

## Tilley Award 2005

### Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at [patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

#### 1. Details of application

Title of the project

**Operation Ghoul**

Name of force/agency/CDRP:

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary**

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors):

**WPC 2576 Lyn Woods**

Email address:

**Lyn.woods@avonandsomerset.police.uk**

Full postal address:

**Crime Reduction Office  
Taunton Police Station  
Shuttern  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 3QA**

Telephone number:

**01823 363038**

Fax number

**01823 363038**

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s)

**Stephen Otter**

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)

**Deputy Chief Constable**

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary  
Police Headquarters, PO Box 37, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8QJ**



**Deputy Chief Constable Steve Otter**

Police Headquarters, PO Box 37, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8QJ

Telephone 0845 4567000

E-mail Stephen.Otter@avonandsomerset.police.uk

19 April 2005

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am delighted to Support Operation Ghoul as an entrant into this year's Tilley Awards.

This very simple but effective approach to reducing anti-social behaviour has resulted in a dramatic reduction in incidents against some of our most vulnerable community members. This initiative is an excellent example of problem solving at a local level, having sustained improvement over a 3 year period, and brought about a genuine reduction in fear of crime for the elderly at Halloween.

I wish Operation Ghoul every success in the Awards.

Yours faithfully.

Stephen Otter  
Deputy Chief Constable

## **2. Summary of application**

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

**In November 2001, following liaison between WPC Lyn Woods Crime Reduction Officer and Taunton Deane Borough Council it was found that there had been a number of complaints about anti social behaviour during Halloween.**

**A number of elderly residents were being targeted by teenagers who upon being unhappy at being refused 'treats' would then subject them to a 'trick' and their homes would be pelted with eggs and flour.**

**A check was made and it was found that over 40 calls had been made to the Police at Halloween that year. As well as causing distress to the victims, immense strain was also put on Police resources in answering these calls.**

**In September 2002 a poster was designed that the elderly could place in their doors to show that they did not want to be contacted by 'Trick or Treater's' in the hope that by not answering the door they could not then**

**'refuse' and therefore be 'tricked'.**

**This was successful and reported incidents were reduced down to 12, but it was felt that this could be reduced further.**

**In September 2003 local schools were contacted and Headmasters were asked to speak to children during assembly to make them aware of what distress these actions caused and also retailers were asked to raise the issue with staff about selling eggs and flour to children.**

**It was obvious that patrols needed to be increased in the problem areas, rather than a strain being put on Police Response Officers, consideration was made of our extended Police family and the support of Special Constables and this year the new Police Community Officers were used.**

**We organised a 'squeegee patrol' and any mess found on an elderly person's property was cleaned up for them!**

**We did not want to alienate those responsible members of the public who escorted their children around friends and family so we had a 'goody bag' and gave out sweets to the little ones who had 'dressed up'**

**There was a high media campaign and as well as local television it was also picked up by the BBC and shown on their breakfast programme.**

**As a result of liaison with Taunton Deane Borough Council and Crime Reduction Officers incidents fell from 40 in 2001 to 5 in 2004. This was achieved through constructive use of the Special Constabulary and the Police Community Support Officers and has become an annual operation that is well received by the residents of Taunton Deane.**

### **3. Description of project**

Describe the project following the guidance above in no more than 4000 words

#### **Operation Ghoul**

Operation Ghoul is an annual crime reduction initiative focusing on the needs of vulnerable residents within the Taunton Deane administrative area. Residents had suffered years of increasing anti social behaviour at Halloween culminating in damage and distress masquerading as 'Trick or Treat' activity. Through a formal SARA model process issues and problems owners were identified, allowing responses and resources to be appropriately applied. Data and anecdotal feedback demonstrated the operations success in reducing crime and disorder, plus reduction in the fear of crime.

#### **Scanning**

In November 2001 following liaison with Taunton Deane Borough Council, after complaints had been made to the Council and the Police by the elderly and some concerned relatives it was apparent that many elderly residents of Taunton were dreading the approach of 'Halloween'.

Discussion with wardens found that the majority of victims were elderly people living in sheltered housing who had been subjected to 'eggs and flour' being thrown at their doors and windows by teenagers who being unhappy at being refused a 'treat' would then subject them to this 'trick'. This was causing immense distress.

#### **Analysis**

Upon checking data from records of calls made to the Police Communications department it was found that the previous year there had been over 40 calls made to the Police on this particular type of attack alone. There had been other calls of nuisance but it was felt that the use of 'eggs and flour' was the incident that was causing the biggest problem.

Other factors to consider were:

1. Why target the elderly?
2. How did they know an elderly resident occupied the property?
3. Why were sheltered housing schemes the main target?

Having spoken to many elderly people it was noticed that due to their trusting nature they found it hard not to answer their door, even though they knew it could be children, many found it hard to ignore in case it was 'something important'! Some residents are quite feisty and would always react rather than ignore, so helped the culprits in their 'game'. Sheltered Housing schemes are easily identified as they are usually bungalows, they are all grouped together so there are a lot of victims in one place and the culprit does not have to 'walk' very far!

So thoughts were given to think of ways to raise awareness and show that the resident knew it was Halloween, they would not be answering the door and hopefully stop anyone coming to the door in the first place!

We looked at what we needed to achieve and our objectives are listed in order of importance

1. Make the elderly residents feel safer in their own homes
2. Stop young people becoming involved in anti social behaviour
3. Ensure efficient use of Police Resources

## Response

In September 2002 It was decided to design a poster that could go in the door, this would inform callers that 'Trick or Treater's' were not welcome. It also needed to be made in an unprovocative way, the last thing we wanted was for the posters to become a 'red rag' and encourage incidents.

Following discussion with HQ Reprographics Department a poster was designed.



The poster was small enough to be displayed in on a front door and because of the colour, visual enough to be clearly seen from the pavement. This poster would then deter visitors to the front door, which would mean that the potential victim by not answering the door would not be in a position to 'refuse' and therefore would not get 'tricked' (See Appendix 1).

Supplies of the poster were then put in all Post Offices and delivered to all Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators in the Taunton Deane area and the poster was advertised in the local Press. It was well received and in fact we ran out of the 3000 printed!

That year incidents had gone down to only 12!

In September 2003 it was decided to look at what we had done and how the problem which although had been substantially reduced, could be reduced further.

Schools were contacted (see appendix 2) Headmasters were asked to speak at Assembly and raise awareness to the students of the distress 'trick or treat' was causing, also the risks and consequences should they be caught and the implications should they be arrested following any damage found. We also wanted to ensure that children learnt right from wrong.

Help was also sought from retailers (see Appendix 3) Staff were asked to question 'Is that child really intending to bake a cake' with the eggs and flour bought?'

There was a high profile media campaign to advertise that the Police would be conducting patrols of the problem areas. Rather than the Borough Police strength becoming strained, use was made of our extended Police family, so along with Crime Reduction Officers members of the Special Constabulary were used, (and this year use of the Police Community Support Officers!) This meant that local officers were not tied up and were able to concentrate on the more serious incidents.

Because of resources we also had to consider when to conduct these patrols. Although we were aware that this type of incident would occur over a number of days during this period, data did show that Halloween night itself was the main problem night. We also focused our patrols on the areas where complaints were the highest.

By talking to children we found that as we had advertised that we would be patrolling during 'Halloween' rather than Halloween Night' they did not realise this and by being vague meant that they did not know when and where we would be!

As well as patrolling the area we operated a 'Squeegee Patrol' (clean up brigade!)

One of the other problems identified with these type of incidents is that the eggs and flour once mixed together is very hard to remove especially if it is not found until the next morning and has hardened. If we attended an incident and found a mess we would clear it up for them, this caused much amusement but also

relief and grateful thanks.

Another factor to consider was that many parents and children enjoyed Halloween. We wanted to show that we were not there to spoil the fun of responsible adults and their children who had gone to a lot of trouble and effort to dress up. So we had on board our vehicles 'goodie bags' so that we could hand out sweets to them, this gave a lot of pleasure and encouraged support for what we were trying to do.

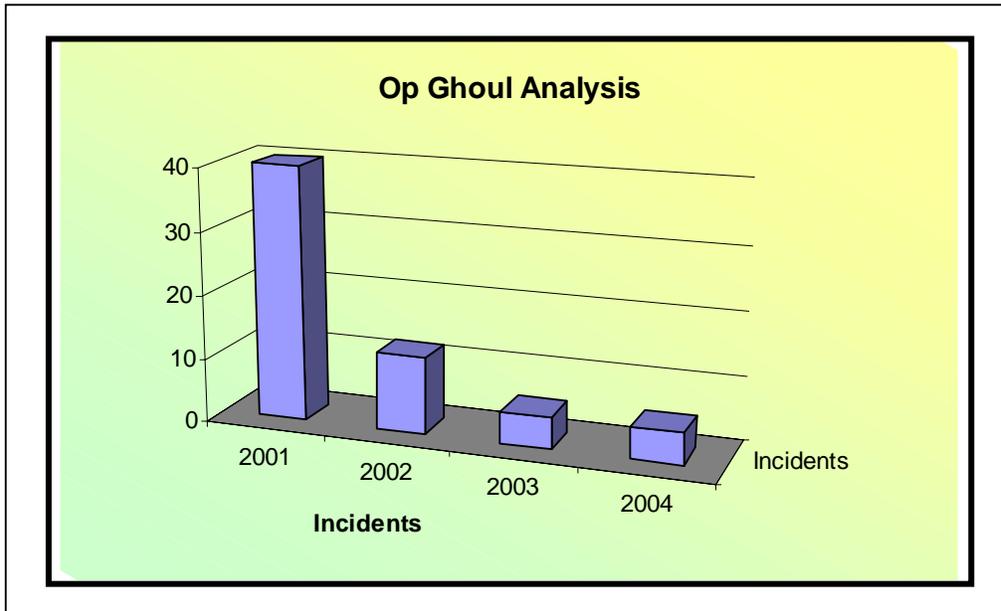
The media interest shown was extremely high profile as not only was Operation Ghoul covered by HTV but also featured on BBC Breakfast with a live broadcast from one of the local shops. Local brownies were there in fancy dress showing what was a responsible way to enjoy Halloween. Local television also spoke to an elderly victim who spoke of the hurt that could be caused by irresponsible behaviour (see Appendix 4)

### Assessment

The result of this on going and annual Operation is that incidents have been reduced drastically.

There was concern that the posters may make the elderly be more of a target but this was not the case and proven by the continued increase in the amount printed each year.

Our Police district has a new schools officer he will be asked to review our impact each year at the schools and it is also hoped that this operation will become a blueprint for dealing with other similar anti social behavioural problems.



It is intended to keep this operation going each year. As you will see from the letters of thanks (see Appendix 5) and the case study this Operation is one that has, is and will continue to reduce the fear of crime to the elderly at the Halloween time of the year.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Poster



### Appendix 2 – Example Letter to local Headmasters



**Taunton Crime Reduction Office**  
**Taunton Police Station, Shuttern, Taunton. TA1 3QA**  
**Telephone: 01823 363027 Facsimile: 01823 363038**  
**Email: lyn.woods@avonandsomerset.police.uk**

Dear

As Halloween approaches I would ask for your help with a common problem during this period.

Many elderly residents frequently become victims of crime when eggs and flour are thrown at their doors, because they would not take part in 'Trick or Treat'

Sadly this type of crime causes immense suffering and fear should their windows become broken during the attack.

I would ask your support of your staff to raise awareness amongst your pupils on how distressing this type of 'prank' can be and also the risks and consequences should they do any damage

Thank you for your help, should you wish to discuss this issue then please do not hesitate to make contact with me.

Yours sincerely

**WPC Lyn Woods**  
Crime Reduction Officer

**Appendix 3 – Example Letter to local Retailers**



**Taunton Crime Reduction Office  
Taunton Police Station, Shuttern, Taunton. TA1 3QA  
Telephone: 01823 363027 Facsimile: 01823 363038  
Email: lyn.woods@avonandsomerset.police.uk**

Dear Retailer,

As Halloween approaches I would ask for your help with a common problem during this period.

Many elderly residents frequently become victims of crime when eggs and flour are thrown at their doors, because they would not take part in 'Trick or Treat'

Sadly this type of crime causes immense suffering and fear should their windows become broken during the attack.

I would ask your support of your staff to question whether the youth buying all that egg and flour is really intending to bake a cake!

Your refusal to sell, will remove the means to commit crime and prevent an elderly person suffering any upset during this time.

Thank you for your help, should you wish to discuss this issue then please do not hesitate to make contact with me.

Yours sincerely

**WPC Lyn Woods**  
Crime Reduction Officer

**Appendix 4 – Case Study**

**Mrs Mitchell  
12a School Road,  
Monkton Heathfield,  
Taunton.**



Mrs Mitchell suffers from multiple sclerosis her husband has also had a heart attack both are in their late 70's and through their illness are registered disabled. They live in a ground floor flat and for years had suffered from verbal abuse and mickey taking; this cumulated every Halloween with eggs and flour being thrown at their windows and doors by local children. The residue of the mess is still on the windows; their window cleaner is unable to remove it.



As you can see from the above photos, there are a number of problems with the design layout of the block of flats that she lives in. There is an external door but this only protects the upstairs flats not Mrs Mitchell's on the ground floor. Her flat is isolated and also has a dark corridor. Liaison has been made with Taunton Deane Borough Council who are looking at siting a new front door so that Mrs Mitchell's flat will be incorporated. There will also be a door entry system fitted, which will protect her further.

Mrs. Mitchell featured on the HTV Halloween report and this lady close to tears finished the interview with the moving words "You too will be old one day!"

It is believed that this interview showing the distress this type of incident and the fact that we had visible patrols in the area were the reason that she has not had a further attack.

As you can imagine Mrs Mitchell and her husband are fully supportive of Operation Ghoul and the results it has achieved.

## **Appendix 5 – Example Letters of Thanks**

### **Letter 1 – from TDBC**

**Scott Weetch**  
**Policy & Performance**  
**The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE**  
**Tel 01823 356317 Fax 01823 356329**  
**email: s.weetch@tauntondeane.gov.uk**

10th November 2004

Dear Chief Superintendent Snell,

#### **Operation Ghoul**

I am writing to commend PC Lyn Woods and her team on another successful year of carrying out Operation Ghoul. This initiative has run for the last three years in the Taunton Deane area and becomes more high profile and more successful with each passing year. In terms of reducing the fear of crime, this initiative goes a long way as officers can be both seen to be out in the community and to be proactively tackling offences. I am sure that the residents of Taunton Deane that had become fearful of Halloween feel more secure knowing that there is a team of officers tackling the problem.

On a lighter side, I understand that this year bags of sweets were given out to young children in supervised parties. I believe that this reinforcement of a positive image will bear fruit with these youngsters in years to come, allowing them to see that the Police are not just there for when crimes are committed, but an integral part of the communities that they serve.

Yours sincerely,

**Scott Weetch**  
Community Safety Coordinator

## **Appendix 6 – Letter from Local Resident to the Somerset County Gazette**

“Well done to the Police in Taunton. I would like to heartily commend them for their proactive stand in supplying leaflets saying “sorry no trick or treat” for Halloween. Many people are seriously affected by the mini terrorists who beg at our doors on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

I have elderly dogs that were desperately frightened by the continual parade of young thugs who hammered on my door demanding money or promising menaces. My polite “Please don’t knock” notice was torn down and my door pelted with eggs when I didn’t answer. By the end of the night my dogs were cowering with fear and I was fuming. What sort of parent allows their child to beg and threaten abusive behaviour letting them roam the streets begging strangers for money or presents? Either the children are alone and therefore vulnerable, or in groups which can be intimidating, or accompanied by a parent, and if any parent, with a child, bangs on my door this year they will get a piece of my mind.

The elderly and vulnerable don’t need this harrowing hassle every year, and neither do those of us who have had a long day at work and want to relax in peace in our homes. So, parents, if you want to celebrate Halloween, throw a kids party in your own home for your children and their friends, and don’t impose them on the rest of us.

This has become a real social nuisance and a massive irritation for dog owners. We don’t want the harassment. These new leaflets are a brilliant idea from the Police. Now parents need to be educated to teach their children to respect the wishes of those of us in the community who don’t want an evening of hassle on October 31<sup>st</sup>.”

**Mr. ROY FRANKLIN**

### Appendix 7 – Comms. Data

The below are extracts from Comms. STROM logs relating to disorder incidents on the night of Halloween in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

AS-20021031-0831	31/10/02	16:11:35	GT 163	EASTWICK ROAD
AS-20021031-0986	31/10/02	17:49:22	GT165	
AS-20021031-1029	31/10/02	18:13:51	GW170	
AS-20021031-1037	31/10/02	18:19:08	GT166	
AS-20021031-1079	31/10/02	18:36:07	GT164	
AS-20021031-1214	31/10/02	19:30:55	GT166	ASDA STORES LTD
AS-20021031-1253	31/10/02	19:44:00	GT157	
AS-20021031-1382	31/10/02	20:29:26	GT171	DILLONS CONVENIENCE STORE
AS-20021031-1442	31/10/02	20:46:58	GW170	ROCKWELL GREEN
AS-20021031-1575	31/10/02	21:38:35	GT167	
AS-20021031-1587	31/10/02	21:46:10	GT157	

AS-20031031-0526	31/10/03	12:37:26	GT164	MILTON ROAD
AS-20031031-1074	31/10/03	18:42:20	GT158	
AS-20031031-1209	31/10/03	19:42:47	GT157	
AS-20031031-1225	31/10/03	19:53:49	GT157	
AS-20031031-1416	31/10/03	21:18:49	GT160	

AS-20041031-0735	31/10/04	11:48:38	GT168	
AS-20041031-1261	31/10/04	18:18:54	GT164	
AS-20041031-1415	31/10/04	19:10:10	GT167	
AS-20041031-1466	31/10/04	19:28:47	GT158	HILLY PK
AS-20041031-1677	31/10/04	20:24:19	GT167	

**Appendix 8 – Op Order**

A V O N   A N D   S O M E R S E T   C O N S T A B U L A R Y



**Operational Order No: 56/04**

# **OPERATION GHOUL**

## **HALLOWEEN**

**SUNDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2004**

The contents of this document may contain personal details which are subject to the Data Protection Act and as such, should not be copied

*Working with you - Working for you*

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1 **General Information**

2 **Legal Objectives**

**“Avon and Somerset Constabulary is committed to implementing procedure that protects individuals' rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, as provided for by the Human Rights Act 1998.**

**The reason for this operational order is to (insert legitimate aims p.10) in accordance with (insert Article(s) pp 4-9 with the potential to be breached) of the European Convention on Human Rights, as provided for by the Human Rights Act 1998”.**

If there is a threat to life from the criminal activity of others then the following paragraph should also be inserted: -

**“The Avon and Somerset Constabulary has a positive obligation under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as provided for by the Human Rights Act 1998 to protect individuals whose lives are put at risk from the criminal activity of others. The Constabulary has taken reasonably practicable operational procedures to uphold this obligation and they are outlined in this operational order”.**

If the operation has the provision for the gathering of evidence and/or the arrest of an identified individual or the potential for the arrest of unidentified individuals e.g. public disorder/football matches, the following paragraph should be inserted: -

**“The procedures of the Constabulary uphold an individual’s rights under Article 5 and 6, in accordance with their positive obligation to implement such procedure”.**

2 **Police Objectives**

3

In partnership with other agencies involved to:

- i) To prevent and detect crime
- ii) To prevent outbreaks of damage
- iii) To reduce fear amongst the elderly

4 **Method**

- i) Patrols of special constables and PCSO's in previous areas where there is a history of egg and flour throwing at the homes of elderly residents. To prevent and deter crime and provide reassurance to elderly residents.
- ii) Response by special constables and PCSO's to all incidents and where eggs and flour have been thrown at doors and windows this will be cleaned up. (once left the mess hardens and is very difficult to remove!)
- iii) Names, addresses and age of any offending youths will be taken and verified by ID, electoral roll etc and ASB form will be submitted for consideration of Letter 1 Or 2 Or ABC's as appropriate.
- iv) Any alcohol found in the possession of anyone under the age or appearing to be under the age of 18 will be seized under the Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997

5 **Command**

**GOLD: Duty Inspector**

**SILVER: Duty Sergeant**

**BRONZE: WPC 2576 Woods**

6 **Additional Information**

The specific information and administration in respect of this particular operation is contained in Appendices (A) to (D) inclusive.

This order has been produced/reviewed to reflect Human Rights principles and is authorised on behalf of the Chief Constable by:

*Name and Position*

Date:

This Operational Order has been prepared by Taunton Crime Reduction Officer

WPC 2576 Lyn Woods Ext 63027



**BRIEFING, ADMINISTRATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

**BRIEFING**

Briefing Officer. WPC 2576 Woods

1600 The briefing will take place in the Community Beat Office on the **Ground Floor.**

**ADMINISTRATION**

- a) All personnel will be from the special constabulary and rostered PCSO's.
- b) All officers should be equipped with appropriate clothing for inclement weather, a torch and a personal Airwave radio, together with a spare battery

**COMMUNICATIONS AND CALL SIGNS**

All communications will be via **TAUNTON CONTROL ROOM**. All officers will use their own collar number.

We will operate on Group Call 100

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Taunton Communications.....63033 .....

Taunton Enquiry Office.....63266 .....

Operation Ease.....63267 .....

WPC Woods Mobile .....07717700667.....

**Distribution List**

Inspectors GH  
Inspector 288 Ashwin  
Sgt Crocker  
Sergeants GT  
Sgt Caburn GW  
Comms  
Taunton Enquiry Office  
Operation Ease  
Special Constabulary  
Sgt Frewin  
PCSO's Taunton