A West Midlands Police nomination for the National Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing

The Tilley Award 2002

Entry category - Crime reduction

Business Against Crime

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Summary

Business Against Crime (BAC), a partnership between West Midlands Police (WMP) and Lye Town's Business Community was implemented in January 2001 in response to a high level of crime committed against business premises. This private-public sector venture has evolved by becoming a non-profit making company limited by guarantee with a broader portfolio of partners to assist its key aim of crime reduction. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Black Country Chamber, Black Country Business Link, Insurance2Day and Lloyds TSB now form the extended partnership.

Analysis showed that between April 2000 and March 2001 commercial burglary was the most reported crime in Lye, accounting for almost a quarter (22.65%) of the Town's crime. This rate of crime was found highly disproportionate when compared with the rest of the Dudley South Police Area; commercial burglary averaged only 10.71% of overall crime and other beat areas with a greater commercial balance than Lye suffered less over the same period.

An independent survey and feedback at BAC meetings tended to confirm that police statistics were indicative, but fell short of the true extent of business crime. Identified through this unstructured methodology were the root causes: a lack of responsibility for, and awareness of security issues. A poor communication network compounded the problem.

BAC has focussed its energy on promoting corporate responsibility and improving communication between its membership, the wider business community and the police:

- by capitalising upon e-solutions for receiving and disseminating 'hot intelligence',
- by circulating BAC News, a free monthly publication which includes local crime trends and appropriate crime reduction/prevention advice to over 800 businesses,
- by employing a media strategy that improved the BAC profile and sold key messages,
- by introducing a referral scheme aimed at victims and business start ups,
- by lobbying government and involving itself in numerous community events

BACs recent Security and Safety Trade Show generated over £40,000 of business, with all exhibitors and visitors coming from the locality, the event represented investment in both the local economy and improved security for Lye.
The critical success factor for BAC is crime reduction. In BAC's first year, commercial burglary in Lye Town fell by 42%. Again, setting this in context, crime of this type has increased across the Dudley South Police Area by 1.15%.

BAC is on target to achieve its plan of becoming a self-sustaining organisation funded through membership within three years.

Data Source: West Midlands Police OLAP Performance Management System.
Lye Town

Lye an enumeration district banded within the 10% most deprived areas in the UK, is a small town approximately four miles square and situated on the main corridor between the two larger towns of Stourbridge and Halesowen, all located to the south of West Midlands Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. In political terms Lye is combined with neighbouring Wollescote to form a ward; the scanning process found the majority of statistical data held about the area used ward parameters. Lye has a population of about 7000 and a dense and diverse community incorporating the highest concentration of Muslims originating from the Murpur region of Pakistan anywhere in the Borough 131.

Police, Social Services, Health, Education and Housing jointly identified two Lye Council owned housing estates, Claycroft Place & Hill Bank, comprising just over 300 homes, formed by low rise flats and maisonettes, as a 'priority neighbourhood'; it was found that by mapping and overlaying data from each agency/department, that it was one of 23 neighbourhoods in the Borough placing a disproportionate call on all public services.

The focal point for the township is its High Street, a spine off which all else runs, home to St Martin's CofE Church, Ghasia Mosque, various public amenities, 86 shops and 9 food outlets including 6 Balti restaurants. Lye is renowned across the region for its Asian cuisine, providing a degree of evening vitality to an otherwise depressed environment.

Lye Business and its Correlation with Deprivation

Until the mid to late 1970's, Lye was at the heart of the heavily industrialised ‘Black Country Region', manufacturing accounting for 46% of all businesses [4]. Many Lye manufacturers having a symbiotic relationship with British Steel, Dudley’s biggest employer at the time. The socio-economic change forced by technological advancement and cheaper markets, resulting in a shift from manufacturing into other business sectors, is so well chronicled that reference is not needed; Lye was a significant victim of this process. British Steel’s Round Oak Works is and its former site occupied by The Merry Hill Centre, one of Europe’s largest shopping complexes since 1985. Wholesale and retail now constitutes 29% of business based in the borough [5], with manufacturing now only accounting for 19% It is plain to see that little investment has been made in the town’s fabric for nearly thirty years. It is often posited that Merry Hill adds to Lye’s problem, by starving its High Street of daytime vitality. Unemployment in Lye is currently 12%, more than twice the regions average of 5.1%.
There are approximately 500 businesses in Lye, with no major employers. Emphasis here remains in manufacture, evidenced by a 36% share in Lye's commercial sector, nearly twice the borough average. There was concern that data trawled from the National Statistics Office, based on Ward Boundaries would skew the picture. However, mapping and visiting businesses found the ward data to be representative; only a handful of businesses were located in Wallescote and these were retail. Lye reflects the borough picture in that, the majority (84%) of businesses are small with less than 25 employees; in fact 70% of this majority employ between 1 and 5 employees. BAC added that a significant proportion of enterprises approached were family owned and run.

Another observation was that the distribution of business premises in Lye was very different to other areas of the Borough. Outside Lye businesses are commonly formed into large trading estates or clusters of smaller trading estates. There is only one area of business concentration in Lye, this runs the extent of the railway line that dissects the town and could be described as a large trading estate. The majority of businesses however are heavily distributed, rather like flecks in a residential tapestry. Much of the commercial property is unkempt and in a general state of disrepair.

Assisting in the recovery of the Lye economy is its position at the tail end of the 'Arc of Opportunity, a 'Black Country Regeneration Zone', so called due to the way in which it sweeps down across the boroughs of Sandwell and Dudley; a fifteen year re-development plan.

**Policing Lye, the Organisational Setting**

West Midlands Police (WMP) devolves policing responsibility to the local level via 21 Operational Command Units (OCU). Dudley Metropolitan Borough is divided into two OCUs; J1 OCU, Dudley North and J2 OCU, Dudley South.

J2 OCU is divided into four Sectors; ‘A’ Sector Kingswinford, ‘B’ Sector Stourbridge, ‘C’ Sector Lye and Cradley and ‘D’ Sector Halesowen. Each sector is comprises between 2 and 4 political wards, dependant on geographical size and density. Each Sector is divided into six beats. Lye Town; Beat 74 is located on ‘C’ Sector. Beat responsibility is given over to a team managed by a sergeant who is held to account by the Sector Inspector.
Response work is not a separate function in the 'Sector Model', each Beat Team manages their beat responsibility within the scope allowed by response commitment.

In November 2000, PS Andy Hawkins was appointed Beat Manager for Beat 74. In support of his role he had an establishment of five constables. A successful bid through the Home Office, Crime Fighting Fund increased this by a further four officers for the beat. In line with WMP deployment principles for such officers, the additional constables were formed into a separate team, The Claycroft Project Team. Devoid of response responsibilities, the team are dedicated to the 'priority neighbourhood' and work in synergy with statutory and other partners to assist the community in problem solving.

Identifying The Problem

PS Hawkins became aware of an existing trend on Beat 74. In November 2000 there were 24 commercial burglaries committed in Lye, equating to over a quarter (28.9%) of the 83 offences committed on the beat during the month [lid, averaging almost one such crime each tour of duty for the Beat Team.

Commercial burglary features in the Dudley Borough Community Safety Strategy, but in reality it is questionable as to how significant this political priority is. It does not feature as a Ministerial Priority or as an area for performance within the West Midlands Police Local Policing Plan. PS Hawkins, saw the crime as a priority as it negatively impacted on overall performance and diverted his resources away from the key priorities of reducing and detecting, domestic burglary, vehicle crime, robbery and drug offences; the supply and use of drugs a dominant feature in Lye.

With the support of the OCU Intelligence Analyst, PS Hawkins undertook crime trend/pattern analysis for Beat 74:

- Commercial burglary was distributed heavily like the premises themselves, with greatest incidence in the areas of greatest commercial density; the high street and Providence Street, the area by the railway line.

+ By examining Modus Operandi, it appeared that most locations did not offer much in the way of physical/technical security. The majority of offences were committed overnight and at weekends and involved force; often, only minimal force was needed and commonly applied to rear doors. Scanning allied incident logs
generally showed no resultant alarm activation. There was only isolated evidence of the more sophisticated criminal i.e. planned, organised, mobile and transcending OCU/Force boundaries. The nature of property stolen was predominantly tools other than in the latter cases, in which computers and, or stock were stolen. In most cases relatively inexpensive target hardening would have prevented or reduced the likelihood of crime. Officers stated that victims cited cost, time and divorced responsibility as the main reasons for security inadequacies. The term 'divorced responsibility' is used to describe the dominant relationship found between landlord and tenant in this area, each suggesting security to be the other's responsibility. Tenants also stated that they might not be in business in Lye long enough to realise the benefit of investment in security.

- It was found the majority of offenders committing crime along Providence Street Estate entered and left the area via the railway line. Physical examination of this area found that many businesses had effective security to the front road aspect, including 6' security fencing. However, fencing along the railway track to the rear, was in many places ineffective. This incomplete perimeter added to the problem, police are unable to patrol or respond to these premises; accessing the premises via the railway track may be an acceptable risk to offenders, but not police.

- In all but two detected crimes, it was found that offenders were resident in the 'priority neighbourhood' or a local bail hostel, Gibbs Road House. Without exception all offenders were known to have a heroin dependency and could be described as local opportunist criminals who predominantly worked on foot. In undetected crimes, intelligence also pointed in this direction. These offenders admit to the acquisitive cycle; they stole locally to fuel an expensive drug habit, which was also supported locally.

- The beat was the OCU crime 'hot spot' and in turn Lye High Street was the Beat's 'hot spot'. A snapshot taken between April 2000 and November 2000 of Lye High Street showed that Lye High Street had been subject to 163 crimes. Over the same period Quarry Bank High Street, similar in age, size, geography, demography, services and shops and located on an equally busy transport corridor was subject to 48 crimes, less than a third of Lye's crime rate [14]. The only real difference is that Lye High Street is located within the 'priority neighbourhood'. About 30% of Lye High Street's Crime was commercial burglary. In December
2000, PS Hawkins initiated a response to High Street crime, a security survey by his officers. Officers walked through each premises giving crime prevention advice based on a checklist. The survey gave a clearer indicator of the commercial burglary problem; excluding the three banks, only 3 of the premises had any type of CCTV, 5 premises including those with CCTV had an alarm system only 2 of which were ‘red care’ or similar. Less than 30 traders were insured for loss or damage. The majority of, premises had some form shutter to the front, the rear of premises were however dark and unlit at night and easily accessible. Wooden doors, a mortise lock sometimes in tandem with domestic bolts, largely secured the rear of these premises. Again the areas behind premises were overgrown and unkempt.

The key problem of communication and a lack of corporate responsibility began to emerge. Other than Lye Business Group (LBG), which represented High Street Traders, no local business groups could be found. Police met with LBG at the beginning of January 2001. LBG’s agenda was to secure police support for CCTV on the High Street; there was naivety in the group in respect of the cost of such schemes and as to how they were funded. The group did not respond well to the suggestion that without target hardening the High Street, the implementation of CCTV was likely to displace crime to the rear of premises and increase the burglary rate. The group were vocal in their defence that it was up to the police to prevent crime. Traders reflected the response of victims given earlier, citing ‘divorced responsibility’ and lack of capital as reasons for not investing in security.

**Forming Business Against Crime, the Identification of a Key Stakeholder.**

The overall response to the problem was Business Against Crime.

PS Hawkins seeing communication as the root problem decided upon a ‘business watch scheme’ as his initial response. In promoting the concept, 100 businesses were visited by officers. The visits were centred on Providence Street and other areas in Lye where there had been greater incidence of commercial burglary. The process confirmed that there was a communication problem not only between police and business, but from business to business. The heavy distribution of business premises in Lye was found to be a geographical barrier, which inhibited the natural development of communication networks. A common awareness of crime in the area or for safety and security issues was not in evidence, in contra, as before, a fundamental lack of responsibility was demonstrated. On a positive note there was some genuine interest for a ‘business watch’. The ‘business
watch' itself was not revolutionary in concept and the desire to harness e-solutions for rapid communication appeared possible, 91 of the businesses visited had access to e-mail and Internet.

The process also identified the key stakeholder. Paul Haydon is a businessman, chairing four companies' in Lye now that Business Against Crime is included. One of Mr Haydon's business premises, N-Signs, a sign design and production company, had been burgled four times in as many years. The most recent burglary in December 2000 had cost him over £20,000 when the hidden elements of re-completing artwork stored on his stolen laptop computer and an inflated insurance premium were included. Mr Haydon had separately started the scheme, Business Against Crime (BAC) and was in his own words "at war with the criminal". Mr Haydon was unclear at this time the direction BAC was to take, but like the police had been canvassing the support of local businesses. At this time Mr Haydon also held the view, that the police were largely to blame for increased business crime.

The significant effort in police time convincing Mr Haydon otherwise, that business had a corporate responsibility to assist police in security and safety and that more could be achieved by working together was to be the single most important investment in the entire process.

Mr Haydon's influence was recognised at an early stage; Two separate meetings had been calendared in February as a result of the separate canvassing, one organised by Lye Police and the other by Paul Haydon. It was agreed prior to the meetings to work together as and that this would be a feature of both agendas. The initial police meeting was attended by 12 people, where as Mr Haydon's meeting, a week later on the corresponding Wednesday at the same time saw an attendance of 43 representatives of the business community.

It was at this meeting the enormity of the problem faced was realised. The attendees again shared the view that the police were solely responsible for preventing and detecting crime. The audience were vociferous, showing the true sense of feeling, many stated that they had been victims but hadn't reported crime as they were uninsured and or had no confidence in the police being able to detect the crime, the process seen as an administrative burden on an already demanding work life.
Business Against Crime, The Aim

The importance of the key stakeholder coming from the business community also became plainly apparent at this early stage. Where businesses weren't prepared to listen to the police, they were prepared to listen to Mr Haydon say,

"...I'm sorry, it was not the police's fault I was burgled, it certainly wasn't their fault I didn't back up my computer data and didn't have adequate security. It is important for every business to realise the blame for crime cannot always be placed at the feet of the police, we must look at ways in which we can address our own security problems and reduce the opportunity for crime..."

Mr Haydon's words effectively summarise the aim of BAC, a message communicated in numerous formats since. It was jointly recognised following this meeting that communication was the key, but only coupled with action would attitudinal change be secured.

Developing the Partnership

A positive result of the meetings was the identification of six individuals sharing Mr Haydon's enthusiasm; they were to be the BAC co-ordinators for the six zones in which Lye Sector area had been divided. It was agreed, that to be a viable and inclusive response, like businesses, BAC needed to transcend the Beat 74 boundary and for ease of measurement it made sense to follow the Sector Boundaries. BAC looked for experience in such a project, this was found in Stuart Perry, an advisor for Business Link, the consultancy arm of Black Country Chamber.

Mr Perry had been involved in a successful crime reduction business initiative in the neighbouring borough of Sandwell, The Sandwell Action Group (SWAG). On examining SWAG's scheme, it was not directly portable as it focussed on target the hardening of large established trading estates; it was dismissed as an inappropriate response in Lye, other than as a potential approach to the Providence Street problem. However, what were adaptable, were many of the SWAG documents, including a constitution, copies of successful funding applications an,a three-year business plan based on membership growth.
In line with the SWAG model, BAC became a company limited by guarantee, the benefits being accountability, non-profit making status and membership of the Black Country Chamber and its allied membership services including Business Link. The Zone Coordinators are now also elected members of the Board.

Business Link provided BAC's £3000 start up costs and continue to match any ongoing business costs by up to 35%. Influencing the Chamber's support is its policy aim of providing a framework to tackle business crime.

The final key partner is Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. Martin Dando, Business Development Officer, represents Dudley MBC. The Council is influenced by the Community Safety Strategy to reduce commercial burglaries in the borough by 5%. The Council allows BAC to use its Business Centre in Lye as its registered address and provides the conference and administration services located here free of charge. Mr Dando's key role is to exploit opportunities for BAC provided for within the 'Arc of Opportunity'.

The police role remains as consultant, informing BAC and its membership of crime trends, offering appropriate crime reduction advice and working in partnership to explore root causes of crime and develop responses.

All partners recognise their secondary status of providing consultancy and support to the key stakeholder, BAC, its Board and Membership.

**Further Analysis**

At the beginning of April 2001, BAC as a partnership re-examined analysis to ensure responses were informed:

Appendix 1 shows that commercial burglary was indeed disproportionate, C Sector having the smallest number of businesses, yet suffering the greatest incidence of commercial burglary. In fact the likelihood of a business suffering a burglary on C Sector was 1:2.

Physical examination showed. commerce on other Sectors to be mainly organised into large trading estates, most having greater physical security and better communication networks in place. Many of these estates were found to be permanently guarded/patrolled,
It was agreed that improving communication and corporate responsibility were the initial priorities for BAC.

Responses Under the Business Against Crime Umbrella

In improving communication and promoting corporate responsibility:

- A crude yet effective e-mail distribution list was set up. Hot intelligence was disseminated to the membership and information returned. Notably, a Sector wide diesel theft problem was identified and transmitted by this system as was information to NCIS re an international e-mail confidence trick.

- BAC Meetings are held on a bi-monthly basis for its membership and other interested parties. At the April 2001 meeting, Deborah Shipley MP gave a presentation on the Government perspective on business crime. In promulgating best practice developed elsewhere, PS Hawkins launched the Award Winning West Midlands Police CD Rom, Protecting You, Your Business and Your Staff, a free interactive product to all businesses. The CD contains a virtual tour of a business identifying security and safety issues and contains documents that enable businesses to carry out their own security audit.

- BAC News, a free monthly publication goes out to over 800 businesses in the area and contains crime information, linked crime prevention advice and progress on various BAC projects. Business Link currently funds the publication, a recent copy is appended. J2 OCU, enhanced last months BAC News by funding the inclusion of a copy of Protecting You, Your Business and Your Staff.

- Business Link funded the design and installation of 50 distinctive Business Watch signs to communicate the scheme to businesses and the criminal alike. Four, 5’ x 6’ BAC, signs are sited on each of the main arterial roads into Lye. The BAC phone number is included.
A referral scheme is in place. Officers attending commercial burglaries explain to the victim how BAC can help and give out a flyer containing the BAC phone number. The police call desk also makes referrals over the telephone. All enquirers are sent a free BAC Pack by return.

Enhancing corporate responsibility;

- BAC has negotiated its own insurance brand, BAC Insurance Services with Insurance2Day, a local insurer. BAC Insurance Services will visit local businesses and give a free security audit offering a 15% discount to members meeting the agreed BAC quality standard. The savings often amount to more than the BAG basic membership fee of £165 per annum.

- BACs Security and Safety Tradeshow held on 19th March 2002 at St Martin’s Church was a success. It was organised locally in recognition of time being a precious resource for all businesses. All 21 paying exhibitors were from the locality, as were the 246 visitors to the free all day event. An estimated £40,000 of business was done. This represented an investment in the Lye economy and its security. It also indicated a positive shift in corporate responsibility.

**Business Against Crime, Overall Assessment**

Assessment has to be a rolling process for this constantly evolving organisation. For example, following the success of the Trade Show Lloyds TSB became a sponsor. This major corporation is developing BACs e-solutions by designing a secure interactive website with hyperlinks to all partner organisations.

BAC is now working on a number of projects including developing Providence Street into a secure estate, phase one is to ensure routes to and from the rail track are secured.

A major project is the funding of a Business Community Safety Warden to meet the needs of this widely spread business community. The Warden will be trained and tasked by Lye Police and will have direct communication. The key role will be to disrupt and deter crimes against business. It is proposed that the warden is equipped with a verified van and have mobile CCTV capability. A local business has already sponsored a van. The funding stream is to be a combination of membership funds matched by other bids and
Dudley MBC. As a Council return, the Warden will also report on other environmental issues.

The organisation has achieved its critical success factor of reducing business crime. BACs business year ran from January - December 2001, over this period recorded crime on Beat 74 has fallen from 230 crimes in the Year 2000 to 134 crimes in 2001, equating to a reduction of 42%. Using the counting year April to March 2002, crime reduced from 234 crimes the previous year to 158 crimes, equating to a reduction of 32.49 %.

The impact, if any, of the Claycroft Project Team has to be examined. Other than the High Street, no businesses fall within the team's remit. Burglary on the High Street has reduced in line with the area; other reported High Street crime has increased. The team does not work night duties when the majority of burglaries are committed.

Using detection rate as an indicator, the police have had a reduced impact on commercial burglary on both Beat 74 and the wider C Sector; over the given counting year, detections are down 55.9% (33 fewer crimes detected) and 39.6% (36 fewer crimes detected) respectively. This tends to suggest reduction is not the product of traditional policing.

Other than the tremendous downward trend on 'C' Sector and a marginal reduction on 'A' Sector of 0.09% (3 fewer crimes) the trend has been upward, an average increase across the OCU of 1.15% and ranging between the 2.07% increase on B Sector (+10 crimes) and the 3.43% increase on D Sector (+139 crimes) [15].

The only added factor in the Lye Mix is Business Against Crime. It is suggested that the organisation is largely attributable for the crime reduction, improving security and safety awareness through improved communication.

Although police detections have reduced, there is evidence of BAC Members contributing in crime detection. A significant example, is when two men presented tools for sale to a BAC Member shortly after he had read a piece in BAC News about the theft of tools in the area. The Member told the two men that he didn't want the tools, but that he knew a friend that might...he called his friend...The Claycroft Team...The two men from the local bail hostel were arrested on suspicion of theft. The property was subsequently identified as being from a commercial burglary in Lye. Both men were charged; one of the men is awaiting sentence the other is wanted for failing to appear at court. It was only a few
months ago, this particular member was one of the greatest critics. This is suggested as being another indication of improved levels of corporate responsibility.

BAC is on target with its three-year business plan to become self-sustaining through membership. A police contribution in this scheme is and will remain crucial, however the level of involvement has already reduced to an acceptable level, with the Membership undertaking the majority of its work.

BAC is currently preparing its own survey and evaluating its response to the recent Black Country Chamber survey, which reports that crime costs the region’s business £1.2 million per year and that 52% of its survey respondents had fallen victim to crime in the past twelve months.
### Appendix 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Sector Kingswinford</th>
<th>B Sector Stourbridge</th>
<th>D Sector Halesowen</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2000 — Mar 2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Commercial Burglaries [1]</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crime committed [2]</td>
<td>3216</td>
<td>4252</td>
<td>4048</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Burglary as a % of total crime</td>
<td>11.69</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>8.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Businesses in Area</td>
<td></td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>1195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% classified as manufacturing [3]</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>17.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial burglaries: no of businesses</td>
<td>1:3, 31.96%</td>
<td>1:3, 29.87%</td>
<td>1:4, 8.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Data References