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

Purpose of the Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio.

Environmental Services

Street Scene

2. Street Scene enjoyed a successful summer period ultimately culminating in being awarded Best Small City in this year's Northumbria in Bloom category and generally overall resident satisfaction with Street Scene has increased. We also saw the successful introduction of new recycling rounds to tie in with the new waste management contract, staff are currently working hard delivering the winter programme while also dealing with adverse weather conditions.
3. The recently launched litter initiative, which is being supported by Neighbourhood Scrutiny Committee, has seen a number of successful initiatives introduced including:
 - (a) working with schools and local shops in key hotspot areas
 - (b) taking enforcement action against businesses that persistently cause litter in the street
 - (c) 8 big tidy up campaigns carried out
4. Officers will continue to deliver actions from the litter initiative in the coming year.
5. Street Scene Enforcement Team that deal with environmental crime are now up to full strength and there will be a dedicated officer in the town centre dealing with the full range of environmental crime. This will include taking action against individuals who litter and also working with local businesses educating them of their responsibility and ultimately taking enforcement action when required.

Anti Social Behaviour

6. Operation Belgowin which covers Park East area has now been running for over a year and a number of successes have been achieved. The initial objectives of the operation were:
 - (a) to reduce incidents, crime and fear of crime within Park East area of Darlington
 - (b) improve the reputation of the Park East area

- (c) increase public confidence in Durham Constabulary and Partners by local residents
7. The Council and Partners are currently putting together an action plan for the second phase of Operation Belgowin and the objectives of this programme have been agreed:
 - (a) the development of long term community based initiatives aimed at empowering residents to work with Partners in resolving local issues
 - (b) improving public confidence and perception of the Police and Partners
 - (c) reducing inquisitive crime, ASB and vehicle nuisance (PACT priorities in Park East)
 8. Community consultation has recently taken place to ensure that residents are fully on board and engaged in the programme.
 9. On 20 November 2009 the Home Office announced that the Council would receive £44K to help tackle anti-social behaviour and keep neighbourhoods safe and confident. The Home Office has provided examples of how this money may be spent:
 - (a) training for front line staff
 - (b) environmental clean-up campaigns in selected neighbourhoods to demonstrate quick visible difference to local residents
 - (c) support for community led projects to engage young people
 - (d) offering support to victims of ASB
 10. This funding will be used to tackle problems in the main hotspot areas with a focus to support Operation Belgowin in Park East.

Housing

Successful Homes and Communities Bid for Hutton Avenue

11. The Homes and Communities Agency have confirmed £135k of funding for Northstar Housing to provide a purpose built dwelling to accommodate three people with learning disabilities on a disused garage site at Hutton Avenue. Work will commence on site in March 2010 and be completed in October 2010. The dwelling will offer bungalow accommodation with some communal facilities for the three residents with support.

Successful Kick-start Bid for Beaumont Hill

12. The Homes and Communities Agency have confirmed £3.5M of funding to support the development of 102 dwellings by Fabrick Housing Group on three vacant former school sites at Beaumont Hill. 34 of the new dwellings will be affordable homes for rent with the remainder being available for market sale albeit flexible arrangements will be made available to interested parties to allow up to three years for prospective purchasers to raise sufficient capital to finance a purchase with properties being made available for rent in the interim if required.
13. The funding provided as part of a Government initiative to revitalise stalled development sites following the economic downturn, will start in March 2010 and be completed in March 2011. Affordable dwellings will be allocated in accordance with the sub-regional choice based lettings policy.

New Handyperson Service Launched

14. Following an additional allocation of funding from Communities and Local Government of £120k between 2009-11 a review of the existing Handyperson service has been undertaken with stakeholder partners and the provider, Care and Repair, the Home Improvement Agency.
15. The new service will be available to all vulnerable people aged 55 years plus who own their own homes and also be available to identified vulnerable new council tenants aged 55 years plus. In addition, to the mainstream services which include installation of grab rails, renewal or enhancement of locks, fitting curtain rails etc, the new service includes home safety checks, installation of smoke alarms, small scale external path improvements and two person jobs such as the removal or relocation of furniture. Also, in partnership with Groundworks Trust we will provide garden maintenance work which is specifically connected to home security.
16. Qualifying applicants on means tested benefits will be eligible to the service free of charge (only needing to pay material costs) with a fixed £10 charge for up to 3 hours of service for non-qualifying applicants plus material costs.

Housing Benefits Customer Satisfaction Survey

17. The Housing Benefits Service has recently undertaken its annual customer satisfaction survey. Questions asked are around access to the service, the experience of visiting the offices, telephoning the service, the clarity of forms and letters, and the time taken to hear about decisions on claims made with the service.
18. Results have shown that overall satisfaction with the service has increased to 89.6%, the highest level recorded since these surveys began in 2000. The Housing Benefits service has seen a huge increase in the level of work over the last 18 months due to the economic downturn, with the number of people claiming benefit increasing from 10,900 in 2008 to 12,100 in 2009. Many of these people will have experienced the service for the first time, seeking help with their rent and Council Tax payments. It is particularly satisfying, therefore that such high levels of satisfaction with the service have been recorded.
19. As with every survey, customers have highlighted some areas for improvement, including; the signage and reception facilities in the Customer Contact Centre, the clarity of forms and letters, and further improvements in the time taken to hear about whether claims have been successful. The Housing Benefits service is currently drawing up an action plan for improvement, to take into account these views.

Housing Benefit Counter Fraud Activity

20. During the period April to November 2009, a total of 57 sanctions have been achieved by the Housing Benefits counter fraud team. These include 4 cautions, 38 administrative penalties (fines) and 15 successful prosecutions resulting in guilty verdicts at Bishop Auckland, Newton Aycliffe, or Darlington Magistrates Court. A further 14 prosecution cases are currently in progress and is an improvement on last year's figures. Offences have included failing to declare work, capital or a partner, in order to claim more benefit than the person was entitled to. Penalties following successful prosecutions have ranged from fines, community punishment orders and conditional discharges. The Council will also seek awards of costs and compensation for the overpaid benefit. Some notable cases include a

successful prosecution of a landlord for the second time who continued to receive Housing Benefit after his tenant had left the property, and the prosecution of Michael and Julie Brown of Tower Grange, Darlington, the outcome of which was published in the Northern Echo on 19/12/2009. This couple claimed Council Tax Benefit from 2002 to 2008 declaring that they lived on Mr Brown's low wage, tax credits and child benefit. Following a complex investigation which took 3 years to complete, Michael and Julie Brown pleaded guilty at Bishop Auckland Magistrates Court to a total of 13 counts of benefit fraud between them, which included undeclared buying and selling property for a profit, buying properties which they then rented to tenants, as well as having bank accounts which had over half a million pounds pass through them during a 4 year period. Mrs Julie Brown was fined £250 plus a £15 victim surcharge, and Mr Michael Brown was subject to a 30 day curfew from 8pm to 6am. The couple are repaying all the overpaid Council Tax Benefit, and Mr Michael Brown has been ordered to pay court costs of £1,578.

Darlington Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and Durham Police Authority

21. The North East Alcohol Office, now branded 'Balance', was launched in February 2009, 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. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) has been successful in a bid to become an Early Implementation site around NI39 (reducing alcohol related admissions to hospital), drawing an additional £150k into Darlington for 2008/09 and a further £200k for 2009/10. This will fund:-
 - (a) A pilot project to put a paramedic on the streets at key times with the Police and other agencies;
 - (b) Large scale training of GPs and other generic staff in adult services to screen, assess and deliver Alcohol Brief Interventions at Tiers 1 & 2; homelessness and housing support for adults and young people;
 - (c) Floating support and homeless prevention services
 - (d) Alcohol Arrest Referral;
 - (e) Education and awareness raising projects and a thorough, independent evaluation of the above projects and implementation of the Community Alcohol Service.
22. Additional Early Implementation funding of £200k was secured for 2009-10 for further alcohol services to address the high rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions in Darlington. These services include the roll-out of Alcohol Treatment Requirements for adult offenders with alcohol issues and the introduction of a 16-week rolling alcohol programme for both offenders and non-offenders to run alongside. Also, for additional nursing capacity in the Community Alcohol Service. Further PCT AOP investment in 09-10 enabled an increase in training and performance support within the DAAT.
23. Indications in the current climate of Public Spending Review are that the anticipated repeat of the Early Implementation Grant of £200k for 2010-11 is now likely to be, at the very least, significantly reduced. The DAAT is currently compiling a business case, in conjunction with Balance, to mitigate this reduction in order to continue to support key pilot and project areas in relation to the reduction of alcohol-related hospital admissions – as outlined above. The DAAT has also submitted a similar prioritisation request to the PCT regarding the safeguarding of the Annual Operating Plan investment into alcohol services.

24. The latest Performance Report on how the Darlington Partnership is performing against the nine Indicators in the Safer Drinking: Safer Darlington Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy indicates a positive position with 6/9 at Green or Amber and 3 reds. The red areas, as predicted, are around NI39, drunk and rowdy behaviour and a downturn in the sign up to the Responsible Sales Code – following issues in Europe re free trade.
25. Darlington DAAT worked in partnership with the Police over a period of time before, during and after the recent drugs raids, to ensure that anyone affected by the raids requiring support, advice and/or treatment for substance misuse issues received the services they required. Working in this joined up way enabled services to be put in place in a timely and effective manner and displayed high degrees of organisational trust between police and provider agencies.
26. For the rolling 12 months up to 30 October 2009 crime reduced by 1% compared to the same period in 2007/08. There were 9,214 recorded crimes in Darlington between November 2007 and October 2008. For the same months in 2008/09 this fell to 9,084, a reduction of 130 crimes (1%).

Community Safety Plan 2008-2011

27. Following publication of the Joint Strategic Assessment in November 2009, the CDRP has refreshed its priorities for 2010/11, as follows:
 - (a) Public Confidence
 - (b) Violent Crime around Domestic Abuse
 - (c) Protecting Vulnerable People
 - (d) Reducing Offending and Re-offending
 - (e) Anti-social behaviour
28. There are two themes which cut across all priorities, namely public confidence, and drugs and alcohol.

Crime and Disorder Performance against Targets

Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC)

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

2008 Baseline	2009/10 Target	12 Months to 31/10/09	% Change
1933	1833	1718	- 6%

Theft of Motor Vehicle (TOMV)

31. For the rolling 12 months to October 2009 there was a 28% reduction in TOMV with 106 fewer crimes being recorded between November 2008 and October 2009 (271 crimes) compared to 377 crimes between November 2007 and October 2008

Theft from Motor Vehicles (TFMV)

32. For the rolling 12 months to October 2009 there was a 20% increase in TFMV with 143 more crimes being recorded between November 2008 and October 2009 (866 crimes) compared to 723 crimes between November 2007 and October 2008.
33. During the last quarter (August-October 2009) there were 167 recorded crimes equating to a 32% decrease (79 crimes) compared to the previous quarter (246 crimes).

Robbery

34. For the rolling 12 months to October 2009 there were 66 recorded crimes which is 7 more offences compared to the same period in 2007/08.

Domestic Burglary

35. For the rolling 12 months to October 2009 there was a 1% decrease in domestic burglary with 4 fewer crimes being recorded between November 2008 and December 2009 (515 crimes) compared to 519 crimes between November 2007 and October 2008.
36. During the last quarter (August-November 2009) 107 crimes were recorded, a reduction of 20% (27 offences) against the previous quarter (May-Jul 09).

Perceptions of ASB - NI 17

37. This indicator measures the percentage of people with high levels of perceived anti-social behaviour within the Borough.
38. The Place Survey 2008 indicated that 17.1% of people perceive there to be a high level of anti-social behaviour in their area, which is an improvement on previous general survey results.
39. The CDRP have set a target to reduce this to 14.1% by 2011.
40. Between August and October 2009 there were 3,144 incidents recorded by police compared to 2,795 over the same period in the previous year, an increase of 12% (349 incidents).
41. The number of recorded alcohol related ASB incidents has decreased with 536 incidents being recorded between August and November 2009 compared to 597 over the same period in the previous year, a 10% reduction.
42. The number of recorded youth related ASB incidents has increased with 1195 incidents being recorded between August and November 2009 compared to 803 over the same period in the previous year, a 49% increase.

Assault with Less Serious Injury (AWLSI) - NI 20

43. This includes actual bodily harm and other injury and racially/religiously aggravated actual bodily harm.

44. For the rolling 12 months to October 2009 there were 608 incidents recorded by police which equates to 47 fewer crimes (7%) than recorded in the previous 12 months.
45. As part of the refresh of the Local Area Agreement the target for AWLSI has been reset to a 4% reduction by 2011 based on a proxy April 2009 baseline of 593 crimes. The target to March 2010 is therefore 581 crimes.
46. Between April and October 2009, 344 offences were recorded against a target of 326, therefore performance is currently below target by 5%.

Repeat Incidents of Domestic Abuse - NI 32

47. This measure came into place in 2009/10 and relates to the repeat victimisation rate of those individuals supported through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
48. During April and December 2009, 74 cases were heard at MARAC meetings, 13 of which pertained to repeat incidents (18%).
49. Between April 2008 and February 2009 there were 1855 domestic abuse incidents recorded by Police compared to 1482 in the same period for the previous year, an increase of 25.1%. This should be viewed as a positive result, with more people coming forward to report incidents. Due to technical issues with IT systems, data from February to date is being provided in arrears and was not available for inclusion in this report.

Prolific and Other Priority Offending Rate – NI 30

50. In 2007/08, 23 PPO's committed 134 offences. The CDRP target was to reduce this to 94 offences by March 2009. The provisional outturn for 2008/09 indicates that the 23 PPOs were convicted of 61 offences.
51. A new PPO cohort has been selected for 2009/10, with a reduction target of 23% (94 convictions) against a baseline of 121. Between April and June 2009, only 1 offence was proven against a member of this cohort, meaning that the CDRP is performing well against this indicator.

Alcohol Related Admission Rates – NI 39

52. This data is provided in arrears and the way in the indicator is calculated has also been changed for 2008-09 therefore performance is not measured against a target for this period. Only provisional data is available at this stage. Future targets have been set, with the numbers predicted to continue to rise during an initial period, as interventions are rolled out. However, it is hoped that the rate of increase will decline.

Drug Users in Effective Treatment – NI 40

53. Provisional outturn for 08/09 indicates that there were 428 problem drug users in effective treatment against a target to March 2009 of 441. This dip in performance can be attributed to a number of factors, including the removal of one agency no longer reporting at Tier 3, and is central to improvement plans with providers that have been approved by the National Treatment Agency.

CDRP Delivery Plans

54. At the end of quarter two, progress against each of the actions within the CDRP Delivery Plans remains broadly on target. A small number of key risks have been identified, as below.
- (a) The lead on some actions in Public Reassurance plan is leaving the organisation without a succession plan being in place. Actions affected are the induction pack, website development, and a communications strategy linked with the LCJB. The same person was to take the lead in ensuring that the work of the LCJB was fully integrated within the CDRP. A decision is to be taken in respect of actions which rely on the recruitment of a partnership analyst.
 - (b) Partners have agreed a moratorium on all actions within the Domestic Abuse plan pending the return of the plan owner from long term sick leave.
 - (c) A number of actions within the Reducing Offending Plan are dependent on the implementation of POMIES, a web-based system for integrated offender management. This is resourced through BCU funding, so it is crucial that POMIES is commissioned immediately in order to ensure the money is spent by the end of March. Commissioning plans are being drawn up as a matter of urgency.
55. Planning is currently under way to develop and consult on delivery plans for 2010/11 in line with the priorities identified earlier in this report. Therefore there will be actions across all delivery plans which relate to the reduction of alcohol and drug misuse in order to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to this issue. Tackling violent crime (other than domestic abuse) and the night time economy is another important priority for the partnership. However, it was decided that this would fit well within the drugs and alcohol theme.
56. With regard to public confidence, again all delivery plans will have actions which contribute to the increase in public confidence in Darlington. However, it was felt that in addition to this there should also be a specific delivery plan to progress this in order to ensure that the positive work of the CDRP is highlighted and that opportunities to increase confidence are not lost.
57. All delivery plans will also contain actions that contribute towards effective enforcement, rehabilitation and prevention in order to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to tackling crime and disorder across the town.
58. A series of meetings and workshops are to take place in order to develop the delivery plans around each of the priorities.

Home Office Support Programme and Hallmarks for Effective Partnership

59. Two important pieces of work have been completed, which will contribute to the development of the CDRP in the next twelve months.
60. The first is the Home Office Support Programme, an independent piece of work which has looked in detail at how the partnership works and made recommendations for further development building upon the existing strengths.

61. The second is a review of the Hallmarks of effective Partnerships, which is a national support frame work for delivering safer and confident communities.
62. Recommendations from both documents are to be combined into an Improvement Plan and details of this will be provided in future reports.

Safer Communities Forum

63. The annual Safer Communities Forum will take place on 15 January at the Dolphin Centre. Invitations have been sent out to partners and community groups.
64. The forum provides an opportunity to look at the performance and key achievements around community safety over the past year, and to outline key priorities for the coming 12 months. There will be workshops to look at each of the themed delivery plans and a question and answer session to Responsible Authority Representatives.

Domestic Abuse

65. An awareness raising campaign around Domestic Abuse is to run over the Christmas period publicising the Domestic Abuse Helpline number. The Star Radio campaign began on the 11 December and the adverts on the backs of local buses will begin to run from week commencing 20 December 2009.

Summer Nights Evaluation

66. Operation Summer Nights is a multi agency, crime reduction and reassurance campaign that aims to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour across Darlington during the summer months particularly when it is alcohol related. The operation had three distinct strands which were:
 - (a) to reassure the public that partner members are working together to take action in relation to anti-social behaviour particularly during the summer when there is often an increase.
 - (b) to promote personal health and safety and build on the positive behaviour of most young people.
 - (c) to encourage people to respect others and their property.
 - (d) to educate, prevent or enforce those messages to people who are behaving or at risk of behaving anti-socially
67. The operation has now been completed and as the evaluation showed has been very successful. Some of the key results are listed below:
 - (a) The fire service dealt with 26 primary fires and attended 50 secondary fires.
 - (b) Trading Standards have carried out visits to supermarkets to reduce restricted products being sold to underage people. They have also visited off licences with police, raising awareness of responsibilities in selling alcohol and other age restricted products.

- (c) The Licensing Department has carried out 18 licence checks and carried out a number of visits to public houses.
 - (d) The Youth Offending Service has taken nominated youths out on activities run by the Youth Offending Service. This proved to be successful as no problems were encountered throughout the sessions.
 - (e) The Anti-social Behaviour Team carried out 24 interviews with children under the influence of alcohol and their parents, and follow up interviews were conducted by a social worker. In addition two Acceptable Behaviour Agreements were signed by young people in relation to Operation Staysafe. Six youths were referred to Right Trax motorcycle course and one youth was referred to the Youth Service Outreach Team.
 - (f) The Youth Service has put on 110 activities for young people, with a total of 2882 youths in attendance.
 - (g) Zone Active, which is funded by Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund, carried out 36 activities over the summer period, which involved 476 youths.
 - (h) Darlington football club's Summer Soccer School was highly successful and was open to boys and girls aged 5-12 years. 525 young people attended.
 - (i) The Drug and Alcohol Team has been busy preparing over the summer for a high profile campaign targeting pupils in secondary schools. The social norms campaign was launched on 21 October, where a presentation was given to approximately 900 children to promote the fact that most children do not use drugs and alcohol. This will be offered to all secondary schools in Darlington.
 - (j) Darlington police carried out high visibility patrols targeting hot spot areas, providing reassurance to the community and gathering further intelligence. More than 300 youths were spoken to and engaged with in various areas of Darlington. The police attended most of the partnership events and engaged in 13 Staysafe Operations. Over the seven week period of Summer Nights the police seized 87 litres of cider and spirits, 62 cans of lager and cider, and 157 bottles of alcopops/lager and cider.
68. More detailed results are available in the Summer Nights Evaluation document, a copy of which is available from the Safer Neighbourhoods Unit, Central House Annexe, Gladstone Street, Darlington, DL3 6JX.

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