

Tilley Award 2006

Application form

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing this form. By making an application to the awards, entrants are agreeing to abide by the conditions laid out in the Guidance. Please complete the following form in full and within the word limit. Failure to do so could result in disqualification from the competition.

Completed application forms should be e-mailed to Tricia Perkins; patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on Friday 28th April 2006. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262. Any queries regarding other aspects of the awards should be directed to Michael Wilkinson on 0207 035 0247 or Lindsey Poole on 0207 035 0234.

Please tick box to indicate whether the entry should be considered for the main award, the criminal damage award or both;

Main award

Criminal Damage Award

Both Awards

1. Details of application

Title of the project: Graffiti - low level/high impact.

Name of force/agency/CDRP: South Yorkshire Police

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): Robert Dyson

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s): Assistant Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s):

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2. Summary of application

This project initially came about following the results of a resident's survey created by the Local Policing Team in the Sharrow area of Sheffield. Results of the survey revealed that quality of life was affected for members of the community, not by fear of crime as would be expected, but rather by the amount of criminal damage in the area, especially graffiti. The survey also highlighted that residents were most unlikely to report incidents of graffiti as they felt they would not be taken seriously.

The Police have historically considered graffiti to be a 'low level' crime and attempts to deal with the problem have been ad-hoc. The Safer Neighbourhood Team believed that by tackling the issue of graffiti and other environmental problems it would not only improve the quality of life for residents but also demonstrate that it is a problem the police take seriously.

We were conscious of the fact that the environment is not something that can be improved by the Police in isolation. Therefore other responsible partner agencies were identified and invited to take part in the initiative. The first stage was to share the results of the survey and invite all parties to join members of the Local Policing Team in a visual audit of the area where they could identify and record problems and recognise the need for action.

The visual audit identified the following problems: graffiti, litter, underage drinking, abandoned vehicles, commercial waste and anti social behaviour.

Each problem was addressed in turn, the appropriate partner agency was identified and ideas to solve the problems were suggested. Each initiative was scheduled in to ensure resources were available, funding could be secured and community involvement could be maximised. As each initiative took place, the results were shared with all parties involved and publicised in local newspapers and at community groups in order to raise awareness with the residents of Sharrow.

Initiatives included the removal of untaxed and abandoned vehicles, test purchases for aerosol paint and alcohol, removal of litter, commercial waste and unwanted items from private dwellings, removal of graffiti and targeting offenders who commit criminal damage.

Following the completion of each initiative, we evaluated our achievements, asking ourselves how successful the initiative was and could we improve on it in any way. This demonstrated dedication to yielding the best possible results we could. The less successful initiatives were re-assessed and new solutions suggested.

The successful initiatives are ongoing and form part of our routine operational duties. Partnerships formed as part of this project are still strong and mutually beneficial and examples of our work have been promoted throughout the force as best practice.

3. Description of project

1. Objectives of the Project: Scanning

Sharrow is located within the 'Sheffield Two' Policing district and Sheffield City Councils Sharrow Ward. There are several of the city's most affluent locations here alongside some of the poorest areas in Sheffield. There is a diverse range of people from various backgrounds, with 110 different ethnicities and 60 nationalities speaking 80 languages, creating the most culturally diverse area in Sheffield.

When the Home Office identified Sharrow as a policing priority area, an extensive community survey was undertaken by the police in conjunction with Sheffield City Council in order to identify which issues were a priority for those living in the area.

The results of the survey were not as the police had expected. The main issue raised as a major concern for residents was not burglary or car crime or threat of violence, but rather the environment in which they lived, the amount of graffiti, litter and vandalism in the area.

A visual audit of the area confirmed that there was a large amount of graffiti on local businesses, street furniture and private dwellings as well as damage to phone boxes, bus shelters, litter and abandoned vehicles.

The Police Education officer spoke to children who attended local schools and identified that the environment was a direct link to the fear of crime. The children were afraid to go to certain areas as streetlights were broken and graffiti and litter covered the area.

For these reasons, we decided to undertake a project to tackle the environment in Sharrow, particularly graffiti, in order to improve the look and feel of the area and reduce the fear of crime.

The success of the project would be apparent from a continued visual audit and feedback from a follow up community survey. Data from partner agencies on reports of graffiti and other criminal damage would supply evidence of success as well as police crime statistics and number of arrests.

Environmental problems can not be solved by the police in isolation, therefore a number of appropriate partner agencies were invited to become involved, in particular those who shared environmental concerns. These are as follows:

<u>Sheffield City Council:</u>	Responsible for the removal of graffiti from buildings and street furniture
<u>Sheffield Trading Standards:</u>	Responsible for retailers selling aerosol paints and alcohol to minors
<u>Local schools:</u>	Educating children in the affects of criminal damage and encouraging community involvement and responsibility.
<u>Crimestoppers:</u>	'Name that Tag' rewards scheme
<u>Local Businesses:</u>	Involvement in the Sheffield Graffiti Charter
<u>DVLA:</u>	Removal of untaxed/abandoned vehicles
<u>Sheffield Fire and Rescue:</u>	Arson Intervention Team

2. Definition of the Problem: Analysis

Although the problem of graffiti is indeed noticeable, it has long been considered by the police to be a 'low level' crime and while not ignored completely, little was done to tackle the problem.

The community survey undertaken by the Safer Neighbourhood Team highlighted the problems of graffiti, litter and other criminal damage as being a major concern for the community. The results of this survey have proven an accurate source of information as they identified not only what the main area for that community was but also what their expectations of the police and other agencies were in relation to it.

The survey results were looked at in conjunction with police incident statistics, Sheffield City Council reports of graffiti and abandoned cars, Fire Service figures and a visual audit of the area.

The survey issued to the residents of Sharrow aimed to not only discover the nature of the problems in the area but also to what extent it affects their quality of life. The way in which the questions were structured made it easy to

identify what concerned the residents the most, the problems they were encountering that were not being reported to the police and why not, and what they wanted to happen to solve the problem.

The community survey of over 4000 homes in Sharrow had a response rate of 27% which, while it was a positive response, did show an under representation in responses from people aged under 29 years. This under representation could be accounted for by the fact that the surveys were addressed to the household, not individuals. However, the visual audit of the area supported the results of the survey, as did the statistics provided by other agencies.

As well as the police driven survey, other agencies were initially contacted to discuss the level of activity in the Sharrow area, for example Graffiti with Sheffield City Council and arson/car fires with Sheffield Fire and Rescue.

The results of the police survey were distributed between all the involved agencies taking shared responsibility for the problems identified. An appropriate response was agreed.

3. Response to the Problem: Response

In order to respond to the problem, we looked at the four main areas highlighted by the analysis in order to tackle long term root causes as well as some quick hit successes to grab the attention of the community and our partners.

Education

Our school liaison officer spoke to children in the schools and at local community projects about graffiti and litter. They discussed the impact it has on an area, how it affects the livelihoods of local businesses, how it makes older people feel about their safety and about the consequences an offender will face if they get caught. Fire and Rescue officers have also visited schools to highlight the problem of arson when rubbish has been dumped and set alight in the area and cars burnt out. By speaking to key community figures and local business people, we have encouraged the reporting of incidents of criminal damage and have provided feedback to individuals about the subsequent action we have taken.

Environment

Many of the local businesses have joined the Sheffield Graffiti Charter after visits from Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Sheffield City Council Representatives. PCSO's explained the affect Graffiti has on a community. They talked about the project and have encouraged a number of local businesses to join the Charter. The Graffiti Charter is a Council Initiative whereby graffiti is removed from a business free of charge in return for a commitment from that business to keep the property clean.

The Lifestyle project planned for the summer hopes to involve youngsters in the building of a community wall. Not only will the children involved learn vocational skills such as bricklaying, but also the resulting wall will be a location where budding graffiti artists can express their talents in a safe environment without causing criminal damage.

The Sharrow Policing Team have organised operations in partnership with the DVLA, resulting in the removal of over 50 untaxed vehicles from the highway, thus reducing the incidents of car fires and abandoned damaged vehicles.

Enforcement

A police operation is planned around a building that is a continued target for graffiti. The building was cleaned of graffiti under the Charter, however it was targeted over night and a mass of graffiti appeared all over the property. Police Officers are arranging for the building to be cleaned once more and have also arranged to set up covert cameras to film any further activity at the site. Police Officers will observe the building in an attempt to arrest the offenders.

A database is in the process of being set up by PCSO's to record pictures of all the 'tags' in the Sharrow area. This will enable the police to prosecute, not only for the incident where the offender was caught, but also for all the other 'tags' recorded.

The Sharrow Policing Team has undertaken test purchase operations alongside Trading Standards Officers for the sale of aerosol paints used to graffiti and alcohol to minors. It was thought that much of the litter was left by youths drinking in the area who then go on to cause criminal damage and commit anti social behaviour.

The Fire Service Arson Intervention Team joined forces with PCSO's and provided training in the identification of

potential arson sites and what could be done to remove them. Where such sites were identified, the Fire Service visited the person responsible and asked them to remove the litter, those failing to comply would face prosecution.

Engagement

The police have worked alongside volunteers from the community to paint out graffiti on local businesses where graffiti removal through the Charter was not appropriate. 'Name that Tag' posters, provided by Crimestoppers, have been displayed in local shops. The posters show photos of ten of the most common tags from the Sharrow area and offer a reward for information about the owner of the tag. Not only do the youths know that action is being taken against those who commit criminal damage but it also raises awareness to members of the local community that they can speak to Crimestoppers anonymously with any knowledge they have about who is causing the damage and about other crimes.

Regular 'environment weeks' have been organised by the police and our partner agencies to engage with the community in dealing with all environmental issues from graffiti to large scale litter removal. In the first of these events, funding was secured to purchase paint and protective clothing to be used by local youngsters to cover graffiti on premises where the Graffiti Charter was not appropriate. The police also rolled up their sleeves and joined in the fun and supervised the youngsters. This enhanced the relationship between the youngsters and the police and above all, it gave them some ownership of the new clean wall they had created.

We decided to approach the problem on all fronts as enforcement alone had not worked in the past. It was clear that agencies other than the police should be involved in the problem, and in so doing it gave them ownership as well as support.

The results from the police and partner's statistics and a continued visual audit of the area present evidence to demonstrate that the intervention was and continues to be effective.

This project has demonstrated the effective use of partnership working as the relationships built on this project have been maintained and used to confront other problems across the area. The initiatives started by the Sharrow Safer Neighbourhood Team have been used as an example to other teams across the police force therefore other areas of South Yorkshire have benefited as a result. In addition, the partner agencies have since started other initiatives such as the sharing of intelligence.

The Sharrow Safer Neighbourhood Team managed the project and each initiative was planned and scheduled by the police. Regular meetings were held with the partners in order to gain the commitment of resources and funding for each initiative. By having regular contact with everyone involved, it gave us the opportunity to identify any potential problems and implement solutions so that each initiative was well planned, well run and results fed back to those involved.

A follow up community survey is planned to measure the success of the project and to assess if the residents of Sharrow have noticed a difference in the environment. The survey also asks if residents feel differently about their quality of life and their perceptions about the police and partners agencies response to the problem.

There is an ongoing visual audit of the area by means of police patrol. The area PCSO records and reports all sightings of graffiti, litter, abandoned vehicles, liaises with the appropriate partner agency and revisits the area to ensure the problem has been resolved.

4. Evaluation of the Intervention: Assessment

At the end of each initiative, we evaluated our results and asked was it a success? What could we do differently? The successful initiatives were repeated, such as the DVLA operations and test purchasing. Where initiatives have been less successful, we have addressed the reasons why and tried other means to achieve a better result.

At this stage, a visual audit and statistics from partners have provided means of evaluating the success of the project. This evidence shows a visual reduction in graffiti and litter. Also personal feedback has been received from elected members of the council for the area, praising the work we have undertaken.

The statistics have shown a marked decrease in the number of calls to the council for litter; complaints about litter have reduced from 43 calls with a response time of 8.5 days to 17 calls with a response time of 4.75 days. The

response time for removing abandoned vehicles from the street has reduced from 5.34 days to 2.12 days. This timely response for removing vehicles helps to portray a positive image of the area as people do not perceive it as an area of high crime. In relation to graffiti, the number of calls from the public has increased from 2 to 5 as we encouraged people to report it. The most impressive result in relation to graffiti is the reduction in response time from 145.28 days to only 4.69 days. The Fire Service has confirmed that car fires over the last two years have not increased in the Sharrow area.

Operations involving Trading Standards for test purchasing of alcohol have shown a substantial decrease in sales to minors. 70% of those tested on the initial operation sold alcohol to a 15-year-old. When we tested the same premises two months later, no purchases were made.

It is clear from the joint initiatives that ownership of the project was high across all the partners involved. While it is acknowledged that the police took the lead on the project as a whole, our main achievement was to raise the awareness and importance of the issues with the partners, offer assistance with planning initiatives, provide resources in the form of uniform support on operations i.e. with trading standards and the DVLA, and then maintain the contact between the police and the partners to ensure an ongoing response to the problem.

As a result of the project, we now recognise that criminal damage such as graffiti is not just nuisance and an eyesore in our community, but it has an effect on the fear of crime and the perception outsiders have about an area. More importantly, if it is ignored, the community begin to feel that nothing can be done about the problem and that nobody really cares. This led to the under-reporting of incidents of graffiti and litter to the police or Sheffield City Council. Furthermore, because no one was complaining, the police considered it as low level and low impact to the community.

This all changed as a result of this project.