



Focus On Doorstep Crime

Practice Note No: 38

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Topic Areas: Personal Safety, Home Safety

Project Background and Aims

Focus on Doorstep Crime operated in West Lothian between 11th and 26th March 2010 and promoted a fully integrated partnership approach to realise the strategic aims that were set and to maximise media exposure of the benefits of partnership working.

Due to its geographical position and ease of access via arterial routes, West Lothian is vulnerable to the activities of travelling criminals who specialise in doorstep crime offences. The challenges associated with Bogus Caller activities have created significant demand within West Lothian in previous years. Focus on Doorstep Crime was an intelligence-led operation and was established to target both travelling criminals and local opportunists.

Through the West Lothian Community Safety Partnership Joint Tasking Group it was agreed that the Partnership would adopt a multi-agency approach to raise community awareness of doorstep crime in West Lothian, promote public reassurance and, where possible, prevent and deter the commission of such offences.

A proactive partnership approach was developed and vulnerable groups were educated and empowered during three prevention events, this activity was complemented by six enforcement days where staff targeted arterial routes and identified 'hot spots'.

This 'Focus On' activity linked directly to the Single Outcome Agreement, West Lothian's Strategic Assessment, Life Stages Model and Force and Divisional Priorities.

Outcomes

National 9: 'We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger',

11: 'We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others'.

Local West Lothian SOA : 'All communities in the Lothian and Borders police area deserve to live their lives free from crime, disorder and danger'.

Resources

Funding: West Lothian Community Safety Partnership.

Partners: West Lothian Community Safety Partnership Joint Tasking Group, Lothian and Borders Police (Response, Community, Special Constables, CID, Travelling Persons Liaison Officer, Roads Policing Officers and Corporate Communications Department), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service, West Lothian Council (Trading Standards, Education Department, Operational Services, Environmental Wardens, Travelling Persons Liaison Officer, Housing and Corporate Communications Department), Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, Department of Work and Pensions, Victim Support Scotland, West Lothian Credit Union, HM Revenue and Customs, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and the Whitburn Older Peoples Group.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The initiative was internally evaluated on an ongoing basis and a final report is available on request from Community Safety manager at West Lothian Community Safety Partnership. The summary evaluation of this initiative was the realisation of an 85% reduction in reported incidents of Doorstep Crime with only one crime reported during the period.

Activities

The initiative adopted a multi-agency approach — incorporating all members of the West Lothian CSP as well as other voluntary organisations from across the administrative area — and was managed by the West Lothian Community Safety Partnership Joint Tasking Group. Senior partners, including the Council Chief Executive, Procurator Fiscal and Divisional Commander, supported the project. Operational working groups, led by the then Police Safer Communities Department, were established, with support provided by a Lothian and Borders Police Analyst. The working groups were made up of officers and staff from Lothian and Borders Police and representatives of partner organisations.

The awareness raising component of the initiative was made up of various activities. A high profile partnership media strategy was developed, focusing on daily local and national coverage.

Three events were held during the course of the initiative, managed by the then Divisional Safer Communities Department. The events included a production of the

play 'One Foot in Your Door' by the Baldy Bane Theatre Group, which covered various aspects of doorstep crime. The play portrayed three scenarios in detail, showing the wrong and the right ways to deal with suspect or unknown callers and gives general advice in an engaging humorous manner with a view to enabling audience members to handle this type of situation with confidence. At each event a 'market place' was established, with stalls attended by representatives from 15 partner organisations. At each event the Operations Chief Inspector also delivered a prevention message on behalf of the Partnership.

These events took place at the following centres:

- Craigsfarm Campus, Livingston;
- Regal Theatre, Bathgate; and
- The Lanthorn Centre, Livingston.

The events were publicised by posters being placed within community centres and public buildings and also information being given to various groups and meetings by partner agencies.

In addition, all lunch-clubs within West Lothian were provided with 'prevention' material such as posters and prevention leaflets and presentations were delivered to all secondary schools within West Lothian by local Community and Safer Neighbourhood Officers. Older adults and children were specifically identified as groups particularly vulnerable to doorstep crime.

Local banks and Post Offices were also contacted, to remind staff of banking protocols and Special Constables were allotted to 'gateway' points to deliver awareness letters to members of the public. These were identified as ASDA and McArthur Glen shopping centre due to the high footfall at both locations.

To deter doorstep crime in West Lothian, 'Cold Calling Control Zone' red cards (anti-doorstep crime window stickers) were disseminated across the Lothian and Borders area and six Multi-Agency Enforcement Days were enforced at doorstep crime 'hotspots' identified by the Lothian and Borders Police Analyst. These activities were supported with high profile Reassurance Patrols within hotspots and a 'Crime Car', staffed by officers with Operation Alert experience. Individuals wanted on warrant for Acquisitive / Doorstep Crimes were also targeted and the establishment of a 'Cocoon Watch' to support victims of Doorstep Crime.

Impact

The initiative utilised a combination of awareness raising, preventative measures and the empowerment of older people and children to deter travelling criminals and local opportunists.

The stage play 'One Foot in Your Door' was delivered to over 300 people, as were the market places established at each venue. As a result of interest shown by members of the public during the operation a further two plays were booked and delivered at venues on the east and west of West Lothian, attended by a further 200 individuals.

A further 61 prevention/education inputs were delivered at all secondary schools and some community groups across the county.

In excess of 10,000 doorstep protocol leaflets, or 'red cards', were distributed to the public to raise awareness and support Cold Calling Control Zones. The leaflets and 'red cards' were distributed at the awareness events, 'gateway' points, lunch clubs, community centres and by Fire Fighters who delivered joint Fire and Crime Prevention advice to the vulnerable.

A further 10,000 'red card' window stickers were placed at Divisional police stations and distributed through Community Councils. Joint prevention/reassurance patrols were carried out by uniformed Police and Council officers in hotspots across West Lothian.

Over 150 vehicles were stopped during the multi-agency enforcement days, with successful results. 17 of the stopped vehicles received prohibition notices, two persons were found to be transporting £10,000 worth of counterfeit designer goods, persons were interviewed regarding benefit fraud and charged with a variety of traffic offences. Perhaps most importantly, intelligence was gathered and shared appropriately.

The joint media strategy received coverage in both national and local media with two prime time slots on national television. Several live interviews were carried out on local radio and the partnership work was covered in both local and national newspapers. In addition a 'Bluetooth' prevention message was broadcast across West Lothian during the two-week period.

Over the course of the initiative, between the 11th and 26th of March 2010, there was an 85% reduction in reported incidents of Doorstep Crime in the West Lothian area, with only one crime reported. This initiative has realised a definite short term impact on volume of crimes of this type however what has been established is the variation of this type of crime with the time of year. As such it has become part of the Partnership calendar to proactively target this type of crime bi-annually.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

'Focus On' is a recognisable, multi-agency community safety brand in West Lothian. Its origins lie in the anti-drugs initiative, Operation Focus, implemented in March 2009 and rebranded as 'Focus On' in December 2009.

The utilisation of 'SMART'¹ objectives ensured a smooth delivery of key activities according to schedule. The lead officer minimised risk of target slippage with the ongoing evaluation of actions. This enabled challenges to be tackled as and when they arose. The Joint Tasking Group and wider partnership were also kept fully up to date with all developments. This successful planning ensured that this two-week operation was cost neutral to the Police service — partnership resources funded all literature, production costs and refreshments for attendees at events.

¹ SMART is a mnemonic device used when setting performance targets. This stands for 'Specific, Measurable, Attainable, relevant, Time-bound'.

With the exception of the plays this operation can be implemented at short notice depending on intelligence and operational commitments. However, the play was a useful hook to engage the interest of audiences who would then gain further information through marketplace piggybacked at the events.

This type of initiative would fit within any police divisional area where partnership working is embedded and it is anticipated that the plan will be used again within West Lothian in the coming years. The structure may be also used as a blueprint for future partnership operations. Enforcement Days continue on a monthly basis, with partners deployed through intelligence provided by LBP Analysts.

Summary

Focus on Doorstep Crime operated in West Lothian between 11th and 26th March 2010. The initiative utilised a combination of awareness raising, preventative measures and the empowerment of older people and children to deter travelling criminals and local opportunists.

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