Scottish Community Safety Network

Practice Note 13

Project Name: Glasgow's Night Radio Network
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Topic Areas: **Personal Safety, Travel Safety, Partnership Working and Public Space Safety**

Project Background and Aims

In recognition of the growing effects of alcohol abuse and raised levels of violence associated with the night time economy in Glasgow City Centre, Glasgow City Council established a working group involving Strathclyde Police, NHS Board, Transport Providers and representatives of the Licensed Trade, to consider the issues most affecting the city centre at night. The lead partner in the working group was Glasgow Community Safety Services (GCSS).

In September 2005, a night radio network was developed using an existing communications platform with a view to coordinating a number of existing projects including 'Nite Zones', 'Best Bar None' Awards Scheme, Environmental enhancements such as additional litter bins and graffiti removal, Lighting of Lanes, Increased taxi rank capacities, Extended Traffic light sequences at night, Pub/Club Watch Schemes, and Deployment of Street Pastors.

Radio channels were already operating in Glasgow to allow the retail sector to communicate with each other and public agencies. Given that the majority of retail outlets are closed at night there was an opportunity to utilise the existing infrastructure effectively. The night project, involving stewards on the doors of night clubs, primarily in and around existing 'Nite Zones' was intended to create the capacity to communicate community and criminal intelligence to the police and other agencies involved in the management of the night time economy.

The Glasgow City Centre Alcohol Action Group (AAG) established by the former Glasgow Alcohol Action Team uses a dedicated budget to tackle alcohol problems, in the broadest sense, as they affect the city centre area. The Group provided funding of £10,000 for the purchase and distribution of radios to approximately 50 licensed premises in police identified hotspot areas.

There was no requirement for matched funding as the Safer City Centre Initiative had already built a radio infrastructure for the Retail Radio Network and GCSS had developed a CCTV control room. Both of these elements proved to be essential in building the night radio network.

Radios were also placed in First Bus Control Room allowing information to be relayed from all night bus drivers and Glasgow Taxis control room offering a communications route for all taxi drivers. Other resources, such as Street Pastors and volunteers were also provided with radios.

The aims of the Night Radio Network project are:

- To develop a platform for communication between the public and private sectors at night,
- To create the potential for a fast response to developing situations potentially reducing the severity of incidents,
- To create a direct link with CCTV Control accessing more than 450 cameras throughout the city, and
- To develop sharing of information between licensed venues and the police.

The intended outcomes of the project are to:

- Improve response times to incidents of disorder by public agencies,
- Reduce levels of alcohol fuelled crime and disorder,
- Reduce the severity of violent incidents,
- Reduce the numbers of victims of crime,
- Impact on waiting times and numbers presenting at Accident & Emergency Departments, and
- Improve public perceptions of violence in the city centre.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All calls made by users of the Night Radio Network are recorded on a database. Furthermore, in May 2009, as part of a wider review on the impact of the umbrella 'Nite Zone' project, an external evaluation team conducted a number of research studies including Stakeholder interviews with Glasgow Community and Safety Services; Glasgow Taxi Committee; Glasgow CCTV; First Bus; and Strathclyde Police; a focus group with Taxi Marshalls; a survey of Taxi Drivers; a survey of Bar/Club Stewards; and interviews with members of the public.

Activities

Partner agencies initially included representatives from Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police and NHS Board (Public Sector) and Transport Providers and representatives of the Licensed Trade (Private Sector). There were no material changes to the project's original intentions, although timescales drifted outwith original plans due to other project work being prioritised.

Impact

The Night Radio Network has allowed a platform for better communication between the police, licensing board and licensed premises. However, it was also considered by the police and GCSS to be instrumental in reducing violent crime and anti social behaviour by providing a process for speedy identification, response and resolution of alcohol fuelled incidents.

For example, in 2005, the Chief Constable's report highlighted a total of 8,439 Group 1 Crimes of Violence across the Strathclyde Area, with 718 (8.5%) occurring in Glasgow City Centre. In 2009/10 there were 5,208 Group 1 Crimes of Violence, a reduction of 38.4%. Of particular interest was the numbers of persons arrested for minor disorder showing an increase, signifying a positive outcome to a faster response by allowing the responding resources to deal with a potentially violent incident at a lower level of prosecution.

Moreover, between April 2009 and March 2010 around 190 incidents were created by users of the network which have resulted in arrests for a variety of crimes and provided support for many victims of crime. Analysis of the Night Radio Network database demonstrates that calls throughout weekend nights were constant, hour by hour, and the majority of incidents (55%) related to alcohol fuelled disturbances. Assaults related to 11% of calls made.

The Night Radio Network has a strong 'community involvement' component - engaging with the licensing sector and bringing together a range of agencies and organisations towards a common goal of public safety and the creation of a safer environment for visitors to the city centre at night. All organisations involved in the project, both public and private sectors, have benefited from their participation.

Police Forces have benefited by receiving information about incidents, criminals and anti social behaviour, which in turn creates a faster response and the likelihood of reducing the severity of the outcomes. Councils benefit by receiving information about environmental issues, which can be rectified quickly and reduce the possibility of legal action, accidents, etc. Medical Authorities benefit by reduced number of patients thereby reducing waiting times and volume of work at Accident & Emergency Departments. The public benefitted through more focus on public safety and faster response resulting in fewer incidents and addressing public reassurance. The Licensed trade benefitted through the development of community spirit, a joint focus on the management of the night time economy involving both the public and private sectors. Moreover, licensed premises benefited from a sharing of best practice and prevention at the front door by being aware of what potential dangers are approaching venues.

Thus, the Night Radio Network provides practitioners with a range of outcomes including increased supervision of the night time economy, potential for reduction of serious violent crime and alcohol fuelled complaint levels, an enhanced partnership structure, improved information exchange between agencies in the public and private sectors, and more effective deployment of resources leading to a potential reduction in the fear of crime.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

The different agencies involved in the project record information differently and, in some cases, they have been reluctant to share information. For example, in many incidents being monitored by a CCTV operator, the police would take charge of a situation and subsequently there is no clear line of communication to correctly update the incident once it passes out of

the control of the operator. This obfuscation was exacerbated by partner agencies using different radio systems and different operating protocols.

The Nigh Radio Network in its original incarnation used an analogue radio network. This system was somewhat antiquated and prone to technical breakdowns. Furthermore, the high buildings of the city centre sometimes obscured signals and the system was vulnerable to unauthorised scanning, thus raising security concerns.

The licensed trade is prone to significant turnover in staff, particularly at the front doors of clubs. This meant that, despite training provided at the start of the project, inexperienced and untrained radio users ended up in possession of the equipment, which impacted on the quality of the information received. Additionally, the original project was routed through a CCTV centre. The primary focus of a CCTV operator, in terms of job description and experience, is to gather CCTV evidence therefore the focus was not on quality radio control but on visual evidence gathering.

The design of the analogue system meant that, if two users attempted to use the network at the same time, one is unable to broadcast. This impacted on the prioritisation of calls. Subsequently, a 'red' call system has been put in place so that a controller can acknowledge the user with an emergency. However, this is a temporary and potentially problematic solution.

In October 2010 the Night Radio Network was rolled out from 50 to 200 licensed premises in Glasgow's city centre. The project shifted from an analogue to a digital platform, thus offering better security as unauthorised persons are unable to access the radio channel through use of a scanner. The digital platform has improved the signal strength of the Night radio Network, thereby reducing the possibility of users being unable to access support when required.

Summary

The Night Radio Network was implemented in 2005 to provide a communication channel between door stewards within Glasgow's city centre and the police. This communication platform allowed for the quick dissemination of information ensuring rapid response to potential troublespots, before violence has escalated. The project involves representatives from Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police, NHS Board, Transport Providers and the city centre's Licensed Trade. The project possibly contributed to a significant reduction in violent incidents in Glasgow's city centre in 2009/2010. The project was rolled out from 50 to 200 licensed premises in the city centre in October 2010, shifting from an analogue to a digital platform.