

United Kingdom



ECPA/BPC 2006

Please answer the following questions in English.

1. Is this your country's ECPA entry or is it an additional project? (Only one ECPA entry per country plus up to two other projects.)

This is the official UK entry to EPCA 2006.

2. What is the title of the project?

The Tower Project - Blackpool

3. Please give a short general description of the project.

The Tower Project is a persistent offender targeting initiative, established in 2002 in Blackpool, a large town in the North West of England. Blackpool had the fifth highest number of drug-related deaths per year in the country. It is a multi-agency project that is based upon an assertive and intensive supervision model that combines drug treatment and lifestyle support with police disruption and targeting tactics. The operation was set up in response to recorded increases in the rate of criminality of drug dependent offenders, linked to a large increase in the use of crack cocaine and heroin in the Blackpool area.

4. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

The project aimed to reduce the offending behaviour of a specially targeted group of persistent drug related offenders who commit burglary, violent crime (including robbery) and vehicle crime to fund their drug habit. A persistent offender was viewed as one who had 6 or more convictions per year. The target pool within the Blackpool area was estimated to be 250 individuals, the majority being illegal drug users.

The aim of the project was to reduce by 30% within the first year the number of offences of burglary, robbery and vehicle crime committed by the target group of

persistent offenders. It should be noted that the occurrence of these crimes had risen since the previous year by 34%; 66%; and 44% respectively.

In addition a target was set to reduce within the first year the average illegal drug use of the target group by 30%.

5. How was the project implemented?

The project was developed taking account of lessons learned from other persistent offender programmes both in the UK and the Netherlands. What was particularly innovative about this programme was the range of partners involved in the project that enabled a much greater degree of involvement, support and management than had previously been the case. For instance the project followed offenders who were both in prison and out in the community; it also provided immediate access to drug treatment and other support, which previously had been sporadic and un-coordinated.

This holistic approach enabled the development of a long-term problem solving strategy that would target those persistent offenders who suffered drug addiction, while addressing such issues as homelessness, worklessness and life-skill problems whilst also introducing mechanisms to deter them from committing further offences.

Individuals were identified through offender profiling, and on a voluntary basis were brought onto the scheme and a programme of support was designed for each of them depending on their situation – for instance, pre-release plans were developed; voluntary drug testing was made available; rehabilitation, drug support, and housing services were offered. Another innovative approach from a project aimed specifically at crime prevention was its assertive (coercive) nature; that participants on the scheme were made aware that if they were found to be re-offending or otherwise breaking the conditions of their participation on the scheme that any of the ‘benefits or privileges’ would be revoked as well as increased police surveillance and other disruption tactics being targeted against them.

Initially the project was pump-primed by using Communities Against Drugs funding. A management team from all involved agencies formed the multi agency team based at Police Headquarters. Working practices were then developed and put in place to manage the offenders.

6. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

A multi-agency operational team was created at the end of 2001 led by a senior police officer. It was located at two centres - a police-based office including the Probation Service and Crown Prosecution Service, based at Police Divisional Headquarters in Blackpool; and a medical team working with the Community Drug Team, which included a drug worker and a medical practitioner.

A key element was bringing together all elements of the Criminal Justice and Community Safety areas, which included the police, prosecution, probation and prison services as well as the Health Service, and the local Drugs Action Team and

Local Community Safety Partners.

All these groups were represented on a Steering Group which developed practical working practices to deliver the aims of the project and manage the offenders.

In addition, the Local Authority provided financial management and administrative support for the project and the police provided accommodation and other logistical support.

7. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project?

A number of performance indicators were established, which involved each of the participants on the scheme. They included:

- Offending rates for each of the target group;
- Cost of the criminality they committed;
- Illegal drug use by the target group;
- Cost of drug use by the target group;
- Offender management – compliance with scheme ‘rules’;
- Overall crime statistics for the police area;
- Costs of running the scheme.

The offenders’ crime reduction progress was monitored weekly by operational staff and the management team met monthly to discuss strategic/operational decisions.

It was possible to compare the offending rate and the cost of that offending before and as the scheme progressed. The aim was to progressively reduce the usage of illegal drugs by the target group, and thus the amount spent on these drugs, taking account of the correlation between the amount of criminality committed in order to ‘feed’ their drug use.

8. Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

The Project was evaluated by The Applied Criminology Unit from Huddersfield University after the scheme had been running for just over a year. A separate evaluation report is available if required. Key findings from the evaluation include:

- It was confirmed that the most prolific and hence challenging group of offenders had been selected for the scheme;
- It was conservatively estimated that between 5 and 50 offences per month may have been committed by each offender in the target group
- At the time of the review there were 90 participants on the scheme and plans were in place to double this number within the following 12 months;
- It was noted that exit strategies were being developed, to allow more stabilised participants to be transferred to mainstream services;
- The substantial claims of crime reductions within the local police area did occur and the overall reduction was significant when all crime types were considered together when compared to the remainder of the Lancashire Police Force;
- There was little evidence of geographical crime displacement,
- The two key objectives of the project – 30% reduction in criminality and 30% reduction in illegal drug use - had been achieved.

9. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

All the objectives originally established for the project were achieved or exceeded. As noted by the evaluation panel – “the programme does appear to be making an impact on the offending behaviour of many of the participants”. Some offenders are now drug-free, and no longer offending, while others have greatly reduced the frequency and severity of their offending. Headline results include:

- Statistical analysis at the end of the first year of the project identified an overall 30% reduction in volume crime in Blackpool in 2001-2002. The evaluation review estimated that up to 40% of this total could be attributed to the project;
- Since the project commenced in January 2002, domestic burglary has been reduced by 55.7%; robbery is down 56.9%; and vehicle crime has dropped by 40.4%;
- 213 drug-using persistent offenders are on or have passed through the project;
- The co-operation rate of those offenders on the project is around 90%;
- A cost benefit analysis of the project has indicated that the costs attributed to the project are less than 20% of the total estimated costs of crime that could previously have been attributed to the target group of offenders.

As the benefits of the scheme were recognised, it was rolled out progressively across Lancashire, then throughout the northwest region, and finally became one of the key foundation stones of the national Prolific & Priority Offender Initiative. This approach has proved to be easily replicable in the UK and it is believed could bring similar crime reduction benefits if adopted in other EU Member States.

10. Are there reports or documents available on the project? In print or on the Web? Please, give references to the most relevant ones.

Available on the Lancashire Constabulary website (www.lancashire.police.uk) and the printed Huddersfield University’s evaluation report. In addition, the Report of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (*Reducing Crime: the Home Office working with Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships*) dated 21st June 2005 (HC147) acknowledges the role played by the Tower project in developing national strategy (Summary - Page 4)

Please, write here a one page description of the project

In 2001, Lancashire Constabulary's Western Division, having previously achieved reductions in the crimes of burglary, robbery and vehicle crime, experienced an upward trend of 30% in these key performance indicator crimes. Anecdotal evidence and some statistics from the Community Drugs Team showed that crack cocaine had been augmenting the basic heroin use of our persistent offenders thus increasing the amount of money the offenders had to obtain to meet their illegal drug needs.

In addition, Blackpool had a long waiting list for drug treatment and there were no shared care services. Persistent offenders, because of their chaotic lifestyle, tended to exclude themselves from many mainstream services such as General Practitioner health services, housing and benefit help. They were trapped in a cycle of offending, drug taking and prison. Something had to change; traditional policing methods were not having any impact. We needed to be offender focused and identify why the offender needed to commit crime. By dealing with the offenders' issues we could remove the need to offend and therefore reduce crime and increase community safety.

As a result the Tower Project was formed to deliver a crime reduction initiative targeting the key crimes of burglary violent crime (robbery) and vehicle crime. A multi-agency team consisting of Police, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service and NACRO worked together from the local police station to manage offenders and offer interventions to stop their criminality. Offenders were targeted both in and outside of prison and given immediate access to drug treatment and support with housing, benefits and lifestyle. Those offenders that continued to offend despite interventions were subject to police surveillance, stop checks and disruption tactics.

The Project is located at the heart of the Division's intelligence system and allows the multiagency team to manage persistent offenders as soon as they come to notice with either (coercive) enforcement tactics or positive multi agency support. Relevant information including drug test results is shared with partner agencies to assist them achieving their objectives and, because agencies work together more effectively, the offenders receive a joined up approach to help manage their issues. This co-ordinated approach also changes the perception of the offenders about significantly increasing their chances of being held to account for their criminal and antisocial behaviour, which impacts on their re-offending.

Blackpool Tower Project has worked with 213 prolific drug-using offenders and to date only 4 have refused to work with Tower and enter treatment. In the first year dwelling burglaries reduced by 44% and in the four years since Tower began, dwelling burglary is down 55.7% and still falling. Over the four years robbery is down 56.9% and car crime is down 40.4%. (See attached graphs).

As part of the national roll-out the Police Standards Unit at the Home Office sponsored the project to hold weekly seminars promoting its work. Many agencies throughout the country visited Tower including 42 of our police forces. Many of these forces set up their own prolific offender units and eventually the Prolific and other Priority Offender Initiative, which drew heavily on the experience of Tower, was launched by the Prime Minister.

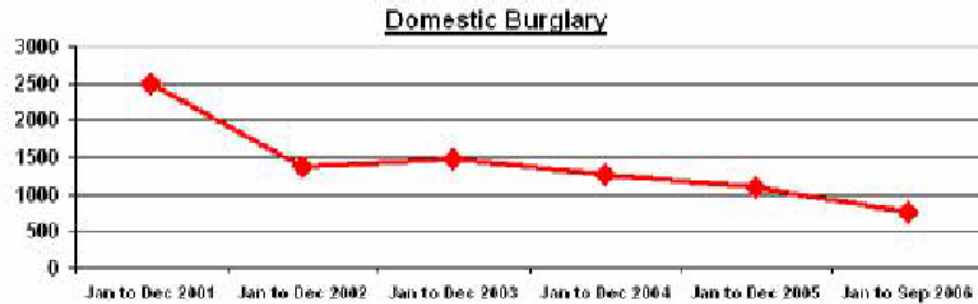
The Tower Project at Blackpool continues to thrive and again this year crime is falling. The project is now well established across the whole Lancashire Police force area and other policing divisions have seen the same significant results. One important point to make is that the offenders know what they get from the Tower Project - a high quality of service that they can trust - provided by Lancashire Constabulary officers and their partners. A testament to this is that Lancashire Drugs Action Team are re-branding all their criminal justice treatment under the banner of the Tower Programme.

ASSESSMENT OF THE TOWER PROJECT - WESTERN DIVISION

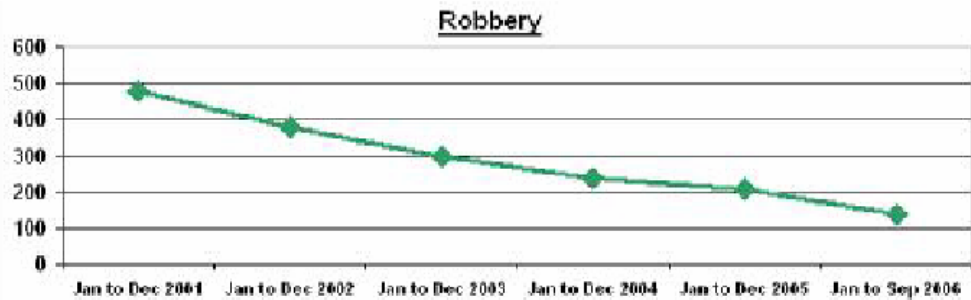
Offences	January to December				January to June	
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2004	2005
Burglary in a Dwelling	2498	1377	1471	1269	646	481
Difference		-1121	94	-202		-165
% + or -		-44.9%	6.8%	-13.7%		-25.5%
Robbery	478	379	296	237	125	97
Difference		-99	-83	-59		-28
% + or -		-20.7%	-21.9%	-19.9%		-22.4%
Vehicle crime	3689	2565	2604	2482	1338	1040
Difference		-1124	39	-122		-298
% + or -		-30.5%	1.5%	-4.7%		-22.3%

ASSESSMENT OF THE TOWER PROJECT - WESTERN DIVISION

Date	Domestic Burglary
Jan to Dec 2001	2498
Jan to Dec 2002	1377
Jan to Dec 2003	1471
Jan to Dec 2004	1269
Jan to Dec 2005	1106
Jan to Sep 2006	753



Date	Robbery
Jan to Dec 2001	478
Jan to Dec 2002	379
Jan to Dec 2003	296
Jan to Dec 2004	237
Jan to Dec 2005	206
Jan to Sep 2006	140



Date	Vehicle Crime
Jan to Dec 2001	3689
Jan to Dec 2002	2565
Jan to Dec 2003	2604
Jan to Dec 2004	2482
Jan to Dec 2005	2197
Jan to Sep 2006	1623

