

Crime Reduction in Halifax Town Centre in the UK (during both day & night)

Project Basics

1. Title of the project: **Crime Reduction in Halifax Town Centre (during day & night)**

2. Key issue that the project is addressing:

This is a joint bid from three schemes which have come together with the main aim of creating a safer Halifax town centre, during both the day and night time economy. Within this the 4 key issues that the project addresses are:

1. to act as reassurance & to provide assistance to the town centre user (shopper, visitor, resident, worker) thus reducing the fear of crime
2. to act as reassurance & to provide assistance to the town centre businesses, thus giving them increased confidence in the local economy
3. to act as a deterrent to potential offenders (whether the offence is criminal damage, shoplifting, anti-social behaviour or other criminal acts) within the town centre
4. to increase the positive image & cleanliness of the town centre

Author contact details

3. Name of application author: Beth Ward, Halifax Town Centre Manager

4. Organisation submitting the application: Halifax Town Centre Management

5. Full postal address: 2nd Floor, 4 Albion Street, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 1DU, UK

6. Email address: tcm@halifaxuk.co.uk

7. Telephone number: +44 (0)1422 360035

Secondary project contact details

8. Name of secondary contact involved in the project: Paul Blakey from Christians Together Halifax

9. Secondary contact email address: paul@streetangels.org.uk

10. Secondary contact telephone number: +44 (0)7074 342123

Endorsing representative contact details

11. Name of endorsing senior representative from lead organisation: Chief Superintendent, Divisional Commander Ian C Levitt, Calderdale Division, West Yorkshire Police, UK

12. Endorsing representative's email address: ian.levitt@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

Summary of application

Scanning:

In the 1990's a report was produced on the vitality and vibrancy of Halifax town centre. Findings showed that the general public and businesses had a fear of crime. It also showed people thought it was unclean. This led to the town having a poor image. It was important that Halifax thrived as an attractive town centre, therefore more in-depth studies were undertaken to find out the seriousness of the problem.

Analysis:

In 2002 a town centre audit was produced. It aimed at businesses, residents, shoppers, workers and visitors to the town. The results were quite shocking. A snapshot showed 64% of daytime users felt intimidated and 52% of businesses were experiencing vandalism.

A partnership including Halifax Town Centre Forum, Calderdale Community Safety Partnership, West Yorkshire Police Authority, businesses, community groups got together to find a solution.

Response:

The response was an on-street patrol called 'Halifax Town Centre Ambassadors'. Their main objectives were to act as reassurance and to provide assistance to businesses and the general public, act as a deterrent to offenders and to increase the positive image and cleanliness of the town centre.

Although the Ambassadors were a great success during the day, they were unable to cover evenings. However it was important to cover both day and night. Hence the arrival of Halifax Street Angels. They are volunteers from Churches Together in Halifax who work between 10pm and 3am at weekends. They patrol the streets looking to help vulnerable people and open the Fairtrade Café as a safe haven.

Still not satisfied with the great success of the 2 teams, St John Ambulance were invited to work in the evenings dealing with people in the town centre rather than having to go to A&E.

Assessment:

Another audit was produced in 2007 showing a dramatic fall in the fear of crime, business related crime etc. The results showed that the on-street patrols were making a real difference. Also there have been many testimonials from individuals and businesses.

One of the biggest accolades is that Halifax is now seen by many as a place for best practice and has had visits from several other towns. Many of whom have since set up Street Angels and others are looking at starting Ambassador Schemes. This is a far cry from a town which was suffering from a poor image and fear of crime 10 years ago.

Number of words: 396

Description of the Project

Scanning:

In the late 1990's Donaldson's consultancy produced a report on the vitality and vibrancy of Halifax town centre. Findings from the report showed that the business community thought that the fear of crime was a big issue in the town centre as was the need to enhance the image of Halifax. Findings also showed that the wider community identified the fear of crime and an unclean environment as their main dislikes about Halifax.

In general the main problems identified were the poor image of Halifax (both during the day & night time) and the fear of crime was driving people out of the town centre. As the largest & most accessible town in the Borough of Calderdale it was important that the town did not become a no-go area.

Key stakeholders in identifying and reducing this problem were: town centre businesses, Calderdale Council, the Police, Halifax Town Centre Management, residents, shoppers, visitors & people who worked in the town centre.

Analysis:

In order to analyse the level of the problem, an independent town centre audit was produced in 2002. Businesses and town centre users (residents, shoppers, workers or visitors) were asked their views on the town centre. Some of the results are shown below:

Town Centre Audit Results in 2002

- **64%** of daytime users felt intimidated in Halifax town centre
- **23%** of people using the town centre between 19.00 & 22.00 hours felt unsafe
- **26%** of people using the town centre after 22.00 hours felt unsafe
- Crime identified as a problem for businesses in Halifax town centre was **4.1** (where 5 = serious problem & 1= no problem)
- Effects of crime on business
 - **52%** of businesses said it had an effect on the cost of their insurance
 - **43%** said it had an effect on their profits
 - **29%** said it had an effect on staff morale
 - **42%** said it had an effect on their customers
 - **52%** experienced vandalism
 - **40%** experienced shoplifting
 - **27%** experienced burglary

What to Do Next

The results of the town centre audit showed that there was definitely a problem with regards to crime and the fear of crime in Halifax town centre. Also this led to people having a negative image of Halifax. Something needed to be done to address the problems straight away.

In previous years a Radiolink scheme had been started within the businesses to try and prevent shoplifting, CCTV had been introduced into the town centre and the Police had a presence. However there was little partnership working.

Therefore it was important that all agencies including the Community Safety Partnership, Halifax Town Centre Management, West Yorkshire Police Authority, business community, local community groups and others got together to discuss the issue and possible outcomes.

Looking at the Problem Analysis Triangle there were only 2 variables that could easily be changed as the location remained the same - Halifax town centre. (Although the partnership looked into improving the security within the town centre and has subsequently funded alley gates, mobile CCTV and extra lighting).

The data provided by the Town Centre Audit showed that the main concern of the victim (potential/actual town centre user) was the fear of crime and the image of the town centre.

Town Centre Audit results showed that the town centre businesses were also the victims. A large percentage of them were actually experiencing targeted crime (including vandalism, shoplifting, burglary or other issues).

In regards to the offender the town centre was creating too many opportunities for them. The offenders were aware that many of the retailers had reduced the number of security guards and had few crime prevention measures in place.

Aware that Halifax was not the only town experiencing these kinds of problems, other towns were visited. After analysing all the data available, liaising with a wide range of agencies and individuals and visiting other towns it was decided that what Halifax town centre needed was additional on-street patrols. These patrols would act as a deterrent to offenders, re-assurance to potential victims (both businesses and individuals) and could also take on additional roles to enhance the image of Halifax town centre. The section below shows the response:

Response:

Having identified the need for additional on-street patrols, Halifax Town Centre Forum (a not-for-profit limited company comprising of town centre businesses, individuals and other agencies with an interest in the town centre) acted as the lead body in putting together funding applications to both Europe and Central Government. Also the idea of an on-street patrol (Ambassador scheme) was included in the Calderdale Community Safety Action Plan.

Due to a lot of hard work and commitment from all agencies, the Halifax Town Centre Ambassadors Scheme was established and up and running in March 2003. The initial team consisted of 7 staff (1 Manager, 2 Senior Ambassadors & 4 Ambassadors) and still does. The team was (and still is) employed by Halifax Town Centre Forum and has a steering group made up of all interested parties including West Yorkshire Police Authority, Calderdale Safer Communities Partnership, town centre businesses, Halifax Town Centre Forum and others. The Steering Group meets quarterly and is chaired by the Manager of the local shopping centre, Woolshops. The group monitors the progress of the Ambassadors and continues to steer the future direction of the scheme, with each organisation/individual bringing additional expertise to the scheme. All stakeholders were motivated to get involved as they all ultimately want to achieve the same goal of making Halifax a safer place.

The lead partner continues to be Halifax Town Centre Forum, which is the accountable body and is responsible for obtaining the funding for the scheme which is approximately £125k per annum and ultimately has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the team. In line with the 6 hallmarks of effective partnership working, all partners within the town centre have signed up to the relevant protocols (put together with help from Action Against Business Crime),

As a result of the analysis **four main objectives** were drawn up for the Ambassadors Scheme:

- 1) to act as reassurance & to provide assistance to the town centre user (shopper, visitor, resident, worker) thus reducing the fear of crime
- 2) to act as reassurance & to provide assistance to the town centre businesses, thus giving them increased confidence in the local economy
- 3) to act as a deterrent to potential offenders (whether the offence is criminal damage, shoplifting, anti-social behaviour or other criminal acts) within the town centre
- 4) to increase the positive image & cleanliness of the town centre

Mentioned below are some of the ways in which the Ambassadors have been working towards meeting the above objectives.

Objective 1 – To act as reassurance & to provide assistance to the town centre user

The Ambassadors patrol the town centre Monday – Saturday between the hours of 0800 and 1800. They wear a high visibility uniform and act as a first point of contact on the street. They are all first aid, health & safety, conflict management and customer service trained. They are CRB checked and linked to the CCTV operators, shops, Police and other on-street patrols via the Radiolink Scheme which they run.

The team give talks to schools, pensioners' groups and others about the work they do and offer reassurance in particular to vulnerable groups in order for them to feel safe whilst in the town centre. In addition they provide people with equipment to help them feel safe such as personal attack alarms and purse clips (due to incidents of purse dipping within the town centre).

The Ambassadors, alongside the Police and Street Wardens, undertake vulnerable vehicle checks and inform the DVLA of cars which have valuables left on view.

One particular request for reassurance came from Halifax's Victoria Theatre. They saw a drop in visitors to the theatre and after some research found that the main reason behind this was a fear of crime. The theatre is located within the heart of the nightlife. Therefore the Ambassadors acted as (and continue to act as) a "meet-and-greet" service outside the front of the theatre on shows which attract people who may feel vulnerable, in particular shows such as the ballet, opera & children's events. The Street Angels then take over at the end of the evening.

Objective 2 – To act as a reassurance & to provide assistance to town centre businesses

Each of the Ambassadors are responsible for an area within the town centre. They make sure they know the manager of each business within their area and give them their contact details. Regularly the Ambassadors drop into the businesses within their zone, even if it is just to say hello! It gives the businesses reassurance and offers them a chance to pass on intelligence if appropriate.

Also the Ambassadors run the Radiolink scheme for both the day & night time economy. Whereas there are a lot of radio schemes across the country which provide a basic service, in Halifax the Ambassadors also provide training on the use of the radios, they do regular checks to make sure everyone is logging onto the scheme, they run the maintenance of the scheme and provide assistance when asked over the radio.

In addition, the Ambassadors can provide town centre businesses with mobile CCTV units, detector pens and can work in store with staff to provide advice on crime prevention. The Ambassadors are often given intelligence from the businesses and then can pass this onto the Police and other relevant bodies.

Objective 3 – Act as a deterrent to Potential Offenders

The Ambassadors act as a deterrent to potential offenders as they are an extra uniformed presence that is linked to the other agencies and businesses through the Radiolink scheme – as mentioned above.

The Ambassadors collate a lot of intelligence which is passed onto the relevant agencies within the partnership, such as information about people wanted on warrant, evidence for preparing ASBO's and sightings of criminal damage. They also help to organise ShopWatch meetings and attend PubWatch meetings.

Objective 4 – Improve the Positive Image & Cleanliness in the town centre

The Town Centre Ambassadors report issues of graffiti, litter, broken paving, damaged phone boxes/bus shelters and damage to property. They remove flyposting where possible. The team have built up a good rapport with partner bodies and the partnership now results in most of the graffiti being removed within 24 hours.

All in all the Ambassadors have provided a positive image for the town centre, reducing the number of incidents in the town centre and offering reassurance to the businesses and individuals.

However, there was still one major difficulty to over come. The partnership and Ambassadors had not achieved all the objectives.

Although crime was reducing and people felt more reassured during the day time, continued monitoring showed there was still a problem during the evening. The local media had a "Win Back Our Streets" campaign which highlighted problems around alcohol, violence and drugs and crime statistics showed a sharp increase in crime mainly between 10pm and 3am on Fridays and Saturdays. On Friday and Saturday nights Halifax town centre had become a northern centre for binge drinking, drug use, sexual assaults and alcohol related violence.

Although the partnership had originally applied for funding for the Ambassadors to cover both the day and night time economy, they did not receive enough money to patrol around the clock. Upon consultation with the Town Centre Forum members (which includes the Police) it was decided to concentrate on the day time economy. However it became apparent that the day and night time economies could not be treated separately.

Evening Economy & the Street Angels

In 2005 the evening economy was still facing the same problems as the day time had suffered before introducing the Ambassadors. It was realised through the success of the Ambassadors, that what was needed in Halifax during the evening was a similar on-street presence. The idea was that the team would patrol during Friday and Saturday evenings to reassure the town centre users (drinkers, workers, residents etc) and businesses whilst also acting as a deterrent for potential offenders. Again if this worked then the image and cleanliness of the town centre would improve. However the problem still remained over funding of the team.

Then Churches Together in Halifax (a member of Halifax Town Centre Forum) came up with the solution. In order to provide reassurance to town centre users during the evening Churches Together in Halifax would ask for volunteers to patrol the town centre and open the Fairtrade Café as a safe place for those who become vulnerable.

Within two weeks of mentioning the idea to the Halifax Town Centre Neighbourhood Policing Team (in November 2005) and to coincide with the new Licensing Laws, Street Angels was launched.

Fifty volunteers from the local church opened the Fairtrade Café in Halifax town centre between 9pm and 3am on Friday and Saturday evenings. The Fairtrade Café would act as a safe place for people who may have had too much alcohol, have lost their friends or just need a safe place to reside for a short period. The volunteers would assist these people in many ways including giving them a coffee to sober them up, aid them in getting a taxi home, call their friends to re-unite them etc. The list is endless.

Not just satisfied with supplying and manning the Café, the volunteers decided to patrol the streets in high visibility jackets, chatting with clubbers and others using the town centre and being pro-active in finding & assisting those who had become vulnerable. The Street Angels have given 8000 hours per annum since they started.

Working in partnership and to ensure the safety of the volunteers the Ambassadors gave the volunteers radios and trained them on their use. Also they spent time with the volunteers advising them on how to deal with specific situations. In addition the volunteers received Police training and have a briefing from the Police at the start of every evening they work.

Not only did this help to achieve objective 1 by reassuring town centre users, it also offered reassurance to businesses and in some cases helped to reduce the amount of criminal damage to their property. Also they were removing the potential victim from the location so helping to reduce the opportunity for offenders to attack vulnerable people.

Again not satisfied with having just Ambassadors and Street Angels in Halifax town centre, in April 2006 St John Ambulance joined the partnership to provide on-street first aid assistance during the evening. Similar to most towns in the UK, on a weekend Calderdale Royal Infirmary saw an influx of people visiting Accident & Emergency (A&E) due to alcohol related problems. It was thought that if St John Ambulance volunteers could deal with the situation out on the street then this would reduce the amount of people needing to attend A&E and also save lives. The volunteers gave 4000 hours to the project in their first year. The Town Centre Ambassadors gave St John Ambulance staff radios and training.

Although the Ambassadors, Street Angels and St John Ambulance team are actually three individual organisations, they are all working together in a seamless partnership with the town centre businesses, Police, Community Safety Partnership and others to provide a safe and clean Halifax town centre. In order to gain the best from the partnership all three organisations attend joint training, PubWatch & ShopWatch meetings, they use the same radio scheme and share intelligence where appropriate.

Assessment:

There have been several ways of evaluating the work of the partnership. These are highlighted in this section:

1. Crime Statistics

Unfortunately over the period of the partnership the way crime statistics have been collated and the area classed as the town centre have both changed. Therefore it has been very difficult to find comparative data. However in the first year of both the Ambassadors and Street Angels working together, comparative data did show that violent crime reduced by 42% in Halifax town centre.

2. Halifax Town Centre Audit

As the partnership couldn't rely on the crime statistics themselves another independent town centre audit was produced in 2007. Table 1 below shows the results in 2007 compared to 2002.

Table 1: Results from the 2002 & 2007 Town Centre Audits

Question	2002 (%)	2007 (%)
What percentage of daytime users felt intimidated in Halifax town centre?	64	27
What percentage of people using the town centre between 19.00 & 22.00 hours felt unsafe?	23	5
What percentage of people using the town centre after 22.00 hours felt unsafe?	26	12
On a level between 1 and 5 (where 1 = no problem & where 5 = a serious problem) businesses were asked to rank the level of crime against businesses in Halifax town centre	4.1	3.21
What percentage of businesses said crime had an effect on the cost of their insurance?	52	17
What percentage of businesses said crime had an effect on their profits?	43	29
What percentage of businesses said crime had an effect on staff morale?	29	16
What percentage of businesses said crime had an effect on their customers?	42	15
What percentage of businesses experienced vandalism?	52	27
What percentage of businesses experienced shoplifting?	40	21
What percentage of businesses experienced burglary?	27	14

Crime Reduction in Halifax Town Centre (during day & night)

The results above show there has been a dramatic fall in the perceived fear of crime and the impact of crime on town centre businesses. These results definitely show that the partnership has had a positive affect on the town centre and is striving towards meeting its 4 main objectives.

3. On Street Patrol Data

Each of the on-street initiatives collate their own data and use it to feedback to partnership members and it also helps for monitoring purposes.

e.g. between 1st July and 31st December 2007, the Ambassadors helped assist with 26 arrests, reported 140 vulnerable vehicles, provided reactive support to 845 businesses, provided reactive support to 514 members of the public, received 14 thank you letters and provided 129 pieces of crime reduction materials/equipment.

Since November 2005 the Street Angels have helped over 3500 people and St. John Ambulance 1500 people.

4. Town Centre Users

Letters and comments of support for the Ambassadors, Street Angels and St John are regular. Listed below are testimonials/stories about how the on-street patrols are making a difference:

- One Friday afternoon the Ambassadors were called to a paper stand, where a male, around 30 years old was stood wearing ladies jeans back to front trying to steal the papers. He was distressed, and hallucinating. He assured them he was ok and living with a friend. On Monday morning he was spotted again. They approached him to see if he was ok. This is when he told them he couldn't remember anything about Friday except ending up in hospital due to hypothermia. The Ambassadors built up a rapport with him, getting details of his past and found out he was homeless with nothing to his name. As a team they helped him get a new birth certificate, asked around for bedding, food and warm clothes (one of them even gave him their boots), they took him to the local housing office and found help for his alcohol addiction. This went on for 6 weeks and eventually good news, he had finally got accommodation. This was the last they saw of him, until one afternoon they saw this smart, cheerful looking man running towards them. He said "I just want to say a big thank you for all the Ambassadors help".
- A young lady was found outside one of the nightclubs on the floor unable to move. The Street Angels and St John got her into a taxi and paid for her to go home. A week later an email arrived from this lady thanking the team for their help, saying that she realised she had an alcohol problem and had got in touch with the Primary Care Trust Alcohol Reduction team and since joined Alcoholics Anonymous - all because someone cared enough to make sure she was safe.

5. Town Centre Businesses

In January 2006 when the future of the Ambassadors was in doubt due to funding the Town Centre Forum conducted a business crime survey asking businesses whether they wanted to see the continuation of the on-street patrols. There was a resounding yes, some even gave money to keep them going. Also in January 2008 Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council agreed to part fund the Town Centre Ambassadors over the next 2 years as they are now seen as such an important part of Halifax town centre. Here are a couple of testimonials from businesses:

"Ambassadors came to help and were very proactive in making decisions and phone calls to ensure the safety of an elderly chap who seemed confused. This is the community teamwork we have worked towards. We thank the Ambassadors for their co-operation. May this spirit of co-operation continue in the future"

Manager of Halifax Bus Station

"I would like to put on record that since the Ambassadors have been active in Halifax town centre our shrinkage has decreased by 50%. The Directors of Harveys put this down to the increased high visibility of the Ambassadors therefore deterring shoplifting"

Manager Director, Harveys Department Store

6. Other Towns

The national Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) now uses Halifax as a guide to good practice for on-street patrols and crime prevention. Within the past 18 months the Ambassadors, Street Angels and St John Ambulance teams have had visitors, who are looking to learn from them, from Belgium, Brazil, Australia, USA, India and closer to home: Worthing, Skipton, Durham, Penrith and Solihull to name a few. Places such as Manchester, Harrogate, Ipswich, Watford and the Shetland Isles have all now started running their own Street Angels – based on what they have learnt from Halifax.

In May 2008 the partnership in Halifax has organised a meeting with other towns/cities to look at the possibility of expanding this good practice across Yorkshire. Already there is interest from over a dozen other towns/cities.

7. Recognition & Awards

Here is a list of the awards received since 2006:

Halifax Town Centre Ambassadors Awards

Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) Regional Winner for Community Safety – February 2006

ATCM Overall Regional Winner (all categories) – February 2006

ATCM National runner – up April 2006

Halifax received the Action Against Business Crime Safer Business Award - Summer 2006

Senior Ambassadors won a West Yorkshire Police Authority Commendation – February 2007

Street Angels Awards

Community Foundation for Calderdale Project of the Year – November 2006

Recognition from Voluntary Action Calderdale at Oscars evening - June 2007

Duke of York's Community Initiative Award – October 2007

National Runner-up in Faithworks Community Excellence Award – February 2008

Investing In Volunteers – awaiting results May 2008

Conclusion

The results of the partnership work speak for themselves. In 2002 people felt intimidated in Halifax town centre both during the day and night time, the businesses were experiencing a lot of crime and the image of Halifax was very poor. There was little to deter offenders within Halifax town centre and partnership working was piecemeal. Now in 2008, Halifax is seen by many as a place of good practice for on-street patrolling and innovative ways to reduce crime. People feel safer to come into the town centre, businesses are experiencing less crime, there are more deterrents for the offenders and the partnership is working extremely effectively. However the main highlight is when the partnership can offer that little bit extra to people who use the town centre. The thank you letters and stories of where the teams have helped make a difference make it all the worth while!!



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Number of words used: 3956

Section D: Endorsement by Senior Representative - Please insert letter from endorsing representative, this will not count towards your word or 1MB size limit restrictions.

Calderdale Divisional Headquarters
Halifax Police Station
Richmond Close
Halifax
West Yorkshire HX1 5TW

CALDERDALE

Tel: (01422) 337050
Fax: (01422) 337099

Our Ref: ICL/DB/Tilley
Your Ref:

24th April 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to fully endorse this application from the Halifax Ambassadors, Halifax Street Angels and St. John Ambulance Nightlife Project.

These three groups play a key partnership role alongside Calderdale Police, in providing a safer environment for the public who visit Halifax town centre during the day, and for those who come to enjoy the vibrant night scene that Halifax has to offer.

The Ambassadors enhance the daytime economy supporting local business, patrolling the centre and providing assistance and reassurance to the public. They work closely with the Neighbourhood Police Teams in the prevention and detection of crime.

The Street Angels and St. Johns Ambulance Project have contributed to a significant reduction in recorded violent crime in the town centre since its launch in November 2005. Their presence on the streets not only provides reassurance but also provides care and medical treatment for those in need.

As Chief Superintendent of Calderdale Police, I am fully supportive of their application.

Yours faithfully

Ian C Levitt
Chief Superintendent
Divisional Commander