



K1 OPERATIONAL COMMAND UNIT

PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING

SECTOR C - THE FRIAR PARK INITIATIVE

FRIAR PARK POP INITIATIVE

PROJECT CONTACT PERSONS

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COMMENCEMENT DATE 1 OCTOBER 1998

ONGOING

INTRODUCTION

The initiative described in this summary has been used as an example of **good** practice during training events conducted within the **K1 Operational Command** Unit and at Force Headquarters.

The summary has been adapted directly from slides and lecture notes written for such training.

No attempt has been made to create a narrative, as it was felt that this would distract the focus of the reader from the way in which the S.A.R.A. **problem** solving model was applied to the 'problems' encountered on beat 27.

The application of this model formed the basis of the initial training the officers involved in the initiative received.

The summary is divided into discreet sections:

Overview

Scanning

Analysis

Response

Assessment

Modified future response

The Friar Park Initiative

Friar Park is a predominantly residential area situated within the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell, West Midlands. This area has been allocated West Midlands police beat number 27 and is policed by officers from Wednesbury Police Station.

The majority of houses within Friar Park are local authority owned and were built between the wars.

The area has an appearance of neglect which is partially attributed to its architecture, partially to the close proximity of the M6 / M5 motorway interchange and large railway marshalling yards and partially to an abnormally high incidence of crime and disorder.

There are few public amenities available for local residents either within Friar Park or the adjacent areas and historically there has been little co-ordinated effort from the residents to improve the area.

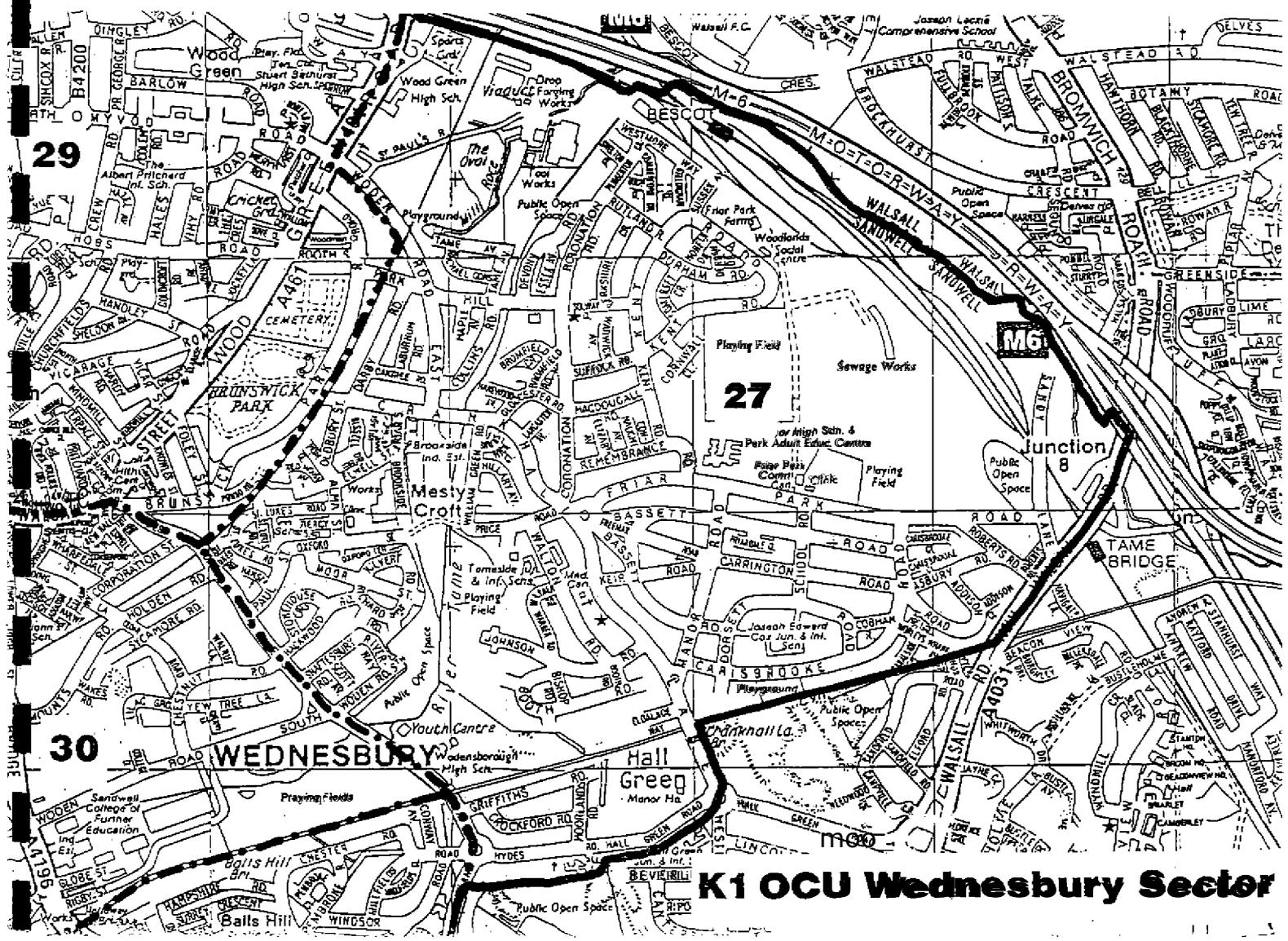
The police have, in the past, regarded the area as one where little co-operation has been forthcoming from the public and policing this challenging environment has often been regarded as a thankless task.

With the move to sector policing and the introduction of a POP style approach this area was identified as being ideal to test the theory. Initially two officers were identified to take ownership of all non-emergency work generated on this beat, in addition to this their remit included improving facilities available to people living in the area, reducing crime and, through improved communication, improving the negative perception the public had of the police.

It was quickly identified by the sergeant in charge that due to the huge workload being produced on this beat it was unrealistic to expect two officers to make a significant impact. To give the project a fair chance of succeeding a further four officers were drafted onto the initiative team.

The `problem' to be addressed was simple:- to reduce crime and disorder, to reduce the opportunities for crime and disorder and thereby provide a safer community, engendering a culture in which the public were not afraid to report incidents to the police.

The response to the `problem' has been comprehensive and is on-going. Various strategies have been adopted, including increasing police - public contact, liaison with various Local Authority departments and targeting / disrupting offenders.



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WEDNESBURY

K1 OCU Wednesbury Sector

SCANNING

High crime rate - 'volume crime'

Incident reports generated on the beat suggested that burglary (dwelling and commercial) and vehicle crime (thefts of, from and interference) make up the vast majority of recorded crime.

High number of offenders

A disproportionately high per capita ratio of offenders. Most offenders know to both the police and the local residents, criminals tending to commit crime locally and blatantly.

10 active CRO's living in one road!

Disorder

High incidence of spontaneous / opportunistic disorder associated with any police interventions in the estates on the beat. Police vehicles and officers attacked when attending non-emergency and emergency incidents.

Social deprivation

Majority of housing Local Authority owned and maintained. Borough of Sandwell nationally recognised as being amongst the poorest in areas of housing, health and education. Lack of local community amenities, area falling into disrepair, high unemployment.

This has typically created low aspirations and expectations in the younger people, allowed them few organised diversions from criminal behaviour and provided opportunities to offend.

Poor perception of the police

Complaints have been received about a perceived unwillingness of the police to get involved - the police feeling that they were working in a vacuum of little public support.

Lack of trust in the police / criminal justice system

An unwillingness from the public to pursue complaints through the courts, having weighed the likely outcome against possible reprisals.

A lack of intelligence being generated from police / public contact giving the police the impression that the community wasn't interested in helping itself.

Intimidation of 'pro-police' residents

An example being the arson at the premises of the beats only Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator. Incidents such as this fuelling rumours and persuading the majority that it's better not to 'get involved.'

Available police resources .

A management decision was made concerning how many officers / vehicles could be allocated to this area and on what basis. The officers with the necessary skills and enthusiasm were identified and recruited.

Visit to Leicester

The sector management visited a police project run in Leicester which had been created to address a very similar area. Many of the Leicester responses were already being considered, several 'new' ones were adopted.

Public meetings

Meetings were held, the purpose being two-fold. Firstly to check that the issues the police had identified had some resonance with public perceptions, secondly to gauge the response from the public, to a more intensive police regime in the area.

Meetings with local housing office staff

Again to confirm that we had common goals and to build links.

Meetings with local councillors

Two local councillors were involved, both had policing high on their agendas.

School visits to assess perceptions

Aimed at building bridges and identifying stereotypes to overcome - both with the staff, pupils and police.

Crime prevention officers assessments

CPO identified crime opportunities and began to work on strategies to combat them.

Consultation with the local beat officer

The PBO had an input into how she felt progress could be made - based on experience as much as on studying empirical data.

ANALYSIS

Breakdown of specific types of crime

This was achieved by using the force 'CRIMES' information system. Anecdotal information was also collated regarding crime which was not being reported.

How many offenders?

The active CRO's were identified and deductions were made about who might be responsible for various types of crime, the potential for the recruitment of new offenders from the large youth population on the beat was factored in.

Who is offending?

Not only amongst those resident in the area but also who is travelling in to commit crime? Also, who is currently incarcerated and can be expected to become active upon release?

Liaison with Housing Department regarding anti-social families

This involvement was Government led but provided a 'spring board' to getting involved with this department. The opportunities for more police action and the provision of more information from the police were considered.

Neighbourhood watch scheme

The potential for new schemes was investigated, the necessary police support was considered.

Residents associations

The remit of the one existing residents association was considered, how could it provide the police team with assistance?

Partnership approach - who else can help?

Officers considered what other assistance might be available, the following groups were identified as being potentially helpful: the Local Authority, housing dept, health dept, education dept, community services dept, social services, local businesses, local residents.

Can the role of the police be made more effective?.

Yes, by linking the above to specific, measured police interaction.

RESPONSE

Identification of a core team of officers

The team was selected based on their skills and interest in the project. Initially the existing PBO was used together with one additional officer. The workload proved so great that almost immediately it was decided that another four officers should be allocated to the team. This augmented establishment has been retained and includes one tutor / probationer pair.

Officers tasked to deal solely with work from this beat

The team deal with all non-emergency work generated on the beat. They also cover emergency response for the beat when they're on duty. Typical duty cover is between 0800 and 2200 daily, although there is considerable flexibility built in to accommodate operations and offender targeting.

Improved communication between residents and police

Officers now make house to house enquiries following all reported crime, this not only increases intelligence gathering it also allows relevant crime prevention advice to be dispensed and increases the profile of the officers working in the area.

Officers carry mobile telephones

This means that the public* have immediate (ie. real-time) communication with the officer(s) working in their area. This has already resulted in several arrests for 'crimes in progress' including one in which an offender was apprehended having made off from a stolen vehicle. This allows the police the opportunity to either prevent crime or at least obtain the best evidence following crime, it also gives the community the reassurance that they can communicate directly with their beat officer about matters of immediate importance.

*The number is only given out by the officers on the team, it is given to residents who can be trusted not to abuse the system. All incidents attended following calls are logged on C&C system by the officers attending.

Officers permitted to use the local housing office as a satellite base

The local housing office staff allow the police team to use their offices as a base when they're on patrol on the beat. Officers can make telephone enquiries and complete reports. This also increases public contact and the security of the housing office staff.

Paperwork is not kept on the premises and housing office staff do not have access to confidential police information.

Housing and police conduct local 'roadshows'

The beat has been divided into sections containing several roads, every couple of weeks the residents from one section are invited to a meeting with the police and the housing dept. to discuss developments and any areas of concern.

Police involvement in planning and developing estate

The beat team, police crime prevention officer and local authority housing dept meet with residents to explore the potential for altering public rights of way and enlarging gardens *in a bid to 'plan out' alley ways and cut throughs used as escape routes* by local offenders.

Traffic calming

The police and the local authority co-operate in organising extensive traffic calming measures. These were necessary to reduce the incidence of stolen vehicles being raced around the estates. This has had the added benefit of rejuvenating the areas adjacent to many of the major routes through the beat.

Sharing information

This links with the Crime and Disorder Act - formal and informal agreements were established regarding information sharing with local authority departments.

Empty premises

The local authority agreed to inform the police when premises (private and commercial) were to be vacated. Crime prevention strategies could then be considered. The authority also notifies the police of prospective new tenants, so problems / issues can be anticipated in advance.

Top 10 criminals /offenders identified

The top ten (ten most prolific:in terms of volume crime) were identified for targeting as it was felt that they set an example to their peers. Positive and decisive police action would send a very clear message to a large target group.

'Target hardening' tactics

Restrictive bail conditions to be applied whenever possible, curfew to be checked as a matter of policy. 'Spoiler' tactics adopted - known offenders approached and disrupted several times a day to disorient them and impact on their behaviour.

Officers to attend courts with offenders found in breach of bail / curfew conditions

Officers tasked to attend Magistrates Courts and provide first hand information on the impact upon the community the breaches of these conditions have.

Focus on stop checks and intelligence

Stop check to become more offender / location specific and associations to be noted and checked out more thoroughly.

Operation 'Starbird'

A crime prevention initiative run from a purpose built vehicle - aimed at heightening public awareness of crime reduction strategies.

PTI files marked 'bt.27' for information of the local magistrates

The Police Sergeant supervising the initiative team wrote to the clerk of the local courts explaining the scope of the project and asking for any / all support when it came to bail / sentencing etc...

Confidential information sheets on files were also written to highlight the 'bigger picture' to the local CPS prosecutors.

Mounted branch and OSU

Specialist, high profile units, were also initially used to make an initial impact and provide public reassurance.

Warrants

High intensity, ongoing, warrants operations were commenced to drive home the message that the police did care and there would be no hiding place for criminals in the area.

ASSESSMENT

It was recognised that the assessment stage would effectively become the scanning stage for any future modification of the response.

The bt.27 initiative is seen as being on-going and does not have a fixed term or life. Different elements of the response stage would show results at different times, because of this it was decided to make the assessment stage on-going and deal with each issue as it arose.

External factors had to be considered, such as the re-emergence of prolific offenders from prison and the displacement effect that a local initiative can have on volume crime.

The areas for consideration when assessing the impact of the initiative are shown below:

Crime figures monitored

This gives empirical data on the what, where and when and allows reductions to be quantified. It also allows analysis to take place and facilitates future target hardening and crime prevention strategies.

Public satisfaction measured

A substantial reduction in complaints from the public about the local police - evidenced from experience at local community meetings.

Offender profiles/ convictions

Are the same offenders still active? Have they been displaced or stopped? Are the 'targeted' offenders being convicted more frequently?

Increased intelligence from the community

A significant increase in information received from the public has been measured. The police are experiencing more co-operation generally.

Reduction in incidents on the beat

The number of incidents taking place on the beat has gradually declined, at the same time the detection rate for incidents on the beat has climbed dramatically.

'Pro-active' police time measured

Time spent on crime prevention, crime reduction and road safety initiatives has increase because the police spend less time reacting to incidents on the beat. This proactive work is seen as an investment which will eventually pay off in an even lower rate of crime and disorder.

Liaison with the Neighbourhood Watch and Residents Associations

There are now three neighbourhood watch schemes running on the beat - feeding information to the police. There is considerable scope for improving this number further.

Weekly meetings with sector management

These meetings allow the beat team officers to discuss day to day issues with the management and allow the sector management team to raise strategic issues, PI's etc...

Information from the Local Authority

The various departments within the local authority make their own assessments of the impact of their strategies and communicate these with the police initiative team, this allows mutually beneficial modifications to be made.

MODIFYING THE RESPONSE - THE FUTURE

Following the initiative being set up and assessments being made of the impact of the responses used, a further table of responses has been discussed to be taken forward into the coming year.

Increase contact with local schools

There are three large secondary schools on the beat and numerous primary schools. Officers will spend more time in the schools developing links with the children, providing road safety and crime prevention advice and also providing a positive role model to the youngsters.

Planned intervention with young single parents

It is proposed that prior to young single parents being housed on the beat the police and local authority will visit the prospective tenants and offer advice and support. This is an attempt to provide a vulnerable group with contacts within the community right from the word go - especially as experience has shown that such individuals often become the target of unwanted attention from the local criminal fraternity.

The promotion of stronger links between the Local Authority and their tenants

The police can begin to influence tenancy agreements and will become more involved in 'policing' the agreements. A letter from the sector Inspector will be sent to householders who commit a minor breach of the agreement to advise them that the situation has come to the attention of the police, has been recorded and will be referred to should a further breach occur.

The Millennium Project

A community centre is being constructed as a millennium project. The contractors were given comprehensive crime prevention advice prior to arriving on site and have had regular communication with the initiative team, this has been so positive that the contractors have offered the police the free use of a vehicle for the duration of the construction. This is to be considered in light of the force sponsorship policy.

Sponsorship of local sports teams

The police will provide sponsorship for a local high school soccer team and as a result the force crest will be worn on the teams shirts.

C.A.T.C.H. radio

The Community Action Tackling Crime and Harassment radio scheme is to be taken up on this beat.

This involves a network of private citizens being issued with a personal radio. The beat team would have radios working on this network (in addition to police P/R) and would be able to communicate with the public without working through the police operations centres J information rooms. This can be seen as an amalgam of the current mobile phone and neighbourhood watch systems.

Introducing the model to other Sector C beats

Following on from the success of this initiative the same principles have recently been adopted on an adjoining beat (WMP bt.28) and the good practice is being applied to that areas problems.