

## 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](mailto: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: BTP Workplace Violence Project

Name of force/agency/CDRP: London Underground Area British Transport Police

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

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s): Paul Crowther

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) Chief Superintendent

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s)

Chief Superintendent Paul Crowther  
British Transport Police  
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## 2. Summary of application

### Tackling Workplace Violence

In 2005 British Transport Police (BTP) set out to tackle assaults on London Underground (LU) staff. Staff assaults had increased yearly since 2002 and a crisis of confidence was looming among LU employees. A self-fulfilling cycle had formed whereby staff were subject to frequent threats and abuse, felt under siege, felt unsupported by management and Police and developed coping strategies which perpetuated the cycle. Utilising the problem solving model of policing BTP set about reversing the trend in staff assaults.

Nottingham University had been involved in earlier research and was engaged to investigate issues surrounding assaults. The report found a serious breakdown in relationship between LU and BTP and identified deficiencies in both LU and BTP strategy in dealing with staff assaults. In response, BTP set out to reduce the offences by reviewing deployment strategies, improving response to incidents and investigation of crime, and facilitating a better relationship with LU staff.

A series of workplace violence forums were held to communicate with frontline officers and change thinking on staff assaults. Staff assaults were made a priority crime for BTP and this change in attitude filtered through from the most senior ranks.

Strong links were developed with LU in and strategy group was formed with members from both organizations. A specifically designed training program was introduced for officers to improve initial actions at the scene and investigation of incidents.

What is believed to be the country's first dedicated Workplace Violence Unit has been introduced in partnership with London Underground to provide the quality service to rail staff victims from the incident to the result and ongoing care.

The key interventions by BTP included:

- Training to improve the response and investigation by frontline officers;
- Developing an improved training package for LU staff to provide the skills needed to deal with and manage confrontation;
- Ensuring an effective strategy with LU at management level and promoting its success to frontline staff.

In 2005-06 a target was set to ensure staff assault offences did not exceed the 2004-05 level of 891 offences. By working within the objectives set, BTP exceeded this target and assaults were reduced by 6.3%. This reduction was particularly significant given the corresponding campaign to increase reporting (detections) of staff assaults. Detections increased by 6%.

### 3. Description of project

#### Objectives

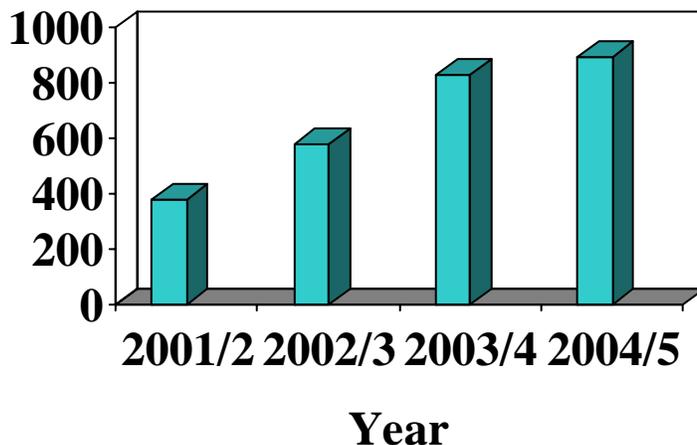
In 2004-05 assaults on LU staff reached alarming levels. BTP's statistical analysis revealed that assaults on LU staff had risen from 400 in 2001-02 to just under 900 in 2004-05. These crimes included more serious assaults as well as difficult to detect, yet just as impactful offences such as threats, intimidation and spitting. A high percentage of assaults were aggravated by racial or religious threats. Staff morale was suffering and a sense that little was being done to address the problem was widely spread. In particular, a sense that Police did not take the matter seriously was eroding the working relationship between BTP and LU staff. Staff were increasingly feeling unsafe at work.

Statistical analysis showed assaults on LU staff had risen from 400 in 2001-02 to 900 in 2004-05.

**Objective:** To maintain staff assaults at the 2005-06 level of 891 assaults.

**Objective:** To attain a detection rate of 35% for assaults on staff.

### Assaults On Staff



Of concern to LU staff was that BTP officers were slow to respond to an incident when called to assist. Staff felt that too few officers were trying to cover too wide a geographical area and that in general response was poor.

**Objective:** To improve actions at scene by initial police responders.

LU staff felt officers were unprofessional in their dealings with staff assaults and did not take the issue as seriously as they should. Staff felt there was little chance of a report resulting in arrest or penalty and perceived BTP did not put in the required level of effort.

**Objective:** To improve the quality of investigation into incidents.

**Objective:** To ensure staff assaults were viewed as a top priority by BTP officers.

Surveys revealed that BTP officers largely regarded LU staff as having poor communication skills and being aggressive towards customers. Frontline officers felt that LU staff often exaggerated assaults to get time off work. The two organisations held very different views of the trigger factors involved in staff assaults.

**Objective:** To improve the relationship between BTP and LU.

Success of the project was measured by the number of staff assaults in 2005-06 not increasing beyond 2004-05 levels. Encouraging an increase in the reporting of assaults was critical, and consequently a reduction target was not set. A specific target was set of achieving a detection rate for staff assaults of 35%

In conjunction with London Underground and Nottingham University a series of performance indicators were drawn up and included in a staff survey to provide an indication of the qualitative success of the project.

Critical to the success of the project was the involvement of senior LU management

This was achieved after a presentation to the LU board, highlighting the importance of the issues, where a service director was identified to own the issue for London Underground.

### **Definition of the project**

Statistical analysis of London Underground's own internal data on assaults revealed an alarming increase in workplace violence which amounted to a doubling of assaults since 2002.

Earlier research commissioned by LU into staff assaults was utilised, including:

- Statistical analysis of 2772 existing staff assault reports;
- Discussion and observation visits to five stations involving 50 staff (station, revenue, operational managers and support functions)
- 11 focus groups involving 64 revenue, train and station staff; and
- A large-scale survey sample (some 2600 usable responses).

The most recent research by Nottingham University conducted in 2003 focused on BTP and included a further two focus groups and a questionnaire survey of 127 officers. It explored the nature, causes and consequences of aggression and violence on the Underground and the working relationship between BTP and LU staff and how this might be improved.

Using a combined qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methodology, the views of LU staff and BTP officers towards the increase in staff assaults were determined. LU staff thought BTP officers were poor at dealing with incidents of assault. These fundamental differing perspectives were analysed to discover the way forward for reducing the number of staff assaults.

Staff thought:

- 1) BTP officers were slow to respond when called;
- 2) Upon arrival at an incident, BTP officers showed little empathy and understanding
- 3) BTP officers suggested it was the staff member who was the aggressor

In contrast, BTP officers thought:

- Many LU staff were unprofessional in their approach to difficult situations;
- LU staff exaggerated incidents;
- LU staff were not given sufficient support by their management; and
- LU staff regarded the BTP as a 'bully buy private army' brought in when things went wrong.

Research showed a poor relationship between BTP and London Underground at the point of delivery was a key factor in the increase in staff assaults. Some LU staff were losing confidence in the ability of BTP to deal with their complaints. Staff objected to the attitude displayed by some BTP officers on arrival at incidents and believed there was a tendency to take the side of the passenger. Some LU staff agreed with BTP that colleagues displayed poor conflict management behaviour and were looking for an argument.

Most interestingly, the circumstances considered by police officers as most commonly causing aggressive incidents to which they were called were:

1. Alcohol and customers deliberately avoiding paying;
2. Drugs;
3. Incorrect ticketing; and
4. Disruption to the service.

London Underground staff rated the inflammatory factors in order:

1. Disruption to the service;

2. Customers deliberately avoiding paying;
3. Alcohol;
4. Lack of information;
5. Queues at the ticket office; and
6. Incorrect ticketing.

A problem profile carried out analysing reported crime for the period confirmed these findings. Analysis revealed that 55% of assaults on staff occurred at or in the vicinity of the ticket barriers at stations. This confirmed the findings of the surveys which identified ticketing problems and the manner in which Underground staff dealt with them, as the single most significant factor.

An information gap identified in the analysis was that in terms of crime reports, 29% of staff assaults crime was recorded as occurring in 'other' locations, i.e. no specific location on a station. In practice this tended to be in the station entrance of booking hall area and the recording officer is sometimes unsure of how to describe the exact location. It was important that this issue was taken into account.

Extensive consultation took place throughout the project with London Underground as the key stakeholder. Other stakeholders included trade unions and specific staff groups such as revenue inspectors, ticket barrier assistants and platform staff who are at the forefront of customer interactions. To ensure full consultation with all groups including frontline BTP officers, Nottingham University conducted a series of focus groups and surveys.

It became apparent that frontline staff LU staff felt they were not supported by their management. This view was supported by BTP. Research showed that LU staff were expected to work in isolated conditions, management did not comprehend the extent of abuse levelled at frontline workers and management and did not lend adequate support in dealing with difficult and aggressive situations. Involving the LU management team and gaining support for changes to the way staff assaults were dealt with was therefore critical to the project's success.

### **Response to the problem**

Research into the problem of staff assaults identified that the incidents of physical assault were relatively uncommon. However, many staff frontline staff felt in fear of assault daily. This fear was likened by researchers to a "drip, drip" effect, or water torture with a deep and long-term effect.

Their sense of wellbeing was being eroded, exacerbated by staff perceptions of management inaction and indifference and indifference from Police. Many believed Police were openly hostile to them when called to a staff assault incident and tended to take the side of the member of the public.

A number of issues clearly emerged:

- The need to raising the profile of the issue of workplace violence within both LU and BTP;
- The need to improve the relationship between LU and BTP frontline staff;
- The need to improve conflict management training by LU of its frontline staff;
- The need to improve links between LU policies and strategies and potential for assaults;
- The need to improve the attitude and response of officers attending the scene;
- The need to improving the quality of investigation into incidents; and
- The need to provide support to victims of workplace violence throughout the criminal justice process.

These issues required action at the level of the individual, team and the organisation as a whole and focusing on three different time points: before, during and after incidents. Because the response involved behavioural and attitudinal changes relating to LU, strong partnership collaboration with LU was also required.

Certain objectives were qualitative and others quantitative so the response design required a two-pronged approach. Specific training was given to officers in relation to investigation techniques and this was reinforced by organisational performance targets. Improving the relationship with LU required a joint approach whereby both LU staff and BTP officers were re-educated on what was expected of each party and attitudinal change was effected by a more emotive techniques.

All 600 BTP operational officers attended a series of workplace violence forums. The forums were designed to educate officers as to the underlying issues and were addressed by senior BTP at ACPO level and senior LU figures and industry experts, and also included an input from the Metropolitan Police Violent crime task force. The forums set out to highlight the similarities between the issues of workplace and domestic violence in terms of police response, and in particular the methods used by the Metropolitan Police to overcome similar attitudinal problems they had encountered when their officers dealt with domestic violence. Nottingham University also presented its research findings.

A high impact training DVD was used in which actors 'role played' the part of members of Underground recounting their experiences of being the victims of assault. The award winning training DVD focuses on case studies and was shown to LU staff in a facilitated session to help them identify ways that they can reduce the threat of assault or abuse by conflict avoidance. It also contains sections that focus on the police response to an incident and how that might be influenced by their own actions. It encourages evidence collection and co-operation to maximise the potential for prosecutions.

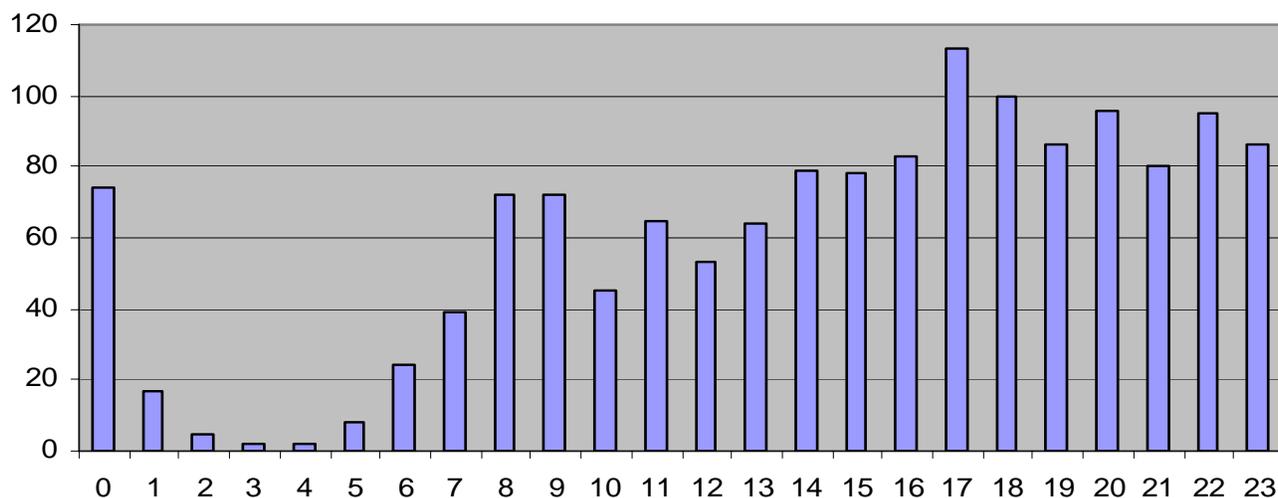
A specially designed training package was structured for all BTP frontline officers and control room staff, to communicate best practice techniques for dealing with Rail staff victims and improve first actions at the scene of incidents. The course also provided input on forensic recovery of evidence and victim care.

Improving response to incidents was critical and a review of the deployments of police response vehicles was essential. The establishment of local BTP Group Station policing teams charged with building relationships with Underground staff and problem solving at the most local level was a key to success. Statistical analysis identified times and locations where assaults were most frequent and officers were deployed accordingly. Staff in the outer suburbs reported feeling most vulnerable after 2300 despite most offences occurring between 1700 and 2000 and so deployment of reassurance policing teams to those areas increased during the identified times.

Traditionally the response to an increase in crime sees increases in resources targeted at identified hotspots. However, in this case analysis has shown a lack of traditional hotspots. Hotspots if they exist are largely situational rather than geographical and so by itself, deployment of officers at specific locations in response to assaults is generally ineffective in preventing them.

London Underground's own analysis shows some 69% of incidents occurred at the ticket barrier on stations, but they were spread out across the system. Whilst most incidents occur when the Underground is heavily congested and when service disruptions are most likely, i.e. during morning and afternoon peak traffic hours, the assaults are thinly spread. For example, Kings Cross Underground Station recorded the most incidents in a year at 35 which is less than one a week.

**Assaults on LU Staff, Apr 2005 - Mar2006, by Hour of Day**



A different approach was needed, one that tackled the root causes of the problem. Clearly, it was important to equip London Underground staff to deal with potentially confrontational interactions with passengers, providing them with the skills to diffuse potentially fiery situations. This required a review of training for frontline staff. It also required that London Underground reviewed their recruitment strategy to these positions to ensure that they selected people with the right interpersonal skills to these stressful positions. Indeed it was critical that London Underground's workplace violence strategy linked with all other strategies, i.e. recruitment, ticketing and deployment of staff to impact on the problem.

In order to effect these strategies, high level ownership of the problem was required. For the BTP, Tackling Workplace Violence is owned by Chief Inspector Paul Wilson and supported at senior level by Chief Superintendent Paul Crowther. For London Underground, workplace violence champion Aidan Harris is the project leader and the project is now owned at Board level by Service Director Howard Collins.

As part of the community engagement and partnership work, quarterly Workplace Violence Strategy group meetings involving London Underground managers and trade union representatives were held whereby BTP provided updates on the project's progress and sought feedback.

To promote partnership between the two organisations and highlight the progress on workplace violence a monthly newsletter was established which contained information on workplace violence issues supplied by BTP and disseminated by LU.

It was recognised that to provide the quality of service that was required in terms of quality investigations and victim care throughout the Criminal Justice process, a joint LU-BTP Workplace Violence Unit was the way forward. The unit provides a one-stop shop for dealing with all aspects of workplace violence and is believed to be the first of its type in the country. The unit comprises a team of police investigators together with LU staff who act as case workers who link with occupational health and welfare facilities and assist with taking statements. The case workers also provide positive feedback to assault victims. BTP evidence gatherers and case progression are also provided to the team by London Underground.

The Crown Prosecution Service was lobbied to regard staff assaults as aggravated with a leaning towards prosecution rather than not and this change in approach has already begun delivering rapid justice. Where there is a decision not to prosecute, a system is in place to refer cases to LU internal solicitors to consider private prosecutions or civil claims.

The approach is designed to ensure victims receive a gold star service with the aim of reversing the "drip, drip" effect

of dealing with conflict and aggression at work, enhance sense of personal wellbeing and actually reduce crime as customer focus improves and incidents that might otherwise have led to assault are diffused.

The project was funded from within existing budgets. However, the establishment of the new Workplace Violence Unit required some re-allocation of existing resources and accommodation. The reallocation of these resources and consequent budget required presentation of in depth plans and proposals to London Underground Board to sell the concept and was a significant obstacle that had to be overcome in the planning stage.

Ongoing review mechanisms were built into the project to ensure it stayed on target. For example, when Tackling Workplace Violence first became a concern, LU provided limited training to employees on dealing with conflict at work. As part of the project and ongoing review by Nottingham University a revised training package was introduced and incorporated into the initial five-day block of training undertaken by frontline station staff. Frontline station staff now undertake three days workplace violence training before they begin working for LU. BTP was involved in the development of this training package, and in particular in the development of the training video now used for frontline staff.

Whilst the project has achieved its initial goals of arresting the increase in staff assaults it is continually evolving. The training packages implemented by LU and BTP are permanent fixtures and their content will be regularly updated, and the Workplace Violence Unit is now operational, delivering force-wide best practice in relation to workplace violence.

While BTP and LU were always perceived as partners in the fight against violence on the Underground, at a local level this clearly required development. The strong collaboration between BTP and LU at the front line is providing improved relationships and bringing about effective crime reduction in the area of workplace violence and breaking new ground in areas of work.

### **Evaluation of the intervention**

To evaluate the project, qualitative assessment criteria were developed. Research was carried out with LU staff at pilot sites at the Victoria and Camden Town groups of stations to assess the effectiveness of the project to date. The findings suggest real improvement. In a survey conducted over a two month period, 83 members of staff were canvassed across both groups and asked a series of questions. In particular they were asked:

- *Do you think assistance from the BTP is improving?*

Approximately 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

- *Do you agree with the statement 'BTP are not just a uniform now, we talk more'*

Approximately 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

- *Do you agree with the statement 'We see more of BTP nowadays & not just in Response to calls'*

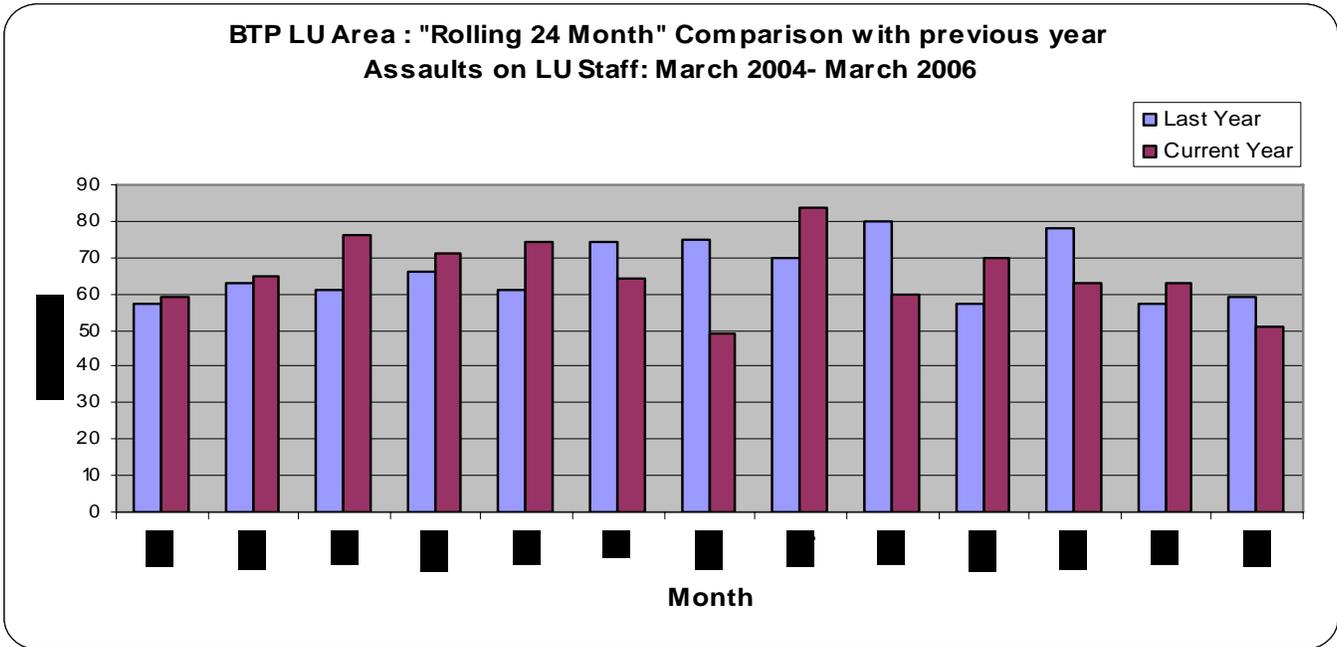
Approximately 75% agreed or strongly agreed.

### **Monitoring Progress**

Initial response of officers to staff assault incidents is monitored daily with officers in charge of BTP stations participating in a conference call chaired by a senior officer. Assaults on staff are now treated as a priority crime and are subject to a positive arrest policy that was introduced in spring 2005. If no arrest results from a call to a staff assault then officers must justify this to senior management.

The strong focus on staff assaults during the morning conference call, the organisational targets around increasing detections of staff assaults and decreasing the number of incidents, together with workplace violence forums and training sessions have all served to change the perception of Workplace Violence among BTP officers. As can be seen, the perception of support from BTP is improving. Reassurance policing deployments during peak traffic times have assisted with response times as officers are more frequently on location during times when service disruptions and aggravating factors occur. The introduction of Group Station Teams has also had a positive impact on relationships at a local level.

Statistical analysis shows much better results than predicted with a 6.3% reduction in staff assaults and a 41% detection rate for these offences, 6% higher than our target.<sup>1</sup>



Evaluation of the qualitative aspects of the project is ongoing. The method of evaluation mirrors the methods used to investigate the problems. Because many of the objectives set in relation to staff assaults were qualitative, surveys aimed at determining the opinions of frontline staff were used. Much of this will inevitably be subjective, and often dependent upon the most recent interaction between staff and police, however, the feedback so far is proving positive.

Throughout the project regular presentations were made to LU Board of Directors including Service Director Howard Collins and BTP Chief Superintendent Paul Crowther to maintain high-level ownership across partners and keep them informed of developments and progress toward goals and project objectives.

The development of the project and the evaluation work by Nottingham University helped to improve and inform knowledge of Workplace Violence issues at a strategic level within London Underground that was previously lacking. Indeed London Underground has now recognised the importance of ensuring that other strategies particularly in relation to recruitment and ticketing are linked to its Workplace Violence strategy.

Conversely, BTP officers are coming to more fully understand the demands on front line London Underground staff. There is now better appreciation and fewer misconceptions about factors involved in assaults on staff, and officers recognise the difficult job that London Underground staff do.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix A shows serious assaults on LU staff by month from 2001-2006

**Appendix A**

**BTP LU Area : Serious Assaults on LU Staff (B\*\*, Z70,X\*\*), by Month:  
Years 01/02 v 02/03 v 03/04 v 04/05 v 05/06**

