

Lancashire Constabulary

CHORLEY MOSQUE

*Crime & Disorder Reduction
Category*

PC 2166 Zoltan Balazs
Chorley Police Station
St.Thomas's Road
Chorley
PR7 1 DR
Tel: 01257 246343
Fax: 01257 246314

Endorsed By: Deputy Chief Constable Paul Stephenson

THE TILLEY AWARDS 2002

"CHORLEY MOSQUE"

CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION CATERGORY

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY

CONTACT - PC 2166 ZOLTAN BALAZS

POP COORDINATOR -Chorley section

TEL - 01257-246343

FAX - 01257-246314

Email -none available

CHORLEY MOSQUE

SUMMARY

Scanning

The racial problems and the fear of racial crime within the Muslim Community have been significantly increased due to events in America on September 11th 2001 and disturbances seen on the streets of the North West. Chorley Mosque had been subject of acts of criminal damage and Asian females have been subject of racial abuse, been spat upon, had their veils lifted and have a fear for their own and their children's personal safety. There is a lack of confidence in the Police, perceived as a lack of positive action, investigation and understanding.

Analysis

The Mosque is situated in Chorley's crime hotspot, out of sight of residential property, insecure, being left open at varying times for daily prayer. The Mosque had flimsy door locks, poor quality window security and no alarms or CCTV in place. The Muslim Community, which is small in numbers and has been previously, a hard to reach group, is seen as a soft target, being identified by their culture and clothing. Language forms a barrier and incidents of abuse often go unreported due to a lack of confidence of the systems in place.

The offenders are thought to live nearby, in an area of high deprivation. The incidents have been random, with little tangible evidence available. There have been few witnesses, however these have been generally of little use.

Response

Initially security of the Mosque was addressed, door locks were upgraded and the number of key holders reduced. Part funding was obtained via sponsorship, enabling the Mosque Leaders to have substantial security grills installed. Dummy CCTV cameras were later fitted through separate sponsorship.

The fear of crime was addressed by personal attack alarms, again part funded, being given to the Asian females. They were instructed in their use and given personal safety advice via a multi lingual video provided by the Home Office. The female Youth Involvement Officer, who has now been nominated as a Link officer to the Community, then offered further practical advice and addressed their concerns. Regular monitoring of the location and the Community now exists via a number of contact points.

Assessment

Security of the building and personal safety measures have been put in place, which resulted in a reduction in crime and calls received. No arrests have been made and repeat damage offences have occurred, however, only cosmetic damage has been sustained, indicating after initial financial outlay, savings have been made, even in the short term. Confidence in Systems has improved, seen through better contact with the Community Stakeholders and an exit strategy is in place via the Link Officer. Partners and sponsorship have been readily available due the high profile and political nature of the problem and subsequent good press.

CHORLEY MOSQUE

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

SCANNING

The racial problems and the fear of racial crime within the Muslim Community have been significantly increased due to events in America on September 11 2001, surrounding Terrorist attacks *on the Twin Towers and The Pentagon* and by the disturbances seen on the streets of the North West, in our neighbouring towns of Burnley and Oldham. Chorley's Muslim place of worship, known as Masjid, became the subject of acts of criminal damage, randomly committed, but in quick succession. Windows of the Mosque were broken by bricks and tarmac in separate attacks, causing concern for users, in particular parents of those children usually praying in the ground floor rooms. Asian males, and in particular females, had been subject to racial abuse from young men and boys, sometimes even in their own language. The ladies have been spat at, had their veils lifted and had a fear for their personal safety.

There was a lack of confidence in the Police, perceived as a lack of positive action, investigation and understanding. Conversely, the Police on their part, deployed resources to all calls received and felt a great deal of time was being spent on attending incidents, with little input or assistance from the Asian Community. Complaints were being made at high level meetings by Community Leaders or Councillors or by letters to Ranking Police Officers. Few calls came via the Communications Rooms, therefore time and evidence was lost. Information was therefore anecdotal and incidents went unreported, due mainly to the perception of a lack of action and a language barrier.

It became apparent that a working partnership approach between the Asian Community, the Police Service and external groups was required to address crime reduction and the fear of crime, thereby improving the quality of life of the Asian Community.

ANALYSIS

Chorley Mosque (Appendix A) is located on Lyons Lane, Chorley, being an arterial road, running off Chorley Town Centre. It is situated within Chorley East, one of 5 Areas covered by Charley Police and is the crime hot-spot area (App. B). 28% of all crime occurs on this Area, a large number when you consider there is very little retail premises within it. As you would expect, there is an attendant high level of depravation in an Area consisting mainly of Local Housing and terraced dwelling. Strangely, the Mosque is not overlooked and there is a lack of natural surveillance (App.0 & D), with business premises adjacent and opposite, open only during trading hours. The Mosque is an unoccupied, 3-storey building located on a corner plot (App.E) and is insecure to allow prayer up to 5 times per day at varying times.

The main door and locks were flimsy and sub-standard and as a result of previous damage, the windows had poor quality wire mesh grilles covering downstairs windows only (App.F), designed and installed by the Mosque Leaders themselves. These were easily penetrated, were weak in construction, could be lifted off the hinges and had only one locking point. Due to difficulties caused by the numbers of visitors, no alarms were in place and due to cost factors, CCTV had not been installed. No security measures were on site and there was little deterrent for offenders, with little chance of being observed. The Mosque was a sitting duck.

The victim is the Asian Community, who have had to bear the cost of the damage, however, they are also the target of abuse in differing forms. The Community is small in numbers, approximately 500, and has been a previously hard to reach group. They are isolated, easily identified through their colour, clothing and language and are seen as a soft target, who traditionally don't fight back. Language forms a barrier and few incidents are reported directly, those that are, come via religious leaders at Public and Private Meetings, or by letter. Incidents that have been reported, have been anecdotal, include Asian females being spat at, racially abused, sometimes in their own language and having their veils lifted, an offensive act to the ladies of the Hajeeb. And there is generally a lack of knowledge of Police systems employed and little liaison between the Community and the Police existed.

There is little known about the offenders, however they are believed to live nearby. Incidents have been random and witnesses have been of little use evidentially, or have had no desire to pursue matters for fear of reprisal. Due to the factors outlined, poor security, lack of natural surveillance, no alarm or CCTV and an unwillingness, or inability to provide information to pursue a prosecution, no deterrent existed and offenders were unlikely to be found.

RESPONSE

A joint response was required to deal with short and long-term issues, which could provide a sustainable solution. An immediate Partnership was formed between the originators of the initiative, the POP Co-ordinator, the Crime Reduction Officer and Mosque Leaders, who met to collate information and analyse problems faced. A second Partnership was formed by the Police and the Asian Women's Forum, to enable the originators to appreciate problems faced by Asian Women, as it soon became clear that the Leaders spoke mainly for the male population. These meetings provided information on what the Asian Community wanted, not what the Police thought they should have.

As a result of the Terrorist Attacks, an immediate response from Chorley Police Cluster was an increased vigilance of buildings with Asian or American interests. These locations were physically checked each hour, the result being logged in the Communication Room. This highly visible presence showed the Community in particular, how highly their needs for reassurance was prioritised by the Constabulary.

A site visit was made by the originators, who surprisingly found the premises insecure and unattended. Daily prayer was an issue. Muslims pray five times per day and therefore the Mosque is needed to be open, however there were too many key holders, that allowed a greater chance of mistakes being made with regard to the security of the building. Leaders agreed to put in place a more rigid policy of the use of the building and to reduce numbers of those with keys.

The front door lock was of poor quality. This was immediately addressed by being replaced with recommended British Standard BS3621 locks being fitted.

An alarm system was discussed, however due to stated key holder problems, the fact that the Mosque was used primarily for prayer and meetings and had little material value within, it was felt that this measure was not necessary.

Funding for further measures was an obvious issue. Lottery grants, or funding gained from gambling was unacceptable to the Mosque Leaders and it was soon apparent that further Partners were required.

The Mosque is a 3-storey building and most of the double glazed windows *on the ground and 1st floor had been attacked. As stated, existing grilles were flimsy in nature and needed to be replaced, however this would come at a cost.* The recommendation was for Optiguard Security Screens (App.G), of LPS 1175 Category I Standard be fitted to all ground floor windows and for the original wire mesh grilles *to be fixed to the 1st floor windows.* These screens had been tested within Chorley Section at a local School with success and provided for the needs of the Mosque (App.H). The Screens fitted into the window rebate, were of a substantial structure, protecting the double-glazing from missiles and did not restrict opening of windows or ventilation. They were pleasing to the eye and allowed light into the interior of the building.

Match funding was provided by the Board of the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC), who agreed to the bid within an unprecedented 24 hours of the bid being penned. The manufacturers, Bradbury Security, agreed to provide the Screens within 3 weeks and to relocate the wire mesh grilles free of charge. Funding and installation were completed on time.

A long term deterrent was sought. CCTV is an expensive measure and as yet unaffordable, however, Partners in Chubb Security were approached and they have provided 2 dummy cameras and 2 camera housings (App I), free of charge. These have been installed via a donation from the Asian Women's Forum. The housings are real and will accept genuine cameras and once further funding is available, a complete CCTV system will be installed.

Immediate short and long term measures were identified to address racial attacks and abuse. Reassurance was a major issue, increased patrols could not be maintained, therefore, self-help was a part solution. Match funding, again shared between LANPAC and the Mosque, provided for 60 personal attack alarms (App.J). 30 were given to Mosque Leaders for their disposal and 30 given to the Asian Women's Forum. A new partner was then introduced, the Youth Involvement Officer (YIO), a female Police Constable, who became the Link Officer, with a role to discuss any issue with, or report any incident to.

A Home Office multi-lingual Video on Self Protection was viewed by different groups within the Asian Community, followed by question and answer sessions, in which various problems were highlighted. Understanding was gained by both sides and confidence in systems employed and trust in the Police resulted. Lancashire's policy on Racial Crime and the Take Action self-reporting incident forms were discussed. The latter was suggested too complicated and work is now ongoing to simplify the form. Education of offenders and local children was highlighted and has resulted in the YIO visiting local schools, informing the children of the consequences of racial behaviour.

ASSESSMENT

Racial crime, racial tension is relatively new in Chorley. The Asian Community is small in number and little work had been done, or was felt necessary, prior to this initiative. Events and recent communication had proved otherwise. Chorley Police have only just begun the process of working in partnership with the Asian Community and although compared to larger towns and cities, who have larger numbers and have major racial problems, any incident in Chorley is magnified and perceived as more important.

Initial success was to be measured anecdotally, as the Asian Community feeling safer, more involved and reassured, thereby improving their quality of life. Further success would be measured by the reduction in crimes committed against the Mosque and against the Asian Community and reduction in deployment of Officers.

Measures to improve the security of the building in the form of the door locks, key holder issues, window screens and CCTV have been put in place and has resulted in a reduction of crimes and calls received.

No arrests have been made and repeat damage has occurred on one occasion, however, due to the screens, only minor cosmetic damage had been sustained (this incident being prior to installation of CCTV). This has shown that initial outlay had made savings for the Asian Community, even in the short term.

Personal safety and Reassurance issues have been addressed in the form of the Personal Attack alarms and the viewing and discussions after the Home Office video, which together with the introduction of the Link Officer, allows Chorley Police to exit from the initiative, but still remain strongly linked.

The process of communication and understanding has begun.

The Domestic Violence Officer and Victim Support Liaison have been introduced by the YIO and all have attended meetings and religious celebrations, again indicating a desire to listen. Confidence in Police systems has improved, seen through Contacts at all levels within the Community. An example being, the involvement of Asians in a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, where previously there had been no representatives in any Scheme.

Due to the political nature of the problem and subsequent good press, partners and sponsorship has been readily available. They have responded well and completed tasks on time and with relative ease.