



**WEST YORKSHIRE  
POLICE**

**PUTTING POP INTO PRACTICE:**

**A DIVISIONAL PERSPECTIVE — *Tackling Local Problems Together***

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# **PUTTING POP INTO PRACTICE:**

## **A DIVISIONAL PERSPECTIVE — *Tackling Local Problems Together***

### **ABSTRACT**

Eccleshill Division of the West Yorkshire Police comprises Eccleshill and Shipley police stations, some two miles north of the city of Bradford.

#### **The Problem**

Like many other police forces, West Yorkshire has, paradoxically, found that although recorded crime rates have, on the whole, fallen significantly, people's fear of crime has steadily risen. Calls to the police have increased year on year, yet only 30% concern crime-related matters. Eccleshill Division has sought to address call management issues, the incidence of crime and people's perceptions of it by "listening and responding to the public", the aim being to deliver "a policing service which we would want to receive ourselves". Central to this is a focus on the Problem Oriented Policing (POP) triumvirate of *Victim, Offender* and *Location*.

#### **The Evidence**

What was attempted was a synthesis of the extensive data on recorded crime, locally accessible command and control information, and more qualitative measures concerning people's perceptions and level of satisfaction. Consultation was extensive and far-reaching. The provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act gave further impetus to the evidence gathering process.

At a Force and Divisional level, the *Incident Based Information System* (IBIS) was utilised to analyse trends in call patterns. It became clear that, in line with other research findings, the police were invariably called by and back to the same people and places time and time again.

#### **The Response**

This has taken the form of a systemic approach, involving structural and cultural changes. POP has been embraced throughout the Division, at all levels. A *Community*

*Action Team* (CAT) comprising two sergeants, an inspector and sixteen geographically responsible beat managers, has been created.

A comprehensive programme of training and development, media coverage and community consultation has complemented this process.

### **The Impact**

Qualitative and quantitative indicators have been utilised to assess the impact of the Division's response to the challenge of implementing POP solutions in the context of day to day policing. Feedback from Community Forums has been positive and supportive. Whilst it is still early days for the project, initial signs are that significant inroads have been made in reducing the total number of calls, in improving quality of service through a more personalised approach, and in increasing people's overall satisfaction levels with the police at the same time as allaying their fears concerning crime and related issues.

'Working in Partnership' is one of four priorities, over the period 1999/2000, for the West Yorkshire Police, alongside Crime Reduction, Combating Drug Related Crime and Building Public Confidence. Community safety has come to the top of the police agenda and the challenge is now to blend policing strategies, philosophies, concepts and models into an effective structure which meets all community needs.

To implement the profound changes posited by problem-oriented policing (POP) approaches requires what Wilson (1992) terms 'change through people'; *proactive, not reactive*, change (Sadler, 1996). There is a growing recognition that organisational structures and prevailing cultural attitudes must change (on this see Barton and Evans, 1999), but such policing approaches impact upon such a wide, and diverse range of people that *organisational* change will not work in isolation.

The writer professes to be what Brown (1996) terms an '*Inside Insider*', and acknowledge the criticism that in-house research projects, particularly when prizes or prestige are involved, are sometimes 'doomed to succeed' (Waddington, 1999). As a Beat Manager with specific geographic responsibilities, as a police officer who tries on a daily basis to implement problem solving solutions he does, however, promise the same objectivity and balance that he endeavours to bring to those problems which confront him as a practitioner.

POP, "in its broadest context," writes Herman Goldstein (1990:3), "is a whole new way of thinking about policing that has implications for every aspect of the police organisation, its personnel, and its operations". He argues that 'substantive problems', and not just 'crime', constitute the business of the police, and suggests that the focus of attention needs to shift from a preoccupation with *means* (such as structures, staffing and equipment), to *ends*, namely the police's effectiveness and impact upon these problems.

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However you view mission, or value statements, and a number are incorporated in Eccleshill's current 1999/2000 Divisional Plan, pronouncements such as:

*'As a Division we will draw our strength from the diversity of our people'*

and

***'Delivering a Policing Service which we would want to receive ourselves'***

signify a distinct and significant shift in police management thinking. The policing style of the division follows an intelligence led approach, "community based and focused on problem solving techniques" (Eccleshill Divisional Plan:12). Furthermore, the hitherto radical idea that "policing services are not delivered to groups or communities, but by individuals to individuals, and no two individuals are the same" is similarly enshrined in the document. For our purposes, however, perhaps the most significant aspect of the division's last two policing plans is the front cover, reproduced at **Appendix one**. If proof of commitment to POP, even if just on the part of the Divisional Management Team, is required, then the inclusion of the POP triumvirate of victim, offender and location, should suffice. Substantive problems, causes rather than effects, are thereby placed at the heart of Eccleshill's policing approach.

However, cynicism will and does exist and must always be managed. Change of this magnitude, Goldstein (1990:172) reminds us, takes time. "The speed of change", he contends, "is probably most dependent on the attitudes of officers toward the change". The writer would concur with this view, and suggest that any change, but particularly that which impacts directly upon police officers, must be accepted quickly, at least in *principle*, if the change initiative is not to be lost, if ultimately the proposed changes are to truly take root within the police organisation. Goldstein agrees, and argues that any proposed changes must not be perceived by the rank and file as further complicating their job, nor must they reflect a lack of understanding of their job conditions (Goldstein, 1990:30). We must not, however, amidst all this lofty debate, forget that :

The objective in attempting to bring about change is not simply to improve the police, *but rather to solve community problems*

(Goldstein, 1990:179, my emphasis)

Sounding a note of caution, however, Gilling (1996:112) believes that the very police organisations which must change if POP is to flourish have been proved time and again to be *slow* to change. So whilst we may be talking, in the Eccleshill context, of evolutionary, incremental changes, these titles threaten to obscure the truly

revolutionary thinking envisaged in moving a police organisation from an *enforcement*, through *a service*, to *a community* model of policing (Fielding, 1996), whereby policing *of* the community becomes policing *for* the community (Waddington, 1999; McConville and Shepherd, 1992).

How Eccleshill has gone about making these changes, why and with whom forms the bulk of this piece. We shall endeavour an appraisal of the project thus far, focusing on outcomes, considering the balance that must be drawn between *quantitative* measures of performance, and more *qualitative* indicators more in tune with 'softer', community-based initiatives, since often we are dealing with people's irrational, subjective fears (Barton and Evans, 1999).

### **Scanning: Doing the same thing differently**

The future of the partnership approach -- both with the public and other agencies — is now integral to the future of policing.

(Gilling, 1996:112)

For most people, crime is not at the forefront of their social concerns.

(McConville and Shepherd, 1992:61)

People will always call the police for help and advice. In turn, the police will always be required to have some form of reactive capability, to service these calls for assistance, as well as to facilitate their 'crisis management' role. What researchers have increasingly found, however, is that so-called fire brigade, or *incident-driven* policing becomes the dominant operating environment as finite resources have to cope with seemingly infinite demands (Eck and Spohn, 1987). The then Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Kenneth Newman, writing in 1984 introduced the concept of multi-agency policing which he defined as a collaborative approach, between police and other agencies, "to develop solutions which address the root cause rather than the symptoms of crime" (Newman, 1984:8). Reactive policing was seen as an increasingly costly endeavour, the explicit rationale of Newman's proposal being to avoid the costs associated with traditional reactive approaches. Similarly, Goldstein's "most important tenet" is that the police should tackle the root cause of incidents rather than responding repeatedly to them (Leigh et al., 1996:13). Change, particularly in a policing context, is not something that happens overnight.

Particularly at Shipley police station, and to a lesser extent at Eccleshill itself, there has been a strong tradition of 'community' policing, delivered by geographically bounded officers, working under a Community Policing (now Community Action) Team. What was lacking, however, was the specific, structured problem solving approach posited by the POP model using SARA (Scanning — Analysis -- Response — Assessment) and Problem-analysis triangle (PAT) techniques. Managers were increasingly faced with steadily increasing crime rates, ever-mounting calls upon the police (70% of which concerned 'non-crime' related matters; Leigh et al.,1996) and static, even decreasing numbers of officers. For the Police in general, and Eccleshill in particular, POP would ultimately come to offer senior managers an opportunity to widen their community-oriented focus at the same time as getting a grip on spiralling demands (Leigh et al., 1998:2, 4). Not only that, but, if Goldstein (1990:39) is right, concerning the 'ultimate objective' of POP, then the result would be a more *effective* police response to incidents.

Aimed at addressing crime issues, in particular dwelling-house burglaries, Eccleshill first introduced, in 1995<sup>1</sup>, a 'Proactive Team', comprising uniform constables, on six to twelve month secondments, working in plain clothes alongside experienced detectives'. Whatever your feelings concerning 'before and after' crime statistics, the results were outstanding, with dwelling-house burglaries being cut by 52% (Eccleshill Division crime statistics) at a time when *more* incidents were crimed as burglaries. Many of the current crop of uniform patrol *officers* at Eccleshill have experience of working in the proactive team, have gradually learned to think laterally around problems, and have come to realise, perhaps, that there is more to policing than blue lights and sirens. In helping to create, in no small part, some of the conditions for change necessary if POP were to succeed, the proactive team played a hugely important part.

By the start of 1998, the new Divisional Management Team at Eccleshill had been working together for *some* four months. A series of staff consultation workshops were run in January, highlighting, amongst other issues, areas for improvement, most notably for our purposes, a desire to work closer with the community through officers with clear geographic responsibilities, and the *efficacy of a more* problem oriented

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix two, Eccleshill Divisional Structure chart.

approach to issues. Running parallel to the internal consultation, wide ranging views and opinions from consultation with the public were collated and documented.

In helping the police assess the environmental factors crucial to any change process, the Crime and Disorder Act has played a major role. The Act, which came into force in September 1998, stipulated that each area had to develop a Joint Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, and that this must be shaped by a Crime and Disorder Audit for that area. The Police and the local authority in Bradford had been working in partnership for some time, having begun to develop a multi-agency approach to Community Safety in 1997.

Extensive and varied community consultation, to find out which crimes caused people the most concern, complemented the data gathering (Bradford Crime and Disorder Audit, 1998:14). Dwelling house burglary, closely followed by car crime, worried, in general, over 70% of the respondents, yet only 20% of them had been a victim and just under 50% believed themselves likely to be a victim. Respondents to a West Yorkshire Police survey were given the opportunity of saying which three crimes they would most like to see given priority by the police in their area. Notwithstanding drastic reductions in overall burglary figures, nearly 80% of those replying rated household burglary as their top priority, the next highest priority being drug abuse/dealing, at 40% and, interestingly, 'youth disturbance' at just over 30%. When asked to suggest measures which would not only reduce crime but which would also make them feel safer, over 75% of people felt that 'more police *foot* patrols' would achieve this dual goal. Other solutions rating a high response included the police targeting known offenders, and, paradoxically, 'more *police car* patrols'. With the exception of the latter, perhaps, the underlying thoughts, fears and feelings of Bradford residents made them particularly amenable to community based, problem oriented policing solutions.

So far we have considered *macro* issues concerning trends which can be broadly grouped under the Scanning banner. With the implementation of POP at a divisional level, in April 1998, this part of the POP process reflects the extensive support which the approach enjoys, with scanning activities being conducted at every level of the organisation – all staff play their part in feeding back issues they come across and which may highlight substantive problems. This activity is underpinned by a newly appointed *Incident Pattern Analyst*, utilising *Watson* computer software, a dedicated

Performance Analyst and, in the earlier stages of the project, local 'Fin' codes enabled the common denominators of problems to be isolated<sup>2</sup>.

It is not just the police who have a role in conducting this scanning phase of the POP process. Reflecting this philosophy, therefore, it has been a conscious part of the POP implementation strategy at Eccleshill to broaden the operation of the concept to the wider community. Not the idealised *Gemeinschaft* of a better, vanished time, 'community' is conceived of more in terms of what Stacey (1969) termed 'local networks'. Neighbourhood Forums, Neighbourhood Watch, 'drop-in' police Contact Points, regular 'surgeries' and other, less formal arrangements are all used to empower the community to take an active part in identifying issues of common concern. From a sociological standpoint, POP represents the realisation that personal *Troubles* can indeed be conceived of as public *Issues* (Mills, 1959).

#### **Analysis: Where do we go from here?**

Most law enforcement agencies should re-examine their role in society and formulate a clear statement of mission

(Woods and Ziembo-Vogl, 1997)

The SARA technique, together with the PAT triangle of victim, offender and location, endeavours to systemise problem-solving and "helps officers to think POP in a structured and disciplined way" (Leigh et al., 1996:vi). PAT helps officers focus on specified key elements of incidents, and to think laterally. It is a crucial tool in the POP toolbox, and as such, the success or failure of any initiative depends on how well, and how quickly, officers assimilate its main components.

Education, as with so many things, is key, and the training package devised was comprehensive, structured, and catered for *all* staff within the division. Eccleshill was certainly not the first to consider this style of policing, and it was decided early on to see how others dealt with the concept of POP, combining good practice with *best value*, in that the division would not be starting entirely from scratch. An Inspector, two sergeants and two training officers visited Merseyside Police, considering their POP methodologies and implementation issues. What Eccleshill took away from the visit was a clearer focus on how POP fitted in with an already focused, participative policing strategy. It was then on to the training phase, considering both the theory and

<sup>2</sup> Appendix three.

practice behind POP, utilising case studies wherever appropriate. The training sessions, incorporating Crime and Disorder Act issues, were attended by 150 officers. 'Cascaded' training, by means of the intranet, daily and Team Leader briefings brought the package to an even wider audience.

The analysis phase falls to the sixteen constables, two sergeants and one inspector who comprise the Community Action Team. The Problem Identification Report, or POP 1, forms the basis of this work<sup>3</sup>. Whilst the IPA can, and does, generate POP 1 forms based on computer analysis of incidents, his input is confined purely to the scanning, or identification, phase (completing page one of four only). It is then left to CAT officers to complete the rest of those forms which the IPA generates, as well as completing their own based on their scanning activities. These forms are now instantly accessible by way of a template included on a number of personal computers located in Shipley and Eccleshill police stations. Whilst initially, some non-CAT officers took it upon themselves to complete the whole form, this was considered to be duplicitous. CAT officers subsequently attended on all uniform patrol briefings to explain further what was required of colleagues, as well as to provide updates of their work. Now, a brief handwritten report, for the attention of the appropriate CAT officer, is all that is required, to enable them then to move onto the analysis phase.

POP at Eccleshill is not set in tablets of stone. It is fluid, constantly capable of evolution and change and whilst the central principles and practices are in place and bedding-in, this capacity for creativity is perhaps its greatest asset.

### **Response: Partners in Crime**

Developing a new philosophy of policing is one thing: permeating it throughout an organisation is quite another.

(Woods and Ziembo-Vogl, 1997)

Persistent, carefully cultivated engagement by the police with communities does result in communities subsequently taking initiatives for themselves.

(Goldstein, 1990:24)

Eccleshill Division's response to the issues facing it, of increasing demand, falling crime rates and rising levels of fear has already been touched on. POP thinking now permeates the Division. Structures, processes and most importantly, resources have been committed to the project. Ostensibly incremental changes to existing policing philosophies, such as the Community Policing and Reactive teams mask this marked transformation in *thinking* that underpins the entire POP edifice.

The *BritPop* report (Leigh et al., 1996), itself an important resource in the macro-level scanning activity conducted by the Division, argues that one of the key messages of POP is that the local community, of residents, other agencies, businesses etc., also has resources which the police can draw upon in endeavouring to resolve problems. These resources take the form of expertise and knowledge of a wide range of issues, accessible to the police if only they can be tapped into. This is where the role of Beat Manager is crucial. Directly accessible to the communities for which they are responsible, they act, in the Eccleshill model, as a conduit for community intelligence garnered from a diverse range of sources, both formal and, perhaps most importantly, informal mechanisms based on their own local networking activity. Put simply, they talk to, know and are trusted by, a vast range of people. Strong, and productive relationships have been formed with other agencies, most notably the local authority housing and tenancy enforcement departments. CAT officers are directly responsible for cascading POP principles to people whom they meet on a day to day basis, and partner agencies have proved to be particularly receptive to both the theory and practice.

The CAT team has its own terms of reference, and deployment criteria, and comprises some of the most experienced officers in the division. Tenure of service has initially been set at three years. The team's primary responsibilities are to :-

- Create and maintain communication and information flow with their nominated communities
- Scan all information sources highlighting trends in reported incidents and/or community concerns
- Identify 'problems' and their causation in a wide context analysing commonality in Victim, Offender and Location

- Co-ordinate solutions to these problems, wherever possible involving other agencies and communities themselves, utilising appropriate police resources when necessary
- Assess the effectiveness of chosen solutions<sup>4</sup>.

Extensive use has been made of computer technology, including both the intranet<sup>5</sup> and world wide web. A problem solving database of good practice, useful contacts and other background information has been produced for inclusion on the Division's intranet site, and a Shipley CAT officer has recently become the first to get 'on line', with his own community web site ([www.saltairepolicecommunityproject.yorks.com](http://www.saltairepolicecommunityproject.yorks.com)). Eccleshill's implementation of POP principles flowed naturally from the Divisional Patrol Strategy, which arose from the consultation exercises conducted upon the appointment of a new DMT. The POP strategy was a natural extension to, and directly comparable with, the division's proactive approach to crime, whereby an initial investment of focused staff reduced dwelling-house burglaries by 50%. A partnership approach, empowerment of staff and communities, and unwavering support at all levels of the organisation are noteworthy. Incident levels are not reduced merely by referring callers on to other agencies, or by refusing to attend the incident. Indeed, the division is committed to its patrol response, and in recent months firm, prompt, response criteria for 'suspicious' incidents have been set. The rationale behind attending such incidents is two-fold.

Firstly, research at a divisional level, and common sense, suggests that a prompt response drastically increases the chances of apprehending an offender, to be contrasted with the previous grading system whereby officers were often dispatched to such messages many hours after they were first received. Secondly, it is felt that whilst the pure POP model does not incorporate such strategies, it is counterproductive to invest so much time and effort in empowering communities, if, when people do see the need to call the police *concerning a suspicious incident* that is happening in front of them, the police response is tardy at best.

A brief example, to close this section, will serve to highlight what some consider to be Eccleshill's unique approach. Upwards of a dozen calls a day, particularly at weekends, were often received concerning the exploits of the *Eccleshill Crew*, a group

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Appendix five, Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 23/5/98.

of mainly white, middle class youths aged 10 to 18 who had begun to congregate in vast numbers in and around the Bolton Junction area of Bradford. This is a predominantly residential area comprising private dwelling houses, shops, several pubs and a disused supermarket. Adherence to PAT principles, extensive and wide-reaching partnership working, even 'solving' the problem; laudable as these may be these are not the true measures of success. Three local residents, who expressed strong views on the subject, were empowered by the local CAT officers, to organise, and chair a community meeting to discuss the problem. This they did, the meeting being attended by a number of local people, politicians, the media and representatives from Eccleshill Police station, including the Divisional Commander, Superintendent David Collins. He recalls that it was a "difficult but incredibly worthwhile meeting, with two of the three individuals going on to join the Special Constabulary, a marvellous example of what can be achieved when police and community work together as equal partners to address those substantive problems that in truth affect all of us as Bradfordians". Disorder problems diminished, crime fell, fear of crime reduced and Youth Services started a range of activities for young people. Parents also began to take more responsibility for their children.

#### **Assessment: Where do we go from here?**

PAJ Waddington, in considering what he terms the 'general approach' to policing offered by community and problem-oriented strategies, concludes that the weakness, despite many schemes in Britain, lays in their evaluation, "much of which is done in-house where there is considerable pressure to report favourably" (Waddington, 1999:210). He calls for independent evaluation to address this and also cites numerous practical difficulties in moving towards what has been termed a 'contract' between police and communities which are heterogenous and often transient (Irving, 1989). For example, Dixon and Stanko (1993), in their work on sector policing in an area of the Metropolitan Police highlight such implementation problems as :

- Vague and purposeless management
- Resistance from lower ranks

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix six — From *The Beat*, West Yorkshire Police internal newspaper.

- Marginalization of 'community constables'<sup>6</sup>
- A public largely ignorant, of policy but mainly satisfied by police response.

We have already touched on issues of 'success' in considering whether problems have been solved or not. Eck and Spelman (1987) identify five varying degrees of impact which the police might have on a problem:

- Total elimination of problem
- Reduce number of incidents problem creates
- Reduce seriousness of incidents created
- Design methods for better handling the incidents
- Remove the problem from police consideration.

The second of these measures, Goldstein argues, is the more realistic goal, whilst the last of them is "obviously unsatisfactory unless it results in the problem being dealt with more effectively than it would have been if handled by the police" (Goldstein, 1990:36). The author is aware of schemes in this country which appear to seek this aim, one which Eccleshill has eschewed in favour of their empowerment approach.

In considering evaluation issues, Goldstein (1990:49) concedes that this is difficult, citing the large number of variables, and the cost and effort involved in setting up controlled experiments. He advocates new and better relationships with academics, foundations and government agencies if we are to move to his 'ideal type' whereby routine and confident evaluation of the 'end-products' of policing are the norm.

In the second *BritPop* report (Leigh et al., 1998), evaluation was found to be "notoriously difficult", and it was argued that effective assessment depended on accurate records of officers' actions being maintained, concerning why, and with whom, they took them. The report's authors recommended that those implementing POP should guard against relying on just one measure alone, proposing instead that a range of measures, for example perceptions, numbers of incidents and arrests be considered. Quantitative measures, therefore, must be backed up by more qualitative indicators, to reflect the nature of POP, with its emphasis on humanistic, participative styles.

Eccleshill, mindful of good practice and constructive criticism, carries out the following work on evaluation:-

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix seven — each high profile CAT officer has numerous colour and black and white posters, and business cards available for distribution.

- Daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly briefings, and performance review meetings involving all staff
- Database of Good Practice
- Moves to work more closely with Bradford College
- Dedicated Crime Pattern and Performance Analysts (civilian posts)
- Analysis of POP 1 forms by IPA re: time and resource savings
- Headquarters performance figures, activity sampling
- Letters of appreciation received (on public display and with copies entered into officer's *Continuous Personal Development* portfolio)
- Community consultation:- victims of crime surveys, Neighbourhood Forums, informal, ad hoc 'community intelligence'.

Falling crime rates, improved satisfaction levels, robust performance targets, planned incidents down from 22,854 in 1997/98 to 19,758 in 1989/99, open and voluble praise for their initiatives at Neighbourhood Forums — Eccleshill could, in theory at least, afford to be complacent about their successes. They are, however, one of only three divisions in the force working with POP, and the only one to have implemented it in such a thorough, systemic<sup>8</sup> way. Until POP has forcewide support, and beyond, Eccleshill will continue to POP. Because POP works<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix eight — letter from the Home Secretary, Jack Straw M.P., concerning work done by CAT on one of several local authority housing estates in the area.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix nine — Diagrammatic representation of Eccleshill POP strategy.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix ten — Pudsey Division is Eccleshill's comparator for assessment purposes.