

THE TILLEY AWARDS 2003

"CHORLEY MOSQUE"

CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION CATERGORY

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY

Endorsed by: - **CHIEF CONSTABLE -PAUL STEPHENSON**

CONTACT - PC 2166 ZOLTAN BALAZS

POP CO-ORDINATOR

Chorley Police Station

St Thomas' Road,

Chorley

PR7 1DR

TEL - 01257-246343

FAX - 01257-246314

Email – zoltan.balazs@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

CHORLEY MOSQUE

SUMMARY

The nature of the problem addressed

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.

Definition of the problem

The Mosque is situated in Chorley's crime hotspot, out of sight of residential property, insecure, and 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 to the problem

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 utilising high visible patrolling of the area, by foot and mobile patrols and Personal Attack Alarms, again part funded, were given to the Asian females. The ladies 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.

Impact of the response

Security of the building and Personal Safety Measures were put in place, which has resulted in a reduction in crime and calls received, indicating the project to have been a success in its objectives. No arrests have been made and although repeat damage offences have occurred, only cosmetic damage has been sustained, indicating after initial financial outlay, savings have been made, even in the short term. Racial Crimes in the immediate location has been reduced by 75% compared with yearly figures, pre and post project. This indicates the measures put in place have had the desired effect. Figures have increased by 40% in the adjacent location in which The Community reside. This indicates a confidence in the reporting of such crimes. Partners and sponsorship have been readily available due the high profile and political nature of the problem and subsequent good press. Confidence in Systems has improved, seen through better contact with the Community Stakeholders and an exit strategy is in place via the Link Officer. A further indication of the value of this initiative has been seen during the worsening of relations, the build-up to war and the subsequent War in Iraq. Contacts in place and target hardening have enabled the Police and the Community to continue to work together to ensure that the Quality of Life issues of all has not been disrupted. Racial Crimes for the four-month period leading up to, and including hostilities has seen **NO Racial Crimes** being committed in either monitored location. A final indication of the progress made has been seen in a dip sampling of feelings felt within the female Asian Community. A questionnaire was not possible, however when questioned as to the effectiveness of the Partnership, prior to this project the Police were given a mark of 4 out of 10, after the initiative had been given time to develop we were given 9 out of 10 and since the War in Iraq, we were given 10 out of 10 for our efforts.

CHORLEY MOSQUE

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Objectives of the Project

The racial problems and the fear of racial crime within the Muslim Community, both nationally and locally, had been significantly increased due to events in America on September 11th 2001, the 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. Most recently, events in the Gulf have seen a prelude to, and a culmination in War in Iraq, which has again focussed attention on this Community. It quickly became apparent there was a need to increase awareness and monitor incidents or events, which could heighten tensions. Initially the problem became apparent at Chorley's Muslim place of worship, known as Masjid, in that it 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 three separate attacks over a two week period, causing concern for users, in particular parents of those children usually praying in the ground floor rooms. This was an unusually high number, in a secluded location, not known for high levels of criminal activity. Another related concern was the level of sub criminal behaviour, in that offenders were making a psychological effort to unbalance and demean their victims. Asian males, and in particular females, had been subject to racial abuse from young men and even younger boys, sometimes even in their own language. The ladies have been spat at and had their veils lifted whilst walking, shopping and waiting to pick their children up from school, 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. This was evidenced by Community Leaders passing on complaints, third hand, acting as go betweens on behalf of their members. 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, with little first hand knowledge of events. Complaints were being made at high-level Ethnic Minority Meetings by Community Leaders, or Councillors, or by letters to Ranking Police Officers. The general complaint being that incidents were increasing and were not being investigated as thoroughly, or had the desired result, as wished for. 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

The objectives of this project soon became apparent; that a working partnership approach between the Asian Community, the Police Service and external groups was required to prevent racist crime, prevent abuse and restore confidence in the Police, thereby improving the quality of life of the Asian Community.

Definition of the Problem

Location

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 Chorley 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 are very little retail premises within it. As you would expect, there is an attendant high level of deprivation 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.C & 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.

Victim

The victim is the Asian Community, who have had to bear the cost of the damage, however, they are also the targets of abuse in differing forms. The Community is small, approximately 650 Muslims in number (total population 100,449), most of whom live, work and whose children go to school, near to Chorley Mosque. They have 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, and include Asian females being spat at, being racially abused, sometimes in their own language and having their veils lifted, an offensive act to the ladies of the Hajeeb. There were huge cultural differences for the Community to overcome and for the Police to comprehend. The male within the Community has always been the conduit for any communications, as the Female is in most instances, left in the background. There is also a general lack of knowledge of Police systems employed and there had been little liaison between the Community and the Police.

Offender

There is little known about the offenders, due in the main, to little first hand knowledge of incidents and the delay in the passing of that information, however the offenders are believed to live nearby. There is no evidence that places the offender as being age or sex specific. Incidents of Racial Abuse have been random in times committed and location, were frequently anecdotal, quantity unknown and witnesses have been of little use evidentially, or have had no desire to pursue matters for fear of reprisal. Incidents of Criminal Damage have been quantified, but 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 no offenders had been, or were unlikely to be found.

Response to the problem

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.

Location

The originators, who on first visiting the Site, surprisingly found the premises insecure and unattended. Daily prayer was an issue. Muslims pray five times per day and therefore the Mosque needs 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 first 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 1 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 two dummy cameras and two camera housings (App I), free of charge. These have been installed via a donation from the Asian Women's Forum (A.W.F.). The housings are real and will accept genuine cameras and once further funding is available, a complete CCTV system will be installed.

Victim

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, and therefore, self-help was a part solution. Match funding, again shared between LANPAC and the Mosque, provided for 60 personal attack alarms (App. J). Thirty were given to Mosque Leaders for their disposal and 30 given to the Asian Women's Forum. Discussions were held between the Police and the Asian Women's Forum, to enable the originators to appreciate problems faced by Asian Women and it soon became clear that the Mosque Leaders spoke mainly for the male population and the A.W.F. for the female population and therefore a separate second Partnership was formed. These meetings provided information on what the Asian Community wanted, not what the Police thought they should have.

And as a result, a new partner was then introduced, the Youth Involvement Officer (Y.I.O.), a female Police Constable whose main role is developed in Schools (Teaching and Liaison), and who became the Link Officer for the female population, with a role to discuss any issues with, or report any incident to.

Different groups within the Asian Community, viewed a Home Office multi-lingual video on Self Protection, 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 to both the victim and offender. Joint ventures and presentations have also been progressed, via close working between the originators, Y.I.O. and The Asian Women Forum. Regular contact and visits are made to the Mosque and it's Leaders, to continually monitor and reassure the Community.

Offender

As a result of the Terrorist Attacks, an immediate response nationally, and locally from Chorley Police, was an increased vigilance of buildings with Asian or American interests. These locations had focussed targeted patrols and were initially physically checked each hour, the result being logged in the Headquarters Communication Room. This was moved one step further by targeting patrols to the adjacent area to Mosque, where the majority of the Community reside. This highly visible presence was a deterrent to offenders increasing their likelihood of arrest and showed the Community, how highly their need for reassurance was prioritised by the Constabulary. Officers were briefed and monitored daily by Supervisors with regular updates. Officers were tasked to prioritise their enquires, geeing up their investigations into any racially related crime and asked to concentrate their minds to be as thorough as possible. Local schools were visited and Morning Assemblies addressed to focus on possible offenders, warning them of the consequences of offending behaviour and also addressing any future offending behaviour.

Evaluation of the intervention

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 have 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, which 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.

Location

Initially, measures to improve the security of the building in the form of the door locks, key holder issues, window screens and dummy CCTV have been put in place and has resulted in a reduction of crimes and calls received. The cost of installing real cameras has as yet been prohibitive, however it is felt that it is not needed, as the measures put in place have been a success.

Due to the political nature of the problem and subsequent good press, (see attached clippings) partners and sponsorship has been readily available. LANPAC donated £1262.70 to the project, as did the Mosque Members, as matched funding for the Screens and Personal Attack Alarms. The A.W.F. paid for the installation of the dummy C.C.T.V. cameras at a cost of £90.00. Chubb donated two C.C.T.V. housings and two dummy cameras normally costing £300.00. The Police have incurred no costs, as all work has been done in normal tours of duty, with no overtime. All Partners have responded well and completed tasks on time.

Repeat damage has occurred on one occasion, however, due exclusively to the screens, only minor cosmetic damage had been sustained (this incident occurring prior to installation of CCTV). This has shown that initial outlay had made savings for the Asian Community, even in the short term.

Victim

Personal Safety and Reassurance issues have been addressed in the form of increased Police activity around this area in the form of highly visible foot and mobile Patrols, the issue of Personal Attack alarms and the viewing of 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. Education of the victim and possible offenders has been addressed by this officer through local Junior and High School Assemblies and through regular contacts at A.W.F. meetings and Ethnic celebrations.

The Domestic Violence Officer and Victim Support Liaison have been introduced by the Y.I.O. and all have attended meetings and religious celebrations, again indicating a willingness to listen and have been co-opted together with the Link Officer onto the A.W.F. Management Committee. 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.

A Questionnaire prior to the project and after its completion was not possible due to the influence of the Asian Male, however a measure of the effectiveness of the project and the feelings felt within the female Asian Community re the Partnership, can be seen in a dip sampling of the Asian Women's Forum. The Police were given a mark of 4 out of 10

for their working relationship with the Community prior to the initiative. After completion, they were given 9 out of 10. And after the War in Iraq they were given 10 out of 10 for their efforts. Mrs. Hasina Khan, the Chair and Spokesperson for the Forum stated, " You didn't know how to communicate.. It wasn't a case of not wanting to, you just didn't have the right approach." The fact that communication of this nature existed showed how much this project had achieved, breaking down the barriers of cultural differences. She added, " We have reached a point where we can communicate with the Police better than ever before with regards to any queries or problems we may have. If we need any assistance we don't hesitate to ask, where previously we didn't have confidence. My personal feeling is I feel we can only move forward and have a better working relationship between both parties. Communication is what it is all about."

The Leader and Spokesperson for Chorley Mosque, Mr. Mohammed Sajid said of the project, " I must admit things were going down the drain, but what with the windows, alarms and cameras and seeing more Police it helps a lot, there is a lot more confidence in the Police. People are happy that the Police are doing more, things are getting done. There has been no more damage because they think they are going to get caught. Numbers have increased of people going to the Mosque and people are encouraged that the Police are listening."

Offender

Figures can be used and assessed in any number of ways. NO Offenders have been arrested for any related offence in this specific location. In this case Racial Crimes for the year, prior to the commencement of the project, compared to the following year, showed a decrease of 75% (from 8 down to 2 crimes) in the isolated location surrounding the Mosque. This shows that the measures put in place have indeed had the desired effect. Figures for the same period, for Racial Crimes at the adjacent location, where the majority of the Asian Community reside, shows an increase of 40%(from 5 up to 7 crimes), indicating a confidence and awareness in the reporting of such crimes. Figures for the 4-month period leading up to, and including the Iraqi War, shows that NO Racial Crimes have been reported in either of the locations, which shows that measures put in place have resulted in maintaining the normal quality of life in the Community, keeping them safe, involved and reassured.