

SAFER, STRONGER SELECT COMMITTEE			
Report Title	The Use of Yellow Crime Warning Boards		
Key Decision	No		Item No. 3
Ward	Brockley and New Cross		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services/Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People.		
Class	Part 1	Date: 23 rd July, 2008	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Following the meeting of Select Committee on the 17th June 2008 , it was requested that a report be completed to assess the impact of the Yellow Crime Warning Boards used in Brockley and New Cross in February – April 2008.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report outlines the following analysis and future recommendations:

- The overall crime rate in the period prior, during and after the signs were put up
- Specific crime type rates in the period prior, during and after the signs were put up
- The impact on fear of crime by the use of these boards.

There was some noticeable reductions in the Priority crime types being targeted in this Operation, namely Motor vehicle and robbery.

- 2.2 Recommendations

- That signs of this nature are used ONLY for the purpose of a policing operation.
- Analysis is undertaken as to the impact of the signs in relation to “fear of crime” where used in the future.

3. Background

- 3.1 The report was requested to ascertain the impact of yellow crime warning boards. This was in response to a number of such signs being erected in the specific locations, as part of a Police led Operation in the Brockley and New Cross areas targeting Motor vehicle and robbery, as this period had been shown to be a peak in 06/07. Local hotspot data was utilised to identify where such activity would be focused.

3.2 The Joint Action Group (JAG), a sub group of the Safer Lewisham Partnership, took this decision to utilise the Boards as part of the overall activity in relation to tackling these 2 priority crime types. The primary purpose of the JAG is to:

- To use the National Intelligence model and local information to identify key issues in relation to crime and safety.
- To jointly task partners in delivering a range of activities to impact on the identified issues.
- This is linked to the Boroughs priorities and agenda on Crime Reduction, Safer Lewisham and drugs and alcohol in line with the Local Area Agreements (LAA) and partnership outcomes.
- To review current data and identify emerging issues
- To report back to the Performance and Delivery Board on barriers to delivery
- To allocate resources against identified need and priorities
- To ensure equity in representation and that equality and diversity issues are followed in the work of the partnership

3.3 Warning signs were placed in 9 roads within the Brockley and New Cross area.

Signs were in place between the 18th February and removed on the 6th April 2008.

3.4 Methodology

Crime data for all reports have been extracted from the Cris, police reporting system, for the relevant areas covered by the signs. Results for the 7- week period the signs were in place have then been compared to a 7- week period prior to the signs being erected and a comparison to a 7- week period after the signs have been removed.

3.5 Limitations on the data

This report is reliant on the accuracy of entries on the Cris police reporting system. It is also reliant on the accuracy of Geocoded MapInfo data.

It has not been possible to undertake a “fear of crime” survey in the area for this report.

4. Analysis

4.1 The table below shows the number of offences reported by road during the time the signs were in place.

Whilst the signs were in place 18th February 2008 – 6th April 2008.

Total	56
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Priority offences

Personal Robbery	1
Motor Vehicle Crime	6
Residential Burglary	8

Prior to the signs being erected 31st December 2008– 17th February 2008:

Total	49
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Priority offences

Personal Robbery	2
Motor Vehicle Crime	15
Residential Burglary	6

After the signs had been removed 7th April 2008 – 25th May 2008

Total	48
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Priority offences

Personal Robbery	2
Motor Vehicle Crime	12
Residential Burglary	2

As this operation was specifically targeted at dealing with motor vehicle and robbery offences the following analysis has been noted:

Personal robbery offences decreased by 50% during the dates the signs were in place, they then increased by 50% after the signs were removed

Vehicle Crime offences decreased by 60% during the dates the signs were in place, offences doubled after the signs had been removed.

4.2 Fear of crime

In January 2008 the Council commissioned an independent researcher to conduct focus groups on the fear of crime amongst Lewisham residents. The following outlines the findings from this work:

Approach	Comments
Yellow crime appeal boards	Several participants referred to yellow police signs on the street as playing a role in providing information on crime in the area. They believed that the number of yellow signs signified the volume of crime in the area. They also reported feeling uneasy when they saw a sign in a location that they often visited or passed through.

Media statements by politicians and senior police officers	This is broadly neutral in impact, the public are neither reassured by these reports nor frightened by this approach.
Promoting convictions and other final outcomes	Providing the offences are serious the public find news about sentencing or seizures of assets reassuring and feel they act as a deterrent.
Advertising campaigns highlighting uniformed presence	The public were negative about this activity as they feel they do not provide a deterrent and also because they judge the uniformed presence by their experience locally of Safer Neighbourhoods, Park Keepers etc.
Safety advice campaigns	The public welcome simple practical advice and do not feel more scarred as a result of such advice being given and the targeting of a younger age group might be useful for youth information

The focus groups give a good steer about how to shape future Safer Lewisham promotional activity:

- Public Relations work needs to have a clear focus on convictions and other outcomes which reassure and deter.
- Publicity needs to continue for operational activity, although it may not reassure people about level of crime it may well influence their perceptions of local agencies and may be important in reassuring key opinion formers.
- A hybrid internal communications - community engagement element may assist in reassuring people through using frontline staff and community leaders to reassure people.
- Crime prevention advice should be developed in light of the comments of the focus groups as a contribution to reducing levels of crime.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The cost of erecting and removing the signs can be met from within the Crime Reduction Budget.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council is under a number of statutory obligations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder; the Anti Social Behaviour 2003 requires the Council as a local housing authority to have policies and procedures for dealing with anti-social behaviour. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places the Council under a duty to have, when carrying out

its functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

- 6.2 The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on local authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised having regard to the combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 6.3 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers local authorities to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of all or any persons within the local authority's area.
- 6.4 These statutory duties amongst others feed into the Council's Safer Lewisham Strategy.

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 Developing safe and secure communities is central to the work of the Council as a whole and in particular to the Community Services directorate. Reducing and preventing crime, reducing fear of crime and supporting vulnerable communities is critical to the well-being of all our citizens.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 8.1 Section 17 places a duty on partners to do all they can to reasonably prevent crime and disorder in their area. The level of crime and its impact is influenced by the decisions and activities taken in the day-to-day of local bodies and organisations. The responsible authorities are required to provide a range of services in their community from policing, fire protection, planning, consumer and environmental protection, transport and highways. They each have a key statutory role in providing these services and, in carrying out their core activities, can significantly contribute to reducing crime and improving the quality of life in their area.

9. Environmental Implications

- 9.1 The Yellow Boards, although impact on the environment of an area, were in place for a short time limited period of time. Their impact on the environment in relation to visibility could be seen to be negative.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The use of the Yellow Crime Warning Boards for a time limited period in the locations noted above, have had an impact on the 2 priority crime types that the Operation was seeking to impact on. The Operation was

targeted in these areas based on local intelligence, hotspot data and seasonal trend data. The crime warning boards were used alongside a range of enforcement, intervention and preventative activities undertaken across the partnership.

- 10.2 Further use of such signs will be considered as part of an overall partnership approach to dealing with specific issues via the Joint Action Group (JAG). There will also be a detailed residents survey undertaken in relation to “fear of crime” in conjunction with any further usage of crime warning yellow signs.

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