

THE PRIORY HERITAGE CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVE

LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

Endorsed by Chief Inspector GINTY

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SUMMARY:

THE PRIORY HERITAGE CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVE

The small villages and towns on the outskirts of Boston are suffering ads of vandalism and disorderly behaviour by youths generally aged between fourteen and eighteen years of age.

The youth clubs are unable to cope with the conduct of the children and are in the process of closing or are already closed.

The fear of crime is high in these areas due to the gathering of the youths in prominent locations and the unruly behaviour is resulting in litter, noise and the damage to property.

There is much talk of the perception of the fear of crime not matching the reality of the quantifiable crime. The fear factor is measurable in public satisfaction surveys, which shows the fear of crime to be high.

The incidence of damage can be demonstrated by crime recorded. It would be naive to believe this is an accurate guide due to the number of crimes not reported due to its minor nature, nevertheless the recorded crime can give a statistical guide from which to measure reduction performance. Observation and recording of the problem by parish councillors and police officers gives an accurate account of the quantifiable problem.

The police response to such instances of damage and disorderly conduct were typical. Incidents invariably concluded '**passing attention promised**'. Perhaps there were increased patrols but it is dear that this is not a sustainable long-term solution to the problem.

Therein lies the problem and the solution needed to be found not only to deter those responsible today but also in the next generation. An educational response to the problem was preferred to a simple enforcement exercise. The police needed to interact with the youth but so did the responsible community members, the clergy, the business people, the British Legion and elderly, all are essential elements of the programme.

Substantial interaction has taken place with the offending youths involving them directly in the consequences of their actions and impact on the community focusing on educating them as to the social and economic cost of their actions. The measure of success is a reduction in reported crime, reduction in reported incidents and a reduction in the number of non reported incidents such as graffiti and damage.

The long-term success can only be measured in the improved behaviour of the future generation and will have to be monitored and analysed to provide a comparison.

THE PRIORY HERITAGE CRIME REDUCTION INITIATIVE **Incorporating the H.E.L.P Project**

Anti social behaviour manifests itself in various forms. Let us look at the typical reasonably sized rural village setting. We would expect to find a post office, public house, church and a police house, or would we?

Times are changing no longer would we expect to find a village bobby', the police houses have been sold. The post offices have become uneconomical in many cases and have closed. Public houses have reduced in number dramatically providing residential accommodation and the church congregations are now so small in many villages that a single minister may have responsibility for four parish churches.

The simplistic view of our idyllic village is under threat and this is very much the case in rural Lincolnshire. The residents particularly those with their roots firmly in their own village have had difficulty adjusting to the pace of change. They simply cannot understand why they no longer have their police officer to deal with their problems and it is little wonder why the call remains strong for the reinstatement of such an officer.

Sibsey near Boston has a growing population with a healthy mix of elderly, retired, employed and young residents, It could easily be described as a typical village in this area. There is little provision for the youth, there is no youth club, no meeting place, no events, limited sports facilities, no sports leagues etc. The result not surprisingly is that there are groups of children and young people congregating at the bus shelter.

They have made plans at school to meet their friends that evening and the venue once decided is ultimately the meeting place for at least two hours between the hours of 7pm and 9pm whatever the weather. It is not unusual to find youths from villages as far distant as ten miles having been deposited there by family members and awaiting collection. The numbers within the groups can reach as many as twenty and their presence becomes intimidating to other villagers particularly when they do not recognise many of the young people.

Once this group is formed there becomes a problem of regulating the behaviour within the group. There is unlikely to be a regulating body such as the police present and even if there was it is unrealistic to spend the necessary time in one location of perhaps eight similar on the officers beat.

The result is that offences are committed, minor in nature but anti social and causing a great deal of distress to the local population. The irony is that often the offences are not reported to the police and do not therefore reflect a quantifiable need to warrant police intervention. Offences such as litter, graffiti, shouting, swearing, spitting, loud music, consumption of alcohol and drug abuse can become commonplace. This serves to raise the fear of crime, and also serves to stereotype youth as dysfunctional, whereas the reality is that there is little crime and only a small proportion of the young people of the

locality are actually congregating at night the majority being at home with their families.

The problem is compounded by the increased mobility when the young become driving licence holders and continue to meet in their traditional meeting place. They are keen to impress their peer group and there now begins the cycle of exceeding speed limits, sounding of car horns and driving in circuits much to the annoyance of residents.

The aftermath is a location that has suffered damage, decay and is spoilt for the citizens of the parish. The Parish councils are working hard to repair and regenerate their communities and turn to the police for help. It is difficult for them to understand how the removal of their police officer can ever equate to progress and a commitment to improvement and the building of a better more efficient police service.

The police respond to the problem dependent on its severity. On the list of their priorities, it is unlikely to be high even though the fact is that the reduction of anti social behaviour and the reduction of the fear of crime are ministerial priorities. Many calls for assistance end with passing attention being promised and a disappointed complainant. The cycle therefore continues and we await the next generation, same problem different faces!

In simple terms here then **is the problem, but it is not that simple, certainly not that simple for the patrolling officer to address and even if he or she should successfully quell the disorder on his patch that will not solve all the other similar incidents in other localities.**

How then do we go about addressing what is clearly a complex issue, there appears to be a lack of respect for property, lack of respect for their community and a lack of respect for each other and the law.

What is the actual significance of their behaviour on the community and how do we measure the reduction in the quality of life of the residents. It is difficult because we rely on incident reporting and the recording of crime. It would be true to say that these measures pall into insignificance compared with public concern which can only be judged by interacting with the community and assessing their fears.

An officer living in the community and serving the community would be well placed to assess any tensions and deal appropriately but this is no longer the case and cannot be seen as the solution.

Why then should we see this as a problem at all when there are demands of crime and large scale disorder that deserves police attention. The reason is that there are large sections of our community that feel very strongly about our young and their behaviour and their own village community and are fiercely protective of it. Their views are not reflected in crime statistics but nonetheless are considered important and worthy of resolution because the behaviour demonstrated by these young people if successfully tempered may

well impact on the bigger issues that divert so much police time and effort on a daily basis.

The community needs to see that the police are interested in them and their problems and that we have a strategy in place to divert youth offenders from anti social behaviour. If a young person's behaviour can be affected at an early age then perhaps respect can be engendered for people and property for without this we will continue to incidents of the nature described for the foreseeable future.

Here we have a tangible problem involving the youngest members of society, which have formed into groups. We have an opportunity to attempt to affect their behaviour and measure the results of that intervention. The problem is not unique to Lincolnshire and for this reason I have selected it and have endeavoured to find a solution.

Any solution to the problem must first examine why is it happening in the first place. I have touched upon the fact that youths will congregate at a certain location at a certain time but there are underlying factors for this.

- A) Geography: Villages are located several miles apart and youths make prior arrangements to meet thereby committing themselves to an evening in that locality. The research for this came from assessing where youths were from when stop checked by police officers and asking them the reason for their presence in that locality.: It was evident that their meeting place was not affected by where they necessarily resided but from the associations they formed in school. The locations selected are focal points that provide shelter there is little clandestine activity taking place within the village.
- B) Facilities: Villages that have provided facilities such as a youth club have been rewarded with greater instances of anti social behaviour than those without, the large congregation of youths acting as a problem itself. The result is that most are now closed and volunteers are in short supply to attempt to control the youths. Professional youth workers have fared no better. Provision of any other facilities are few.
- C) Time: It is clear that the time span for disorder is short, restricted to between 7pm and 9pm on average following school and evening meal and prior to returning home at a reasonable hour to prepare for bed and school the next day.
- D) Intent: Why do they go and apparently achieve nothing constructive. The answer to this can only be found by asking the youths and it is consistent that they tell you they have nothing else to do, but it is clear the attraction is the extension of their school day to gather and socialise with friends.
- E) Tradition: Many of the areas that are used as meeting places have been such for many years and efforts to divert the youths from these areas are difficult to achieve. In the village of Sutterton a licensee decided to provide a room with heating and facilities to divert youths from the church porch in winter. Despite this they continued to congregate outside and this phenomenon is repeated elsewhere where similar has been attempted.

If it is accepted that the young will gather in a certain place then it is the aim of this project to divert them from their offending behaviour and observe accepted society rules. If they realise fully the negative impact they are having on their community then perhaps they will move of their own volition to a more acceptable location for all concerned. The key to the project is education.

Information was supplied by youths to parish councillors and the police and analysed before inviting the youths to a public meeting to discuss proposals, it was believed that any resolution must involve the young in the decision making process from the outset. This approach was chosen to give the young a feeling of respect within the community as opposed to isolation. It was also believed that simply addressing the problem of today did not substantially influence the problems of tomorrow and therefore the project deliberately focused on the future generations. An education package was developed for primary schools in liaison with the school liaison officer and education authority.

Local history was on the National curriculum but on investigation with teachers it was felt that it was not being adequately taught, the reason being that teachers are no longer local people and therefore lack the necessary knowledge and time to develop a programme. The subject was considered important as it is the foundation of engendering civic pride. Research was conducted in the community and the results were woeful demonstrating a lack of education of local history among those born and educated locally. It was aimed to demonstrate how our ancestors worked so hard to produce a lifestyle we enjoy today and that we should be grateful for their effort and respect their legacy.

It was on this premise that Priory Heritage was founded by police officers to address this situation. The Parishes were contacted and invited to a meeting to discuss proposals. The result was that each went away to found their own history groups, then to write a parish history and produce a heritage centre in each small community. Once achieved workbooks for children would then be produced which could be used in the future as the parish history will not alter. The books could explain in simple terms the salient points using a question and answer methodology i.e. Q1. Why is Boston called Boston (refer to Page 2 of the History of Boston). It can be seen that teachers no longer have to teach and children will have to read and in doing so learn in order to complete their workbook thereby getting the message across.

The name Priory Heritage was chosen as we wanted people to protect their heritage and the monk logo reflected the contribution to education made by the monks. The monk image is one that is easily endeared to the population and this was a consideration. It was soon found that the concept attracted substantial public interest and consequently volunteers.

The volunteers are not those who would normally be associated with the special constabulary as there are no physical attributes required and indeed it is mental capacity that is the greatest advantage. We needed administrative support and lecturing capability as the organisation evolved and those

interested in history seem very suited to this. A further advantage is that these volunteers are in the community and are able voice the concerns of the community to enable Priory Heritage to respond directly to those concerns, they have innovative ideas that would not have been considered by the police before.

Priory Heritage created a speaker bank, a facility for the community to obtain a speaker from a data base. The police now have the ability to place speakers on drug abuse and crime prevention onto the system for the public to utilise. If they train Priory Heritage volunteers to fulfil these roles it costs the establishment nothing and satisfies a demand. The fire brigade, ambulance service, environment department and any other organisation who cater for such requests can also use this facility. Priory Heritage is becoming a public service, and therefore sought the help of the volunteer bureau and in turn the Town Council. This is a friendly civic organisation working in partnership with the Police, Schools, Council etc and is not seen as a police organisation working solely for the priorities of the police.

Being firmly police orientated the organisation can call upon the immense resources of the statutory bodies, there is no agenda, Priory Heritage is a civic body working on behalf of the citizens of Boston. Priory Heritage members are able to call upon the owners of premises who have suffered graffiti and ask politely for its immediate removal, a facility not afforded any statutory body and without fear of reprisals. There is a high success rate for this approach and whilst it cannot be quantified it is believed that early removal of graffiti does reduce the total amount of damage overall. This is certainly the experience in the villages. Priory Heritage is free to write to any organisation asking for its help on any matter. Whether it be the installation of lighting, a camera, litter collection or whatever, because they are independent, the volunteers are independent and all working to create a safer environment to make Boston a better place to live. The organisation are free to issue civic certificates to worthy candidates and schools and children and promote Boston and the surrounding villages as desirable places to live.

The HELP project (Heritage and Environment Locally Protected) was launched as a platform from which Priory Heritage can raise local awareness. The police and council have recently joined forces with Priory Heritage to educate children about the problem of graffiti, litter and chewing gum disposal. The school being presented with an eco - monk as a reward for their involvement.

Children seem able to respond easily to the organisation and the monk image is acceptable to everybody. There is no reason to be anti monk in the way some are anti police or anti council. Research was undertaken into the victims of graffiti from police crime statistics. This showed the majority was against corporations such as British Telecom. The education provided by Priory Heritage using slide projection and digital images demonstrated the effects of wilful damage and the costs involved. The Special constabulary have been instrumental in inviting congregating youths into the police station for an evening to be given lectures on the economic cost of their damage and the

effects on the elderly. A partnership with British Telecom has developed in respect of such wilful damage and the Special Constabulary conduct their own public satisfaction survey following such operations to determine effect. The results are encouraging and one of the interesting points is that young females are more receptive to this approach and then appear to regulate the behaviour of the boys. Once it has been pointed out to them about the effect they are having they also find a socially more acceptable place to congregate. The parents obviously have a vital role to play and in areas where there are high incidents of damage the parents are visited and shown images of what is occurring in the hope that they will also assist to regulate behaviour. The impact of this is that some have chosen to prevent their children going to that particular place. Once again the key is a low profile approach asking for help as opposed to enforcement.

The young and parents are encouraged to become involved in heritage projects and the obvious advantages of a healthy tourist industry are explained. A partnership has been formed with the local tourist office and the children are creating heritage trails and walks for publication.

Priory Heritage works closely with the church in each community and has written articles on church security for the historic churches trust. It has also been asked to assist in helping provide sports venues for a karate club and gymnastics club for local children and is able to use its growing influence to help find such services. Other partnerships include the local businesses, museums and civic trusts all of which have an obvious interest in its success. The police are able to control the direction but many helpful ideas are coming from the community and not from the authorities. An example of this was a local residents idea of a community quiz, teams of 24 people from a small village to compete against other villages on a knockout basis. The idea being to gather the community together stipulating the number from each age range i.e. four aged 16 to 20, four aged 20 to 30 and so on. The idea being to stimulate the community to be a community. This is currently being administered by a Priory Heritage volunteer and has the support of the media and council.

The reduction in graffiti is marked, the reduction in anti social behaviour is marked and even a visible reduction in the quantity of litter. The crime rates are statistically lower being up to fifty percent in some areas of involvement but it is the future we are concerned with. The police have a major influence on the community behind the facade of a monk and there has been no attempt to conceal to police influence. The approach is sustainable and the growth potential is enormous. This is a project that has caught the imagination of the public and this can be measured by the response on the office ansaphone, the response to the media interest, and the television and radio interest that has taken place.

It is intended that the project will continue to develop and early signs are that communities will make this happen. Enquiries have been received from neighbouring divisions asking the organisation to help in their area. It should not be forgotten that the police have a powerful enforcement arm and one of

the prime movers in Priory Heritage is the Neighbourhood Watch organisation. In fact the founder of Priory Heritage was instrumental in the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch in this police area and this is a useful partner. The information network established has enabled Priory Heritage to collate and receive complaints of considerable public concern such as damage to a church, gravestones, war memorials, monuments, flower beds and notice boards that would not normally be reported. They are able to contact an officer direct who they know shares their concern and are not afraid to ring and do not have to enter the switchboard system. They are encouraged to contact a member of Neighbourhood Watch or their Parish Council who will directly contact the police on their behalf. Each Parish will have a nominated member responsible for their heritage that will liaise with the heritage officer.

The initiative was developed at the ground level of the police with the special constabulary and there has been no managerial input at its inception. The management of the project is undertaken by a police sergeant and there is a rigorous approach to problem solving policing with the community being involved at the outset. The enforcement option is always considered but there are a raft of preventative measures considered at the same time. No problem is treated with a passing attention response but is carefully considered in consultation with the complainant. The results of this are the provision of litter bins if needed, the removal of seating or shelter, the arranging of public meetings and debate with the offending youths and parents. All of this is much easier to achieve when a non statutory civic organisation is involved as an intermediary.

Priory Heritage has no politics and has a slogan 'Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future' this is quite simply a return to old fashioned values presented in a modern understandable way involving children in their community, helping them shape the future of it and treating them with respect.

One of the main organisations that Priory Heritage sought the advice of at the earliest opportunity were the youth service and the provision of outreach workers at sites of concern was most helpful as it became obvious that support would be forthcoming on request. They were able to provide an insight into the difficulties in running youth clubs and why perhaps they were unable to sustain them. They unwittingly shaped the intervention method which was the removal of the youth from their own environment to a police environment, to bring home the severity of the concerns they were causing their fellow citizens. This was not a chat on the street corner but an orchestrated effort to address real community issues. The measure of success was often their reaction to the public concern about their behaviour and how they were affecting others. The other measure was a very real change in their behaviour and officers have been careful to show them their appreciation for their behavioural change.

There has never been a major difficulty with resources, regular officers, specials and cadets have turned out regularly to support this initiative. The

cost implications to the force are so minimal that a costed plan was never considered necessary.

I anticipate that Priory Heritage will continue to grow and change to meet the needs of the community, it is very much in its infancy but this is driven by the community for the community and could become an emblem for civic pride for future generations. The aim is to make those intent on spoiling the quality of life for others remain firmly in the minority.

Ultimately this project will be judged by the behavioural standards of the next generation.

APPENDICES

1. Mission Statement of the Priory Heritage organisation
2. H.E.L.P Project volunteer request
3. Typical school liaison letter
4. Merit certificate presented to pupils or worthy recipients
5. Typical letter requesting assistance from public (this sent to Eastenders television programme)

THE MISSION STATEMENT

To provide quality, informative education for young people focusing on citizenship and moral issues

The guiding principles are;

We will through our education programme increase knowledge and the desire to learn through interactive history based innovative teaching practices

We will develop a range of programmes to suit all ages and backgrounds, religions and ethnicity

We will directly confront moral issues and stimulate debate

We will work in partnership with the police and education authority

We will promote education to encourage conservation

Our aim is to preserve the past and protect the future

We Need YOUR

Heritage

Environment

Locally

Protected



If you are interested in local history and the preservation of our heritage and feel able to contribute to the aims of

Priory Heritage

Then please **Telephone** 01205 312272 for details of how you may be able to assist this local organisation. Thank you.



LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

AREA HEADQUARTERS
LINCOLN LANE
BOSTON PE21 8QS
Fax: (01205) 356483
Telephone: (01205) 366222
Ext. No 2218
Officer Deaing:Sgt 733 Brown

Your Ref

Our Ref: GAB/JB

1st May 2001

Dear Parent

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES/POLICE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

As part of the ongoing Environmental Studies and Police School Partnership, Boston West County Primary School have been invited to take part in an Environmental Initiative on Thursday 3rd May 2001, which involves a lesson in environmental issues such as littering and graffiti. A short supervised walk in the town centre, identifying the areas that have been affected by these problems will follow this.

Each child will receive a certificate of attendance for taking part. In order for your child to attend, I would ask that you return the permission slip below, to the school prior to the event.

Yours faithfully

Sergeant 733 Brown

I hereby give my permission for my son/daughter to attend the Environmental Study Lesson on 3rd May 2001.

Name:

Class :

Signed:Date:



Awarded for excellence

LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

PRIORY HERITAGE



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

**On Thursday ^{3rd} May 2001 made a
valuable contribution to making
Boston a better place to live**



Awarded for Excellence



Priory Heritage

Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future

Stoke Priory, Fishtoft Road, Fishtoft, Boston, Lincolnshire. PE21 ORR
Telephone: 07796 090 570

Dear Mr Yorke

I watched with interest a morning television programme explaining that the Eastenders programme has a graffiti artist employed to make Albert Square look realistic and the presenter of this programme added her own graffiti to the Square.

I work as a police sergeant in the Lincolnshire Police and I am heading an operation designed to help eradicate the graffiti problem blighting this area. As a result of my work I have founded an organisation called Priory Heritage whose aims are to educate our youth as to the harm that such acts cause our society.

It is a reality that many people are offended by graffiti and there are a large number of people committed to helping solve this problem.

I wondered if your programme might consider introducing a clean up Albert Square campaign into the script, as there is no greater medium than television to get this message across. If a character were to become anti graffiti it would reflect the views of a large number of individuals and small groups keeping their communities free from this menace.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

G A BROWN