
The Tilley Award 2000

Merseyside Police

Problem Orientated Policing Youth Disorder in Halewood

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Table of contents

Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	
Scanning.....	6
Analysis.....	8
Response.....	13
Assessment.....	15
Appendix 1.....	17
Appendix 2/2A.....	18
Appendix 3/3A.....	19
Appendix 4.....	20
Appendix 5.....	21

Problem Orientated Policing Youth Disorder in Halewood, Merseyside

Summary.

The issue of youth disorder in this instance is concerned with the way in which young people spend their leisure time, where they congregate, and the effect this has on local residents and retailers.

Large number of youths were congregating each evening after school in Hollies Road, Halewood and the behaviour of the youths was the cause of considerable annoyance to both the local residents and shopkeepers.

Officers from the Halewood Police Station were aware of the problem which had existed for many years.

Constable Steve McCormack, who had previously served in this area, returned from another posting and became aware that the youth disorder problem had increased.

Examination of Police incident logging facilities revealed that there was an exceptional demand on Police resources to deal with youth disorder problems in the area of Hollies Road, Halewood.

Constable McCormack, recently trained in problem solving techniques, sought by using a problem solving approach for the first time, to achieve a sustainable solution.

During the Scanning and Analysis stage information was obtained from a wide range of sources including other police departments, outside agencies, the complainants and the offenders themselves.

A inter-agency working party, was organised and a meeting arranged where a presentation of the benefits of Problem Solving Policing and the evidence obtained concerning local disorder problems was made to enable them, to utilise the process and to them to work in unison.

The SARA process determined the needs of the local youths, and an implementation strategy was formulated which permitted all parties to become involved in the organisation and provision of the solution which revolved around the provision of a youth disco.

Following implementation, performance indicators showed a dramatic reduction in requests for police attendance in the area and both local residents and retailers reported that their quality of life was improved and the problem significantly reduced.

Introduction

The history to this problem dates back to the 1960's and the development of housing within this area to service the workforce at the local Ford Car Plant. Facilities catering for young people do not match the population profile. Accordingly a problem has developed concerning the way in which young people spend their leisure time, where they congregate, and the effect this has on local residents and retailers.

Examination of available Police incident logging facilities revealed that there was an exceptional demand on Police resources to deal with youth disorder problems in the area of Hollies Road, Halewood. This demand was disproportionate to similar occurrences in this and other areas.

Constable Steve McCormack, who had previously served in this area, returned from another posting and became aware that the youth disorder problem had increased.

Constable McCormack had recently been trained in problem solving techniques and sought by using a problem solving approach, to achieve a sustainable solution. He consulted with his line manager and fellow officers and was given facilities to address the problem.

Scanning

The scanning was achieved using a number of methods;

1. Number of calls received by the Police from residents requesting attention in relation to youth disorder.
2. Number of calls received by the Police from local business regarding juvenile behaviour.
3. Intelligence provided by local beat officers.
4. Intelligence provided by local residents and community groups.

As a result of examination of these information sources (including 121 Incident Logs between 01. 09. 98 and 22. 12. 98; Appendix 1), the following were determined.

1. The young persons involved in the disorder were equal proportions of male and female.
2. Aged between 12 and 17 years.
3. In groups of up to 100.
4. The disorder occurred between 1800 hrs and 2200 hrs.
5. The disorder occurred on a daily basis but was more prevalent at the weekends.
6. The majority of young people involved were resident in the Halewood area.
7. The problem impacted upon the availability of Halewood officers to address other policing issues.
8. Logistically, providing additional resources to support local officers was impracticable due to the geographical configuration.

From this information, Constable McCormack dip sampled some of the calls and conducted personal interviews with the complainants in order to determine their needs and expectations.

The officer also interviewed other Police officers serving in the area to determine the individual problems they had encountered.

This process was repeated with Police officers in other departments who as part of their function had some involvement with the incidents of youth disorder in the Halewood area. This included the Incident Management Unit, the Youth Liaison Officer, and the Community **Beat** Officers for the Halewood Area.

In addition to these methods Constable McCormack, in his function as a uniform patrol officer, had, when dealing with youths subject of a complaint, used the opportunity to conduct interviews with the youths at the time to determine why they were congregating in the area.

The result of these interviews confirmed the lack of facilities in the Halewood area for the youth .of that age group.

Analysis

Following the scanning process Constable McCormack conducted enquiries concerning the local youth clubs and contacted Mrs Carol Farrell who provided all the times of opening and facilities on offer for the two youth clubs in the Halewood area namely the Hilton Grace Youth Club and The Halewood Youth Club (See Appendix 212A).

Examination of the facilities available at these youth clubs showed them to be extremely poor, especially for those young people in the identified age group.

As a result of the dialogue with Mrs Farrell she was able to provide Constable McCormack with information obtained from an independent survey conducted by outreach workers concerning the problem of youths congregating in the Halewood area. See Appendix 313A). The survey further confirmed much of the research already conducted by Constable McCormack , namely:

- the youths hanging around Hollies Road were from estates all over the Halewood area; and
- the youths surveyed wanted more facilities in the evening times and on the weekends.

Mrs Farrell was **also able to provide** Constable **McCormack** with additional information sourced from a further survey completed by Outreach Workers concerning alcohol abuse amongst young people in the Halewood area. The survey, which was completed by 9 girls and 15 boys between the ages of 12 and 17 years further found that:

- the youths had tried alcohol for various reasons but the main one was boredom; and
- the most favoured location for the youths to drink was on school fields and the streets.

The Hollies Road area is serviced by four Off Licences, all in close proximity to each other. One of the Off Licences was on Hollies Road itself, situated amongst a small row of shops which was frequented by the local residents and the youths who were congregating in the area.

Constable McCormack determined that the information contained in both the surveys completed by Outreach Workers had been apparently overlooked and not utilised. Realising the importance of this information, Constable McCormack arranged for all local Off Licences to be visited by police officers to remind the staff to be vigilant over selling alcohol to under aged people. The Licensees in the area were very supportive and displayed posters to reinforce the message.

Constable McCormack and other members of his section then began to disseminate all the gathered information and as part of this process gave a presentation to the Halewood Station Inspector, Alister Buckley. Mr Buckley, who was trained in problem solving techniques, was fully supportive of the project and the utilisation of the SARA system.

This support gave the Officers confidence that the problem would be addressed and they were supported by the management.

Inspector Buckley arranged a inter-agency meeting which was held on January 8 1999 at the local Knowsley Council Offices. Each of the undermentioned agencies were represented and who formed a working group to deal with the problem:

- the Police
- the Youth Service
- Knowsley Council
- the Local Residents Group
- Local Councillors
- Local Businesses
- the Single Regeneration Board
- Halewood Town Council.(Chairperson)

Constable McCormack took the lead role in making the members of the working group aware of the work that had been completed by the police. This included making presentations to the working group concerning:

- the concept and methodology of problem solving policing; and
- the evidence that had been obtained, concerning disorder problems in the area of Hollies Road to date, by application of the problem solving process.

These measures ensured that all parties involved in the process were aware that the Police were following a systematic approach to the problem.

Constable McCormack asked this group to ascertain if they could provide any further information with regards to the problem and tasks were allocated to the various agencies and groups which would be discussed at the next meeting.

One of the important issues arising from this meeting was that some of the stakeholders were not present, the most important of which was the youths themselves and representatives from the local Schools. The local Comprehensive School was where most of the young people in the area were educated so it was decided that representatives from the School would be invited join the working group and attend at the next and subsequent meetings.

Consequently, at the next meeting Mrs Gwen Billingham a representative from Halewood Comprehensive attended and brought with her pupils from the school who had volunteered to represent the views of the youths.

The pupils were asked their views about why their peers regularly met in the Hollies Road area and they thought it was because of the geographical configuration and that it was the traditional place to meet.

It was suggested that what the youths might be looking for was a 'safe place' and this idea was seized upon by members of the working group who were dismissive of the views of the young people present.

As a result of this, a trip was organised to a project in Bolton where a similar idea had been implemented. Whilst the scheme in place was magnificent, it had been well funded costing in the region of 1.5 million pounds to set up. However, there were no funds available to implement such a scheme in the Halewood area.

The pupils of Halewood Comprehensive who visited the Bolton scheme were impressed, however, were unsure whether it was what was required in Halewood. It was at this point that the working group realised that they had listened to everyone's opinion and considered their views but not that of the representatives of the youths themselves. In order to redress this imbalance, Mrs Billingham and the pupil representatives offered to complete a survey of the young people within their School.

The findings of the survey were presented to the working group at the next meeting by the pupil representatives who had conducted the research. The findings revealed that what the young people from the School who frequented the Hollies Road area wanted was a disco.

The initial reaction from the local residents group representative was negative as the objective of the residents group was to have no youths in their area. However, after some further dialogue it was decided that the working group representatives would arrange for a disco to be held for the youths each month on a Wednesday between 1900 hours and 2200 hours on a trial basis.

Wednesday's were chosen as it was mid way through the school week and in order to prevent youths attending staying out late, rules were formulated together with sanctions for non compliance.

The local youth were very excited with the news that a disco was to be provided for them, however, it was made clear from the outset that they would have a role to play not least of which were the rules of the disco which the youths had to adhere to.

A meeting was held at the School with the full Youth Council, chaired by Mrs Billingham and with Constable McCormack and the local Police Community Officers present. It was explained to the Youth Council that certain sanctions were to be used against any youth causing problems in the local community, in School, to the Council or the Police.

The sanctions would be that if a youth was reported by any of these bodies, e.g. attending school late on the morning following the disco, they would be precluded from attending the next disco. In order to enable this provision to be effective, tickets for the disco had to be applied for in advance to enable the agencies to vet those who wished to attend.

The sanction would, however, be removed at the next disco if that person had not come to the attention of the authorities during the intervening period. This policy allowed for people to have a chance to redeem themselves and would prevent them from becoming a problem for the community. The youths were also advised that the Police had the power to stop the disco if problems persisted.

There was a policy of no alcohol and no smoking which the youths wanted which would give confidence to their parents that it was a safe venue for their children to attend.

The working group partners agreed to provide assistance and expertise in the production and running of the disco. The Halewood Town Council provided the venue, the youth service provided the Disc Jockey, the local residents and local volunteer groups provided the internal security and the provision of a snack bar. The Police provided two Police Officers for the external security and Constable McCormack was to wear an evening suit and act as doorman.

The cost to the Police for assisting at the disco was 3 Constables for 3 hours. Other agencies had costs but these were minimal as they were all working towards a common goal which resulted in no wasted resources. The Youth Council also volunteered to assist in the cleaning up after the disco which helped to minimise the cost of running the event.

Response

The first disco was held on 16th June 1999 and was well attended attracting 75 youths. Feedback was sought from those attending which was positive and appreciative towards all those concerned in the organisation and running of the event.

The local residents group who assisted in the running of the disco **also began to see** the youths in a different light after talking to them in the non confrontational atmosphere of the disco. This brought a greater understanding from both groups who became more tolerant towards each other.

The disco continued each month, the numbers of youths attending gradually increasing and the numbers of complaints in the **area** of Hollies Road diminishing. During this period the complaints of youth disorder were continually monitored by the Police Incident Management Unit and results were made available to the working group at every meeting.

After the disco had been running for some six months, Mr J McGee a resident of the Halewood area **approached** the working group put forward his services to undertake the organisation and running of the disco for the youth of Halewood.

After consultation with Mr McGee it was decided that he would be allowed to take over the disco providing the rules already in place continued and that the Police Service and other agencies were able to continue the monitoring process.

Mr. McGee proposed that he would run the disco every two weeks instead of once a month also on Wednesday evenings as the original system had worked well, A membership system was put in place by Mr. McGee to enable him and his staff to identify young people who the other agencies wished to sanction.

As a result of Mr. McGee running the disco as a private venture a number of local people including Mr McGee are benefiting from an income received from the disco. The number of youths attending the disco on a regular basis is upwards of 150 which is a significant number of youths enjoying themselves in a managed environment.

The working group no longer contribute to the running of the event which enables resources to be directed towards other problems in the area. Officers from Halewood Police Station still monitor the event and are welcomed by the organisers and the youth when they attend.

Assessment

The evaluation of the response was made by the **same** working group members who had been involved in establishing the disco. The success was measured using the same criteria as was used to identify the problem, namely:

- Number of calls received by the Police from residents requesting attention in relation to youth disorder.
- Number of calls received by the Police from local business regarding juvenile behaviour.
- Intelligence provided by local beat officers.
- Intelligence provided by local residents and community groups.

The Police were able to provide the working group with comparative data with that of the previous year which evidenced of a reduction of 73.5% in the number of calls concerning youth disorder in the Hollies Road area for the same period. A significant reduction. (See Appendix 4).

Corresponding to this, there was also a reduction in the number of youth disorder reports across the Halewood area as the youths were aware of the sanction process and wishing to be able to attend the disco had modified their behaviour accordingly.

Other members of the working group, especially the local residents representative Mr Fitzgerald, informed the group that the residents quality of life had been improved.

The members of the youth council stated that they and their members had been informed by the youths attending the disco that they had been impressed with the fact that the adults had listened to their views and implemented their suggestions. This has helped promote greater understanding between both the youths and adults not only with the residents of Hollies Road but also with professional bodies such as the Police.

The latest figures in calls for service in the Hollies Road area have show that between 12/09/99 and 02104/00 the trend for youth disorder in the Hollies Road area has been reduced to approximately 1-2 calls a week. (see Appendix 5)

Whilst the response to the problem in Hollies Road was extremely effective, it must be conceded that but not all problems involving youths can be solved by providing a disco. The effectiveness of this response can be attributed to the working group adhering to the systematic approach to problem solving working towards a common goal and listening to all parties involved.

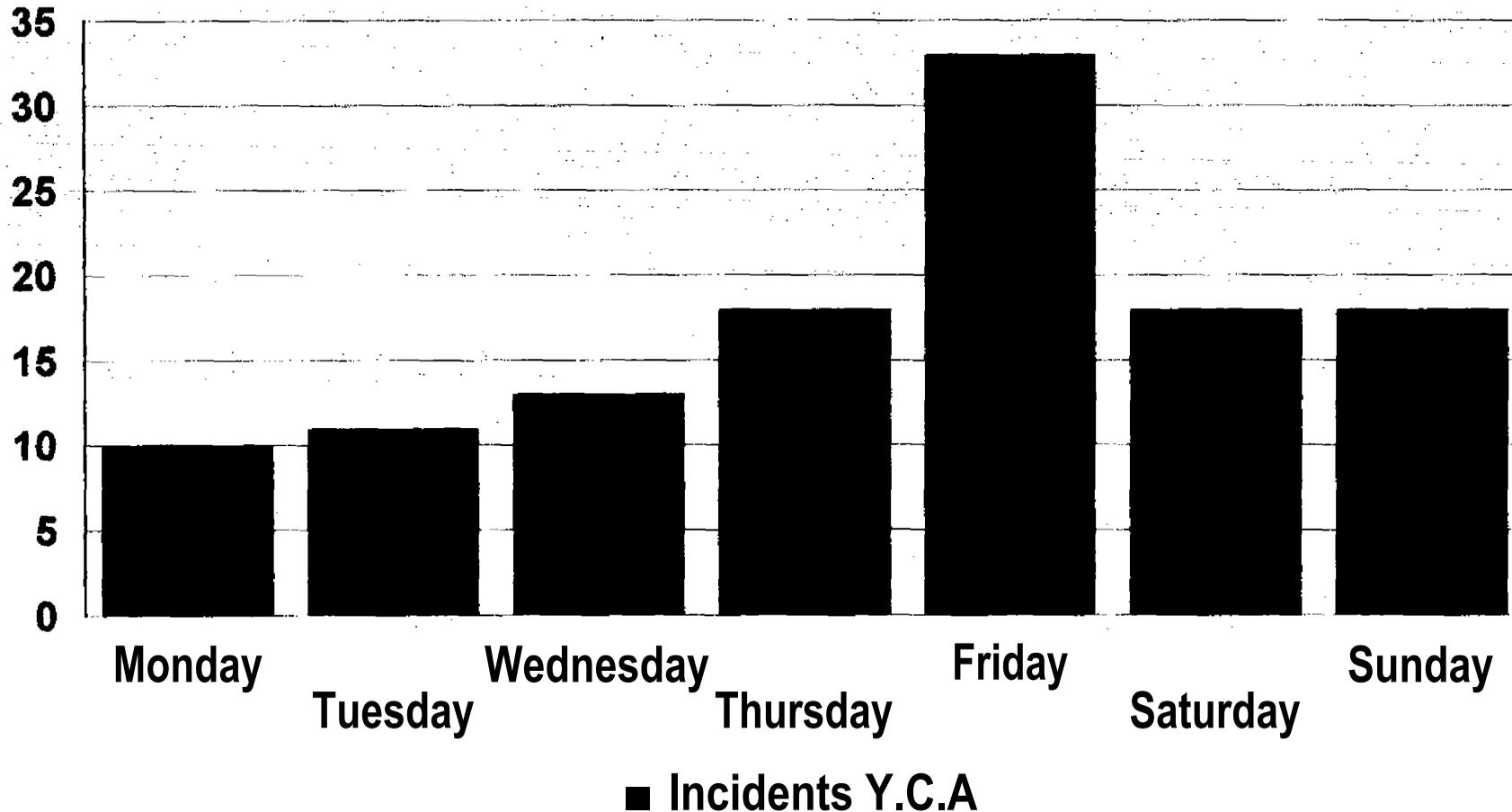
The problem solving process has realised a number of other benefits as a consequence of the exercise. The Community now had a working group formed from a nucleus of agencies and having a broad range of skills and abilities. The group had shown that although it was the first time that they had worked on a problem together the group had an effective mechanism in problem solving which could be utilised again and adapted where necessary to solve other problems in the Halewood area.

Effective consultation had proved to be financial good practice as all agencies were aware of each others involvement thereby eliminating wasted resources because of duplication of effort. This enabled other projects to be considered that otherwise would not have had the funding to proceed.

COMMAND AND CONTROL LOGS "''''"

HOLLIESROADAREAL26

TOTAL LOGS = 127.



INCIDENTS BETWEEN¹⁷ 1.9.98 AND 2212.98

HILTON GRACE COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CENTRE

PRESENT FACILITIES

DAY	AGE GROUP	TIMINGS												
		16.00 Hrs	16.30 Hrs	17.00 Hrs	17.30 Hrs	18.00 Hrs	18.30 Hrs	19.00 Hrs	19.30 Hrs	20.00 Hrs	20.30 Hrs	21.00 Hrs	21.30 Hrs	
Monday	13+ Yrs													
	12+ Yrs													
Tuesday	5 - 9 Yrs													
	All													
	13+ Yrs													
Wednesday	8+ Yrs													
	10 - 13 Yrs													
	12+ Yrs													
Thursday	5 - 9 Yrs													
	12+ Yrs													
Friday	8 - 13 Yrs													
	10 - 12 Yrs													

HALEWOOD YOUTH CLUB

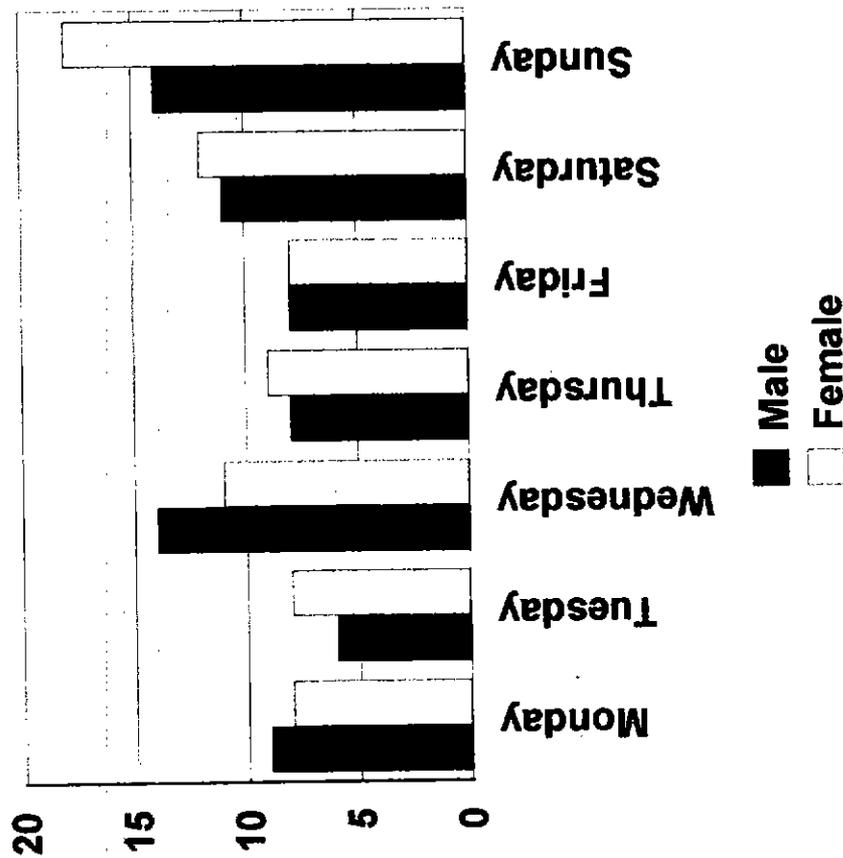
PRESENT FACILITIES

DAY	AGE GROUP	TIMINGS										
		15.30 Hrs	16.00 Hrs	16.30 Hrs	17.00 Hrs	17.30 Hrs	18.00 Hrs	18.30 Hrs	19.00 Hrs	19.30 Hrs	20.00 Hrs	20.30 Hrs
Monday	5 - 12 Yrs 13+ Yrs	JUNIORS										
Tuesday	5 - 12 Yrs 13+ Yrs ALL	JUNIORS										
Wednesday	5 - 12 Yrs 13+ Yrs	JUNIORS										
Thursday	5 - 12 Yrs 13+ Yrs	JUNIORS										
Friday	5 - 12 Yrs 13+ Yrs	JUNIORS										
Saturday	ALL ALL	09.00 Hrs ▶ 12.00 Hrs FOOTBALL PRACTISE CLUB TIME										

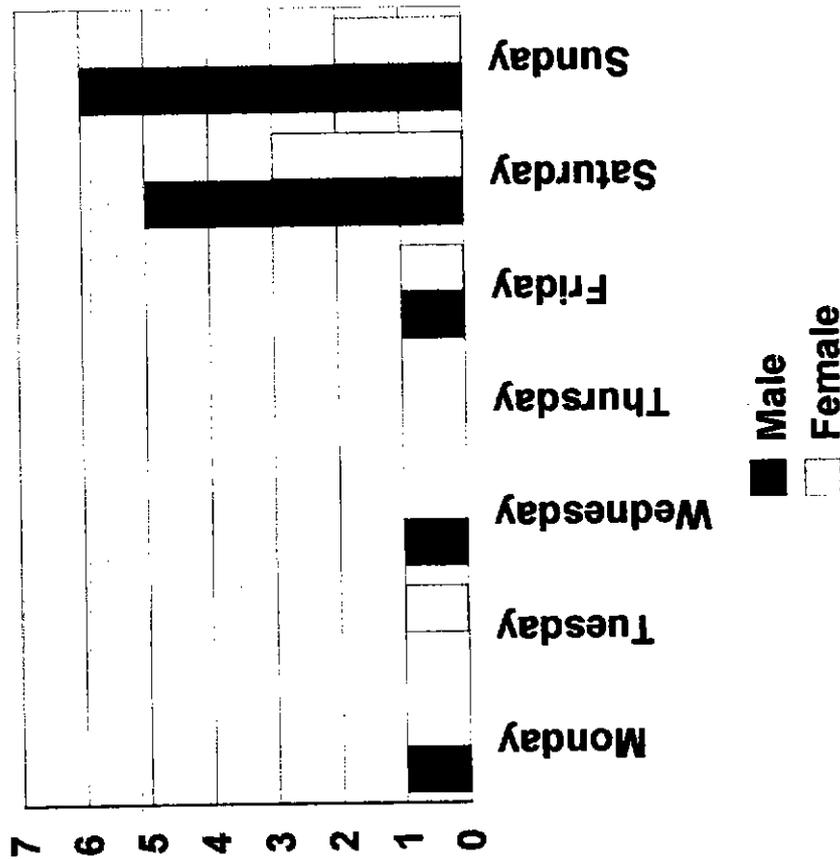
SURVEY EVALUATION OF HALEWOOD YOUTHS FAVOURED YOUTH CLUB OPENING TIMES THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Appendix 3/3A

18.00 Hrs - 20.00 Hrs

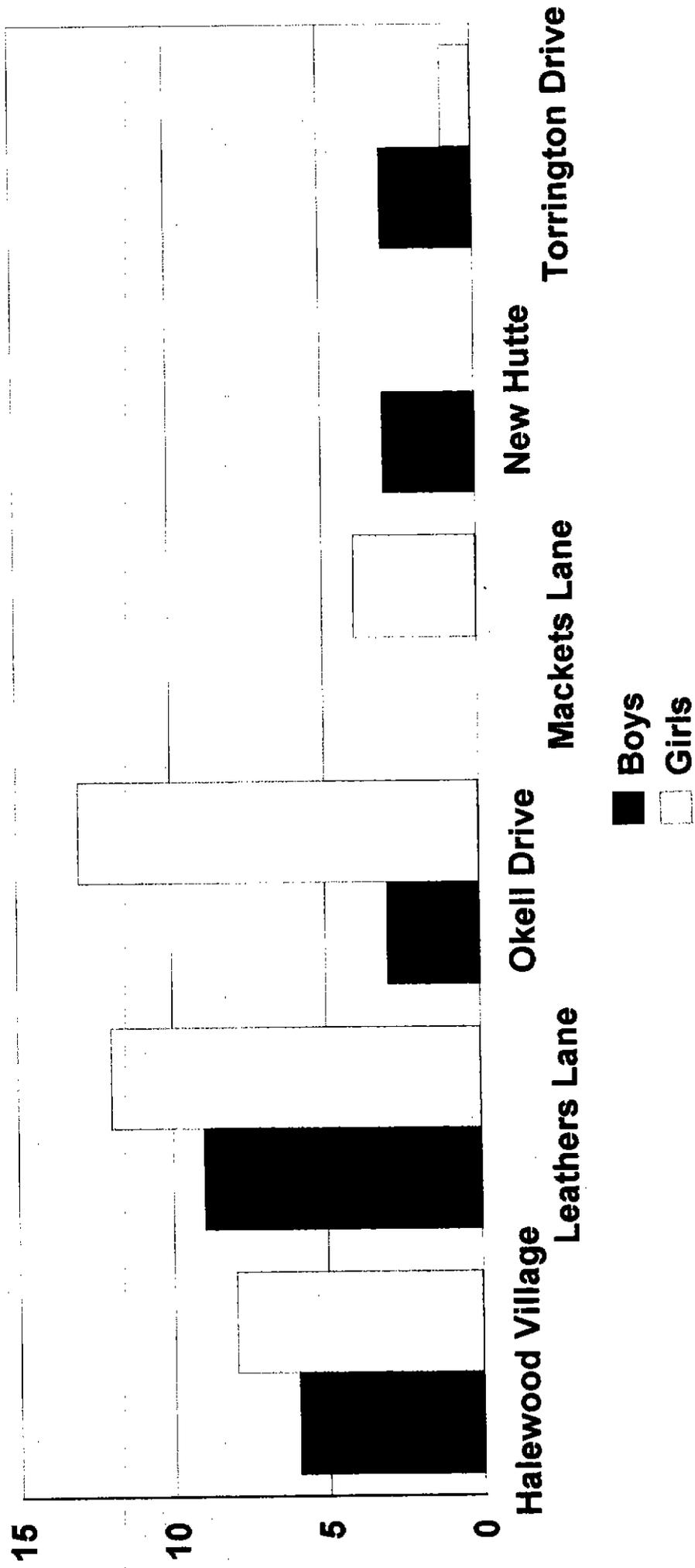


16.00 Hrs - 18.00 Hrs



QUESTIONNAIRES COMPLETED BY 13 - 16 YEAR OLDS

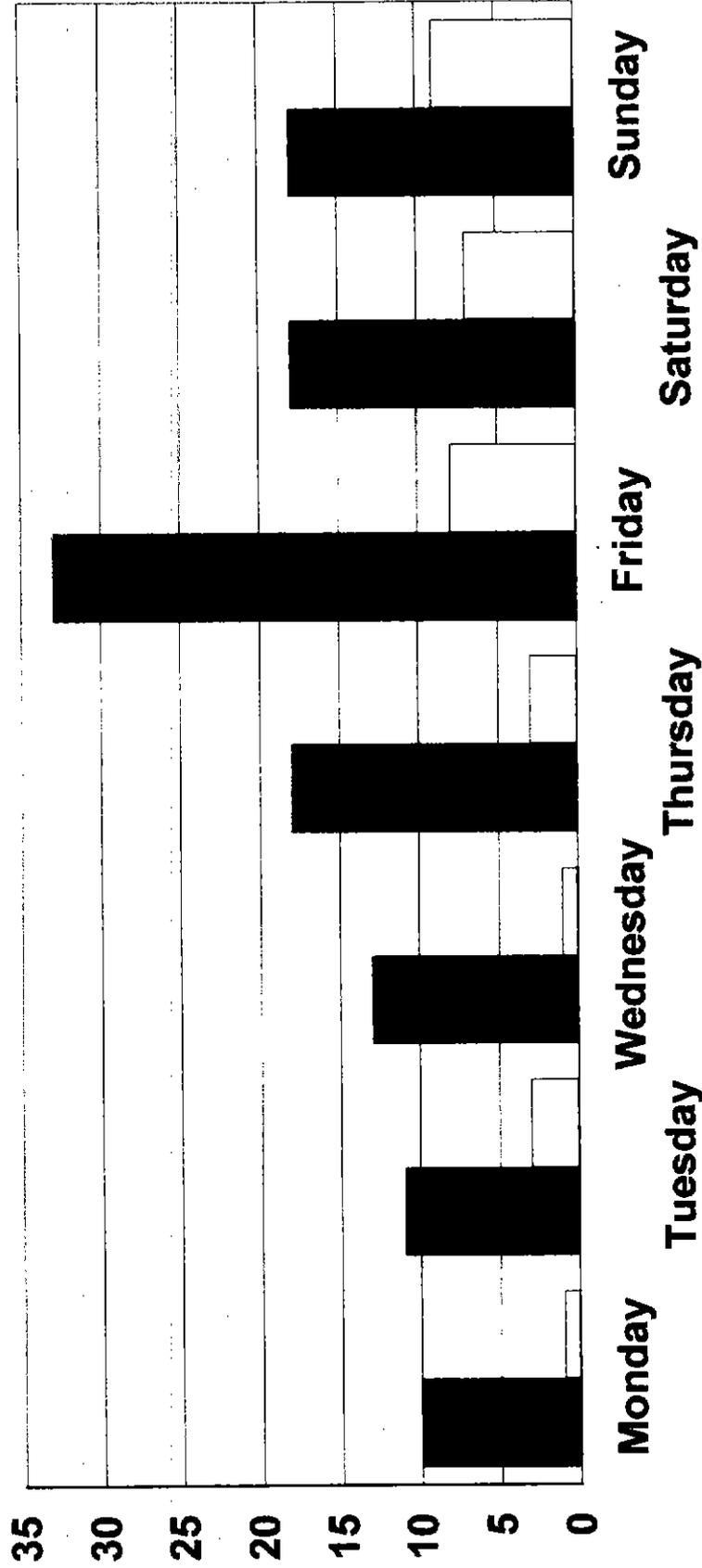
AREAS IN WHICH YOUTHS WHO COMPLETED SURVEY LIVE



TOTAL SAMPLE = 62

COMMAND AND CONTROL LOGS

HOLLIES ROAD AREA L26



■ Incidents Y.C.A 1.9.98 to 22.12.98 - Total Logs = 121

□ Incidents Y.C.A 1.9.99 to 22.12.99 - Total Logs = 32

Reported Incidents of Y.C.A reduced by 73.5%

Disorder Hollies Road 12/9/99 to 2/4/00

