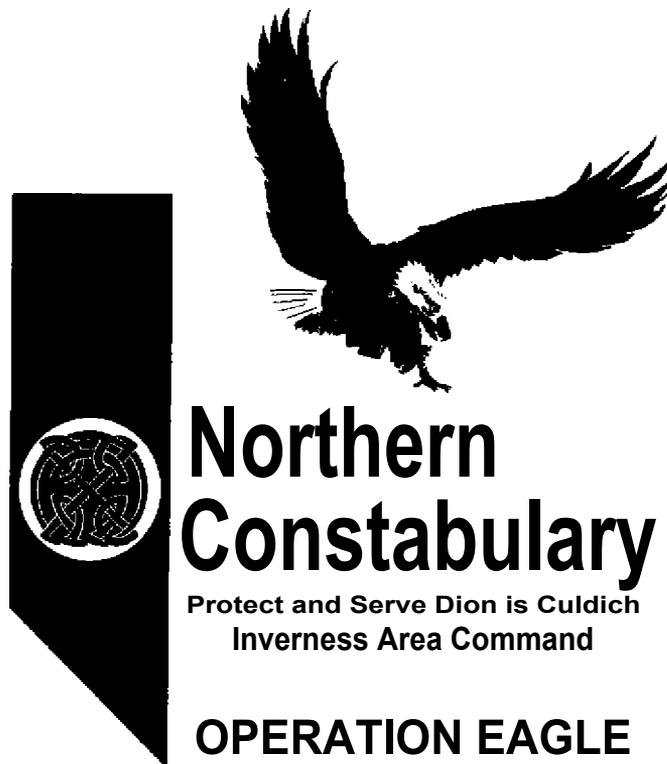


TACKLING CRIME AND DISORDER

IN

SOUTH KESSOCK



**Northern
Constabulary**

Protect and Serve Dion is Culdich
Inverness Area Command

OPERATION EAGLE

**An Application for the Tilley Award
2001**

Chief Inspector A B Duncan
Northern Constabulary
May 2001

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Inverness is situated in the heart of the Highlands of Scotland. It has a population of approximately 75,000 which is growing rapidly, with the city labelled the fastest expanding location in Europe. The idyllic splendour of the area also attracts many thousands of visitors from around the world each year.

Crime in the city is low and the detection rate achieved by Northern Constabulary, currently 58.5%, is the envy of most police forces. Inverness, in common with other cities, does however experience crime and disorder and the detection rates for crime had fallen during 1999 and early 2000. There can be no doubt that the quality of life within certain areas of the city was being seriously affected by anti-social behaviour.

Recognising the importance of community safety, both in maintaining our unique way of life and encouraging inward investment, Northern Constabulary began to adopt a problem solving approach to all aspects of its work during 1998. The following Force Goal was **developed** to show our commitment:

"To make a positive contribution to the well-being of the Highlands and Islands through a Problem Solving approach to community policing."

Northern Constabulary operates a regime of fully devolved resource management and this paper details how a problem oriented approach was adopted at a local level to address complex social problems within a residential area, known as South Kessock, Inverness.

OBJECTIVES

South Kessock is highlighted on the maps in Appendices 1 and 2. It is a relatively small area but the number of calls to the police emanating from it were totally disproportionate towards the end of 1999. During the first three months of 2000 it was clear that the volume of calls were on the increase and that the public were not satisfied with the level of anti-social behaviour which was adversely affecting their quality of life. The Inverness Area Command Management Team decided that a problem-oriented approach was required. After considerable consultation and debate the following objectives were agreed in respect of South Kessock:

- 1 To take all reasonable steps to improve the quality of life for the residents.
- 2 To reduce the volume of calls emanating from the Area to allow more time for proactive policing.
- 3 To reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- 4 To Improve the crime detection rates.

Success would be measured by feedback from the public, community councils, residents associations, the media and the elected representatives of local and national government, all of whom had been extremely vocal in expressing their growing concern regarding the area. In addition to these qualitative indicators, the volume and types of calls would also be used to determine our success.

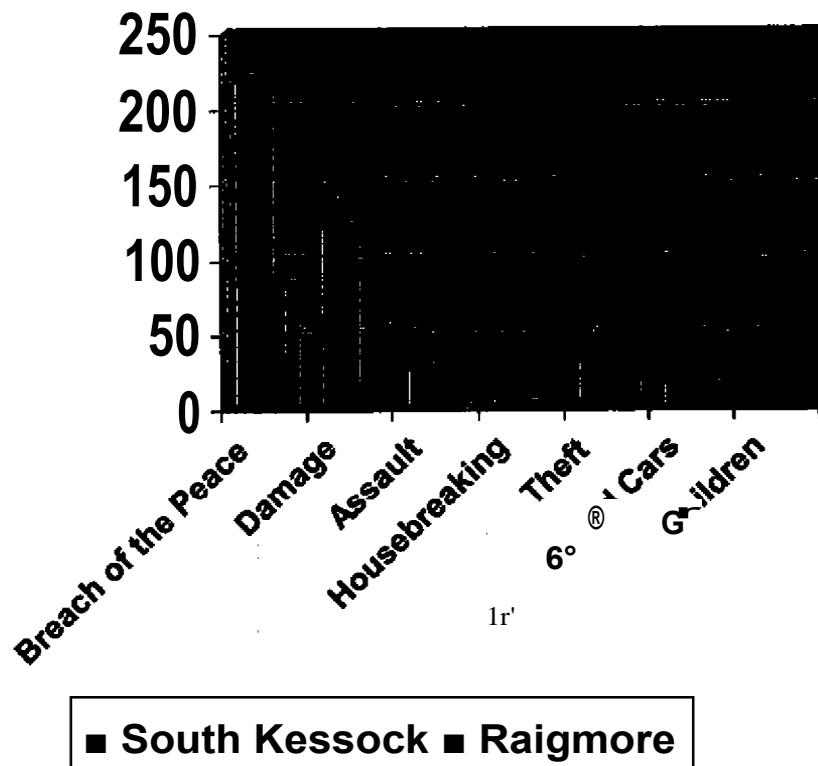
SCANNING

Vandalism was one of the major problems highlighted in South Kessock. Therefore, all reported incidents for the first three months of 2000 were plotted onto a large-scale map. This confirmed the disproportionately high incidence of this crime in South Kessock.

The local media seemed keen to portray South Kessock as a deprived area where crime and anti-social behaviour were rife. This negative press was depressing residents and stifling what community spirit there was, compounding the problems in the area.

A comparison was made with a similar housing estate at the other side of the city and it was realised that far fewer complaints were being received there. The statistics are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Calls made to the police from South Kessock and Raigmore Estates from 1 January to 17 May 2000.



ANALYSIS

The Force had already put in place an effective community consultation model, called the Three Tier Consultation Process. This involves liaison with other organisations, the voluntary sector and community groups at all levels.

Tier 1 meetings involve **beat** officers attending community meetings at a local level. These meetings confirmed the concerns of residents in South Kessock.

Tier 2 meetings involve local police managers meeting elected representatives and Council Service Managers. During these meetings it was apparent that all council departments were experiencing problems in South Kessock and attempting to address them in isolation. Housing and **Environmental services** in **particular** were spending **sizeable** amounts of public money, repairing and tidying up damage.

Tier 3 **operates at a strategic level but was not utilised in respect of this initiative.**

Any problems highlighted through the Three Tier **Consultation Process** are recorded on a Force Form a copy of which is attached at Appendix III.

In Inverness, to ensure that everyone, particularly those with a management role, were aware of developing issues, all completed consultation forms were logged on a locally developed computer system. This system confirmed that South Kessock; an area containing only eight streets was absorbing a totally disproportionate amount of police and council resources due to the levels of crime and disorder reported there.

Northern Constabulary had, through Devolved Resource Management, promoted a culture of continuous improvement. In this everyone is empowered to use their initiative to address problems at an appropriate level without the need for constant authorisation. The concept of blameless error had also been brought into the culture to encourage innovation.

Despite the efforts of the South Kessock Community Beat Officer and indeed all staff it was clear that the situation was **deteriorating**. It was therefore time to use the power which had been devolved to address this pressing local issue.

To closely examine the underlying causes and to ensure that the limited resources at our disposal were wisely used it was decided to form a South Kessock Working Group comprising of senior officers from both the Council and the police. Work began immediately with the appointment of a police officer and a Council Housing Field Officer tasked to work together to gather and analyse data from both agencies and to produce an Action Plan for consideration. These officers consulted widely and produced an excellent document titled "South Kessock Action Plan 2000". This showed a series of

issues that were contributing to the gradual destruction of this community. Whilst the entire document cannot be reproduced within this report the following extracts are worthy of inclusion:

"South Kessock is an area of 513 properties, the tenure is mainly local authority rented with only 16, properties having being bought under the Right to Buy Scheme.

'The area is defined as `Hard to Let' and there are currently over 50 empty Properties - over 10% of the stock- and this results in an average rent loss of over £120,000 a year. This despite the fact that lengthy waiting lists exist for council houses throughout the city.'

'The South Kessock Area has been viewed as an `undesirable' place to live for some years now. This is due to the area's local reputation as a place of crime, anti-social behaviour and social deprivation - a reputation borne out by the problems experienced by numbers of Council tenants in South Kessock and the increasing amount of police time devoted to calls in the area. As a result the houses are hard to let, and this has resulted in higher levels of allocations to young people under the age of 25 years, and increasingly to single, male applicants. The resulting imbalance in the population has not made for a stable community and there are higher levels of housing abandonments and sudden terminations as people move out to `better' areas.

"The law-abiding members of the population are expressing concern and lack of confidence in the way both Highland Council and Northern Constabulary are dealing with the problems in South Kessock."

The next issue was to consider the individual incidents which were being reported. As well as analysing the data available from the records held by the Council, we were fortunate in that the Force's Corporate Database allowed quick and excellent analysis of all incidents. It was established that certain addresses featured very frequently in calls for police assistance and also that several individuals featured highly, both within the incident recording and the intelligence system.

One of the most alarming facts discovered during this stage of the analysis was the reluctance **of people from the community to give information or to stand as witnesses for either agency, for fear of reprisal.**

The problem had now been well defined and both agencies held ample data to support their findings. We were all also well aware that despite high levels of expenditure, the residents of South Kessock were suffering greatly. A solution had to be found.

It was apparent that there was no overnight solution and everybody was aware that quick fixes would be short lived and would not produce sustainable results. Despite this, public feeling was high and some instant action was required to secure early wins.

RESPONSE

The analysis clearly suggested that a multi-agency approach involving short, medium and long-term initiatives would be required. Again it is not possible to reproduce the entire list here. The following were included:

Short Term Initiatives

- **The establishment of a small, high profile, proactive team of police officers to boost public confidence and deal with blatant law breaking.**
- The opening of a 'One Stop Shop' in the heart of the estate.
- The establishment of a Council Quick Response Team to deal immediately with graffiti, fly tipping, broken windows, etc.
- The development of joint procedures to quickly identify and remove abandoned vehicles.
- The removal of rubbish and debris which was frequently used to commit acts of vandalism.
- Enhancement of the role of the Young Tenants **Support Worker**.

Medium Term Initiatives

- The installation of a CCTV system.
- The use of Anti **Social Behaviour Orders** to deal with problem individuals.
- **The eviction of problem tenants.**
- **The development of a joint protocol to ensure the unrestricted cross flow of information between agencies.**

Long Term Initiatives

- The demolition **of poor quality, problem housing.**
- **The encouragement of inward investment to create job opportunities.**

LET'S GET PROACTIVE!

It was accepted that this response would be ongoing for many years but the police would play a major role in the short term.

We accepted that our traditional response which was, through necessity, reactive would be insufficient to provide the catalyst for change. We had considered a new approach to policing the city based on intelligence led policing and had decided to call this 'Operation **Eagle**'. The objective of Operation Eagle is:

"To transfer the fear of crime to the criminal and thereby improve the feeling of wellbeing in communities."

South Kessock provided an ideal launch platform for Operation Eagle.

Our first step was to create a short-life, proactive team that would identify and take action to address repeat calls. The staff for this team would need to be drawn from existing resources, as no additional funding was available. We knew that this would meet with initial resistance from operational staff. They had all received a half-day training in problem solving and most accepted the benefits of this approach. They did, however, feel under pressure due to the number of calls that they received. Some openly expressed the opinion that they would not cope if staff were abstracted for the proposed proactive team.

SOME HARD SELLING

The entire Management Team were supportive of the proposed proactive approach and agreed to market the benefits at every opportunity, during briefings, appraisal interviews and in face to face discussions, even in the canteen! Despite this, many staff were sceptical about this approach in South Kessock, stating that nothing had worked previously in that area.

To address the press negativity mentioned earlier, we decided to be more proactive in our marketing and to provide them with details of our activities on a very regular basis. We enlisted the assistance of the Force Media Manager in this and had regular meetings with the local press during which they agreed to positively promote our efforts and achievements. The press also gave us some new marketing ideas.

One member of staff suggested that we should personally visit every household in the area to explain our proposals. We did that during the first few days of the campaign, distributing leaflets and discussing issues with householders. A copy of the leaflet we used is attached at Appendix IV.

The majority of residents were delighted by this approach. There was a clear message for those who were behind many of the problems as they too were visited and received the leaflets. This **exercise generated great public awareness** of the operation which was further enhanced by reports in the local press.

The next phase of our operation was to maintain high visibility patrols in the area by our proactive team. We were supported by colleagues from British Transport Police who patrolled the nearby railway line which was regularly used by those committing crime. These patrols resulted in the arrest of a number of habitual criminals and many of those identified by community groups as being problematic.

SOME JOINT WORKING

During the second week a 'One Stop Shop' opened in the middle of the estate. It was occupied by council staff and police officers and provided a single point of contact for residents. It also facilitated the sharing of information and the co-ordination of all our efforts. Again the media gave this initiative excellent coverage, including television interviews with local councillors and the beat officers.

Our joint working with the Council produced excellent results. In particular we **worked** together to **deal** with the **abandoned** vehicles **that** littered the streets and were often vandalised by children. We identified the vehicles and the Council removed them as quickly as **possible**. **They** also **took** steps to **block** the entrances to an area that we identified as a favourite place to dump and burn stolen cars. This action made the area safe and pleasant again for children to play and for adults to enjoy.

To improve the overall appearance of the area the Council began to use the powers contained within tenancy agreements to have untidy gardens cleared. Council staff also assisted those unable to tend their own gardens. To help others, a tool club that had previously operated was re-launched and advertised within the Community Newsletter.

To build confidence in the area we all employed positive marketing at every opportunity, using the media and the Community Newsletter. One small but relevant point was that this area was known locally as 'The Ferry'. This name was associated with many of those negative aspects of social activity that we were all striving to eradicate. Therefore all **official bodies simply stopped** referring to the area by this name.

To target those individuals who were causing particular problems we worked closely with the Council to obtain Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. The Council also took firm positive action in respect of those families who caused

problems and had rent arrears. They also enhanced the support and guidance available to young and vulnerable tenants through their Council Young Tenants Support Worker. This all met with a very high level of public support.

MEANTIME, ON THE STREET

Tier 1 work was also progressing at a pace with officers identifying addresses, crime types, hot spots and the individuals responsible for the calls on our time. This was greatly assisted by the 'One Stop Shop' and the contacts which officers established.

Staff were encouraged to analyse the individual problems and over time, new and innovative approaches began to emerge. Initially the focus was on arresting • identified targets as this boosted public confidence. Gradually officers began to accept the degree of autonomy they had been given and looked at innovative ways beyond the traditional policing methods of warning, charging or arresting people, responses which did not address the underlying causes of the problem.

One example of the work undertaken at Tier 1 involved an address to which officers had been called over 30 times within a six-week period. Analysis of the calls showed that all occurred in the evening and were either made by neighbours or the householder, who was a single parent with young children. Attending officers often found a number of known local troublemakers to be present within the address. Our staff took time and spoke with the householder at length. They found that she was a vulnerable character and was afraid of these individuals who were not friends but simply used her house to misuse drink and drugs. She lived in fear and was struggling to bring her children up alone. This case was discussed with housing and social work staff and alternative, suitable accommodation was secured in another area of the city. Her new house was near to her mother who was available to assist her with the care of the children. The individuals concerned no longer plagued her and there was a significant reduction in the number of calls to that part of South Kessock.

BROKEN WINDOWS

Another issue that was handled very well was vandalism. Broken windows, graffiti, damaged cars and broken fences all gave the impression of a crime ridden estate. Apathy led to neglect, which in turn encouraged further vandalism. The incidence of vandalism had been increasing and our detection rate was falling monthly. One officer took the map on which we had plotted vandalism, which is discussed earlier, and sought assistance from the Council to get a picture of the damage calls they were receiving. A very bleak picture emerged but it did highlight some 'hot spots' and the types of projectiles that wer being used to cause the damage. Our response was two pronged.

Firstly, the Council dedicated two of their staff to patrol the area, removing debris and items like broken fences. At the same time this small team was tasked with removing, as quickly as possible, any graffiti they found. Secondly, our officers altered their shifts to provide high profile patrols at the known 'hot spots' at the times of day when vandalism was most prevalent. The vandalism figures were reviewed on a weekly basis and almost immediately they began to show improvement.

Interestingly, analysis revealed that a high percentage of the reported acts of vandalism appeared to be tenant generated rather than acts of criminal damage. It transpired that the Council operated a policy whereby damage caused by the occupier had to be repaired at their expense. The Council would, however, pay for repairs due to vandalism. Accidental damage was therefore often being reported as vandalism to prevent occupiers having to pay repair costs. The Council is in the process of reviewing this policy which encourages people to lie and produces distorted crime figures for the area.

Success bred success and new problem solving initiatives emerged on a daily basis and the number of calls fell. We were truly moving from reactive to proactive policing in South Kessock.

AN `EXIT STRATEGY

We had known from the outset that we could not sustain four officers in South Kessock indefinitely. Initially we had agreed an eight-week period to allow the Council time to install CCTV at key locations. They were able to justify this expenditure on the grounds that they were losing so much money in rent from houses that they could not let. Due to the inevitable delays in a project of this type, our plans had to be reviewed and the additional officers retained within South Kessock for a further two weeks. The staff involved were delighted as they enjoyed the level of success being achieved.

Immediately the cameras were operational we withdrew the proactive team. We decided, however, to show our long term commitment by increasing the number of community beat officers in the area from one to two. This was very well received by the community. These officers continue to work very closely with other agencies. They are well known faces and command a high degree of respect.

ASSESSMENT

We put a great deal of effort into resolving the community issues in South Kessock but was it all worthwhile? To answer this question we must return to our objectives.

To take all reasonable steps to improve the quality of life for the residents.

The Community Council, Residents Association, Council Services, Locally Elected Representatives and many residents have all noted considerable improvements in their community. A letter from Councillor Peter Corbett, **substantiating** this claim, is attached at **Appendix V**. **Prior to this initiative Councillor Corbett communicated** with the Area Commander at least weekly regarding the concerns of his constituents.

The Highland Council reported that during the first three months of 2000 they had spent **£52,000** on **repairs** to council **property**. This fell to £22,000 for the first three months of 2001. They **also reported** that the number of **residents** requesting transfers out of South Kessock had fallen. The number of empty houses remains high but this is due to a policy decision by the Highland Council to be selective with allocations. A letter from the Highland Council giving full details of the success achieved is included at Appendix VI.

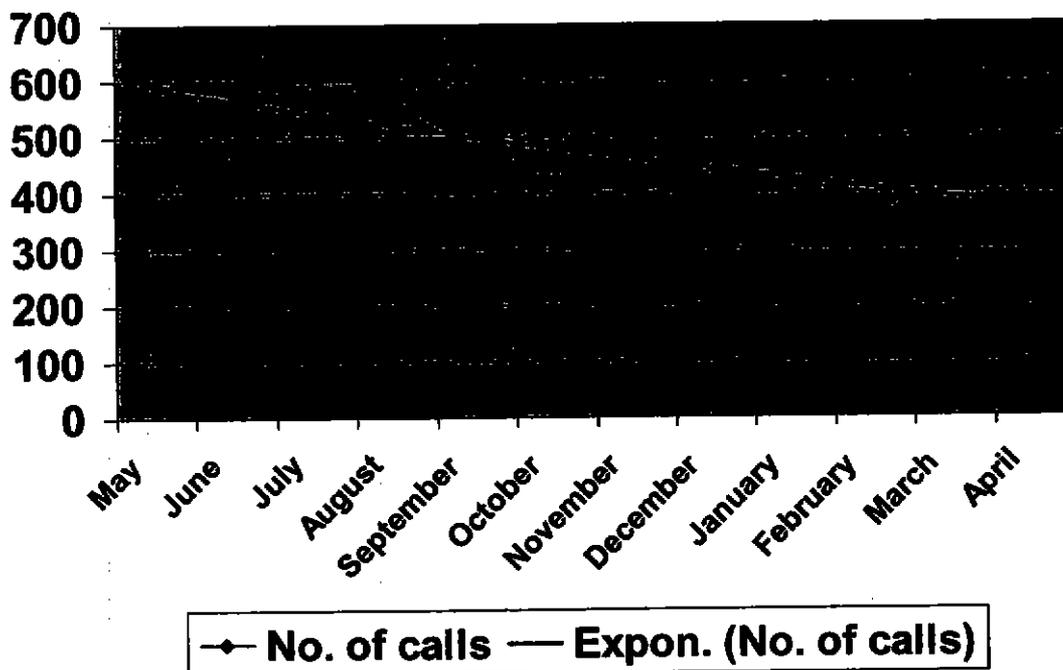
Progress is also being made towards the demolition of two blocks of flats which are in a poor state of repair.

It is very encouraging to note that four tenants have recently lodged applications to buy their council houses.

To reduce the volume of calls emanating from the Area to allow more time for proactive policing.

This is one of the easiest objectives to measure and shows that we are making a difference. Figure 2 shows the number of calls for police assistance received from the South Kessock Area from May 2000 to April 2001. The exponential trend is clearly downwards.

Figure 2: No of calls to police from the South Kessock Area in 2000/2001.

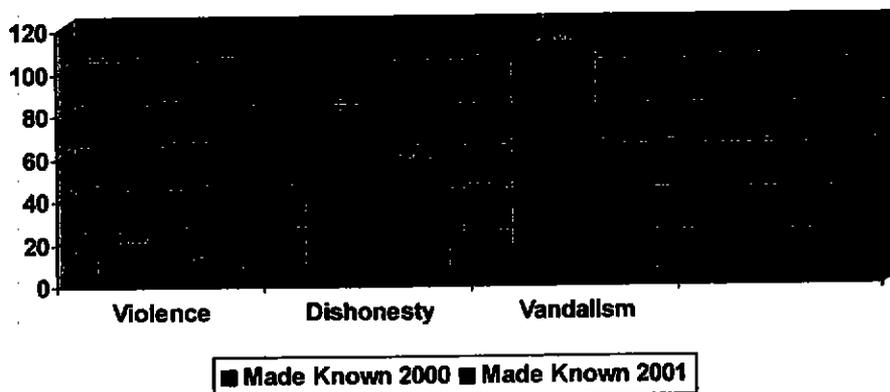


Staff used the time which was saved to develop their problem solving techniques and we were in a position where we were no longer simply responding to calls.

To reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Crime rates in all categories have fallen in South Kessock and this is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Crime Made Known in South Kessock from January to March 2000 and 2001



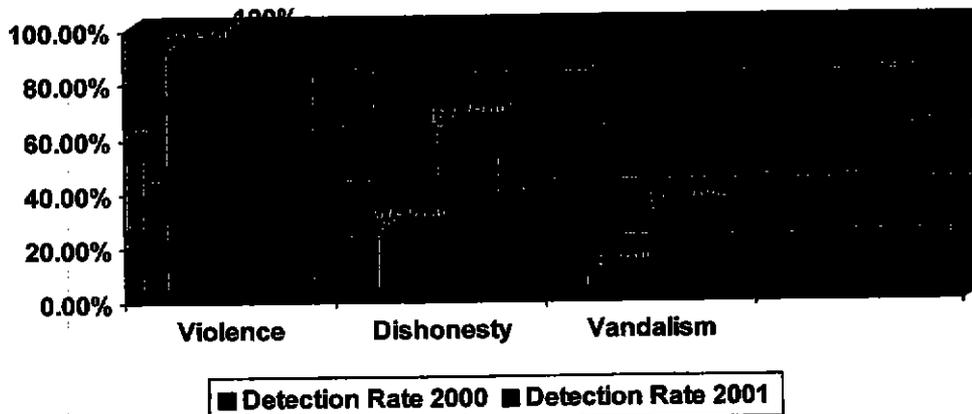
We also work closely with council officials to target problem families and individuals. Some of them have been relocated to other parts of the city whilst we have also assisted the Council to obtain Anti-Social Behaviour Orders against prolific troublemakers. Our joint commitment has had a very positive effect on other residents in the area and has reduced the fear of crime. The feeling of well being has been further enhanced by the introduction to the estate of CCTV. This has acted as a deterrent, improved public confidence and reduced the fear of crime.

We have worked hard to market our successes and we now find that all of the groups we consult at Tier 1 and Tier 2 report significant reductions in crime and the fear of crime.

To improve the crime detection rates.

Our crime detection rates have increased significantly in all categories and this is shown graphically in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Crime Detection Rates in South Kessock for January to March 2000 and 2001.



CONCLUSION

We still have a great deal of work to do in South Kessock but we have proved that problem solving works well. In a relatively short time, working closely with our partners in support of the **community**, we have **achieved** the **following**:

- **A dramatic fall in the number of calls received by both Northern Constabulary and the Highland Council.**
- A 42.3% reduction in the cost of Council Housing Repairs.
- Improved public confidence.
- Improved relationships with the public.
- Improved the **environment** in South Kessock.
- Achieved a 41.2% overall reduction in crime in the area when comparing 2000 figures with 2001.
- Increased the crime detection rate from 27.5% for the first three months of 2000 to 60.5% for the first three months of 2001.
- Significantly reduced the fear of crime in South **Kessock**.

The team in Inverness Area Command has enjoyed the challenges of adopting a problem oriented approach in South Kessock and we are developing our model in other parts of the city. We know that we are making a real difference to the everyday lives of ordinary people by:

"Transferring the fear of crime to the criminal and thereby improving the feeling of wellbeing in South Kessock."