

# Community Safety Forum 10 June 2013

## Agenda Item 7a

### Brighton and Hove Community Trigger Trials Assessment Report

#### 1. Local Background

Brighton and Hove is a city of about 274,000 people, it has a vibrant and lively city centre with a strong tourist and night time economy. There is a large LGBT population of an estimated 30,000 people and an estimated BME population of 53,000. There are two universities, the student population is about 22,000. On the outskirts of the city there are a number of large areas of social housing, in the city centre there are a large number of houses in multiple occupation. The majority of social housing is still managed directly by the council. Reported ASB in the city is predominantly:

- ASB towards neighbours by adults and families in social housing and the private rented sector. Perpetrators often present with mental health and/or alcohol as an underlying issue accompanied by higher than average levels of worklessness and low educational attainment
- Night-time economy alcohol related disorder
- Street community ASB
- Youth related ASB

There are on average between 40 and 45 ASBOs in place at any one time, and each year there are two or three premises closure orders.

#### 2. Agencies involved

The city has had designated ASB officers in place for a number of years. There are two teams dealing exclusively with ASB: a Partnership Casework Team and a Housing Services Team totalling 12 officers. The police also have 6 officers whose primary function is to deal with ASB. These teams and officers all work closely together to reduce risk and harm for victims, protect communities and bring perpetrators to justice where necessary and are overseen by the Senior ASB Co-ordinator for the city. Increasingly over the past 18 months colleagues from the YOT, environmental health, RSLs, fire and rescue and health and social care have become involved in problem solving ASB cases.

The Community Trigger trials have been led by police and ASB Teams.

### **3. Brighton and Hove Process**

The trigger threshold in Brighton and Hove is met where an incident has been reported once before and no action has been taken and more than one week has passed since the incident was reported or the incident affects more than one household or business premises.

Trigger activations are received by the Senior Caseworker in the Casework Team and together with the Senior ASB Co-ordinator a subjective assessment is made as to whether the trigger threshold has been met. Contact is made with the client within one working day and the process is explained. This includes an undertaking to give a full response within five working days. Where it is legitimately activated a lead agency is allocated, reviews the case and responds to the client within the above timeframe.

Vulnerable victims identified through the trigger are risk assessed and harm reduced using an internet cloud based multi agency casework system and overseen by the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Tasking meeting (MARAT).

The Senior ASB Co-ordinator reports on the Community Trigger to the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Gaps in service identified through the Trigger would be addressed at the meeting.

Hate incidents are managed using the same process as ASB in the city and a decision was made early on in the trials to include hate incidents. Communities affected by hate incidents have appreciated the inclusion of hate incidents in the process.

There have been nine activations in Brighton and Hove, five where the threshold was met and four where it was not, a summary of the activations are attached

### **4. Partnership working**

There is a strong ethos of partnership working in Brighton and Hove. The trigger and the associated process for managing ASB are relatively new. In some cases there have been discussions about who should be the lead agency. The trigger has led to the identification of gaps in the services of some agencies. It is important that agencies work collaboratively to provide the best service to clients and work together to support each other and address gaps in service.

## 5. Resource impact

The trigger process is managed within existing resources and accountability processes. It works as an additional safety net to ensure victims have proper recourse to services and helps services address gaps in provision. The lead agency does need to spend an amount of time reviewing cases where the client has activated the trigger and communicating effectively with the client the outcome of that review and any actions arising.

## 6. Communications

There have been three strands to communications in Brighton and Hove, firstly, some local publicity and a wide distribution of leaflets and posters. The other two strands are more sustainable. Caseworkers promote the trigger as part of the general service offer relating to ASB and hate incidents directly in community meetings and to relevant statutory and non statutory agencies. Finally the trigger is embedded in online reporting. Where a client is reporting ASB or a hate incident online and the trigger threshold is met they are alerted that they have met the threshold and they are asked if they want to activate the trigger.

## 7. Professional feedback

All managers involved in the process have given feedback on its effectiveness. Police colleagues have found that the process does take some time and with the quick turnaround required there is some concern as to how to swiftly and effectively resource a response. Some police colleagues think the threshold is too low and that the process should only be used where more than one household is affected.

Environmental health colleagues feel the existing complaints process would have been more effective. Council housing colleagues have been very positive about the process recognising that it provides an opportunity for direct communication and service recovery with tenants who feel they have not received the best service.

Officers in the ASB and hate crime Casework Team overseeing the process have recognised that there needs to be clearer guidance to managers on how to manage the process and note that the most significant outcomes of the trial has been to improve communication with residents who feel that they had not received a good service and to identify gaps in service provision.

## 8. Innovation

Brighton and Hove manage ASB and hate incidents in the same way based on the risk and harm approach so from the outset the trigger has been available for ASB and hate incidents. So far there have been no activations in relation to hate incidents but in communicating its availability with

communities affected they have fed back that they feel reassured. This has a positive impact on trust and confidence.

A redeveloped community safety website has provided an opportunity to build the trigger activation threshold into the ASB and hate incident online reporting form. Where the threshold is met those reporting are notified that they have hit the trigger and they are given an option to activate it. This makes the trigger part of normal business and advertises it directly to those who meet the criteria.

## **9. Setting the threshold**

The threshold in Brighton and Hove is met where an incident has been reported once before and no action has been taken and more than one week has passed since the incident was reported or the incident affects more than one household or business premises. There was considerable debate with colleagues locally in agreeing the threshold with some understandable concern that it was set too low and would result in a flood of activations. This has not been the case and the trigger is seen by professionals as a safety net.

## **10. Info sharing**

The process is managed within existing information sharing protocols and practices.

## **11. Issues and solutions**

There are several issues that have arisen for us in Brighton and Hove. Firstly this trial was aimed at getting the most vulnerable and disenfranchised to report incidents. The experience has been that the trigger has been activated by residents who we have not assessed as high risk victims. We need to continue with our broader engagement work directly with communities and third sector agencies serving those communities to encourage them to report incidents, the trigger will be a strand of that engagement work.

Agencies and managers in Brighton and Hove have responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm and effectiveness to trigger activations. We need to have clearly articulated agreed guidance, protocols and briefing to agencies involved to achieve a uniformly high level of response to trigger activations.

The trigger threshold and timescales may need to be reconsidered to maximise the number of agencies involved. Some housing providers have limited local resources that may cause them to question whether they can meet the criteria required.

Finally we may need to have a more formal process for reporting on trigger activations and responses. At the moment any issues would be addressed with the CSP. With PCCs now appointed we need to ensure they are also briefed on activations and responses.

## 12. Benefits

Participating in the trials has helped us to consider our responses to ASB and hate incidents and critically how our responses are received or perceived. The trigger works for us a means of service recovery ensuring appropriate responses to bring about resolution wherever possible. It is not a complaints procedure, learning from activations will help close gaps in service and improve responses to ASB and hate incidents.

## 13. Case studies

A synopsis of trigger activations is attached in Appendix 1.

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## Appendix 1

### Synopsis of trigger activations in Brighton and Hove

#### Trigger 1 – complete

Trigger regarding regular protests taking place outside a pregnancy advisory clinic, situated in a good class residential area in the suburbs of Brighton. On one morning per week the clinic offers an abortion service. Across the road from the premises occupied by the clinic is a 6th form college.

Approximately two years ago, regular protests began to be held outside the premises by an evangelical church group. The protests consisted of holding up placards with photographs of aborted fetuses. Protesters asked passers by if they would like to discuss the moral issues surrounding abortions. These protests were originally held on one morning per week (Wednesday) as this coincided with the days on which the abortion service was offered. The clinic changed the days on which the abortion service ran, and consequently the protests increased to three per week. The size of images being displayed also increased. A second protest group which is also linked to a church group began to also protest outside the premises.

The police response to these protests was to launch Operation Madeira. This consisted mainly of a high visibility presence of two officers being provided at times when the protests were occurring. The protests and graphical images were considered by some councillors, residents and students to be distasteful and to constitute anti-social behaviour. Various meetings were held with residents and those affected. Meetings were also held with appropriate representatives from Brighton and Hove City Council in order that a joint solution could be devised. The opinion of the local Neighbourhood Police Inspector, shared with the legal team from Brighton and Hove City Council was that the protests were proportionate and lawful, and that they did not amount to a breach of the Public Order Act or any other legislation. Reasons for this were given to those who had complained and a Residents meeting was convened where police again explained their rationale.

The Trigger was instigated by one of the residents in the locality. Her rationale was that ASB was being committed regularly and that more than one household was being affected. The complainant was contacted within the five working days and actions taken were fully discussed.

As a result of this Trigger, the local Neighbourhood Policing Team distributed 200 leaflets in the locality, and contacted numerous students by e-mail, canvassing their views as to the impact which the repeated demonstrations have had on them. Ten replies were received, nine of which condemn the protests, and one of which highlights the rights of the protesters.

A meeting of all agencies with an interest and / or duty to act was called and options to deal with the ongoing issue were discussed. In this meeting it was agreed that all legislation which may be appropriate had been fully considered. Also discussed was the issue of proportionality, and whether the multi agency response to the protests had taken into account the rights of those protesting.

A report was compiled for the Chief Executive of Brighton and Hove City Council. This broadly stated that all options had been considered. The notable exception was that the Primary Care Trust (who had responsibility for the clinic) were brought into the problem solving process. Dialogue continues between the Community Safety Department within the council and the Primary Care Trust.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team considered holding a public meeting, but it was felt that this was not necessary as all avenues open to partners had been explored, and no additional significant actions had been instigated as a result of the Trigger.

All people who had replied to the original correspondence (E-mails and letter drop) were written to and a full update of actions, considerations, legislation etc was given.

The original complainant was happy that the NPT Inspector and the partnership had canvassed views in the area, and held further comprehensive multi agency meetings. She is also satisfied in having been kept updated. However, she is not happy with the fact that the demonstrations continue.

### **Trigger 2 and 3 – complete**

Two separate reports about the same problem family in an ongoing case being managed by the Council Housing Department. The ASB manager for council housing did an immediate quick-time review of the case, and met with both residents within five days. He explained the plan in place to address the issue and both residents were satisfied with this response.

This is a good example of how the trigger can be used by managers to remedy cases quickly and perform service recovery if necessary.

### **Trigger 4 – threshold not met**

Trigger report from a victim of persistent name-calling of 'paedophile' from neighbours and local residents, in various public places such as supermarket, library, on the street. Victim has mental health issues, and believes he may have previously upset the perpetrators, and would like help with apologising to them in order to stop the verbal abuse. Not dealt with as a trigger as it was the first time the issue had been reported. ASB action plan implemented lead by Council Housing

### **Trigger 5 – threshold not met**

The Trigger relates to the victim's neighbour shouting abuse & making threats, and the neighbour's sons intimidating the victim (one son is wanted by police). The victim has received further abuse from the neighbour because the victim has reported it to police. There had been criminal damage to property, but it is not clear whether it's the same perpetrator. The side gate has been kicked in, front gate taken, shed roof smashed. Other neighbours are not being targeted. Not dealt with as a trigger as it was the first time the issue had been reported to the RSL. ASB action plan implemented lead by the RSL.

### **Trigger 6 – threshold not met**

The complainant reported victimisation and harassment by a neighbour. Both parties are council tenants. This case has already been fully investigated by council housing, and has also been the subject of a stage 2 complaint which was not upheld. The complainant had previously been advised that Council housing would only investigate new incidents of ASB, and that the complainant should contact the Ombudsman if not happy with the previous investigation. This message was re-iterated in writing to the complainant.

### **Trigger 7 – threshold not met**

The complainant reported harassment by a neighbour. The complainant is currently on court bail having been charged with harassment of his neighbour. The police feel that the complainant is the offender in the situation and is using the community trigger to muddy the waters. He was advised to take legal advice if he is unhappy with the actions of the police or make a complaint to the IPCC. The police agreed to give suitable words of advice to the complainant's neighbour's friend who called the complainant a "rotter" when they passed each other in the city centre.

### **Trigger 8 – threshold met**

The complainant reported that a noise abatement notice had been served on her neighbours who had been making noise for over a year, but breaches of the notice had not been enforced as no officer has witnessed a breach. The complainant also gave details of three other neighbours being affected by the nuisance. Environmental Health and Licensing were identified as the lead agency, and responded in writing to the Trigger within five working days.

The written response from Environmental Health was formal, corporate and similar to a response to a complaint. Direct face to face contact with the client by a manager with a solution focussed approach may have been more appropriate as a trigger response.



## Brighton Trigger 9 – complete

The complainant reported that she and her partner have ongoing issues with a student property next door. They have reported domestic noise previously and received a response at that time from Environmental Health Dept (EHL), they have phoned police on a number of occasions with regard to ASB in the street either through parties spilling into the street or the neighbours and their visitors causing a disturbance, and have been disappointed with the police response. The final straw was a group of about 8 people attending the property at 0330 and demanding to be let in, hammering on the door and shouting “Let us in you f\*\*kers!!”.

A Community Safety Team (CST) Officer spoke at length to the complainant and liaised with Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) and EHL. The Community Safety Officer also spoke to the student’s letting agent and University. An action plan was implemented thus:

- A CST visit to warn the students regarding their future behaviour and that of their visitors
- A letter drop to find any other affected local residents
- A letter from the University and letting agent reminding the students of their responsibilities as tenants
- An EHL investigation into noise nuisance
- A future reporting and feedback plan to be agreed with the complainant after the above actions have been carried out. It was agreed that the above actions would be carried out or begin within one working week

In the initial Trigger report the client stated she had “*lost faith in the police*” and declined the offer to speak to a police supervisor. At the end of the trigger process the complainant stated that she was happy with the action plan and with the response to the Community Trigger.

