

Grindon Community Cinema Project

Tilley Awards 2004

Sunderland West Area Command

Northumbria Police

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GRINDON COMMUNITY CINEMA PROJECT SUMMARY.

Force: Northumbria

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Grindon is a large housing estate in the Sunderland. It suffers from deprivation and is subject to special funding under the governments Single Regeneration Budget round 6. The estate is serviced by a Community Beat Manager Pc Steve Sheard. Youth disorder and anti social behaviour is identified as a priority in the Sunderland Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002 – 2005. In addition it is part of the control strategy as a priority for action under the National Intelligence Model Analysis of policing issues within Sunderland West Area Command

In the summer of 2002 from his network of residents forums and partnership meetings PC Sheard became aware of growing anxiety and reduction in the quality of life for residents caused through groups of youths wandering around the community on an evening time. This was in turn hampering the regeneration of the area.

Pc Sheard adopted the problem solving approach realising that enforcement alone could not resolve this issue long term. He initiated a series of resident's surveys, public forums and partnership meetings. The problem appeared to be a lack of youth provision in the area.

Through his area command team he enabled a short term enforcement response whilst at the same time facilitating the formation of a residents steering group. He identified in conjunction with the youths that the most favoured activity would be a cinema 'something Sunderland does not have'.

Pc Sheard assisted the steering group and residents in researching what was required in terms of licensing and health and safety and the building. In the summer of 2003 the community cinema opened on the Grindon estate.

The cinema remains very well attended and there has been a corresponding reduction in recorded youth disorder of 44% within that time.

In addition the fact that the community did it themselves, with the guidance and facilitation of Pc Sheard has motivated them into going for a much bigger cinema in the future. There has been a re-igniting of community spirit on the estate to the betterment of all.

Definition of the problem

Grindon is an area of social housing within the city of Sunderland. The Grindon ward ranks 5th in Sunderland and 301st (Out of 8414) in the national league of ward deprivation. There are a large number of families living on the estate, a high proportion of which are claiming state benefits. The area was identified as needing special assistance under the SRB 6 funding regime. Youth disorder and anti social behaviour is identified as a priority in the Sunderland Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002 – 2005. In addition it is part of the control strategy as a priority for action under the National Intelligence Model Analysis of policing issues within Sunderland West Area Command

Grindon is in the suburbs requiring at least one bus journey to reach the facilities of the city centre. The city of Sunderland does not at this time have a large cinema complex.

The area is policed by the Sunderland West Area Command and benefits from a community beat manager PC Steve Sheard. Through regular residents forums and partnership meetings Pc Sheard identified that the quality of life on the estate was suffering through the activities of groups of youths hanging around on an evening time, apparently with nothing to do. Although the majority of these youths were not engaged in criminal activity their presence alone was sufficient to cause fear in many of the residents.

Pc Sheard realised the police alone could not resolve this situation, however information from incident logging indicated that it was placing a demand on police time diverting them from tackling actual criminal activity.

In addition to this the fear of the groups of youths was preventing many residents from engaging with other evening time activities that were being organised by the SRB6 partnership in order to assist with training, development, leisure and the general regeneration of the estate.

He initiated a series of surveys and forums, which identified the perceived youth disorder and included complaints of:

- Criminal Damage
- Graffiti
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Alcohol Consumption in residential and open spaces
- Litter
- Alcohol related violence and disorder

Pc Sheard realised that the fear of the youth groups was having a significant impact both upon the residents themselves and the efforts of other partner agencies to promote a sustainable regeneration of the estate.

It was imperative that the issue be addressed in order to improve reassurance of the public in the police and to maximise the use of the SRB6 budget.

Response to the problem

As is common in all problem solving approaches Pc Sheard needed to adopt a short and long term strategy to address the identified problem. He had gathered sufficient information from local partners, residents and the youths themselves to enable him to design a strategy for implementation by all stakeholders.

Discussions took place with the local housing group with a view to try and change behaviour through enforcement of housing tenancy agreements. In addition Pc Sheard secured the support of the local police tasking and coordinating group under the national intelligence model to increase directed patrols and enforcement action where appropriate in the short term.

Community officers were tasked with going into local schools to engage with youths directly to not only outline consequences of anti-social behaviour but also how other residents perceived their actions. It was apparent from this exercise that many of the youths shared their concerns and a flavour of how they saw the solution was obtained.

As a result of this Pc Sheard initiated trying to improve the central cause of the problem, i.e. lack of youth provision in the estate. He realised that he would have a greater chance of success if the community themselves resolve this problem.

With this information in hand the next stage was for Pc Sheard to organise a public meeting to which all stakeholders were invited via an article in the local newspaper. These included young people and local community workers from both the voluntary and public sector and in particular residents from Grindon.

The meeting was well attended by a broad spectrum of the community covering age and gender, and revealed further evidence giving a broader understanding of the issue of youth disorder in Grindon.

Pc Sheard now had a clear understanding of the nature of the problem, was supported by his command team, the housing group and other partner agencies within the SRB 6 partnership. It was a priority area under the crime and disorder strategy and he had the nucleus of interest from residents and local youths.

As a result of this meeting a small steering group of residents and stakeholders was set up, Pc Sheard ensured the local ethnic minority groups had opportunities to participate, thus ensuring that community cohesion was addressed. In addition to this he set up a

separate group of youths, recognising the existence of distrust and wariness that existed between youths and adults at this point.

Under the guidance of Pc Sheard the two groups arrived at a consensus that a community cinema would greatly assist the situation by providing a resource that would meet the needs of all.

The steering groups took responsibility to formally adopt a constitution with the aim of providing a community cinema on the estate.

In so doing Pc Sheard had two main objectives:

1. To provide a diversionary activity for local youths in order to reduce the incidence of youth disorder and anti-social behaviour
2. Raise the skill levels of local residents in achieving a project to conclusion

The project required a considerable amount of planning not only in finding a suitable venue but also in addressing complicated licensing, health and safety and sustainability issues. Pc Sheard maintained a facilitating role and allowed the steering committee and other partners to project-manage the initiative. In addition to this role Pc Sheard designed and implemented a marketing strategy.

The building in which the community office of Pc Sheard is based is a long established community focal point named Grindon Action Technology Enterprise Shop (G.A.T.E.S.) which has the facilities including equipment which lent itself to the practical needs of providing a single screen cinema free of charge. The Grindon ward local authority councillors who supported the initiative from the outset were also involved in this project and enabled the project to gain the initial cost of a cinema licence.

As part of the marketing strategy Pc Sheard took on the responsibility to raise the profile of the project, in his off duty time he designed and developed a website for the project which he continues to update. The website was designed to keep all interested parties regularly informed of developments of the initiative. This includes an email address which is another form of accessible contact. (<http://committed.to/grindon>)

Using Pc Sheard's contacts in the local media, the project gained further publicity from local radio stations including a live interview on BBC Radio Newcastle, and updates broadcast from the SUN FM. Radio station. The Sunderland Echo newspaper was very keen to interview the young people, which resulted in the project being featured in the

press on several occasions. This has led to further publicity in the Sunderland West area Regeneration Community Newspaper and Magazines.

Wednesday evening was identified as 'Cinema Night' because it fitted into the existing timetable of activities at G.A.T.E.S. The young people themselves took responsibility as a group to choose the films which were suitable for family viewing. The first showing at G.A.T.E.S. was on Wednesday 20th August 2003 and therein the project continues to provide this activity on a weekly basis. Entry is free.

The project is monitored via the Steering Group Development Meetings, which are held in the GATES Project and one of the early changes is that the youth group attends the full Steering Group Meetings with the adults. Prior to this Pc Sheard regularly met with the youth and adult groups separately. The decision to initially 'work' with the youth group separately to the adults was to enable Pc Sheard to concentrate on the following:-

- Break down barriers between the young people and the Police.
- Enable the young people to meet together in a safe controlled environment.
- Enable the young people to 'get to know' each other.
- Facilitate a consultation exercise, focusing on their views regarding a diverse range of issues including Youth Disorder
- Identify individual strengths/weaknesses and interests (Group Dynamics)
- Create opportunities for young people to accept responsibility for their actions and play an active, effective part in the social and economic regeneration of the area in which they live.

The young people discussed the topic of 'Ground Rules', from these discussions, they drew up a 'Code of Conduct', which was voluntarily signed by each member as a pledge to abide by this on every occasion they came together as a group, either at meetings or during the practical activities of the project. Having ownership of this document motivated the group to implement these rules during the Steering Group Meetings and performances, to their peers and adult members. This greatly minimised the risk of unsocial behaviour particularly before, during and after each film performance.

Pc Sheard gained the young people's trust and the decision to amalgamate the youth and adult groups was democratically made by both groups, from discussion through to voting.

PC Sheard and June Milner, Community Development Worker (GATES) facilitated the development of the Adult Steering Group. None of the resident members had participated in a formally constituted community group before, therefore the legal aspects

of such a project together with the formal procedures of meetings etc had to be 'gently' introduced to the group. The partner representatives assisted with this 'training'.

The groundwork carried out with both groups proved to be beneficial as the transition of bringing them together proved to be a positive process. This enabled the full Steering Group to work as a team, as they shared a common interest with the purpose of reaching realistic positive outcomes.

The project is innovative in its response to the problem presented. There are no other similar projects of this type and it is not the usual youth activity provision. The project is creative and has retained the initial membership from its inception. However the numbers have increased recently with two youth members joining the steering group. The Grindon Community Cinema Project could easily be seen as a role model for similar projects in other areas.

Unusually for a city the size of Sunderland the Grindon Cinema is the only cinema in the city, a fact that was identified in the local press, which praised Pc Sheard and the police for enabling the project to the benefit of all.

Evaluation of the intervention

The evaluation was designed to check that the project had met its initial objectives of reducing youth disorder and that the community have learned from implementing the project.

Pc Sheard carried out the evaluation under the direction of the SRB6 steering group and his area command team. The evaluation consisted of analysis of youth disorder on the Grindon estate together with surveys conducted with residents and partner information.

As part of the ongoing process of the sustainability of the project we canvassed the opinions of all attendees after each performance. The questions asked related to the quality regarding the practicalities of the performance. The initial results were favourable, but interestingly it provided evidence of the breaking down of barriers between youth and adult residents.

The project has been running weekly since August 2003 in this location and during this period comparative figures of calls to the Police regarding youth disorder in Grindon were as follows

- 2001 - 220 calls
- 2002 - 215 calls
- 2003 - 123 calls

The calls to the Police regarding youth disorder in Grindon during this period saw a reduction of 44% from previous years. Whilst positive Police action has assisted in the reduction of calls about youth disorder, the cinema has contributed towards this by providing sustainability over the long term. This performance can be monitored on a day to day basis, by the feedback from local residents through the partnership network or from Police records.

As GATES is the base for the Cinema, then this is the point to which interested parties, especially members of the community, are directed to for information regarding the cinema. GATES is a multi-partnership, neighbourhood service delivery project, thus the ethos and aims of the Cinema are promoted via links with residents and key partners in Grindon. The response has been one of overwhelming support.

Grindon residents have welcomed the initiative and this is enhanced by the fact that their 'own' Community Beat Manager is involved and the nature of the overall aim of the

project is to address the issues of youth disorder, youth provision and levels of quality of life for residents.

The three Grindon Ward Councillors all reside in Grindon and have reported positive comments from residents, made in casual comments and during their monthly surgeries.

The Sunderland Housing Group has offered financial assistance towards the development of the project. This demonstrates their support and is in line with their strategy for the redevelopment of their housing stock. The housing group additionally report that demand for housing stock within Grindon is high, which is further evidence of the confidence of the public in the estate.

This initial community cinema has proved so successful that the community now wish to progress it to a bigger venue with more opening times. Fresh from the success of their endeavours in establishing the cinema in the first place, they feel confident they can achieve this with minimum assistance from Pc Sheard.

The local authority has also pledged to assist financially in the redevelopment of the exterior of Galashiels Road, which is the proposed site of the new cinema in Grindon. They have offered the location on a peppercorn rent, thus demonstrating partnership commitment.

The website is continuing and has attracted in excess of 1500 hits. Numerous e-mails have been received from other communities around the country including Northern Ireland asking for advice on how a similar project could be initiated within their own community.

The project was highlighted by the local press and radio and received a significant amount of positive publicity. In fact an editorial leader in the local paper identified the fact that whereas efforts of the city council had failed to produce a cinema within the entire city, a committed police officer, together with the will of the public and partners had produced a community cinema within Grindon.

The evaluation demonstrated that the objectives of the project have been met in full. Not only has youth disorder reduced, learning and ability increased, but the apathy which is synonymous in such communities has been replaced with the realisation that by working together they themselves can make a positive difference to their community by becoming active citizens.

Aims and objectives of the initiative

The aims of this project are to:

- To address the issue of youth disorder
- To motivate and enable a community to resolve a long standing problem

The objectives of this project are to:

- Tackle the Fear of Crime
- Reduce youth disorder
- Produce a community cinema resource
- To promote project management skills amongst the community
- To break down barriers between youths and adults
- Reduce the number of alcohol related incidents involving youths in Grindon
- Reduce the incidents of Anti-social behaviour by youths in Grindon
- Provide a youth diversionary activity
- Reduce the instances of Graffiti and litter in the area
- To increase self esteem of the steering group and participants

The above is being achieved through partnership work involving the Police, residents and relevant agencies.

Intervention Principles

The ethos of the Project is that the youths are equal stakeholders with the adult residents, and it is controlled and managed by them for the benefit of their community. This equality has broken down barriers between youth and adults also the community as a whole and the police. Not only has this helped to reduce the risk of crime and disorder activities in Grindon but reassurance amongst the community has been enhanced by the contact with Pc Sheard.

The community has a sense of ownership and pride, addressing the issue of apathy and perceptions of levels of crime. The community is gaining new skills, confidence and self-esteem.

By enabling a youth activity it was deemed we could help to prevent youths from becoming offenders by providing a diversionary activity. This actively promotes the inclusion of young people at risk of committing offences and those that have been involved in low-level crime.

Providing the youths with a safe controlled environment, we are removing the opportunity for groups and individuals to be exposed to situations where they could commit or become the victims of crime. Whilst youths are attending the cinema performances and/or engaged in other aspects of the project. The areas they would normally frequent benefit from a reduction in youth disorder and anti-social behaviour.

By actively promoting and supporting community participation then this intervention also contributes to the image and regeneration of the area. The cinema is contributing to the regeneration of the area.

Outcomes

The main outcome is a rejuvenated community, with an enhanced trust of each other. This has assisted in reducing the fear of crime and promoting a safe and attractive environment.

The nature of the solution in providing a diversionary activity, which meets the needs of the community, has avoided the usual risk of displacing the problem.

The strengths were in the community working together under the guidance of Pc Sheard the Beat Manager. This is evidenced by their wish to develop the initial project even further into a bigger community cinema.

There were several problems that had to be overcome, including breaking through apathy, lack of project management skills amongst the community and even initial cynicism amongst some partners that it could be achieved.

Strong motivation of Pc Sheard and the support of the command team to make a difference to his community enabled this project be brought to a successful conclusion. The initial cynicism has turned into support for further development.

Repeat calls to the police about disorder have been reduced, enabling them to tackle other crime problems. In addition by providing an activity in the area to which all youths are included the police have been seen to positively engage the youth, encourage them to break the cycle of group offending and give them an alternative to hanging around the streets in the area.

The cinema has been running one night a week, which has made a large impact on the issue of youth disorder. This has resulted in a reduction of calls to the police regarding youth disorder in Grindon of 44% in 2003 compared to 2001. The estate now has a much-enhanced opportunity of regeneration evidenced by information from the housing group.

One major success in this project has been the recruitment and retention of youth. The youth have given up large amounts of their own free time to the project including:

- Organising a fundraising stall at a local community event
- Organising and managing monthly meetings
- Preparing the multi purpose room for the weekly cinema performances before and after each showing.
- Publicising the project each week

The cinema continues to go from strength to strength attracting average attendances of 70 – 85% capacity, the majority of seats being occupied by young people.

The Problem Orientated Policing approach has enabled the issue of youth disorder in the Grindon area to be addressed by harnessing the skills, experience and commitment of Pc Sheard, statutory and voluntary agencies and the Grindon community.

The intervention method of addressing the underlying causes of the problem has proven to be successful. Lines of communication between the resident's themselves (Youth and Adults) have benefited. Local people have gained an understanding of the intricate issues of licensing laws and health and safety regulations, and the complexities of crime from the police perspective, particularly from grass root levels.