

THE TILLEY AWARD 2000

MANOR FARM YOUTH PROJECT

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SUMMARY:

MANOR FARM YOUTH PROJECT

The project was set up to address criminal and anti-social behaviour committed by young persons aged between 10 years and 17 years within the Manor Farm Housing Estate in the North East part of the City of Coventry.

The evidence used to define the problem came from police reports ,the youth liaison office and the residents themselves.The conclusions of which showed that the young people of the area had a much higher than average likelihood of becoming involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour. Between 1996 and April 1998 some 1019 crimes were reported within the estate making the estate proportionally one of the most victimised areas in the City. Of the detected offences during that period one in three were shown to have been committed by juveniles.

The response to the problem was to use a multi agency approach, including the local residents association,to set up a youth diversion project in order to provide improved recreation facilities and to break the cycle of offending by providing young people with worthwhile sustainable alternatives to crime.whilst seeking to engender a positive peer pressure whereby such behaviour is seen as unacceptable. This was coupled with an active police targetting approach directed at regular offenders.

The project was initially set up in April 1998 since which time the local youths have become involved in activities that they would not otherwise have experienced **and,through** which they have gained in confidence and self esteem.Local residents have reported a decrease in problems with young people as there has been a marked decrease in groups hanging around the streets.

There has been a noticeable change in the attitudes of the young people who are now aware of their social responsibilities and how their actions affect others.

In its first year a crime figures comparison showed a reduction of crime in the area of some 70.9%.

Since its inception no young person directly involved in the project has been arrested for any criminal offence or anti-social behaviour.

The resulting outcome has been a large reduction in crime and an overall improvement in community safety.

MANOR FARM YOUTH PROJECT

OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

Manor Farm is a small urban housing estate situated in the North East section of the City of Coventry, Henley Ward, of which Manor Farm is a constituent part (Map of area contained at appendix 1)

As of November 1997 this area had the highest rate of unemployment in the City with some 47.55% of the population of the Henley Green area, of which Manor Farm Estate is a part, being under the age of twenty five years. This is substantially higher than a City average of 34.91%.

The Manor Farm Estate is a designated priority area. Only 35% of the residents are economically active compared with a City wide average of 47%.

Some 15.8% of the residents are lone parents in comparison with a City average of 4.68% and 71.3% are households who have no means of transport, again, this compares with a City average of 38.75%.

Until this project was initiated there was a distinct lack of opportunity and provision of facilities within the area for the young people of the estate.

Analysis of both statistical and anecdotal information has highlighted problems both in respect of crime levels recorded in the area, the level of crime committed by juvenile offenders and in particular the number of calls received by the police with regard to anti-social behaviour of young persons.

Between 1996 and April 1998 some 1019 crimes were reported as having been committed on the Manor Farm Estate. This represents an extremely high level of crime and made the area proportionally one of the most victimised areas in the City.

Of the offences detected by the Police during that period one in three were committed by juvenile offenders.

There were also a series of attacks directed against students who reside within Caradoc Hall, a residential establishment owned by Coventry University for accommodating students.

The persons responsible for those attacks were all described as being young persons from within the estate.

Between 1st April 1995 and 1st December 1997 some 1059 calls were made to the police from residents of the estate. Of those some 205 (20%) were concerning nuisance caused by young persons.

An independent survey conducted by Youth Action Research Development identified that 75% of the young people surveyed in the area spent their free time hanging around on street corners due to the lack of provision of any other facilities. The evidence obtained from this survey was corroborated by local police officers and local residents.

Perhaps the most chilling anecdotal fact however is that in 1997 the area had the highest rate of suicides amongst young white males in the City. This perhaps more than anything else highlighted the lack of opportunity and provision of facilities that existed in the area prior to the inception of this project and establishes the need for this initiative to continue and succeed.

THE PROJECT

The project was initially set up in April 1998 after it was recognised that there was a desperate need for recreational facilities within the Manor Farm Estate for the youth of the area.

This fact coupled with evidence that young people from the area had a substantially higher than average likelihood of becoming involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour highlighted the need to create a youth development programme tailored to meet the needs of the local community.

The scheme was set up as a joint initiative involving the Police, The City Council local area coordination, The Manor Farm Residents Association (M.A.N.D.A.), Community Education, Henley College and centre AT7 (a local community sports centre). It has been managed throughout by a steering committee consisting of representatives from each organisation involved and was initially partially funded by a grant obtained from The City Councils Action Against Crime Single Regeneration Budget (S.R.B.) for a period of two years.

The purpose of the scheme was to attempt to break the cycle of offending by providing young people, who may be regarded as being at risk of offending, with worthwhile and sustainable alternatives to crime, whilst seeking to engender a positive peer pressure whereby such behaviour is seen as unacceptable. Thus allowing the youths to develop into honest reliable citizens who are involved in the community whilst taking control and accountability for their own actions, whilst becoming aware of how their own behaviour affects others.

It is also envisaged that the active participation in the scheme could enhance employment potential thus breaking the cycle of continued generation unemployment with all of the problems that go along with that.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the scheme is to provide a framework on the Manor Farm Estate for the prevention of crime and the reduction of the fear of crime, through the provision of youth activity projects.

To promote and develop positive action with young people and thereby go some way towards tackling the fear of crime amongst the elderly residents.

To provide information about drugs and drug misuse to enable them to make informed decisions and to raise their self esteem to instill the confidence to say "No".

These objectives would be achieved by;

- Providing young people with improved recreational facilities in order to reduce the instances of youths congregating on street corners with nothing constructive to occupy themselves with.
- Provide young people with the opportunity to develop life skills in order that they may realise their full physical, educational, social and economic potential.
- Raise confidence, self esteem and aspirations of young people through participation, mentoring and support.
- Encourage young people to accept responsibility for their own actions and to take an active part in the decision making processes that affect their lives.
- Overcome dissatisfaction and exclusion from the local community.
- Provide a range of activities sensitive to local needs and cultural requirements.
- Encourage interaction between police officers and young persons in a non confrontational setting.
- Reduce animosity between young persons in the estate and student residents within a complex on the estate.

The scheme compliments other initiatives ongoing within the area designed to improve Community Safety in the Manor Farm Estate which are in main of an environmental nature.

BENEFICIARIES OF THE SCHEME;

There is a potential for the scheme to benefit all of the residents of the estate, which consists of around 2000 persons, and the surrounding areas.

In particular however the main beneficiaries are likely to be the young people of the estate, of whom there are approximately 250, and the areas elderly residents of whom there are approximately 200.

Obviously any potential victim of crime will also benefit by the overall crime reduction making them less likely to become a victim of crime.

An important part of the project also relates to the relationship between the young people of the estate and the students resident within the university complex.

This project has already had a significant affect in addressing that particular problem and been highly successful in breaking down barriers and reducing the fear of crime.

HOW THE OBJECTIVES WOULD BE ACHIEVED;

Young people between the ages of 10 and 17 have been offered a range of meaningful and healthy pursuits, supervised by trained and accredited staff, representing realistic and attainable alternatives to crime. These activities have been available six days a week for forty six weeks of the year. (A summary of the activities held together with the numbers of participants are shown in appendix B.)

The activities are made up as follows;

- Outdoor pursuits; including ,climhing, mountain biking, night orienteering and water sports.
- Football sessions.
- Youth club, including an input on sexual health, consequences of crime, aerobics and drug education.
- Young women's club, including education as above coupled with young women's self defence classes.

- Community cafe.
- Dance.
- Basketball.

All of these activities have been provided to the young people either free of charge or with the minimum of cost taking into account the economic situations of the persons involved.

Each completed programme of activities has been rewarded by Youth achievement awards. Additional facilities are now in place for appropriate individuals to become qualified to teach and supervise these activities, thereby enhancing their employment potential whilst attempting to make the project independent of outside agencies who currently provide supervision and *training*.

MANAGEMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

The scheme is managed and coordinated by a steering group consisting of representatives of all of the involved organisations. Importantly however it is intended to involve a small number of young people directly involved with the project into the steering group. It is hoped that this will ensure that the views of the *young* people are expressed with regard the management and operation of the project and will contribute towards its continued success.

This will also enable the participants to develop essential skills in communication and experience of meetings which will be advantageous to them in their future development.

In order to evaluate and monitor the success or failure of the scheme a set of performance indicators have been established.

These are as follows;

- Number of crimes committed within the area.
- % of detected crime committed by juvenile offenders.
- Number of calls made to police concerning the area.

- Number of calls made to the police concerning behaviour of young persons.
- Number of calls from elderly residents.
- Number of juveniles referred to youth liaison officers.
- Number of attendees of the programme.
- Feedback of attendees regarding the quality of the programme
- Feedback from M.A.N.D.A./Tenants association concerning problems from young persons.

THE PROJECT TO DATE:

All parties involved with the project to date have considered its first years to have been a resounding success. This is due in main to the dedicated approach of the supervising agencies, who have contributed their time and manpower largely free of time, coupled with the support provided concerning facilities from community establishments.

A committed group of local young people have become involved in activities that they would never have otherwise experienced and, through which, they have gained in confidence and self esteem.

Local residents have reported a decrease in problems caused by young people within the area as there has been a marked decrease in groups hanging around the streets intimidating local residents.

This has been supported by a noticeable change in the attitudes of the majority of the young people in the area.

All parties involved are impressed by the dedication and improvement in behaviour of the young people involved, who are becoming more aware of their social responsibilities and how their behaviour affects other people's lives.

The intensive weekly activities programme has provided the young people of the area with attractive alternatives to hanging around with nothing to do. This has inevitably led to a decrease in the amount of crime and nuisance complaints experienced within the area.

A comparison of crime figures between October 1997 and October 1998, the last figures available at this time, showed a reduction in crime of 74.9%. It is firmly believed that this was due in main to the joint approach of targeting persistent young offenders, and dealing with them expeditiously, alongside the provisions of diversionary youth activities provided through this scheme.

The relationships between the local young persons and the local police has improved tremendously through the development of mutual respect and has resulted in information being passed to the police concerning activities which the young people now perceive as unacceptable behaviour.

There have been two incidents in particular which demonstrate the changing attitudes of the young persons involved. The first relates to an incident whereby vandalism was caused to a bus, this behavior was seen as unacceptable and information was passed to the police regarding the identities of the persons concerned who were duly dealt with. The second relates to an elderly resident on the estate who had not been seen some days and the information was passed to the police resulting in forced entry being made to the premises where the occupier was found collapsed and medical attention was secured.

One of the initially identified problems, that of attacks experienced by the students residing within the area, has diminished as the students have become more integrated and accepted within the community.

Perhaps the finest achievement of the project has been that since its inception no young person directly involved with the scheme has been arrested for any criminal or anti-social behaviour.

The West Midlands Police have recognised this project as an example of good practice and is seeking to use it as a model for future projects in other areas.

THE PROJECTS FUTURE:

Due to the success of the project in the initial years it is now proposed to develop and expand the scheme with the proposed future initiatives being;

- The accreditation of many of the courses
- Linkage to the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- A system of incentives and rewards in recognition of good behaviour and attendance.

- The introduction of "Bursaries" for young people who show particular interest or skill in some area in order that they can maximise their opportunity to develop.
- Further publicity including posters and leaflets in order to maximise clientele.
- The provision of Life skill courses focused on particular issues such as assertiveness classes.
- Expansion of the project to take in adjoining areas and different age groups.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED:

There are a number of issues that have arisen that need to be addressed to ensure the continued success of the project namely;

- How to reach young people who do not currently participate in the project and instill their involvement.
- The issue of overpopularity of some of the activities, particularly Football, which has resulted in persons not being able to participate fully. This issue hopefully will be resolved in the foreseeable future due to Henley College supplying the provision of an all weather pitch enabling more persons to take active part at any one time.
- How to ensure that activities are balanced and appealing to both sexes and all age groups.
- Facilities to allow participation of disabled youngsters in order to allow full integration within the community.

CONCLUSION;

This project to date has been a highly successful operation that has achieved its initial objective of diverting young people away from crime by providing realistic alternatives to crime, the resultant reported crime decrease being self evident.

The project alone would not have succeeded without a targeted approach of some prolific offenders for whom the project would not have had the desired affect. This targeting in

