

Tilley Awards

2002



Crime Reduction Category

*A Safer Greets Green
Reducing Antisocial Behaviour and
Nuisance*

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Anti-social Behaviour and Nuisance

The Oak House area residents have over the past few years made complaints to the police that the local youths were causing low level nuisance in and around the Oak House and its grounds. This included playing football, inappropriate comments and behaviour to local residents, staff and minor damage such as egg throwing against walls.

Scanning

As much information as possible, was obtained to benchmark the problem. The following sources were used.

Data was obtained from 1st November 2000 till 31st November 2001 (Benchmark)

- 19 Recorded Police Logs (Calls for police) were made to the area
- NDfC delivery plan (Community Consultation Document)
- Anecdotal evidence from security guard and staff working within the Oak House Museum
- Anecdotal evidence naming offenders but with unsubstantiated evidence
- + Links established with local housing department for NOSP's (Notice Order to Seek Possession)
- Local knowledge of police officers who identified crime 'Hotspots' in and around the surrounding area
- + Information gathering on Offender/Victim/Location

Analysis

Identified the following

- Incidents were being committed by young persons residing in the locality
- + Clear time scales for majority of incidents being reported
5 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.
- Money need not be the primary motivator
- Fear of crime and quality of life issues were a major concern for the local community

Response

- Operation Bareen established to tackle problem with Short/Medium/Long term action plans
- Targeted patrols — time and day specific
- Offenders targeted with assistance from other police departments
- Letters sent to parents requesting assistance (See Appendix.)
- Meetings set up with Council Planning / Housing/ Museum Staff / Police
- Partnership working with Local Housing department for NOSP's (Notice Order to Seek Possession)
- Meetings setup with Council Planning / Housing/ Museum Staff / Police / Nacro
- Development of an Action Plan
- + £50 K funding obtained for the complete removal of all overgrown foliage
- Re-development of gardens and surrounding area including perimeter fencing.
- Mobile Police Surgery within the area to offer advise and support

Evaluation

- 10 youths identified
- 7 youths arrested
- All of the youths referred to Nacro and Positive Futures program
- 1 NOSP issued another family voluntarily left the area
- Visible physical improvements in design and security of the area
- Reduced Calls for Police (2 Police Logs)

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Anti-social Behaviour and Nuisance

History of Greets Green area

The Greets Green area lies in the heart of West Bromwich to the south and west of the town centre. It is a mixed residential and industrial area. Much of the living accommodation is pre 1919. The area is also more reliant on traditional heavy industry, such as manufacturing, than other parts of the country.

The area has significant central area uses as it lies immediately adjacent to and includes a part of West Bromwich town centre. These central uses include civic buildings, a college campus, the magistrates court, a hospital, the bus garage and numerous banks/building societies and offices.

During work undertaken by Sandwell MBC in 1998 it was found that the community in the area was diverse, proud and resourceful, but that it was also characterised by high levels of social exclusion and social and economic deprivation.

- **The crime levels in the Greets Green area has been identified as one of the worst in the Sandwell Borough**
- There are over 12,400 residents living in 4,600 households.
- The overall crime rate is 21% higher than the borough average
- Burglary rates are 30% higher than the borough average
- Criminal Damage rates are 19% higher than the borough average
- Incidents of Anti-social behaviour are 11% higher than the borough average Some 30% of the population are of minority ethnic origin, which is twice the Sandwell average
- There are approximately 400 businesses in Greets Green employing 15,679 people. Around 7.2% of those employed by these businesses actually reside in Greets Green.
- Unemployment rates are 10.5% for Greets Green, 7.4% for Sandwell and 4.6% for England well above the national average.
- Poverty is a real and serious problem in Greets Green. Incomes are lower than elsewhere due to a combination of a higher than average number of households being in receipt of income support, and the lower wages on offer from the jobs that are available. This means that on a national scale 30.3% of households are in absolute poverty.
- Only 50.1% of housing are owner occupied while 40.8% rent from the authority and the remainder rent privately or from Housing Associations. A very high proportion of all private sector stock (48%) is currently classified as being unfit.

(* All information taken from the Greets Green Delivery Plan November 1999).

Policing the Greets Green area

The Greets Green community, through consultation undertaken by Sandwell MBC during completion of the delivery plan, highlighted that dealing with crime and community safety was one of the key strategic outcomes of the project.

The delivery plan strategic objective is "to reduce crime levels and fear of crime within the community and create a safe, secure environment by promoting active citizenship and effective social integration".

In response to overarching needs of the area a policing team was setup on the 3rd July 2000. It consisted of a Sergeant and seven Constables, one of which was a Crime Reduction Officer. The officers were funded through the New Deal for Communities project (the Sergeant and the Crime Reduction Officer) and the Governments Crime Fighting Fund monies, which the West Midlands Police senior management had utilised in the areas most deprived neighbourhoods (six Constables), .

The police teams remit given was to reduce crime, the fear of crime and to deal effectively with all other associated problems related to areas such as anti social behaviour.

Their role was to work in close harmony with residents and other agencies such as Crime Concern, The New Deal executive team and Sandwell MBC and voluntary organisations to ensure that the concerns and needs of the community are met.

This was to be achieved through the development and implementation of short, medium and long-term crime strategies for the area in line with the needs of the community as expressed through community consultation.

The officers benefited from a support structure of experts within West Bromwich Police Station who were able to assist them in the development of both effective intelligence led and community based policing initiatives.

Their work was in support of the police officers that are already allocated to the West Bromwich area that provided the traditional "response" policing.

The Oak House Museum Project Objective

The development of the project will be illustrated through the use of the SARA problem-solving model that was used to underpin the strategic work undertaken in the area.

Scanning

In order to identify any possible solutions or activities to combat problems a good understanding of the area needed to be gained. This was done through a variety of sources from computer systems through to personal knowledge and perceptions of individuals. This was the most crucial part of this process. It would identify the appropriate action that would need to be taken.

The Oak House area is predominantly owner occupied properties. In the centre of the area is the Oak House, which is a sixteenth century house timber-framed house, which displays a fine collection of contemporary oak furniture, mostly owned by Sandwell Council with some items on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is a working museum and used by the Education Service for specialist tours of the building and used by local and regional school parties. It is also open to the public as a local attraction. It is used as a working museum and has grassed areas surrounding it. The museum has a grassed area surrounding the building and the perimeter area is fenced with lockable gates securing the driveway. The fencing was in a poor state of repair. Historically there have been problems with local youths causing general low level nuisance in and around the Oak House and its grounds. This included playing football, inappropriate comments to local residents, minor damage such as throwing eggs against people's walls and causing problems for the security guard at the Oak House. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken during the consultation period for the New Deal for Communities Program. This information provided vital information to the process. The Oak House area adjoins the Lyng estate. This area is currently undergoing large-scale

housing regeneration with blocks of two story flats being replaced by modern council owned. The two areas as a whole suffer from domestic burglaries, vehicle related crime and some robbery/theft from the person offences. Both areas have historically had large gatherings of youths and this in turn causes problems in relation to anti social behaviour.

The Oak House area has the Lodge Road community centre where young people can become involved in a number of activities, historically it has not been well used by the local youths.

Analysis

Police Data Logs were obtained from 1st November 2000 till 31st November 2001. 19 Police Logs (Calls for police) were made to Oak House Museum alone. **During the scanning process it became apparent that extracting the information for the area was overly time consuming.** Therefore, the figures for the Oak House Museum were the only statistical figures used for benchmarking the problem. The majority of the problems that were occurring were between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 p.m.

There was little formal agreement or consultation with the local community or key stakeholders in the area. The contacts that had been made were very uncoordinated. It was apparent that there was no plan to deal with the problems that were being encountered to the quality of life issues within the area. As a result of the antisocial behaviour in and around the Oak House those responsible were also causing problems in the wider area.

The analysis showed that there were two main areas of concern that needed to be addressed.

1. To identify and deal with the nuisance and antisocial behaviour.
2. To establish long term sustainable solutions to create a safer place for the community thereby reducing the fear of crime enhancing the quality of life for residents

Response

As a result of this operation "Bareen" was launched. The aim of the operation was to utilise officers in uniform in the public order van. It would patrol the problem areas within Greets Green 2-3 times per week and identify the local problem youths. If they were seen committing crime they were arrested. If they were in the general area where anti social behaviour had been previously reported they were spoken to and a letter was sent to their parents, and the local housing office. The letter explained the problems in the area and asked the parents to take a more active interest in the youth's whereabouts. (See Attached Appendix)

In addition a mobile police surgery was established in the grounds of the Oak House where local residents could speak in confidence to the local police about the issues within the area.

As a result of the operation three local youths regularly came to the attention of the police team. The operation was run through the summer months and then phased out at the end of August 2001.

In September 2001 another youth and his family moved into the area; His family had previously been moved out of a neighbouring area for causing numerous problems. As a result they moved into a privately rented house in Edith Street, near to the Oak House. The arrival of this youth coincided with an increase in the level of anti social behaviour in the Oak House area.

Although the youth was only 16 years old intelligence suggested that he was regularly using motor vehicles in and around the area. This increased his notoriety with the local youths in the area.

As a result of the problems these groups of youths were causing the police team took an active interest in their movements. This led to two youths being arrested at the end of October 2001 for taking a motor vehicle without the owners consent They were charged and bailed with conditions which included a curfew of 8pm – 8am.

The following month (November 2001 saw an increase in calls re damage and nuisance around Bromford Lane, Clifford Rd, Westbourne Rd, Coyne Rd and Manifolda Grange. (Surrounding roads to the Oak House Museum)

Six youths that were responsible for many of the problems in the area were arrested for vehicle related crime. All of them were charged and the same curfews were imposed. At the same time different members of this group were arrested and charged for other offences.

There were also numerous complaints from residents about damage to items in people's back gardens, other damage and general anti social behaviour in the area by a group of youths. Although this was attributed to this group there was no hard evidence to arrest and charge the youths. In order to further examine the problem officers used high visibility patrols and plain clothes patrols to locate the offenders through observations and patrols around the streets, local alleyways and in people's back gardens.

At the end of November 2001 an incident occurred whereby the security guard at the Oak House was pushed over and assaulted three of the youths. The result of the incident was that all three were arrested within 24 hours and charged with assault. They were given curfew conditions as before. During the month they were also charged with assaulting a local resident and arrested for breach of bail.

At the beginning of January 2002 approximately £5,000 worth of damage was caused over a two-night period with the group slashing tyres and shooting ball bearings into the elderly residents flats. As a result two youths were arrested for criminal damage. They were charged and remanded in custody to go to court. Officers attended court to speak to the Crown Prosecution Service to explain the full level of the youth's previous behaviour.

The officers were the catalysts to establishing a closer working-relationship with the appropriate people. (See Evaluation below)

Evaluation

Police Data Logs were obtained from 31st November 2001 to 31st March 2002 as a comparison only 2 Police Logs (Calls for police) were made to Oak House Museum during this period a significant reduction for calls for police.

In order to address problems within the area, a partnership has now been established with managers and staff from Jefferson Housing Association. (Who own private housing, including sheltered accommodation within the area) Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Housing Department, Crime Concern (Neighbourhood Safety Partnership), and New Deal for Communities as well as management and staff of the Oak House Museum. Two formal Neighbourhood Watch Groups have been established as have more informal community groups.

As a direct result of the partnership arrangements £50,000 of funding was secured through New Deal for Communities to completely replace the fencing and gates to the site. A balance in relation to security and being sympathetic to the environment and the nature of the building was initially problematic. Through negotiation of the partnership this was achieved.

As a result of their meetings the housing association have agreed to fund fencing around their properties. New Deal for Communities have supplied twenty housing associations tenants a free burglar alarm through the Neighbourhood Safety Project.

Due to the establishment of the partnership a NOSP (Notice order to seek possession) was served on one of the families who have now been removed from the area. A second NOSP was to be served on a second family, however they voluntarily moved from the area prior to the NOSP being served.

Ten of the youths have been referred to NACRO and the positive futures programme. The project is funded by Sport England and the Youth Justice Board to engage young children in sport as an alternative to order anti – social behaviour, drugs and the "hanging out" culture.

Positive Futures is run in partnership with the Greets Green New Deal for Communities, the Sandwell Health Authority, the Youth Inclusion project and West Bromwich Albion FC Study Support Centre.

Two groups of 20 children will attend a weekly coaching activity based around fitness and healthy lifestyles in two groups, 11 to 14 year olds and 14 to 17 year olds, boys and girls. They will also attend education programmes with the Study Support Centre, The Hawthorns on match days, meet players and receive first aid training.

It's a twelve-month project, which will be managed by WBA Community Officer along with a number of coaches from the Community Programme who will be responsible for delivering the weekly activities.

West Bromwich Albion players will also be used as role models for the youngsters involved in the project, while they can also call on the fitness and medical advice that can be offered by the club's medical and physiotherapy staff.

The ultimate aim of the project is to promote healthy lifestyles, increase participation in sport and increase awareness of the dangers of drugs and anti — social forms of behaviour.

The Health Authority will be using their expertise to illustrate the effects of alcohol and smoking on professional sports people, as well as addressing other issues such as teenage pregnancies.

There are also plans to redevelop the Oak House Barns that are to the rear of the main Oak House Museum. These have remained in an almost derelict condition for many years. The intention is to provide additional facilities within the area. A period of public consultation has been undertaken and the Barns will be redeveloped subject to obtaining the necessary funding. It has been proposed that the Barns will be developed to meet Secured by Design Standards.

In Conclusion

Due to the work that has been undertaken and the long-term plans that have been developed we are now starting back at the scanning stage. There have been many interventions already undertaken and much is still to be done. The process is now ongoing.