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Edinburgh Meadows Practice Exemplar

14/04/2021

Introduction

Shirley McLaren is the Community Safety Manager at City of Edinburgh City Council. On Tuesday 13th April, Shirley explained to SCSN how her and her teams' efforts helped to reduce levels of violence and antisocial behaviour in the Meadows in Edinburgh.

Situation

The Meadows is a green space in Edinburgh that attracts people from across Edinburgh and from further afield. Although it is a relaxing, family friendly and accessible space, problems such as anti-social behaviour, littering and dog fouling can be commonplace. Recently there were over 5000



people in the Meadows, which is especially alarming given that Covid-19 restrictions are still in place. Due to the sunny weather and bank holiday weekend, young people from across the Lothians and from Glasgow gathered in the Meadows. Many people were under the influence of alcohol and as the day progressed the mood changed from friendly picnics to violence and anti-social behaviour, with behaviour such as bottle throwing and brawling. Side streets and lanes surrounding the Meadows were used as public toilets with some local residents seeing up to 40 people

urinating and defecating in the streets next to their houses over the course of the day.

The reporting from this weekend can be found here –

<https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/edinburgh-news/edinburgh-meadows-locals-demand-summit-20323530>

Action

Prior to the weekend following the one stated above, Shirley and her team utilised their weekly Covid-19 meetings to discuss events at the Meadows and plan ahead to make sure that future responses effectively put a lid on anti-social behaviour and violence in the Meadows. The plan that unfolded for the following weekend included the below measures:

- Public Order Policing Duty. 40 police officers at any one time in the Meadows and on standby should issues arise or violence erupt.
- 6 police horses and police stationed at every entrance to the Meadows stopping people with alcohol from entering the park. Police were in the surrounding streets too.
- People were stopped and advised that it's illegal to drink in the Meadows and if seen to be drinking then issued with a fixed penalty notice.
- Wraparound signs on trees stating that it is illegal to drink in the Meadows.
- Deployed CCTV van from 2.30pm to 11pm on Friday and Saturday and installed re-deployable cameras in the lanes where people were using toilets.
- Public toilets open until 8pm.
- Deployed cleansing staff who patrolled the Meadows doing litter picking all day from 10am - 6pm. Had 6 staff litter picking staff who also issued black bags to everybody to gather the rubbish.
- Utilised 2 park rangers in who were there to enforce park management rules. If anyone behaved in an antisocial manner, then they were asked to leave the park and be banned for 24 hours.
- 2 street enforcement officers to issue fixed penalty notices for littering and dog fouling.
- Street Assist presence from 6pm to 11pm on both nights to offer support for anyone feeling vulnerable
- Manager from the council on standby on Friday and Saturday (Shirley).

Outcome



Although the Meadows were slightly quieter than normal anyway (due to colder weather) the outcome of all the measures put in place was very positive. The Meadows were much quieter and by end of the Saturday night there was snow, which also

helped to clear the park. By 8.30pm most people had left and the majority of rubbish had been cleared up and put in bin bags. This was a big operation and overall it went very well. The below kept points provide a summary which demonstrate the overall success of this partnership work.

- Only 1 arrest all weekend
- No hospital admissions
- 388 dispersals (asking people to leave the park)
- 8 fixed penalty notice issued

In comparison to the violent and anti-social weekend before, there was a really nice atmosphere where people were able to meet with friends and where families could enjoy outdoor green space. Local shops that sold alcohol were also visited after branded carrier bags were seen across the park as identified by staff and CCTV footage. Feedback received indicated that one particular retailer wasn't managing queues and were unaware of proxy purchasing. This retailer was visited by Licensing Standards and reminded of their licensing duties as well as their duty under Covid-19 restrictions to manage queues outside shops. A tough stance was taken. A positive outcome of this intervention is the introduction of new Alcohol Partnerships in the area, in particular for the Meadows, of which the above-mentioned retailer will participate in alongside other partners to help reduce anti-social behaviour and problem drinking.

Reflection

Key activities that led to the success of this intervention were strong partnership working, engaging with the community and pre-planning. If future efforts are to be as successful, then the Meadows can continue to be utilised in a friendly and appropriate manner so that everyone can enjoy the facilities. Although the large police presence isn't sustainable, hopefully this initiative will act as a deterrent for future violence and anti-social behaviour. In addition, when planning future resources, it is important to look at the weather forecast and apply additional resources based on what the weather will be.

In her role as Community Safety manager at City of Edinburgh Council, Shirley was present in the Meadows on both days over the weekend. She felt that it was important for her to greet all staff on the day, provide briefings to all

managers prior to the event. Shirley also created a contact list of all staff which included shift times and contact numbers. She also ensured that there was a member of staff in the multi-agency command centre, streaming live the CCTV footage so as the team could act quickly to any issues.

The next concern is the 26th of April, when legislation changes, and more people can gather in larger groups. It is expected that there could be issues that weekend as people will be able to drink in the Meadows again, and it also a bank holiday weekend. Shirley and her team will continue to monitor activity in the Meadows on a week-by-week basis and respond to changes flexibly and effectively.

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