

## Tilley Award 2004

# **The Offmore / Comberton Urban Safety Initiative**

*“Bringing people together to  
improve our area”*

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**CONTENTS**

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Scan	4
Analysis	5
Response	9
Assessment	15
Taking the project forward	18

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Offmore / Comberton ward is a mixed housing area located in Kidderminster, Worcestershire, with local shopping provision centred on two small parades of shops located at Burcher Green, Comberton.

By late 2001 the level of anti-social behaviour and nuisance had reached exaggerated levels. Local visible minority shopkeepers were being persistently targeted, vulnerable community members subjected to hostile behaviour and groups of youths appeared to be controlling and "policing" the estate. Media coverage was extremely poor, public and councillor complaints high and anti-social behaviour incidents at very high levels. The area was suffering 36% more disorder than the next highest ward in the local authority area.

Once identified, the problems were analysed by agency databases and via a questionnaire / survey distributed by wardens and councillors, of all residents on the estate. The following issues were identified:

- dis-empowered local community;
- poor levels of visibility in "policing";
- a lack of diversionary opportunities;
- inappropriate landscaping;
- a hard core of nuisance youths;
- the Burcher Green area was identified as a key location.

An Urban Safety Group (USG), which later gained charitable status, between the residents, councillors, Police and other agencies was established. The Police acted as the catalyst to create the forum but it quickly gained it's own identity: - **Offmore / Comberton Action Group (OCAG)**

The group brought together a diverse community and it has facilitated many interventions, including:

- more pro-active use of neighbourhood wardens;
- named Police Beat Officers / Beat Manager;
- a series of seasonal multi-agency reduction plans;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders against five identified ringleaders;
- multi-agency, problem-solving training has been delivered to OCAG;
- OCAG has successfully bid for £200,000 of re-generation funding and work has commenced on CPTED compliant landscaping of a play area and the key hot-spot area.

As a result of these actions, disorder has reduced by **82%** in the key location of Burcher Green, and by **30%** (185 fewer incidents) across the whole ward. Public confidence has dramatically increased and the citizens have challenged inappropriate behaviour and improved their community.

The knowledge obtained has been replicated in other wards across Wyre Forest District Council area with new Urban Safety Groups being developed. Although in the early stages, a reduction of 13% in disorder across the other Kidderminster wards has already been achieved. The process also features in the new Force Policy on re-assurance.

**INTRODUCTION**

Kidderminster is a market town located in North West Worcestershire with a population around 60,000. The town has a traditional town centre defined by a ring road, with a mix of housing and light industrial areas bordering the centre.

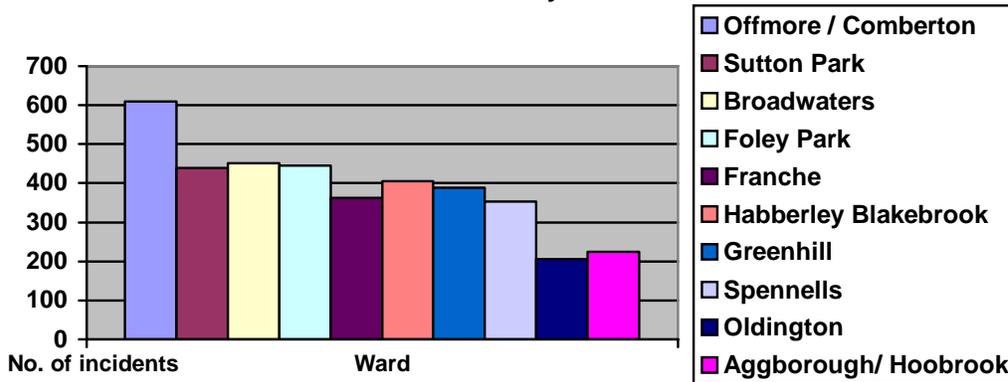
The town is divided into 10 local authority wards, which the Policing sectors mirror. Although being a relatively prosperous area the most deprived ward in Worcestershire, Foley Park, is found within the town. Kidderminster Local Policing Team adopts a problem-solving ethos and routinely uses the PAT and SARA models.

**SCAN**

The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2002-2005, includes anti-social behaviour as one of its priority areas. Specifically “the partnership aims to identify anti-social behaviour in localised hotspots, through a multi-agency, systematic approach, so that all residents are less affected by anti-social behaviour.”  
*Wyre Forest Community Safety Strategy*

As part of the National Intelligence Model and other performance monitoring, data for crime and anti-social behaviour is collated monthly across the District in order to identify emerging trends and issues. The figure below illustrates the data for the total number of anti-social behaviour / nuisance incidents reported for 2002.

**Number of Public Disorder Incidents 2002 by Ward**

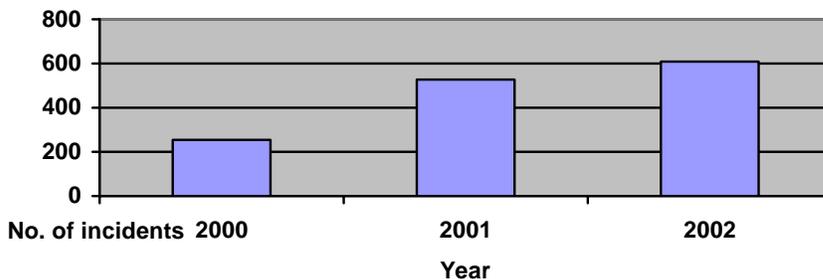


*West Mercia Constabulary (WMC) POINT Data*

The data demonstrated that the Offmore / Comberton Beat had **39%** more reported disorder than the next most disorderly beat. Disorder was significantly higher than more deprived wards.

Further research indicated a growing problem. The 2000 data needs to be treated with caution due to changes in calculating figures, but the trend was clearly rising. A 12% increase from 2001 through to 2002.

**Growth in Offmore / Comberton Disorder 2000-02 (WMC data)**



**DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

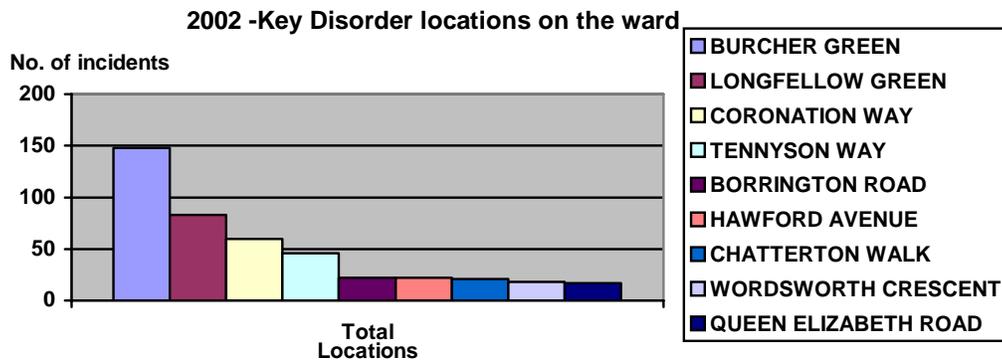
Two broad goals were established at this time:

1. Reduce the level of anti-social behaviour.
2. Improve the quality of life of residents.

**ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

In order to define the problem both quantitative and qualitative processes were employed. Police and Housing Company resources were used. Crime pattern analysis and comparison charts were produced to help define and describe the problem.

Persistent callers were identified from call-management systems and scanning of the local media, both reports and letters, helped to further define the problem. Letters of complaint were also considered. The local knowledge of the various agency staff was also utilised. Data analysis identified the key locations on the ward.



West Mercia Constabulary (WMC) POINT data

**BURCHER GREEN SHOPS**



As part of this phase wardens and councillors delivered a questionnaire to every address on the estate. Softer, qualitative details were provided by face-face interviews of the residents and shop owners of Burcher Green. 80 % of respondents were concerned to the extent that their health and peace of mind was affected.

### KEY QUOTES FROM INTERVIEWS

*"We lock ourselves in from 3.45 when they come back from school."*

*"They use foul language and abuse."*

*"The kids broke our window 3 months ago. Now they throw eggs and fired some sort of pellet gun."*

*"We can't go on like this. I love my home, the neighbours are lovely but now I want to leave."*

*"People are avoiding the shops."*

*"Fireworks being thrown."*

*"They blew up the post box with fireworks."*

*"I've given up scraping eggs off the windows."*

*"They keep calling me a mother- f\*\*\*er. Why do they do it?"*

*"The noise from the football is awful."*

*"They kick the ball into the garden on purpose."*

*"Trade is down. The area is getting a bad reputation."*

*"Behaviour of kids is disgusting ... urinating in drains ... spitting and urinating."*

*"Trade is absolutely dreadful. The future of our shop is at risk."*

**Burcher Green with shops and sheltered housing**



The identified causes of the disorder were considered in the matrix below:

<p><b>WHAT type of incident is occurring?</b></p>	<p><b>THE PROBLEM</b></p>	<p><b>WHO are the offenders?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• racist abuse to shopkeepers</li> <li>• egg –throwing</li> <li>• criminal damage</li> <li>• firework misuse</li> <li>• “knock and run” games</li> <li>• inappropriate car use</li> <li>• youths congregating and causing a nuisance</li> <li>• football being played outside homes</li> <li>• alcohol and drug misuse</li> </ul>	<p><b>Anti-social behaviour on the Offmore / Comberton ward, Kidderminster, Worcestershire</b></p>	<p>Numerous youths identified through youth awareness letters etc but 5 key troublemakers appear to be ringleaders.</p>
<p><b>WHO or WHAT is the victim; are repeats occurring?</b></p>	<p><b>WHERE is it occurring?</b></p>	<p><b>WHEN is it occurring?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• residents of estates</li> <li>• OAP's who live in Burcher Green</li> <li>• members of church groups</li> <li>• local Brownies who use church hall</li> <li>• shopkeepers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burcher Green shops</li> <li>• the open space behind and in and around Burcher Green Church.</li> <li>• around the estate in general to a lesser effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• every evening, following school</li> <li>• all day at weekends</li> </ul>
<p><b>HOW are they doing it?</b></p>	<p><b>HOW often?</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT is the impact?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• banging on doors</li> <li>• throwing objects at windows</li> <li>• direct intimidation of OAP's</li> <li>• obstruction of shop doorways</li> <li>• throwing fireworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyday without fail</li> <li>• over 600 incidents in 2002</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some residents have become ill as a result they are suffering from stress</li> <li>• some have requested house moves</li> <li>• they have become imprisoned in their own house</li> <li>• shop was threatened with closure due to lack of custom</li> <li>• reduction in community confidence in local agencies</li> <li>• community apathy</li> </ul>

[www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits)

**Offenders**

The offenders are both male and female, aged between 12–20 years of age. Additionally, intelligence identified 5 key individuals who appeared to be “ringleaders” etc. They live on the ward and are well known to victims and potential witnesses.

**Victims**

The vast majority live on the estate and are senior citizens. The business community also suffers with direct harassment and loss of trade. Church groups and those using the facilities also suffer.

**Locations**

The key location is Burcher Green, which consists of two small parades of shops, the local Church and a large grassed area. Youths congregate to play football and generally cause a nuisance.

**Fireworks**

Members of the public become concerned over the nuisance caused by reckless and dangerous misuse of fireworks e.g. potential injuries, the frightening of pets and the damaging of property, including post boxes.

**Trick and Treat**

Youngsters calling at addresses cause distress to elderly residents with the potential to cause distress, damage and / or nuisance.

**Egg throwing**

Eggs being purchased by youths and then being thrown at buildings / individuals

**Obstruction of the Highway / Shop doorways, etc**

Youths congregating in inappropriate location, verbally abusing residents, shopkeepers and other members of the public. Sex taking place in outdoor locations.

**KEY ISSUES**

1. A hard core of nuisance youths.
2. A dis-empowered local community.
3. Low visibility in “policing”.
4. A lack of diversionary opportunities.
5. Inappropriate landscaping.

The project developed the following objectives / success criteria:

**OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

1. To reduce the amount of anti-social behaviour.
2. To empower the local community.
3. To improve the quality of life of people living in, visiting and working in the Offmore / Comberton estate, Kidderminster.

**SUCCESS CRITERIA**

1. Fewer incidents of disorder.
2. The Community feels safer and re-assured.
3. The Community feels able and willing to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

**RESPONSE - HOW DID WE DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM?**

**ACTION PLANNING - POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS / OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

<b>Physical Environment</b>	<b>THE CAUSES</b>	<b>Social Environment (sense of community, etc)</b>
<p><b><u>LONG TERM</u></b> (Engineering)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landscaping of Burcher Green grassed area</li> <li>• provision of diversionary youth area / play area</li> <li>• re-develop shopping parades</li> <li>• All using Crime prevention through environmental design principals (CPTED)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a hard core of nuisance youths</li> <li>• a dis-empowered local community</li> <li>• low visibility in “policing”</li> <li>• a lack of diversionary opportunities</li> <li>• inappropriate landscaping</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>MEDIUM TERM</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish Neighbourhood Watches</li> <li>• establish a comprehensive cohesive community group</li> <li>• target funding streams</li> <li>• establish a Urban Safety Group</li> </ul>

<b>Target victim profile</b>	<b>Offender related</b>
<p><b><u>SHORT TERM</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high profile menu patrol</li> <li>• victim support</li> <li>• move victims from estate</li> <li>• educate victims</li> <li>• restorative justice</li> <li>• dedicated police officers</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>SHORT TERM</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high profile menu patrol</li> <li>• youth awareness letters</li> <li>• acceptable behaviour contracts (ABC)</li> <li>• anti-social behaviour orders (ASBO)</li> <li>• restorative justice</li> <li>• diversionary activities</li> <li>• police officers allocated to ward</li> <li>• evictions</li> <li>• prevent sale of eggs / fireworks to offenders</li> </ul>

*www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits*

The need to re-establish community confidence was paramount. The responses selected were a mixture of:

- short term;
- medium term;
- long term.

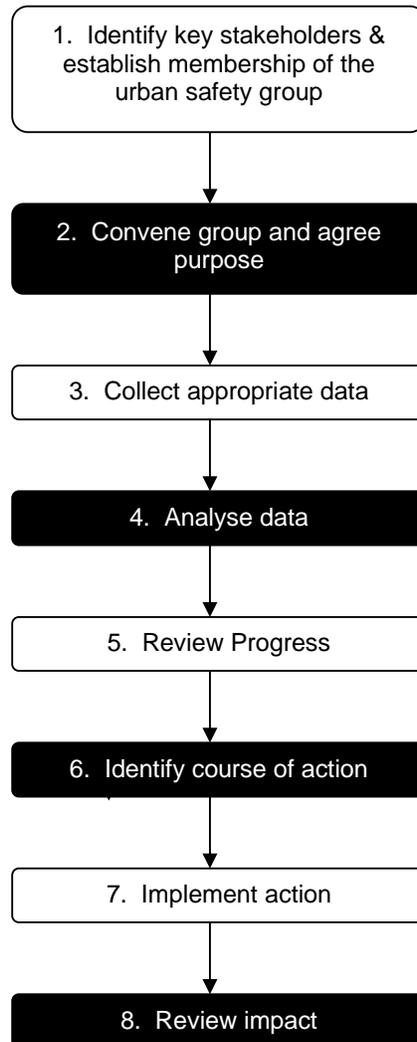
And covered the 3 E’s:

- enforcement;
- education;
- environment.

The fundamental building block to “turning” the ward round was the creation of a resident / agency forum.

**OFFMORE / COMBERTON ACTION GROUP (OCAG)**

In order to increase public confidence and generate community involvement, a group consisting of local residents, business people, ward councillors, Churches, Schools and other community groups, OCAG was formed. The group utilised existing good practice from the West Mercian Rural Safety Initiative and followed a set process.

**OFFMORE / COMBERTON ACTION GROUP: - PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL**

Data previously collected by the Police and Wardens was shared and the group conducted additional work. The group quickly became established with the only Police involvement being the Beat Manager acting as a temporary secretary and an initial problem-solving training input. The group brought a rich diversity of people together who analysed the problems in their community, identified possible options and implemented solutions. OCAG gained charitable status, developed a web-site and published the following aims / objectives: -

**Vision**

“Bringing people together to improve our area.”

**Aims**

To bring together local stakeholders, external agencies and funding agencies with a view to establishing a coherent and co-ordinated programme, which will:

1. Reduce levels of real and perceived nuisance, harassment and vandalism for residents, shopkeepers, organisations and visitors caused by a minority of youths and children attracted to the area.
2. Offer new opportunities for involvement and leisure activities for young people and children in the area.
3. Generally contribute towards the improvement of quality of life in the area and the improved reputation of the area.

The group has encouraged active citizenship, developed involvement and helped empower the community. It has successfully applied for funding for Environmental / Landscape Responses.

Bids totalling over **£200,000** have been made to re-develop: -

- Burcher Green
- Borrington Road park, to create a skateboard park, all weather football pitches and new fencing

These projects provide diversionary opportunities and comply with CPTED principles.

**Work Commencing on Borrington Road Park****Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO)**

Key ring leaders and prominent disorder offenders were targeted for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO). Evidence was gathered from members of the public only after increased levels of trust and confidence had been developed through the OCAP and greater Police visibility.

Five key targets identified, proposed restrictions included not to:

1. Enter key roads / locations on the ward.
2. Use, threaten or incite violence, abusive language or gestures.
3. Riding or driving any vehicle in an anti-social manner.
4. Buying or possessing any firework or explosive.

5. Throwing any stone, egg, bottle or other object or material at any person, animal or property, causing any damage to property.
6. Selling or supplying intoxicating liquor to any person under 18 or attempting to do so.
7. Acting in a manner likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress including, to include, causing an obstruction, banging on doors or windows, kicking a ball at people or property or having sexual intercourse otherwise than in private.

### **Neighbourhood Warden Scheme**

1. OCAG influenced activity : -uniformed presence, patrol activities, litter clean-ups and other community activities to develop community cohesion, re-assuring to the community.
2. The Warden supervisor attended monthly Police District Tasking and Co-ordination meeting to target / influence warden patrol activity.

### **Police Visibility**

1. Prioritise Beat Managers' actions on Offmore / Comberton ward and allocate additional local Beat Officers to implement the plans / operations developed by Beat Manager.
2. Raise the profile and market Beat Manager and Beat Officers.
3. Link visibility to Seasonal Reduction Plans (below).

### **Seasonal Reduction Plans**

As part of the Police's response to the on-going problems, activity was organised around generic seasonal reduction plans linked to District Tasking:

- Operation Discipline – Summer holidays;
- Operation Ghost – Autumn policing plan;
- Operation Holiday – Christmas / Winter plan.

### **Operation Discipline**

1. Menu led, targeted high profile Police and Warden foot patrols often joint, targeting both locations and individuals.
2. Every youth on ASB database visited by an Officer and presented a playscheme pack.
3. Diversionary local authority play schemes held on the ward.

### **Operation Ghost**

This operation built on the successes of discipline and true multi-agency activity / tactics were developed. The Autumn period includes key events such as Bonfire Night and Halloween which had been identified through scanning as problematic for residents and the Police.

### **High Profile Menu Patrol activity**

Neighbourhood Wardens, Special Constables and regular Police Officers involved in targeted intelligence-led menu patrols throughout the period of the operation.

*Specific actions / responses for key events / dates during this period are listed below:*

### **Bonfire Night Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003**

1. School half term newsletter to include:
  - safety advice to children for Bonfire Night;
  - safety advice to parents regarding Bonfire Night;
  - firework safety leaflet – “Follow the clues to firework safety”.
2. All premises selling fireworks written to and asked to re-consider selling fireworks due to misuse.
3. Personal delivery of a letter signed by the Divisional Commander, containing advice to retailers on fireworks law, their responsibilities and safe storage.
4. Joint Community Fire Safety Officer and Police visit to all firework retailers.
5. Trading Standards provided test purchase operations on any premises that had intelligence stating that fireworks were being sold under age.
6. DTI posters and information leaflets distributed widely in public places including shops and schools
7. Memo card distributed to officers on general firework offences (including retailer offences).
8. Council removed unofficial bonfires and empty litter bins regularly in hot spots.
9. Intelligence-led sealing of vulnerable Post boxes.
10. Police Beat Managers follow up Youth Awareness letters and consider the Youth Offending Team.

### **Halloween**

1. Local newspapers published “**Do not Disturb**” posters, which residents placed in windows declining visits from trick or treaters.
2. School newsletter sent including:
  - Safety advice to children during trick or treat.
  - Safety advice to parents regarding trick or treat.
3. Youths and parents on ASB database visited and informed of diversionary activities.
4. Safety notices and a reflective hedgehog (to be worn on outer garments), to promote road safety, distributed to parents and children whilst they walk estates “trick and treating”.
5. Whilst delivering bogus caller information to the elderly and vulnerable, reassurance message to be given regarding trick or treat.
6. Lifeline co-ordinators and wardens contacted regarding reassurance message for trick or treat issues.
7. Youth awareness letters sent to parents when youths found in anti-social hotspots / activity.
8. High visibility campaign by local officers, wardens and Specials on foot in residential areas to tie in not only anti-social hotspots but with burglary dwelling hot spots.
9. Officers made fully aware of police powers and offences.

### **More General Activities**

1. CDRP partners aware at strategic level. Other agencies attended monthly Police District Tasking meetings to co-ordinate activity at a tactical level.

2. Local retailers where egg throwing have been a problem previously visited and asked not to sell eggs to youths.
3. A corporate letter to Councillors and repeat victims explaining what activity is being undertaken, followed by thank you letters for continued support.

**Training**

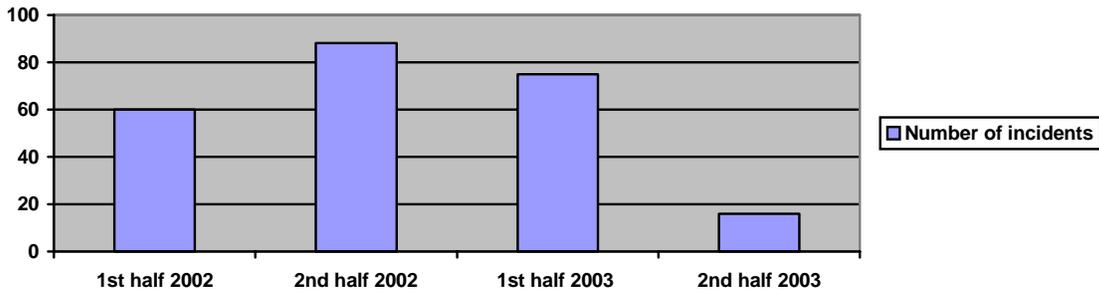
1. A Wyre Forest multi-agency Crime Concern training day was delivered to ensure that key agency staff across Wyre Forest possess the necessary skills to provide sustainable problem-solving. It also provided a valuable opportunity for networking to take place between Police, Council, Housing officers and voluntary sectors. Neighbourhood Watch and the Salvation Army were amongst those represented.
2. OCAG received appropriate training
3. The Beat Manager for Offmore / Comberton attended the National Crime Prevention course.

**ASSESSMENT**

Assessment has considered both hard data and interview feedback. Letters to the Chief Superintendent and press scanning has also helped provide softer feedback.

**OBJECTIVE : - TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

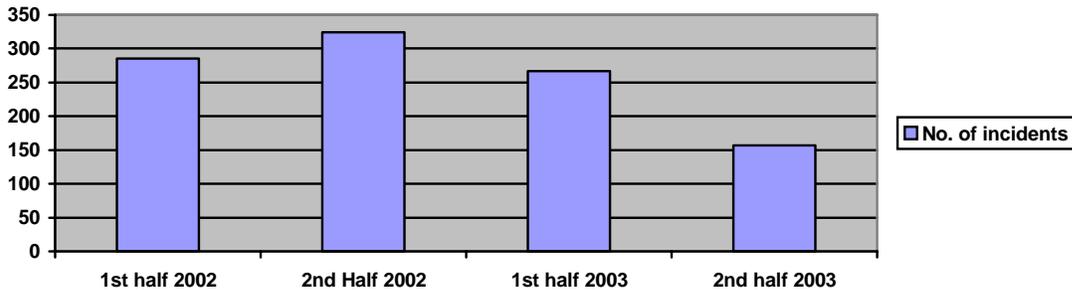
**Reduction in Disorder in Burcher Green (key location)**



West Mercia Constabulary POINT data

The figure above demonstrates an **82% reduction** in reported disorder in the Burcher Green area achieved through the multi-agency activities delivered throughout the project.

**Reduction in Disorder across whole Offmore / Comberton Ward**



The Project has thus far achieved a **41% reduction** across the whole of the ward. The longer-term environmental responses (park development and designing out opportunities) are continuing to be developed.

**OBJECTIVE: - TO EMPOWER THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Community has established Offmore / Comberton Action Group (OCAG) an active, dynamic group which operates without the need for direct Police involvement.

**OBJECTIVE: - TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE LIVING IN, VISITING AND WORKING IN THE OFFMORE / COMBERTON ESTATE, KIDDERMINSTER**



**Relieved resident: Betty LOWE who says behaviour in Burcher Green has greatly improved**

Picture: CORDELIA NOBLE

**Key evaluation quotes from community members / residents/ business owners**

**Residents**

*"It's a lot better they don't hang around the shops anymore."*

*"It's a lot better, the group has gone."*

*"It's a lot better now. We used to have the kids hanging around. We've had a lot of help from the Police."*

*"We know the Police on first name terms."*

*"It's really a lot better now."*

*"It's quiet over here."*

**Business Owners / Shopkeepers**

*"Trade has really improved."*

*"We don't get any problems anymore."*

*"PC Chris Greaves knows all the local youths and residents."*

*"The kids are not hanging around and abusing people who go past anymore, it is a much quieter area because of the ASBO's."*

*"We went through hell. We had three windows smashed during the night and we would often find eggs smashed all over the front, but we are back in business and people are safe to come here again."*

**Local Stakeholders**

*"It affected people coming to midweek evenings at the church. We certainly lost bookings because of their behaviour. We had windows smashed by footballs and the roof was damaged. I think the Police singled out the ringleaders of a wider group, although the ASBO's seem to have had a wider effect."*

Rev Hugh Burton.

*"As ward councillors, we went from receiving five or six phone calls a day to almost zero and there's been a huge improvement in public confidence and happiness ... at one stage, most of the people living in the bungalows in Burcher Green had applied for a transfer but all of these have been withdrawn."*

Local Councillor

*"PC Greaves has worked long and hard to help us and other local organisations in the area to achieve a safer environment for us all to live in. ... We have had a very bad anti-social behaviour problem in this area. Like so many areas nowadays, but with PC Greaves and other's commitment, help, sound advice and knowledge this problem has now all but been eradicated."*

Chair of the Tenant's Consultative Committee



*"I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the role of the local Police in improving conditions in this area."*

*"..our appreciation of the work, enthusiasm and support of PC Fearnall whose contribution to our work has been absolutely invaluable."*

*Mike Oborski Local Councillor*

*"We still have a lot to do make sure that the changes planned for Offmore and Comberton come to fruition. This will require partnerships with many organisations including the Police but most importantly the active involvement of residents and especially young people."*

Treasurer Offmore and Comberton Action Group

### **Press Coverage**



A number of relevant press reports providing valuable open source comment / evaluation are held on file.

### **Police Community Consultative Group (PCCG)**

The PCCG was used to receive feedback from the community with particular reference made about the Halloween "DO NOT DISTURB" posters distributed in the local free newspaper. The posters were regarded by respondents as a resounding success and helped reduce unwanted trick and treaters.

### **Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's)**

Five ASBO's were successfully applied for against the key identified individuals. This represented a success in numerous respects. Having been in a position where people were unwilling to make statements, trust and confidence was restored and statements given. The orders not only stifled the behaviour of the recipients but associates also curtailed their activities and the whole general level of behaviour improved. One of the five breached his order and was promptly arrested and sentenced to three months. This reinforced the strength of the ASBO's and effectively marketed the process to the wider community.

### **Letters**

A number of letters have been received supporting the activity and results, which are held on record.

**HOW DOES THIS PROJECT FIT INTO AN OVERALL APPROACH TO PROBLEM-SOLVING?**

The Wyre Forest District is completing a West Mercia project into delivering a more problem-orientated approach. New problem-solving forms have been devised and the fore-mentioned Training Day used to develop skills. PDR priorities relate solely to reduction targets and allocating officers to specific wards has enhanced ownership of areas. The multi-agency reduction seasonal Policing plans extend across the whole of the North Worcestershire Division and a problem-orientated ethos continues to be cemented.

Three further groups have been since been established in the District.

In terms of displacement the other Kidderminster wards, have achieved a 13% reduction (2002-2003) in reported disorder. The force continues to introduce a problem-solving ethos in line with the findings of the Best Value Review of Territorial Policing (2001).

The new Force " Crime, Disorder and Re-assurance policy" includes USG as a tactical response, and the Rural Safety Initiative is mentioned on the Home Office "Fear of Crime" toolkit. The project firmly meets the Government's desire to deliver a citizen focused approach, engage communities and encourage active citizenship.