

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

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 TARGET

Name of force/agency/CDRP:

Lancashire Constabulary

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

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Julia Hodson

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Acting Deputy Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)

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2. Summary of application

SCANNING

Officers recognised the increasing number of deployments to incidents where toy Ball Bearing (BB) Guns were being used. These 'toys' appear to be genuine firearms.

Inappropriate behaviour often demonstrated by children and young persons cause harassment to members of the public. These incidents often cause the deployment of police.

Cheap toys have increased the number of incidents and action was required.

ANALYSIS

Statistical data was from forms completed by officers. Locations of incidents were areas visited by or visible to members of the public. These areas were town centre locations, public open spaces and housing estates.

Times of such occurrences co-incident with children and young adults congregating in these locations. Offenders were predominantly youths playing, who when challenged were unaware of their inappropriate/criminal actions.

Victims were members of the public whom had witnessed an incident of BB guns being used inappropriately and thought that they had seen a real weapon. It was apparent on visiting schools that they too were having problems.

This was evidenced by the number of BB guns that had been confiscated from pupils.

RESPONSE

Efforts focused on reducing the number of incidents involving toy guns. To facilitate this, emphasis was placed

- Crime Prevention
- School Liaison.
- Local Business Partnerships

A presentation was devised and delivered in schools by officers.

We launched a competition inviting children to design a poster warning others about inappropriately using BB Guns.

Local businesses sponsored us and purchased prizes for the winning entries. We utilised the media, using newspapers, radio and television.

ASSESSMENT

The outcome was the reduction of incidents involving BB guns.

Comparing data from 2002/2003 to 2003/2004 there was an overall reduction of 8.7%. Significantly the final 3-month period, which encompassed the summer school holiday period, saw a 33.3% reduction. This result was achieved with our partners, in particular the Local Education Authority and Youth Services.

Media exposure assisted in this reduction. The coverage gained both regional and national media thus exceeding initial expectations.

'Target' has no long-term outlay costs. It has saved on police deployments to armed incidents. This is in contrast to the cost likely to be incurred if police were to shoot a youth inappropriately using a BB gun. Lessons learned so far have been the need for an accurate CRSII code to assist in statistical analysis recording. Colleagues could have been used more efficiently to increase the number of presentations delivered.

3. Description of project

Scanning

The Problem.

Officers from the Lancaster Divisional Armed Response Unit recognised an increase in the number of deployments to incidents whereby members of the public had contacted the police regarding persons armed with firearms. This is obviously treated as an emergency incident and requires the deployment of armed police officers along with resources from local patrols.

The informants for the calls were often alarmed and distressed by what they had witnessed or been confronted by. However the vast majority of these incidents were found to involve juveniles and children playing inappropriately with toy ball bearing (BB) guns and other imitation firearms in public places.

Officers realised that the cost of such deployments was both resource intensive and also an area of concern, as armed officers may deploy firearms against an individual armed with a toy gun. The consequences of the former being the reduction in policing response for the local area when officers were deviated to such incidents, and the consequence of the latter would have been catastrophic if shots were fired by police officers for the officer, individual, the organisation and the local community.

The proliferation of BB guns has increased in the last few years. The majority of these toys are highly realistic in their appearance. They fire small plastic ball bearings, hence the name BB guns.

It is often only able for an Authorised Firearms Officer to distinguish between a toy / replica weapon and a real weapon when examining it closely and actually holding the gun.

Such toys are mainly produced in China and other far east countries.

There is little or no legislation regarding the sale or purchase of these toys.

The price of such toys can be as low as two to three pounds.

Such toy guns are sold in a wide variety of shops, from high street stores, market stalls, and corner shops to seaside novelty shops.

The problem was found, when having dealt with incidents reported to the police, to be that the youths involved were ignorant as to the law regarding the use of toy/imitation firearms in public areas. It was only following contact with the police, which dependant on the information provided often meant the arrest of the youth, that they realised that their actions were in fact inappropriate and unlawful.

Officers from the Armed Response Unit were most aware of the problem and wished to initiate a response.

Analysis

Data

The analytical data that was available to officers was derived from forms completed by Armed Response Unit officers following their deployment to armed incidents.

These forms, referred to as FR2's, include such information as the time and location of the incident, persons arrested and the type of weapons used by the offenders.

Using this data the following information was derived.

- **Offenders were young males**

Traditionally it seems that young males during childhood enjoy playing with toys guns. Historically such guns were quite easily identified as such, they were poor imitations of the real thing. The availability of cheap realistic toys has now allowed for young males to still play with toys guns, but now they have a realistic looking toy. When having spoken with such young males and children it is also evident that the influences they have of television, cinema and computer games all have an element of violence and guns, which they find attractive and stimulating. Their play with toy guns is often acting out and related to what they have seen in the various medias. It was also clear that they were unaware of the criminality of their behaviour or the effect they were having on other members of the community.

- **Locations were non-specific, yet mainly public areas, city centres, housing estates, and open spaces.**

No one area suffered uniquely with this problem. The main theme of the location of such incidents was that they occurred in areas where the offenders were visible to other members of the public. This ranged from city centre to private housing estates. This indicated that the problem arose when the offender (young males) came into contact with the local community whilst in possession of a toy gun.

- **Times of offences were wide ranging, however non during night time hours.**

Times for the occurrence of incidents varied greatly. It was not possible to indicate a common or specific time frame for such offences to occur. There were no incidents relating to toy weapons during night time hours. This was thought to be due to the offending group (male children) being at home asleep.

- **Victims were members of the public who had witnessed what they thought were persons in possession of firearms.**

The victims / informants for offences where toy guns were used called with good intentions and an honest belief that they had witnessed someone in a public place in possession of a firearm. The descriptions given by the informant were not of a child playing with a toy but of a man in possession of a handgun.

- **Victims were alarmed / distressed by what they had seen**

What the informant saw had distressed or alarmed them and or concerned them sufficiently into calling the police. When having spoken to the informants it was discovered that the majority of those most concerned were the elderly or vulnerable in the community. They too were affected by the media they had available to them, newspapers and television. Although a low area of firearms related crime, residents of Northern division were concerned at what they read and watched regarding gun crime in other parts of the country. Indeed it is difficult to read a newspaper or watch the news without a shooting being reported that day somewhere in the country. The disproportionate fear of gun crime had assisted in causing concern /alarm for the informant.

- **Victims were non repeat**

No pattern of repeat victimisation was evident

Response

Officers recognised that the offending section of the community for this problem were young males of school age. These young males were unaware/ignorant of the laws they were breaking and the consequences to members of the public and the police of their inappropriate use of toy BB guns. Officers felt that attempting to halt the circulation of BB guns through obtaining the co-operation of shopkeepers not to sell the toys and importers not to supply the toys was unrealistic. This was because no laws had been broken by these people and their co-operation on a local level to voluntarily not sell to children had been sought and declined previously.

Therefore efforts to reduce the number of firearm incidents relating to BB guns was best thought to be aimed at the identified offending group and situational crime prevention, reducing the excuse of ignorance.

Ages within this group varied, from 8 to 17.

In order to address the widest possible audience presentation within schools to children of 9 to 14 years were embarked upon. It was felt that this age range of children would be most impressionable and receptive to our message.

Operation Target

The main thrust of the operation was the construction and delivery of an educational presentation designed to be delivered in schools.

The package was devised so that it contained the relevant information to give to the children regarding inappropriate play with toy BB guns and aimed at altering their behaviour.

A short video compiled from actual firearms incidents was produced and shown to the children. This acted to capture the imagination and attention of the children and allow them to focus on the problem and become more receptive to our message.

The presentation was constructed and delivered by two Armed Response Unit officers who during the time with the children would discuss the similarities between real and toy guns. They further explained that even they as professionals were unable to easily distinguish between the two. This was then demonstrated by the officers displaying real and toy firearms.

In order to visually represent the cost in resources to the police of a firearms incident, whereby the offenders are later to be found as children, a short and simple role play, where a number of children were assigned roles to play that would normally be found within the police service during a firearms incident was devised.

The incident was one that had really occurred. Selected children were nominated a role to perform that would be deployed to a firearms incident by the police. These ranged from communications operator, Authorised Firearms Officer to helicopter observer. Quickly the children saw, as more and more of them were being asked to stand up and assigned roles just how resource intensive inappropriate play with toy guns can be for the police. In total 32 children would be stood up to visually represent how many police staff and officers are required to initially deal with a report of a firearms incident.

The presentations were aimed at years 6, top junior, and year's 7 and 8, first years at secondary school.

At the junior schools the officers remained in the class for either an afternoon or morning session and were available to answer all questions on a variety of topics following the presentation and fully interact with the children.

In the secondary schools the presentation was delivered to a school assembly of up to 270 children at a time.

At the conclusion of the presentations the children were invited to design a poster that would be produced in order to further publicise and widen the audience of Operation Target.

When produced these posters were displayed in every educational establishment and other prominent locations in the Lancaster /Morecambe /Wyre area.

Leaflets with the same design were also produced, these contained relevant firearms legislation on the rear regarding the use of BB guns and imitation firearms. Police Community Support Officers distributed these to all shops and retail outlets selling such guns for distribution to persons purchasing a BB gun.

To act as an incentive a prize was offered for the winning entrant. This would be presented at a reception hosted by the mayor at the town hall.

Partnerships

- Primary and Secondary Schools
- Cannon Hygiene Ltd
- Area Education Office
- Crime Prevention Officers
- Schools Liaison
- Press Officer
- Morecambe Press
- North British Housing
- St Nicholas Shopping Arcade
- PCSO'S and CBM'S

All schools within the Lancaster and Morecambe area were sent letters explaining the problem and inviting them to become partners in the operation. We offered the services of the police to attend their school and give an educational presentation to the children.

Cannon Hygiene, a large local business, were approached with the aims and objectives of Operation Target and as a result of which they offered to provide financial assistance to purchase a prize, to act as an incentive for the children to become actively involved in the operation.

Lancashire County Council Area Education Office agreed to distribute posters to every school within the Northern Divisional area

St Nicholas Arcade, a large city centre shopping centre displayed a large number of the posters designed by the children.

Media

To ensure that Target reached the widest possible audience media coverage was actively sought and achieved. This was to educate both children and parents to the problem and the law relating to BB / toy guns.

Posters were placed in all leisure centres and schools within the Division.

Leaflets were distributed to police officers and through Police Community Support Officers and Community Beat Managers to local shops and community venues. Internally an intranet page for the use and information of Lancashire Constabulary employees was constructed.

Local newspapers covered Target on several occasions.

Radio interviews were aired on both the local independent BAY RADIO, regionally on LANCASHIRE RADIO and also nationally on RADIO FIVE LIVE.

Operation Target was also featured on television, appearing on BBC1 NORTHWEST NEWS.

It was also featured by Cannon Hygiene through their in-house magazine and on their website.

Target was therefore able to reach the wider audience and population

- Locally
- Regionally
- Nationally
- Globally

Funding

Monies for Operation Target were forthcoming from 3 sources.

1. Street Crime Initiative.
2. LANPAC (Lancashire Partnership Against Crime).
3. Cannon Hygiene Limited.

Assessment

Results

The purpose of Operation Target was to reduce the number of firearms incidents that officers are deployed to. In order to measure this data regarding the deployment of officers was researched.

Method:

A comparable timescale of 12 months was analysed for before and after target using FR2 forms. The categories of weapons that officers encountered were sub divided (*Appendix A*). The control time span was November 2002 to October 2003 (*Appendix B*). The figures during and following Target were between November 2003 and October 2004 (*Appendix C*). Both sets of data were therefore collected over an equal amount of time, 12 months. Recording methods of incidents was uniform throughout the two periods.

The results showed that during and following the introduction of Operation Target the number of deployments to armed incidents fell.

Overall there was a decrease in deployments of 8.7% (*Appendix D*).

Most notably, and the largest decrease shown, was of 33.3% for the 3 month period between August and October 2004, this was felt to be most encouraging as this encompassed the 6 week school holiday period when more young children have more free time and are in public areas for longer periods. In fact only 1 incident was reported to the police during the 6 week school holiday period. This is felt illustrates that the message has reached our target audience and been effective.

The reduction in deployments of officers, which could be up to 32 and above in number, was therefore reduced. Thus allowing for more officer time and resources to be re-directed to policing tasks elsewhere.

Also by reducing the number of incidents attended by armed officers, the risk of an armed officer encountering a supposedly armed individual and being called upon to make critical shoot, don't shoot decision is reduced. This lack of interaction is regarded as positive by Authorised Firearms Officers, as a police shooting is a costly incident for all those involved. A cost that cannot merely be measured in financial terms for the offender involved, their family, the local community, the wider community, the police officers involved, the local constabulary and the police service nationally. For years of interaction and community harmony could be lost following a police shooting where the offender later transpired to be a young person in possession of a toy gun. Even though the actions of the armed officer were in the honestly held belief that the person was armed and posed a threat and that the best information available was that there was a person armed with a firearm in a public place.

Partnerships

- Cannon Hygiene have continued their support of Target
- Schools within the area have a contact point within the police resulting from Target
- Officers have contacts within the schools and education authority to assist with Target
- CBM'S and PCSO'S have a contact point and available resource for problems arising with BB guns in their areas

Lessons Learned

CRSII.

This is the computer system used in all communications rooms within the Lancashire Constabulary.

When trying to search the system for all incidents relating to BB guns, toys, and imitation firearms difficulties were encountered. This was due to the incident category that log is given by the operator differing markedly depending on the information given and the operator receiving it. Incidents that are finalised as children playing with BB guns may have been opened as Robbery, Persons with firearms or Juvenile nuisance.

Therefore for future use of Target, a dedicated CRSII, or its new successor NSIR, incident code should be given that following the completion of an incident the initial code given can be changed to reflect the fact that it was young persons playing with toy guns. This would then allow for the data regarding such incidents to be searched more easily and allow for easier interrogation.

Use of other officers.

Two officers, initiated, devised and ran Operation Target.

These officers were from the Armed Response Unit at Lancaster. No extra time or cost was available to be afforded to them. Every effort though was made to allow them to give presentations to schools uninterrupted. The number of organisations that wished to become involved, initially schools then youth clubs and out of school groups was difficult to managed for two officers alone.

When reflecting upon the operation the officers involved believe that for future presentations and the continuation of Target that assistance from other members of the Armed Response Unit would be beneficial. To this end the lesson plan used has been placed on the Lancashire Constabulary Intranet, allowing for all officers across the force to have access to it and use it for similar presentations.

All officers from the Armed Response Unit have received an input on how to deliver Target and the resources required.

With the assistance of more officers the target age range for presentations will be able to be widened to allow for older children to be spoken to as well.

Media.

Initial expectations were that media coverage would be at a local level to promote the POP at a Divisional level.

At the inception of Target there was no media representative for the constabulary within the division, therefore all contacts and press releases were initially made by the two Authorised Firearms Officers running Target.

These officers were successful in generating media interest and coverage not only in the hoped for local area but also on regional radio, television and national radio. This is felt to demonstrate that the message carried within Target is reflected and pertinent across constabulary and county boundaries and is a national problem.

Conclusion

Operation Target was initiated to reduce the number of firearms incidents within Northern Division, this it has achieved.

The originating officers have packaged the operation in order that other officers can deliver it in other areas/divisions. There are no long term cost implications associated with Target.

The operation can be continued with no monetary outlay to the constabulary or overtime expenditure. This can be accomplished by the correct use of duty management and use of more Armed Response Unit officers who have received the required input to deliver the presentation.

All monies that were used in Target were from external sources.

With reducing firearms deployments officers can be deployed to other police related tasks.

Target has been identified as good practice for POP and has been nominated for the Lancashire Constabulary POP Rose bowl award.

APPENDIX A

BREAKDOWN OF CATEGORIES USED TO GET FIGURES FROM FR2'S

REAL	Section 1 Firearms, Shotguns, Prohibited Weapons
IMITATION	BB Guns, Replica's and Blank Firers
OTHER	Air Weapons, Stun Guns, CS Spray, Knives, Swords, Cross Bows and Humane Killers
NO WEAPON	Incidents where no weapons were seized or found, hoax calls or no trace incidents.

APPENDIX B

FR2 incidents attended by BR90 from 1st November 2002 - 31st October 2003

1st November 02 - 31st January 03					Total number of incidents deployed to 34. 24 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	1	9	6	8	
Other Div	1	3	5	1	
Total	2	12	11	9	

1st February - 30th April 03					Total number of incidents deployed to 37. 33 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	2	11	10	10	
Other Div	1	0	3	0	
Total	3	11	13	10	

1st May - 31st July 03					Total number of incidents deployed to 25. 17 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	1	5	6	5	
Other Div	1	1	3	3	
Total	2	6	9	8	

1st August - 31st October 03					Total number of incidents deployed to 28. 24 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	2	8	4	10	
Other Div	1	1	2	0	
Total	3	9	6	10	

Totals for the year					Total Incidents attended throughout the year 124. 98 of which were on Northern Division.
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	6	33	26	33	
Other Div	4	5	13	4	
Total	10	38	39	37	

APPENDIX C

FR2 incidents attended by BR90 from 1st November 2003 - 31st October 2004

1st November 03 - 31st January 04					Total number of incidents deployed to 33. 27 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	6	8	8	5	
Other Div	1	1	2	2	
Total	7	9	10	7	

1st February - 30th April 04					Total number of incidents deployed to 33. 27 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	2	8	4	13	
Other Div	0	1	2	3	
Total	2	9	6	16	

1st May - 31st July 04					Total number of incidents deployed to 22. 15 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	0	3	4	8	
Other Div	1	1	2	3	
Total	1	4	6	11	

1st August - 31st October 04					Total number of incidents deployed to 15. 7 of which were on Northern division
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	0	0	2	6	
Other Div	0	3	1	3	
Total	0	3	3	9	

Totals for the year					Total Incidents attended throughout the year 103. 77 of which were on Northern Division.
Totals	Real	Imitation	Other	No Weapon	
B Div	8	19	18	32	
Other Div	2	6	8	11	
Total	10	25	26	43	

APPENDIX D

OVERALL RESULTS

1ST November 02 – 31ST January 03

34 incidents in total, 24 of which occurred in Northern Division.
9 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 37.5%

1ST November 03 – 31ST January 04

33 incidents in total, 27 of which occurred in Northern Division.
8 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 29.6%

A DECREASE OF 7.9%

1ST February 03 – 30TH April 03

37 incidents in total, 33 of which occurred in Northern Division.
11 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 33.3%

1ST February 04 – 30TH April 04

33 incidents in total, 27 of which occurred in Northern Division.
8 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 29.6%

A DECREASE OF 3.7%

1ST May 03 – 31ST July 03

25 incidents in total, 17 of which occurred in Northern Division.
5 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 29.4%

1ST May 04 – 31ST July 04

22 incidents in total, 15 of which occurred in Northern Division.
3 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 20%

A DECREASE OF 9.4%

1ST August 03 – 31ST October 03

28 incidents in total, 24 of which occurred in Northern Division.
8 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 33.3%

1ST August 04 – 31ST October 04

15 incidents in total, 7 of which occurred in Northern Division.
0 of these incidents involved imitation weapons = 0%

A DECREASE OF 33.3%