



Floodlit PACT

Submitted for the Herman Goldstein Award

by PS Simon Holderness

Lancashire Constabulary
Eastern Division Headquarters
Whitebirk Drive
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB1 3HT

SUMMARY

Scanning:

Following months of successful work to reduce an anti-social behaviour problem in one of our areas, we had become aware that despite the great success that we had had on paper, on the ground to the public living in that community, there was no perception of an improvement. The public felt that they 'never saw a police officer'. It was difficult to scale down policing to a normal level as the public were not reassured

Analysis:

Analysis led us to believe that although effective, our response had the full outcome desired. Statistical analysis showed we had reduced ASB but that this was just the objective view. Sociological analysis showed that individuals still held their own subjective views of social reality and as such we had not impacted on the perception issues such as the fear of crime and disorder. What was missing was the ability to increase public confidence and increase public satisfaction.

Response:

We couldn't deliver more police, we had to work a little smarter with the resources we had. Policing activity was accompanied by High Visibility Floodlit PACT events. An On Street PACT meeting under Floodlights with messages projected onto walls using a high powered projector. The idea was to announce our presence in a big way and to 'surprise' the public, exceeding their expectations. Even if the public didn't see us, these were events that would get people talking and the word would get around, generating public confidence.

Assessment:

Many benefits identified – Well received by communities, Used successfully for 3 distinct policing purposes: Operational Response; Event; Community Engagement. Huge interest from partners; huge interest from colleagues from our and other forces. Lots of publicity generated in local media. The format was used in conjunction with the Tackling Knives Action Programme and received critical acclaim from Westminster. The initiative complements the Policing Pledge well. Most importantly it met the objectives set at the instigation of the project and has improved local public perceptions.

DESCRIPTION

Scanning:

'You never see a Police Officer'

Ask any police officer old or new – this statement ranks as the most likely criticism to be levelled against officers who trudge the streets of their assigned beats working towards improving our communities.

It's easy for officers to dismiss these kinds of comments but studies show that the frequency with which people see a police officer is an extremely important factor in making them feel safer:

Almost nine out of ten (89%) say the frequency with which they see a police officer on the beat is not enough...

A similar proportion (87%) say that seeing a police officer on the beat makes them feel safer, with half (49%) saying it makes them feel *much* safer.*

**Life in Lancashire Wave 1 Survey*

It is easy to be dismissive, but our challenge lies in meeting the public's expectations and we felt that there was an opportunity to do so here if a 'can do attitude' were adopted.

The following scenario brought the problem into sharp focus for officers working in Accrington, Lancashire.

The Peel ward of Accrington experienced heightened incidences of ASB in the period leading up to June 2008. This was highlighted through resident's feedback at PACT meetings and through individual approaches from residents. Analysis identified that the crux of the problem was that youths in the area appeared to be obtaining alcohol and that problems of Anti Social Behaviour and criminal damage were the upshot. An action plan was drawn up involving flooding the area with resources as part of a high visibility response. Specific action plans were carried out to tackle the supply of alcohol to youths. Success was experienced particularly in tackling the supply of alcohol to youths – a local shop had its licence revoked. Statistically, ASB was showing month on month reductions. However, the community's feelings appeared notably unchanged following the plan.

Despite the increased patrols and reductions, we were receiving feedback like "well I haven't seen any extra police officers...", and, "You're not there when the problems are happening." The message coming back was that residents didn't know that the policing in the area had changed and hadn't noticed the additional patrols.

Effectively, fear of crime and ASB had not moved. Community safety extends beyond the boundaries of the Police who are only one of a number of contributing organisations. On speaking to partner agencies such as the neighbourhood management team and Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service it was clear that they had the same problem tackling the invisible boundaries of people's perceptions.

The aim of the project was to reduce the community's fear of crime and disorder and in order to address this we set the following objectives:

- Identify the key issues where focus was needed
- Improve engagement of partner agencies
- Provide a sustainable solution to address issues raised

Analysis:

The analysis centred on the P.A.T. to distinguish between the location, victim & offender.

Location

Analysis of the area's topography shows the location (Peel Ward) as a medium sized urban conurbation comprising of some of the densest housing in England, predominantly row upon row of terraced housing. There are a number of small businesses including pubs and off licences but no major employers.

A brightly lit petrol station and mini market had become a focal point for local youth and had been the centre of Anti-Social Behaviour problems in the area.

Victim

The victims were the members of the community whose fear and mistrust we wished to address. Analysis of the ward's demographics showed this and surrounding areas to be amongst the most deprived nationally (*2007 index of multiple deprivation*). The ward suffers from above average child poverty and the high levels of unemployment from the 2001 Census statistics (*Appendix 1*).

There is little available to occupy the area's youth and education levels are low. In 2006 only 47.4% of school children achieved 5 or more GCSE grade C or above which was below the Lancashire average. The 2001 Census showed only 3.95% of people 16 years and over were in education (full or part time) compared to the national average of 7.25%. 38% of over 16year olds had no qualifications whatsoever (*compared to 29% nationally*).

The indigenous population is a tight knit community with a low degree of transience. Nearly half of the ward's households (42%) do not own a car and over 82% of workers travel less than 6 miles to work. (*Figures from 2001 Census*)

Offender

Firstly, consideration was given to why the public were not feeling the benefit of the improvements that had been made. What we were experiencing in Peel, we felt was a microcosm of a problem that the Single Policing Target would bring to all areas of our business. In Peel, we were seeing very positive improvements on our graphs and spreadsheets, which we analysed in two areas: *Resources* and *Reductions*.

Resources

In tackling the problem of 'You never see a police officer', we had learned that 'more police officers' was not the answer, certainly not with the resources that we had available. Analysis showed having four officers in the area instead of one was unlikely to have any great effect – you were still relatively unlikely to see a police officer. We had to work smarter with the resources that we had.

Reductions

We had made improvements – massive improvements, but importantly, we hadn't eliminated the problem (*appendix 2*). The reality was that where on a typical weekend evening in Peel, around 6 ASB incidents had been reported, we had reduced that number to around 2. Now that is a reduction of two thirds – in policing terms, an undisputed triumph. Ask any crime manager who is chasing a 5% reduction margin! But the reality was that the residents were still exposed to ASB – to a lesser degree albeit, but they didn't make that distinction. If you live near that house where the windows got smashed – that is what influence's your perception. If it is that unlikely that the public will perceive a 66% reduction in ASB over a matter of a few months, then all the hard work that is going into shaving another 5% off criminal damage is most certainly in vain – at least in terms of influencing public confidence.

As stated earlier it was acknowledged by Police that patrols had increased and ASB had decreased, the 'offenders' therefore were not the original perpetrators of the anti-social behaviour – the situation had moved on.

The problem was one of epistemological viewpoint. Service providers, including the Police were taking an objective, positivistic look at the observable social phenomena of crime and disorder and as such were satisfied that the statistical data was demonstrating improvements. Unfortunately this did not take into account the more interpretivistic phenomenology of the individual members of the community. It was unreasonable of the police and partners to expect the community at large to have registered the facts of the improvements made as it contradicted the cognitive construction of their individual social reality. More needed to be done to highlight these improvements before we could expect them to have any real impact on people's perceptions, and their fear of crime.

The true 'offenders' turned out to be the service providers, including the Police, who were failing to effectively communicate with the members of the community.

We asked ourselves what we knew about factors which increase public confidence, 87% of respondents in the LIL survey told us that seeing a police officer on the beat made them feel safer, in some cases much safer. It appeared to be that contact with the police that was all important.

Effectively, it wasn't enough to make improvements – the key issue (*objective one*) was the perceptions of the public. We needed to demonstrate visibly that improvements had been made and drive home the messages before any 'feel good' effect could take place. We needed to tap in to those factors which promote public confidence.

Response:

If people did not notice the additional patrols in the area, we needed something that they would notice. It needed to be something that would attract the attention and that would demonstrate that we are aware of the problem and that we are there to deal with it. In order to truly affect customer satisfaction, we felt that we needed to 'surprise' the public by effectively exceeding their expectations. It would be about accessibility and visibility and it would be about being there at the time and location that the problems were happening and dealing with the problems there and then.

The proposal was to hold PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings on the street under floodlights. These meetings were to be held at the time and place where the problems were occurring. A high powered projector would be used to project messages onto walls at venues highlighting the work that was being carried out in the area and providing a 'gateway' to services. The lights and the projector would give these meetings a sense of event and would achieve 'high visibility'.

These events would incorporate:

- 'a focal point' – the event venue, floodlit with the backdrop of the projected slideshow; and
- Patrolling – CBMs and PCSOs patrolling the area selected for the event. The patrolling was seen as essential for two reasons. To give some operational value to the event and to allow problems raised to be addressed there and then, and to offset any accusation that such events were a 'gimmick' or that they replaced actual patrolling.

Events would be publicised via various methods including a letter drop of the local vicinity a day before the event.

The public could meet officers at the venue or could ask for a visit at home during the duration of the event or at a later date.

Initial thoughts on such a response were:

- This was a new and additional method of engaging our communities and this gave it value right away.
- These events would 'surprise' the public – this would be unexpected of the police.
- This service was likely to be of value to those that used it.
- There was a high likelihood that the events would generate some word of mouth publicity in the community in addition to the media publicity – Even if you didn't see the event, you would hear about it.
- It demonstrates to the public that the police are aware of problems in the area and are doing something about it.
- There was a 'taking back of turf' element to such events, and the high visibility nature of the event signalled to would-be wrongdoers that the police would be present in the area for a prolonged period – they had a preventative quality.
- These events were 'Public Facing', 'Policing Pledge friendly' events – An opportunity for the public to examine their Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- These events could be used as a specific response to community concerns.
- The format was versatile and could lend itself to many policing scenarios as well as to those of our partners i.e. ASB, witness appeals, reassurance, home fire safety checks, road safety, Clean-ups etc.

We spoke to people within our organisation, with partners and with the community about it. The response was unanimously positive. We instinctively knew this format would be successful mainly from our own experiences as members of the public. We simply asked ourselves if we would like to see this initiative in our own area. The only thing remaining was to go out into the community and try it.

We considered what would surprise our customers and therefore meet or exceed their expectations. It was felt necessary that if we were there in response to an ASB problem that manifested itself on weekend evenings between 8pm and 11pm, that we should be there at that time and we should be there whatever the weather.

Lancashire had become the only force in England and Wales to be awarded a grading of 'Exceeds the standard' for Neighbourhood Policing, the highest grade possible. This message was one of the first 'performance related' messages to grace one of our slides, and it is still used today. Special themed Floodlit PACT events were carried out. Initially, this was done on an area where the CBM reported road safety as her main priority. The event was carried out on a busy main road and a huge 30 mph sign was projected onto the wall as part of the extremely visible campaign. Another event was accompanied by free fitting of cycle lights in partnership with Halfords. Acquisitive crime was also tackled as we held a Floodlit PACT at a garage forecourt where drive offs had been prevalent. Offenders had been stealing number plates from surrounding streets to commit drive offs, so the Floodlit PACT was conducted in partnership with the AA who helped to fit anti tamper number plate screws to vehicles on the forecourt.

Partners Response

It was immediately identified that the benefits to our organisation also applied to all of our partners working in community safety. Neighbourhood Management and Lancashire Fire and Rescue immediately expressed interest in the project. The involvement of partner agencies was mutually beneficial. Their presence at events assisted with staffing arrangements whilst enabling them to deliver their services and messages, and at the same time, a holistic service was being delivered. Likewise, we were demonstrating that we worked with our partners taking a joined up approach, and providing best value.

At Christmas, an initiative was carried out with East Lancashire Primary Care trust aimed at curbing excessive drinking which causes problems for the PCT and which causes problems for us. A Floodlit PACT was run in the town centre on 'Mad' Friday (the last working day before the holidays and traditionally a day of increased drink related violence due to workers finishing early and over indulging) and we were joined by the P.C.T.'s Watering Hole - a mobile bar serving free water. Revellers were encouraged to alternate between water and alcohol. Other bolt-ones have been carried out - for example, we have used a Bluetooth radio to transmit picture messages by Bluetooth promoting our, or partners, messages.

Resources

Initial events identified that four police staff (CBMs & PCSOs) were required to run a standard Floodlit PACT event and that generally this could be arranged without recourse to overtime. The trial events were run using equipment borrowed from a range of sources and so self sufficiency was an issue - funding was required for equipment to enable this to continue. A projector, floodlights, a generator and other sundries cost around £1500.

Assessment:

Two sets of equipment have been purchased to enable Floodlit PACT to be carried out across our Division. Obtaining funding proved to be very easy. The wide appeal and versatility of the initiative meant that many funding streams were open and in our case, we were able to secure funding from the Tackling Knives Action Plan fund as the Floodlit PACT format was identified as being ideal for delivery of TKAP initiatives. The initiative was run in Peel and Church wards and was an immediate success. The public response was that they liked the format. A typical comment was, "This is fantastic – how long have you been doing this?"

The format was then pushed out into all our areas with the subsequent events acting as a learning experience enabling us to find out what worked well and what didn't. Each event was accompanied by a media release which generated publicity for the events and raised public awareness, in turn combating the 'you never see a police officer' effect.

All of the events were extremely popular with the public and have increased our visibility and reputation.

Floodlit PACT in Accrington has now become firmly established in our community engagement toolkit. Officers now see Floodlit PACT as a 'first response' to community issues. An example would be that I was recently approached by one of my staff about emerging problems on her area. She told me that there had been rising tensions which had resulted in a couple of incidents on subsequent weekends and that she intended 'to put a Floodlit PACT in straightaway'. I was hugely encouraged by this as it demonstrated the confidence that CBMs have in the format and their willingness to use it (which I had some early doubts about!) This kind of use of the format in Accrington is now commonplace. It confirms our assertion in planning our response that such events demonstrate to the public that we have registered the problem and are doing something about it. It signals our arrival in the problem area.

The format was used as part of our TKAP response in December. Knife Arch operations were being carried out in the town centre but it was feared that the operation was actually creating fear of crime rather than reassurance. The slideshow this time carried reassuring messages asserting that Accrington was a safe place to be. Surveys carried out with and without the Floodlit PACT event showed that where the projector was used, the public felt safer. This approach to TKAP earned critical acclaim from the Police Minister Vernon Coaker. In all 18 events have been carried out in Hyndburn since we started and Floodlit PACT is now extending across the force. Officers from another Division have purchased equipment to replicate the TKAP work as have officers from Merseyside.

Difficulties Encountered

Certain venues were less suitable than others - for the projector, you need a good wall to project onto. This is not always available at the location that you want to go to. Workarounds have been to do the event without the projector or to work in the closest suitable venue. However, by and large we have now identified good workable venues for Floodlit PACT in all our neighbourhoods. Generators were noisy - we purchased quiet running generators. It is important to say that where the venue did not allow a projector, the events have still proved popular and have been successful.

Police Outcome / Result

Observed benefits: The format has been found to be adaptable to virtually all aspects of core business.

In some cases, attendance at Floodlit PACT has been better than at traditional PACT meetings. At one event in Baxenden, when the attendance had reached 7, the CBM stated that this was a record on her area. The total attendance that evening was 25.

The format reaches harder to reach groups and notably, you also get passing trade. On one occasion, a man approached us and pointed out three juveniles who he stated were responsible for all the trouble in the area - something that couldn't happen at traditional PACT and happened because we were there at the time and place when the problems occur.

There was a noted effect that we were taking back turf or planting a flag that the public appreciated. The initiative exceeded customer's expectations - they did not expect to see us so highly visible and so available on their areas. There was something almost symbolic about bringing our PACT meetings out of the community centres and church halls where they had erstwhile taken place and holding them on the very spot where, most nights, troublemakers gathered and terrorised the community! They didn't expect us to be set up at the locations that we used in the heart of the community and they were surprised to see us remain there until late and in all weathers.

In some cases, turnout to events by the public has been high and in some cases low – some CBMs say they prefer them to traditional PACT meetings citing better attendance, a more representative attendance and the potential for passing trade as their reasons. Turnout is dependant on a number of factors – the early evening events (6pm-9pm for example) have been better attended than the later events (i.e. 8pm-11pm). The weather is a factor although once advertised, the event will take place whatever the weather. The reason we do this is because we are firmly of the opinion that the attendance is not the important thing – it is the fact that we are there. The knowledge that we are there provides reassurance. Even if you don't want or need to speak to a police officer, the knowledge that the police are on the streets, highly visible has some value. Likewise, it also has a deterrent effect. Law abiding residents are not the only ones who become acutely aware that the police are about. Also, it depends on why you are holding an event – actually engaging the public is not necessarily the primary reason for holding an event – as discussed elsewhere in this document, it could be about 'signalling our arrival', 'planting a flag' or 'taking back turf' or demonstrating that we are aware of and responding to a problem. In these cases, it is enough for the public simply to know that we are there.

Media coverage has been all positive; we have been featured in all our local newspapers and have been featured on local radio. The initiative was also featured on a range of websites.

With the arrival of the Policing Green Paper, the Policing Pledge and the single top down target, Floodlit PACT has gained increased relevance. It is the perfect tool for demonstrating in a highly visible way to our communities that we are working effectively with partners to tackle crime and disorder in our areas. Many areas of the pledge are covered through Floodlit PACT but more importantly it works in the spirit of the Pledge which is to offer increased availability, accountability and accessibility to policing services.

Partners Outcome / Result

Huge interest from partner organisations - Many of our partners immediately saw the same benefits in the format that we did and support us regularly at events and some are even initiating events now. Commercial organisations such as AA and Halfords have been very keen to partake in Floodlit PACT because of the high visibility publicity generating capabilities - Both these companies have taken part and we in turn have put their name up in lights as working in partnership with Lancashire Constabulary.

Local councillors are hugely supportive of the format and turn out with us regularly. They see the events as an opportunity to be visible and available on their areas and to demonstrate that they are working with the local police on the issue of crime and disorder.

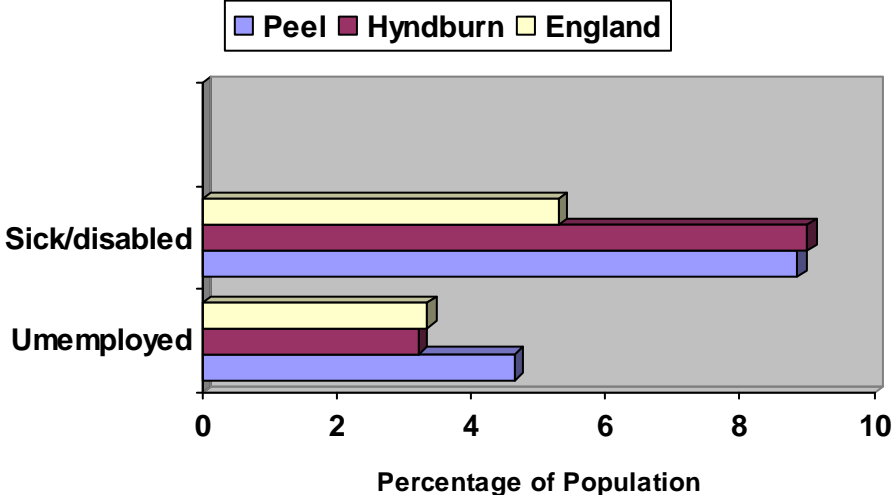
Neighbourhood Management have proved to be critical partners to this initiative, right from the beginning. All the benefits about visibility, about being seen to be working in our neighbourhoods, about meeting and exceeding customers expectations apply equally to them as they do to the police.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue use Floodlit PACT to get into our Neighbourhoods particularly to promote their free Home Fire Safety checks. More importantly, they are seen to be working closely with partner agencies and to be taking a joined up approach.

A particularly interesting outcome which was observed at one Floodlit PACT was the exchanges that took place between the partners present. At this particular Floodlit PACT, Police were present along with Neighbourhood Management, Fire Service, Primary Care Trust, Neighbourhood Watch, a Prince's Trust student, Resident's Association and the Local authority's ASB officer – the event was particularly well attended by partner agencies. Notably, aside from the exchanges that the different agencies had with the many members of the public that attended, there were many different exchanges between the different agencies, many of whom had met each other for the first time, and it was good to see that business cards were being exchanged and that new partnerships were being formed.

Ultimately the project has met its aims and objectives. It is sustainable with little cost implications, it has encouraged better partnership working and it is focused on the key issue of tackling people's perceptions to meet the aim of: **Reducing the fear of crime and disorder.**

Appendix 1 – Population out of work in Hyndburn & Peel Ward – 2001 Census



Appendix 2 – Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour in Peel Ward

