



Tilley Awards 2004

Probationers and Problem Oriented Policing

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SUMMARY

In 2001 the Police at Whitehaven began to implement the principles of Problem Oriented Policing, (P.O.P) enabling them to be more effective and efficient in the service that they delivered. Initially P.O.P was to be implemented by the towns' Community Team, with the intention of cascading P.O.P philosophies to other officers within the station.

When the Community Officers began to try to influence others within the station, to adopt a problem oriented approach, by showing the benefits of P.O.P. they came up against varying degrees of resistance. There was reluctance to change from a reactive style of Policing. There was also a degree of cynicism from the majority of officers.

Due to this resistance, new ways forward were sought, and a decision was made to focus on new officers who would be easier to influence and therefore more receptive to P.O.P philosophies. Eventually Probationer Constables were 'targeted,' during the first five weeks of their operational career.

Instead of ten weeks of reactive Policing during the accompanied patrol phase, training was split into five weeks of P.O.P and five weeks of reactive Policing. There were concerns that this approach may have a negative impact on the number of core skills a probationer could attain by the end of their ten-week accompanied phase. This was not the case.

A 'hands on approach' to training was adopted.

The intentions: -

- To promote the ethos of P.O.P
- Give new officers practical experience of P.O.P methods at the earliest opportunity
- Give practical experience of Policing methods, which could not be achieved by carrying out reactive police work

The results of the project have shown that P.O.P has been promoted within the station and is now being utilised as part of everyday Policing within the town. Officers' trained under this system now use P.O.P to address problems as they arise.

By moving away from ten weeks of purely reactive Policing, during the tutored phase of training, to five involving P.O.P then five of reactive Police work, there has been a significant improvement in the numbers of core skills achieved by a Probationer Constable. There has also been an improvement in standards overall.

Due to the initial success in the way training in P.O.P has developed Probationer Constables, the project has continued and is now being adopted throughout the BCU.

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SCANNING

Whitehaven Police Station is situated within the Western Area BCU of Cumbria Constabulary. This serves two Council areas, Copeland and Allerdale. Whitehaven town is served by approximately thirty-five uniformed officers' split in to six shifts. Included in this number is a five-officer Community Team.

A Community Team was developed in April 2001, to provide a Problem Oriented and Intelligence Led Policing approach. It was intended that this approach would be adopted and implemented to support the 'Borough shifts' within the town, thereby placing a problem solving philosophy at the heart of policing the town.

By December 2001 the Community Officers' were carrying out work on twelve separate P.O.P initiatives. These dealt with a wide variety of community related issues. Despite trying to sell the P.O.P approach, through demonstrating the benefits it had, there was a great reluctance to change. The majority of officers within the station were unwilling to become involved in anything other than reactive Police work.

Three of the officers' within the Community Team were Tutor Constables. This resulted in occasional 'attachments' of Probationer Constables so that they could gain the necessary competencies relating to community issues that are required for their Personal Development Profiles (PDP)

The current style of Probationer training concentrates on a purely reactive approach from day one of an officer's career. No training is given in a problem solving approach. This had caused attachments to the Community Team to be divisive and was seen as a chance to have core skills 'signed off' and not as a chance to learn.

ANALYSIS

We began to look at why a P.O.P approach was not being adopted within the station, by the majority of officers', notional evidence was gathered which indicated these reasons. New initiatives to Policing, not just P.O.P, were generally met within the Service with a mixture of suspicion and cynicism.

We're all Problem Solvers at Whitehaven! Aren't we?

In 1998 Cumbria Constabulary adopted the Intelligence Led Policing (ILP) model, several years later officers at ground level were still unsure as to what ILP was. No guidance had been given at the outset. By 2001 P.O.P was the new way forward, once again there had been a failure to tell anyone what it actually was. The SARA model had been adopted. This failure was evident when the submission of a 'SARA form' requesting analysis from the Area intelligence unit, led to an accusation of Whitehaven officers setting up their own intelligence unit!

As an Area there was the ability to support a P.O.P approach, through the use of analysts etc, but the introduction of P.O.P was left to individual officers who had a genuine interest in employing its' methods therefore small pockets of problem solving existed throughout the Area.

Within force one Area had gone to the extent of setting up a team to introduce and support problem solving.

At Whitehaven the P.O.P approach to Policing was implemented mid 2001. Initially, this was introduced by the Community Team, as the Area and the Force began to move towards a Community based Problem Solving approach in its' policing response. The Western Area Commander supported the use of P.O.P. by all officers.

The initial approach involved officers' from the Community Team at Whitehaven researching the methods and philosophies of P.O.P by gathering evidence of best practice from other Forces'. It could be seen that P.O.P, was used worldwide to good effect, and was a method of policing which was widely adopted and encouraged.

In particular we began to look at the experience and practices adopted by Lancashire and Cleveland Constabularies. We also looked at the methods adopted by the Area, which had employed a problem solving team.

By adopting the best practice of these Forces', the Community officers, with partnership agencies, had started to implement P.O.P to address problems as they arose. By doing this it had been thought that as the P.O.P show signs of success, especially with regards to the need to attend repeat calls, there would be a diffusion of benefits for other officers within the station.

It had also been thought that with training, the majority of officers would begin to implement the problem solving approach in their daily work. It soon became apparent that this was a misplaced belief.

Borough shifts within the town carried out a purely reactive style of Policing. There was no emphasis whatsoever placed on P.O.P or Community related Policing.

Resistance to change

Although we expected the majority of officers to adopt the methods of P.O.P in daily Policing, it would have been wrong to think this could have been achieved overnight.

The fact that we had been told that 'we are all problem solvers at Whitehaven', was a very naïve approach. Some thought P.O.P could be implemented without informing officers what it was. If officers weren't informed how could we expect them to implement problem-solving methods?

As problem solving was left to interested individuals no training package was available within the Force. We therefore looked to best practice adopted by other Forces' throughout the Country who had delivered training to their Officers. A simple package was formatted to meet local needs. We began to try to implement this training within the station, using local problems to emphasise the benefits a P.O.P approach would bring, thereby reducing the need for a responsive style, giving officers more time to concentrate on problem solving.

An example used to emphasise the benefits was: -

Scanning

Numerous complaints about disorder and under age drinking were being generated from the area of Castle Park in Whitehaven.

Analysis

- Incidents occurred mainly on a Friday and Saturday night.
- Incidents tended to occur during the early evening.
- The ages of those involved ranged from ten to eighteen years.
- Alcohol was a factor.
- Two off-licenses were situated close to the Park.
- The park had CCTV coverage; this was ineffective due to the position of trees.
- Shrubs and bushes gave cover from view.

Response

- A high profile Operation was initiated as a short-term measure to detect offenders and deter youths from misusing the park.
- Awareness of the problem was raised with the two licensees.
- Work with the local Council saw trees and shrubs being cut back to give improved CCTV coverage and improved view from outside the park.
- The Council provided CCTV signs.

Assessment

- The numbers of incidents and complaints were reduced.

With this example we were able to show how P.O.P worked for us and its' benefits. Despite this there was still reluctance and resistance by the borough shifts to employ the methods of P.O.P.

Why resist the change to P.O.P?

When we asked this question of Officers, the common themes, which ran through most answers could be summarised in the following responses: -

- "It (P.O.P) is no different to what we do now"
- "It's just government jargon"

- “It won’t work”
- “It (Policing) is not broken so why fix it”
- “P.O.P will go away when whoever thought of it gets promoted”

From these responses it was realised that there would be great difficulty in changing the negative mindset of Officers who resisted change. In the past they had seen numerous Policing Initiatives fall by the wayside for a variety of reasons that generally resulted in the Police Service reverting to it’s reactive role.

One of the major causes of negativity was the introduction of ILP in the circumstances, which have already been outlined.

In P.O.P we had tried and tested methods of policing which had been ongoing for several years, not just in the UK but also worldwide. We had local examples of the benefits of P.O.P and despite this we still experienced the resistance to any other type of policing being used, other than the ‘Fire Brigade’ style we had become accustomed to.

Although training in the methods of P.O.P had been offered to officers at Whitehaven there was still reluctance to accept it. This left a cycle that had to be broken.

When analysing the best methods of training, it was found that the evidence of best learning was to learn while doing. We then began to look at ways of introducing a ‘hands on’ training approach to problem solving. This also impacts on the need to remove Officers from front line policing.

Probationer Attachments and Development

The current system of Probationer Training is based upon a Probationers development over a two-year period.

The operational phase of the police work is carried out at a tutor station over a period of approximately 18 months. During this time, the Probationer spends a ten-week period in company with a tutor. At the end of the ten-week period there is an assessment, measured against core skills achieved. A minimum of 80% of these skills has to be attained. At the end of two years, an assessment of the same skills is made. At this stage 100% have to be attained. Additional skills are also assessed at this point and 80% of these skills have to be attained.

During the 18 months of operational policing, a Probationer would carry out a number of attachments including:- Mobile Support Group, Criminal Investigation Department, Intelligence Units, Interview Teams and Dog Section. They would also have three, two-week foundation courses.

Attachments to the Community Team were driven by the need to have community, based skills “signed off” within the PDP, as they could not be achieved by carrying out reactive policing. These attachments were purely divisive.

Many supervisors felt that Probationers should learn reactive policing from day one of their careers. P.O.P was seen as something to ‘specialise’ in later. They were also concerned that the core skills required could not be attained while attached to a team carrying out Community policing. Once again this can be attributed to the fact that unless officers went and found out for themselves what problem solving was they were ignorant of its’ methods. One person described problem solving as some form of elite secret club.

In September 2001 a Probationer completed a five-week attachment to the Community Team to address issues of youth disorder on a local skate park, by using a Problem Solving approach. The Officer worked on this initiative and on other initiatives, which were ongoing at the time. After the attachment the Officer continued to work on the P.O.P initiative whilst working as part of the borough shift. The project successfully addressed the problem and the Officer began to work on other P.O.P initiatives as part of normal policing.

Factors such as self- motivation and enthusiasm no doubt played a part in the success of this attachment. It did show that with 'hands on' training an Officer could learn the P.O.P principles and then apply them on what would normally be a reactive shift.

This attachment also confirmed to us that the Officers to 'target' and who would be more likely to employ the principles of P.O.P were those at the early stage of their police career. They would be easier to influence and more likely to employ P.O.P principles as they had not become bogged down in reactive policing.

Although a Problem Solving Policing philosophy, which was community based was encouraged, Probationer Constables did not receive any form of input on P.O.P. Therefore new Officers were learning nothing other than reactive policing methods, from a majority of Officers who were interested in nothing other than reactive policing.

In 2002 the publication of an HMIC Report regarding probationer training, contained a number of recommendations, the main one which would impact upon the start of this project was the recommendation for Forces to initiate Tutor Units to improve probationer training.

The problem solving methods at Whitehaven were regarded as good practice. As we looked to become increasingly community focused there was an urgent need to begin to break the cycle of reactive policing.

RESPONSE

Through scanning and analysis, it was realised that the chain, which led a majority of Officers refusing to accept change, had to be broken.

In implementing changes, it was apparent that it would be difficult, in the majority of cases, to change the mindset of those Officers who had become accustomed to reactive policing methods and who had seen other policing initiatives fall by the wayside.

A solution was sought whereby the mindset of those who had not experienced reactive policing would be influenced and encouraged to adopt a P.O.P approach.

We identified that the people to target and who there could be greater influence over were Probationers Constables, at the early stages of their policing careers. The current probationer, training package influenced probationers to police in the reactive style we already have. Eventually a minority could be changed into a majority.

The initial intentions were:

- To promote the ethos of P.O.P
- Give new officers practical experience of P.O.P methods at the earliest opportunity
- Give practical experience of policing methods, which could not be experienced by carrying out reactive policing

Focus on new officers

The HMIC report presented an ideal solution to solve the problem of the resistance to focusing attention on new officers. Through the analysis we had identified the officers to 'target' and this now presented us with a stronger case for breaking from normal tutoring methods.

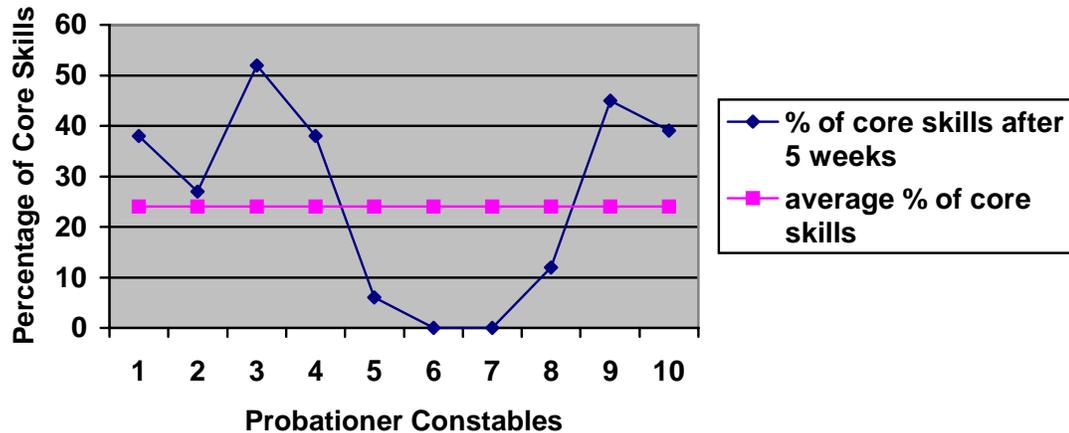
Three of the Officers within the Community Team at Whitehaven were Tutor Constables. Whitehaven does not receive any more than three probationers in one intake. The idea of Probationers spending their first weeks of policing as part of the Community Team was 'sold' to the local management team and it was agreed that a trial would take place.

Probationers, during their ten-week accompanied phase of training would spend the first five weeks of this period with the Community Team. They would then spend the second five weeks attached to their respective shift, in a reactive role.

The Area Training Officer was involved in setting up the processes for the new methods, which were to be adopted. The training officer had identified that as well as introducing the methods of P.O.P to Probationer Constables; there was also be an opportunity to improve the overall standards in the early stages of development, improved standards was another area highlighted by the HMIC.

The trial commenced in April 2002. To measure the success of the new tutoring approach the percentage of 'core skills' achieved by ten Probationer Constables, tutored at Whitehaven immediately prior to the start of the project were obtained.

The chart below gives the percentage of core skills achieved by those ten probationers prior to the trial, these were used as a control sample [for baseline comparison.]



Officers attended who were posted to Whitehaven at day one of their operational career were introduced to a community-based style of P.O.P. The officers worked on 'live' problems thereby gaining a knowledge and understanding of P.O.P philosophies through a 'hands on' approach to learning thereby developing new skills.

Although in five weeks we could not expect probationers to immediately implement their newfound knowledge, they were encouraged to adopt a pro-active problem solving approach and look for the bigger picture, as opposed to a reactive response.

The five weeks of tutoring in P.O.P methods focused on encouraging Probationer Constables to look for:-

- The underlying conditions which generated problems
- When those conditions were identified, employ P.O.P methods to address them

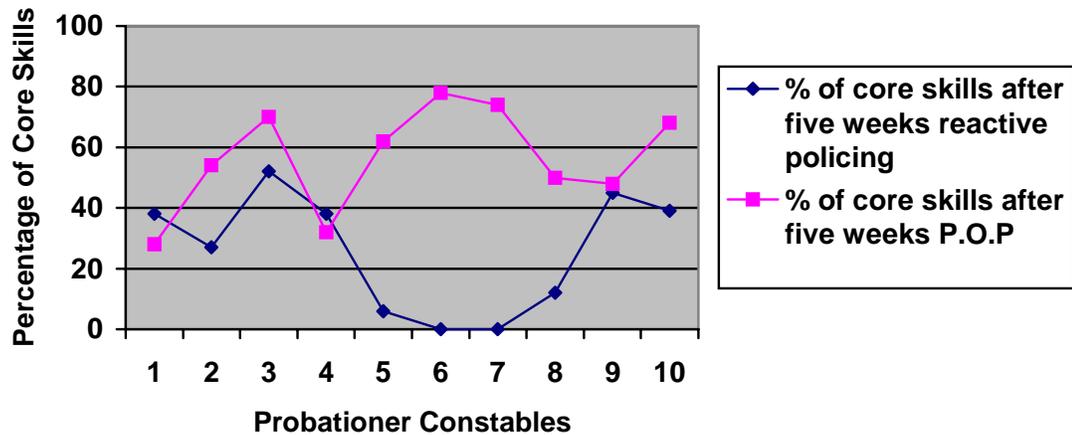
An initial assessment of the project was carried out after five probationers had worked with the team. The initial assessment appeared to produce good results and ensured that the project continued.

By carrying out this initial assessment two concerns were immediately discounted

- Probationer development will be hindered
- Core skills will not be attained

Both concerns were closely linked, as a failure to attain the core skills would hinder development. This was found not to be the case.

By October 2002 ten probationers had been tutored through this method, a second assessment was carried out and some surprising results were achieved, The results ensured that these methods of tutoring continued at Whitehaven.



On average the number of Core skills gained by each group of ten doubled from 25% of skills gained through reactive policing to 50% of skills gained through problem solving methods.

Whitehaven Inspector, Gary Slater and Area Community Safety Inspector, Jeff Downham had fully supported this method of tutoring from the outset, as they could see the benefits it had. Within Copeland an agreement was reached whereby all probationers who were posted to the other three stations, which are rural, in that area would spend their initial five weeks tutored at Whitehaven in P.O.P methods.

However when they attempted to sell this method throughout the rest of the BCU and especially Workington, which is the areas other tutor station, they were met with similar levels of resistance to that which had been experienced at the outset in Whitehaven. One of the major causes of this resistance was the 'its' not my idea, so I'm not doing it' mentality.

Local Policing Teams

In April 2003 Cumbria Police Authority approved the recruiting of an extra 300 officers for the Force to be employed in Local Policing Teams, which are community focused. The recruiting campaign for this, encouraged officers to come and be involved in its community-focused problem solving approach to policing. Some of those recruits will be deployed to Western Area. It was realised that if something weren't done to promote problem solving then the Area would have new recruits doing more of what is already being done.

Within the BCU the Area Commander directed that the method adopted at Whitehaven had also to be adopted at stations within the Allerdale area.

To support new officers, a one-day problem-solving course was formatted which is delivered to Area officers. The course involves input on the use of SARA and the Problem Analysis Triangle, and emphasizes the need to look for the underlying trends causing problems. The use of problem solving is encouraged to deal with 'street level' problems.

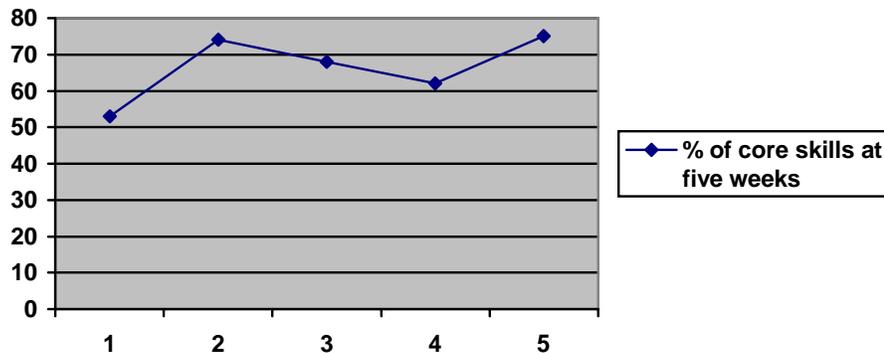
Within the probationer PDP the need to address Area policing objectives have been replaced by a need to address such objectives through problem solving methods. To ensure this is done probationers then leave the course and have to implement a P.O.P approach to poling which they then present to their colleagues at stage 6B, eight to ten months later.

ASSESSMENT

The first ten

The success of the first ten probationers ensured that the project continued at Whitehaven and was developed to include officers posted to other parts of Copeland.

An assessment of officers trained in this method was carried in December 2003 showing that a high number of core skills are still being attained at the week five, review point as the chart below shows. This is achieved by training in a problem-solving environment.



The initial intentions outlined in the Response focused on new Officers learning the methods of P.O.P and the benefits this brings at the earliest stage in their careers.

Increasing the core skills of probationers was never the intention of this project. This has occurred as a natural consequence of training officers to use P.O.P.

Mrs. Graves, the Area Training Officer, also noticed the following: -

- A wider range of events were being experienced within the initial five weeks
- Probationers are more aware of the principals of P.O.P and are more willing to use them
- An improved assessment of the Probationers is given at the five week stage
- The quality of evidence contained within the PDP has improved

The ten Probationers who were assessed in October 2002 as a result of this project were given the opportunity to improve through the benefits of learning under the P.O.P and reactive policing environment.

Of the ten, one preferred to be purely reactive, on admission this was as a result of peer pressure. The other nine accepted the principals of P.O.P, could see the benefits P.O.P created, and to varying degrees use P.O.P philosophies in they're daily policing.

The successful results achieved ensured that the project continued, not just at Whitehaven Police Station but also now includes all officers posted within the Copeland Area of the BCU.

It would be easy to say that Probationers will use P.O.P philosophies and leave it at that. However, we now have evidence of those trained under this method, implement P.O.P to address community issues such as retail theft, youth disorder and violent crime.

The following P.O.P approach has been adopted by one of the Probationers to address a problem of retail theft:-

Scanning, An increase in the number of thefts from shops

Analysis, Revealed the increase related to theft of handbags from within the towns' supermarkets.

Response, High profile patrols, work with storeowners to raise awareness through a poster campaign to target offenders

Analysis, Reduction in incidents

The Probationer, who carried out the initial attachment, has since gone on to receive a Good Policing Award, as recognition of the results achieved through her Problem Oriented approach to policing in Whitehaven. Rewarding success has been one of the ways that the Area Commander has promoted P.O.P.

P.c. Jim Lloyd says that problem solving produces better results than reactive policing.

As a result of the project the following Success Factors have been identified:-

- Targeting the right audience for training.
- Learning whilst doing, the hands on approach

P.c. Lorraine Murphy who was tutored on the unit and has since returned as a Community Officer after being employed on a response shift says the problem solving approach encourages self motivation and creates job satisfaction, by getting to the heart of the problem rather just dealing with what you are initially confronted with.

It is too early to assess what impact training all probationers will have but in training Area officers enabling them to offer support it became apparent that the majority were now keen to implement P.O.P as they had seen it in action and could see what benefits it can bring. Perhaps at the outset at Whitehaven we attempted to train people too early, as a gradual implementation appears to have generated more interest. This was evident when delivering the P.O.P course as the courses, which were organized, were oversubscribed.

P.c. Helen Whelan said that it was 'a course that is absolutely relevant to my role'

P.c. Kerry Jamieson said after the course that, 'problem solving is now no longer a problem.'

Problem solving may not have been a problem had someone explained its' principles at the outset of its' implementation

Realising Limitations

This approach has worked well and continues at Whitehaven and now in other areas of Copeland, as well as being rolled out within the BCU, therefore it continues. It is not a method, which can be implemented overnight.

It has changed the method of tutoring to the benefit of probationers. This is through improved results and to the benefit of the community, as P.O.P is increasingly being implemented to address its concerns.

It is impossible to say what will happen in years to come, and whether those probationers who have experienced P.O.P will continue to use its' principles or revert back to reactive policing methods.

Over the coming years the Force is committed to the implementation of Local Policing Teams and will recruit several hundred new officers as a consequence. We have shown that there is potential to build on this projects' success and turn a minority of officers using P.O.P philosophies into the majority, by influencing officers at the earliest point in their careers.

Inspector Slater – Whitehaven Police said:-

“The Officers tutored by the unit demonstrate different policing skills and it is those Officers we will recruit for our Local Policing Teams. They are more willing to accept responsibility for problems they encounter”

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