

The Street Crime Unit.



The Tilley Award 2004

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The Street Crime Unit.

Summary.

The Street Crime Unit was formed in June 2003 in order to combat Retail and other associated street crime including anti social behaviour in Newcastle Central Area Command.

Newcastle Upon Tyne is a vibrant and progressive City and has a City Centre which is subject to constant development and change. Millions of pounds of investment, both commercial and public, is currently being targeted at extensive City Centre development.

Major investment in the City such as the Gate, Quayside, Grainger Market and future proposals for Eldon Square shopping complex are changing the face of Newcastle. These changes are attracting greater numbers of people who live, work and visit the City therefore, it is essential to provide an environment in which they can enjoy the facilities without the threat or fear of crime.

In order to realise these aims it is vital that the Community, Private, Public and Voluntary bodies, as well as the Police, all work in partnership. No single organisation has a monopoly on the effects of crime and it is a fundamental principle of Problem Solving that we must all work together in order to reduce crime and the fear of crime thereby improving the quality of life of the community we serve.

In the year 2002, Newcastle Central had 2,530 incidents of theft from shops. This represents 34% of all crime and equates to 27% of all arrests within the Area Command. Research showed that this quantity of retail crime was greater than other comparable areas such as Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester etc.

The aim of the Street Crime Unit is to reduce this burden by working in partnership using the Problem Solving Model of Scan, Analyse, Response, Assess and ensuring any resolutions are sustainable. This will free up resources, enabling them to concentrate on the other Targets and Priorities of the Area Command.

Since the introduction of the Street Crime Unit incidents of theft from shops have decreased as follows :-

June 2002 - Jan 2003 1715 crimes

June 2003 - Jan 2004 1331 crimes

Crime Reduction of 384 crimes This equates to a 22% Reduction

This resounding success is the result of establishing excellent relationships with all agencies working in partnership. The Street Crime Unit has worked extremely hard to establish these links and the results are evidence of their endeavours.

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Scan.

Newcastle Central Area Command covers just over one square mile around the commercial centre of Newcastle Upon Tyne. In recent years the commercial development of the city centre, including housing developments, has significantly increased. The ongoing development of Grainger Town is complemented by many new leisure facilities including "The Gate" which has a capacity of 12,000. There has also been a large increase in hotel capacity to over 6,000 beds and the continuing success of Newcastle United Football Club ensures attendance's of over 52,000 supporters. In addition to this, the city has two Universities which attract a transient population of more than 50,000 students. The overall result of these developments is an increase in the amount of people who live, work and visit the city.

The main shopping complex within the city is Eldon Square. This is the largest city centre complex in the country. In 2002, Eldon Square had 25 million visitors. This development is surrounded by an ever increasing number of other retail outlets.

The combination of increased facilities and developments inevitably attracts an increase in number of incidents of crime and disorder in the city. In the year 2002, the Area Command recorded 2,530 incidents of thefts from retail premises. This figure represented 34% of all crime and equates to 27% of all city centre arrests. In addition, each police officer deals with an average of 54 arrests per year (all arrests) which is double the force average.

The Area Command is determined to reduce crime and the fear of crime by building upon our partnerships with other agencies. In order to help achieve this and take a more structured approach to retail crime, the Street Crime Unit was formed in June 2003.

The Unit consists of a Sergeant and six permanent police officers representing the core of the team. This team is further enhanced by two officers from the early day shift and two officers from the late day shift. This enables the Unit to cover the Area Command from 8am until 10pm for six days of the week.

The overall aims and objectives of the Unit were to:-

Reduce retail / street crime and other anti social behaviour

Deal with 80 - 90% of all shoplifters

Streamline procedures for routine shoplifters, submit quality files and remand applications

Forge close working partnerships with all agencies co-ordinating and sharing intelligence

Identify and effectively deal with persistent offenders

Identify "Hotspot" areas and direct resources using covert and high visible patrols

Free up shift resources to deal with other Targets and Priorities of the Area Command

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Analysis.

The Analysis was carried out to define what the real problem was and why it was occurring using the Problem Analysis Triangle of Victim, Offender, Location.

Victim.

The Victims were widespread from retail outlets to juveniles being accosted and even robbed in the street. As the city has developed the victims became people who lived in, worked in and also visited the many attractions the Area Command has to offer. The needs of the people who visit the city centre vary dramatically. For example, the demands of the residents living near licensed premises differ from those visiting and working in the city centre, however they all have a common need for a safe environment. Surveys have shown that fear of crime and disorder is one of the greatest concerns in city centres. One of the roles of the Street Crime Unit is to regularly consult with “users” of the city centre and all partner agencies in order to address public perceptions of crime. We aim to provide the highest quality of service at all times treating everybody with dignity, respect and complete integrity.

Offender.

Offenders vary as much as the victims they prey on. They range from the school child who steals through bravado or excitement; the drug addict who has no other means of funding their very expensive habit; the vulnerable adult who has learning difficulties and the professional thief who steals to order. There is no such person as a typical shoplifter.

Shoplifting is a prominent problem in all city centres. It is not an irrelevant offence and is often linked to offenders who have their fingers in lots of crimes which affect city life. Retail crime is considered by many as a “Gateway” crime which can lead onto other serious offending.

In view of this, the Street Crime Unit whilst efficiently and effectively dealing with the volume of street crime also needs to be quick in assessing the offender as to whether it is a routine process or one that requires more careful handling.

Location.

The primary location is obviously Eldon Square and the ever expanding retail outlets surrounding this complex. Eldon Square is the 8th busiest shopping area in the UK. Northumberland Street, which is adjacent to the complex, is the 10th. A combination of the two makes Newcastle city centre arguably the busiest retail destination in the country.

There are 148 shops, including the major national chains of John Lewis, Boots, The Arcadia store with six brands under one roof, New Look, Etam and Argos. Two major retail operators, Marks & Spencers and Fenwicks, link directly into the Centre. Over 1300 seats are available in retail outlets offering catering facilities. Eldon Leisure, situated within the Centre, offers a wide range of sporting and leisure facilities seven days a week. Newcastle city centre offers 10,000 car parking spaces, 1800 of these are directly attached to Eldon Square.

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No less than 4,000 people work each day in Eldon Square. In 2002, they had an average of 480,000 visitors per week which peaked to 810,000 in December.

The Street Crime Unit carried out both field and data analysis in order to identify “Hotspots” of activity in the Area Command. This was fed through the TCG and NIM processes which produced Target Areas and Target Offenders which were then acted upon by the Unit and other partner agencies both internally and externally. Additional resources were requested through the NIM bidding process so that both covert and high visible patrols were utilised to optimum effect in order to reduce incidents of crime and disorder in these identified “Hotspot” Areas.

The cultivating of actionable intelligence was another priority of the Unit. This intelligence was not only cultivated from offenders but also from all other partner agencies through various operations and crime prevention panels. By identifying crime trends and patterns using this intelligence and the expertise of the Area Command Analyst, the Unit was able to direct resources effectively and efficiently to problem areas. This not only reduced crime and disorder in these identified areas but also effective use of high visible patrols reassured the public.

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Response.

The Unit responded to this by first and foremost tackling the problem via Enforcement, Intelligence, Prevention and most importantly by working in Partnerships. Spreading the word to all partner agencies, getting the message across that crime and disorder was not just a policing problem but a community problem and how we all needed to work together in order to significantly reduce retail crime in the city. Sgt Stafford called together multi agency meetings where he explained the Role of the Street Crime Unit and began the process of forging closer links with all partners in the Area Command.

A plan of Action was then devised on what the parameters of the Unit were and how we intended to resolve the problems of retail crime and associated disorder in the Short, Medium and Long term.

Short Term.

In the short term the Unit identified “Hotspots” of retail crime and disorder through the TCG and NIM meeting process and carried out both high visible patrols and covert plain clothes observations in these areas. Partnership work immediately uncovered a great deal of actionable intelligence which was developed and then acted upon involving the Street Crime Unit and the Area command Intelligence Unit.

The Unit worked closely with both internal and external partners in order to combat retail crime in the Area Command. Two officers from the uniform early day shift and two officers from the late day shift were seconded onto the team. Resources from the uniform Supplementary Patrol Team and CID Proactive Team were also utilised in Operations undertaken by the Unit.

All persistent offenders were refused bail and comprehensive Remand Applications submitted. Where suitable, offenders granted bail were given conditions to keep out of all retail premises in Newcastle city centre. This had the immediate effect of policing out the problem and word soon got around that the Unit were targeting persistent offenders and professional shoplifting teams.

Medium Term.

It soon became apparent that due to the volume of shoplifters the Unit were dealing with they needed to streamline the arrest and detention procedures. A meeting was held with the CPS and ASU and agreement reached on the minimum that was required in straight forward Guilty files. This was essential in ensuring the Unit were able to cope with the demand and still carry out proactive patrols at the same time. This further ensured the Unit continued to deal with almost all shoplifters arrested in the Area command thereby relieving the burden on the Shifts. This allowed them to concentrate on the other Targets and Priorities of the Area command Plan and ensured the uniform officers were able to carry out high visible patrols on the streets reassuring the public and providing quality of service.

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A database was created by the Street Crime Unit which includes all MG 5 Summaries for repeat offenders. This provides a framework which can be used by all Area Command Staff when submitting files of evidence.

A member of the Unit also devised a MG 7 Remand Application form which is used extensively by the team when applying for a Remand in Custody. This application has proved to be so successful, it is now being considered as Best Practise, throughout the force.

Various Operational Orders have been devised by the Unit in order to combat retail crime in the city. One of the most successful has been "Operation Davenport" which was compiled by Sgt Stafford. Analysis revealed that a large number of the criminal fraternity travelled into the city using the Metro System. Very few of these people pay for using the Metro and are responsible for a substantial amount of crime and disorder in the city. The intention of this Operation is to carry out both high visible patrols and covert observations in the Metro Stations at various times of the day in order to stop, check and prosecute any offenders identified.

The Street Crime Unit involved all partner agencies both internally and externally in this Operation which has been and continues to be, a huge success. The Partners utilised in this initiative include :-

Uniform shift resources, Supplementary Patrol Team, Community Beat Managers, Proactive CID ,CCTV Operators, Metro Unit Police (bid via the NIM system) and Nexus Operators (Metro Staff).

The method of this Operation involves Nexus and uniform staff identifying persons who have not paid to use the system, checking these people out and reporting them for the Metro bye law offences. The covert officers observe those offenders acting suspiciously or not wanting to be stop / checked by Nexus Staff or uniform police officers. These Operations are carried out at the five main Newcastle Metro Stations namely, Haymarket, Central Station, Manors, Monument and St.James'.

Operation Fox is another successful initiative undertaken by the Unit. This Operation targets a certain area in the city, namely the Grainger Market and surrounding licensed premises. This area was identified through the National Intelligence Model as a "Hotspot" frequented by well known criminals who try and sell stolen goods to the stallholders and patrons of the public houses. The intention is to patrol the area and visit the licensed premises by both uniform and plain clothes officers. These officers carry out stop /checks and where appropriate PACE searches of known offenders in order to prevent and detect crime. Again, resources are requested through the NIM Level 1 Bidding system and TSG officers used as the high profile uniform patrols.

Historically, the Christmas season creates an increase in visitors to the Area command and as a consequence, an increase in crime, especially retail crime and disorder. As already stated, Eldon Square shopping complex attracted 810,000 visitors in December 2002. In order to combat this, Sgt Stafford compiled "Operation Christmas Cracker", The intention being to concentrate resources in a co-ordinated and proactive manner so that a significant decrease in reported crime could be achieved. The aim was to target prime areas of concern, highlighted

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through the TCG and NIM systems, using both high profile and covert operations. This Operation ran from 1st December 2003 until 4th January 2004 and was publicised in the media and on the Northumbria Police Website. Again, resources were successfully requested through the NIM Level 1 Bidding system and officers from the Mounted section, the Metro Unit and the TSG used as the high profile uniform patrols. Sgt Stafford and officers from the Street Crime Unit attended Shop Watch and Street Traders Association meetings to ensure a multi agency partnership approach was taken in co-ordinating all our efforts in reducing crime and the fear of crime as well as reassuring the public that Newcastle city centre is a safe place to live, work and visit.

Long Term.

The long term aim of the Street Crime Unit is to continue working in partnership with all agencies ensuring there are sustainable resolutions to problems encountered in Newcastle Central Area Command.

We now have strategies established to combat retail crime and have established regular formal meeting processes with all our partner agencies to address issues identified.

The Unit will look to expand its remit to include more street crime offences such as theft from the person, robbery, burglary OTD, vehicle crime etc.

Juvenile crime is also a problem the Unit is looking to reduce significantly by working with our partners including the Retail Staff and Youth Offending Teams. We have looked at other comparable areas in order to identify "Best Practise" in how to reduce this problem. The West Midlands adopt an in-store cautioning procedure for first time offenders involving low monetary values. This is something the Unit will look to introduce in the future.

The Unit has also been successful in applying for Anti Social Behaviour Orders in order to prevent persistent offenders, re-offending in Newcastle city centre. We shall continue to apply for such orders on persistent offenders.

The team will continue to identify crime trends and patterns by cultivating intelligence from offenders and all partner agencies. This will be fed through the TCG and NIM processes and resources will be directed to these targets and priorities using covert and high profile patrols as necessary.

The overall long term aim of the Street Crime Unit is to reduce retail and associated street crime and disorder to such an extent that the quality of life of people who live, work and visit Newcastle Central Area Command is greatly enhanced.

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Assessment.

The Street Crime Unit has now been in operation for eight months and has significantly reduced retail crime in Newcastle Central Area Command.

The team has work extremely hard in forging close links with all partner agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as with the community as a whole. The message that crime is not just a policing issue but a community problem has been taken on board by all concerned and we are now working in liaison. Several partner agencies have been so impressed by the Street Crime Unit they have written to the Chief Constable expressing their appreciation of the teams efforts.

Regular meetings now take place between the partner agencies where information is shared and action plans drawn up on how to best combat the real issues of concern.

Information and intelligence is cultivated from confidential sources and CHIS's. This is subsequently fed through the correct channels, namely the TCG and NIM meetings. From this, offenders and "Hotspot" areas of crime are identified and targeted by the department best suited to deal with the problem.

The Unit have endeavoured to deal with almost 100% of shoplifters arrested in the Area command. This has relieved the burden on shift resources who have been able to concentrate their efforts on other targets and priorities in line with the Area Command Plan. This has resulted in greater high visible patrols being out on the streets reducing crime and disorder and reassuring the public thereby providing a quality service.

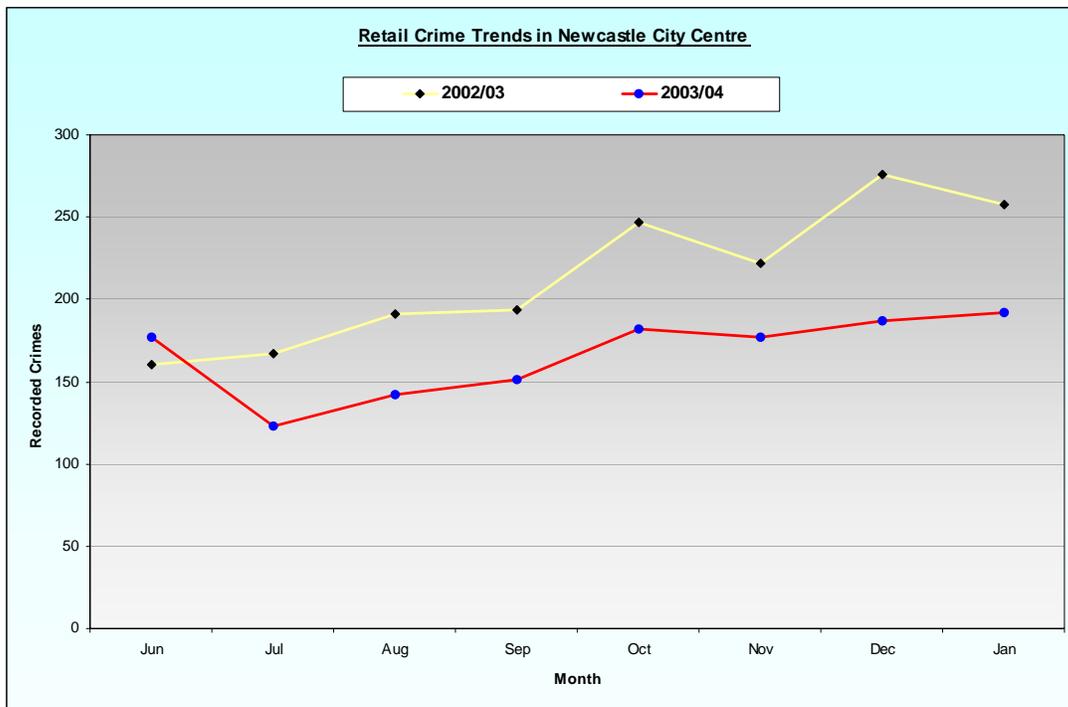
The Street Crime Unit was introduced to reduce crime, especially retail crime in Newcastle Central Area Command. By taking a Problem Solving approach to this issue using the SARA Model, the Unit has successfully reduced retail crime by no less than 22% and Robberies by no less than 11%.

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The following table and chart shows a monthly breakdown for Retail crime since the introduction of the Street Crime Unit.

Retail Crime Trends 2002/2004				
Month	2002/03	2003/04	Change	%
Jun	160	177	17	11%
Jul	167	123	-44	-26%
Aug	191	142	-49	-26%
Sep	194	151	-43	-22%
Oct	247	182	-65	-26%
Nov	222	177	-45	-20%
Dec	276	187	-89	-32%
Jan	258	192	-66	-26%
Total	1715	1331	-384	-22%



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The following table and chart shows a monthly breakdown for Robbery since the introduction of the Street Crime Unit.

Robbery Crime Trends 2002/04				
Month	2002/03	2003/04	Change	%
Jun	13	12	-1	-8%
Jul	14	5	-9	-64%
Aug	10	4	-6	-60%
Sep	9	10	1	11%
Oct	7	8	1	14%
Nov	6	8	2	33%
Dec	10	10	0	0%
Jan	5	9	4	80%
Total	74	66	-8	-11%

