

THE TILLEY AWARD 2002

NOMINATION

TITLE OF PROJECT

CHILDREN'S RESOURCE CENTRE, HOSPITAL ROAD, BURY ST  
EDMUNDS

CRIME REDUCTION CATEGORY

HOME OFFICE PRIORITY AREA - ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

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## 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The title of the project is the Children's Resource Centre, Hospital Road, Bury St Edmunds. These premises are under the control of the Social Care Services and are the home for a maximum of eight young people, up to the age of 16, from a variety of backgrounds who are in need of care.
- 1.2 The activities of these children, in relation to crime and anti social behaviour and the number of times they were absent from the premises, proved a disproportionate draw on Police resources. Analysis showed that during the first quarter of 2000/01 ie. April, May and June, the Police responded to some 152 events which represented almost 6% of Police time. During the second quarter of that same year ie. July, August and September, a similar picture was found in that the Police responded to 134 events, which again represented over 5% of Police time. On further analysis of these events, it was established that Police were broadly called to respond to two incidents each day, which either involved some form of criminality or young residents being missing from care.
- 1.3 The evidence used to define the problem was provided by Police Data in relation to responses to these premises and crime statistics.
- 1.4 The initial response of the Bury St Edmunds Police Sector Commander was to correspond with the Manager of the premises and meet with the Deputy County Manager and Youth Offending Team Manager. During the course of this first meeting it was established that an Education Quarterly Meeting already was in existence, in order to address educational needs of the residents and it was agreed that this Forum would be broadened with Police and Youth Offending Team participation, in order to address other demands placed upon all strategy agencies involved in a support network and Partnership, addressing the needs of the residents at any given time. Following on from the first reformed education meeting, a Partnership was formed involving Senior Education Officers, the Youth Offending Team, the Community Safety Unit, Social Services Accommodation and Outreach and the Suffolk Constabulary. Whilst the Partnership has continuing aims and objectives, clearly with the transient nature of the residents, there is also the need for flexibility in order to respond to an individuals needs. However, the objectives of the Partnership can be summarised as follows:
- A) Improved educational outcomes for all residents - improved attendance.**
  - B) Improved links with the local schools.**
  - C) Contribution to professional development of Children's Resource Centre staff.**
  - D) Maintain links with services working with young people. eg. Connexions.**
  - E) Reduction in occasions residents go missing from care.**
  - F) Reduced criminal activity and need for police enforcement.**
  - G) Improved and accurate data collection.**

The above objectives, responses and performance are kept under regular review at quarterly meetings, where each resident is discussed in detail, with appropriate actions being highlighted and allocators, formal minutes are recorded and then reviewed at

subsequent meetings.

- 1.5 In accord with one of the Partnership's primary objectives at improving and collating accurate data, this has been achieved throughout 2001. During the first six months of 2001 ie. January to June, there were 299 events, 150 crimes and 99 incidents of missing from care, that were all attributed to the Children's Resource Centre in Bury St Edmunds. During the second half of the year, ie. July to December 2001, the number of events were 214, incidents of criminality were 54 and incidents of missing from care were 114. It can be noted there has been a reduction in the level of Police response through events and criminality and a minor increase in those incidents of missing from care.

85 fewer events equals a reduction of 28%, 96 fewer incidents of criminality equals a reduction of 64% and increase in incidents of missing from care represents 15%,( NB it should be noted that during the second half of the year 30 incidents of missing from care can be attributed to just one resident, who in fact was not genuinely missing, but who choose to absent herself and her location was always generally know).

In addition, in terms of education, without exception the Partnership as indicated earlier is also able to reflect a continued positive response in terms of school attendance for each of the centre residents.

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

- 2.1 The overall objectives concerning the Police was to reduce criminal activity and the need for Police enforcement and also, to reduce the occasions when residents go missing from care. However, by involving the Police with the educational needs of the residents, it was soon established that by improving the educational attendance of the residents then the opportunities for criminal activity and being missing, were greatly reduced.

The collection of data to prove the problems caused by the residents was comparatively easy and it was a case of listing numbers. Analysis of the problem proved difficult in so far as although the Centre had a capacity for eight children, these individuals changed on a regular basis. However, their location remains the same as a large detached house in its own grounds, situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a town centre. The underlying problems were as diverse as the problems each of these young people had at the various stages of their development.

Although the underlying objectives were Police led, it was also incumbent to become involved in other activity, which would enhance the lives of these young people and also assist the main aim. Significant activity took place during the course of the year as a result of the main Partnership, but also the Sub group involving the Children's Resource Centre, Youth Offending Team and Police Management. Below is listed some of the activity that was facilitated through this Partnership and helped to address the ongoing issues at the location.

- 1) Ongoing staff training, which involves Police Officer input around enforcement powers and procedures, including Officer Safety Training and Problem Solving.
- 2) Ongoing environment (premises) assessment by the Suffolk Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer and also the Local Crime Reduction Officer.
- 3) A contribution to the Review of a protocol established between Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Constabulary for Missing Children From Care. A revised version was published in November 2001 with one of the principle outcomes of the document to draw a distinction between residents who are genuinely missing and those who choose to absent themselves.

- 2.2 As a result of the work of the Partnership, stronger links have been established through the Education Authority and local Schools and other support Education facilities, which continue to see improved attendance by the residents.

The Police also involve themselves with social activity for the residents, which included the following:

*A day visit to Center Pares, with Partnership representatives and residents.*

*i Through support funding from the Local Community Safety Partnership and Bennetts*

*Electrical Retailers, the Partnership, the Partnership was able to provide eight portable and remote colour televisions for each of the residents.*

*A local Police Officer facilitated a visit for the residents to Suffolk Police Headquarters.*

- 2.3 In April 2002, in order to address and improve the liaison at the Centre with the Police, a new Police Post was created. A Community Police Officer was appointed to work with the Youth Offending Service, with a responsibility for looked after children. The purpose of this post was to work in Partnership with Social Care Services and the Youth Offending Team, to reduce Crime and Disorder involving the residents of the Children's Resource Centre, Hospital Road, Bury St Edmunds. The principle responsibilities were to liaise with Partner agencies, to develop pro-active strategies, to target criminal behaviour, in order to reduce, prevent and detect offences. To adopt a problem solving approach, in order to address the causes of youth offending and encourage and educate the residents in Good Citizenship. Contribute to the identification of vulnerable residents and take appropriate action within the practice of the Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Care in Suffolk, examining Best Practice and recommending changes where appropriate. By establishing links with other residential facilities, providing advice and guidance to Social Care staff as appropriate.

The Officer also has routine responsibilities of building relationships with all residents, identifying their concerns and in conjunction with other Partners, including Social Care Services, Youth Offending Team and Connexions, create an individual support programme to divert the resident from offending or high risk behaviour. The Officer will also highlight to residents the effects of offending on victims and the impact of having a criminal record and also, liaise with all agencies and be pro-active in crime reduction initiatives.

The creation of this post is deemed to be one of the main responses to the problem. It is anticipated that the downward trend in Police response will be maintained as a direct result.

- 2.4 In January 2002 a Problem Solving Seminar, regarding the Children's Resource Centre was held in Bury St Edmunds. Participants were from many agencies involved with young people. The delegates were divided into three groups and were asked to consider the following headings:

*Education and Social activities*  
*Criminality*  
*Working Together in Partnership*

## **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

The group members agreed that education was a positive solution and a protective factor. The Education Units were extremely proactive, with regular timetable and punctuality adhered to. There appeared to be a stark contrast with risk factors in changing schools, which presented negative images from school and peers. It was established that there was peer pressure to go out

and commit crime by dominant residents, and staff at the centre cannot give parental responsibility and cannot stop any resident going out.

## **CRIMINALITY**

This group felt the way forward lay with giving response and solutions to problems with regular Problem Solving Meetings and a Steering Group being formed. A good starting point being the Education Forum. It was felt that it would be useful to promote positive measures, including public perceptions, via the media and schools and also to raise the self esteem of the young person resident at the Centre. The Group realised to implement measures above would involve extra cost, but if the outcome of long term results were the reduction of criminality, increased school attendance, there was a balance that needed to be established.

## **WORKING TOGETHER - PARTNERSHIP**

The training of staff in other agencies was important and the identification of an inappropriate placement should also be addressed. If education is not provided then individual schools must be held to account to ensure that education takes place. It was agreed that every child in public care must have education. It was also felt that if a child was not ready for school training provision must be arranged as delay produced negativity. It was also felt important that life skills should be learnt at the Centre.

As a result of this Seminar, a detailed response/solution Action Plan was devised and is to be put into progress with an Implementation Group, as yet to be formed.

2.5 On first reflection of the figures, which show a percentage reduction in the events of Police attendance and the incidents of criminality, the indication is of a significant success of the project. However, the project activity has gone some way to contribute to a reduction in Police response through events and criminality, it must also be recognised that with the often constant change of residents at this location, that stability of the Unit and individual profile of residents can also have a significant impact on Police activity. However, it is as a result of closer working relationship, primarily with the Centre and Youth Offending Team staff, that local Police input and activity continues to influence appropriate responses.

2.6 A study of the objectives of the Partnership reveals the following:-

### **A) Improved, educational outcomes for all residents - improved attendance**

At the initial Educational Meeting four out of the eight residents were attending education. By the last meeting this had increased to six out of eight. These six were in attendance, although irregularly, at either mainstream schools or specific educational projects, which is a measure of success.

### **B) Improved links with the local schools**

This has not been as easy as first anticipated. Schools are reluctant to take on pupils who potentially may affect their attendance and truancy figures. However, the centre is in the

catchment area of one upper school and a specific Liaison Officer has been identified and it is hoped that this will improve.

**C) Contributions to professional developments of Children's Resource Centre staff**

This commenced with the attendance of a Community Police Officer at staff meetings to give advice and information of Police procedures and action that could be taken. This has been developed by the appointment of the Community Police Officer working from the Centre. His presence working alongside staff has led to a greater understanding of Police and staff issues consequently aiding the staff development.

**D) Maintain links with services working with young people, e.g. Connexions**

Connexions have a specific responsibility to assist young people with a variety of their concerns including career development and the transition from school to work. The working relationship has been sustained with staff and residents.

**E) Reduction in occasions residents go missing from care**

There was an increase in these incidents, however 30 of these incidents related to one resident. However, work needs to be progressed in order to achieve this objective. The Community Police Officer is in the process of developing mechanisms in order to address how the residents are reported as missing and also comparing when the residents are merely absent and their whereabouts are known and when they are genuinely missing. A reward system is to be introduced for those who return at the required time and remain in the Centre.

**F) Reduced criminal activity and need for Police enforcement**

Over the period of comparison this objective was achieved with a reduction of 64%.

**G) Improved and accurate data collection**

This is an ongoing objective and is currently being developed by the Community Police Officer.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Events</b>	<b>Crimes</b>	<b>Missing</b>
January-June 2001	299	150	99
July-December 2001	214	54	114
%	28% reduction	64% reduction	15% increase