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Crime reduction

Lancashire Constabulary

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Scanning.

Clayton Brook estate on the outskirts of Chorley is a large-scale housing development under the control of North British Housing Association (N.B.H.A). The estate accounts for over 30% of all calls to police, and 28% of crime within the Wheelton section. The objective was to find methods of reducing this figure.

Analysis.

Police data was examined and it was discovered that a significant number of incidents were emanating from a small number of individuals or households. For example police had been called to one address 32 times in a one-year period. N.B.H.A. also held data in which individuals and households regularly highlighted anti social and criminal behaviour. Traditional policing methods were having no lasting effect upon these problem makers; as in isolation the incidents seemed relatively minor.

Response

- A partnership between N.B.H.A. and Police was established.
 - An existing protocol was resurrected under which data held by the partners could be exchanged.
 - Hardcore offenders were identified and targeted and a zero tolerance approach adopted. Close liaison with CPS on target offenders.
 - Both partners gathered information on the targets and a file was prepared.
 - Individuals jointly visited and warned.
- Any continuation of the behaviour and N.B.H.A. instigated eviction procedures.

Assessment.

Initially very successful and within a short period of time targets who chose to ignore their warnings were taken to court. However the court proceeding proved lengthy and continual adjournments frustrated progress. In the mean time the targets continued with their criminal behaviour, the public lost faith in the ability of the partnership and became reluctant to supply the much needed information.

As part of the ongoing review of the partnership the core problem was identified in the tenancy agreements offered to N.B.H.A.'s clients. These offered virtual immunity from eviction to tenants from the moment they signed. A working party was established and changes made to the initial application forms and more significantly new tenancy agreements were developed. Now every new tenant is placed on a six-month probationary contract during which time any unacceptable behaviour can lead to immediate eviction. The six-month period is also extendable.

Conclusion.

- Three families and two individuals have been removed from the estate.

- Two families are on suspended eviction notices.
- A.S.B.O.'s obtained on two core targets, A.B.C.'s being integrated.
- Comparison 2001/02 - 2002/03 (proMIS3) shows an overall reduction in crime of 17% and a 5% increase in detection rates.; Domestic burglary fell by a staggering 61% and detections increased from 14% to 21.5%; Criminal damage fell by 7.5% and detections rose from 7.% to 14.5%.
- Reports of antisocial behaviour fell by 11% which equates to around 45 fewer deployments per month.
- CCTV is being installed linked to Chorley CCTV.
- CBM recently been appointed
- Many new initiatives have been launched.

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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.

Objectives of the project

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 775 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.

Definition of the project.

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 children. They suffered from intimidation and harassment on a daily basis. Gangs of children aged between 12 and 18 would gather around the shops of 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. On an alarmingly regular basis the names of the brothers were being put forward as the main ringleaders 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 gang's 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 activities of the 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 problem families and individuals resident on the estate.

How did the partnership deal with the problem

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.

How to tackle problem families and individuals

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When looking at this complex problem a number of ideas immediately spring to mind. Eviction from the estate; Zero tolerance policing & ASBO's are answers the difficulty is achieving the goal.

During regular consultation with N.B.H.A. these issues were raised and it was agreed that a top ten hit list would be drawn up that identified an individual, family or a location that was a cause of concern. The plan being that by starting with the most prolific problem and then working down the list an immediate effect would be observed.

The above-mentioned brothers came straight into the top ten at numbers one and two. What to do with them?

The brothers 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

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consultation which stated that each organisation had been consulted and supported the application for an ASBO.

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, 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 of 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. The Magistrates took this breach seriously 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.

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 was 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.

The next on the list was a problematic family, who had been resident on the estate for several years and throughout had regularly come to the attention of both Police and N.B.H.A. Numerous complaints regarding drug dealing, noise

nuisance, neighbour disputes had emanated from the family home. Again using the signed protocol data was exchanged between the partners and a file of evidence gathered. Statements were taken by N.B.H.A. staff, with regard to minor neighbour nuisance. The family was raised as a targeted patrol by Police and all information collated was added to the file. Once a significant file of evidence had been achieved a consultation was held involving the partnership and N.B.H.A.'s solicitors. It was agreed that the family would be invited in to the housing association offices where they would be informed by Police and housing staff that they were under scrutiny and faced possible eviction proceedings. This meeting was also viewed as an opportunity for the family to put their side of the argument forward. The meeting was not very constructive and only supplied further evidence for the file! The eviction notice was served upon the family. The court issuing a suspended possession notice giving the family 12 months in which to mend their ways. The careful targeting continued by the partnership and soon supplied the necessary breach, in terms of a conviction for drug dealing by the elder son from the address and a noise abatement order issued by Chorley Borough council .

The family were subsequently taken back to court and evicted from the estate. This process was repeated with several other problem residents. To date four have been evicted.

One such problem that emerged from the eviction process 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 that sends out a clear message to potential offenders that anti social behaviour or criminal activity will not be tolerated by the partnership.

An example of the partnerships determination in addressing quality of life issues can be seen with the "Clean up Clayton centre" campaign. This is an attempt to improve and develop the village centre of the estate. The centre is frankly a depressing place comprising of a public house, shops, village hall and primary School situated around a precinct. A visual audit was carried out by the partnership, which observed graffiti on shutters a run down raised flowerbed, tiles from which had been removed and used as missiles to break those windows not protected. The few litterbins in the centre were not maintained or emptied on a regular basis. At night time the lighting was poor making for an intimidating atmosphere. Police stats show that this location generated the most calls in terms of antisocial behaviour on the estate. The following initiatives have or are being undertaken by the partnership, which in this area has been extended to include Chorley Borough Council, Brewery, shopkeepers and Clayton Brook Primary School;

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Over £20,000. Was raised to install a CCTV system in the centre, which is linked to Chorley town centre's CCTV system and monitored between 8pm and 2am . The ground work for the camera has been completed and it is hoped that it will be in use within the next few months.

The residents are being consulted through local organisations such as the Parish council and neighbourhood watch in a bid to re design the square. Some funding has been raised to progress this. It is hoped that the three main land owners will foot much of the bill.

Each shop keeper has been tasked to look at their premises and carry out minor repairs and decoration.

N.B.H.A. are to clean off all the graffiti within the square free of charge.

Evaluation

Clayton Brook remains a hot spot. The partnership between NBHA and the Poiiice has had various successes as highiigniea aDOve, nowever me 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 community beat manager has recently been appointed to further reassure the public of our commitment to them. It is essential that the good work done is carried on to make Clayton Brook a safer place to live and work.

Comparison between 20001/02 and 2002/03

All crime fell by 17% and detections increased from 22.3% to 27.15%

Domestic burglaries fell by a massive 61% and detections increased from 9% to 21.6%

Criminal Damage fell by 7.5% detections increased from 7.5% to 14.5%

Reports of juvenile nuisance fell by 11% which equates to approximately 45 fewer deployments per month (in the region of a £3000.00 per month saving).

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