

EXETER COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

A. OVERALL

The crime figures for the year April 2006 to March 2007 show a marginal increase of 0.4%. However, in terms of the ten British Crime Survey (BCS) Comparator Crimes, by which the partnership is measured by the Government Office South West and the Home Office, there has been an increase of 3.8% on last year. These increases follow decreases of 10% and 11.9% respectively in the previous year.

The table below shows the comparison of the 10 BCS crimes against the 2003/4 baseline figure. We are still on track for the required 17.5% reduction from those 2003/4 figures by the end of 2007/8, though this performance is considerably threatened by the current numbers of criminal damage offences being reported.

April 2006 to March 2007		EXETER			
		Target	Recorded 2006/07	Recorded 2003/04	%age Change
Crime	Domestic burglary	Reduce by 12%	570	565	0.9%
	Theft from the person	Reduce by 10%	226	221	2.3%
	Robbery	Reduce by 10%	63	74	-14.9%
	Theft of vehicle	Reduce by 10%	277	364	-23.9%
	Theft from vehicle	Reduce by 20%	1233	1598	-22.8%
	Vehicle interference	Reduce by 20%	135	119	13.4%
	Theft of pedal cycle	Reduce by 20%	418	408	2.5%
	Common assault	Reduce by 17%	496	661	-25.0%
	Wounding	Reduce by 17%	1104	1383	-20.2%
	Criminal damage	Reduce by 19%	2593	2525	2.7%
	Total - these crimes		7115	7918	-10.1%
	Total - all recorded crime		12449	14332	-13.1%

The year saw a continuing effort to work through the changes in the structure and funding of community safety work across Devon, largely brought about by the development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). There is now an established Safer Devon Partnership (SDP), but further discussions are still ongoing about the governance and accountability for community safety work across Devon. This has taken a considerable amount of time, partly because of the uncertainty over recommendations likely to arise from the government's review of the Crime and Disorder Act

The introduction of the LAA led to substantial change in the way funding was allocated for 2006/7, with further significant changes being discussed.

B. PROJECTS

Funding was limited during the year, so the additional projects were fewer in number than previously.

1. Youth service diversion work

Targeted work by the Youth Service over several years has seen reductions in anti-social behaviour in certain areas at certain times of year. For example, diversionary activity during the Halloween/Bonfire Night period has been effective in reducing such ASB, and the partnership has funded additional service provision at this time, and during the summer holiday period.

2. Phoenix

This is a project run by the Fire Service to offer a week-long course to young people who have been involved in fire-setting. The course gives them an insight into the dangers of fire-fighting, but also gives discipline and a sense of team spirit. Arson is potentially the most damaging and most expensive of all crime against society, and the Partnership funded places on this course in order to provide some early intervention work with young people identified as being at risk.

3. SPLASH

SPLASH holiday diversion schemes have been supported by the Partnership for some years. Last year's funding enabled the extension of the scheme to other holiday periods through the year.

4. Capital funding

There is a requirement under Home Office rules to use a certain proportion of the allocated funds to purchase capital items.

During last year, the partnership was therefore able to support the expansion of the EBAC (Exeter Businesses Against Crime) radio link system to areas beyond the immediate city centre. The aerials purchased using this capital money have extended the range of cover to Heavitree and St Thomas.

Some of the capital funding was also used to purchase 2 head cameras for use by the police. These are cameras which are worn on the caps, and they provide both immediate direct evidence of behaviour and a deterrent. Concerns have been raised about possible confrontation and escalation of the situation in some cases, but the evidence seems to suggest that they have worked well. Indeed the Home Office is now making further funding available through police services.

The Partnership's own funds were used to contribute to work across all of the themes, usually making small amounts available quickly to support community initiatives, or supporting publicity work on behalf of the various Action Teams.

C. RESPECT

The other main focus of work during 2006/7 was the Respect agenda and the development of Exeter's status as a Respect Action Area. This required a commitment to tackle anti-social behaviour, with a step-up in the use of the available tools and powers to the police and local authority. The City Council Housing Department was an early signatory to the Respect Housing Management Standard.

There was also a requirement to establish a Family Intervention Project (FIP). These projects were pioneered in Dundee in the 1990s, and they are now being rolled out across the country in Respect Areas. FIPs work with those families who cause the most disruption to the communities in which they live. These families are likely to be known to all of the statutory agencies, and they are likely to have several key staff working with them.

After a full tendering process, working with Devon County Council Children and Young People's Commissioning Team, NCH (National Children's Homes) have been commissioned to provide the service, and work is now in hand to staff the project and start working with families.

The ongoing work to tackle anti-social behaviour was aided by the appointment on secondment of Steve Stewart, who brought an understanding of the issue from a practitioner's perspective from his work in the Community Patrol service.

The Partnership Escalation Process has been reinforced, and a more regular weekly team meeting has been established to maintain a focus on tackling known individuals, areas and types of behaviour. This new procedure is still bedding down, but has already shown the value of the regularity and consistency of attendance.

Considerable use has been made in the city of the Section 30 Dispersal Zones. These designations give the police the power to disperse groups of 2 or more people who are behaving (or are likely to behave) in an anti-social manner. The zones are requested by the police in response to particular, usually short-term, issues in local areas. The Zone in the city centre has been consistently renewed,

but most others have been used for short spells to focus activity on particular trouble spots. Some zones have been renewed to deal with recurring problems at particular times of the year – eg Halloween.

To date, there have been Section 30 Dispersal Zones in the city centre, Burnthouse Lane, Countess Wear, Exwick, Pinhoe, Cowick Street, Buddle Lane, Whipton Barton, Beacon Heath and the Canal basin. Some of these have been extensive areas (Countess Wear), others only a few streets.

The effectiveness of Section 30 Dispersal Zones is due to be assessed over the whole police service area of Devon and Cornwall. However, in Exeter, the effect has been mixed. The successful zones have, in general, been those which have been adequately resourced, and which have been used as part of a wider package of measures – eg targeting prominent individuals, providing youth outreach diversion work. Zones provide some respite for residents, but with some evidence of displacement and recurrence. Longer-term solutions require multi-agency engagement, commitment and resources.

D. OTHER WORK

There was a reduction in alcohol-related crime and violence during the year. However, many of the criminal damage offences are thought to be alcohol-related, linked to the late-night economy, and so this remains a major focus of attention.

The 3 strikes campaign was started during the previous year, but has proved very successful. It is an initiative by the police Community Safety Team and Licensing Department to tackle alcohol-related disorder, usually in the evening economy, and linking to the anti-social behaviour escalation process, so that repeat offenders can face bans from city centre pubs and clubs, and then ASBOs. A new website has been established to improve the sharing of information about banned offenders.

There was a significant publicity campaign launched just before Christmas last year, working with the Safer Devon Partnership (SDP) and the Devon Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). The “Think Safe, Drink Safe” campaign contributed to a reduction in alcohol-related crime during the year.

The work of the Domestic Violence Forum – or ADVICE (Against Domestic Violence In the City of Exeter) – continued to focus on the need to increase awareness of the issue, and thereby increase the reporting of offences to the police and other agencies.

The national awareness-raising week in November was supported, with a high-profile march in the High Street, ending at the War Memorial on Cathedral Green.

The other projects developed in Exeter during the previous year, largely under the auspices of the Devon partnership – Against Domestic Violence and Abuse (ADVA) – have continued to thrive and a new service has also been introduced.

- There is now a co-located multi-agency unit involving police, social services and Women’s Aid – Exeter Domestic Abuse Support Unit (EDASU).
- There is a Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) at Exeter Magistrates Court.
- There is an established Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process in place.
- There is an established Outreach service through Exeter Women’s Aid.
- A Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) has been established.

The Prospects Approved Premise is now being run by Devon and Cornwall Probation Area after a difficult opening period. Some small changes to the referral criteria have enabled the project to operate at closer to capacity.

The Prolific Offender Resettlement through Co-ordinated Housing (PORCH) project has come on stream, and is already making a significant contribution to reducing re-offending by helping release prisoners find and maintain more settled accommodation.

E. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The last year has seen an increasing focus on neighbourhoods. The City Council’s own pilot community engagement areas are closely linked with the development of neighbourhood policing, including the deployment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

There have also been additional PCSOs engaged by the police but funded by the City Council to focus on the crime and disorder issues in the city centre. These 2 officers work closely with the CCTV Control Room and the Exeter Businesses Against Crime Manager, but also provide a consistent reassuring presence to the public.

The Crime and Disorder Act Review includes requirements for community engagement and involvement, including Community Call for Action. This is being developed in partnership and co-operation with other agencies, and will clearly be the direction of work for the future.