

# OPERATION DAWDLE

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## Summary

Complaints at the local Police Surgery about the rising number of vehicles parking on the narrow, busy road outside the village school and the potential accidents that they would cause prompted the development of Operation Dawdle.

The road through the village had 16% of the total of road traffic accidents in Preston, Lancashire on it in the year 2003. Even though it has a 30mph speed limit there are no other traffic calming measures at this particular area of Grimsargh. Additional vehicles blocking the roads and pavements created a worse problem. The vehicles belonged to parents dropping children off at the school.

Operation Dawdle became a partnership approach to achieve:

- A reduction of the incidence and cost to the community of road crashes,
- Improved road user behaviour
- The provision of safer roads for the Grimsargh Village Community

The project partnership enabled:

- The delivery of an educational package to the village school,
- Community engagement and the opportunities to consult with residents of the village,
- Attracted funding from LANPAC,
- Input from the Lancashire Healthy Schools Standard, and
- The provision of equipment from Preston Climbing Club.

Every school morning parent's use 2 large car parks  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile either side of the school to drop off their children. Parent volunteers wear high visibility jackets to escort the pupils to school and the children all walk together and wear high visibility armbands whilst holding onto 30foot ropes with handles.

- The project has given road safety advice to over 160 children.
- On average 45 children use the Walking Bus each day; this is over 30% of the number of pupils in the school.
- The project has reduced the number of vehicles parking on the roadside at peak hours by 33% each day.
- The children enjoy being healthy and safe together.
- Road traffic incidents on the road have reduced by 75%.

The project originally started with one rope. Due to the interest and the enthusiasm of children wanting to join in, the operation now runs three ropes – two from the car park West of the school and one from the East. Each rope can hold up to 18 children.

# **The Aims and Objectives of Operation Dawdle**

The objectives of Operation Dawdle are to reduce the number of road casualties, increase road safety knowledge and also to create and maintain partnerships in the rural village of Grimsargh, Lancashire.

**The project aims to:**

- Promote road safety education for road users and pedestrians
- Encourage safer modes of travel to school for pupils
- Reduce traffic
- Work with other agencies to help young people understand the health aspects
- Increase public satisfaction and confidence in the service provided

It also encourages the Lancashire Constabulary's axiom of 'Helping to make the people of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured' and follows the local Police Divisions aims by

- Reducing the incidence, severity and cost to the community of road crashes,
- Improving road user behaviour, and
- Providing safer roads.

The Constabulary is committed to reducing road accidents by use of education, engineering and enforcement to improve the behaviour of road users. This involves working with other agencies and organisations to secure an environment where individuals can use the roads with confidence and free from fear.

The Government have also set targets to reduce child casualties by 50% by 2010.

# Scanning What is the Problem?

Data was gathered from several sources to reveal the problem.

1. Local Police surgeries were held to collect important verbal concerns from local residents,
2. Letters from residents to the Police and the City Council Highways Department outlining the problem were assembled,
3. A consultation paper funded by the Countryside Agency was distributed to each of the 910 households in the Parish, and
4. Police Communication Room figures were explored relating to traffic problems and accidents.

The information was analysed in a number of ways. Police figures were examined over a number of years and the Parish Plan consultation papers were studied.

The Police figures revealed that between 1<sup>st</sup> March 2001 and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2001 there had been 8 reported traffic incidents on the main road that runs through the village, in the year 2002 there were 5 and this figure increased in the year 2003 when there were 10.

When analysis was undertaken on a wider range the figures showed that the small rural village of Grimsargh had in fact 16% of the total of the City of Preston's road traffic accidents in the year 2003.

A study of resident's complaints revealed that the amount of traffic travelling through the village at peak hours caused the most concern plus parking problems on the main road and side streets. It also revealed that the existing travel calming measures and enforcement were inadequate especially at the school opening and closing hours.

Further investigation from the Parish Plan demonstrated that the parents of school children created the majority of the concerns:

- Parking on the main road and its narrow pavements
- Arriving late and abandoning vehicles
- Parking across residents driveways
- Trying to park as close to the school gates as possible
- Dropping children off as the School Lollipop Man stopped traffic
- No car park
- Poor lines and enforcement signs

So, the Police Community Beat Officer, parents and teachers became involved in finding a solution to the problem. A census of vehicles was carried out by the Year 6 pupils to gather important information about the number of children travelling in vehicles and the distance/ route travelled by the pupils. This was evaluated prior to Operation Dawdle commencing with the results shown below:

#### Preston - Grimsargh

	No. of cars	1 child	2 children	3 children	4+ children
Monday	26	13	6	3	4
Tuesday	22	13	3	2	4
Wednesday	23	13	3	3	4
Thursday	25	16	4	2	3
Friday	25	16	3	2	4

#### Longridge – Grimsargh

Day	No. of cars	1 child	2 children	3 children	4+ children
Monday	15	11	3	1	0
Tuesday	12	8	3	1	0
Wednesday	12	8	3	1	0
Thursday	13	9	2	1	0
Friday	14	10	3	1	0

## Operation Dawdle, 2004 Tilley Award Entry

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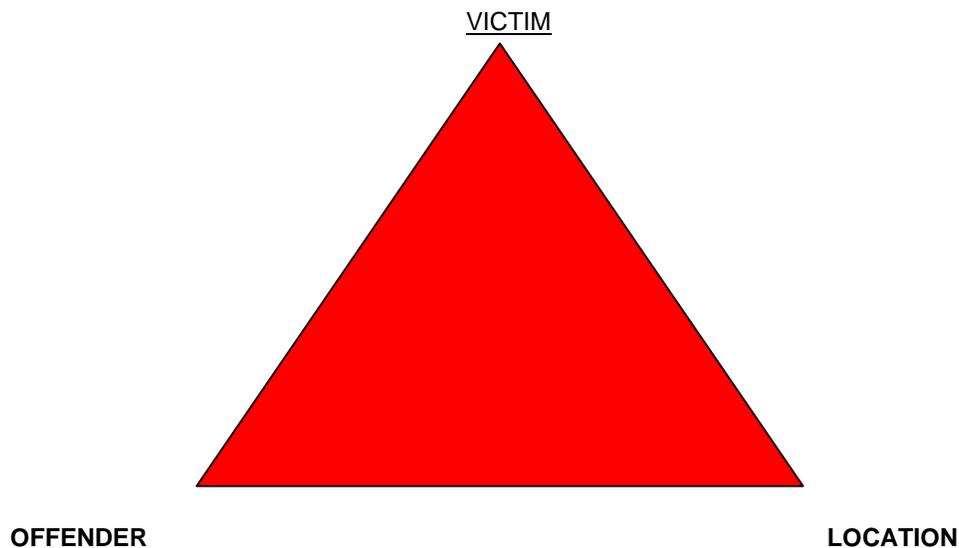
On the busiest of days there were over 80 children travelling to school in vehicles. The school has fewer than 200 pupils and almost 50% were travelling to school in a vehicle causing the parking and road safety issues.

The school is situated on the main road and therefore the parking issue was going to be a continuous concern unless actions were taken. There is no parking at the school site and the nearest parking facilities were 3/4mile to each side of the school; one at the village hall and the other at a new housing estate.

Other agencies were invited to become involved including the Lancashire County Council, Road Safety Education Services for Lancashire, Safer Travel Unit, Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety, Lancashire Healthy Schools representatives, Parents, School Council, Lancashire Partnership Against Crime and Preston Climbing Club. These partners were able to offer support to the scheme in a variation of methods to ensure that it was a success.

# Analysis

Scanning utilised the 'Problem Analysis Triangle' to assess the situation, this established that there were two areas that could be targeted.



The **offenders** were the parents that were parking their vehicles on the busy main road in order to drop off children at the school.

The **location** proved to be a problem with its position, the large catchment area from which the children travel to school many by car coupled with the lack of parking facilities.

The victims were the road users that passed this area at school opening times.



Operation Dawdle objectives could be achieved through:

- Re-education of offenders (parents) in relation to:
  - Use of nearby off road parking facilities;
  - and, the proposed walking bus.

# Response

Using the data gathered at all stages of the analysis it was decided that several answers could help achieve a result for the problem.

One of these responses was Operation Dawdle; a 'Walking Bus'. The decision to try this initiative over the others was taken because it was the most cost effective, it could easily be ended if it was unsuccessful, it involved the school and community as a whole and it could be the start of a much larger project if successful. Other ideas such as a new car park, cycle route and traffic enforcement could be added to the original idea at a later stage when funding, planning and land were established.

The project started after newsletters were sent to parents of the pupils and several parents offered their support.

The local Police Officer had worked on a similar project in Hornby, Lancashire where it had been a success run as a weekly campaign once a term. Funding was applied for through LANPAC. Newsletters were sent to parents of the pupils, notes were put on vehicles and several parents offered their support to the initiative. The school organised 'Right Start Pedestrian Training' with the infant classes to compliment the scheme and created a 'Safer Routes to School' committee. The local climbing club donated equipment.

The initial cost of the project was to be £90 for the rope. But, other sponsors and partners have come forward so, to date, no money has been spent on this project.

Volunteer parents now run the scheme. Teaching staff often show their support and the local Police Officer supports the project as a volunteer both on and off duty when available.

Every weekday morning three parents meet at each of the two village car parks. As other parents arrive in vehicles the volunteers meet and organise the children by giving them a loop to hold on a 30ft rope. When ready, the line of children all walk to school escorted by the volunteers.

A Health and Safety Risk Assessment has been carried out and fortunately the children do not have to cross any roads on their way to school. All children wear high visibility armbands and the volunteer helpers have all be given high visibility jackets to wear. A local supermarket has provided a trolley to transport lunch boxes and reading folders.

# Partner Profile

## **Police**

The local Community Beat Officer was involved before the scheme developed. Time was spent moving vehicles that were illegally parked, speaking to drivers and also attending the school at peak times. Other Officers spent time dealing with problems and accidents that occurred on the busy road.

The Officer originally spent time setting up the scheme by finding sponsors, working with school pupils, finding volunteers and then running the Walking Bus and then supporting the school with the educational packages.

## **Lancashire County Council**

Partners from Lancashire County Council offered their support to the project by offering road safety education. This involved a number of schemes whereby the pupils and parents were given advice. The programmes contributed to the school curriculum by:

- Providing opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve, and
- Preparing all pupils for the responsibilities and experiences of life.

## **School**

The school included this education in their curriculum as part of the core subjects such as science, maths and English, plus it became a component of PSHE lessons. This education service is ongoing and is delivered inline with government research and national models of best practice by teachers.

- Key Stage 1

Topics included at infant age included 'Where we live', 'Journeys', 'Wheels', 'People who help us', 'Weather' and 'Out and About'.

- Key Stage 2

The junior pupils studied 'Safe places to play', 'History of Transport', 'Local area Studies', 'Safer Routes to School and Design of road safety posters'.

- Right Start Pedestrian Training

This programme is used with the infants. It involves the school and parents working in partnership to enable the children to become safer pedestrians. It consists of three stages each having a number of units including classroom discussions, practical sessions and follow up work sheets to support the sessions. The children are rewarded with badges and certificates.

- Passport to Safer Cycling

The junior pupils take part in cycle safety training. This is a three-part scheme developed to offer a greater understanding of road usage. It involves a comprehensive workbook, practical off road training and then on road training. Again the pupils are rewarded for their efforts.

- Theatre Education

Several workshops in the school involving actors and teachers help to reinforce issues seen in a play watched by pupils. These include the hazards that pose risks to their safety, reducing and eliminating these hazards, changing behaviour that contributes to risks and peer pressure.

## **Parents**

Volunteer parents play a vital role in this scheme. They offer their time up to five days a week in order to walk the children to school safely. Other parents spend time at the school assisting with the educational packages.

## **LANPAC and Preston Climbing Club**

These partners have supported the project financially by providing the equipment for the plan.

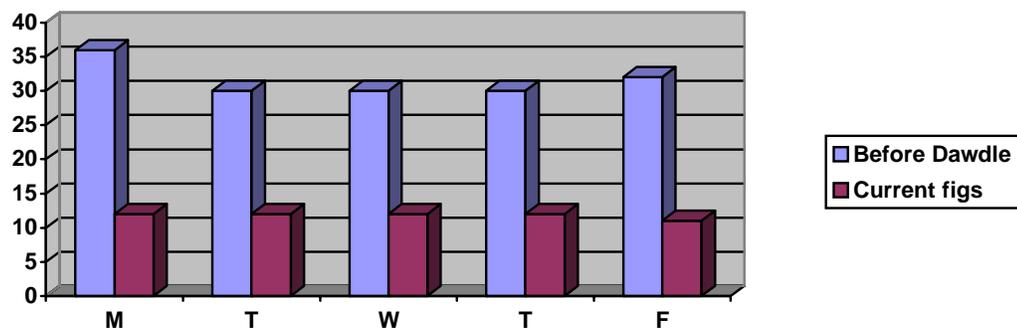
# Assessment and Evaluation

## Operation Dawdle, 2004 Tilley Award Entry

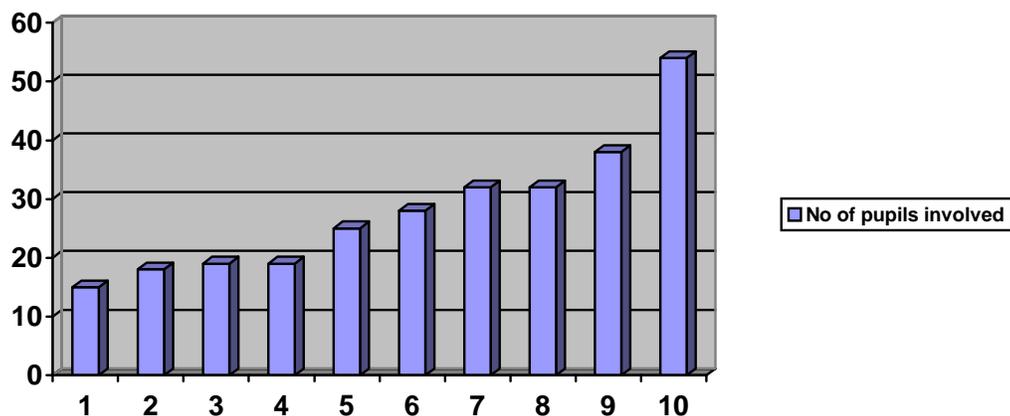
The response had to be reviewed several times within the first month of the project starting. Originally we only anticipated about 15 children taking part. Currently there are an average of 50 children take part every day. Initially there was only one rope so after 4 weeks of the project starting another rope was donated and on the sixth week the third rope was set in motion. All ropes were donated at no cost to the scheme.

Evaluation was taking place daily by the children and volunteers. Each morning a head count was made to find out how many pupils were involved and if the project was worthwhile. A vehicle count was made to find out the reduction of traffic parked outside the school on the busy main road.

The following information shows the number of vehicles that parked outside the school prior to the operation and also the current figures. An average was taken over a ten-week period.



The next graph shows the daily numbers of children taking part over a ten-week period. Only one rope was in use between weeks 1 and 4, the second rope was provided for week 5 and last week another rope was started so that 2 buses now go from one location.



This data shows the success of the scheme and how it has exceeded all expectations. 33% of the children now walk to school on the 'Walking Bus' and an average of 12 cars park close to the school rather than the average of 37 that caused problem prior to 'Operation Dawdle'.

The figures should also improve in the Summer months when more children prefer to walk.

The table below shows the number of traffic incidents on the road over the same period in the past 4 years. It illustrates the reduction of 75% to date since the start of the project.

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004
No. of incidents	8	5	10	2

The project is a simple easy to manage solution. Its' costs are minimal but it relies on a strong team of volunteers and eager children who support the initiative to make it a success.

### **Exit Strategy**

The project has not cost anything to date so to exit the plan at any stage would not have been a problem. The scheme would quite simply end by giving parents of all pupils a letter advising them of this change. The scheme is being reviewed constantly.

### **Sustainability**

- The scheme now runs with no Police resources.
- The parents run their own rota for the bus.
- The funding has been purely from donations and there is a back up fund should a further rope need to be purchased.
- The scheme should continue with no problems and will hopefully improve as the children do more research into health at school.

### **Additional Benefits**

The introduction of a School Travel Plan has encouraged the children to walk to school improving their health by increasing their exercise level. The walk to school with their friends extends the school day and offers an extended learning experience to them as they take notice of the environment around them whilst singing and marching along.

The Walking Bus runs in all types of weather – rain, snow, wind, fog and hail. Now that Spring approaches the children look forward to the sun!

The scheme not only benefits the pupils but it promotes a feel good factor to passing motorists who wave and smile at the youngsters. Complimentary comments have been passed to the local newspapers from some of these motorists.

### **The Future...**

- Plans for the future development of this project include:
- A new car park,
- Better road markings,
- The addition of safe cycle storage at school,
- Speed enforcement by the youths with Police,
- An extension of the old railway line footpath leading to the school from the West so that there will be no need to walk by the roadside
- and finally a team of pupil experts are taking the idea to other local schools with the same problems.

