

Policing the City

Northumbria Police

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Summary

People living, working, studying or visiting Sunderland City provide a rich diversity of economy, culture and environment and the development of the City Centre is a critical priority of the Sunderland Local Strategic Partnership in order to achieve sustainable economic and social regeneration.

Surveys of residents and consultation, together with increased reported incidents revealed concerns about levels of actual and perceived crimes including drugs misuse, property and car crime together with disorder and violence.

The locations and frequency of the incidents were not individually alarming but when taken together presented a problem.

With major and smaller retailers located in the City and target rich environments such as public car parks, shoplifting and theft from motor vehicles offences occurred. Street robberies particularly of young people also occurred, often for small amounts.

Violence and assaults were fueled by alcohol with victims and offenders socialising in licensed premises and then meeting on the streets when incidents were common particularly at the traditional busy weekend evenings.

Misuse of drugs impacted upon offences with acquisitive crime being used to fund addiction and social use of drugs increased with the greater night time culture.

Building on existing proven procedure and partnerships a range of interrelated options are used to reduce crime and disorder, increase reassurance and confidence

These include:

- Operations to combat street drugs dealing (Operation Blink) and violence fueled by alcohol (Operation French).
- The 'Pub watch' Scheme' providing direct links between licensed premises and the police CCTV control room and also training for registered Door Supervisors ran and administered by the police Licensing Officer.
- The retail Crime Community Beat Officers work closely with commercial enterprise through the Sunderland Shop watch Partnership to combat theft, fraud, and harassment of staff as well as being the local officers for city centre residents.
- Police Community Support Officers are now patrolling in crime and disorder hot spot areas.
- Two dedicated University Constables.
- CCTV cameras monitor the area and provide support to operational police officers and partners via the Pub watch and Shop watch schemes.
- The use of the Problem Solving model to continually evaluate and address issues.
A Media Strategy to inform and engage the public with Crime Prevention initiatives and a strong working relationship with City Centre Partners.

Crime figures comparing April 2002 to January 2003 and April 2003 to January 2004 show an overall reduction in crime of 6%

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 This submission is presented by Sunderland City Area Command, Northumbria Police. The submission relates to the Policing the City Plan devised and implemented by the Area Command and its partners over the period April 2003 to January 2004.

2.0 **The City Centre**

2.1 The Area Command of Sunderland City comprises two-thirds housing estate and one-third commercial premises mainly situated in the City Centre. Over 100,000 people live, work or study within the City providing a rich diversity of economy, culture and environment. The centre itself is largely populated due to consumers coming into the area to use the various commercial outlets, including the Bridges shopping complex. The area boasts a healthy and expanding evening economy.

The scale of the development within the City provided increased opportunities for low level, but frequent acquisitive crime offences to be committed and it was recognised that the fear of crime could increase and be disproportionate to the actual number of offences.

2.2 With an expanding number of licensed premises within the centre, competition has driven prices downwards. Anecdotal evidence of increasing numbers of public disorder and drugs offences predominantly perpetrated on and by the people coming into the City Centre to socialise in the pubs and clubs was supported by the recorded incidents and the information and intelligence collected by operational officers on the streets. The practical experience of the officers in dealing not only with incidents reported to them but in preventing and calming situations in areas that could be described as target rich both for crime, offences against the person, general disorder and rowdy behaviour indicated that the problems were greater than recorded offences. Information about the incidents was fed back into the police National Intelligence Model leading the Area Command to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the drivers of this problem.

3.0 **The Evidence**

3.1 The Area Command used both quantitative and qualitative evidence from a wide variety of sources to determine the nature and scale of crime within the City Centre. These are detailed below:

3.2 The City of Sunderland CDRP has a statutory obligation to conduct a crime and disorder audit every three years. Between September, - October 2001 a survey of residents in the Sunderland area was undertaken with a view to giving their opinion on how they perceived the city centre of Sunderland with regards to public safety. The survey also included the student residents in university campuses in and around Sunderland.

3.3 The consultation programme produced the following findings:

- 69.8% of those surveyed believed that there were high levels of crime in the city centre.
- 64.4% thought it was unsafe to be out alone in the city centre after dark.

3.4 The student survey produced the following results:

- 53.7% of all students surveyed felt unsafe in the city centre after dark.
- 41.6% felt unsafe in pubs/clubs.
- 38.5% felt unsafe in their own neighbourhood.

3.5 When the students were asked how they believed that Sunderland city centre could be made safer, the results stated:

- 61.9% wanted more police in the city centre.
- 24.8% wanted more CCTV cameras
- 13.3% wanted better street lighting.

- 3.6 With regards to student safety in pubs/clubs in the city centre:
- 28.8% stated they would like to see more security on doors by door staff
 - 23.5%. Better/tighter security inside of pubs/clubs
 - 13.6% more police entering pubs/clubs.
- 3.7 Crime statistics for the period April 2002 to January 2003
- Assaults 604.
 - Robbery/Theft from the person 260
 - Drugs 298
 - Public Order/Affray 301
 - Theft from Motor vehicle 327
 - Vehicle interference 47
- 3.8 As well as the quantitative data described above, the Area Command also undertook a consultation programme in order to gain qualitative data from the major stakeholders across the City. This consultation provided an opportunity to understand the current and forthcoming policies and procedures of partner agencies, and to delve deeper into the drivers of fear of crime.
- 3.9 Face-to-face interviews and focus groups were conducted with the following Stakeholders over a three month period:
- Peter Gouldsbro, City Centre Manager;
 - Phil Spooner, Head of Regeneration and Housing, Sunderland City Council;
 - Students of the University of Sunderland;
 - Residents of the City Centre and its outlining areas (via an audit);
 - Alan Mitchell, Community Safety Officer, Sunderland City Council;
 - Business Owners in the City Centre;
 - Licensees;
 - City Centre Residents Associations.
- 3.10 The results of the analysis showed increasing levels of crime and fear of crime across the city centre, predominantly in the evening, but also during daytime hours. The underlying causes of this problem were multifaceted and included:
- An increase in the number of Licensed premises in the city and reduced alcohol prices;
 - Limited control and enforcement of Licensees;
 - An increase in the number of vulnerable victims using the city centre including students;
 - Lack of support for the business and residential community within the City Centre;
 - Limited police presence in the city centre;
 - Limited CCTV coverage in the City Centre.
- 3.11 The analysis revealed that crime and disorder was becoming an increasing problem, and were it not to be addressed, the continued economic stability of the area was in jeopardy.

4.0 **The Approach**

4.1 The Policing the City Plan was implemented across departments within the Area Command, and became a central plank of the Area Command Plan. The Plan was awarded strong Senior Management Support, and a commitment was made to continue resourcing the project over the medium to long term. Senior Managers recognised the need for a Partnership approach to addressing concerns, and worked with the CDRP to raise awareness of the plan, and implement it as appropriate.

4.2 The objectives of the Policing the City Plan were to:

- Address crime and anti-social behaviour problems associated with 'hot spots' in the day and evening economy e.g. taxi ranks, takeaways etc.
- Extend/ enhance / co-ordinate Shopwatch, Pub Watch, CCTV systems to help deter and address crime in the City Centre.
- Increase the number of high visibility patrols across the City Centre.
- Communicate positively with residents of Sunderland to promote a positive image of the City Centre.

4.4 The Policing the City Plan was regularly monitored via the local Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group, and the Executive Group of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to support implementation. Individual Officers were given specific responsibility for particular elements of the project, and this was linked to their Performance and Development Portfolio.

4 Description of Interventions

Operation French/Blink

The City Centre has been subject to high visibility patrols to prevent and detect crime and provide public reassurance.

Due to the increase in disorder incidents that the area command responded to the problem by providing high visibility police patrols in key areas such as Crowtree Road, Holmeside and Park Lane as statistically the areas showed a marked increase in public disorder.

Extra disorder patrols were changed from a Wednesday evening to a Thursday evening due to a shift in disorder on specific days. Officers would work 12-3 am to cover specific areas in team buses for a quick reaction to a problem.

Operation French was opened as a command initiative to prevent disorder incidents in those specific areas pointed out. Recently however, officers have suggested the Manor Quay Public House be incorporated into the operation as disorder is spreading to this location. Officers are being deployed on foot, in high visibility uniform and stand on relevant street corners watching 'flash points' as a preventative measure. French is command policy to be followed on a weekend at the discussed times at specific locations. Victims are non-specific and no particular age groups or gender have been targeted. Incidents would appear to be spontaneous and not premeditated.

Operation Blink was in response to the organised street dealing of heroin and used a covert operatives phase followed by evaluation and arrest leading to the arrest of 23 offenders with 19 convicted receiving sentences ranging from Drugs Treatment Orders and imprisonment from 5 months to 5 years.

The operation was widely reported in the media as part of the media strategy.

Licensing Officer

National research indicates that arrests for violence and disorder are much higher following alcohol use, and local consultation in Sunderland revealed that levels of fear caused by individuals and gangs behaving aggressively under the influence of alcohol in public places was significant and is felt especially by the elderly and the vulnerable.

In order to address issues surrounding Licensed premises in the City Centre, the Area Command released one officer from their normal operational duties, and created the post of Licensing Officer.

The role of the Licensing Officer is to develop the relationship of the police with all licensed premises owners ensuring compliance with legislation and procedure with this sector of the community.

The officer is the central point of contact for the managers and owners of premises communicating the Area Commanders policy, providing instruction and guidance to them

and training the registered door supervisors together with preparing prosecution of breaches and representing the police at the Licensing Magistrates Courts.

The officer is involved from the start of any new development which ensure issues such as the provision by the owners of security measures such as CCTV systems are provided as a proviso for a successful application for any new licences.

The officers role while traditionally looking at enforcement and regulation is now far greater and incorporates effective partnership with both owners and the relevant departments within the Local Authority where a professional combined approach is used to the benefit of all particularly the members of the public who come into use all of the amenities in the City centre.

The Licensing Officer has relaunched the Pub watch Scheme via the local meeting. The scheme has in excess of 60 members attending bi monthly meetings in the Crowtree leisure centre in order to exchange intelligence/information and make them aware of current crime trends along with preventative measures especially high risk football games involving Sunderland football club at the Stadium of Light. Each member has signed data protection forms and must display a membership poster on the front door/ window to their premises. Approximately 35 people are

Community Beat Managers in the City Centre

The Area Command created a team of four Community Beat Managers with responsibility for the Central Ward covered by the City Centre. The Beat Managers are tasked with addressing problems of crime and disorder facing retailers in the City Centre. The daily workload falls into three main categories: shop theft, fraud/deception against retailers and problems of disorder/harassment against staff.

The Community Beat Managers aim to support retailers and encourage them to report crime to the police. The team offer a quick response to any crime and consistently take positive action to demonstrate crime will not be tolerated. The Retail Crime Unit have trained shop keepers in basic crime prevention.

A key task of the Community Beat Managers has been the development of the Sunderland Shop watch Partnership. This involves a partnership between retailers, the Chamber of Commerce, Sunderland City Centre Management and the Bridges Shopping Centre Management. The group meet the Police on a regular basis in order to work together to take a proactive stance against crime and disorder. The partnership involves a sharing of intelligence, monitoring the Retail Radio link and preparing and serving exclusion notices on known offenders as directed by the Shop watch Management Group.

The Beat Managers also attend meetings of Sunderland City Centre Residents Association with a view to community reassurance.

Sunderland City Centre received 'Safer Shopping Award' accreditation in March 2002, recognising the successes made in addressing retail crime in the City Centre through partnership working e.g. the Shop watch Scheme.

PCSOs

The Area Command recognised that it would be impossible to provide consistent reassurance to the public in the City Centre using their existing levels of resource. The Area Command were successful in being allocated fifteen Police Community Support Officers. The Officers were deployed throughout the City Centre to provide a visible uniformed local patrol targeted to reassure through protecting vulnerable locations and people. The PCSOs have enhanced street visibility and deliver extra reassurance to the public.

The primary objectives of the PCSOs are to:

- **Be impactful**-reduce crime and disorder. Intervene in anti-social behaviour within limited powers, and action TTCG and problem solving tasking;
- **Be Knowledgeable**- contribute intelligence from the local communities that assists in the maintenance of an accurate documented profile of crime and reassurance issues within the City Centre;
- **Be locally known**- speak daily to specified local stakeholders, and;
- **Be visible and accessible**- maximised through patrol at specified locations.

Intervention Principles

The Policing the City plan adopted a range of intervention principles including separating offenders from targets (e.g. the bans imposed on known criminals on entering the City Centre via the Retail Crime Unit), making the environment less conducive to crime (e.g. assisting in the planning and development of the City Centre), targeting offenders (Operation Blink and French).

6.0 Outcomes

Crime Figures Overall in the two periods reviewed crime decreased by 6% with the main areas targeted showing a clear downward trend.

- Assaults down 12% from 604 to 534.
 - Robbery/Theft from the person down 10% from 260 to 235.
 - Drugs up 22% from 153 186.*
 - Public order/affray down 8% from 301 to 277.
 - Theft from Motor vehicle down 3% from 327 to 318.
 - Vehicle interference down 2% from 47 to 46.
 - Improved satisfaction from city centre businesses, residents of the city centre and the wider crime and disorder reduction partnership.
 - Recognised needs of using a variety of methods to address the various crime and crime related activities in the City Centre.
- * The increase in drugs offences detected is a positive indicator of the successful partnership with the Licensing trade and the registered door supervisors who actively engage their patrons and liaise closely with the local police officers.

7.0 Future Directions

7.1 Despite the success of the Policing the City Plan, the Area Command recognises that there is likely to be continuing problems of crime and the fear of crime within the City Centre. This is likely to be compounded over forthcoming years by the further development of the evening economy, the aims of Sunderland Housing Group to reintroduce City Centre Living, and the Sunderland ARC project (Area Regeneration Company).

7.2 As a result, the Area Command is continuing to develop the plan by:

- Working with the City of Sunderland Local Strategic Partnership to develop a City Centre Management Plan funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.
- Developing a late night transport system to further reduce crime and disorder. This involves partnership working with the Sunderland City Centre Management Group and local transport providers.
- Working with the ARC development to ensure that we 'design out' crime from the earliest development.
- Fear of crime survey
- Developing a 'Safer Streets Policy' to help co-ordinate all partners and how they can influence safety on the streets, and;
- Bidding for external funding to increase the number of PCSOs in the City Centre.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The Policing the City Plan involved a comprehensive, co-ordinated and partnership based approach to addressing crime and the fear of crime.
- 8.2 After extensive consultation and analysis, a range of interventions involving both traditional and non traditional policing methodology were deployed. This resulted in significant reductions in the target crimes.
- 8.3 The already strong links within the Area Command with the Local Authority, public and private enterprise was confirmed as the way to approach issues to ensure success and is seen as best practice. The Area command are continuing to develop new and existing interventions.