

Tilley Award Submission 2004

- Project Title - 'Think About It'
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Think About It!

Summary

Dalgety Bay, Fife, is a modern commuter town located on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth. The Town is within Fife Constabulary's Western Division.

In 2001, a new supermarket was opened. This shop was located near a residential area of the town. Due to its position adjacent to a main thoroughfare and a park, it attracted youths from all over Dalgety Bay. As a result, the number of complaints to the police from the public began to increase, primarily relating to anti-social behaviour involving groups of youths frequenting the area.

The local police realised that conventional policing methods were proving ineffective in addressing the problem. On the occasions when the police were able to interact with the youths involved it became apparent that many were unaware of the consequences of their behaviour and that they were actually committing offences.

The local community police used Problem Orientated Policing (POP) principles to address the issues at their root causes and concluded that a partnership approach which combined education, police enforcement and target hardening would assist in resolving the matter.

The principle feature of this initiative was the production of a video entitled 'Think About It'. The video was shown to youths in the local schools to highlight to them in an interactive way the possible consequences of their behaviour. This production was funded by the South Fife Crime Prevention Panel and the actors were recruited from the local secondary school, some of whom were the actual offenders.

The shop owner also worked with the police and instigated various measures, such as removing certain alcohols from his shelves and raising the age for selling alcohol to 21 years.

At the conclusion of the initiative, its success was clear on numerous levels. The video assisted in preventing people from becoming offenders and also resulted in the youths no longer frequenting the problem area. Evaluation of the impact of the video showed the 90% of youths questioned were more inclined to think about the consequences of their actions.

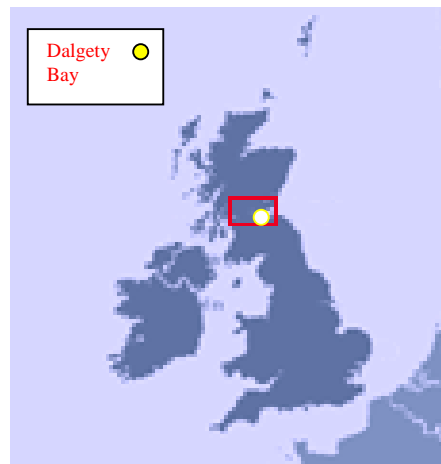
The overall effect was a considerable saving in police time and resources and a significant improvement in the quality of life experienced by local residents. Comparative data for periods before and after implementation showed that crime in the area reduced by up to 83% and calls to the police from the area most affected fell by 47%. The shop owner also reported increased profits.

Introduction

Dalgety Bay, Fife, is a modern commuter town situated close to Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh. The town is located on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth and overlooks the world famous Forth rail and road bridges. The town has a population of approximately 14,000.

The town has two small shopping areas, in addition to which a further small supermarket opened for trading in mid July 2001. As is common with most towns and cities throughout the UK, a considerable problem exists in relation to youth disorder and anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour is often associated with the underage consumption of alcohol. Where Dalgety Bay may differ from other communities in some respects is that the area is fairly affluent and children often have significant sums of money to spend.

In terms of policing, Dalgety Bay is within the Western Division of Fife Constabulary. There is a police station in Dalgety Bay from where the officers based there provide 24 hour cover for Dalgety Bay as well as other centres of population at Aberdour, Hillend, Inverkeithing, North Queensferry and Rosyth. Approximately 30 uniformed officers are based at Dalgety Bay, which equates to five teams of four constables and one sergeant and a community team of six constables all working a variable shift pattern.



Location of Dalgety Bay

Background to the Problem

In 2001 a new supermarket premises opened in Dalgety Bay. This shop was located near a residential area of the town and due to its position adjacent to a main thoroughfare and a park, it attracted youths from all over Dalgety Bay. As a result, the number of complaints received by the local police from the public began to steadily increase. These complaints primarily related to the anti-social behaviour of the large groups of youths frequenting the area.

It quickly became apparent to the local police that conventional policing methods were proving fairly ineffective in addressing the problem. In general, the police were attending and moving the youths on, however, this was not providing any form of long-term solution to the problem.

As a result, the local community police decided to employ the principles of Problem Orientated Policing (POP) to address the issues involved at their root causes.

Scanning

At the commencement of this initiative, all available information was drawn together from a number of internal and external sources, outlined as follows: -

Information/ Complaints Received from the Public

The public primarily identified a problem with anti-social behaviour involving large groups of youths (often numbering in excess of 35 individuals). Complaints ranged from excessive noise, litter, vandalism to verbal abuse, intimidation, obstruction of the footpaths, under age consumption of alcohol and occasionally assault. The area was identified as a problem for this type of behaviour during the weekend, particularly Friday nights.

This anti-social behaviour was having a detrimental impact on the quality of life for local residents both in real terms and in their perception of the problem and fear of crime.

Community Intelligence

Through regular contact with members of various community groups such as Community Councils and Neighbourhood Watch Committees, local police officers began to receive complaints regarding the conduct and behaviour of the offenders. This enabled the police to begin building a picture of the problems being experienced.

Elected Officials

Complaints were received from local councillors regarding the situation who were concerned about the level of incidents and the impact the behaviour was having upon their constituents.

Police Records

When scanning of police records was undertaken, it was clear that since the shop had opened, both the number of crimes recorded in the area and calls received from the public had increased.

The scanning process was thereafter guided by the Problem Analysis triangle: -

PROBLEM

The problem mainly revolved around local youngsters of varying ages congregating in at the recently opened shop premises, near to the newly built private housing estate. The youths located in the area ranged from 11 years to late teens. As a result complaints to the police regarding the noise and anti-social behaviour of these youngsters increased. This behaviour was also associated with the under age consumption of alcohol. There were also allegations that staff within the shop were selling alcohol to minors and that adults were also purchasing alcohol for minors.

VICTIM

The main victims were the local residents whose quality of life was being adversely affected by the behaviour of the offenders.

The shop owner and staff were also victims, however, initially this only related to the occasions when the offenders were actually causing problems within the shop.

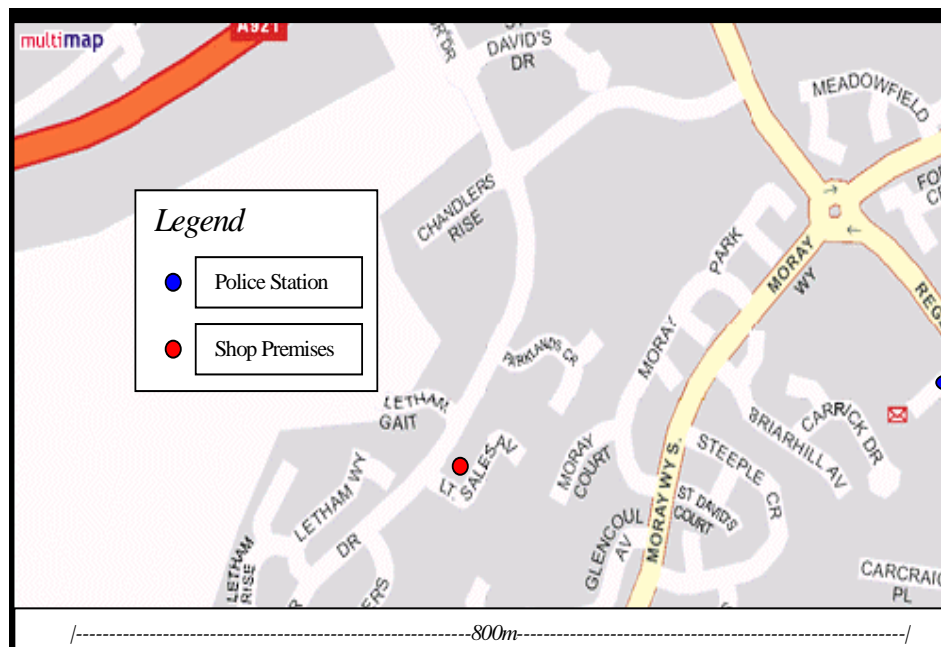
OFFENDER/ INCIDENT

The youths involved were identified as the offenders. The attraction for the youths was the shop, which was a new facility from where they could obtain confectionery, cigarettes and also allegedly alcohol. Initially, the youths were not known to the new staff members and even after they were identified as being under age there appeared to be a seemingly endless supply of older youths willing to purchase alcohol on behalf of their younger friends.

The shop owner and staff were also identified as offenders, as they appeared willing to turn a blind eye to the conduct and behaviour of the youths when they were outwith the confines of the shop.

LOCATION

The residential area predominantly affected by the problem was Lt Sales Avenue, Dalgety Bay, which was a newly built private estate with approximately 26 homes. Many of the residents had young families. The recently opened shop premises are located at the front of the estate and have a car parking area to the front. The geography of the local area was an attraction for the youths in that there was an open storage area to the rear of the shop where they were able to gather out of sight to consume their purchases and if moved on from there a nearby area of woodland was another popular meeting place. A network of pathways linked most of the surrounding streets providing easy access to and egress from the area concerned.



Map showing the location of the shop premises and surrounding streets

Analysis

In order to analyse the problem effectively a sample area was studied. This area was identified as the newly opened shop premises and the area immediately around it, which included some 10 streets containing in excess of 1100 households. Relevant data in respect of this area was obtained from various police computer systems.

In respect of the sample area, analysis showed that in the six month period prior to the store opening there were a total of 39 calls to the police from members of the public complaining about behaviour which may or may not constitute a crime but generally centred around youth disorder. The following two six-month periods showed 112 and 100 calls respectively which represent increases of 287% and 256% respectively.

Analysis of the calls to Police showed that the majority of the problem was associated with youths in the 13 – 15 yrs age group and that the majority of complaints related to mainly Friday nights and to a lesser extent Saturday nights. It was also observed that alcohol played a major factor in influencing the behaviour of the youths. This observation was acknowledged by most of the youths who later assisted with the evaluation process (*appendix 3*).

It quickly became apparent that calls to the shop and the surrounding streets containing some 3,264 residents in 1167 households, were not only seriously affecting the quality of life for the residents, but also impacting greatly on police resources.

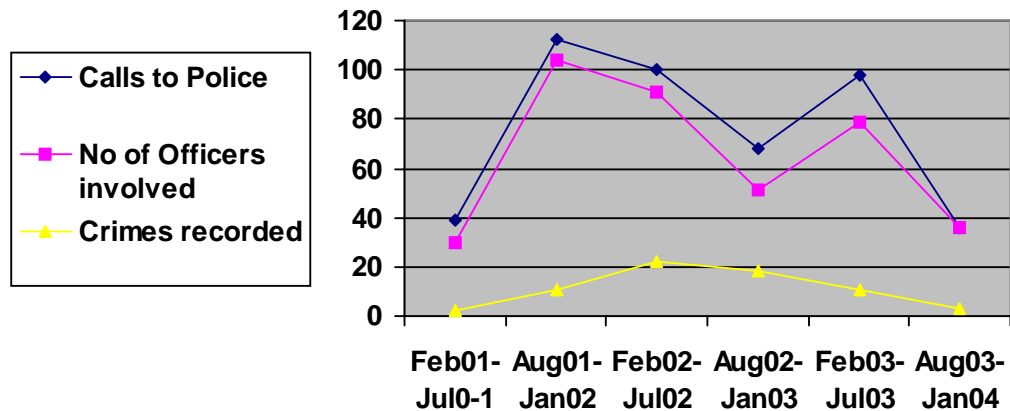
In the period after the shop opened and prior to this initiative (August 2001 – January 2003), the police responded to a total of 280 calls relating to general youth disorder at or in the area immediately surrounding the shop and a total of 246 police officers were deployed.

In addition, a comparison of crime figures for the period prior to the shop opening (February 2001 – July 2001) and the corresponding period the next year (February 2002 – July 2002) saw crime figures rise from 2 to 22 which equates to an increase of 90%. Whilst the problems at the shop cannot be blamed for all crimes which occurred in the area, a great deal of the additional crimes related to vandalism, disorder and theft which was no as prevalent prior to the shop opening.

Despite the attention focused on this single shop and the associated problems, the number of crimes recorded and people charged with offences and either formally warned or reported to the relevant authorities was relatively low when compared to the number of calls received from the public. Often youths would disperse before, or make off on police arrival only to re-group later on.

The following chart is an illustration of the comparison of officers tasked, volume of calls and crimes recorded. The Chart includes an analysis of 6 months before the opening of the shop and also the year following the launch of the 'Think About It' initiative which took place in January 2003.

Analysis of calls to shop premises and surrounding streets



Response

Initially the policing methods employed to tackle this problem were reactive and a number of offenders were prosecuted for various offences. This approach had no significant effect in reducing the problem. Complaints from members of the public were received on a regular basis in respect of this location, placing an unacceptable demand on police resources and it quickly became apparent that a different approach was called for.

Various attempts were made by the Dalgety Bay community team to discuss the problem with the youths and to build a rapport with them whilst continuing with reactive policing when required. This had little or no obvious effect and so a targeted, multi-agency approach was required.

As a result, the local community team employed Problem Orientated Policing (POP) principles to view the problem and try to establish what their root causes were with a view to resolving them.

PC Maylin and other members of the community team commenced this process by consulting with a number of the youths involved in the anti-social behaviour and also those brought into custody as a result of their actions. As a result of this, it became apparent that not only did the youths not stop to consider the consequences of their actions on themselves or others but that a significant number of them were unaware that their behaviour constituted one or more criminal offences.

The objective then became to work with partners to resolve the problems by educating the youths in an attempt to reduce the anti-social behaviour issues and thereby reduce the burden on police resources and most importantly to reduce the fear of crime and improve the quality of life for the local residents.

The initial response from PC Maylin was to address the issue of educating large numbers of youths. After consultation with schoolteachers, colleagues and line managers it was decided that the most effective format available would be to produce a short video illustrating a catalogue of offences including those associated with general youth disorder.

To achieve this a number of Partners were identified and recruited;

1. Inverkeithing High School, which is the local comprehensive high school for the area, was a willing partner in the project and since many of the youths responsible for anti-social behaviour in the area concerned were pupils there, it was possible to involve some of them directly in the project. After initial consultation with the Rector the responsibility for selecting and coaching the pupils was delegated to the school drama department.
2. The manager of the shop premises where the problems were being experienced was contacted and kindly agreed to allow his premises to be used for filming and to assist in the provision of props.
3. The local Tesco Store in Dalgety Bay assisted by providing refreshments for the cast and crew during filming, as did a local Italian Restaurant.
4. A local garage proprietor also provided a location for filming and props.
5. The South Fife Community Safety Panel were consulted throughout the planning stages and provided initial funding for the project.
6. Fife Community Partnership also provided funding.
7. Fife Regional Council Education Department were consulted for guidance.
8. Local residents were consulted and subsequently formed a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
9. Fife Constabulary Media Resources Department were consulted for technical advice. They also filmed the video and facilitated the production of the finished article.
10. Heather 'The Weather' Reid from BBC Scotland introduced the video and provided the voice over.
11. Special effects make up was provided by a student on a theatre make up course at Greenock College.

When the go ahead was given to progress this initiative, PC Maylin arranged a meeting with the principle teacher of drama at Inverkeithing High School, Alan Wilkins. After discussion, students were auditioned and selected for various roles and a further series of meetings with the students was then arranged.

Some of the pupils involved were known to frequent the area in question and it was decided to directly involve these youths where possible.

It was very obvious at an early stage that the youths selected were enthusiastic and excited about the project and this had the effect of breaking down some of the barriers that existed between them and the police officers on the street. This in turn resulted in an improvement in the approachability factor of the police officers based at Dalgety Bay, from the perspective of not only the youths directly involved but crucially many of their friends.

In order to create as much realism as possible it was decided not to write scripts for the actors but instead to sit down with them and talk through with them their various roles. Involving them in discussions from the outset had the effect of encouraging them to both talk about and 'Think About' the implications of what they were being asked to portray. Having done this, the dialogue used was for the most part spontaneous and hopefully more realistic than it would otherwise have been.

PC Maylin and the other partners involved then decided on a format for the video. It was decided to keep the overall duration to within a period of about 20 minutes. The idea was to run through a series of short incidents, many of them leading into each other which could conceivably all happen within the space of an evening spent hanging around in a large group drinking alcohol.

The sequence, which illustrates some 28 separate offences would then be repeated with captions and a voice over, highlighting the offences that had been committed, and by whom.

The finished article was intended to be a self-explanatory educational tool that was capable of being used in a variety of different ways according to the preference of the user. A cover was designed and included a brief explanation of the video (*Appendix 1*).

The proposed format was then discussed at length with the South Fife Community Safety Panel who gave the project their approval and financial support from the outset.

PC Maylin then wrote a script for the presenter (Heather Reid) whilst PC Bolton, another community constable based at Dalgety Bay, fulfilled the task of arranging the various locations for filming and also securing the provision of refreshments in the form of sponsorship from the local businesses referred to previously.

Two days were later arranged for filming. The filming was carried out under the expert guidance of Jim Flanagan from the Fife Constabulary Media Resources Department.

Soon after, Heather 'The Weather' Reid from BBC Scotland spent a morning at Fife Constabulary Headquarters in Glenrothes where she recorded the voice over and the production of the video was duly completed.

Whilst making arrangements for filming, an excellent rapport was also established between the police and the manager of the shop at the centre of the problem. The manager was enthusiastic and cooperative and subsequently installed a state of the art CCTV system on police advice. He later improved the security of the storage area to the rear of his shop by fencing it in and thus denying the youths a place to gather out of sight to consume alcohol.

Relationships with residents in the area were also significantly improved. This was at least partly due to them being able to see for themselves that the police were taking positive and proactive measures to address their concerns regarding the 'Youth' problem. An enthusiastic Neighbourhood Watch was established in the area concerned as a result of dialogue between the police and the residents.

The 'Think About It' video was formerly launched on 14th January 2003 at Inverkeithing High School, Fife. At the launch, a senior member of Fife Education Authority immediately ordered several copies of the Video for every high school in Fife. There was also significant local media interest in the project (*Appendix 2*).

Simultaneous to the launch of the video, a further phase of the initiative was also launched. This initially involved a period of police enforcement to tackle a hardcore of persistent offenders who continued to congregate in the area. Officers operating in plain clothes were deployed in the area, as a result of which, two youths were charged with purchasing alcohol from the shop whilst underage. Two older youths were also charged with supplying alcohol to minors and three members of the shop staff were charged with selling alcohol to minors. The police action resulted in the shop proprietor approaching the police at Dalgety Bay to discuss what action he could take in order to help resolve the situation.

After discussions with the police the proprietor voluntarily agreed to amend the age below which he would not sell alcohol to 21 years. This had the effect of deterring the youths who might try and pass for 18 from attempting to purchase alcohol. The proprietor also stopped selling the brands of alcohol which are popular with youngsters.

Shop staff also underwent an element of retraining with regards to the law relating to the sale of alcohol and tobacco and also on the various ways they could ascertain proof of age prior to making a sale.

Several environmental improvements were made to the outside of the shop itself. The box storage area to the rear of the shop was made secure with the installation of fencing and a secure gate. Suitable shrubs were then planted in order to deter youths from loitering nearby.

These improvements amounted to several thousands of pounds, however it wasn't long before the proprietor was reporting an increase in his takings. This appeared to be a consequence of more customers attending at times when they were previously deterred by large groups of youths loitering outside the shop.

In the eight-week period analysed immediately after these implementations there were only two further youth disorder type calls to the shop or the surrounding area. It was evident that a partnership approach involving education, police enforcement and target hardening has resolved what was becoming a significant social problem for the local community.

Assessment

In respect of the 'Think About It' video, an evaluation form was produced and a total of 190 youths and several teachers were surveyed. The overwhelming majority of youths felt that they had learned something beneficial from the video and that as a result they would be less likely to engage in the sort of incidents and behaviour depicted (*Appendix 3*). Most of the teachers surveyed considered that the video was a practical and useful educational tool, it was straightforward and self-explanatory. The results of this evaluation demonstrate its overwhelming success.

In terms of comparative police data, the following evaluation has been made. Comparison of the period immediately prior to the launch of the initiative (August 2002 – January 2003) to the corresponding period the following year (August 2003 – January 2004), the following conclusions can be reached. Calls made to the police from the public regarding general disorder in the area have reduced from 68 to 36. This represents a decrease of 47%. Recorded crimes in the area have fallen from 18 to 3, which represents a decrease of 83%.

In addition, comparing the available data from the period when the problem was at its worse (August 2001 – January 2002) to the current data (August 2003 – January 2004), the following conclusions are reached. Calls made to the police from the public regarding general disorder in the area have reduced from 112 to 36. This represents a decrease of 68%.

Quite apart from the obvious benefits to the Police service in the savings of time, resources and ultimately money, it is difficult to measure the benefit enjoyed by the wider community of having Police Officers available to attend to other issues, many of which were considerably more serious and immediate.

Most importantly, there has also been an improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by local residents. They now have a reduced fear of crime and no longer feel intimidated and afraid to venture out to their local shop in the evenings or under siege in their homes. This statement is evidenced by the following qualitative data obtained from local residents: -

"Over the last twelve months or so life has got a lot better" – Jason Kelsall.

"There are still some kids hanging around but it's definitely much better" – Anne Yarney

"About two years ago it was so bad that we were going to move, there is a major difference now" – Bill Callaghan.

Conclusion

This initiative has certainly resolved what had become a persistent anti-social problem. The partnership approach employed assisted in achieving the aims and objectives of the initiative in respect of education, police enforcement and target hardening.

The video continues to be a success story. Copies of the video were also circulated to all Community Safety Panels, crime prevention officers and community teams within Fife. Copies were also distributed to the Scottish Police College and to the Training Departments of all the Scottish Forces.

Following this, orders from the video began to come from other agencies and educational establishments throughout Scotland. Several copies have subsequently been ordered by Police Forces from as far a field as Inverness and Jersey. It is envisaged that youngsters across the country are now realising that it is better to 'Think About It'.

Appendix 1

This video was filmed by Fife Constabulary working in partnership with the South Fife Community Safety Panel and the Students and Staff of Inverkeithing High School.







Entitled 'Think About It' this video shows examples of youth crime and disorder which are most frequently reported to and encountered by the Police. The aim of this video is to encourage awareness in youths of exactly what type of behaviour may constitute an offence and importantly that being present whilst a crime is committed can also make you guilty of the offence.

The first sequence is approximately 8 minutes long, there is then a short break during which it is intended to invite discussion. The sequence is then replayed with captions highlighting the offences and an explanation of each offence as it occurs.

Offences covered include those involving Public Order, alcohol, weapons, violence, dishonesty and Road Traffic.

Produced by Fife Constabulary in partnership with South Fife Community Safety Panel and Inverkeithing High School.

Total running time 18' 09"

Think About It

Think About It

ADVANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN FIFE

2002

Appendix 2

Herald & Post

Wednesday, January 15, 2003



PICTURE THIS: New police video to help stop crime has been launched by Fife Constabulary

Youth crime in the frame

YOUNG people in Fife are being put firmly in the picture on youth crime thanks to a special new video launched this week.

The "Think About It" tape, fronted by Heather "The Weather" Reid from BBC Scotland, was filmed by Fife Constabulary working in partnership with the South Fife Community Safety Panel and the pupils and staff at Inverkeithing High School.

The video highlights examples of youth crime and disorder which are most frequently reported to and encountered by the police.

"Its aim," explained Sgt John Graham, "is simply to encourage awareness in youths of exactly what type of behaviour may constitute an offence and,

BY JULIA GRAMAM

equally importantly, that being present when a crime is committed can also make them guilty of the offence as well.

"It is split into two segments, the first portraying a sequence of events which are then repeated with captions indicating the offences and an explanation of each as it occurs."

Pressure

Offences featured in the film cover everything from public order to alcohol, weapons, violence, dishonesty and road traffic matters.

"In dealing with youth crime locally a pattern had begun to emerge which clearly indicated that a significant number of young people were only becoming involved in incidents because of peer pressure or a lack of awareness of the implications of their actions,"

continued Sgt Graham. "They were getting themselves into trouble without even realising it."

The concept of a video came from local Community Constable Mark Maylin who was supported in its preparation by colleagues PC Gerry Bolton, Sgt Graham and Dalgety Bay-based Inspector John McFarlane.

Actors were auditioned from 4th-year drama students at Inverkeithing High with the task of identifying props, locations and scripts being undertaken with enthusiasm by all involved. The tape was produced by Fife Constabulary's video unit with a cast of around 26 under the directorship of manager Jim Flannigan.

"It is intended that the tape be used in schools or other educational establishments across the Kingdom," added Sgt Graham, "with a target audience primarily aged between 12 and 15."

Dunfermline Press, 16th January, 2003

newsdigest

Pupils star in crime video

THE minefield of youth crime is laid bare in an educational video launched by Fife police on Tuesday. Staff and pupils at Inverkeithing High teamed up with the force and South Fife Community Safety Panel for the short film - "Think About It" - which highlights examples of youth disorder and crime most frequently reported to police. Starring fourth-year drama students - who also helped to identify props, locations and scripts - the film targets youngsters aged between 12 and 15. It demonstrates what behaviour may constitute an offence and that being present when a crime is committed can also put youngsters in the frame.

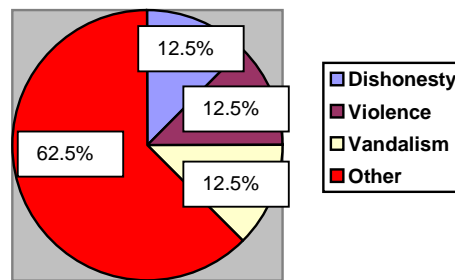
Appendix 3

Results of Evaluation Survey in respect of the 'Think About It' video.

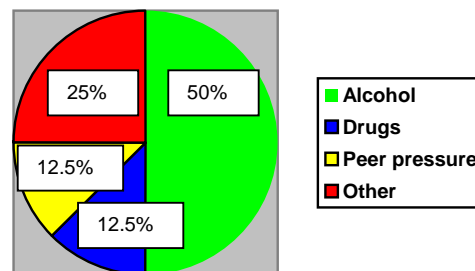
Inverkeithing High School was used as the model for evaluation purposes. It draws its pupils from a large catchment area covering a broad representation of the social spectrum and is fairly typical of a modern comprehensive school. 190 14year old pupils were surveyed.

- **42%** of the youths surveyed admitted having been involved in one or more of the offences depicted in the video.
- Of these **87%** claimed to have been aware that their actions constituted an offence.

The nature of the offences and the influencing factors are shown below,



Breakdown of nature of offences



Influencing factors

- Of the youths surveyed **58%** considered that they were now considerably more aware of the type of behaviour that could constitute a criminal offence. **16%** thought they were a little more aware and the remaining **26%** thought it made no difference to them.
- **47.5%** believed that antisocial behaviour had a very damaging effect on the community. **42%** believed that it had a slightly damaging effect and the remaining **10.5%** believed that it had no effect on the community whatsoever.
- **89.5%** stated that they were more inclined to 'Think About' the possible consequences of their actions and the same number believed that they were now less likely to become involved in offences similar to those depicted in the video.

