

Tilley Award 2005

Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

1. Details of application

Title of the project; Reducing youth related disorder

Name of force/agency/CDRP: Cumbria Constabulary/West Cumbria CDRP

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors): Sgt Mark Wear

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Full postal address: Whitehaven Police Station, Scotch Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA287NN

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) Neil Rhodes

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s) ACC

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s) Cumbria Constabulary, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith, Cumbria CA 10 2BA

2. Summary of application

In no more than 400 words please use this space to describe your project. Include details of the problem that was addressed a description of the initiative, the main intervention principles and what they were designed to achieve, the main outcomes of project particularly in relation to the problem, evidence was used in designing the programme and how the project is evaluated.

Whitehaven is a small market town on the West Coast of Cumbria. It is the main town in the Copeland Borough Council area. Youth related disorder has been a problem in the town for many years.

When an anticipated fall in youth related disorder incidents didn't occur, at the end of the school summer holidays 2003, the police at Whitehaven began to look at ways in which to deal with such incidents in an far more effective manner.

Scanning and analysis of incidents revealed that almost a quarter of monthly incidents, which the police responded to related to nuisance behaviour. The inability of the police to deal with such incidents was reflected in the way the majority of incident logs were finalised, with either youths being 'seen and warned' or the areas where the youths were, being checked and found 'all quiet on police arrival.'

With this in mind, it was realised that if an impact could be made on youth related disorder then the number of incidents the police had to respond to could be significantly reduced.

The normal police response to increases in disorder would be to mount a high profile operation to target youths. This would usually last for one to two weeks and then stop. It was obvious that this approach was not working as offences continued to rise.

Little partnership work had happened to address the problem, partners felt the problem belonged to the police. There was also nothing in place to identify persistent offenders.

To address these problems a multi-agency group was formed to look at ways of dealing with the most persistent offenders. The partners involved include Cumbria Constabulary, West Cumbria CDRP, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, YOT, Connexions, Mobex, The LEA, Army Careers, Families First and Social Services.

Anti-social behaviour intelligence forms were issued to all police officers, enabling the identification of the most persistent offenders. Youth organistaion recruitment days have been organised to attempt to divert the youths away from trouble. A red and yellow card scheme was introduced, to assist in the identification of persistent offenders.

Through partnership working and the other initiatives, which have been introduced, there has been an improvement in the responses adopted in dealing with youth related disorder. This has had a positive effect on the number of incidents to which the police now have to respond, as incident numbers have been reduced.

3. Description of project

Describe the project following the guidance above in no more than 4000 words

Scanning

In October 2003 an anticipated fall in youth related disorder incidents relevant to the end of the school summer holidays, didn't occur. Youth related disorder on some estates appeared to be spiraling out of control.

Scanning of Polis incident logs revealed that almost a quarter of monthly incidents, to which the police at Whitehaven responded to related to nuisance and rowdy behaviour. Many officers within the station felt that early evening shifts were spent 'chasing kids about' with no end result. The inability of the police to deal with such incidents effectively was reflected in the way the majority youth nuisance related incident logs were finalised, with either youths being 'seen and warned' or the areas where the youths were being checked and found 'all quiet on police arrival.'

The normal police response to increases in disorder would be to mount a high profile operation to target youths. This would usually last for one to two weeks and then stop. It was obvious that this approach was not working as offences continued to rise.

A small amount of partnership work occurred but this had usually come when Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, ASBO, were being imposed on persistent offenders.

Partners felt the problem of Anti Social Behaviour belonged to the police.

The Police had nothing in place to identify who, the persistent offenders were. The ASBO's, which had been granted against persistent offenders, were gained using local knowledge of the officers who were constantly being called to deal with specific individuals.

Analysis

Police officers within the town were well aware of who the persistent offenders were, through either dealing with them or through speaking to members of the public.

When officers were deployed to incidents involving youths a vast proportion of incident logs were finalised as 'youths seen and warned' or area checked no youths' present.

Although previous attempts had been made at sending letters to the parents of the youths who were seen and warned, this had been done an ad hoc basis with very little structure in place.

Different officers would send different styles of letter to parents but the fact that letters were being sent was not being recorded anywhere. In theory the same youth could be seen and warned 365 days of the year and still have no action taken against them.

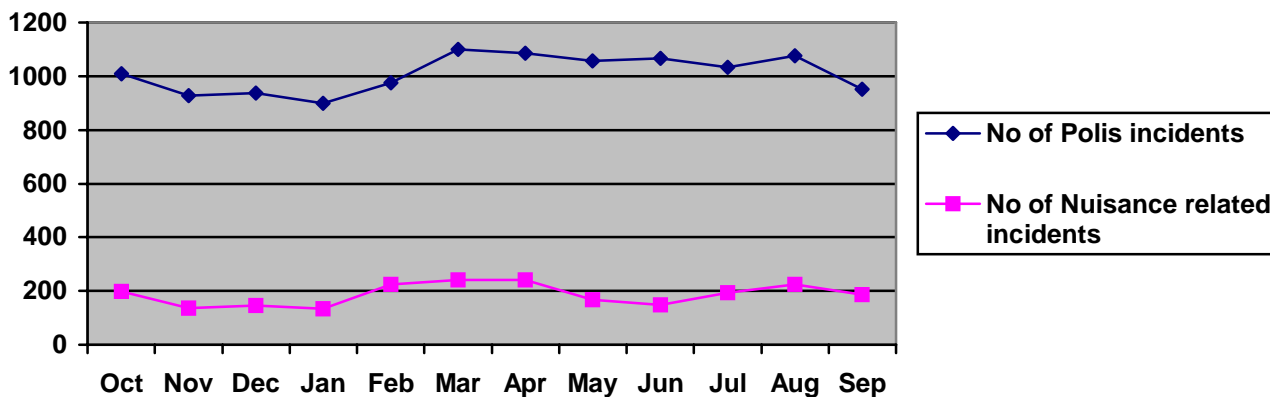
A previous attempt to introduce a three strikes and your out type scheme had failed due to a lack of understanding of the scheme and a lack of anything constructive to do with youths who reached the third level.

In practice no information about nuisance youths was being recorded on any police system other than the names of those youths who were being arrested. This obviously left a large gap in the ability to deal with youths who were involved in lower levels of disorder, which didn't merit arrest.

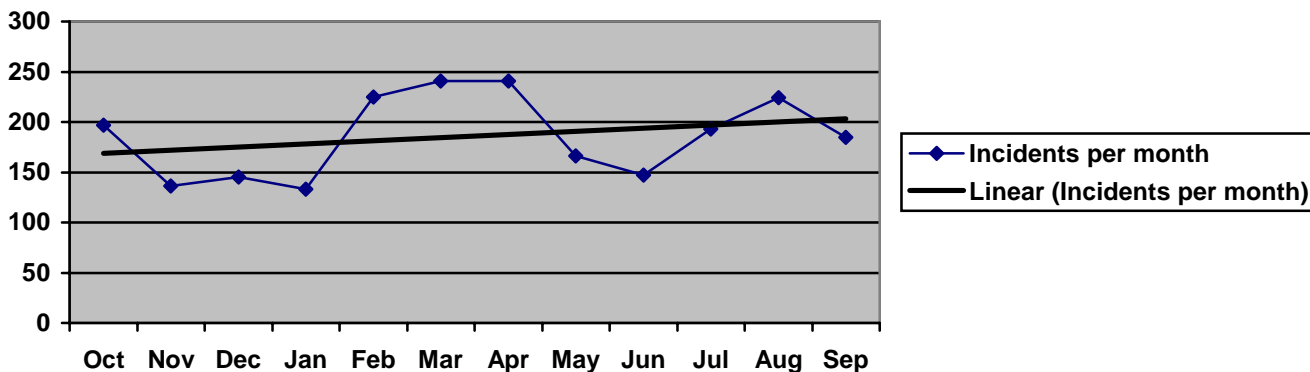
Notionally it was widely known by the police that youth related disorder and anti-social behaviour was a significant concern to residents within the town. This was also reflected by the number of incidents of disorder and anti social behaviour reported to the police.

Some months saw as much as a quarter of the incidents being dealt with within the town would relate to youth disorder.

This is reflected in the chart below. This shows incidents from October 2003 to September 2004.



Although the trend in previous years had shown that after the school holidays and with the onset of dark nights a reduction in the number of incidents would occur, the trend prior to October 2003 was showing that disorder within the town was increasing. This can be seen in chart below.



In summary the scanning and analysis revealed that although youth related disorder was a significant concern to members of the public, through the number of incidents they reported, the police response to dealing with it was ineffective. This placed a high demand on police resources and left officers with the impression that they were aimlessly chasing kids about, in response to the public's complaints.

Partnership working didn't exist in any productive format, due to the impression that youth nuisance was the police's problem.

Previous responses to the problem had not worked resulting in youth related anti social behaviour having an adverse effect on resident's lives.

Objectives

- Introduce a process whereby persistent offenders could be easily identified.
- Through partnership working introduce systems to divert youths involved in lower levels of anti social behaviour away from such behaviour.
- Provide an effective response to dealing with youth nuisance.
- Reduce the number of youth related incidents occurring within the town.

Response

All police officers were issued with anti-social behaviour forms. These forms are to be used to record the details of youths involved in anti social behaviour or who were in disorder hotspot areas. This was used as an initial attempt to identify who the persistent offenders were and to get officers to take some positive action rather than merely moving youths on.

The forms contain the youth's details, parent's details, which school the youth's go to and a brief summary of the incident they were involved in.

On completing an anti social behaviour form the completing officer would submit them to an officer who became responsible for entering the youths into the anti social behaviour register. This is an alphabetical list of names cross referenced to the relevant anti social behaviour form.

On receipt of the form the officer enters details of the youth in to the register and dependant on the number of times the youth had already been placed in the register, depended on the level of response.

Initially this was set up as the yellow and red card scheme, whereby an initial entry in the register would generate a general letter to the parents of the youth outlining the nature of the behaviour.

A second entry in the register would generate a yellow warning letter informing parents that this was the second time that their child had come to the attention of the police and further offending would result in a police visit to the parents address

The third red letter was hand delivered to the parents and as a result of this letter parents were informed that due to the continued offending of the child they would be referred to the towns persistent anti social behaviour group as an attempt to divert the child away from anti social behaviour.

The persistent anti social behaviour offender group was formed as a multi agency partnership to address the behaviour of youths constantly involved in anti social behaviour. The group meets on a monthly basis and has representatives from the Local Education Authority, Connexions, Youth Offending Team, NACRO and housing providers.

All agencies are allowed to refer youths in to the group, police referrals come from the use of the anti-social behaviour forms. From this referral the type of offending is discussed and suitable courses of action are discussed which will divert the youth in question away from anti social behaviour.

These interventions have included the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Anti social Behaviour Orders, referrals and work with Connexions and the Youth Offending Team to address behaviour such as anger management courses. The Local Education Authority carries out increased monitoring of the youth, within the school environment.

At the meeting each agency will agree it's response and then report back at the next months meeting. Dependent on the success of the interventions the youth will either be removed from the agenda of the group or will remain a target for further work and intervention.

One of the biggest complaints from many of the youths who are spoken to by officers is that there is nothing for them to do.

This led to the introduction of youth organisation recruitment days being held. These are held in Local secondary schools where the captive audience, are given the opportunity to see the various activities which are available to them within the town. This has included the Cadet Forces. Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Scouts, Guides and the providers of local sporting facilities.

Assessment

The issue of anti social behaviour forms to all officers was well received as they felt that they now had a positive way of dealing with youths rather than just warning them or displacing the problem.

The forms have enabled the police to identify who the persistent offenders are without having to rely on purely notional evidence. This can be seen in the case study for Lee, post.

To date 800 anti social behaviour forms have been registered. It would be wrong to suggest that officers submit forms at every incident of anti social behaviour they attend to, but the numbers of forms submitted reflect that in most instances they do.

The yellow and red card scheme didn't work as it was intended, as we quickly realised that a youth could have three anti-social behaviour forms submitted about them, but only for being involved in lower levels of anti social behaviour. This type of behaviour could not lead on to any form of ASBO application.

This scheme was revamped, yellow and red warning letters are still used but the type of letter sent is dependant on the type of evidence provided on the anti social behaviour form and the number of times the youth has appeared in the anti social behaviour register.

There has been no negative feedback from parents who have received letters from the police in fact quite the opposite has occurred where parents have contacted the police to thank them for letting them know what their child has been doing and where they have been.

The use of this simple form has enabled the police to become effective in identifying who the persistent offenders are, prior to this no system was in place to identify persistent offenders. This has assisted greatly in identifying which youths to refer to the persistent anti social behaviour group. In the majority of cases those youths referred by the police have also caused problems within their respective schools and on the estates where they live.

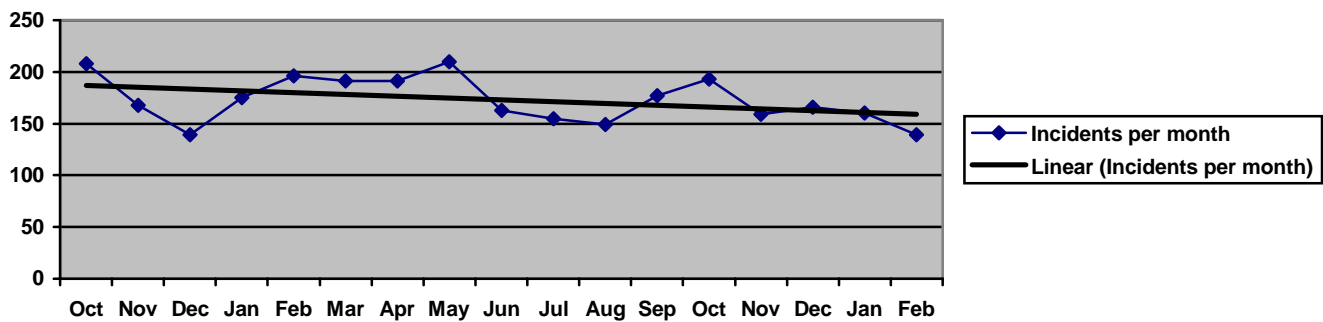
Through these referrals the other agencies have realised that anti social behaviour is not just a police problem. Effective partnership working now exists the work of each agency complementing that of the other rather than each agency working against on another. This has made the interventions adopted far more co-ordinated.

The group, to try to prevent persistent offending, has used a wide variety of interventions. Where these interventions have failed the fact that they have been carried out has provided sound evidence for ASBO applications' as we have been able to show that we have attempted to prevent youths offending rather than just going straight to the point of an ASBO application. This can be seen in the case study for Craig.

The process adopted has, as a result of the 800 referral forms submitted led to 45 youths being referred to the persistent offenders group, this in turn has led on to 25 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts being signed, which run for a six month period. There have been three ASBO granted.

The use of youth organisation recruitment days has proved to be successful. In some cases organizations have become oversubscribed, where as in the past they had had insufficient interest in their organisations to justify their continued existence. This was most evident with the Scouts. No doubt this increased recruitment has led to the diversion of many youths away from anti social behaviour.

In the year prior to the commencement of this campaign the trend in anti social behaviour incidents within the town was showing a steady rise. Since the introduction of the persistent offender group in October 2003 and then the introduction of anti social behaviour forms in January 2004, the trend shows that incidents of anti social behaviour are now going down. This can be seen in the chart below.



Through partnership working the response to anti social behaviour has become more effective and is now not just a police problem.

Case study Lee

Lee is a fifteen year old from the Whitehaven area, he is part of a small gang which frequents the town centre on a Friday and Saturday night. Prior to April 2004 his details had been recorded on the anti social behaviour forms on two occasions resulting in a general letter and then a yellow warning letter being sent to his parents. He had also been arrested for an offence of being drunk and incapable.

In April three forms were submitted about his behaviour. This resulted in his referral to the persistent offender group. It was agreed that he would be offered the opportunity to sign an ABC and Connexions would work with him as he had shown an interest in joining the Army.

Initially this course of action appeared to work but then he began to offend once again as further anti social behaviour forms began to be submitted about him.

Further discussion within the persistent offender group found that he had not been attending appointments with Connexions. Due to the nature of his offending it was decided to apply for an ASBO. Through the group we were able to show that other interventions had been tried to prevent his offending but these had failed. This was used as evidence for the ASBO application.

Of all the incidents Lee had been involved in only three came to the police's attention as a result of calls from members of the public. The other 13 incidents were all found as a result of the anti social behaviour forms. If these forms were not in use there would have been no evidence to justify the ASBO application.

Case study Craig

Craig was one of the first youths to be referred to the persistent offender group after he was involved and named as being involved in numerous incidents on the estate where he lived. On prior occasions he had been spoken to by the police and arrested but this had not impacted upon his offending.

Craig was given the opportunity to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract, this in itself gave the police and Connexions the opportunity to point out to Craig how his behaviour was affecting people in the area where he lived.

From this it was decided to send Craig on two-day course, funded by Connexions and emphasising the need for Craig to take more responsibility for his actions.

Craig was visited a month after the course, during this month he had not offended. He said that the ABC and then the course had made him realize how stupid his behavior was. His parent's had also seen a complete change in his attitude.

Six months later and Craig has still not re-offended

The above case studies highlight how the processes, which have been put in place can and have worked. Although we accept there are youths who we can do nothing with other than arrest and put into the Criminal Justice System we have shown that early intervention, even in the form of a letter to parents show how lower levels of anti social can be effectively dealt with through partnership working.

The response has been well received by the partners involved and all now feel they are making a significant contribution in dealing with a problem, which is of great concern to members of the public.

Colin McCourt from St Benedicts School has said that this approach is a fantastic way of sharing information and he can now see the behaviour of problem children outside school hours.

Education Welfare officers have said that the approach is giving an insight in to offending outside school, the information sharing is excellent and good practice in working together has been developed.

Barbara Strong head of the local Pupil Referral Unit, has praised the work of the group especially when referring youths to organizations, which have helped to stop them offending.

Keith Cartner, ASB co-ordinator for West Cumbria is now promoting this approach throughout the rest of the Area due to it's success.

Most importantly through partnership working persistent offenders are being dealt with at an early stage, which is having a positive effect on disorder related incidents.

