

Lancashire Constabulary

OPERATION McSORLEY

*Crime & Disorder Reduction
Category*

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CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION

(FEAR OF CRIME)

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CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION/ FEAR OF CRIME

The Clayton Brook estate is situated to the north of Chorley in Lancashire in the apex of the A6 , M65 and M61 motorways. The main bulk of the (No of houses) on this development fall under the control of North British Housing Association, with some smaller private developments surrounding the estate. Clayton Brook was built as an overspill in the 1970's for the near by city of Preston. Over the years since its birth as a new town development Clayton Brook has developed a reputation as being a bad estate with high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Police statistics show clearly that the estate is one of Chorley Boroughs "Hot Spots" with regard to Crime, juvenile nuisance and anti social behaviour. Crime levels increase on a year by year basis.

Current Government statistics (the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) also scores the ward as falling below the Lancashire average in terms of employment, income and child poverty.

Closer analysis of these factors highlighted the following significant factors;

- 1; A lack of communication between community stake holders, in particular Lancashire Constabulary and North British Housing association.
- 2: A break down in trust between the stakeholders and the residents of the estate.
- 3; The reputation of two brothers resident on the estate Martin and Mark McSorley as the perceived example of the above. The brothers were known to be responsible for a significant amount of the crime and anti social behaviour on the estate and were developing a reputation of being untouchable_

In response;

- 1: A protocol was signed between NBHA and Police to facilitate the exchange of information. The residents were consulted regarding their fears.
- 2; McSorley brothers were targeted and eventually removed from the estate under Chorley Boroughs first Anti Social Behaviour Order.

The impact;

The ASBO went a long way to restoring public confidence in the Police and NBHA. The high level of publicity given to the ASBO proved that stakeholders working together could tackle specific problems on the estate. This also sent out a message to other troublemakers that this type of behaviour would not be tolerated.

It has established a belief that partnerships can work.

A decrease in the reported incidents of anti social behaviour and crime.

A much closer working relationship between NBHA and local Police is now viewed as pivotal

Three miles north of Chorley town centre and four miles south of Preston, central Lancashire and situated in the apex of the main A6, M65 and M61 motorways is the Clayton Brook estate. Home to approximately 7000 residents most of whom reside in properties under the control of North British Housing Association, who manage the properties from offices within the estate. Some privately owned properties are found on the periphery of this development and more still are under construction. The community is served by business, leisure and retail services. The estate has its own "village centre" with shops, community services, public house and School. Built in the 1970's as a new town development to accommodate the overspill from the near by city of Preston the area developed a reputation for crime and anti social behaviour. Until 1996 the area in which Clayton Brook falls, though in Chorley Borough, was policed from near by Bamber Bridge, this being a district of Preston. Structural changes in Policing areas in 1996 gave the area back to Chorley division and the estate now falls within the Wheelton police boundary.

Police statistics show that Clayton Brook is one of the boroughs "hot spots" in terms of crime and anti social behaviour, indeed during 2001 some 750 crimes were recorded on the estate, which represented almost half the crime in Wheelton sector. Disorder figures too reflect this trend, the majority of which fall into the juvenile nuisance or domestic matters categories. Between 2000 and 2001 there was an increase of 28% in recorded crime and anti social behaviour issues.

Government statistics were consulted and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation employed. The results were not surprising, with the area scoring in the bottom three in the borough of Chorley and well below the Lancashire average. Particular concern was highlighted with regard to levels of employment, income and child poverty.

The change in Police boundaries in 1996 also led to a change in the officers who policed the estate and over night local knowledge and imperative intelligence went to Bamber Bridge. Much of the excellent work done on the estate was lost forever as new officers from Chorley took over Policing. Many community contacts were broken and with this breakdown many residents believed they had been hard done to, that the authorities had turned their back on the estate. The lack of community contact between community stake holders (i.e. North British Housing and Police) and the residents of the estate resulted in the virtual drying up of intelligence being fed to the authorities. This only served to make the estate a breeding ground for crime and anti social behaviour and a vicious circle began.

This break down in community contact led to despondency and apathy from the public , an acceptance of the situation in which they found themselves . This was reflected in the lack of faith shown in the abilities of the stakeholders to address the spiralling crime and nuisance issues. Lack of faith led to a lack of trust in the authorities and co-operation in terms of the amount and quality of intelligence gathered was withdrawn. This is reflected in Police statistics, which show an increase in crime and anti social behaviour on the estate. It was clear to all concerned that this imbalance needed to be addressed.

There are many stakeholders in any community and Clayton Brook is no exception and each one had a part to play in the rebuilding of public confidence and pride in the community.

The main stakeholders in any community are the people who live there. The vast majority of residents of the estate are decent law-abiding citizens who felt frustrated at the decline in their quality of life at the hands of gangs of juveniles. They suffered from intimidation and harassment on a daily basis. Gangs of juveniles aged between 12 and 18 would gather around the Village centre near to the Spar shop, many would be in drink. Residents were verbally abused as they visited the shop and on occasion's this would lead to assaults and public order offences. Because of the perceived lack of positive action the vast majority of these incidents went unreported. Many residents who did report such incidents were happy to give information verbally to the police but not willing to provide statements. Some who did provide statements suffered from harassment, intimidation and in more extreme cases attacks against themselves or their property. As a result hard evidence was hard to come by. The one common factor that emerged were the activities of two brothers, resident on the estate. Martin and Mark McSorley. On an alarmingly regular basis the names of the McSorley brothers were being put forward as the main ring leaders of the gangs on the estate. Residents would not complain for reasons stated above. This fuelled their reputation as the "untouchables" which again only encouraged the rest of the gangs members to emulate their behaviour.

The businesses on the estate also suffered at the hands of the gangs. The more vulnerable were afraid to venture out at night, and those that did were often barracked or asked to buy alcohol from the stores. As a result takings at businesses were affected.

The subsequent associated damage, litter and graffiti which resulted from these gangs on a nightly basis also impacted on NBHA, as they were responsible for the cleaning up on the estate. The reported crime resulting from this impacted on Police crime counts and recorded anti social behaviour statistics increased.

A consultation process was initiated between the Police and NBHA in a series of meetings held in response to the gang culture of the estate and in particular the McSorley brothers. Throughout these meetings it was apparent that both organisations held information useful to the other. It soon became obvious that both shared similar goals, this being in essence to make Clayton Brook a safer place, to reduce crime and improve the quality of life for the residents.

As a result of these consultations three main issues developed;

- 1; How to improve communication between the two parties. Given the impact of Data protection and Human right issues.
- 2; How to rebuild the breakdown in trust between the stakeholders and the residents of the estate.
- 3; How best to combat Martin and Mark McSorley.

Sharing of information.

It was upper most in the minds of those concerned that the wrongful disclosure of information held is a criminal offence under the Data Protection Act 1984/1988. The recently adopted European Human Rights Act had also been introduced and due consideration needed to be given to obligations under both documents. As a result of this Lancashire County's solicitors were consulted and a protocol or an agreement for co-operation was drafted. The purpose of this document was to establish clear and defined boundaries so all parties were clear on which information could be passed to the other.

The document states;

Where a decision is taken to exchange personal data on an individual, without consent, there must be a legitimate reason based on; reducing instances of antisocial behaviour; crime prevention and detection.

This protocol was signed on 21st July 2001.

Re building the trust of the residents.

It was obvious that this would prove to be a long-term goal, and that it would not be achieved overnight. Initiatives such as neighbourhood watch and Police surgeries were suggested but met with a limited response from the residents. A theme that emerged from this process was actions speak louder than words. It was decided that only positive visible results would convince residents that the Police and NBHA meant what they said and were serious about tackling quality of life issues as a partnership. Juvenile nuisance was a major problem on the estate, the development of a gang culture had been an issue raised at every consultation with the residents. It was decided to take the gangs on. This fed in with the third objective of dealing with the main protagonists of the gangs the brothers McSorley.

What to do with McSorley brothers

Mark and Martin McSorley come from a broken home and have very poor social skills. Both have been excluded from school. Their mother is an alcoholic and they have no contact with their father. Since they were very young they have been allowed to run wild on the Clayton Brook estate and have come to the attention of the Police on many occasions, both have criminal records. The fact that they have been allowed to do as they please has contributed to their lack of respect for themselves and others. They display total contempt for authority and thrive on the intimidation and harassment of others. When they do not get their way they often resort to violence both their mother and step father have been victims of the brothers

actions as well as countless other residents. It is not surprising that they headed the gang prevalent on Clayton Brook.

Due to their age (both at the time being juveniles). It was difficult for NBHA to take long-term actions to remove them from the estate. When arrested for offences the courts had only limited powers they could exercise over them. Any conditions placed on them to limit their offending were routinely ignored in the knowledge that very little could be done to curb their behaviour. The regular intimidation and harassment of any witnesses against them led to several complaints being withdrawn. It is believed that the complaints made against them are only a small part of a much bigger picture. They soon got the reputation of being "untouchable". This did nothing to rebuild the confidence of the community. Their offending and the level of violence they were prepared to use escalated, and it was not uncommon for them to use weapons such as glass and baseball bats.

It was decided the only way forward was to establish a partnership with other stakeholders and interested parties and apply for Chorley and South West Lancashire's first Anti Social Behaviour Order. (ASBO).

A meeting was called and representatives from various organisations were invited, this included; Chorley Borough Council, Youth Offending team, Social Services, Chorley and South Ribble NHS Trust, North British Housing, Lancashire County Council Education and Lancashire Constabulary. These being the parties affected by the brother's behaviour. This group formed the partnership. As previously stated a protocol had been signed between NBHA and Police allowing the free exchange of information in certain circumstances, of which this was a prime example. To comply with Human rights and Data protection regulations it was necessary to ask all parties to sign a certificate of consultation which stated that each organisation had been consulted and supported the application for an ASBO.

Once the partnership had been formed the task of collating evidence began. This task mainly fell to the Police and NBHA. A painstaking re-examination of all Police logs was carried out to establish all incidents of any nature involving the McSorley brothers and a list compiled. All crime files were retrieved and examined for evidence. Every single complainant was re-visited and where possible statements obtained. This was at first a slow process, as the level of trust between Police and residents was very low. As far as they could see the McSorley brother's were still at large and a lot of support and encouragement was offered. NBHA were invaluable throughout this stage in the commitment they offered residents, even offering to re-house potential complainants if this would persuade them to put pen to paper. The re-examination of past logs inevitably brought new leads and slowly a comprehensive document was growing painting a picture of the brother's offending.

NBHA also keep records of complaints made by residents and these too were subject to scrutiny, to establish further points of contact and more complaints became apparent. This process snow baled as more people complained other more reluctant victims came forward to offer their support.

In total some 29 separate incidents were discovered and comprehensive statements obtained. Each of the completed ASBO applications compiled had over 110 pages of supporting evidence.

The application being made was to ban the brothers from the Clayton Brook estate for a period of years rather than months. The application was made before Ormskirk Magistrates Court and was opposed by the brothers. The painstaking detail compiled in the document ensured that the ASBO was granted against both Mark and Martin McSorley excluding them from the Clayton Brook estate for a period of two years.

An unusual application was made to the court to remove the usual reporting restrictions placed on juvenile offenders in relation to Martin, who was 15. After due consideration this was granted. The ASBO was given front page coverage in the Lancashire Evening Post the following day. Pictures of the McSorley's were placed in prominent positions around the estate to advertise the fact that they were banned from the neighbourhood.

It came as no surprise to the partners that within a few days of the order the brothers were reported to be back on the estate. A comprehensive Police search took place and eventually they were arrested. This breach was taken seriously by the Magistrates and both received a custodial sentence.

Shortly after this breach the brother's family were re-housed out of the area. This was felt a necessary step to negate a possible reason for the brothers to visit the estate.

Since this time neither brother has been seen on the estate.

There can be no doubt that the objective to remove the McSorley brother's from the estate was successful. This can be evidenced by the fact that no complaints have been received by the Police or NBHA since the initial breach of the ASBO.

The main partners in this initiative, NBHA and the Police both benefited from the out come in the following ways.

The removal of the brother's from the estate lead to a significant decrease in reports of anti social behaviour and the increasingly violent attacks they perpetrated ceased. Both organisations have found that residents of the estate are more willing to come forward and complain about outlandish behaviour in their neighbourhood.

The signing of the protocol between the Police and NBHA has lead to a much closer and fruitful working relationship. There is now a clearly defined vehicle, which enables problems to be addressed before getting out of hand.

There has also been a regeneration of trust between the residents and Police following the success of the ASBO. The high level of publicity given to the granting of the order was essential in this. It was an interracial point of the plan to show that by establishing a partnership between the authorities and the residents that a sustainable solution could be found to particular issues affecting the quality of life on Clayton Brook. There are still many problems on

this estate, there is no one pill cures all mentality in the partnership. To this end regular meetings are held between partners where problems are addressed.

One such problem that emerged from these consultations was that once a tenancy was signed allowing a person to reside in a NBHA property it was an extremely lengthy and long-winded process to evict them, should that be necessary. It was decided between the partners that all new residents of the estate would be placed on a six-month short-term tenancy placing them under an obligation of good behaviour. This is closely monitored and where required information between the Police and NBHA is exchanged under the protocol. Warnings are given to the 'offender', and in most cases this has proved sufficient. However recently one violent man has been evicted from the estate as a direct result of the short-term tenancy. This is another example which sends out a clear message to potential offenders that anti social behaviour or criminal activity will not be tolerated by the partnership.

Clayton Brook remains a hot spot. The partnership between NBHA and the Police has had various successes as highlighted above, however the momentum gained must not be surrendered. Some traditional initiatives have been tried in a bid to further establish closer working relations between the residents and partnership, these include Police surgeries and a regular Police column in NBHA's quarterly residents news paper "Let's talk".

POP's in Schools has been launched in a bid to tackle the grass route problems of juvenile behaviour. Clayton Brook has secured funding from Government and soon will have a Police community beat manager. It is essential that the good work done is carried on to make Clayton Brook a safer place to live and work.