
**OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
PORTFOLIO**

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under The Portfolio Holder for Community and Public Protection.

Darlington Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

2. The full refresh of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, completed by the DAAT on behalf of the LSP - Safer Drinking, Safer Darlington 2008/2011 - was successfully launched on 29 September 2008. The expanded alcohol service, Darlington Community Alcohol Services, was also successfully launched on 29 September. In addition, the North East Alcohol Office was launched in October, providing a lead on social marketing, consistency of service provision and practice across the region and a focus for lobbying government on alcohol related issues.
3. For the rolling 12 months up to 30 September 2008 crime reduced by 10% compared to the same period in 2007. There were 9,362 recorded crimes in Darlington between October 2006 and September 2007. For the same months in 2007/08 this fell to 9,362, a reduction of 992 crimes (10%).
4. Between July and September 2008 there were 2,273 crimes recorded by the Police in Darlington, which is a 1% increase on the previous quarter (April to June 2008 - 2,247 crimes).

Community Safety Plan 2008-2011

5. The priorities identified within the plan are:
 - (a) Anti Social Behaviour
 - (b) Reducing Offending
 - (c) Violent Crime and Disorder in the Night Time Economy
 - (d) Domestic Abuse
 - (e) Public Reassurance
6. Reducing the harm caused by Drugs and Alcohol forms a cross cutting theme across all priorities. For each of the priority themes specific delivery plans have been developed, each plan being progressed through an identified plan owner.

Description	Ref	Comment
Serious Acquisitive Crime	NI 16	Collected via monthly iquanta data
Perceptions of ASB	NI 17	Collected via Place Survey
Assault with Injury	NI 20	Collected via monthly iquanta data.
Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse	NI 32	Live 2009/10
Alcohol Related Hospital Admission Rates	NI 39	Collection issues to resolve
Drug Users in Effective Treatment	NI 40	Collected quarterly in arrears

7. There are a number of data collection issues that are currently being progressed locally and nationally. In addition, some indicators will not be in place until 2009/10.

Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC)

8. Serious Acquisitive Crime includes Burglary Dwelling, Robbery, Theft of Motor Vehicle and Theft from Motor Vehicle. The CDRP target is to reduce SAC by 8.2% by 2010/11.
9. The table below shows overall performance based on the **last rolling 12 months**:

2008 Baseline	2010/11 Target	12 Months to June 2008	% Change
1933	1766	1730	- 11%

10. The table below shows current performance against **quarter two targets**:

Components	Quarter 2 Target	Quarter 2 Actual	+/-%
Burglary Dwelling	114	155	36%
Robbery	21	19	-10%
Theft of Motor Vehicle	114	109	-4%
Theft from Motor Vehicle	244	180	-26%

11. There are no significant issues in regards to NI 16 although burglary dwelling is being closely monitored and offenders targeted to mitigate any potential risks to performance.

Perceptions of ASB - NI 17

12. This is currently measured through the General Survey and will form part of the new Place Survey. The indicator relates to people's perceived level of ASB in the area in which they live. The 2007/08 baseline is 23% with a target of 19.5% for 2010/11.
13. Between July and September 2008 there were 2,727 incidents recorded by police compared to 2,877 between April and June 2008, a reduction of 150 incidents.

Assault with Injury (AWI) - NI 20

14. This includes Actual Bodily Harm and Other Injury and racially/religiously aggravated actual bodily harm. The CDRP have set a target to reduce AWI by 10% by 2010/11.

15. For the quarter to September there were 163 assaults that fall within this indicator compared to 130 in the previous quarter, an increase of 33 incidents (25%).

Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse - NI 32

16. This measure comes into place in 2009/10 and relates to the repeat victimisation rate of those individuals supported through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
17. Between July and September 2008 there were 472 incidents recorded by Police compared to 480 between April and June 2008. The repeat victimisation rate for the quarter was 36% which is an improvement on the previous quarter at 44%.

Not in My Neighbourhood Work

18. The CDRP took part in Not in my Neighbourhood week which ran from 13 to 17 October 2008 in Park East.
19. A summary of the main activity is detailed below:
 - (a) A 22 year old man was cautioned for possession of cannabis and an 18 year old man was arrested pending the outcome of tests on a substance believed to be cocaine found during raids at properties in Severn Way on the Skerne Park Estate in Darlington. A quantity of cash was also seized.
 - (b) In Wordsworth Road a quantity of cocaine was seized, as well as kitchen equipment worth more than £2,000 which is believed to have been stolen. One man was arrested and another is wanted in connection with the suspected stolen goods.
 - (c) A Bottlewatch Scheme was also launched at three off licences in the ward, which will provide the police and wardens with ways of tracing where alcohol seized from underage drinkers has been bought from.
 - (d) More than 150 hours of foot and bike patrols by the Police and PCSOs.
 - (e) More than 40 residents were visited and given SmartWater to security mark their possessions.
 - (f) Skerne Park Primary School was visited where pupils bikes were security marked.
 - (g) One youth was reported for driving offences after being found riding an off road quad bike.
 - (h) The fire service launched a Fire Watch initiative aimed at reducing fire related anti social behaviour.
 - (i) Fire crews also carried out home fire safety checks at houses in the Poets Corner area of Skerne Park.
 - (j) Locations for removal of graffiti and rubbish were identified after an estate walk through, carried out with residents.
 - (k) 118 young people engaged with youth workers, including 56 young people making use of the multi-use games area extended opening time.
 - (l) Community safety advice was given out, along with light timers, energy-saving light bulbs and personal attack alarms
20. The CDRP Problem Solving Group has developed an action plan to tackle a range of ongoing issues within the ward during the next few months; this plan has been developed in conjunction with residents and partners.

Anti Social Behaviour

21. The 'Summer Nights' campaign has now concluded and multi-agency attention is now focused on the Borough-wide 'Nightsafe' operation. Tackling violence in the night time economy, alcohol related hospital admissions, underage alcohol, sale and consumption and general youth and disorder, Nightsafe is a multi-agency initiative managed via the CDRP Problem Solving Group (PSG) between Police, Fire Services, Youth Services, Anti Social Behaviour Team and the DAAT and will run throughout the autumn and winter months.
22. The Council's Environmental Crime Team recently developed the warning sticker initiative to deter potential car buyers from buying cars sold on the highway. Purchasers often believe they are buying from a private vendor, however traders are selling the vehicles in the name of the last registered keeper to avoid detection and prosecution under new legislation. In an initial pilot, warning stickers have been adhered to cars advertised for sale on the highway in North Road but the initiative is being rolled out across the town by end of October 2008.
23. To date 19 vehicles have been investigated and received a sticker. Letters have been sent to the last registered keepers, notifying them of the sale of the vehicle in their name and advising of the requirement to change the log book details or face action. Four private sellers have contacted us as a result and have been advised accordingly. Records show that all vehicles have been removed by sellers within one day of the sticker being adhered and none of the vehicles have returned to the location. There has been a dramatic reduction in new vehicles on site and these are dealt with whilst on routine patrols. No further complaints have been received from residents since the launch of this initiative.
24. Three members of the same family living in the Bank Top area have received Anti Social Behaviour Orders totalling 12 years as a result of their intimidating, aggressive, threatening and damaging behaviour, preventing them from:
 - (a) Engaging in conduct which causes harassment, alarm or distress
 - (b) Using foul language
 - (c) Intimidating anyone
 - (d) Throwing any missiles of any description
 - (e) Causing or threatening to cause criminal damage
 - (f) Entering an exclusion zone
 - (g) Consuming alcohol in public or open space
25. A multi-agency week of action has taken place between 13 and 19 October 2008 called 'Not in My Neighbourhood'. As a Home Office initiative, the keys aims were to:
 - (a) Raise public awareness of action already being taken to deal with crime and anti social behaviour
 - (b) Increase confidence in the ability of the authorities to deal with crime and anti social behaviour
 - (c) Encourage residents to engage with the partners and play their role in the reduction of crime and anti social behaviour
 - (d) Provide reassurance to residents in areas where perhaps it is most needed

26. All CDRP partners were involved in the week of action. During the week, the focus was on drugs, motorbikes, youths causing annoyance and burglary in the Park East area. Uniformed Wardens linked in with Police teams to be a visible presence in the area, providing reassurance to residents and Anti Social Behaviour Enforcement Officers were present to take civil actions against persistent and problematic individuals.

Public Reassurance

27. Weekly bulletins promoting the activity and results of the Summer Nights and Night Safe plans have been provided by DBC Communications unit to the media, gaining regular half and full page slots in the Northern Echo, Darlington Advertiser and Herald and Post, as well as the Town Crier.

Youth Offending

28. The number of first time entrants (FTE) to the youth justice system is on target i.e. reduce by 5% by 2008 the number of (FTE) into the criminal justice system, compared to the baseline figure of 280 in 2005/2006. A total of 59 young people were referred against the 2008/2009 annual target of 275. This is also a stretch PSA target for the YOS to reduce by 10% the number of FTE by 2009 against the 2004 - 2005 baseline of 311. Performance against this target is consistently strong and continues to improve further.

Table A shows the number of first time entrants by locality in the last financial year April to March 2008

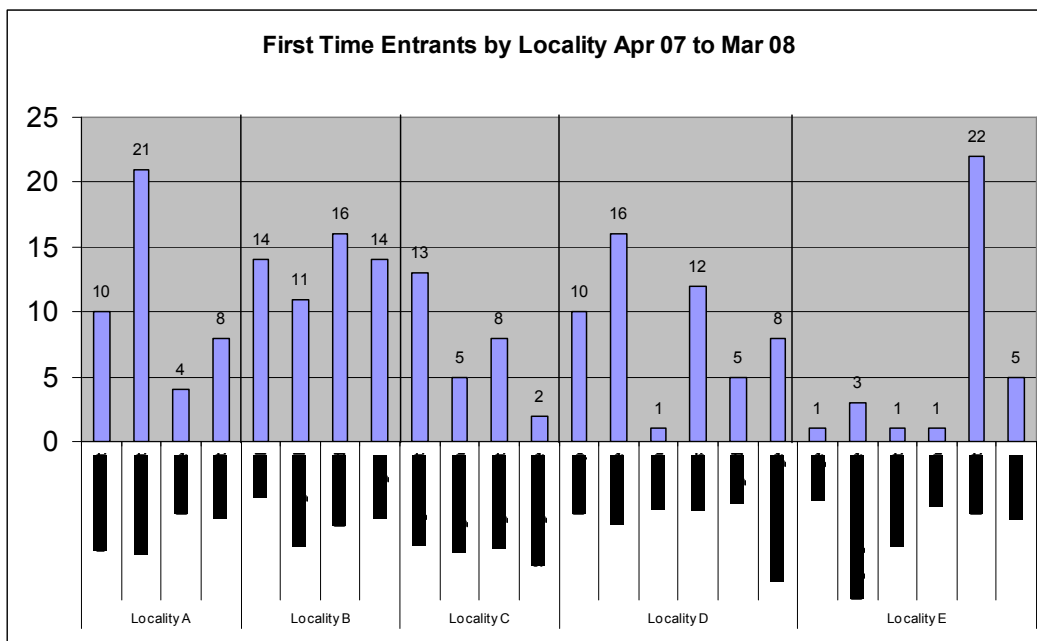
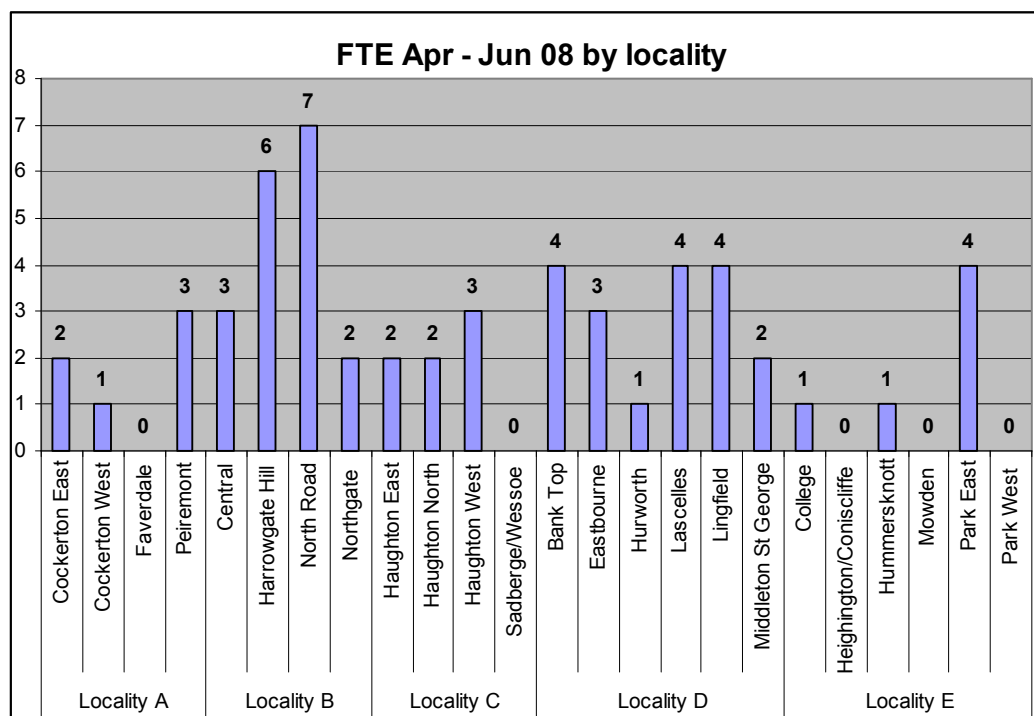


Table B shows First Time Entrants by locality in the last quarter April - June 2008



Street Scene

29. Following the Street Scene mid term review, in order to move the service forward, ensuring a consistency of approach and a more proactive customer orientated service, a new management regime was implemented on 15 September 2008 and early indications are that the changes are providing improved service delivery.
30. As part of the new management structure, a dedicated crematorium and cemetery provision has also been established, which due to a slightly longer consultation period, commenced on 6 October 2008. Training of new staff is also being undertaken as former crematorium staff can now undertake activities such as grave digging, whilst former grounds maintenance only staff can also undertake tasks within the crematorium. This additional flexibility will allow for greater service provision across the full range of services.
31. During the spring and summer significant disruption was experienced due to extreme weather conditions and grounds maintenance services suffered, particularly in relation to grass cutting. Large areas of open spaces experienced standing water upon them, which made it impossible for heavy plant and equipment to move across the land and cut the grass to the required standard. As a result, the length of grass throughout the borough during parts of the spring and summer were longer than desired. However, resources were targeted to address these issues and apart from a couple of small areas of open space, all grass cutting was returned to programme during September.
32. On 13 October 2008, large scale changes were made to the refuse and recycling collection rounds. These changes were brought in to progress service improvement by matching collection rounds to the five geographical areas. This has enabled greater efficiency within the collection service, whilst also empowering a sense of ownership to operatives tasked

with undertaking services within a particular geographical area. Monitoring suggests that implementation has been successfully introduced.

33. The second of three NI195 inspections was completed during October 2008. These inspections establish the Council's performance in relation to street cleansing. Only 4% of the streets inspected, failed to meet the required standard of cleanliness for litter and detritus. This is a major improvement upon previous years' results.

Energy Efficiency Improvements in the Private Sector

34. Housing Services have secured £100k of investment from the Single Housing Investment Programme specifically targeting energy efficiency improvements in privately owned and privately rented accommodation in the borough. The contract to commission the work will be awarded in early December 2008 following the completion of the formal tendering process in November 2008. The type of energy efficiency measures available will be targeted at those deemed to be most vulnerable to fuel poverty (i.e. those households spending the equivalent of at least 10% of their disposal income on fuel), least able to finance essential improvements to their homes and those measures that will deliver the most improved performance in terms of energy.

Welfare Rights Performance

35. A restructure of Housing Services in 2007 enabled the appointment of a Welfare Rights Officer specifically for Council tenants. I am please to report that in the last quarter the service secured £87,000 in additional benefits for current Council tenants with the average award of benefit arrears being £886.32. In total 33 clients were seen by appointment in the Advice Centre and 18 were visited at home. The Welfare Rights Officer also represented 15 clients at Social Security appeal tribunal hearings. The breakdown of the assistance provided in the last quarter is as follows:
 - (a) Ten Disability Living Allowance awards at an average of £47.83 per week.
 - (b) Four Income Support awards at an average of £95.11 per week.
 - (c) Three Incapacity Benefit awards at an average of £87.40.
 - (d) One Pension Credit award of £35.19 per week.
 - (e) One Housing and Council Tax Benefit award of £7.95.
 - (f) One Attendance Allowance award of £52.05.

Benefit Fraud Sanctions and Prosecutions

36. The Housing Benefit counter fraud service has recorded excellent results for the first six months of the financial year, in terms of administering sanctions and successfully prosecuting people who commit benefit fraud.
37. During 2007/08, the Housing Benefits service administered 67 fraud sanctions, including five people who were successfully prosecuted for benefit fraud offences. For the period April to September 2008, 50 sanctions have been administered, including ten successful prosecutions. These include offences such as failing to declare work, failing to declare a partner, producing false documents for a fictitious tenancy and falsely declaring non-dependant children had left the property.

38. In particular, the Council has recently prosecuted its first private landlord for Housing Benefit fraud. In this case, the landlord had failed to declare the tenant had left his property. He continued to receive Housing Benefits payments, which he knew he was not entitled to, so that he could recover unpaid rent arrears. He was fined £280, ordered to repay the overpaid benefit in full and the Council was also awarded costs of £475. The Housing Benefits Service have also formally decided that he is 'not a fit and proper landlord', which means that he cannot directly receive Housing Benefit payments in the future.
39. Outcomes from the other prosecutions include conditional discharges, fines totalling £960, community punishment orders and awards of costs £2,213. In addition, 26 penalties totalling £7,576 have been administered to benefit fraudsters, 14 formal cautions have been issued and over £37,000 of recoverable overpayments of benefit has been identified.

Official Opening of Linden Court

40. His Royal Highness, the Duke of Gloucester officially opened the new sheltered housing scheme at Linden Court, Hurworth Place on 18 November 2008. The Mayor and I were in attendance and during the afternoon of his visit HRH enjoyed a full tour of the scheme as well as a demonstration of Assistive Technology. He met and talked in detail with residents and Council officers who had been involved in the scheme

Councillor Bill Dixon
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for
Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety