



Crime Reduction & Community Safety Group

Tilley Awards 2007

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, **within the stated word limit and ensuring the file size is no more than 1MB.** Failure to do so will result in your entry being rejected from the competition.

Completed application forms should **be e-mailed to tilleyawards07@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk**

All entries must be received by noon on **Friday 27th April 2007**. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Alex Blackwell on 0207 035 4811. Any queries regarding publicity of the awards should be directed to Chaz Akoshile on 0207 035 1589.

Section 1: DETAILS OF APPLICATION

Title of the project: **Operation Robot**

Name of force/agency/CDRP/CSP: **Cumbria Constabulary/West Cumbria CDRP**

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

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If known please state in which Government Office area you are located e.g. Government Office North West, Government Office London etc: **Government Office, North West**

Name of endorsing senior representatives(s):

Neil Rhodes

Name of organisation, position and/or rank of endorsing senior representatives(s):

Cumbria Constabulary - Assistant Chief Constable.

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s):

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Please tick box to indicate that all organisations involved in the project have been notified of this entry (this is to prevent duplicate entries of the same project):

2. Summary of application

Maryport is a town on the West coast of Cumbria with a population of approximately 13,000, which due to the levels of deprivation in the town has been subjected to a number of regeneration schemes. Housing stock within the town consists of a mixture of private and that owned by Housing Associations/Registered Social Landlords (RSL). A disproportionate amount of crime and disorder within the town occurred on the estates managed by the RSLs.

Crime within the town had been high in comparison to other towns within the BCU. Similar sized towns in the BCU, Cockermouth and Keswick were experiencing 50% less crime.

Prior to the summer of 2005 the normal policing response when dealing with issues raised via the tasking and co-ordinating process would be to mount a short term quick fix operation producing short term results in terms of crime reduction and disruption, but no long term effect. Partnership working was limited even though the majority of crime in the town was being experienced on estates owned by RSLs.

Analysis revealed a hardcore of ten individuals who with their associates were actively involved in low level crime to feed the misuse of drugs. During the summer of 2005 all of the individuals had become associated with one property in Maryport town centre.

To deal with the problems associated with the individuals, wider partnership working between Allerdale Borough Council, Housing Associations, the police and local residents was implemented. The measures put in place included targeting offenders through the execution of drugs warrants, increased information sharing between the police and partner agencies and the use of legislation to close 'crack houses' and exclude problem individuals from parts of the town.

As a result of these interventions, Crime was reduced in Maryport from 1463 in 04/05, to 1295 crimes in 06/07, a reduction of 168 crimes or 11%. Crime on the Ellenborough ward has fallen by 25%, with burglary dwellings being reduced by 37 offences in 06/07, a reduction of 48%.

3. Description of project

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

Scanning

Maryport is a small town on the West coast of Cumbria with a population of approximately 13,000. The town is situated within the West Basic Command Unit of Cumbria Constabulary. There are nine other towns within the BCU.

Maryport is naturally divided by the main west coast road running north to south through the centre of the town. To the west of the road lie the shopping, area a harbour and some residential properties. To the east lie the main housing estates including those managed by housing associations.

Housing stock within the town consists of a mixture of private stock and that owned by Registered Social Landlords. A disproportionate amount of crime and disorder within the town appeared to occur on the estates managed by the RSLs.

Crime and disorder within the town had been high in comparison to others within the BCU. Out of 12752 crimes committed across the BCU in 04/05 1463 were recorded in Maryport.

It was rare for Maryport not to feature on the tactical menu of the BCU tasking and co-ordinating process, due to the high levels of crime and disorder it generated.

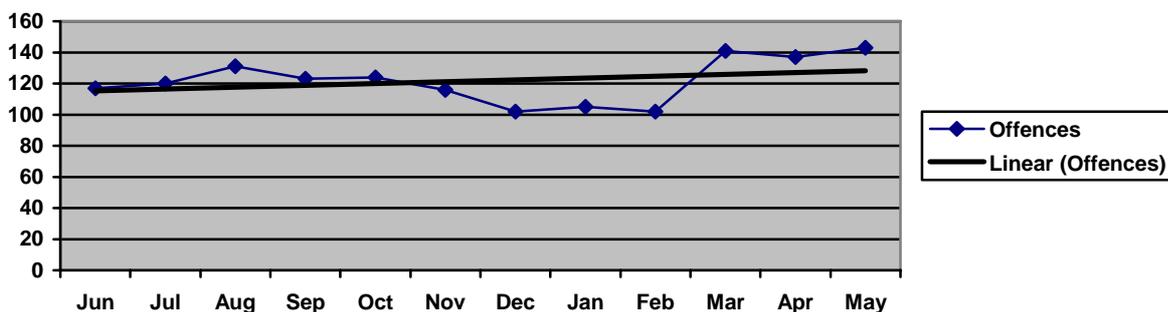
Through the use of crime statistics and intelligence it could be seen that a small number of individuals were causing a disproportionate amount of the towns' crime. One individual had been convicted of over 100 offences.

Prior to the summer of 2005 the normal policing response when dealing with issues raised via the tasking and co-ordinating process would be to mount a short term quick fix operation. Such operations would produce short term results in terms of crime reduction and would also disrupt criminal activity, but there was no long term effect, hence issues in the town would constantly be raised via the tasking process.

Partnership working in an effective format didn't really exist. The police were trying to deal with everything within the town by themselves as partners saw problems of crime and disorder as being a police problem. Partnership participation was passive rather than active.

Police Analysis

Over several years all types of crime within Maryport had steadily risen, this can be seen in the chart below showing the number of offences within the town between June 2004 and May 2005.



These crimes included Burglary Dwelling, Burglary Other, Class A Drugs Offences, Criminal Damage, Drug Offences, Criminal Damage to a Vehicle, Fraud and Forgery, Offences Against the Person, Robbery, Sexual Offences, Theft, Theft From a Motor Vehicle, Theft from the Person, Theft Of a Motor Vehicle.

In line with this, crimes such as burglary and vehicle crime had also risen. Intelligence indicated that this was as a result of drug users committing this type of crime to feed drug habits

Through the use of police intelligence and previous crime statistics it could be seen that significant proportion of the crime within the town was being committed by a small number of active criminals and their associates.

In June 2005 the police Area Intelligence Unit within West Cumbria identified ten individuals within Maryport town who with their associates were actively involved in committing acts of crime classified through the tasking and co-ordinating process.

Use of intelligence reports and historical data held on previous arrests and offending histories were used to identify these individuals. Between them they had amassed 508 convictions. The youngest was 18 the oldest was 38. An offender profile was built which revealed;

- Nine of the ten individuals were male
- All were known to be actively involved in minor crime
- Of the 508 offences 130, (26%) related to thefts.
- All were known to be drug abusers with 28 convictions relating to drugs., intelligence held by the police indicated that all were committing crime to feed drug habits
- Only one was involved in any form of drug rehabilitation, this information was provided by the area Prolific and Priority Offender Team.
- They were all linked to one property, Scott House, within Maryport town centre. Scott House, was a block of six flats owned by a private landlord. The group of ten were either living at this property or were going to misuse drugs or dispose of stolen property. The landlord had taken on some of the individuals as tenants. Others from the group had then moved in with them or would regularly visit.
- The association to this property was causing a considerable amount of fear amongst local residents. Evidence of this was gathered when Community Support Officers spoke with residents.

The normal response to dealing with the problem of crime linked to drug misuse was to execute drugs warrants over a short period of time in an attempt to disrupt the criminal activity. In effect the police were attempting to deal with the problems of crime linked to the drug misuse of the ten offenders within the town from a policing perspective. The police weren't drawing on a wider partnership response to address the problems they were experiencing.

Partners Analysis

Through police analysis it could also be seen that those using Scott House were associated to a number of properties on the Hillside Estate within the town. The Hillside Estate is managed by Derwent and Solway Housing Association and consists of 400 properties. Hillside is a former Borough Council owned housing estate. Statistically former Council Housing estates which are now owned by RSL are likely to experience higher levels of crime and disorder. *Source Home Office Respect Action Plan.*

As a result of a number of police raids executed in 2005 Hillside had been labelled by the press as one of the worst in the County. The estate had a poor reputation as a crime and disorder hotspot amongst local residents. This reflected the national picture in regard to former Council owned estates. Residents living on the estate were doing so under a great deal of fear generated by those involved in crime. One resident describe living on the estate as like 'living in Beirut.'

Derwent and Solway Housing Association had difficulty in letting properties, this in turn translated into a loss of revenue. Monthly rent of a property equated to approximately £65 in June of 2005 there were 28 properties which were vacant on the estate.

Hillsides neighbouring estate, Ewanrigg is managed by Home Housing Association and consists of 500 properties. To enter Hillside people have to pass through the Ewanrigg estate either on foot or in vehicles. Evidence provided by housing officers working on this estate indicated that residents were aware of the problem individuals transiting through this estate but there wasn't the same level of fear amongst residents as there was on the Hillside estate.

The landlords of the Ewanrigg estate did not experience the same levels of vacant properties as those on the Hillside estate, yet the presence of these individuals in Ewanrigg was affecting their housing management and was contributing to the higher levels of crime on this estate.

There are five Council wards in Maryport. Hillside and Ewanrigg are situated in the Ellenborough ward of Maryport. This ward accounted for over a quarter of the crime occurring within the town. Of the 1463 offences committed in the town 388 were committed on this ward.

Although these estates were managed by housing associations, the landlords had taken little action against the perpetrators of crime on their estates despite being capable of doing so. When action was taken it took the form of evictions which wasn't necessarily the best tool to use to deal with the problem. Landlords were not working in partnership with each other as they weren't looking at the wider picture of dealing with anything more than problems on their estate.

Housing Associations (RSL) have wide reaching powers provided by the Housing Act to deal with problem tenants, these include injunctive powers available to deal with anti social behaviour, crime or anything regarded as a breach of tenancy.

Prior to June 2005 there had been one Anti Social Behaviour Order granted against a problem individual within the town and two other individuals had been evicted as a result of their involvement in crime and disorder.

No other power provided by anti social behaviour legislation had been used by the police or partners to address the problems within the town in a wider context.

In one case a drug dealer was evicted from his house only to set himself up in a privately rented property further along the same street where he continued to deal drugs. If the housing association had used its injunctive powers in conjunction with the eviction then this individual could have been excluded from the estate.

Information exchanges between the police and housing associations were ad hoc. Information would tend to be exchanged between community police officers and housing officers on an informal basis.

From consultation with the community it was found that residents were more willing to pass information about crime, disorder and drug misuse to housing officers, rather than the police. This stemmed from a culture of reluctance to 'grass' on others. This resulted in Housing Associations possessing a considerable amount of information on the individuals who were causing problems. Due to the informal nature of information exchange this information was not always shared.

Problem Definition

The problem was defined as one of crime and disorder linked to drug misuse which was being caused by a small number of individuals who lived in the town. The police and partners were not effectively tackling these issues due to communication problems.

Objective

Over a twelve month period proactively target those involved in drug misuse within Maryport town. In that same period reduce crime overall by 10%.

In partnership, actively target problem individuals using a twin track approach of enforcement and support;

- Increase use of ASB powers – ASBOs / Crack House Closures / Injunctions / etc
- Increase number of target individuals accessing drug treatment services

Response, Phase I

In developing the response it was agreed by the main stakeholders within the town, police, Borough Council and Housing Associations to target the offenders as this would impact upon the victims and locations. The response was therefore heavily weighted to dealing with the offenders.

The response was set in two phases, the initial short term phase was to deal with Scott House, the second medium to long term phase was to deal with displacement of those living in Scott House and the wider effect the individuals were having on crime within the town.

Police Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) were tasked with gathering information on the activity at Scott House. The gathering of this intelligence was targeted towards an objective of executing misuse of drugs warrants at the property. A timescale of one month was set for this.

The intelligence that was provided allowed the police to identify that all ten individuals plus their associates were visiting five of the six flats contained within the building. This information gathering was carried out during July 2005. This resulted in six search warrants being executed at the property during the same month.

During the searches of Scott House evidence of the misuse of Class a drugs was discovered in the five properties used by the ten identified individuals. At the time of the execution of the search warrants residents who lived nearby were visited and canvassed to see if they were experiencing problems with visitors to Scott House.

As an initial step all partners decided that the police would apply to the Magistrates Court to have five of the six flats closed using 'crack house' Closure powers provided by the anti social behaviour act. The sixth flat was occupied by the landlord who had become a victim of the users and visitors of his properties as he was living in fear of their presence. He was an alcoholic and as such was unable to deal with those visiting his house as he was living in fear of them.

'Crack House' closure legislation allows properties to be closed where class A drugs are used, supplied or produced and where the use, supply or production is associated with serious nuisance or disorder. Evidence of the serious nuisance and disorder had been provided through the complaints made by residents.

To offer respite to residents a timescale of one month was set to place the case before the court. Closure Orders were served at the properties in September 2005 with the full Closures being granted by West Allerdale Magistrates Court the day after the notices were served.

Environmental Services from the Borough Council were involved in the closure to ensure that the owner of the property cleaned the area surrounding the building as this had become a dumping ground for drug related paraphernalia.

As a result of the type of person using the flats they had fallen in to a state of disrepair and therefore the fire service attended the closure to inspect the property and make suitable recommendations surrounding its use as a dwelling. Help was offered to the landlord to treat his alcoholism and to get the flats back into a reasonable state of repair but this was refused.

Assessment

The action at Scott House was successful as the property was closed for an initial period of three months.

By involving the environmental department of the Borough Council the area was returned to a normal state of cleanliness within a short space of time. The fire service, were able to prevent the building from re-opening as flats until remedial work regarding fire safety was carried out. To date the flats have not re-opened.

Information gathered by Community Support Officers indicated that the closure had a positive impact upon the quality of life of residents living in the area surrounding Scott House. There was no information held which suggested the closure had an impact on the wider problem of crime within the town.

Response Phase II

Prior to the closure of Scott House partners identified a potential problem which would be caused by the displacement of those who were living there. The closure and need to deal with displacement in an active way was the catalyst to commence partnership working in an effective manner. It was anticipated that those moved out of Scott House were likely to attempt to set up residence with their associates on the Hillside and Ewanrigg estates.

The National Intelligence Model was to be used to track the whereabouts of the ten individuals once they were displaced. Information held by partners was fed into the system at a local level through close liaison between the police officers and Housing officers. Using the Intelligence gathered by CHIS and the evidence gathered from residents, during Phase I, analysts from the police were able to build an association chart of those visiting other properties throughout the town. This association chart was used to inform the response of this phase.

In November 2005 based on information gathered from CHIS, residents and partners the execution of search warrants commenced at properties known to be occupied by the ten individuals and their associates. This activity was predominantly focussed on the Hillside Estate, though action was taken in other parts of the town, including Ewanrigg.

The initial action on Hillside resulted in a cycle of information exchange developing between the partners and members of the public. The exchange of information was coupled by tangible enforcement action being taken against the perpetrators of crime and disorder. This type of action developed into a cycle of information gathering, action and then information exchange with partners and the public. This cycle would occur over a three week period. Two weeks of information gathering and one of action.

Much of the initial actions which were taken involved the execution of search warrants, when these were executed at known associates' houses they would be left under no illusion that the cause of the execution of the warrant was the link to one of the ten individuals who had been originally identified as a major cause of crime within the town. In time associates of the ten began to refuse them access to their properties under fear of action being taken against them by the police or their landlords.

Whenever one of the ten was arrested or found at a property where drugs were they would be offered the support of drug misuse workers. They would also be informed that if the offer of help wasn't taken then continued targeting of them and their associates was likely to occur. When enforcement action was taken by partners they were able to offer their tenants support services, for example drug users were referred to rehabilitation schemes.

By exchanging information with the RSL they came in to a position where they were able to deal with their tenants using the powers available to them under the Housing Act, especially injunctive powers.

Actions such as eviction took place, however more emphasis was placed on the use of Injunctive powers and Anti Social Behaviour Orders to exclude individuals from particular parts of housing estates or by dealing with tenants within their properties, preventing displacement. For example instead of evicting a tenant for drug misuse an injunction would be obtained to prevent the tenant from allowing drug misuse in the house. This type of action worked as a great deterrent.

Assessment

Working with partners on this scale and over such a long period of time has been innovative within the County. The use of the tools and powers available to partners and information sharing has tested new areas of working. Partnership working in this way has certainly been new to Cumbria.

There has been little cost involved in the operation as police and partners have just had to refocus their efforts. This ensures that the operation is sustainable and also transferable to other areas of the County. The model has already been transferred to parts of Carlisle where initial indications are showing that the same method of working is producing similar results.

Offenders

As anticipated those who were displaced from Scott House began to appear on the Hillside and Ewanrigg estates where they took up residence with some of their associates.

Information sharing between the partners enabled the locations in which the ten individuals were living to be identified far quicker than had been previously achieved.

This exchange between partners has enabled far more effective targeting of the ten individuals and their associates to be carried out. Coupled with use of the National intelligence Model information exchange allowed the ten perpetrators to be 'intelligently' tracked around Maryport and their offending dealt with in a far more efficient manner.

The cycle of information exchange grew and developed. Regular meetings took place where information would be exchanged, a course of action would be agreed, action would then be taken and the results of this action would be fed back to partners and more importantly members of the public.

Information on action taken was fed back to members of the public via the media or face to face. This in turn developed in to a two way information exchange between the public and partners.

The operation extended over the twelve month period and has now lasted for almost two years. This resulted from all offenders not being dealt with in the initial twelve month period.

The worst offenders have been targeted using the National Intelligence Model. Partners have been drawn in to the tasking process through the format of information exchange which has developed. This has developed into 'business as usual' amongst the police and partners within the town. By drawing on partner information a wider picture of the levels of offending of the ten individuals was gained.

It would have been very easy for the police to treat this as 'another drugs operation.' Although arrests would have been made and drugs recovered, this would not have dealt with the underlying cause of the problem initially associated with Scott House or the wider problem of drug associated crime within the town. A drugs operation would not have offered long-term respite to residents or restored their quality of life and would not have impacted upon crime within the town.

To date 63 Magistrates Court drugs warrants have been executed at properties within the town.

Nine properties including Scott House have been closed using legislation to close crack houses.

Anti Social Behaviour Orders and Anti Social Behaviour Injunctions have been granted against fourteen problem individuals within the town. This includes orders granted against eight of the original ten persons identified as problems. ASBO and Injunctions have been used to exclude individuals from specific parts of the town and to prevent individuals from using their houses in an unlawful manner.

Three tenants who were causing the severest problems were evicted from their properties on the Hillside estate. Due to information exchange carried out between the Housing Officers these individuals were not re housed in the town. Prior to the start of this operation there would have been nothing to stop this happening as partners weren't speaking to each other.

By offering support mixed with enforcement five of the ten individuals identified as key players eventually accepted the offer of support to deal with their drug related offending.

In the twelve months prior to this operation the ten individuals were convicted of 54 offences. In the twelve months after they have been convicted of 18 offences.

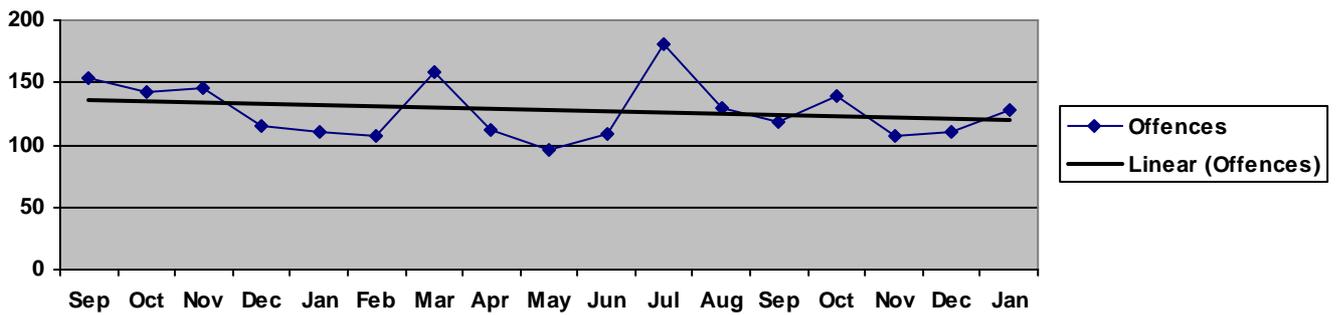
The victims

The action which was taken and 'sold' to residents resulted in residents expecting more to be done about their problems. To sell action good working relationships were established with the local media.

The relief of residents when one closure order was served was evident when they came out on to the street in dressing gowns to clap and cheer the police and Housing Officers as the property was being boarded up.

By targeting specific individuals and their associates involved in crime, disorder and drugs misuse, a reduction in incidents of crime within Maryport has been achieved. This reduction can be seen in the chart below.

These figures are taken from crime statistics from September 2005, when the initial closure of Scott House occurred, to the present date;



There is now a downward trend of crime in Maryport.

From the initial figure of 1463 crimes committed in Maryport. This had been reduced to 1295 crimes a reduction of 168 crimes or 11%. Crime on the Ellenborough ward has fallen by 25% from an initial figure of 388 offences to 256 offences in 06/07. Burglary dwellings within the town have fallen from 71 offences in 05/06 to 37 offences in 06/07 a reduction of 48%.

Although there was an initial displacement of the problems associated with Scott House to other parts of the town, in particular Hillside, partnership working allowed these problems to be dealt with effectively.

Involving partners enabled the police to deal with the problem of crime and disorder in a wider context. The underlying causes of some of the crimes, for example minor thefts to feed drug habits were addressed by looking at the wider picture of enforcement mixed with support.

Location

The effect of dealing with problem individuals has meant that on the Hillside estate there is now a waiting list to gain a property. This means the housing associations aren't managing vacant properties and have increased their income. Two years ago this was unheard of as many residents wanted to leave.

A survey of 26 Hillside residents carried out by the housing officer revealed that all felt that Hillside was now a decent place to live. Although a small sample the general feeling within the estate is the same. Public perception has changed so much that the people living there have formed their own residents group.

Public perception of crime is hard to measure, throughout Maryport town there is a general perception amongst the public that the problem of drug related crime is now being effectively addressed. This information has been gathered from community and Council meetings along with general feedback given to police and housing officers.

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