

Operation Trident.

This is a joint application from: -

Huyton Neighbourhood, Merseyside Police

Citizenship and Social Inclusion Unit
Knowsley Borough Council.

Housing Department
Knowsley Borough Council.

Operation Trident is a three-way partnership formed to resolve serious anti-social behaviour around the Bluebell housing estate in Knowsley, Merseyside.

Scanning

Anti-social behaviour resulted in increases in crime and disorder and massive loss of confidence in the three agencies from the majority of residents.

On the 26th September 2000 a young girl with learning difficulties who lived just off the estate was raped and indecently assaulted on parkland on the Bluebell Estate. She was subjected to these assaults by numerous young attackers, an estimated number of 20 – 25 young males took part in the attack all aged between 12 and 19 years of age. These youths either lived on the estate or frequented it. It was alleged that many more youths both male and female watched as the attack took place. Sections of the community suggested that this incident was the responsibility of the victim and little support was shown for her plight.

Two women residents heard her distress and rescued her from the attack. The alarm had been raised by one of their sons who had witnessed part of the incident. He subsequently gave evidence in Crown Court. The young girl, obviously in a very distressed state, was still able to give a description of what had occurred and the police were called.

A major investigation was launched and thanks to four young witnesses fifteen arrests were made of young men between 12 and 17 years of age. A protracted investigation was then undertaken, followed

by a high profile trial at Liverpool Crown Court. Five of the initial fifteen arrested were convicted of offences ranging from indecent assault to rape. They were imprisoned for periods of eighteen months to four years. This crime proved the trigger for sporadic disorder and anti-social behaviour on the estate. Initial intervention tactics of high profile policing proved ineffective in combating these nightly outbursts.

Housing Department, Knowsley Borough Council

Following the court trial the Housing Department started to notice an increase in complaints of anti-social behaviour, from residents, regarding gangs of youths. The department was informed that youths allegedly on the periphery of the offence were inciting abuse against prosecution witnesses. Graffiti appeared on walls and pavements to support this and residents insinuated that this group considered themselves untouchable.

Citizenship & Social Inclusion Unit, (CSIU), Knowsley Borough Council

The CSIU's role within Knowsley is to co-ordinate youth schemes and activities, providing unique feedback from young people about their estate. Throughout 2001 it became apparent that there were simmering issues on the estate. Workers were told that a group of youths, not convicted for the offence, considered themselves untouchable. These youths targeted youth workers as being police informants, making youth intervention almost impossible. They identified an even more concerning trend when a small group of residents expressed the view that a miscarriage of justice had taken place when the five youths had been convicted. CSIU knew this would divide the estate, as the majority of residents believed guilty people had not been prosecuted.

Merseyside Police.

Following the trial reports of youth disorder and minor crime gradually increased. Initial scanning suggested that a group of youths considered they ran the estate, considering they were untouchable. Graffiti started to emerge stating the innocence of "the Bluebell five". Prosecution witnesses were targeted by verbal and physical abuse. Their property was subjected to damage by stone throwing and excrement being placed outside the doors. Apathy began to emerge among residents that reporting issues to the police was a waste of time as nothing would be done. Intimidation was affecting the residents and police found those witnesses no longer stepped forward fearing reprisals.

Further scanning at a meeting of 100 residents on the issue established that people felt isolated and neglected. One child witness had commenced treatment under a child psychiatrist. Recent demolition of several blocks of flats created areas of open waste ground. Residents were exposed as they passed the houses of offender's families, increasing the likelihood of abuse. It was pointed out that youth facilities on the estate were non-existent encouraging youths to gather in gangs on street corners. Road access to the estate was limited to two roads resulting in little through traffic of passing police patrols, leaving residents feeling vulnerable and unsupported.

Analysis.

Collation of evidence in the form of witness statements was heavily restricted and alternate methods were required to establish a true picture of life as a resident. The partnership utilised relationships with strong resident leaders to use previous good practise of anonymous diaries. Acknowledging their use as a way to understand life on the estate, a more substantive system of evidence gathering was required if court proceedings would be brought. The diaries showed unequivocally that disorder and anti-social behaviour mixed with drug abuse was thriving within the estate boundaries.

One residents outspoken support of prosecution witnesses singled her out as a target. However her diary wouldn't be admissible in court due to her refusal to give evidence. Housing Department and CSIU offered to jointly fund professional witnesses to gather evidence for proceedings for ant-social behaviour and crime that could be prosecuted by either of the partners. Again a model of previously used good practice within the borough was utilised. Evidence obtained by these witnesses could now support prosecutions.

On the 29th October professional witnesses moved into a vacant property for a week, continuously filming the events around the Ardennes Road area that appeared from the diaries as the focal point of the disorder and intimidation. Supported by continual contact with the police they were able to record evidence knowing that they were fully supported should they become compromised. Only when the video and sound evidence was available could a full analysis of the problem take place. The partnership analysed each tape for information and evidence that related to their own field of expertise.

The analysis drew a variety of conclusions:

- The behaviour of a small number of youths on the estate was greatly affecting a large number of residents.
- A culture of intimidation and harassment was evident, specifically of residents who supported victims and witnesses of crime.
- A large number of residents living in great fear were producing a massive loss of confidence in the three agencies. This was evident at the lack of police attendance to criminal activities that were later established to have been unreported although witnessed by many, adding to the theory of apathy with the police.
- The partnership acknowledged that this problem required prioritising over others.
- The Housing Department was receiving daily requests for transfers off the estate.
- Police statistics identified that anti-social behaviour was at a level whereby more serious offences could easily occur. On the 5th November the witnesses had recorded youths making a petrol bomb. Later used to start a bonfire this was seen as a clear reflection as to the state of mind of the youths.
- It was decided levels of crime and anti-social behaviour had to be greatly reduced to restore confidence in the police and local authority thus reducing the fear of crime.
- Offenders needed to be prosecuted and victims supported to rebuild the community.

Offender.

- Videos and diaries identified that behaviour revolved around twenty ringleaders.
- Offences occurred between 1800 hrs and midnight.
- + Thursday, Friday and Saturday were favoured days for crime and disorder.
- Offenders either lived on the estate or very near to it.
- Several of the ringleaders had been closely linked to the original rape and indecent assaults, or arrested during the investigation.
- Direct evidence suggested that offenders considered they were untouchable, reflecting in their open criminal activity and abuse of residents.
- Offenders were recorded on tape committing offences of arson, burglary, criminal damage, handling stolen goods and possession of an imitation firearm. An intelligence briefing including

still photographs was circulated amongst the Police and CSIU in an attempt to identify those involved.

- Offenders were both male and female with no apparent division or exclusion as to ringleaders.
- Offenders gathered in large groups and sought refuge in numbers.
- Most offenders were in mainstream schooling and none had been excluded permanently.
- Most offenders were already known through complaints to all partners.
- Offenders came from affluent and deprived backgrounds.
- Most offenders had been offered previous intervention programmes but had refused to take an active part.

Victim.

- Residents who were either directly or indirectly involved in the original court trial were being targeted.
- Victims were from a broad range of ages from 11-70 years of age.
- Most residents lived near the offenders or in isolated streets away from the main estate activity. Those living nearby received most abuse, however living away from the main community presented problems of isolation and easy targeting.
- Abusive graffiti, name calling, damaging their houses by throwing missiles was the identified pattern of abuse. The petrol bomb incident added to the potential risk.
- Victims had low self-esteem believing having given evidence the police no longer cared about their fate.
- Residents believed the local authority wanted the estate to fall into disrepair to enable a further demolition programme. This added to their low esteem and community pride.
- A well-established resident network was able to quickly feed information to members, however the partners under used this. Other residents felt that these groups were not representative of all community members and consisted of only one age group. It was seen as exclusionary amongst young and working people on the estate.
- By mid October 2001 police received an average of 10 calls a week over youth disorder. This did not appear to be particularly high. Analysis against the diaries and videotapes showed a massive under reporting problem.

- Few diversionary activities had been successfully employed for local youths and integration with adults was restricted to immediate family.

Location.

- House demand had declined over the last 5 years, producing a number of derelict blocks, which had been pulled down creating waste ground.
- To the south runs the River Alt. Overgrown undergrowth and grassland surrounded the area, here the attack took place.
- For over 500 dwellings there are no youth facilities, which is unusual for a housing estate in Knowsley, contributing to the feeling of neglect.
- The local primary school served most families resulting in flash point incidents occurring. The school became a focal point for families who wanted to air their grievances.
- Local shops were in a state of disrepair. Only one shop stayed open during the evening as both a convenience store and off license. Heavily secured with restricted access, gangs of youths were left to remain outside whilst friends purchased goods, creating blockages at the doors and into the street. Elderly customers then refused to visit the shop for essentials fearing intimidation.
- The roads within the estate were in disrepair; potholes and loose surface allowed youths to easily remove missiles. Road surfaces worsened and the run down feeling on the estate was exacerbated.

This analysis showed that there were two issues on the Bluebell Estate.

The rape of one resident by a large number of youths resulting in five people being imprisoned. To some on the estate this was too many and to others not enough. Subsequent graffiti and attitudes displayed, had split the estate in two.

A perception of lack of investment in the estate by all agencies and no community spirit. Emulating from the demolition programme and lack of youth facilities.

Response

The partnership aimed to address both issues. Those who considered themselves above the law had to be held to account, and the partnership agencies had to visibly demonstrate investment in the estate, being accountable to the community and each other.

To continue the partnership response to this problem planned activities were to be exercised on the same day. On Friday 14th December 2001, Operation Trident commenced with the following activities.

- Officers engaged in high visibility early morning raids arrested all identified offenders. Entering the estate at 0715 the police action provided a catalyst for both consolidation and impact activities.
- The day of the week that the operation commenced was carefully chosen. Analysis had shown that Friday and Saturday were the favoured days for disorder. It was hoped that having the initial response on this day would ensure maximum effect on disorder reduction.
- The date of the operation was carefully considered. Analysis had shown that many residents had experienced disruption to their home lives for many months. It was decided to commence the operation as near to Christmas as possible. It was hoped that this would give the estate a quiet festive period and thus maximise the effect of public satisfaction.
- Community intelligence had informed the police of an address where many young people were obtaining cannabis. A search warrant at this address would further disrupt the criminal element on the estate and again improve community satisfaction.
- Immediately after the arrests extra police were deployed on the estate using strategic locations to ensure maximum visibility. Officers were outside the Primary School at both opening and closing time handing out letters informing the parents of the agencies actions. A tactic used with good effect by various forces. At the same time the Headteacher was informed of the activities to ensure both he and his staff were well informed.
- The Housing Department had identified four problem tenants around which the anti-social behaviour revolved. Following the morning arrests they served notices to obtain possession of their premises, holding parents to account for their children's actions.

- At the same time Contract Services Department of Knowsley Council attended and cleared litter and rubbish from the estate removing all graffiti. Overgrown paths were trimmed back to aid natural surveillance.
 - Of the ten arrested, seven were charged. Police placed curfews on them as part of their bail conditions. Robust policing ensured that no infringements occurred.
 - A joint press statement signalled the intent around the area to highlight the action taken.
 - A jointly chaired meeting by the partnership of the key opinion formers, including representatives from the residents association, was held. They were briefed as to the extent of the operation and what actions were going to take place in the following months.
 - Pulse policing a tactic used in the Home Office Toolkits created the perception of additional resources. Extra staff were obtained from surrounding areas to 'pulse' the estate at set times. This principle had been used in Knowsley for an earlier operation and proved to be an effective way of quickly increasing visibility without greatly reducing the effectiveness of policing in other areas.
 - Consolidation remained a major factor in the response to this problem. It was acknowledged by all agencies that slippage could not be allowed once the operation commenced. To this day the estate is 'pulse policed' in a structured but irregular manner.
 - Up to the operation the estate had only one dedicated 'neighbourhood officer'. Operation Trident introduced a second officer to the estate.
- + The CSIU commenced 'Anti Social Behaviour Order' proceedings against four of the main ringleaders.
- A continued media strategy ensured 'good news' stories were broadcast loudly. Negative media attention was diverted to produce positive images of the estate.
 - On the 16th January 2002 at a resident's forum the consolidation phase was launched. The police along with the CSIU proposed to form the Bluebell Estate Action Team (B.E.A.T.) initiative. A model for long term sustainable community development, it revolved around identifying residents on the estate who were suitable and prepared to undergo a twelve week training programme. The programme intended to equip them with the skills to become community champions. Once the programme finishes the agencies start to withdraw their control to enable the 'champions' to run youth diversionary activities and build community relations. Funding had already been obtained from Riverside Housing Trust, who owned a number of properties on the estate and the Safer

Merseyside Partnership Community Chest and Police and Youth Development Services. Prior to its inception community agreement was required to ensure the proposal met area needs.

Assessment.

The two goals for the operation had been: -

1. Improve confidence in the police and local authority.
2. Reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime.

These two goals dictated that the measures for the evaluation would be: -

1. Reduction in the total number of crimes reported.
2. Reduction in the numbers of calls to the police relating to disorder.
(These were decided regardless of the fact that an under reporting problem had been identified.)
3. Increase in the number of letters of thanks received by the police.
4. Improvement in the attitude of the residents to the agencies.
5. Number of good news stories in the media.
6. Reduction in requests for the council to remove graffiti and complete repairs to minor vandalism.
7. Increased visibility of the police on the estate.
8. A cessation of the large number of requests to leave the area through alternate housing.

The assessment started on the first day of the operation to ensure that each tactic was having the desired effect.

Each action was designed to complement the next. The problem in responding was to ensure delivery started on the same day. No room for additional police spending to run the operation existed, staff had to be used from other areas to supplement existing strengths. Ownership of the operation was firmly with the police due to the arrests being the start of the actions and also to their experience in arranging similar types of operations.

- The Police implemented a system of tasking sheets for officers ensuring that they could capture all of their activities. It also enabled them to demonstrate the amount of officer hours spent on the estate should any resident question their patrol. Immediately acknowledgement of the extra police presence was recorded.
- All targets on the estate had been arrested. Some had been about to leave for school so the time was considered correct.
- Following the seizure of drugs from the warrant the Housing Department commenced action to repossess the property.
- Two hundred leaflets circulated outside the school received positive feedback from both parents and teachers, if only tainted slightly by a 'not before time' attitude. The Headteacher expressed gratitude for being kept informed early enabling him to mention the action in assembly, ensuring it was communicated totally positively.
- The notices to seek possession served by the Housing Department proved very positive. Each agency soon received feedback that each of the families was reflecting on their behaviour. One occupier was trying to obtain support to fight the eviction. To this date she has received no support from her neighbours. Housing legislation guarantees this eviction; others are going to court.
- The cleaning of the estate was well received by the residents. It has resulted in requests for further work being reduced by 70%. (Contract Service figures)
- Seven of the targets received curfews as part of their bail conditions. The police implemented a system to ensure that all were visited on a regular basis. None of them were caught breaching their bail. This tactic was considered a great success.
- The meeting of the key opinion formers was also a great success. All feedback was positive and the agencies used this forum to communicate a positive message regarding their action. This tactic has been used again in the Huyton area following Operation Arizona. It is now considered as good practice in the area.
- The media strategy was also successful. Positive stories appeared in all of the local newspapers. Coverage was also given on local television and radio. The true legacy of the operation is the media still refer to Operation Trident when the policing of Huyton is discussed. Previously adverse publicity had been levelled at a lack of action.

- The B.E.A.T. initiative is active. Several of those young people who originally gave evidence are involved. This initiative has been received with true enthusiasm. The residents association is in the process of obtaining funding for facilities for these 'champions' to start their work once fully trained. The residents have stated that it is this initiative that shows the agencies are investing in the future of the estate.
- The CSIU's work in obtaining anti-social behaviour orders has not been so successful. Although all agencies considered that there was enough evidence to take certain individuals to court this has not happened. The operation has highlighted certain blockages within the Local Authority. However this situation has helped to highlight the problems being experienced and a constructive debate has commenced.
- On reflection the partnership could have been expanded at an earlier stage to involve the education and health departments. A need for re-education could have been built into the local school curriculum to increase the awareness of youth disorder and social development skills.
- The sustainability of the B.E.A.T project lies in the residents and youth committee deciding who is entitled to enter the programme. Before commencement of activities each youth is tasked with two hours of 'community work', collecting litter or graffiti removal to show their commitment to the group and community. Many of the activities reflect those available through the youth services increasing the communication between residents and youth workers that suffered at the start of Trident.
- Road surfaces within the estate have been re-laid and a new traffic-calming scheme introduced restricting vehicles to 20 mph. Improving the geography of the estate and raising the status among residents could have been increased by assisting the local shop keeper to more effectively utilise his space. This would have reduced the opportunity for youths to gather in the area of the shops.

After the first three weeks reductions in crime and disorder were good. At the end of March 2002 a more detailed assessment was made. This compared the level of crime and disorder for the months of January to March 2001 with these months in 2002. (See appendix A). These three months reflect the months of consolidation after the enforcement activities. The following assessment was made of the seven performance indicators set.

1. Total recorded crime fell by 29% for the months of January to March
2. Reports of disorder fell by 58% for the months of January to March.
3. Police received 12 letters of thanks regarding the Bluebell Estate.
4. There is a positive attitude from the residents to the agencies.
5. There have been 4 substantial stories in the newspaper regarding Operation Trident. There was coverage on Radio Merseyside, Channel One (a local cable channel) and Ceefax.
6. There has been a 70% reduction in requests for graffiti removal and minor damage repairs.
7. The residents have noticed the extra police patrols.

When considering that there had been an under reporting problem 2001 it was considered that the reduction in crime and disorder was substantial.

Operation Trident has been viewed a success by the agencies, residents, media and the Home Secretary at a recent visit. It has set the tone for partnership problem solving within Knowsley. Similar operations are in the planning phase and already various aspects of Trident have been used elsewhere. The problem solving approach was not familiar to the Housing Department or the CSIU. The second legacy of Operation Trident is that the police will be providing problem-solving training to these agencies in the near future.

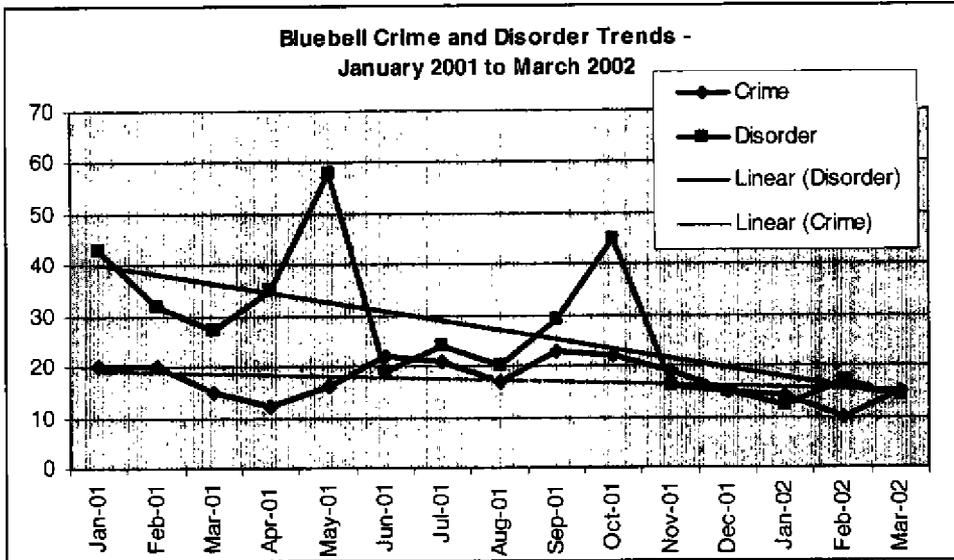
Nigel Pantak	Inspector	Merseyside Police.
Mark Rowley	Sergeant	Merseyside Police.
Kath Fielding		Knowsley Housing Department,
Mark Harrison		Citizenship & Social Inclusion Unit Knowsley Borough Council.

Appendix A.

Bluebell Estate — C322

Crime and Disorder

January 2001 to March 2002



CRIME

	2001	2002	Grand Total
January	20	14	34
February	20	10	30
March	15	15	30
April	12	12	24
May	16	16	32
June	22	22	44
July	21	21	42
August	17	17	34
September	23	23	46
October	22	22	44
November	19	19	38
December	15	15	30
Grand Total	222	41	261

DISORDER

	2001	2002	Grand Total
January	43	12	55
February	32	17	49
March	27	14	41
April	35	14	49
May	58	14	72
June	19	19	38
July	24	24	48
August	20	20	40
September	29	29	58
October	45	45	90
November	16	16	32
December	15	15	30
Grand Total	363	55	406

Crime

January to March 2002 saw a **29% reduction** compared to the same period in 2001.

Disorder

January to March saw a **58% reduction** compared to the same period in 2001.

	2001	2002	
Affray - causing		1	
Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm	3	2	-33%
Burglary in a building not a Dwelling	3	3	0%
Burglary in a Dwelling	2	2	0%
Criminal Damage to Dwellings	14	11	-21%
Criminal Damage to Other Buildings	2		-100%
Criminal Damage to Vehicles	6	1	-83%
Escape from Lawful Custody		1	
Going Equipped for Theft etc		1	
Gross Indecency with a child	1		-100%
Handling Stolen Goods	1		-100%
OTHER Criminal Damage	2	1	-50%
Other Harassment Offences		1	
Possession of a Controlled Drug		2	
Possession of an offensive weapon without lawful a	1		-100%
Robbery of personal property	2		-100%
Robbery on Business property using firearm or othe		1	
Theft (Simple)	4	5	25%
Theft from Motor Vehicle	7	3	-57%
Theft from the person of another		1	
Theft of Motor Vehicle	7	1	-86%
Threat to Commit Damage		1	
Wounding with intent to cause G.B.Harm		1	
Grand Total	55	39	-29%