

CASE STUDY

The purpose of this case study is to understand the impact of using a problem-solving approach in policing to find evidence-based solutions to situations. Dyfed-Powys Police uses the OSARA Model (SARA) to systematically identify, understand and sustainably resolve problems. This case study has been presented in this format.

This relates to the cuckooing of a vulnerable resident in an elderly residential complex. The address was being used to supply drugs by the occupant's son. The issue was dealt with by way of civil injunction, an intervention under the 'Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014'.

Scanning

This issue became apparent due to the volume of calls for service to the residential complex. Basic information showed that there were numerous calls to the complex of suspicious activity, callers and alike, to one address specifically. We knew that a linked individual was a prison leaver, heavily involved in the use and supply of drugs in Llandrindod. The Neighbourhood Policing Team engaged with residents as part of normal patrol and this activity became apparent through this. This engagement increased when we heard that the offender, known to us, was pressing on his relative. This was further aggravated, in terms of vulnerability, as the address was used for the purpose of bail.

There was resident representation; approximately 20 residents and the complex warden. Powys County Council Housing were involved, following reports from residents. Kaleidoscope were also involved, in terms of support, from an early stage. POBL, a local homelessness support group, were available for support.

In terms of impact, residents were fearful of the situation. A resident had his flat broken into; a case of mistaken address but hugely impactful. In terms of signal crime, it was massively impactful for residents and the fear of crime in an ordinarily safe environment drastically increased. It was suggested that one resident, an elderly lady, chose to sleep with a knife next to her as a precaution. There was a wider impact, linked to the drug use and associated conduct, but the main extent was for the complex residents and, indeed, the victim herself.

Impact, for Powys County Council, was also overwhelming. Angered residents were directing most of the complaints at the council which had a resource impact on them also. There were limitations for the local authority, who didn't know how to progress. There was a commitment from the offset.

In terms of previous attempts to resolve the problem, this was the first time we identified cuckooing in this setting/ at that location. We were not aware of any attempts to solve elsewhere (in force or nationally) but research was not conducted at that time.

Baseline data (police) September - October 2019;

- 7 Incident Reports, and
- 8 Recorded Crimes; crimes related to theft, threats to kill, possession of drugs, public order, assault with injury and possession of a bladed article.

Housing were heavily involved here and were bombarded with complaints from residents/ wardens, many of which we were aware of.

Analysis

In order to better understand the issue and its impact, a residents meeting was held at the complex. There was a naivety, on the part of the victim, about the kind of behaviour of the offender at the address. We were able to make some assumptions about the nature of the incident but the residents meeting truly put into context how distressed residents were feeling.

Through normal engagement, we had good grip on this matter from the offset. It was contact with offender's sister that confirmed that, whilst he suggested he was there from a supportive stance, that he was exploiting the victim and her address for his own gain.

Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT)

Victim - an older lady (60s) living independently with some support. Mother of two; the offender being one of them. She had regular contact with her daughter but this became strained when the offender came onto the scene. No confirmed mental health issues but liked a drink (alcohol). Vulnerabilities due to situation.

Offender - a male in his late 20's, heavily involved in the use and supply of illicit drugs. Known to police for drugs, violence and knives (not limited to). There's a history of mental health, he wasn't under license and wasn't working with probation. On script with Kaleidoscope and engaged with support for drugs and alcohol. In terms of managers or controllers, there are nobody of influence in his life. He was, more often than not, under the influence of a substance, alcohol or both.

Location - the complex is situated in the centre of the town and accessible from the rear through an insecure boundary fence. The complex is in close proximity to a hostel. Residents wanted the victim to be moved, moving the problem elsewhere.

The problem ultimately occurred as a direct result of the offender's attitude and disregard towards his mother, the victim. The location, being so open and accessible, was certainly a significant factor as it's accessible to town. It was convenient for the distribution of drugs. The offender had little understanding of the consequences of his actions and seemed to think that authorities were powerless to prevent him from his lifestyle and choices. The problem, therefore, was the offender's behaviour.

Based on police information it was clear that the situation/ conduct was escalating. This information helped with prioritising this problem and focused the team.

Objective (SMART)

- Specific:** To improve the quality of life for the residents of the complex, safeguarding the victim and bringing a change to the offender's behaviour.
- Measurable:** To prevent the situation from continuing entirely.
- Achievable:** We have adequate resources, time and powers to tackle this problem.
- Relevant:** This improves the quality of life for residents, the community and supports other policing objectives to tackle drug use/ supply as well as the force objective to protect the most vulnerable.
- Timely:** To be achieved within a month.

Response

The following were considered as part of developing a plan;

- Residents Meeting; whilst this formed part of the analysis stage, it showed a partnership commitment to resolve the situation and provide support/ reassurance to the residents.
- ASB Warnings (1st and 2nd); making the addressee aware that there's an issue with their conduct and that, without a change in behaviour, more robust action may be taken. This creates an opportunity to assist a change in behaviour at an early stage and allows us to evidence such activities.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC); Housing to issue an ABC to the victim, making her aware that her tenancy would be at risk if she allowed this behaviour to continue.
- Civil Injunction; Local Authority/ Police to develop case for injunction to prevent the offender from attending the entire area (residential complex) thus supporting the victim.
- Development of a warrant under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; to search and evidence drug use at the property.

A Closure Order was considered but deemed unsuitable for this situation as it would prevent any other visitor to the address.

The offender was very much the focus but we ensured that contingency, in terms support for the victim, was always in place.

Assessment

This plan was ultimately successful, as evidence below;

- **Residents Meeting;** we engaged with the residents from the offset and maintained a regular presence. This 'visible' presence reassured the residents in the early stages and while other actions were taken. Feedback from the residents showed a profound improvement in the quality of life and saw a significant reduction in the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. There were benefits in terms of confidence in the police. We were careful to not promise anything that couldn't be delivered. Residents felt that they'd been included and had influenced how the problem was tackled. We also saw a revived confidence to report activity (seeing an increase in demand initially) but this was accepted to be positive, evidence that confidence in police.
- **ASB Warnings (1st and 2nd);** a total of nine (9) warning letters were issued soon after the residents meeting. Letters were issued to those seen entering the complex for the described activities seeing substantial compliance; those issued with warnings, in the main, did not return and understood the impact of their conduct through this process. This created a learning opportunity for us in terms of how effective the letters can be when issued at that early stage, despite the warnings being seemingly over simple. The exception to this was the offender himself but a disregard on his part was anticipated.
- **Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC);** Housing issued an ABC to the victim, making her aware that her tenancy was at risk. Residents expressed a desire to have her moved and we recognised that, whilst being the victim, it was important that she understood the consequences. This was delivered with support in mind, creating an opportunity to prevent the offender from visiting.
- **Civil Injunction;** Local Authority/ Police developed a case for injunction, preventing the offender from attending the entire area (residential complex) thus supporting the victim. Evidence was presented by Police in a lead statement. Ultimately, that good relationship with Housing (partners) was key to developing and securing the injunction. The order took two (2) months to get through the court process; there are implications in terms of time when it's contested (as was in this case) as the subject has the opportunity to appeal. There was learning in terms of the differences in Civil Court processes over Criminal Courts (Magistrates and Crown). Significantly, there isn't a need for statementing and witness attendance at court in this process. Redacted information from intelligence, as an example, can be used in civil cases.

The conditions were:

1. *Not to cause anti-social behaviour, causing threat or nuisance to the victim, residents of staff*
2. *Not to use or threaten violence*

In addition, on breach, the exclusion area was also added with a power of arrest.



- **A warrant under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971** was conducted at the address. This was a positive warrant with drugs and paraphernalia was found and the offender was caught preparing drugs. A criminal proceeding followed.

Of the above, the most impactful intervention was the Civil Injunction with conditions. The injunction was inevitably breached with weeks and the offender was arrested. For the first time, gave additional opportunities to manage the offender by increasing the initial conditions of the order to include an exclusion zone (which was argued initially by the offender, claiming he supported the victim).

The objective, as specified, was achieved seeing no further incidents post order. This provided a sustainable solution, replicable in similar situations.

On reflection, the offender would have issued with a CPW soon after the ASB Warning, which he ignored. Similar conditions to the Civil Injunction would apply. The CPW does not prevent the Civil Injunction preparation. Also, there were lessons in terms of the structure of MAVIS, using the appropriate categories to evidence these interventions.

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