



## Summary

During the 1980's and early 1990's, the Southmead Estate in North Bristol was labelled as a "sink" estate, with serious economic and social deprivation, extensive drug abuse, and strained relations between the community and the police and other authorities. This project played a major part in regenerating the community.

Problems escalated in 1994 when a particular drug dealer was suspected of being involved in sexually assaulting juvenile males, most of whom were themselves involved in criminal activity.

To impact most effectively on the problems, the police needed to demonstrate they were capable of tackling the issue, and to win the support of the community. A three stage approach was undertaken.

Firstly, the drug dealer was carefully targeted, showing the willingness of the police to address community problems. As part of a process of continuous review, it became evident that a greater impact could be made on drug dealing than had been thought.

The second stage involved the successful prosecution of a number of major dealers in the area, in order to prepare the climate for change in the community.

The final, and perhaps most important, stage of the process involved working with the community to regenerate the area. The catalyst for change was the successful criminal trials to convict the offenders. The "Voice of Southmead" emerged from the strong feeling within the community that such events should not recur and that a better future must be built for the young people.

The police developed a two-way relationship with this group, and a mutually supportive environment developed. The Voice of Southmead promoted sports for young people, giving them an alternative to the drugs and crime culture, and also worked with the police to combat the drugs problems. The police together with other agencies have developed the work of the group; assisting with funding, providing sports instructors and helpers, and backing many proposals to improve the area.

Over a period of approximately 5 years, dramatic changes have taken place in Southmead, with crime levels down 26%, an improved quality of life for residents, and a brighter future for the young people. Their sporting and artistic achievements have been numerous, and they show a self-confidence that was previously lacking.

There is still much to be done, but by continuing to work in close partnership with the community and the agencies, successful and sustainable outcomes can continue.



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## Introduction

### *Background*

The emergence of the Voice of Southmead and the Southmead Sports Development Initiative (SSDI) represented major progress in the policing of the North Bristol District. The elements required for change had been present previously, both within the community and from the statutory agencies. The critical factor, however, was a number of successful drug related operations between 1995 and 1997, which acted as a catalyst for action.

This submission covers the period 1995 to 2000 when these developments took place and significant outcomes were achieved. It is presented in three stages, each representing a SARA process, albeit SARA was not in existence at the start of this work, and therefore some of the earlier elements are not as well detailed as the latter ones.

The policing philosophy of the North Bristol district was firmly embedded in multi-agency work, and a desire to implement long-term solutions to entrenched problems. The socio-economic characteristics of the district are diverse. The Southmead Estate is typified by social deprivation, above average crime levels, high unemployment rates and it starkly contrasts with surrounding areas of relative prosperity and affluence.

The recommendations of the Morgan Report found support and expression in the activities of the agencies working in the Southmead area, which was not reflected across the rest of Bristol. Southmead suffered major street disorders in the early 1990s, resulting in disruption to the life of the community and strained relations with the police. There was agreement that a different approach was needed by many agencies.

A number of groups, some with community representation, operated during the 1990s: The Southmead Family Project (SFP), offered structured support to families and excluded school children. The joint Operational Panel (JOPs) managed the SFP and other multi-agency projects. Both groups continue to operate. The Southmead Crime Reduction Implementation Project Team (SCRIPT) co-ordinated holiday activities for young people and crime reduction initiatives, later being replaced by the Voice of Southmead as the mouthpiece for the community.



## The Vision

I was appointed as the District Commander for North Bristol District in August 1994. My vision was based on a belief that the most productive outcomes for policing were based on:

1. A close working relationship with the community based on trust and mutual interest.
2. Joint working with voluntary and statutory agencies towards common aims and supporting the work in the community.
3. A balanced policing approach and structure to reflect intelligence led and targeted enforcement, appropriately responding to community needs and the development of a strong crime reduction role.

C/Supt Parker-Jones, Southmead PCCG Minutes, Sept 1994 (See supporting materials).



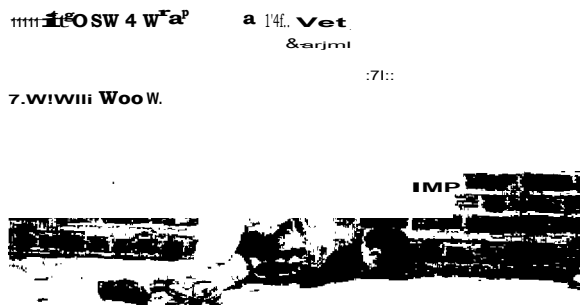
Stage One

Targeting A Serious Offender

How Did It All Start?

During late 1994 and early 1995, reports were received regarding an individual living on the Southmead Estate. These were informal allegations suggesting that this person was involved in the supply of Class A drugs. They further suggested that he was associating with a number of juvenile males, and may have sexually assaulted some of them. Other reports even suggested that some form of cult activity surrounded this man. These allegations were very serious in nature and an urgent response was required to deal with them.

At this time there were extensive problems on the estate, with high levels of drug-related crime, burglaries and large numbers of stolen vehicles being abandoned.



The relationship between the police and the residents was strained, and surrounded by suspicion and mistrust. The community were unwilling to work with the police to solve the numerous problems.

How was this Problem Investigated?

DS Trotter of Southmead CID was the officer investigating these criminal allegations. His first aim was to obtain information and intelligence to establish that offences were actually occurring and to determine their precise nature.

The investigation was very difficult as many of the victims were themselves persistent young offenders, and were unwilling to make formal statements. Consequently, there was little evidence for a prosecution.

DS Trotter identified the suspect as a "district target" (Target 1). Officers were required to submit ongoing intelligence in relation to him, and callers leaving his address were to be searched for drugs. Information was also gathered from Social Services and the Family and, Child Protection Unit (FACPU) who were dealing with some of the victims. This information was collated and analysed centrally by Intelligence officers.



The information proved that Target 1 was dealing in Class A drugs, and committing serious sexual offences against boys as young as 10 in exchange for drugs. His controlling influence was also apparent, and the community would not make complaints against him for fear of reprisals.

## ***What Happened Next?***

It became clear that steps must be taken to obtain the trust of the community and to protect the victims in order to obtain the necessary evidence for a prosecution.

The community would only become involved if they believed that the police were taking positive action to deal with drug problems. The arrest of a major dealer such as Target 1 would help to illustrate this, and it was hoped that local residents would then help the police in their investigations.

Regarding the victims, the prime objective was to give them confidence in the investigating officers and provide a safe environment. Close work with Social Services was required to determine which individuals were vulnerable and then relocate them to "safe houses", removing the influence of Target 1.

Operation Demise was undertaken, involving test purchasers and extensive surveillance, to obtain sufficient evidence to arrest Target 1. Although it might be costly and potentially dangerous, it was the only sure way to obtain firm evidence without the support of the community.

## ***Unexpected Rewards***

The test purchasers proved to be more successful than could have been anticipated. The officers were not only able to obtain evidence regarding Target 1, but also to establish such a good relationship with him that he led them to several other major drug dealers.

The time had come to completely review the aims of the operation



## Stage Two

### Expanding the Scope of the Operation

#### *Making the Most of Opportunities*

Those involved in Operation Demise quickly took advantage of their good fortune regarding the identification of these additional dealers. They appreciated this opportunity to take a firm stand on drug dealing on the estate by using their information to target several major drug dealers.



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#### **INSIDE THE FORTRESS 'OF DRUGS**

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One person in particular (Target 2), was known to the police, and previous raids on his property had been unsuccessful. He had turned his council home into a "fortress" using state of the art security equipment, including electrified heavy iron doors, extensive CCTV coverage of his property, listening devices and dogs to guard the house.

Clearly, this investigation could become very large, providing a turning point in the relationship between the police and the local residents of the Southmead Estate. It was important to get it right.

#### *How Was Information Gathered?*

Surveillance activities were extended to cover Target 2. The role of the test purchasers was also expanded to obtain the maximum information possible regarding identified drug dealers.

More thought was given to the underlying causes of the problems. The environment on the estate was encouraging the drug culture, particularly regarding persistent young offenders. Further information was required to understand the precise situation they faced. This could only be obtained from statements given by the young people and so the work continued with Social Services and FACPU, in order for the victims to speak out in safety.



## *Deciding on Actions*

Intelligence proved that the address of Target 2 was very active, with 694 callers during the 18-day surveillance period. Searches of persons leaving the premises had also resulted in drugs seizures. An estimate based on this evidence indicated that Target 2 was earning approximately £36,000 per month from illegal drugs sold from his "well-fortified corner shop".

The test purchasers gained sufficient evidence to prove that each of the identified dealers had sold them Class A drugs on more than one occasion.

Warrants were now obtained to search the relevant addresses.

## *Removing the Major Dealers*

In November 1995, 120 officers executed 5 search warrants on the Southmead Estate at the addresses of major drug dealers. As a result, 7 arrests were made.

Officers took 2 days to complete a search of the address of Target 2, with large quantities of Class A drugs being recovered.

The arrest of Target 1 achieved the desired effect of removing the fear of retaliation from his victims, enabling them to speak out. Patient work with these victims led to over 50 statements being made, detailing Target 1's offences.

## *Maintaining The Pressure and Reviewing the Situation*

The nature of the crimes meant that extensive work was required to secure convictions for these targets, taking eighteen months to complete. It was essential to keep working on the estate against drug dealing during this time.

During 1996-97, 28 additional warrants were executed, leading to 275 seizures of drugs. The community realised that the local police were working with them, combating the drugs and crime problems, and protecting their children from further sexual and drug abuse.

As statements were reviewed, a picture emerged of youngsters who were bored due to a lack of facilities on the estate. They held strong views that those in authority did not care about what was happening to them. Drug dealers had encouraged them to turn to drugs, and then commit crime to support their drug habits.

In January 1997, Target 1 was found guilty of 23 sexual and drugs offences and was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

In June 1997, Target 2 was sentenced to 5 years in prison and ordered to pay £120,000 to represent his perceived earnings during the period he was offending.





Due to non-payment of this fine, he was sentenced to 2 additional years in prison. He has also been banned for life from obtaining council property.



## Stage 3

*Working with you — Working for you*

### ***Rebuilding the Community***

The efforts made by officers to deal with the drug problems on the Southmead Estate led to a thawing of the relationship with the rest of the community. Those in authority had taken their problems seriously and were working hard to help them.

As the **cases came to court** for Targets 1 and 2, the extent of the problem became evident to the community. A local newspaper ran a series of articles referring to the youths who were affected as the "Lost Generation". There was strong feeling at ground level that this must never be allowed to recur.

## THE LOST

It was clear to the community that working with the police could reap benefits and mean that the children living on the estate would enjoy a better future.

### ***The Community Leads***

In March 1997 a group developed from within the community, The Voice of Southmead. Their main aims were as follows:

1. To defeat drug dealers on the estate
2. To provide improved opportunities through sport and recreation for young people
3. To improve the quality of life for the people of Southmead

In April 1997, this group leafleted the estate to canvass support for their aims, inviting people to a public meeting in May. 500 people attended the meeting to express their views on how the estate needed to be improved, and learn about support from key agencies.

From the outset, those involved were aware that it was crucial to support this work in order to make progress:

*"We've got to grab this moment — it's special"*

Mr P Dorney, resident, June 1997

# THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD



*"It is likely to be a long, slow and often difficult task, but it can only be achieved with the close co-operation of such groups as the Voice of Southmead, the police and other agencies"*

CMSupt Parker-Jones, Internal Memo 1997

## ***The Remaining Problems***

The main offenders had been removed from the Estate leaving the way open for the community to establish a new way of life, particularly for the children. In mid-1997, however, there were still problems of few facilities for young people, and boredom continued to lead them into criminality.

Typically youths would hang around outside the Youth Centre, which was in very poor repair, damaging streetlights, while others raced around the adjoining square in stolen cars. This had happened repeatedly and it was necessary to break the cycle. Those attending the public meeting in May emphasised that they were no longer willing to tolerate their present living conditions.

Bored youths were still creating high demands on police time and resources. Truancy levels were high along with **poor academic standards**. **Regular damage** to council properties, large numbers of reported crimes (often criminal damage and burglary), abandoned cars and drug abuse, although reduced, still occurred.

Change was essential to avoid any repetition of the past. The young people on the Estate needed to be offered a viable alternative.

## ***Working Together***

The only way to introduce a long-term solution was by working closely with the community. A mutually supportive network would enable the police to carry out their role more effectively, and would help the community with their stated goals.

In June 1997 a poster campaign commenced which encouraged members of the community who knew of drug dealing activity to contact the police in an effort to stamp it out.

Volunteers within the group were also setting up sports activities for the young people during the evenings. This proved very popular with an attendance of over 70 people each evening.

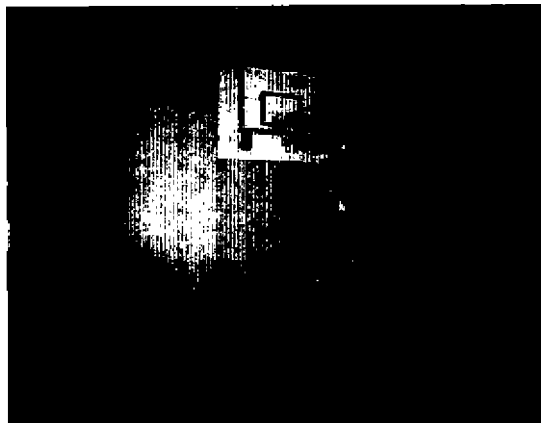


# THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD



In November 1997, The Voice of Southmead, supported by the police, campaigned for funding for a paid Youth Sports Development Officer, to work at the youth centre and continue developing sporting activities for young people.

It was believed that by focusing the young peoples' aspirations on sport, and providing the necessary equipment and supervision, a lasting change could be effected for the benefit of the community.



Since 1997, the police alongside other agencies, supported a wide range of Voice of Southmead initiatives, including providing a volunteer to assist with weightlifting training, and unclaimed mountain bikes for the young people to use.

Fortnightly meetings are now held with the Voice of Southmead, at which the community provides intelligence to the police, in an effort to maintain the reduced level of crime.

## ***A Tale of Success***

By June 1998, five football teams were established (3 for boys, 2 for girls), and boxing training with a qualified instructor was taking place biweekly. Along with basketball training and table tennis sessions, other casual sports including roller blading were introduced, and approximately 120 young people were involved in these activities. These sporting facilities have continued to expand and improve.



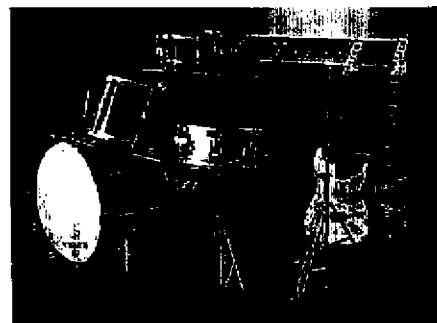
In October 1998, renewed funding for the Youth Sports Development Officer was sought. The police agreed to partially finance the position, further establishing their support for the initiative. This also involved working closely with many other agencies, including Housing Services, Avon Health Authority, Leisure Services and the Community Development Unit.

## THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD



The young people at the Youth Centre have won an array of awards for a variety of sports, leading to them travelling throughout England to compete at higher levels. For many of them, this has provided their first opportunity to see life in other areas of the country.

There have also been a range of arts activities. These include two bands that were set up and who have made a CD, which is currently on release. The young people also worked on a video telling the story of the success of the Voice of Southmead initiative, entitled "Southmead Slammin'".



In recognition of the achievements of the Voice of Southmead a number of local and national businesses have provided funding for further development. Sufficient money was raised in 1998 to totally refurbish the Youth Centre.

There has also been extensive media interest in the activities of the group, leading to positive articles which helped to promote the work of the Voice of Southmead and the community living on the Southmead Estate.

A string of awards have followed on these successes:

In October 1999, the Southmead Sports Development Initiative (SSDI) received a coveted community award from Crime Concern. This was presented by the Princess Royal.

After representation from the police, the government released some of the proceeds of the sale of stolen property seized from the home of Target 2 for the SSDI, and this was presented by Mo Mowlam earlier this year.

Most recently, in May this year, this project was awarded first prize of £3,000 in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary POP 2000 awards.

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## THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD

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The success of this initiative has resulted in an increasing interest from the community of Southmead in helping themselves, supported by agencies such as the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, the Council and the Health Authority. A number of other organisations have been set up including Southmead Drugs Project, Community Development (Southmead) Ltd and an Exclusion project, working with schoolchildren. These organisations have all played their part in improving the quality of life in Southmead.



### Assessing Progress

#### A Picture of Southmead Prior to 1995

In 1994, 2217 crimes were reported on the Estate, of which 28% were dwelling burglaries and a further 28% were vehicle crime. The vast majority of criminality in the area was committed by people who were addicted to Class A drugs.

The high levels of crime were having a great impact on police and local authority resources. Each child that was accommodated in a community home cost Social Services £600 - £800/week, and those placed in secure units cost £2,000/week.

As far as education was concerned, only 17.8% of pupils at the four local comprehensive schools achieved 5 or more GCSE grade A-C passes in 1994. There were also high levels of permanent exclusions at these schools.

#### Changes in the Last Five Years

Since these inauspicious beginnings, there have been profound changes in the quality of life on the Southmead Estate. These have been evident not only in the crime figures, but also in many other aspects of community life.

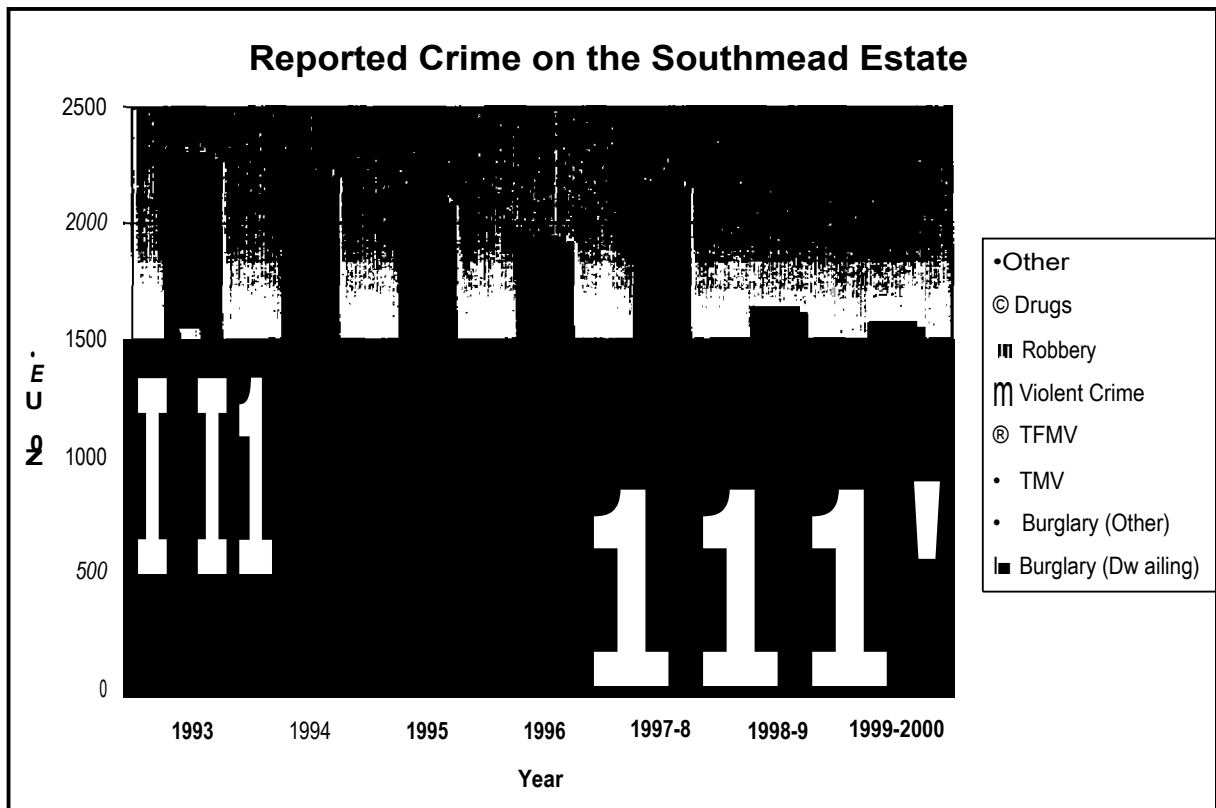


Chart 1

# THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD

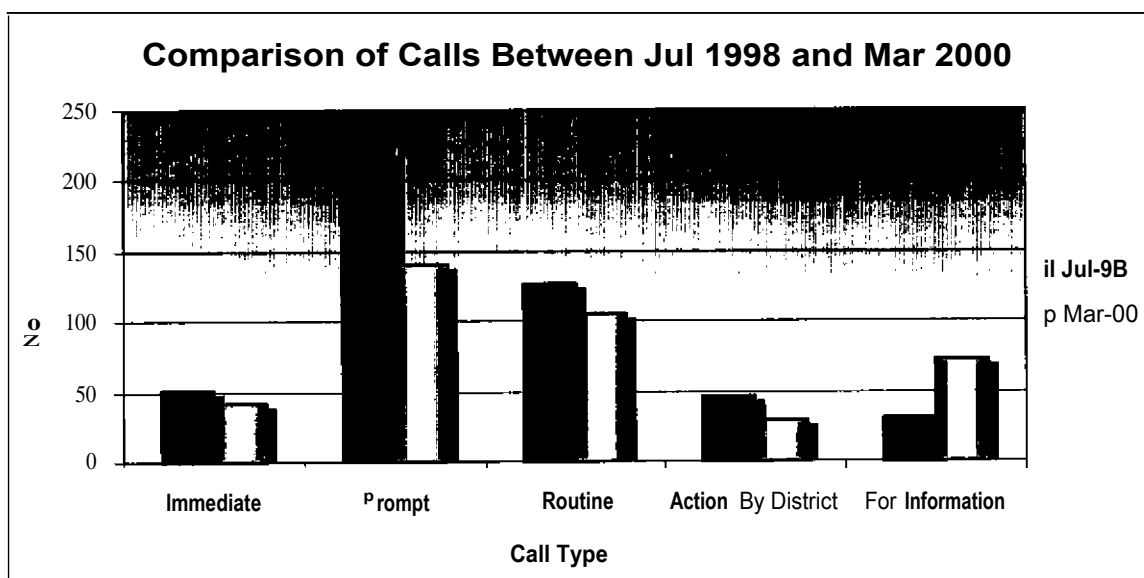


Chart 1 shows a clear drop in crime levels over 7 years<sup>1</sup>, especially with regard to burglary and vehicle crime, which were serious problems in 1994 - 5. The Crime and Disorder Audit for Bristol also showed that burglaries in this area dropped from 70.6 per thousand dwellings in 1997/98 to 42.0 per thousand dwellings in 1998/99.

For the three years between April 1997 and March 2000 the numbers of crimes in this area dropped from 2069 to 1538, a decrease of 26%. This compares favourably with a drop of 8% on the North Bristol District as a whole. The table below shows this in more detail:

Year	Vehicle Crime	Dwelling Burglary	Shed 1 Garage Burglary	Violent Offences	Theft (Other)	Total Crime
1997-1998	424	440	228	126	266	2069
1999 - 2000	324	267	176	104	172	1538
% Change	-24%	-39%	-23%	-17%	-35%	-26%

In terms of police resources, there is an ongoing trend for the number of emergency calls from the Southmead Estate to decrease, and an equally impressive trend for more calls to give information to the police, see Chart 2. There are currently 15 active Neighbourhood Watch schemes running in the area. There are also two areas within the Estate which are interested in setting up new schemes, and work is being carried out to establish these.



**Chart 2**

<sup>1</sup> Between 1996 and 1997, the beat boundary for Southmead Estate changed, extending the beat by approximately 20%, which explains the apparent rise in crime at this time.



# THE VOICE OF SOUTHMEAD



The numbers of stolen vehicles that were being recovered from Southmead Estate dropped by 4% over the three year period between April 1997 and March 2000. The figures for the first two months of this year suggest a further decline in the number of vehicles being recovered.

With specific regard to the Youth Sports Development Officer, there is a clear drop in the numbers of juveniles involved in crime<sup>2</sup> before and after his appointment, marked with dotted line on chart 3:

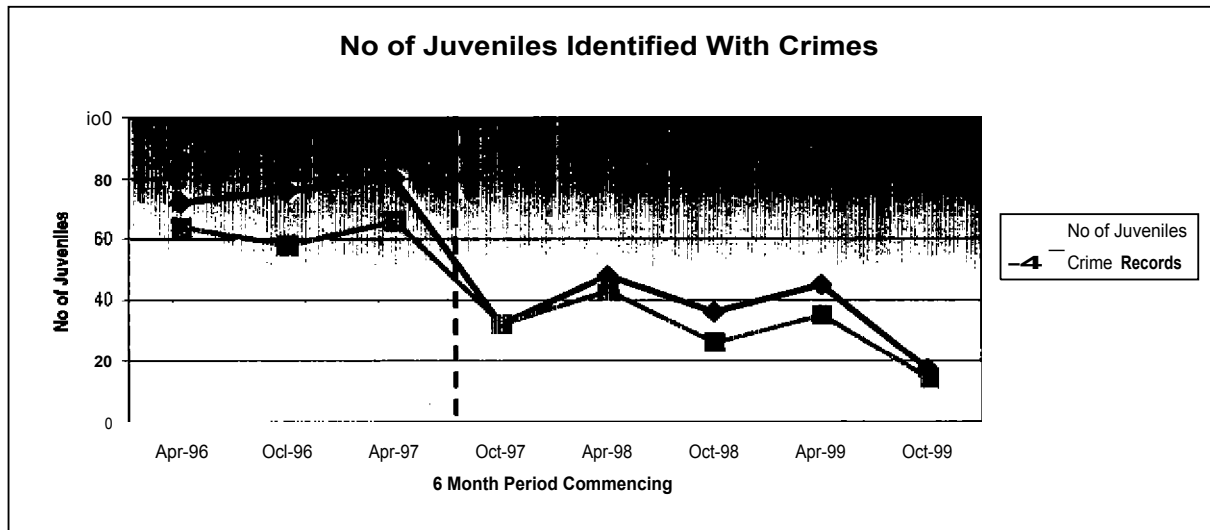


Chart 3

Charts 4 and 5 show the improvements in educational standards in the area<sup>3</sup>:



Chart 4

<sup>2</sup> Included in the graph are instances where more than one juvenile committed an offence, and instances where the same juvenile has committed more than one crime.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Ofsted placed one of the four comprehensive schools on 'special measures' after the 1997 academic year. A dramatic improvement in standards followed, pulling the school up and out of this category, but Bristol City Council decided to close the school. As the closure date approaches, the performance has deteriorated as the more able students have left, as shown in Chart 5.

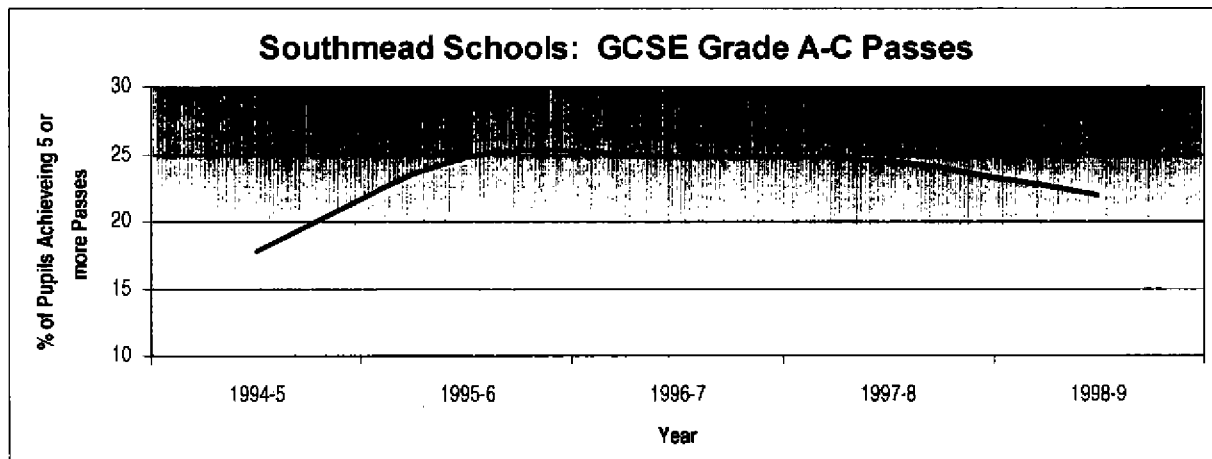


Chart 5

As a pioneering way of dealing with the problems faced by young people, the SSDI has been under scrutiny both internally and externally, and the findings have been favourable:

*"The Initiative has not only had an impact on young people, but has also had a much wider community effect. As well as the volunteers who have come forward to help with the sports activities, local people have been enthusiastically involved in fundraising for facilities that they want to see for their children, and the Initiative has organised events that have provided a social focus for the wider community"*

Youth Sports Development Worker review report, June 1998

A survey was carried out in 1999 to find out "what it is like to live on Southmead Old Estate", and the findings indicated that over 75% of the 271 residents who responded were very happy, quite happy or neutral about living in the area. This is indicative of the improvements that have occurred in the conditions on the Estate in the last few years.

The process of rebuilding community spirit on the Southmead Estate has been underway now for five years. This has hinged on creating a climate for change and then taking advantage of opportunities as they arise. It has been essential to gain the trust and support of the community, and in return to help them to achieve their goals. The Voice of Southmead has helped to raise the community spirit and to allow the residents needs to be heard. The ongoing achievements of the SSDI and other areas of their work illustrate how far the community has come already.



## *The Future*

In the 1999 survey, many residents expressed their concerns regarding the amount of drug use on the Estate. This was partly a reflection of the greater awareness of drugs issues on the estate compared to previous years. Enforcement will continue, as well as harm reduction schemes and education. Community Development Southmead Ltd is an organisation that works, with the support of the police, to try to rehabilitate ex-drug users by finding them placements with local businesses and helping them to achieve relevant qualifications. Of the 82 people on methadone who were referred to this project last year, 39 are now back at work. The hope is to build on this work in the future.

The community also raised the issue of the accumulation of litter and abandoned vehicles outside empty properties. In response to this, there is a current project being run with the police and the council to "Clean Up The Streets", whereby any reported abandoned vehicles will be removed without charge, and skips will be provided outside empty properties to encourage litter to be properly deposited.

There are also plans to draw up an Estate agreement to try to establish codes of practice for both residents and service-providers in order to manage the expectations of each group more effectively.

Further information continues to come in regarding Target 1, and this additional evidence is being reviewed with the aim of extending his sentence.

The SSDI requires funding to continue their work, and the police offer their support where possible. Currently, Avon and Somerset Constabulary are aiming to fund a minibus for the use of the Youth Centre. They are also working to provide a Youth Shelter as a congregation area and have recently secured funding for this project to go ahead.

Interest at local and national level in using sport and art to help young people continues to expand, with more partnerships developing to support the work:

*"... initiatives through the Voice of Southmead and the Youth Service have attracted a grant from Sport England to build sports training programmes for young adults within the Southmead Estate. This is where the partnership approach will bring added value ..."*

Education and Leisure Services paper for the Education and Sport Conference, 1999

There has been a continuous process of two-way consultation and review throughout the development of the Voice of Southmead thus far, and this must continue. There are still problems on the Southmead Estate but by working with the community and other agencies, these problems are gradually decreasing.



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