



Practice Note 19

Project Name: Hillview ASB Partnership

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Topic Areas: Partnership Working, Public Space Safety, Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Personal Safety, Community Engagement

Project Background and Aims

A significant antisocial behaviour problem was identified in Hillview, Brechin, where a group of individuals were intimidating, harassing and threatening residents, subjecting persons to racist abuse, housebreaking, stealing property, vandalising property and holding frequent excessively noisy parties where alcohol and illegal drugs were being abused.

Tayside Police had also identified the area as having notable problems in terms of crime, with Hillview confirmed as a hotspot for vandalism and noise nuisance within the Community Intelligence Analyst's monthly tactical document. Moreover, community intelligence indicated that residents were scared to report incidences for fear of reprisal. Several households believed suffering from significant anti-social behaviour were of non-British nationality.

Housing Division information showed that five households, the majority of whom were of non-British nationality, had sought homelessness from their council tenancy in Hillview due to suffering from threats and serious anti-social behaviour by this group of individuals.

It was clear from all sources of information collected regarding the Hillview area that some radical and intensive work was required to turn the problems of the area around. A report undertaken by the Housing Manager for the Brechin area referred to the area of Hillview as "a stigmatised, low demand area with a high number of voids (properties)" which utilised a "disproportionate percentage" of Brechin's entire Housing repair budget. This was also true when comparing Hillview to other housing schemes within Angus. The report also stated that antisocial behaviour problems in Hillview were "significantly higher" compared to the rest of Brechin.

The Joint Services Team, Housing Division and Tayside Police formed a localised project team to tackle these complaints of serious and persistent anti-social behaviour which resulted in Hillview becoming a more safe, secure and sustainable community. Through their own engagement with the community of Hillview, partner agencies believed that the problems of the area were significantly under-reported. The group wanted to achieve a marked reduction in all the major issues.

Resources

Funding: Resourced through existing departmental and partner agency budgets.

Partners: Residents, Housing Staff, Tayside Police, ASB Staff, Community Wardens, Victim Support, Angus Community Mediation, Translation Services, Community & Tenancy Participation Officers, Community Learning & Development Officers

Monitoring and Evaluation

Partners met at least fortnightly to discuss progress which was measured against the differing key indicators of each agency, including SOA, local and community indicators, as well as by feedback from the residents and victims. These meetings were flexible in their frequency as the need arose.

Activities

A multi-agency meeting was held with relevant partners where a plan of joint positive action was agreed.

Throughout next three months, Angus Council Joint Services Team, Angus Council Community Housing Team and Tayside Police carried out extensive work in the area in order to gain the confidence of the community and victims of the ongoing behaviour. This included positive action by police where evidence was available, dedicated foot patrols by Community Wardens, investigative work by the Community Safety Team Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Unit and Housing Officers, and deployment of an overt public space CCTV camera. This work helped to gain the confidence of the local community who had previously given up hope of finding a solution.

Specific support was given to non-British residents in allowing them to record details of incidents in their own native language and providing a member of staff who could speak their language. Victim Support Angus and Angus Community Mediation also gave support to vulnerable residents which helped to increase their confidence in the process further.

Overt public space CCTV camera provided visible reassurance to residents. As all normal methods to gain evidence had been exhausted, and lack of corroborative proof still existed, permission by the Community Safety Team was sought and granted under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 to install covert camera equipment at two key locations within Hillview.

Impact

The impact of the Hillview ASB Partnership has been significant. There has been an 83% reduction in antisocial behaviour complaints compared with the previous year. Also, reported vandalisms have reduced by 54.3% in the area compared to the previous year.

Tenancy turnover has decreased 41.4% from the previous year. Previously void flats are now occupied and sustaining tenancies. 30 previously unoccupied and void flats are now tenanted, with revenue of over £61,000 per year in rent and there has been a reduction in frequency of abandoned or terminated tenancies.

Staff costs have decreased, with less hours spent on management of void tenancies, antisocial behaviour investigation and repairing damaged properties. For example, maintenance costs have been reduced, with less vandalism and fewer house breakings and consequently less need for broken door, window replacements and so on.

All relevant evidence of criminal acts was handed over to Police for consideration of proceedings. This resulted in four individuals being arrested. One was sentenced to one year for fire-raising with potential endangerment to life, the second to ten months imprisonment for fire-raising with potential endangerment to life and a further forty days for housebreaking. The third individual, the person subject to the anti-social behaviour order on criminal conviction, was arrested for disorder committed against another household within Hillview and other offences. He was sentenced to five months in prison. The fourth individual received a non-custodial sentence for house breaking. All these offence were committed against residents of Hillview.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) were also granted against two of these individuals for a period three years, banning one from certain area in Hillview and the other from entering Hillview altogether.

In October 2010 the Hillview ASB Partnership received a Safer Communities Award for Equalities and Diversity.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

The Hillview ASB Partnership pooled and coordinated existing resources and delivered appropriate responses in a joined-up manner. The partnership benefitted from an enthusiastic involvement of partner agencies and real engagement with the local community.

The work of the Hillview ASB Partnership is ongoing and it has recently worked with Neighbourhood Services Housing Division to provide a community flat. This will be utilised as a meeting place by Hillview residents, as there is no community centre in the area. The premises identified for the community flat is on the bottom floor to

enable access for all residents. In addition, tenant participation staff are working to establish a residents group in the area.

Summary

Hillview and the work undertaken there was much less a “project” and more of an operational, grass roots level example of a community and practitioners looking at what was needed and “just getting it done”. It is acknowledged by local agencies that utilising a similar approach in other problem areas in Angus will most likely prove to be successful. The model of work done could also be replicated in other council and partner agencies work with communities. In 2010 the Hillview ASB Partnership received a Safer Communities Award for Equalities and Diversity.

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