

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: **OPERATION 'SURRENDER IT'**

Name of force/agency/CDRP: **Lancashire Constabulary**

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

PC 677 Steve Bradshaw

Email address: **Stephen.Bradshaw@Lancashire.pnn.police.uk**

Full postal address: **Armed Response Unit, Central Division, Preston Police Station, Lawson Street, Preston Lancashire PR1 2RJ**

Telephone number: **01772 209032**

Fax number **01772 209037**

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Acting Deputy Chief Constable Mr. Adrian Mc McAllister**

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Acting Deputy Chief Constable – HQ Corporate Services Directorate**

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s) **Lancashire Constabulary Police Headquarters PO Box 77, Hutton, Preston, Lancs PR4 5SB**

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.

SITUATION – A high number of BB gun related instances in the Preston area

TASK – To reduce the number of instances through education.

ACTION – The POP plan, Operation ‘Surrender It’ consisted of 4 main focal points.

1. **Education of the public** – Utilizing the scanning phase of the SARA model, it was shown that there had been 52 BB gun related instances in the Preston area over the previous 3 months involving youths aged 9 to 17. By speaking to the Parents of the youths responsible, it was clear that there was a lot of ignorance as to the anti-social impact the guns have. The age demographic of parents was targeted by using local BBC radio as well as the local paper. A BB gun amnesty ran from the 1st December 2005 until 28th February 2006. The dangers posed by the misuse of BB guns were targeted to youths and parents. The similarities to real firearms and the fact that the ARV deploy to BB gun related instances with real firearms was highlighted. Owners of BB guns were asked to ‘Surrender It’ and upon doing so, were asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding BB gun perceptions. A completed questionnaire was entered into a draw to win an IPOD. The operation featured on the front page of the Lancashire Evening Post and a further two times during the campaign and once in the Preston Citizen. I conducted two interviews on BBC local radio and it featured on BBC World Online. I designed 2 educational posters that were placed in areas associated with young people like Libraries, Youth Clubs, schools, etc.
2. **Education of the Police** – I designed a laminated *aide memoir* and PowerPoint presentation detailing the offences under the firearms act. I briefed the sector teams and checked understanding.
3. **Reinforcing the message** – I forged links with the community and I have spoken to The Princes Trust, The Avenham Project, St. Matthews ward PACT, UCLAN and local schools.
4. **Keeping it going** – With the purchase of www.SurrenderIt.com, I have in place a long-term reference point. I designed the website which contains the results of the Amnesty and findings from the survey as well as my contact details.

RESULT – The POP showed a reduction of 65% in BB gun related instances from the preceding three months and a 44% reduction in the same three months the previous year.

3. Description of project

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

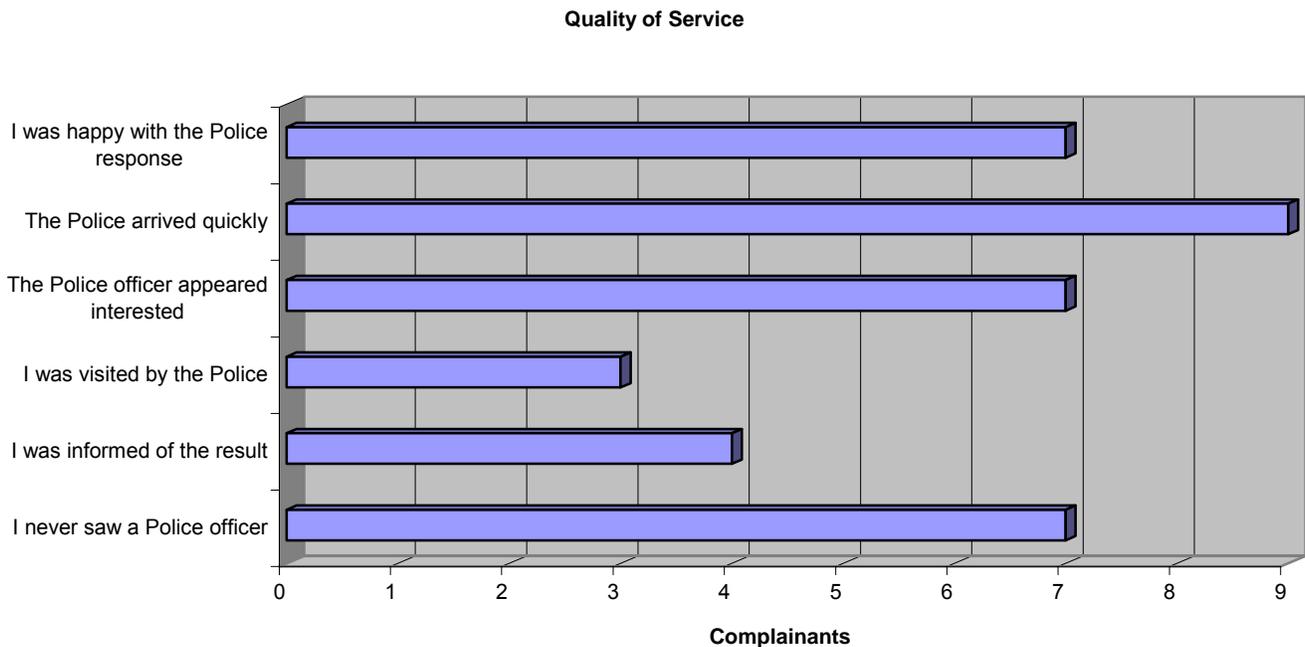
Scanning & Analysis

By interrogating the local Police computer systems, Preston Armed response unit had deployed to fifty-two BB gun related instances in the three-month period commencing 1st September 2005 involving primarily youths aged between 9 and 17. It was also noted that there was a month on month steady growth of BB gun related instances over the past 3 years. Raw data, in itself is a valuable scanning tool but it can never reflect the human perceptions to such incidents. I took a sample of 20 incidents from the assessment period and visited the complainants. I ensured that the sample reflected the whole diverse population of Preston. I asked the complainants a set of structured questions relating to their perceptions and fears of what had happened and the quality of service that they had received from the Police.



Examining the above chart, it can clearly be seen that the perception of serious crime like armed robbery, serious assault etc. is actually quite low. The overwhelming factor from speaking to the complainants were that they were not sure either way whether it was a real gun or not. One of the main trigger factors I found was that their perception of a toy gun differed from what they had observed; e.g. removable magazine, top slide movement. A common phrase of "Toy guns looked like toy guns when I was younger" was used time and time again to highlight the difficulty in complainants identifying the items as toys. The chart shows that the overwhelming fear that the 'guns' may be used in an anti-social, nuisance and signal crime perspective. Most complainants were concerned that horseplay would result in damage to property, injury and road traffic collisions.

The below chart shows the level of satisfaction that the complainants had in response to the incidents they reported.



It can clearly be seen that the quality of service was lacking in a number of key areas, namely keeping the complainant in the loop and informing them of the outcome. I was able to cross reference the incidents in which the perceived response from the public was little to find out that a major firearms operation was implemented and a great deal of Police time and resources were applied to the solution which was not recognised by the complainant because we were not victim focused at the end.

The second part of the scanning process was to visit the 'offenders' in front of their parents. Using the same 20 incidents, I was able to quickly assess that the main problem was one of ignorance. Parents were not aware as to the nuisance element that arises from the misuse of BB guns stating, "It's only a toy". They were indeed quite shocked when I pointed out the criminal offences of brandishing an imitation firearm in public. This opinion was uniform across the people spoken to. The 'offender' for such offences could not be isolated within a particular social group; Young people from all backgrounds ranging from the socially deprived areas of Preston to the affluent.

It was evident that to target the problem, education was needed in the first instance; both to parents and children to educate them on the clear risks of carrying a BB gun in public. The education needed to be division wide and target the age groups of 9 – 15 years old and 30 – 50 years old to net the youths involved and their parents. I decided that I needed to implement short, medium and long-term solutions to the problem involving a multi agency approach with the local media. I needed, in the short term, to educate as many people as possible over the whole of Preston and the media was highlighted as the best medium.

It was also clear that the Police had lessons to learn from the analysis. We needed embrace the principles of the national reassurance policing plan as well as the signal crime perspective and focus on the needs of the complainants. As I already had links with the Police and Communities together group on the St. Matthews ward of Preston, I decided to speak to them to get a more general feel as to the extent of the problem. The meeting was very productive indeed and it resulted in a very honest and open discussion as to the way in which the public would like us to respond against the way in which the Police deal with potential firearms incidents. The main points of the public were as follows;

1. Police don't treat minor acts of nuisance as a priority
2. It takes a long time for the Police to arrive
3. The youths are briefly spoken to and then the Police leave
4. The youths are not dealt with positively

I decided that along with the education of the Public, an education of the Police was needed. I needed to highlight the need to concentrate on the quality of service issues whilst also pointing out the need to deal with 'offenders' positively.

Response

I decided that the education process would target our specified groups from a variety of angles to constantly reinforce the message. My main objective was to be as impactful as possible from the start. I decided to run a BB gun amnesty called "Surrender It" from the 1st December 2005 until February 28th 2006. The amnesty was focused on highlighting the problems to neighbourhoods and persuading people to hand over their BB guns to the Police. By using an amnesty, it was more appealing to local newspapers and radio to allow me to advertise the background to the amnesty. The incentive to young people to hand over their BB guns was the prospect of winning an IPOD MP3 player. Whenever a member of the public handed in a BB gun at Preston, Lea or Fulwood Police Stations, they were asked to fill in a short questionnaire (not shown in this document due to the large file size) as to the reasons why they possessed one. This information could then be used in better understanding the BB gun problem as well as allowing me to focus my approach on the school visits. The rear of the questionnaire was reserved for personal details to facilitate the IPOD draw. Enquiry desk staff at the three Police stations were fully briefed as to the amnesty.

Once the logistics of the amnesty was established, I needed to advertise the message as far and wide as possible to try and convince people to 'Surrender It'. With my target age ranges in mind, I highlighted the Lancashire Evening Post (a daily evening newspaper serving Preston and its suburbs) as the ideal local medium. I contacted one of the reporters, Mr Henry Widdas and between us; we developed the most impactful way to advertise the campaign. This resulted with a full front page and extensive interview regarding the campaign. I also considered local radio. I had the option of two local radio stations serving the central area of Lancashire; Rock FM and BBC Radio Lancashire. I dismissed Rock FM as not addressing my target audience. I spoke with BBC Radio Lancashire who interviewed me live on air during the breakfast show giving me a considerable amount of time to advertise the amnesty and reasons for it.

I also contacted the 'Preston Citizen', a free local newspaper who was aware of the media attention so far. I explained that I was keen to work in partnerships with them to advertise the amnesty amongst the poorer areas of Preston who did not receive the Lancashire evening post but did receive the 'Preston Citizen'. They ran a full-page feature advertising the amnesty with a detailed interview with myself.

The next step was the design of two posters that were placed in youth related areas such as schools, libraries, youth clubs, local shops etc. The posters were A4 in size and are too large to attach to this document.

I purposely made the posters visually impactful to highlight the importance of the amnesty and to grab the attention of the target age ranges.

Whilst the Amnesty ran, I reinforced the message by formulating a lesson plan and delivering it at the target audiences. I forged links with 'The Princes Trust', 'The Avenham Project' (an initiative to promote respect and teamwork between two historically rival areas of Preston) and 'Larches House' (a school for problematic individuals who are excluded from mainstream schooling). I delivered the lesson plan and it was received very well. Part of the lesson is to simulate what occurs from a neighbourhood and Police perspective when a BB gun is reported as a firearms incident. This part is very visually impactful as members of the group take on certain policing and public roles. They are asked for their opinions and views as the firearms incident unfolds and it highlights to the youths the anti-social and nuisance element of their actions as well as the resources that the Police have to invest in the incident.

The amnesty was featured on BBC World Online and tracked during the amnesty. As the campaign got going, I revisited the Lancashire evening post and BBC Radio Lancashire who every month refocused and gave more media time.

Now that the amnesty was underway, I turned my attention on the education of the Police. I found that by speaking to colleagues, there was very little understanding on the powers the Police have in relation to the firearms act. I created a 'Firearms Act aide memoir' laminated card that was distributed to each and every operational Police officer within Preston Division. The card was of a size to comfortably fit in the rear of the officer's pocket notebook. I attended team briefing and using a PowerPoint presentation I designed, I was able to fully brief the teams on their powers whilst reiterating the need to address the areas highlighted in the assessment phase e.g. quality of service, visiting complainants and dealing with offenders in a positive way. I reiterated the national reassurance policing plan and the signal crime perspective and explained how the initiative linked into neighbourhood policing. I explained that positive action might mean the use of conditional cautions and referral to the youth offending team.

I also delivered the presentation to the neighbourhood Policing teams serving the many areas of Preston. This involved Police community support officers and Special constables as well as Police volunteers. I make extra time to speak directly to the Specials Inspector and Special Sergeant to reinforce the learning package as they have a limited knowledge of Police legislation.

The amnesty gathered pace and the amnesty was receiving more and more publicity and the officers were better equipped to deal with the incidents.

Lastly, I needed a future focal point for enquiries. I needed to enforce that once the amnesty was over, we were still committed to reducing the instances of disorder and nuisance. I needed to reassure the public that we were dedicated long term to tackling the problem. I designed a web page and with the purchase of www.SurrenderIt.com, I have in place a long term reference point detailing the results of the amnesty and the continued commitment by Preston Police to refocusing on the issues at hand. The website has a guest book which is being used as a low level community contact regarding BB gun related nuisances. This allows us as a firearms department to proactively deal with issues before they become impactful on the local communities. www.SurrenderIt.com allows me to re focus on the issues that matter most to the communities and to show we are responding to the issues that are of greater concern to the community. This is in line with the National reassurance policing plan as well as the signal crime perspective. By using skills learnt outside of the Policing arena in web design, I was able to use a tool for the initiative that would have otherwise been very expensive.

Assessment

Although I could see the results of the amnesty unfolding whilst it was in progress, I needed to find out whether the problem had been reduced and whether the quality of service issues had been addressed. My first point of call was the 52 BB guns that had been handed in and to analyse the data that had been received from the questionnaire. The below table shows the results from the 45 filled in questionnaires.

Question 1.

Do you know what a BB gun is?

YES 36 NO 9

Question 2.

Do you think there is a growing trend in owning BB guns?

YES 26 NO 19

Question 3. (of the 26 that said yes)

If Yes, Why do you think that is?

It is trendy/cool	11
They are fun	20
They are easier to buy	18
Increase in youth crime	10
It's like owning a real gun	3

Question 4.

How old must you be to legally own a BB gun?

Any age	21
10	3
14	7
18	4
21	8
no idea	2

Question 5

Is it legal to fire a BB gun in the street if you are over 14?

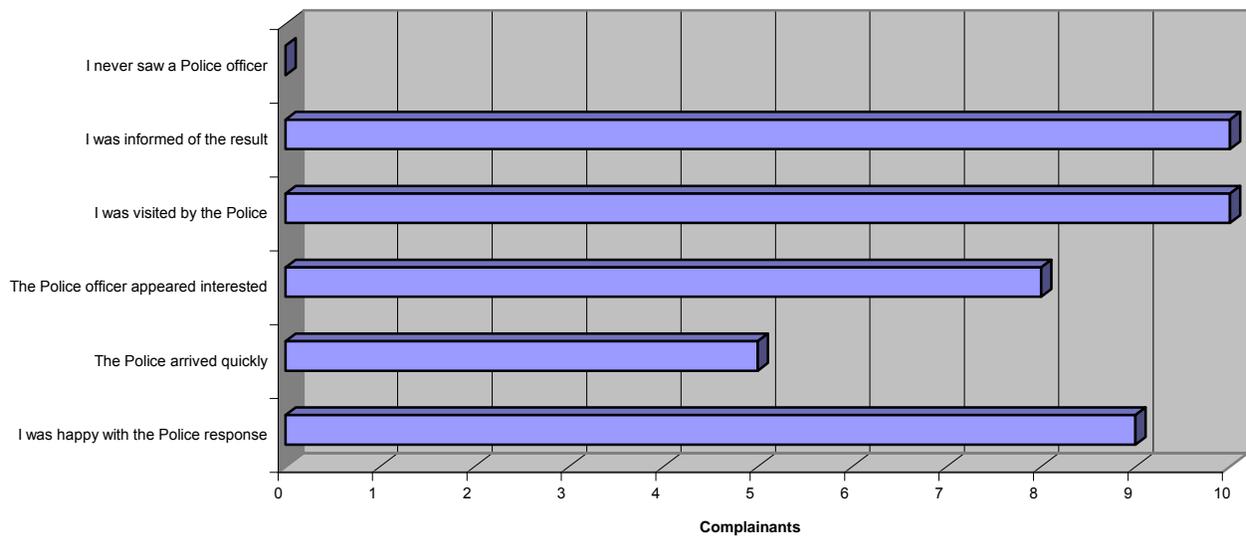
YES 10 NO 35

It is clear from the data that the ease of accessibility and low cost are the main factors in owning a BB gun. It can also be seen that they are seen as fun to have and play with which would suggest ignorance in relation to the serious consequences should they be misused. This data has been fed into the lesson plan to enable me to refocus on the objectives and direction when speaking with youth groups. This information has been published on the web site to show to the communities the ongoing focus.

The next point of call is the raw data. Compared to the fifty-two instances in the preceding three months, there were 18 instances during the amnesty period. This is a reduction of 65% in BB gun related instances. Comparing the data from the same three months the previous year, there was a reduction of 44%. This was a fantastic result but I needed to establish if the communities noticed the reduction and noticed the targeted efforts that were put into place.

Using 10 of the 18 instances that were reported, I was able to assess the quality of service issues to see if they had increased. By using the same template as I had used during the scanning and analysis phase, the results can be directly compared. They are shown below.

Quality of Service



The result is overwhelming, by educating the many different levels of Police staff, the quality of service issues has improved dramatically. This is because of the focused approach to improving the links between communities and the Police and serving the needs addressed by them. Speaking to officers who attended the incidents, it was clear that although it took only moments to speak to the complainant, the impact was huge. This to me is the most important factor in reducing the fear and perception of crime.

The result of the BB gun amnesty resulted in a 16 year old college student receiving a IPOD shuffle MP3 player and the conclusion was received well by the local media that I have maintained links with throughout. Since March 1st until 23rd April 2006, the reduction has continued and I have received numerous requests from local schools, youth groups etc, to continue to presentations which I will do.