

Aims

- ◆ To establish communication between the police and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities;
- ◆ To encourage a better understanding of police procedures in BME communities;
- ◆ To promote greater level of trust of ethnic minority communities in the police;
- ◆ To improve service delivery to victims of racist harassment;
- ◆ To increase level of positive action and facilitate reporting of racist incidents;
- ◆ To tackle problems of repeat victimisation of BME communities.

Location

The 2001 Census population figure for Newcastle-upon-Tyne was 259,500. The Community Linkworkers Initiative was located in areas with high levels of incident demand. The initiative covers all of the NRF wards in the command areas - West, North and East. The five posts have, however, been flexible to changing demand over the lifetime of scheme. Originally, there were to be five posts, but because of recruitment problems the grade was adjusted and the number reduced to four. There was a clear linkage between incidence of racist offences and ward areas identified in the indices of multiple deprivation. The project concentrated on improving the police response within these areas, in order to help to impact on quality of life issues.

The Intervention Strategy

Staffing

The scheme employs five link workers recruited for their ability to communicate verbally and in the written form in the main community languages of the area.

Funding

The purpose of the scheme was to link recommendations from the MacPherson report. This scheme supported the appointment of two Community Link Workers from the local minority ethnic community whose remit it was to work in partnership with the SIU and provide a customer-focused service.

Given the dispersal of asylum seekers within the area, the role of the Link Workers has been expanded. Two Link Worker posts have been extended and three are new posts, all of whose full revenue costs have been supported by the £299,000 NRF monies that have been allocated. This has enabled the scheme to be rolled out across the whole of the local authority area based on good practice demonstrated at Westgate Road police station. Funding had previously been provided up until March 2002 by the Northumbria Police Grant Pool system and for three years by Home Housing Association.

Operating Method

Northumbria Police at the West Area Command have worked for a period of time on forging links with local minority ethnic communities. The Special Investigation Unit was established in 2000 to focus on hate crime for the whole of the West End of Newcastle. In September 1999, the West Area Command secured Home Office funding through the Beacon Project for the Enhanced Response to Ethnic Communities scheme, EREC.

The Community Link Workers have engaged with individuals and groups from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds including African, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Iranian, Kurds, Pakistani and Turkish.

Community Link Workers have received training from DIVA in domestic violence and in forced marriages and the Community Link Worker Newcastle North Area Command made a presentation on forced marriages at a multi-agency conference to raise awareness of the issues to improve service delivery.

The number of racist reports alone reported directly to the Newcastle West Community Relations Unit, in preference to reporting via conventional means, (i.e. telephone/police station) are an indication of those incidents that might otherwise have gone unreported, and are an indicator of a bond with the Community Relations Unit that has the potential to grow to include the wider 'police family'. As an example, 21% of racist incidents recorded at Newcastle West in the third quarter of 2003 were reported directly to the Community Relations Unit.

Visits to ethnic minorities communities have built strong relationships and trust between the Community Link workers and a large number of people from these communities. If an investigation about a racist incident takes place then the community link workers are able to get extra intelligence about the case from these communities. To date 43% of recorded incidents for the year 2003/2004 (1st April to 31st March) were concluded with a positive

outcome compared to 22% in the year 2000-2001). In Newcastle West Area Command, 10% of the positive outcomes in the third quarter of 2003 were initially negative outcomes that, through rigorous management of the investigation by the Community Relations Team, were transformed to positive outcomes.

Community Link Workers give advice to ethnic minorities communities about personal safety issues and about reporting procedures. Community Link Workers work with agencies and government bodies to help victims of crimes.

Having access to key individuals 'in tune' with the mood of the community and opportunities to gain feedback from sources, not necessarily community leaders and one of the key roles of the Community Link Workers is the gathering of Community Intelligence which feeds into the National Intelligence Model. This role is invaluable in assisting in mapping tension and criminality to inform appropriate policing responses and the implementation of reassurance activities. For example, the Community Link Workers had information from community representatives about the election of the Bangladeshi leader. This helped the preparation of resources for protecting against crime, disorder and tension.

This project does not focus on floor targets as there are none in relation to racist harassment though it focuses on racist harassment and repeat victimization, advocating the spirit of closing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and other parts of the country and improving service delivery to these areas.

The community relations unit was established in April 2003, to link the work done by the special investigation unit with an improved community relations remit. The special investigation unit is still in place and the link workers support that role as well as other uniform officers. The link workers now work with the community relations unit in recognition that their role is wider than supporting victims of crime.

Achievements of the Intervention

Main Achievements

Working in 3 separate Area Commands, the Community Link Workers, though subject to different supervisory structures, have worked closely and co-operatively. Factors such as the integration of the Community Link Worker as part of the recently formed Community Relations Team and the development of knowledge and skills of the individuals fulfilling the roles and of others involved with them, have provided a framework for Best Practice.



Link Workers

Contact:

Superintendent Carolyn Peacock
Tel 0191 214 6555

NRF Priority:

Crime

NRF Authority:

Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership

NRF Funding Level:

Medium

PTO for additional information

Lead Agent:

Northumbria Police

Main Partners:

Members of the Newcastle Community Safety Partnership

Location:

Newcastle City Council, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear

Main Achievements:

615 Awareness sessions with minority ethnic groups

290 Follow up/support visits to victims of crime

630 Follow ups to victims of racist harassment

455 Contacts with service providers for minority ethnic communities

460 Attendance at public events

452 Attendances at drop in centres

- ◆ 615 Awareness sessions with minority ethnic groups
- ◆ 290 Follow up/support visits to victims of crime
- ◆ 630 Follow ups to victims of racist harassment
- ◆ 455 Contacts with service providers for minority ethnic communities
- ◆ 460 Attendance at public events
- ◆ 452 Attendances at drop in centres

Mainstreaming

Without NRF funding, Northumbria Police would not have been in a position to financially support the Link Workers posts.

The Learning Curve

The strengths of the scheme are that the police, through the employment of link workers who are themselves from minority groups have given a fresh perspective on the issues of community relations and community cohesion. The scheme is innovative, providing customer-focused alternatives for reporting and resolving crime and other issues.

Key Lessons

Problems were experienced in recruiting staff with the requisite skills, fluency in a language other than English being one of the requirements of the post. Supervisory structures are variable across the 3 areas where the link workers are deployed. This is an area for improvement to provide greater focus and consistency.

Customer-focused alternatives for reporting and resolving crime and other issues have given a fresh perspective on the issues of community relations and community cohesion.

Contact Details

Superintendent Carolyn Peacock Newcastle West Area Command

Tel 0191 214 6555