

## Executive Summary

#StrongerNorth is an on-going multi-partnership initiative established in October 2014 following a high profile attempted murder, which was a hate crime incident. The incident resulted in an increase in concern over rising youth antisocial behaviour (ASB) in the North Edinburgh Ward areas.

The #StrongerNorth partnership is a multi-agency initiative between the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland, Total Craigroyston, local youth groups, other third sector agencies and organisations working together with the community to reduce offending, improve the environment, and provide opportunities, better communication and improved engagement with residents. Key objectives are to work with the community to improve community safety, deliver environmental benefit and enhance opportunities for young people.

Since its inception the project has received positive feedback from residents and service providers. This feedback is supported by an independent survey, which documents improvements in the community, decreases in offending and reductions in the numbers of Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) cases.

This project won the Wider Partnership Safer Communities Award in 2016.

## Background and Aims

Forth Ward is located in north Edinburgh and has a number of areas of social deprivation and social inequality. The area has received a substantial level of negative publicity over the years as a result of high levels of crime in the area. The negative media coverage was heightened in 2014 following a high profile attempted murder, resulting in increased fear of crime in the community.

To tackle local perceptions of the area and reduce fear of crime the #StrongerNorth multi-agency strategic response was established. #StrongerNorth aimed to improve responses to individuals engaged in offending and ASB; provide a cleaner, greener environment, enhance opportunities for young people, develop approaches to working with families engaged in or at risk of crime and improving communication and engagement with residents.

Prior to the initiative a statistical and qualitative baseline was established, this baseline was the primary driver of the initiative against which outcomes were established and the multi-agency approach was adopted. The approach aimed to increase engagement with communities and young people and through improved communication, raised awareness and local understanding.

## Activities

The strategic aims of the initiative were designed to deliver social, physical and environmental improvement to the area to improve the quality of life for the local community. To achieve this the initiative's multi-agency partnership held street surgeries, used social media sites to increase engagement with younger groups, produced newsletters, conducted joint walkabouts and environmental surveys with the local community and local elected council representatives.

To ensure that the community's young people were engaged and had a voice within the community 'Youth Talk' events were held. In addition, high tariff young offenders were identified, supported and signposted to capacity building and diversionary activities including: youth army outreach, SFRS cool down crew and apprentice opportunities tailored to individual needs.

The initiative also adopted a preventative approach engaging with young people in local schools. Multi-agency 'Support in Time' meetings were held to discuss pupils in need of support or intervention and provided tailored support to the pupils and family. Mentors in Violence and Rights Respecting schools initiatives were also delivered.

Within the community local staff and groups worked together to identify, target and provide local support to young people and families; delivering positive outcome for them and the local community.

An example provided identified two young boys in one local family who were regularly engaged with ASB and hate crime. Despite being known to a number of services there seemed to be little impact on their behaviour, and lead to a lack of confidence with the services. #StrongerNorth provided the opportunity for partners to link up and create a unified approach to assisting the boys and the family. This conjoined approach had a greater impact in reducing offending and the family had increased confidence in the service responses. The wider impact was that the community had a stronger belief in the value of these services and their ability to support changes in behaviour.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

#StrongerNorth used the 'Knowledge Partnership', an independent organisation to evaluate and monitor the initiative. In addition to surveys used to set the baseline benchmark, the partnership established eight focus groups drawn from across sections of the community representing social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The focus groups provided qualitative research data, which was combined with the quantitative data on crime obtained through Police Scotland.

The evaluation recognised that most people felt their concern for crime had diminished with 60% of residents stating their fear of crime had reduced. In addition to the qualitative outcomes, Police Scotland's crime statistics also identified a marked reduction in crime and disorder including:

- Crimes of serious violence - down 23.6% on 5 year average
- Minor assault down 8.9% on 5 year average

- Housebreaking – down 41.8% on last year to date
- Motor vehicle crime – down 48.6% on last year to date
- Vandalism – down 33.9% on last year to date

Within the community the initiative generated a desire to create a greener, cleaner environment, which resulted in intergenerational community clean up events. As a result of the improved community engagement the focus group data identified a 22% reduction in the proportion of people who believe their area was unclean.

Whilst the evaluation focussed on the benefits delivered to the local community there were also significant improvements delivered in partnership working. These included:

- Increase support for individuals responsible for delivering assistance to local young people and their families
- Improved information sharing through co-located services
- Co-location and early detection, improved support and interventions
- Involvement of local youth groups ensured that local young people needs were met
- Multi-agency partnerships identified and supported the development of programmes to improve employability and social skills
- The 'Mentors in Violence' and Rights Respecting Schools initiatives ensured that local young people were given greater chances, were more confident, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- Multi-agency 'Support in Time' meetings deliver improved outcomes for young people and families at risk
- Greater collaboration between services resulted in a number of notable benefits for families, greatly improving access to relevant services and reducing duplication of effort

## Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

#StrongerNorth provides a clear demonstration of public sector services responding effectively to community concerns and providing an opportunity for the local community to be involved and have their say in the action taken. The initiative is a demonstration of how local public sector and voluntary groups can come together with the local community and work with them in delivering sustainable improvement. City of Edinburgh Council and Police Scotland have undergone recent major restructure of services across the city. The partnerships developed and working practices achieved through #StrongerNorth have informed a number of these changes and continue to be adopted.

## Resources

Much of the resource allocated to #StrongerNorth came from the effective use of partnership resources with staff and time provided by the primary agencies engaged with the initiative. Police Scotland provided a community officer who was co-located with the community safety team, they used the resources of the National Violence Reduction Teams, the Air Support Unit, mounted officers, roads policing and uniformed/plain clothes officers.

The City of Edinburgh Council used its own communications officer in the development of the community engagement social media project. In addition the council provided a budget of £30,000 which was used to produce and distribute newsletters and conduct focus groups and surveys to solicit public opinion and qualitative data.

### Practice Note Information

Practice Note Title:	#StrongerNorth
Practice Note No:	PN71
Date Produced:	August 2016

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