

Tilley Award 2006

Application form

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing this form. By making an application to the awards, entrants are agreeing to abide by the conditions laid out in the Guidance. Please complete the following form in full and within the word limit. Failure to do so could result in disqualification from the competition.

Completed application forms should be e-mailed to Tricia Perkins; patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on Friday 28th April 2006. No entries will be accepted after this time/date. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262. Any queries regarding other aspects of the awards should be directed to Michael Wilkinson on 0207 035 0247 or Lindsey Poole on 0207 035 0234.

Please tick box to indicate whether the entry should be considered for the main award, the criminal damage award or both;

Main award

Criminal Damage Award

Both Awards

1. Details of application

Title of the project : Bluelight Disco

Name of force/agency/CDRP: Fife Constabulary

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors): PC Fraser Laird

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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) : Mr Allan Burnett

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s): Assistant Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s) Police Headquarters, Detroit Road, Glenrothes, Fife, KY6 2RJ

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.

The problems associated with young people under the age of 18 consuming alcohol in the U.K. are well documented. Within Dunfermline, Fife, this was presenting a particular problem for the Police and other agencies. A group of partners, including the Police, Health Services, Local Authority and licensees, came together in 2000 to identify what could be done locally to contribute to making an impact on the problem. This was initially done through a combination of education and advice for young people and licensees, followed by targeted enforcement campaigns.

Representatives from the partnership were invited to make a presentation to the World Health Organisations conference in Melbourne in March 2004 on the work of the group. Whilst in Australia, the group spent time with the Victoria Police learning about ways they had tackled similar problems.

One initiative the group felt they could adapt within the resources available was the Blue Light Discos. The discos are aimed at 1st to 4th year high school pupils, take place one Friday per month and provide an alcohol free, violence free and safe environment for young people to enjoy themselves.

Following consultation with young people, it was agreed to establish the discos and that they would be held once per month. On the night each young person is breathalysed and searched on entering the premises.

The real strength of the events are that not only are they financially sustainable, they are also supported by a very strong partnership consisting of 8 different agencies who regularly contribute, all of whom have the opportunity to interact with the young people.

Through a separate quieter room known as the Chill Out room, agencies have the opportunity to consult with young people and provide information on a wide range of issues.

Since the discos started in Dunfermline in August 2004, over 5,500 young people have passed through the doors, with only two having failed the breath test. Analysis of crime figures also show a reduction in the number of vandalisms and nuisance calls on the nights of the events compared with other nights. The events are regularly evaluated and changes made accordingly.

The initiative has now become established in other parts of Fife and Scotland, with a web site now available for all of the sister events to publicise their activities on.

3. Description of Project

Describe the project following the guidance given in no more than 4000 words.

Exploration of the Problem

Solving the problems associated with young people consuming excess alcohol remains at the top of the agenda for many public sector agencies. Issues such as anti-social behaviour, impact on the young persons health, impact on the wider community and the draining of resources from agencies such as the Police and Health Service are widespread. It has been recognised that the “solution” is in fact a series of component solutions.

The Scottish Executive’s Plan for Action on Alcohol Misuse and the Review of Liquor Licensing and Public Disorder, both place an emphasis on working with young people in order to find effective solutions to the problems associated with alcohol.

Within Fife itself, all of the main public sector agencies, including Fife Constabulary, Fife Council, NHS Fife and the voluntary sector etc, have signed up to a series of common objectives affecting the quality of life in Fife within the Fife Community Plan. Under the theme “Making Communities Safer”, a commitment is given to “reducing problems caused in our communities by drug and alcohol abuse”.¹

Fife Constabulary’s Policing Plan states that “A multi-agency approach will address the problems associated with the abuse of alcohol, particularly upon the involvement of young people”.²

The Fife Drug and Alcohol Corporate Action Plan, produced by the Fife Drug and Alcohol Action Team, has as one of its key priorities to “Reduce binge drinking, because of the harmful social and individual consequences”.³

It is estimated that in the U.K. alcohol abuse costs the NHS £3 billion per year on hospital services and that 1 in 4 acute male admissions are alcohol related.⁴ Amongst young women in the 16 – 24 age group, the proportion exceeding sensible drinking limits has more than doubled from 15% in 1983 to 33% in 2003⁵.

In Fife, the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) 2002 survey found that, of the 1747 questioned, 40% of the 15 year olds drank at least once per week. Perhaps more concerning however were the associated high risk behaviours that our young people were participating in. For example, 15% had tried drugs whilst drunk, 13% had had unprotected sex whilst drunk and that 43% had vomited whilst drunk.⁶

The Local Context

In common with many other parts of the country, local staff from a number of agencies had been receiving representations from members of the public concerned about the effects that young people consuming alcohol was having on their community. Concerns were registered at Community Police surgeries, local Councillors surgeries community meetings and through the local press.

Within Dunfermline, there has always been a positive approach to looking for solutions to some of these problems, with local workers far more concerned with what they can do to effect change as opposed to what barriers stand in their way.

¹ A Stronger Future For Fife – Fife Community Plan – 6th April 2006

² Fife Policing Plan

³ Fife Drug and Alcohol Corporate Action Plan 2005 – 2006

⁴ Royal College of Physicians, 2001

⁵ World Health Organisation 2003

⁶ SALSUS 2002 – Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, University of Edinburgh

In 2000, the Boozebusters group was established as a forum for joint working. The group consisted of representatives from the Fife Police, Health Promotions, Fife Council, Elected Members, Fife Drug and Alcohol Action Team and local licensees. For the first three years, the work of the group centered around a cycle of education and awareness raising amongst both licensees and young people, by means of poster competitions amongst the young people and the provision of literature and posters, till stickers etc, to the licensees. This would then be followed up by a period of enforcement, whereby the Police would take a zero tolerance attitude to both the sale of alcohol and drinking in public places.

Over a four-weekend period during 2003 in the Dunfermline area, Fife Constabulary's Community Team carried out a targeted campaign on under age drinkers. The result was that 117 litres of alcohol was confiscated, with a large proportion taken from young girls mirroring the national trend of an increase in alcohol consumption by young girls.

It was around this time that one of the group members from Health Promotions submitted a paper on the work of the group to the World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) who were looking for examples of good practice in the field of reducing alcohol consumption. Shortly thereafter, members of the group were invited to present to the W.H.O. International Conference on Health Promotion in Melbourne, Australia. One group member from Fife Constabulary, one from Health Promotions and one from Fife Council attended the week long event in April 2004.

In addition to the valuable experience gained at the conference, group members spent time discussing common issues with both the Victoria Police and the Liquor Licensing Board in Melbourne. Information was gathered on matters such as the Victoria state courts attitude to dealing with alcohol abuse, strict adherence by licensees to standard signage and pilots of nurses being located in special "reception centres" to deal with those who had been arrested and were under the influence of alcohol. However, none of the aforementioned initiatives could be transferred to Dunfermline utilising only the resources of the group.

The one initiative that the group were made aware of and that would be possible to transfer was that of the Blue Light Discos. These discos started in Melbourne in the mid 1970's in response to concerns raised by local nightclub owners who ran discos for young people. The events would regularly be broken up by fights with ever increasing numbers of young people under the influence of alcohol. The solution was to breathalyse all the young people entering the nightclub. This had an immediate effect on the instances of violence at the events and therefore reduced the number of young people drinking on a Friday night. The group members felt that not only would this intervention be appropriate in Dunfermline, but also that it could be developed to include much more of an advice and information content.

Response to the Problem

On return from Australia, a meeting of the wider Boozebuster group was convened and it was agreed that the Blue Light discos would be run one Friday per month and offer young people an alternative to drinking on a Friday night, engaging in anti-social behaviour and other associated high risk behaviours. Consultation was carried by Detached Youth Workers in the community, School Nurses spoke to young people in the schools and at the various Community Development forums within the area. The consultation led to a very positive response.

What appeared to be particularly attractive over traditional discos and other diversionary events to both the young people and the parents was the fact that the events would provide a safe environment. Parents felt happy to let their children attend as the Police would be in attendance and the young people felt that "nothing bad would happen to them". These perceptions remain to this day.

In order to make best use of all of the resources available within the Dunfermline area and to give people the opportunity to buy in, invites were sent to a wide range of local agencies to attend a scoping meeting.

The partners who responded and have subsequently remained with the project were:-

Fife Constabulary – Community Team

NHS Fife – Health Promotion and School Nurses

Fife Council – Youth Work, Regeneration Team, Community Wardens, Integrated Community Schools

Local Elected Members

Chair of the Local Children's Panel

Fife Fire and Rescue

Community Volunteers

Dunfermline Athletic Football Club

From the start a clear set of objectives were established by the partners, namely:-

- To provide young people with a safe, alcohol free, drug free and violence free environment for young people to enjoy themselves.
- To impact on youth crime within the Dunfermline area.
- To give agencies the opportunity to interact with young people and provide information and advice on a whole host of topics, particularly health.
- To make the events sustainable, both in terms of physical and financial resources.

It was agreed at the start, that for the events to be successful, then the partner agencies would have to be able to add value to the services they already provide. To that end, a set of critical success factors was agreed that would justify the partner's ongoing involvement.

General Success Factors

Maintain the numbers attending

Self sustainability

Wide partnership input

Transferability

Sharing of best practice

Fife Constabulary

Reduction in the number of nuisance and vandalism calls on the nights of the discos.

Minimal failure of the breath testing

Minimal disorder within the events

Opportunity to break down barriers with young people

NHS Fife

Establishing a themed programme of health promotion

Reduction in the number of young people smoking

Opportunity to offer sexual health advice

Youth Services

Increase in the number of opportunities to consult young people on the services they want

Opportunity to build relationships with young people

Fife Fire and Rescue Service

Opportunity to promote safety messages to young people

Opportunity to break down barriers with young people

One further important success factor was that these events would give the group the opportunity to demonstrate how the strategies highlighted at the beginning of this paper were being translated into local action.

So How Does It work?

Once the objectives and parameters were established, an application for a small grant was made to the Community Safety Partnerships Youth Diversion Fund. The group were awarded approximately £1,000 to establish the event and prepare all of the publicity and advertising materials. This work was very much a joint effort between the Police, Fife Council's Regeneration Team and the Abbeyview Community Regeneration Forum (a local community group).

The group agreed that, in response to the consultation with the young people, that a neutral venue should be booked. The young people perceived that there may be territorial issues should the events be held in the local schools. Likewise, the partners felt that partly due to cost and partly due to the message that could be given to young people, that the local nightclub should be avoided. Accordingly, the local Territorial Army Hall was booked. The hall was surveyed by Fife Fire and Rescue Service and deemed safe for 250 young people. At that stage it was impossible to accurately predict how many young people would attend the first event.

One of the key objectives was to create an atmosphere where young people would enjoy themselves, therefore an important factor was to ensure the music was what the young people wanted. The disco booked was one which was used for the school discos and had been recommended to the group.

Each of the staff and volunteers involved in the events were put through Disclosure Scotland checks.

Posters and tickets were produced and a press release was put out to local papers. Posters were displayed within the schools, local Council offices, local shops, clinics and Dunfermline Police Station.

Tickets for the events were sold through the four Dunfermline High Schools and at the Dunfermline Police Station reception. Given that the group wanted to make the events as accessible as possible to all young people in the area, the tickets were priced at only £1. As will be shown later in this paper, the charge of £1 would ensure financial sustainability if the attendance remained steady.

A separate and quiet area was identified within the venue to act as the Chill Out Room. This area gives the young people the chance to talk with their friends and be given the opportunity, if they want to, to talk with staff about particular themed topics. Health Promotions, the Police, the Fire Service and youth workers, prepared a programme for the Chill Out Room. From a health perspective, the themes for the Chill Out Room follow the Health Education Board Scotland calendar of events, with topics such as the impact of alcohol on health, smoking, sexual health, testicular cancer, oral health. Furthermore, themes such as the work of the Police Force, opportunities to volunteer and fireworks safety have been covered by the partners. This room also gives agencies the opportunity to consult with the young people on a wide range of subjects and has been accessed by organisations that are not regularly involved in the partnership, e.g. Fife-wide agencies or staff from other agencies looking to establish a similar event and looking for feedback from the young people. Although it is optional, our experience has shown that the young people are very keen to take part in the consultation events.

A series of health and safety procedures were prepared, covering things such as risk assessments and a fire plan for the events. These were prepared utilising the experience of the Police and Fire service.

On the night of the event staff and volunteers arrive approximately half an hour prior to the start of the event and are allocated particular tasks, e.g. carrying out the breath tests, marshalling the crowds, checking the toilets, working in the tuck shop etc. On average there will be approximately 25 staff and volunteers on duty throughout the night and drawn from the various partners, the Police will have approximately 6 to 7 Officers including the Community Inspector and Community Sergeant and perhaps 2 Special Constables on duty in the build up to the start of the event to ensure that the traffic is marshalled appropriately. Thereafter 3 to 4 Police Officers will leave and tour the hot spots of Dunfermline, although regular radio contact is maintained with the Officers at the disco. Experience has shown that the events are a good development opportunity for new recruits and Special Constables allowing them to interact with young people. Those Officers touring the hot spots will then return at the end of the event to ensure a smooth dispersal of the young people and associated traffic.

The doors usually open at approximately 7:15p.m. with the music starting at 7:30. The night ends at 11:00p.m.

On entry **all** are breathalysed and searched. As part of the publicity for the events, it is made clear that these checks will be carried out and that they are a condition of entry. Posters are also displayed at the doors explaining the process. Given that the breath test is voluntary, partners such as the Community Wardens and youth workers have been trained to carry out the testing, the Police carry out all searches.

If someone fails the breath test, they are taken home to their parents by Police Officers and the circumstances are explained to the parents, the Community Inspector will officially write to the parents and this will in most cases be followed by a ban for a specified period. In the event that someone is ejected for their behaviour, they will also be banned for an appropriate period of time.

Following the breath test and search, the young person is given a numbered ticket. This ticket doubles as both raffle ticket for the prize draw and a double check as to how many young people are on the premises.

A tuck shop is also provided with a very minimal mark up on soft drinks and snacks. The tuck shop is also staffed by volunteers, usually members of the community group and the wives of two of the Police Officers.

Has It Worked?

When the partnership agreed to commit to the project, it was a new initiative and no-one was certain as to how many young people would turn up and whether the young people would continue to support it over the long term.

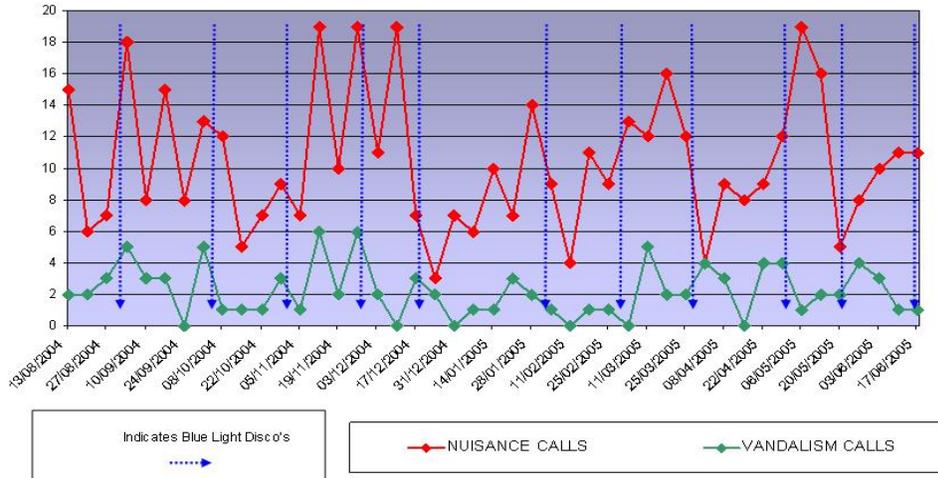
The first venue to be used was initially rated to cope with approximately 250 young people by the Fire Service. The first event in August 2004 drew 113 young people, which at that stage was a manageable number for the staff. By the next disco, the numbers had increased to 250. The Fire Service reassessed the venue and the capacity was increased to 350. By the fourth disco the numbers had reached 350 and were sustained at that level until the demand for tickets grew to such an extent that a bigger venue had to be sought. In fact demand became so great that attempts were made to present forged tickets.

In June 2005, the event was moved to East End Park, the home of Dunfermline Athletic Football Club, where the capacity was raised again to 500. However for the sake of safety and to keep the numbers of volunteers required to a manageable size, it was agreed to only sell 450 tickets. This venue was suitable over the summer months, however since the event was using the concourse under one of the stands, it became extremely difficult to heat during the winter months. In February 2006 it was agreed to move to the canteen within Lauder College in Dunfermline, which has provided an ideal venue both in terms of size and the facilities available.

One of the main objectives set at the beginning of the project was to have an impact on the crime figures within Dunfermline. Over the first eleven events to be held in Dunfermline Figures show that the average number of youth related disorder calls have reduced by 13% in Dunfermline on nights when the disco is on.

Figures released by the Home Office suggest that the cost of vandalism is on average £890 per incident. This takes into account Police time, Prosecution time etc. If we relate these figures to the reduction in incidents on the night of the events, this equates to a saving of £2,251 per disco, or £24,769 over the first eleven events.

IMPACT OF BLUE LIGHT DISCO ON NUISANCE/VANDALISM CALLS



The actual profile over the first eleven events is shown above.

In terms of cost of the events, each disco costs the following:-

Hire of Disco	£130
Hire of Venue	£175
Top Up Tuck Shop	£150
Total Cost	£455 (average of £1.01 per person)

Income	
Ticket Sales	£450
Tuck Shop Income	£272
Total Income	£722

The profit from each disco is recycled into marketing materials for the young people and for promoting the events.

In terms of the impact that the events are having on the lives of young people, at one event a young man was arrested for assaulting a Police Officer inside one of the discos. This young man had come to the attention of the Police on many occasions in the past. As a result of this incident, and the partnership working that takes place at these events, his case was picked up by one of the Family Support Workers who regularly attends as a volunteer. Subsequently he attended the Operation Lifeline outward-bound project and has since taken part in sports leadership courses and been involved in community service. Since that event, this young mans life has turned around to the extent that he now has good prospects of getting a job when he leaves school and has never come to the attention of the Police since.

With the opportunity to interact with young people within the Chill Out Room, 19 young people who attend the Blue Light discos now regularly attend the drop in sessions held by the Family Support Worker and the Sexual Health Worker in school.

At the first disco at Lauder College, a group of approximately 12 young people were hanging about outside the venue. When they were approached by one of the youth work staff, it became apparent that they were all under the influence of alcohol and that this was a regular Friday night occurrence. The Youth Worker then proceeded to show the young people around the disco and then back out again. At the next event, all of them turned up and passed the breath test. It is hoped that they will remain regular attendees.

In order to improve communication with the young people and those interested in hosting a similar event, a website was created at www.bluelight-fife.org.uk to promote the work of the project and to give the young people the opportunity to make contact with the organisers. This has been a very popular tool for the young people to ask questions about the events and to request changes to be made.

Consultation is carried out with the young people at every event to ensure that the disco is still meeting their expectations. This is usually done by means of a graffiti wall, face to face discussions or a questionnaire.

The response from the young people has been very positive. Comments gathered during consultation have included:

“It stops me going to the park and getting pi**ed”

“Can we have one every Friday”

“I feel safe and that nothing bad would happen to me”

Comments from parents include:

“I only let my daughter go because it was a safe environment”

“It’s long overdue, it should have happened years ago”

“I heard the last disco was a success and was safe, so I have allowed my son to attend his first disco”

The discos have generated a large amount of interest from other parts of Fife and Scotland as a whole. Successful events are now being held regularly in Leven and Lochgelly who are attracting 250 and 200 respectively to each event. Police in both areas are also seeing an impact on youth crime and vandalism on the nights of the discos. In addition to these events, discos have been held, or are being planned, in:

- Kirkcaldy
- West Fife Villages
- Cupar
- Dalgety Bay
- Central Scotland
- Lothian and Borders
- Highland
- Argyle and Bute

Support materials have been produced by the partners involved in the Dunfermline event for those considering establishing a Blue Light Disco giving details of some of the things that should be considered.

Have We Met Our Objectives

To provide young people with a safe, alcohol free, drug free and violence free environment for young people to enjoy themselves.

To date in excess of 5,600 young people have attended the discos, only two people have failed the breath test and three have been ejected for bad behaviour.

To impact on youth crime within the Dunfermline area.

The figures for Dunfermline and Lochgelly show that there has is a continuing reduction in youth related crime on the nights of the events.

To give agencies the opportunity to interact with young people and provide information and advice on a whole host of topics, particularly health.

The numbers attending the sessions in the Chill Out Room and the quantity of educational materials taken by the young people indicate that the message is getting through. In addition, the examples of individual cases whereby the lives of individuals have been positively impacted on by partnership working make it worthwhile

To make the events sustainable, both in terms of physical and financial resources.

The young people have voted with their feet! Numbers have been sustained since the events began. Had the events not been meeting the young people's expectations, they simply would not attend. In terms of financial sustainability, each event is making a small profit which allows the partners to invest in making future events just as successful.

One of the biggest successes of the events has been the opportunity for the partner agencies to interact on a regular basis with the young people and to gain a greater understanding of their needs. For example, many of the partners and visitors to the events have been struck by how compliant the young people are to the rules and discipline in place and the fact that they seem oblivious to the presence of uniformed Police Officers.

The discos have also given members of the community the opportunity to positively contribute towards providing an alternative to drinking on a Friday night.

Conclusion

It can be seen that working in partnership with a range of agencies with common interests and goals has resulted in a proactive approach to reducing youth related crime and disorder through providing an alternative to consuming alcohol. The Blue Light Disco's also provide a very practical example of how high level strategies for dealing with the problems associated with alcohol consumption are being tackled at a local level. This project has also demonstrated that through partnership working, Police resources can be more effectively deployed.