

**Lancashire Constabulary
Tilley Awards Entry 2004**

'EXHALE'

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EXHALE - Summary

Woodnook is a small ward (population 2300) within Accrington, classed as one of the highest deprived wards in Lancashire. As such it has benefited intervention of Council Wardens patrolling the streets (2) financed by Government Regeneration Money. One CBM is dedicated to the ward.

Booth Street consists of densely populated terraced houses (34 premises). Undesirable tenants at four addresses had taken over the street. Residents suffered extreme Anti Social behaviour, Criminal Damage, Abusive Language, Drunken behaviour and drug dealing. Attempts at reasoning by residents resulted in violence and harassment.

Response officers deal with individual incidents. EXHALE needed to solve the problem using partners. Talking was not enough. The war –weary residents needed a co-ordinated, hard-hitting long-term end to the problem. Failure was not an option.

The CBM and Wardens joined Woodnook Forum, a local group, gaining the trust of residents, who imparted information on key offenders.

ASBO's were prepared, but not served....yet..

In a partnership with Hyndburn Council, an empty premises was utilised to install Covert technical equipment to gain more evidence.

Housing Associations /private landlords owning problem premises now obtaining eviction orders for tenants. These were not served....yet..

A high-ranking Police officer attended Woodnook Forum to address their concerns, offering reassurance that Exhale would be successful.

In a 'Grande finale', Exhale culminated in four target addresses being simultaneously entered under power of warrant. The residents watched from blacked out vehicles as we returned the streets to them! Large quantities of illegal drugs were recovered-.key targets arrested.

For maximum effect, the three pronged attack began.....

- Offenders were charged-
- Only now , with the offenders vulnerable, did the landlords strike, visiting them at the Custody office, serving Evictions!
- It was only now with offenders charged that we obtained Lancashire's first ever ex-parte Anti social behaviour orders and served them on them!!!

Overnight, the offenders were gone with prohibitions not to return! The area returned to a peace unknown for months! Letters of thanks flooded in. Exhale identified that working together we are a formidable team. Timing was vital. Never did the offenders think they would receive charges, evictions and ASBO's all at once. NEVER would they rule a street again!

The blue print was set- a formidable partnership to be rolled out on others foolishly believing they have the right to impact on the quality of life of their neighbours.

Operation Exhale

The area and the background

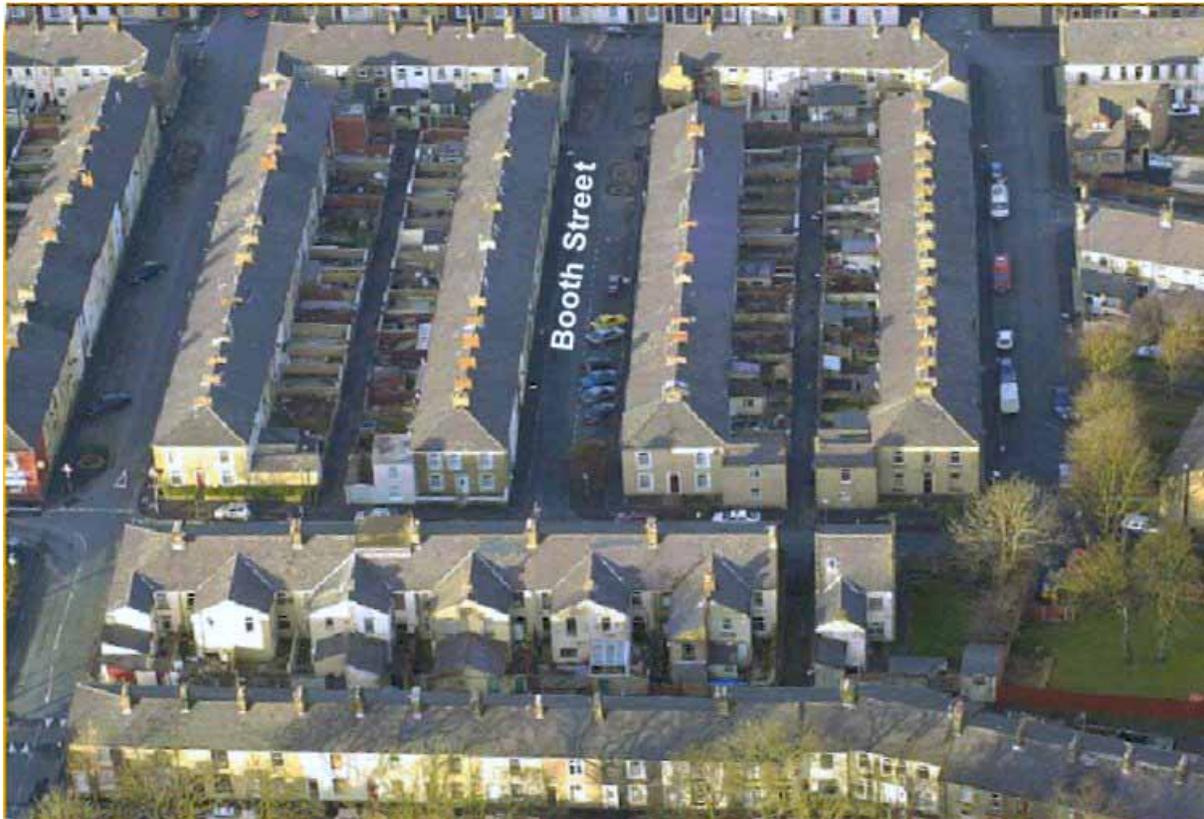
Woodnook, population approximately 2300 is situated in the inner urban area close to Accrington town centre, in Lancashire.(see appendix A)

In July 2001, Hyndburn Community Wardens were introduced to the area, and several other 'deprived Wards', to patrol the area and in particular to concentrate on environmental and anti-social behaviour issues.

The Wardens are not accredited with Police powers; therefore their intervention in anti-social behaviour matters is limited to reporting incidents to the Police. They are often classed as the 'eyes and ears' of the community. Additionally much of their work is utilised in relation to environmental issues in the area, such as rubbish, fly tipping etc.

For many months the Wardens identified that they were receiving complaints from residents in the area relating to anti-social neighbours. Despite details of the incidents being passed to the Police, the long-term consequences of 'response only' policing was resulting in problem tenants obtaining a foothold within the community. Analysis of Police incident logs at this time depicts a high level of community-based complaints

(See appendix B)



Seven arrested in drugs raid

SEVEN people were arrested during a series of drugs raids in the Woodnook area of Accrington last Friday afternoon.

Officers from Accrington Police swooped on four addresses in Booth Street and a large amount of cannabis, worth several hundred pounds, was recovered from one of the properties.

Smaller pieces of cannabis were found at two other properties and more class B drugs were found in a car parked on the street.

Some of those arrested received police cautions for possessing cannabis, while others are on police bail pending forensic analysis of the drugs seized.

PC Lynne Williams, the community beat manager for the area, said that the war-

Dealing will simply not be tolerated in Woodnook, says community beat bobby

rants were the result of lengthy police inquiries into alleged drug-dealing in the area.

She said: "Gathering the necessary information for this operation has been a lengthy process but it has paid off and we have received the results we have been looking for."

"I am determined to help this area return to the peace-

ful place that it was previously. Drug-dealing will not be tolerated in Woodnook."

"Anybody who thinks they can continually commit anti-social behaviour in the community will find that in the end they will be brought to justice."

She added that she would now be working closely with landlords and eviction notices would be issued at

problem addresses.

Sergeant Claire Holbrook, co-ordinator for Accrington Police, said that 34 officers had been involved in carrying out the simultaneous raids.

She added: "This is not the first and will not be the last series of drugs warrants that we will execute in Hyndburn. Drug-dealers are not welcome here."

The pattern Emerging....

A Community Beat Manager was placed in post in the area in October 2002. The officer was enlisted to a far greater area than Woodnook, which was only a small part of one of her three wards. The officer became involved with her community to the best of her ability, but alone with the Wardens there was only so much intervention she could deal with. The CBM was aware of the problem of drug dealing on Booth Street, but not of the extent of anti social behaviour and intimidation that accompanied it. A drugs warrant was executed, but did not result in any convictions.

It was apparent that complaints were being received, but a deeper understanding of the problem was required.

In the interim period, response officers dealt with the majority of the public's complaints from the area. At this time a large investigation involving under cover Police Officers was taking place into the wider problem of drug dealing in Woodnook, and the CBM was in the unenviable position of having to keep a low profile on this one issue whilst still having to reassure the public. The drug dealing operation (part of Operation Nimrod) was successful, but unfortunately did not have Booth Street within its remit and both this and the fragmented reaction that response policing provided had led to a lack of confidence in the Police to deal with their specific problem.

During a public meeting held in Woodnook in July 2003 residents voiced serious concerns relating to reduction of quality of life issues on another street in Woodnook. Within this clamour for action against a totally separate group of individuals, a small number of lone voices were raised about the 'forgotten street' ie Booth Street. There followed a period of some intense activity looking to address the other problems and the residents of Booth Street and its immediate surrounding area began to feel even more isolated and disillusioned.

This can clearly be seen in appendix B, which shows that in August 2003 the residents called us **less** frequently presumably because they did not feel we would solve the problem.

The seeds had however been sowed in the Community Beat Mangers mind and a second meeting was organised by the Community Beat Officer, held at Accrington Police Station and targeted specifically at the residents of Booth Street. This was held at the end of August 2003.

This was the key meeting and for the first time it truly highlighted the **full** extent of the Booth Street problems. It also led to the Community Beats Department at Accrington making a commitment to **them**, a promise to deliver and have some hope for a better quality of life. It was the tentative start at the rebuilding of trust. It was also the beginning of the most important partnership in tackling the problem ie the one between the Police and the residents.

It was these two significant meetings that resulted in **Operation Exhale** being developed. Its primary objective was to apply the law and to improve the quality of life of those within the immediate vicinity of Booth Street.

Its secondary objective is very important. The Community of Woodnook had begun to pull together in many areas and in the face of some very real social and economic problems it was beginning to address some of its troubles. The Police had played an important part in that process, but public confidence in such a small enclave can be eroded very quickly if problems like Booth Street remained unchecked. In short, it could potentially become an unchecked problem that could seriously undermine all the hard work that had gone before it.

Evidence Gathering

Analysis was obtained by a close alliance being developed between two Wardens and The Community Beat Manager.

Anti social behaviour forms were formulated by the team to identify the problems that were of uppermost concern to the residents in the area. These were completed at every opportunity with the help of the complainants. Residents were assured that they could remain anonymous and the information gathered was added to the overall intelligence picture. Secondly, these would add to the weight of intelligence that could be used to obtain Anti Social Behaviour Orders should they become necessary.

The anti-social forms built upon the picture already gathered by previous meetings with residents. They helped identify four main addresses that were occupied on the street and identified by name, the occupants and their activities. The reports made frightening reading, with some residents resorting to stress counselling, after continuous harassment. Several had had repeat damage to their premises, suffered physical and mental assault, and lived in constant fear of leaving their addresses and vehicles unattended. Several occupants had given up their employment such was the upset that their home life was in.

The main protagonists openly were controlling the streets around Booth Street. Open-air parties were being held during which time the street was taped off, and those entering 'without permission' were subject to attacks. Police officers were openly challenged as to the reason for their presence on the street and at one stage a police horse was even attacked by a drunken male. It was also clear that the level of intimidation was a deliberate policy aimed at supporting a lucrative drug dealing business.

Drug dealing was commonplace attracting clients from other Wards to the area. Many of the reports sited the dealing as a major cause of the disorder in the area.

It was decided that a multi partnership approach would be the best option to deal with deal with the problems.

What was needed

It was imperative that the solution was sustainable in the long-term.

This meant that the plan was required to return;

- ❑ peace to the area-
- ❑ to reduce calls from the public complaining about the area,
- ❑ to reduce violent crime in the area.
- ❑ anti social behaviour needed to be drastically reduced.

Above all, it needed to be a blueprint for Policing Excellence in the future, as the problem is one that can be seen on housing estates and wards throughout the Force.

Exhale

The ideology behind 'Exhale' was that the problems needed to be solved, rather than 'patched',

Exhale was the planned goal for the members of Booth Street and the surrounding streets -

to be able to breath out, to relax, to have their lives back.

It would only work if all the agencies involved became one tool – to work with dramatic effect.

Woodnook Forum

The Woodnook forum group was similarly embraced. The worst effected residents agreed to come to the meetings to update and be updated on the project. The meetings were held at a local church, which is centrally based in Woodnook. Through close liaison with the forum, the Wardens and the Community Beat manager gained the trust of some of the worst affected neighbours, who provided detailed intelligence regarding the target addresses.

This growth of trust in the Police can be seen in appendix B through in the month of September and October were the calls from the public began to reflect the problems occurring. Finally the resident were beginning to trust the Police to take ownership of their problems.

The Community had suffered at the hands of these offenders for months. Patience was wearing thin.

Through our partnership with the forum we maintained communication with the residents, and trusted residents were given detailed information, relating to the Exhale Operation. Our intention was always that all the partners, including the residents, would solve the problem together. This often meant in the early stages that it was explained to the residents that they had to do their bit to assist. In this case, they did have to inform us of the events and issues that were occurring on the street.

This is where the Community Beat Officer comes into their own- an officer needs to be able to gain the trust of a very scared community and elicit accurate and recent information from them. The personality of the officer is vital component in this scenario.

The Lancashire Assistant Chief Constable was invited to attend the Woodnook Forum Meeting to discuss the issues with some of the residents who attended. We considered it of vast importance to make the forum understand how seriously we took their problems. We believe that this approach assisted the Community to be entirely behind Operation Exhale, giving it greater credibility. The community gave feedback to the station after the meeting that they felt that their problems were of genuine importance to the Police, who were not only listening to them, but planning the future.

Raising the profile - The Wardens and the Community Beat Managers.

A problem profile was commenced via Police SLEUTH targeting. This increased patrols in the area over a period of weeks and maintained a high visibility in the area. Further information of key targets was obtained in the area.

Covert technical evidence.

The Community Beat Officer, under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000 obtained authority for covert recording equipment. This resulted in camera equipment being placed in an observation post on the Street. This was all thanks to our partners at the Housing Association, who allocated the address for this purpose. Necessary evidence was collated which would later be used to connect the four addresses in drug dealing offences. Additionally anti social behaviour was recorded on a daily basis-vehicles hand brake turning (on this one way street at high speed), Abusive language etc, all which enhanced the information submitted for the Anti Social Behaviour Orders that were to come.

Housing Associations and Private Landlords

Exhale created a partnership between the key landlords who housed the identified targets. This included both private and Housing Association properties, all which were enthusiastic to assist. They expressed concern that the current problem tenants were lowering the standards of the area. To improve the area, they understood the necessity to work together. Both Housing Officers and the Police continued to gather evidence regarding unacceptable behaviour by the tenants.

As the information grew, the landlords agreed that they had sufficient evidence to commence formal proceedings against the tenants. The key to this was the supplying of a detailed Community Impact Statement by the Community Beat Manager. Eviction orders were in place, but by agreement, were not served.

Exhale required a 'day of reckoning' to achieve maximum impact.

New alliances were forged, with a communication panel. (Accredited Landlord project) being developed. This encouraged intelligence sharing between agencies and dealt with the issues of potential future tenants applications. The aim of this being to prevent similar scenarios in the future.

Community Strengthening – Community Email

The Community Beat Manager wished to reach a larger audience in her community. The Police Community Email was introduced to Woodnook in February 2003. This provided an update on the work of the Community Beat Managers, not just in this ward, but in all wards.

The Woodnook Community Beat Manager contributed to this fortnightly Police document, and ensured that residents with access to computers received it. Key members of the community were highlighted to spread the community email information to other residents not in a position to receive it. This would ensure that much of the community were aware that problems were being dealt with by the Police and their partner agencies.

The Woodnook Forum ensured that the information on Community Email was available to the effected residents. This helped other affected residents to come forward to assist with information. (The community email currently has over 250 recipients in Accrington , maintaining a much needed communication with the public).

Exhale – The Finale

On a cold morning in the beginning of November 2003, the culmination of several months work unfolded. A briefing consisted of all our partners: Housing, private landlords, Hyndburn Borough Council Wardens, Police.

We invited a minibus full of our partners, the brave residents, to come on our journey to return peace to their area. In 'blacked out' vans they could watch Exhale unfold. They could watch as all their efforts to assist us, and work as one with the Partners, became a reality...

Members of the media attended, to obtain footage of the Exhale day of reckoning, their brief being to maximise on the impact of Operation Exhale so that other such offenders would be aware of the consequences of believing you 'own' a street.

Four target addresses were entered by force under the power of warrants obtained under the misuse of drugs act 1971. Police Officers entered and searched the premises recovering large amounts of illegal drugs. All the identified targets, and several of their visitors were arrested.

Our partners the landlords were at hand, in consultation with us, to greet the target offenders as they arrived in the Police Custody Office at the Station. Finally, we served the Eviction orders on them, banning them from residing at their own addresses. The reasons were detailed and accurate from several months of joint collation, thus resulting in the lack of opposition that we received from the offenders to them. Our partners from the Housing Association and landlords kindly assisted us by securing the offenders houses shut as they were arrested and changing the locks.

The offenders were dealt with in custody for a variety of offences relating to the sale of illegal drugs over a period of months from the premises, and are awaiting a trial date.

Exhale --- The Twist

Whilst on police bail a twist in this tale occurred, where the main protagonists returned to Booth Street after their evictions and were seen to use derelict properties near to their previous residencies, in order to continue with their dealings. It was then that the groundwork initially undertaken with intelligence gathering reaped an immense reward. Patience was sought and because of our previous delivery, was achieved. The Lancashire police force solicitor was involved and there was a gathering of intelligence and evidence to obtain ex parte anti social behaviour orders in order to finally curtail the activities of a group who had considered themselves untouchable.

The first ever ex parte ASBO's were successfully obtained in Lancashire that day (See appendix D), with a wide range of prohibitions being set against the offenders- (see appendix D).

Some reservations about the addresses that they were now giving led to a visit by the housing benefits Officer, to further reinforce our ability to exchange information under the Crime and Disorder Act and to establish that there was a very powerful united front determined to stamp out this form of anti social behaviour.

Booth Street itself was now a market place without a stall. Persons were still arriving to buy drugs and posters were placed on the streets lampposts signed by the Community Beat Manager advertising that the selling and purchasing of drugs or anti social behaviour could result in Arrest, Eviction and ASBO's. It quickly became the quiet street that it deserved to be.

EXHALE RESULTS

Exhale identifies that throughout October 2003 complaint telephone calls to the Police station relating to Booth Street were at an all time high of 75 complaints being received in a one month period. Following on from the implementation of Exhale each month the numbers of calls received from the Booth Street Residents has steadily declined-

October 2003	75 calls
November 2003	15 calls
December 2003	07 calls
January 2004	07 calls
February 2004	04 calls (up to the 25/02/04)

This represents a reduction in 'ALL' calls of 73%.

With reference to calls received relating specifically to anti social behaviour, the results are even more dramatic.

Looking specifically at the four months prior to Exhale, the amount of calls received at the police station relating to antisocial behaviour was 46 (July 2003 to October 2003 inclusive).

After the interception of Exhale, 7 calls related to anti social behaviour were received (from November 2003 to February 2004 inclusive)

This evidences a dramatic reduction of 84%. (See appendix B)

In relation to crimes reported, again reductions can be clearly seen.

From July 2003 to October 2003, 6 complaints of assault were crimed from the residents of Booth Street.

From November 2003 to February 2004, 1 assault only was crimed from Booth Street, and this was a common assault only.

This evidences a reduction of 83% (See appendix C)

Similarly, criminal damage in the area reduced (Appendix B) from 7 offences reported in the initial period to 1 offence committed in the latter period.

This evidences a reduction of 85%. (See appendix C)

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of EXHALE, the community Beat Officer received excellent feedback from her residents. The attached quotes from letters received give an indication of the depth of feeling felt by the elated residents,

Letter received from J. Smith resident,

‘ What a difference to finally be able to sleep at night again without the stress and anxiety of it... peace!!! It is like music to our ears!!! ’

And....

Letter received from P. Gilbert, on behalf of the Woodnook Forum,

‘ ...This capable Officer has been such an asset in tackling serious crimes in the Woodnook area..’

And A. and R. Baxendale.

‘ ...For the first time for a long time, we hear residents and particularly children laughing and talking on the streets...refreshing and reassuring...’

The assessment of Operation Exhale evidences that the reduction in crime and calls from the residents in Woodnook is sustainable even after the passage of 4 months.

The impact has even gone beyond Woodnook. Other areas within Accrington suffering similar problems have had meetings with their CBM’s and CBM supervision. Residents from Booth Street have addressed these meetings and explained what can be achieved with trust, patience and commitment from the Police and their partners.

The partnership with landlords established has subsequently led to an interest expressed by them to buy up more of the derelict property in the area and monitor more closely the type of person offered accommodation there. They have seen the economic benefits of close partnership with a committed and capable Community Beat Manager.

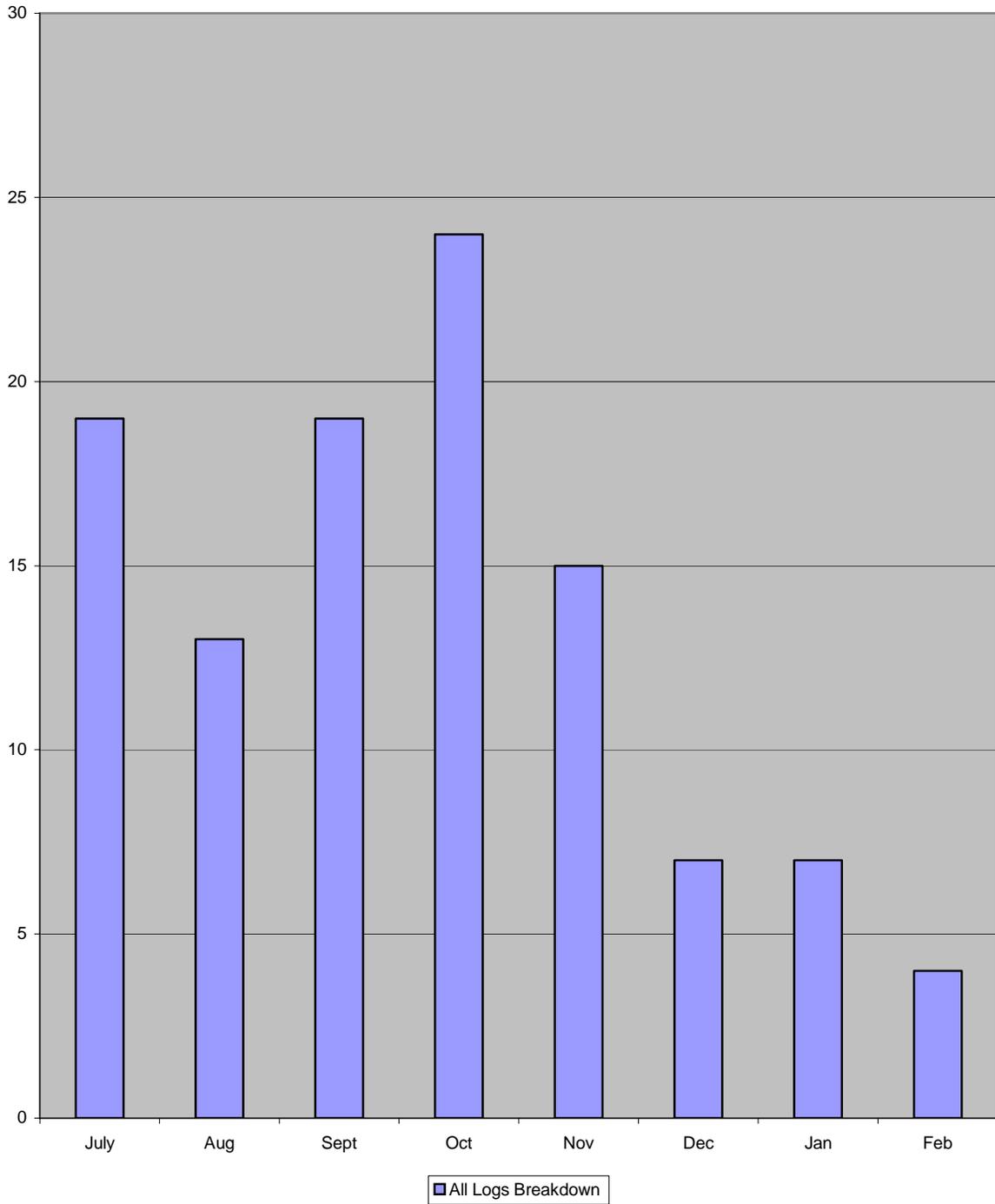
We can therefore truly say that Exhale was so much more than a simple drugs warrant. It -

- ❑ **HAS returned peace to the area**
- ❑ **HAS reduced calls from the public complaining about the area**
- ❑ **HAS reduced violent crime**
- ❑ **HAS reduced anti-social behaviour**
- ❑ **HAS improved public confidence**

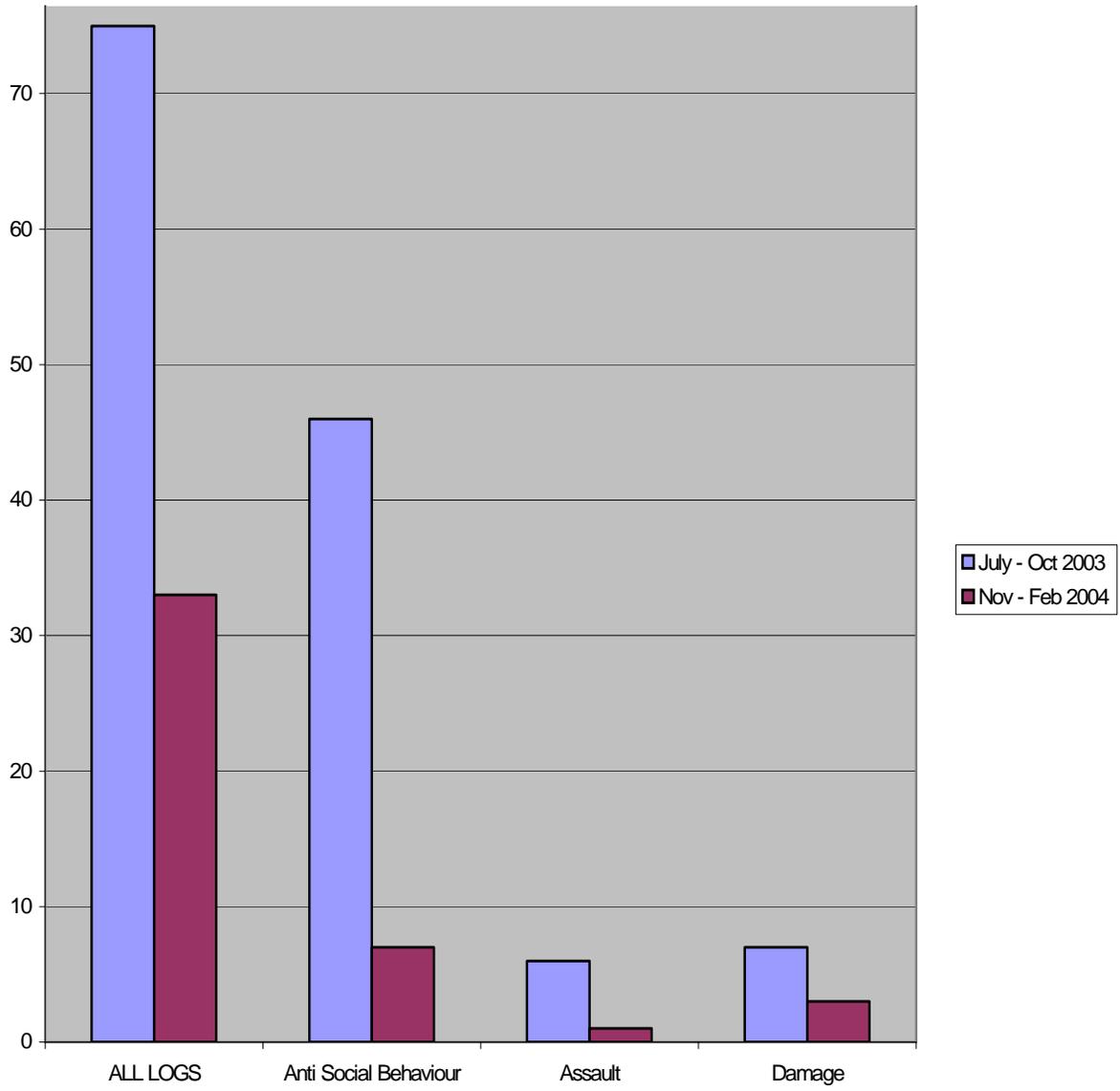
In essence the good residents of Woodnook have been able to ‘EXHALE’ – to breathe out, relax and enjoy a better quality of life in the area.

PC Lynne Williams.

Booth Street, Accrington. APPENDIX B



Booth Street, Accrington. APPENDIX C



Appendix D

The strict prohibitions for all Offenders

The court orders that the defendant is prohibited from:

1. Entering the area of Booth Street, Hudson Street and surrounding streets as determined by the boundaries on attached map except to visit Davina Norris at 22 Booth Street.
2. Associating with Dawn Taylor or Scott Macarther, either directly or indirectly through any third party
3. Playing loud music in excess of reasonable levels at any time within the Borough of Hyndburn
4. Playing any loud music in excess of reasonable levels at any time within the Borough of Hyndburn
5. Using any dwelling house, occupied or otherwise for the purpose of selling or storing illegal drugs as determined by Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
6. Using foul, abusive or insulting language or behaviour towards others in public or intimidating other residents by encouraging large gatherings or excessive numbers of visitors to home address of vicinity.

Driving his or another's motor vehicle in a careless or inconsiderate manner which is likely to or has caused, alarm, distress or annoyance to members of the public.