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Introduction

Merseyside Police is one of five Metropolitan Forces who were awarded Home Office funding to tackle the problem of street violence.

~1.8 million was allocated to fund crime reduction activities between September 2000 and March 2002.

Robbery had increased in Merseyside by almost 11% in the twelve months ending June 2000. Coupled with that, the Merseyside Citizens Panel survey indicated that almost 34% of those questioned felt unsafe in their neighbourhoods.

The focus for delivering the campaign was to those neighbourhoods/communities where street crime or the fear of crime is most extreme.

Three geographical policing areas were identified as robbery hotspots. However in order to ensure that **'Be-Streetsafe'** was a Force initiative; all Policing Areas within Merseyside were asked to submit local plans based on 'the S.A.R.A model' outlining the extent of their local problem and actions proposed to tackle them.

Internal performance management structures currently in place support an ongoing assessment of the local responses.

The plan was supported by an innovative communications strategy, which focuses on awareness, perception and attitudes towards robbery. There was a commitment to reducing the public's feelings of vulnerability to robbery by educating them on ways to avoid becoming a victim. This strategy was seen as critical importance to reducing robbery, reducing the fear of crime and improving public reassurance.

According to BVPI statistics in the year ending 31st March 2001, Merseyside Police recorded a reduction in robbery of 9.52%, which equates to a figure of 1.79% per thousand population.

The detection rate for the year ending 31st March 2001 was recorded as 21.3%. This represents an increase of 3% compared with the previous year.

The feelings of safety targets are still being assessed through the Citizens Panel Surveys.

The **'Be Streetsafe'** campaign demonstrated a commitment by Merseyside Police towards reducing robbery by adopting a problem-oriented approach. In addition it has demonstrated the many positive aspects of developing and implementing such an approach to reducing crime.

Objectives of the Robbery Reduction Plan

The principal strategic operational objectives of the Robbery Reduction Plan were focussed upon the following key themes:

- To reduce the fear of robbery on Merseyside
- To reduce the incidence of recorded robbery
- Increase detection rate for robbery
- Increase feelings of safety
- To promote the work being done by Merseyside police to achieve all of the above

In support of these objectives, strategic communications activities were used to tackle aspects of the plan which focussed on:

- Awareness, perception and attitudes towards robbery
- Reducing vulnerability to robbery by informing the public of ways to avoid becoming a victim
- Promoting the work of Merseyside Police and their role in reducing robbery, thereby improving their image

Success Criteria

The indicators used to measure the success of the plan were a combination of national BVPI targets plus local indicators aimed specifically at tackling Merseyside specific issues relating to Robbery.

These indicators are:

Crime Targets

CRIME	YEAR	CRIMES PER 1,000 POPULATION	% REDUCTION
Robbery	2000 — 2001	1.89	4.8
	2001 — 2002	1.73	3.9

Feelings of Safety Targets

YEAR	% IMPROVEMENTS
2000 — 2001	10+
2001 -- 2002	10+

Outcomes

Implementation of the Be StreetSafe Plan aimed to deliver the following:

- Reduction of Recorded Robbery
- Increase in the detection rate of robbery
- Reduce fear of crime
- Increase the feeling of safety

Defining the Problem

In developing the **Be Streetsafe** plan we analysed the scope of the problem from the perspective of the victim, location and offender. Key activities were identified to maximise the impact along a chronological time line before, during and after a crime has happened. This informed our response to the problem.

Our analysis indicated the following:

- The highest incidence of robbery in the force, was in the City Centre over the period running up to Christmas and during January. A similar trend was seen in Birkenhead as well as Wavertree and Riverside.
- Students formed a significant proportion of robbery victims: Profiles of times of robbery showed that occurrence was most frequent between 2200 hrs and 0400 hrs.
- The British Crime Survey published in October, 2000 does not show statistically significant increases in **robbery** across **England and Wales**: It was **comparatively** more of a significant crime as the incidence of other crime reduced: There was an identifiable increase, however, in the incidence of robbery of 16 year olds. This may be due to mobile phone use.

Perceptually the British Crime Survey shows a significant fear of robbery amongst the elderly.

The robbery problem can be summarised as follows:

35% of victims were under 19 years of age

75% of victims were male

Three geographic hotspots were identified for these crimes based on BVPI statistics, (City and Kirkdale, Wavertree & Riverdale, Central Wirral):

To put the robbery statistics in perspective it was shown that:

- 2,000 of the 1.4 million population in Merseyside are victims of robbery each year. As well as actual recorded levels of crime; fear of crime was a critical **issue and arguably our biggest challenge**.
- 34.4% of people surveyed in the Citizens Panels in January 2000 stated that they felt unsafe in their local area in relation to crime.
- The areas in which they felt most vulnerable were parks, walking near their homes and travelling on local transport.
- Of those people who felt vulnerable in these areas; a significant number stated that they were in fear of being a victim of street robbery.

To ensure that our response to the robbery problem on Merseyside was coherent, we appointed a Force Analyst whose role involved identifying trends and patterns and highlighting any cross border issues. The analyst has provided a strategic overview on a monthly basis which was evaluated to the Crime Managers across the Force Area.

Clearly there are limitations on relying solely on police data to identify the extent and in particular to accurately identify areas where robbery and violence are most prevalent.

To extend our information base Merseyside Police consulted with representatives of Health Action Zone and the Safer Merseyside Partnership to develop and match fund protocols regarding the sharing of information within the various Accident and Emergency Departments.

This information has been utilised on a limited basis within the City areas of Liverpool to enable Merseyside Police to identify crime Hotspots. The success of this initiative merited extending it across the Force Area.

Our Response

The focus for delivering this campaign was to those neighbourhoods where street crime or the fear of crime are most extreme. A mix of activities were planned in a rolling programme which will impact (over a 18 month period) on the Six Basic Command Units (BCU) which currently comprise Merseyside Police.

A significant proportion of our additional funding allocation was used to tackle the fear of crime, promote crime prevention and inform communities about what we are doing.

Other resources were given to new equipment and tactics to identify, confront and arrest offenders. Finally, further monies will be spent on social/situational crime prevention measures.

All eleven Policing areas were asked to demonstrate their commitment to reducing robbery by basing their responses around three elements, namely the **victim**, the **offender** and the **location**.

In addition they were asked to consider Enforcement, **Education** and **Environmental** issues.

Three geographical areas were identified as robbery hotspots. However in order to ensure that 'Be Streetsafe' was a Force initiative, all eleven police areas submitted local plans based on the S.A.R.A. model outlining the extent of their local problem and actions proposed to tackle those issues.

The S.A.R.A. documents were submitted to the Force Problem Solving Team and have formed the basis of their 'Compstat' programme management process.

All eleven areas were asked to submit a timeline of activity which was collated by the Force Analyst. This process ensured that areas were planning ahead and enabled Merseyside Police to support operations with communication activities.

The Robbery initiative was managed through a Consultancy Team who met on a regular basis to address issues relevant to the 'Be Streetsafe' plan. This Consultancy Team comprised representatives of the Communications and Marketing Dept, Media Dept, the Force Analyst and the Crime Reduction Unit of Merseyside Police.

In support of their activities monthly meetings were timetabled for Area Robbery Co-ordinators to discuss the progress of the plan against targets, highlight best practice and identify areas for improvement.

To support areas in targeting robbery offences and to facilitate an 'up to date' response, the Force Robbery Analyst identified and circulated the projected crime peaks for the year. In addition she supplied a strategic overview of the Robbery problem as well as a breakdown of the 'current top ten' beats for Robbery offences. This information is circulated to Areas who are encouraged to demonstrate activities at these key locations.

In developing our response to tackling robbery we gave a commitment to implement systems which would enhance the quality of investigation into Robbery. The following processes were developed and extended to support our response:

Robbery Investigation model

National Robbery Reduction' Template

Robbery Investigation Packs

Critical Incident Vehicle



Robbery Investigation Model

We have developed a Robbery Investigation model detailing minimum standards expected. This document was circulated Forcewide.

National Robbery Reduction Model

We developed a National Robbery Reduction template. This was circulated to each of the other Metropolitan Forces which received Home Office funding.

Robbery Investigation Packs

To maintain minimum standards of investigation we developed a Robbery Investigation Pack for use when dealing with a complaint of robbery.

Critical Incident Vehicle

Merseyside Police purchased a 'Critical Incident' Vehicle which is being piloted in the Sefton area. The main purpose of the vehicle is to enhance crime scene management and improve victim care at the scene of robberies and other serious crime. In developing the protocols for deployment of such a vehicle and equipping it, consideration was given to addressing the 'Golden Hour' principles.

Another benefit of the critical incident vehicle was its deployment for public reassurance following a serious incident. In addition the vehicle has witness facilities which enable anniversary visits to be made to the scene of robberies. If successful, this protocol will be extended across Merseyside.

Partnerships

Consultation with the Environmental Services of Liverpool City Council has demonstrated the benefits of working in partnership to reduce opportunities for crime at vulnerable locations. One area was identified by the Student Community as being of concern to them. This was forwarded to the City Safe team for action regarding improving street lighting in the area.

The top ten beats identified by the force Analyst were incorporated into the 'Alleygating' scheme under the Crime Reduction programme. The rationale for this action was to frustrate opportunities to discard stolen property. This modus operandi was identified by the analyst as being a common theme.

Mobile CCTV

CCTV is recognised as one of the most useful aids to reducing the fear of crime, crime reduction, detection and intelligence gathering. Merseyside Police embarked upon an exciting new initiative to implement Mobile CCTV across the County. The aim of this Mobile CCTV unit is to reduce crime by prevention and detection and to address the fear of crime. The primary use of this Mobile CCTV is to support Merseyside Police's Neighbourhood Policing Strategy.

Promoting this mobile CCTV formed a major part of the Communications strategy addressing the fear of crime and public reassurance.

Public Help Points

To increase feelings of safety and increase levels of public reassurance in Merseyside, the 'Be Streetsafe' campaign gave a commitment to compliment CCTV coverage by developing and installing public help points in Town Centres across Merseyside. Funding was allocated from the 'Be Streetsafe' budget to facilitate the purchase of these systems.

Most Wanted Campaign

The Most Wanted Campaign was launched in November 2000, in partnership with the Liverpool Echo and utilising the Force website. The objective of this initiative was publicising the names and photographs of criminals who have committed serious crime. This initiative has to date been successful, with some 15 of the 32 images published resulting in arrests.

Education/Initiatives

Local initiatives have been run within the Student Community to raise awareness, thereby reducing the likelihood of them becoming victims of crime. We have identified the need to extend these initiatives to 6th form Colleges on Merseyside. This initiative is being developed together with a programme for delivery by the local Crime Prevention Officers. In addition Road Shows are planned to be delivered to the Business Community to reduce the likelihood of them becoming victims of robbery.

ATV advertisement was commissioned and broadcast at shopping precincts in the Liverpool and Sefton areas. It was supported by the distribution of Be Streetsafe leaflets. This included delivering crime prevention advice and promoting the many positive aspects of Merseyside.

Arrest Days

To demonstrate our determination to reduce robbery and disrupt criminal activity, on 21st and 22nd November 2000 Merseyside Police carried out arrest days, which were supported by High Visibility Patrolling at key times and key locations. To demonstrate their commitment to the 'Be Streetsafe' campaign, the arrest days were supported by all departments as well as 'ACPO' who participated in the arrest days and High Visibility Patrolling.

The British Transport Police supported the campaign by participating in two days of joint patrolling with Merseyside Police officers. The officers conducted uniformed patrolling on the Merseyrail Network. The rationale of this patrolling was to raise levels of safety at venues where the community had indicated that they felt vulnerable to robbery.

In excess of ninety people were arrested over the two day period. Favourable feedback was received from a number of quarters including the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who congratulated Merseyside Police for joining forces with the British Transport Police to tackle aspects of robbery.

Following the arrest days Merseyside Police undertook an extensive High Visibility Policing initiative under the banner 'Operation Guardian'. The objectives were to disrupt criminal activity at vulnerable business premises and 'Cash in transit' companies. In addition, Officers were deployed to these premises to offer crime prevention advice and public reassurance during the period leading up to Christmas, traditionally a vulnerable time for the Business Community.



Communications Strategy

Merseyside Police have a consistent approach to problem solving and are accustomed to working in partnership with other agencies.

The Be Streetsafe Campaign offered an opportunity to use Strategic Communications to support operations. Funding was set aside to develop a strategy encompassing a wide variety of media ranging from leaflets to outdoor billboard advertising was devised. A Marketing Consultant was appointed to join the Consultancy team to bring communications expertise to the project.

This function was fulfilled by working in partnership with the Marketing and Research Unit at Knowsley Borough Council. Working with Operational Planning, a Communications strategy was devised and a campaign planned and executed. Other public sector partners were involved such as Merseytravel and the Universities.

Essentially, communications activities were to support operations. The aim was for communications to be viewed as one of the many 'tools' available to operational staff to tackle robbery. It was important, therefore, for communications to be embraced as such at the outset. All communication activities were specifically designed with a practical application and outcome in mind.

The approach essentially consisted of two distinct levels:

- An 'overarching' Merseyside-wide **campaign** to reduce robbery
- A targeted campaign focusing on key 'at risk' groups and/or locations

An important feature of the campaign was to 'quality assure' the proposed communications materials to ensure that they were interpreted in the way that they were initially conceived. A series of three focus groups took place, two drawn from the Citizens' Panel and one at Altcourse Prison. Feedback from these meetings was used to inform and develop the final designs.

The 'overarching' campaign set the tone for the lifetime of the 18 month campaign and combined the use of a wide range of media.

The approach will essentially be two pronged:

- *Proactive* — i.e. prevention of the potential incident
- *Re-active* — i.e. 'tools' we have to ensure the perpetrator of the crime is taught.

Communications Objectives

The thrust of the 'be streetsafe' campaign was to reduce the incidence and the fear of robbery. Campaign activities supported operational activity across the force to this end.

The target locations for this campaign were the City Centre, Birkenhead and Riverside and Wavertree. The target groups were students, 16 - 27 year olds, shoppers, mobile phone users and cashpoint users.

The campaign consisted of two key themes:

- Proactive — an educational theme, centred on the public taking personal responsibility for their own safety
- Re-active reassurance messages focused on increasing feelings of safety of the public in the event of an incident and to deter potential offenders.

Proactive Approach

This theme was essentially an educational message and was centred around the public taking responsibility for personal safety in order that they avoid putting themselves at risk to street robbery. The approach was based on straightforward advice and was targeted in locations and/or situations to achieve maximum impact. For example, pubs and clubs in Liverpool City Centre, Birkenhead and Wavertree areas were asked to display materials featuring advice on how to get home safely. The aim was to get the message across 'real time' so that people were made to think about taking a safe way home after an evening out, thereby preventing a potential incident by not putting themselves at risk.

Reactive Approach

This theme aimed both to reassure the public that in the event of an incident, the Police will catch the offender and to deter a potential offender from committing an offence in the first place. The messages here feature the range of 'methods' which the Police have to fight street robbery such as CCTV, high visibility policing etc.

A wide range of media and marketing tools were used to deliver these themes. Messages were specifically designed to suit the particular medium being used. This may include:

- Posters
- Radio
- Website
- Buses, Trains, Taxis
- Promotional items (T-Shirts, Coasters etc)
- Fliers and leaflets
- ||| Banners
- Extensive PR activity



A full media plan was developed and extensive coverage of the initiative was given in local press. In order to avoid alarming people, key message focussed on explaining that robbery is not prolific, but there is a need to reduce it still further. This is a difficult balance to maintain as by promoting messages to reduce robbery, we were mindful that we may draw attention to the likelihood of becoming a victim and hence create a fear where there may not have been one. The communications materials were designed with this in mind and were successfully tested in a focus group.

Examples of the communications materials used can be seen at Appendix I .

Funding

In developing our responses, funding was allocated under two main headings, corporate and local.

- Corporate funding was allocated to purchase equipment and implement force-side initiatives, for example, mobile CCTV, critical incident vehicles, public help points. Furthermore, funding was allocated to develop a communications strategy and to pay for planned communications activities.
- Local funding was **allocated** to support the **locally devised area plans**.

Measurement and Outcomes

According to BVPI statistics, in the year ending 31st March 2001 Merseyside Police recorded a reduction in robbery of 9.52 %, which equates to a figure of 1.79% per thousand population.

The detection rate for the year ending 31st March 2001 was recorded as 21.3%. This represents an increase of 3% compared with the previous year.

The feelings of safety targets are still being assessed through the Citizens Panel Surveys.

In measuring the impact of the fear of crime campaign it is worth noting that from the outset, the primary aim of the campaign was to develop a seamless Operational and Communications strategy to deliver a reduction in robbery on Merseyside. As such, it is difficult to separate out which elements have impacted upon the outcomes. However, the results have been impressive. An exercise to specifically measure awareness of the Communications activities has taken place and the results will be available in the near future.

When comparing the Merseyside Police approach to the four other Metropolitan Forces which received funding to tackle robbery, the Home Office have said that Merseyside's strategy has by far been the most successful and has made the most significant impact.

Long Term Gains

In developing the Be Streetsafe plan it was important that any initiative developed had both short term and long-term benefits and demonstrated our commitment to reducing robbery and its causes, using a problem oriented approach. The following summary of activities demonstrates a snapshot of these benefits:-

- In developing the National Robbery Reduction Template there is clear evidence of a commitment to detect offenders and offences but to reduce the opportunities for such offences to be committed.
- In **developing** the Investigation model there has been an emphasis on maintaining minimum standards, which would clearly have long-term benefits. These standards will support the current Force Strategy of improving levels of public satisfaction.
- In developing the Robbery Investigation Packs, Police Officers are reminded once more of the need to investigate offences from the perspective of the victim, the **offender** and the **location**.
- The success of the **campaign** is a clear indication towards encouraging Police nationally to take Communications seriously as a credible tool in the fight against crime. Our aim is to work with the Home Office to establish the strategy as a model for best practice nationally. If accepted, not only does this have far reaching implications for robbery reduction, but the lessons learnt and the recognition of the valuable role which **communications can play** as a crime reduction tool.

The Be Streetsafe campaign has shown the many benefits of developing and maintaining a partnership approach to reducing crime and disorder. These partnerships have been demonstrated in a number of ways including the 'Most Wanted' campaign, joint patrolling with British Transport Police data sharing with Hospital Accident and Emergency Departments.

In developing local responses to robbery all eleven Policing areas submitted plans based on the S.A.R.A model. The 'local' focus meant that Areas identified their own local problems and put in place responses, which were relevant to their local areas. This process demonstrated the many benefits of adopting a problem-oriented approach to crime. Following a Force restructuring programme all local plans are being reviewed.

In introducing the innovative approach of deploying mobile CCTV, Merseyside Police developed a strategy, which took into account Human Rights legislation, Data Protection rules and the Regulatory of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. This strategy has been forwarded to the ACPO Steering Group on CCTV for ratification. The benefits of this strategy will be felt nationally.

Internal performance management structures currently in place will support an ongoing assessment of the initiative.

Additional Information

- The 'Be Streetsafe' campaign demonstrated a commitment by all members of the Merseyside Police towards reducing robbery by adopting a problem-oriented approach to the problem. It was successful in focusing the attention of the whole service and our partners on addressing their local problems using this model.
- A timeline of activity submitted by Areas will ensure that performance is maintained.
- An exciting element of the plan was the innovative step of supporting operational activity with a communication strategy. The emphasis of this strategy has been focused on delivering key messages aimed at raising levels of safety and reducing the likelihood of people becoming victims of crime. The benefits of supporting operations with communications have been met with a favourable response and are likely to form the basis of other future initiatives.
- In conclusion, the success of the 'Be Streetsafe' campaign has demonstrated to Merseyside Police the positive aspects of developing and implementing a problem oriented approach to reducing crime.

