

Select Committee on Community Safety & Community Services
12th June 2008

Report of the Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services

Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Purpose of Report

1. To review the work that DACHS is involved in that contributes towards fulfilling the obligations of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Background

2. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act places an obligation on local authorities and the police to co-operate in the development and implementation of a strategy for tackling crime and disorder. The causes of crime and disorder are complex and varied and the Act reflects the view that achieving a reduction in crime and disorder is not solely a matter for the police. Accordingly, Section 17 of the Act imposes a duty on a number of bodies including Local Authorities and the police to:

'Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed upon it exercise its functions with due regard to ... the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.'

3. Section 17 is an 'enabling device' for the promotion of effective crime reduction in the day-to-day activities of the police and the various services of the local authority.
4. This is the first Section 17 report that covers the whole of DACHS. The report is structured so that each division within the Directorate has contributed to the report as listed in the Appendices below. Contact details are given should Members wish to pursue an initiative further.
5. In addition to the contents of the Appendices, it is important to recognise that the Directorate has as part of its customer base, vulnerable and disadvantaged people. The Directorate's Mission Statement captures what collectively we want to achieve, "We help people to lead fulfilled and independent lives in homes of their choice, in safe and active communities". The appendices are numbered as follows:

Appendix 1 – Housing (Public & Private Sector)

Appendix 2 – Community Safety Bids – Area Housing Panels

Appendix 3 – People with learning difficulties and hate crime

Appendix 4 – Substance and Alcohol Misuse

Appendix 5 – Services for Older People

Appendix 6 – Libraries, archives etc

Appendix 7 – Policy, Performance and Resources

Finance

6. There is no additional budgetary provision to deliver Section 17 requirements.

Law

7. To fulfil the obligations of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Equality Impact

8. The report in itself is not subject to equality impact. The contents of the appendices covers services intended to protect and/or help the more vulnerable in society and equality impact would need to be assessed for each service.

Recommendation

9. Members are asked to note the work undertaken by DACHS in response to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.



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Linda Sanders
Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services

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Housing (Public & Private Sector)

Redevelopment of the North Priory Estate

Bromford Housing Group will be designing (working with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer) and building the new North Priory estate to Secured by Design standards. It is intended that the development will receive full compliance under both section 1 covering the layout and design of the development and section 2 covering the physical security of the individual property. This will enable Secured by Design accreditation to be secured across the whole site.

For further information contact Andrew Leigh, Head of Service (Housing Strategy & Development)

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Clearance of North Priory

The clearance of 264 households from the North Priory Estate started in June 2007 to enable the regeneration of this estate to take place. This is an estate that has historically been blighted by incidents of crime and disorder and this was one of a number of reasons for the decision to proceed with its regeneration.

The clearance of the estate has presented its own challenges in terms of crime and disorder because as the estate has started to empty so it has become an attraction to perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour. An early problem in this project was the risk of theft of scrap metal from our empty properties as well as young people using them as a source for anti-social behaviour. However from the inception of the project excellent partnerships have been developed with the Police and Fire Service and this combined with intensive estate management from the Housing Team responsible for the estate has kept incidents of crime and disorder to a minimum, so much so that many of the residents who remain on the estate describe it as been more peaceful than it has ever been.

For further information contact Nigel Collumbell, Area Housing Manager Dudley

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Telephone: 01384 815050

Patch-working – Estate Management

Housing Services continues to deliver its landlord services through the now well established patch-working approach to housing management.

Housing Managers proactively manage estates of up to 650 properties. The size of patches managed vary depending on the level of management required with some estate identified as having particular problems that require a more intensive management than others.

Housing Managers continue to work with other partner agencies to deliver a service that address the needs of the individual estate. The development of PACT meetings across the Borough has

strengthened our already good working relationship with the police and has assisted in focusing attention in areas where there operate on resident priorities.

In 2006/07 a new patch-working initiative of Home Checks was introduced. The aim of this initiative is for the Housing Manager to visit each of their tenants to carry out a tenancy check at least once every 3 years. To date 13,652 checks have been carried out across the Borough. This pro-active method of working enables Housing Managers to identify any problems with a tenancy and either take appropriate enforcement action to resolve the problem or in many cases sign post the tenant to other services for assistance. The primary aim of Home Checks is to identify issues that may affect the sustainability of a tenancy as early as possible in order that any intervention, whether support or enforcement, can be effective.

Our strategy for completing Home Checks on a 3 year cycle as well as our regular inspections of estates (every 6 weeks) and walkabouts with other agencies, elected members and residents are all designed to ensure we pro-actively seek out problems and find solutions to them. It is our belief that well managed estates are less likely to suffer from problems of crime and disorder and by the provision of a professional, pro-active service we aim to create public confidence in our service so that when problems do occur residents are ready to work with us and our partners to tackle them together.

For further information contact Nigel Collumbell, Area Housing Manager Dudley

Email: Nigel.collumbell@dudley.co.uk

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Supporting People Grant

Overall we spend around £6 million per year to over 80 support providers who in turn provide housing related support to over 2,800 people who would be at risk of homelessness, offending or becoming a victim of crime owing to their vulnerability.

New Schemes commissioned via Supporting People funding

Sanctuary Scheme:

To provide enhanced safety measures and support to victims of domestic violence (Heantun Housing will be the provider). This will provide three distinct levels of physical security measures, together with specialist floating support, to enable people who have suffered domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes.

Probation Scheme:

This scheme will provide accommodation and support specifically for offenders leaving prison and those subject to Probation supervision orders. The support will focus on stabilising their housing conditions. Research demonstrates that the provision of stable accommodation dramatically reduces the rate of re-offending. The scheme is a partnership with Probation services and Crime Reduction Implementation Group (CRIG) have supplied some initial funds approx £10K to provide furnishing for the (initially) 6 units of LA accommodation. Floating support will also be provided to offenders already living within the community to minimise the likelihood of homelessness and re-offending.

Dudley was a member of a regional group on Offender Housing, which provided a comprehensive generic guide to accommodation for people leaving prison, together with information and contact

details for housing advice, supported housing, benefits advice and employment services in each of the local authority areas. This guide has been distributed to all prisons in the region.

Homelessness/Mental Health Worker:

This scheme has been commissioned in partnership with the Primary Care Trust (PCT)/Criminal Justice service to provide support to people who are homeless, within a hostel or supported housing who have mental health problems. Many of this client group do not have a GP and, therefore, are unable to be channelled into mental health services. The worker will be able to refer clients directly into second tier services without the need to register with, or be referred via a GP into mental health services. We believe that the provision of this service will ensure that the most needy people will have a better chance of receiving appropriate treatment. This will also help to reduce homelessness, rough sleeping, substance misuse and offending.

Additional work:

We are working with two housing associations to seek funding from the Homes and Communities Agency to upgrade current hostel facilities in order to provide suitable accommodation and engage residents in meaningful activities and employment opportunities that will positively contribute to local communities.

We are at an early stage of working with a range of housing providers, The Warehouse (Drug Treatment Services) and Aquarius to develop a Housing/Drugs and Alcohol Protocol with the aim of improving joint working and reducing the likelihood of exclusions from hostels for people with drug and alcohol issues.

Youth Offending Service (YOS)

Through Supporting People Grant we fund Heantun Housing Association to provide housing related support to young offenders who are at risk of, or have become homeless. The local authority provides 10 furnished flats, a further 10 people are provided with support in their existing housing to prevent homelessness and a number of Crash Pad units are also used to house young people on an emergency basis. These young people are either assessed and helped to find longer term housing solutions or they undertake mediation with parents and relatives through the Time2Talk mediation service and often are able to return to the family home.

The review of the project from 2003-2007 as follows demonstrates how re-offending has dropped and this can be linked to the support given to these young people.

For further information on Supporting People Grant contact Joanne Forbes, Strategy Manager (Supporting People and Housing)

Email: Joanne.forbes@dudley.gov.uk

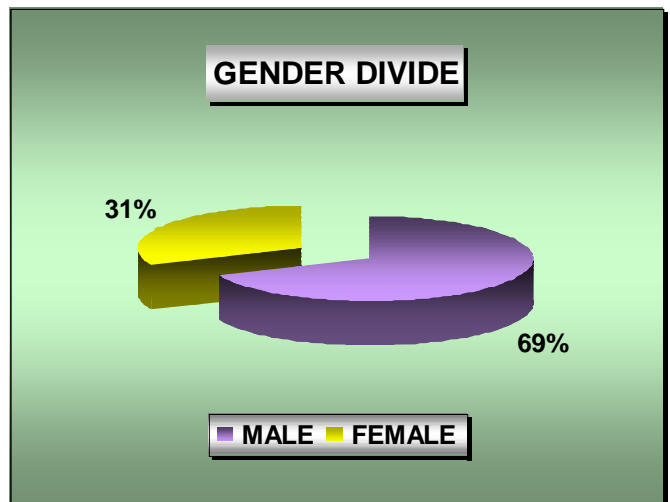
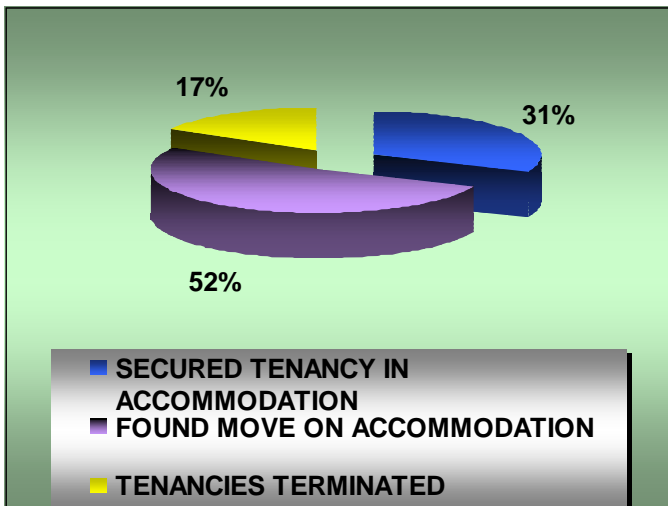
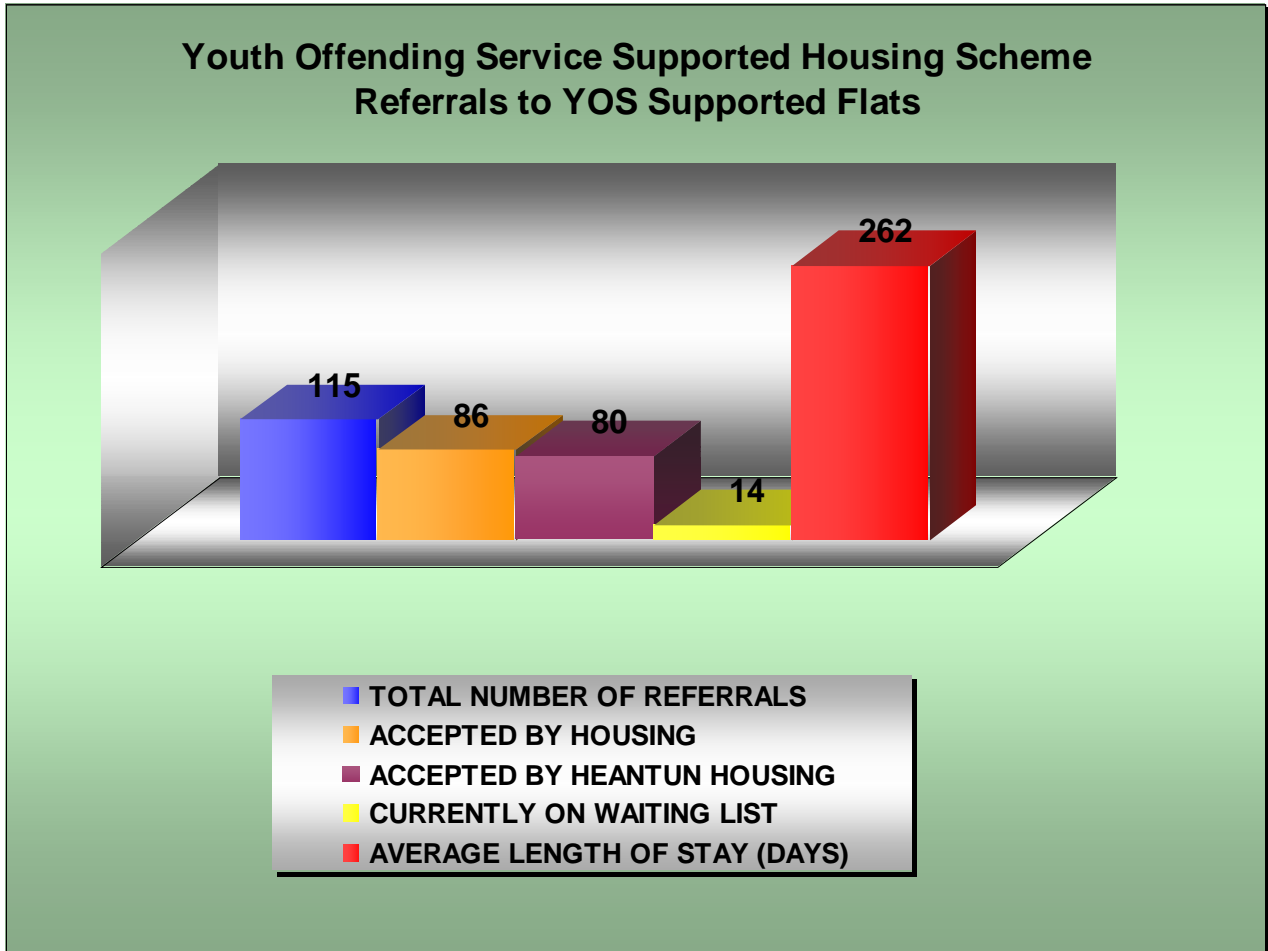
Telephone: 01384 815081

For further information on Youth Offending Service, contact Wayne Hobday, Accommodation Manager

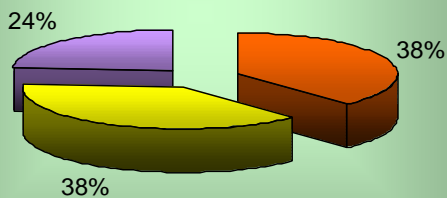
Email: Wayne.hobday@dudley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01384 813276

YOS Supported Housing Project 2003 – 2007 Review

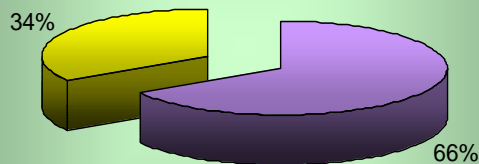


OFFENDING STATUS FOR A PERIOD OF 6 MONTHS BEFORE ENTERING THE PROJECT



In Custody Offended Not Offended

OFFENDING STATUS WHILST IN SUPPORTED HOUSING

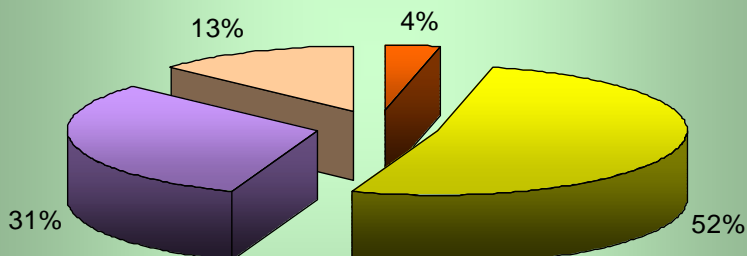


Not Offended Offended

The Project has evolved through continual review into a holistic service offering dedicated accommodation support to all young people known to the Youth Offending Service who are highlighted as requiring support with their housing situation. Previous to this change the scheme only provided housing support to young people referred to the YOS Supported Flats.

Young People Receiving Housing Floating Support

58 Referrals received since June 2006 for Floating Support



Made homeless claim while receiving support Stayed at home with family Moved to YOS Supported Flat Moved to other Supported Accommodation

Empty Homes Strategy (Private Sector)

Private Sector, DUE, Community Safety, DCP are working with the West Midlands Arson Task Force (Police and Fire Service) as part of the Void and Derelict Properties Group and have developed a mechanism of electronic notification of empty properties (residential and industrial and commercial) that are presenting a problem to the emergency services due to arson/crime incidents. The relevant Directorate is then responsible for investigation and notification to the Arson Task Force of action being taken. This has contributed to a reduction in the number of incidents of Arson across the region. This initiative has been incorporated into the empty homes work already underway and is funded through the existing capital budget.

The number of Private Sector empty homes brought back into use has increased from 61 in 2006/7 to 91 properties in 2007/8 and puts the authority's performance in this area of work in the top quartile of all England local authorities. The overall number of empty private sector homes has also reduced from 1,624 in 2007 to 1,493 as of April 2008.

For further information contact Theresa Kelly, Strategy Development Manager (Private Sector)

Email: Theresa.kelly@dudley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01384 815109

Mediation Service

The Mediation service has been in operation for three years and in that time two trained officers have engaged in mediations averaging approx 100 cases per year. Those cases consist of both community and homelessness mediations

Breakdown of figures for 2007/08

Community Mediations

Cases 81 of which

55 Public sector referrals

9 Private Sector referrals

12 Mixed Tenure

5 Housing Associations

By far and away the biggest issue still causing dispute is noise nuisance with around 43% of all community cases relating to noise.

177 preliminary visits were made to parties in dispute with 35 face to face meetings resulting from those visits.

Many cases have also resulted in agreements being made between parties. Of the 35 face to face meetings achieved 29 of them have resulted in a formal written agreement between the parties.

Homelessness Mediation

There have been twenty four cases this year of which

12 Public sector referrals

12 Private sector referrals

61 Preliminary visits made to families with 17 resulting in a Face to Face meetings between parent/s and young person.

The majority of the referrals came from Housing Advice, but this year for the first time referrals have come from Connexions.

A number of young people are allocated the Crash Pad for a period of 2 weeks in which they are expected to get involved in mediation with their parent/s. They are also provided with a support worker from partner Heantun Housing for a period of up to 2 years.

Of the young people that go through the mediation process some remain at home or return home or increasingly are being allocated alternative supported accommodation.

Out of the 24 referrals last year 11 young people remained at home, 5 returned home, 3 moved into supported accommodation, 1 went to prison, 1 was already in prison, 1 found alternative accommodation, 1 unknown and 1 case still open.

Networking

The mediation service has forged links with several external organisations including Heantun Housing Association, Police, Midland Mediation Network, Alone in London and Citizens Advice Bureau.

With reference to Midland Mediation Network and Alone in London – this specifically relates to further developing the mediation service through both community and homelessness mediations

Supervision

Both mediators undergo supervision with a trained supervisor to further develop skills and highlight any areas that can be improved within the service.

Schools

Two 15 minute sessions were undertaken last year at school assembly to year 10 pupils about mediation. This is an area that the mediation service is looking to develop in the coming year and beyond. It will be done with other partnering agencies.

For further information contact Patricia Dolan, Area Housing Manager, North Dudley

Email: Patricia.dolan@dudley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01384 812186

Homelessness

Considerable effort is being put into our service to sustain tenancies, support vulnerable people and prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness. We are able to demonstrate that in 2007/08 solutions were found that prevented 245 households becoming homeless.

The Crash Pad

Two units of accommodation are available to provide intensive support for young people facing the threat of homelessness. This supplements other supported accommodation. No one provision can operate in isolation and key to this programme is the link to and increasing use of family (homelessness) mediation – details are found elsewhere in this report. The Crash Pad initiative has been used as a best practice model throughout the country.

For more information contact Sian Evans, Area Housing Manager Brierley Hill

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Anti Social Behaviour Action Day

A tenant's conference, jointly organised between DACHs and Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, was held on 18th May 2007. It attracted in excess of 100 people, predominantly tenants but also included representatives from various agencies and voluntary groups.

The conference was organised and delivered as an action day to provide delegates with a clear understanding of the impact of ASB, raise awareness of the opportunities for partnership working, providing information and advice on the tools available to tackle ASB and provide an opportunity to learn from each other and share best practice.

As a result of the day, there is a greater awareness of the tools available to tackle ASB and partnership working has been considerably strengthened through developing a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved.

For further information contact Margaret Tebbett, Area Housing Manager Stourbridge

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Telephone: 01384 812101

Enforcement Action

It is recognised that sustaining tenancies and communities are key objectives. Our aim is always to use a range of tools to resolve issues of anti-social behaviour ranging from mediation through to repossession recognising that eviction is a last resort when all other options have failed. The following table shows legal enforcement action from April 2007-March 2008

Enforcement action in relation to ASB

	April to June 07	July to Sept 07	Oct to Dec 07	Jan to Mar 08	Total
NOSP	6	10	7	4	27
NPP	3		3	1	7
Possession Orders	5	1	6	6	18
ASBO			2	2	4
ASBI			2	0	2
Extension of Introductory tenancy			1	0	1
Demoted tenancies	1		0	0	1

NOSP = notice of seeking possession

NPP = notice of possession proceedings for introductory tenancies.

ASBI= anti social behaviour injunction

ASBO – anti social behaviour order

For further information contact Patricia Dolan, Area Housing Manager, North Dudley Housing

Email: Patricia.dolan@dudley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01384 812186

Noise Nuisance – Private Sector

There have been 880 noise nuisance complaints received between April 2007 and March 2008 which have been dealt with in line with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and are broken down as follows::

262 Noise from domestic Dogs

361 Noise from amplified music

186 Other domestic noise

38 Noise from domestic DIY

33 Noise from Alarms

For further information contact Helen Barlow, Head of Service, Private Sector Housing

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Gypsies

In the interests of improving community relations between the settled community and the residents of the Oak Lane Traveller Site, a Community Cohesion Group has been set up to consider issues affecting Businesses and Residents surrounding Oak Lane site. The group reviews existing working practices especially the use of Council's ASB Policy in order to minimise the incidents of ASB and whether tools are being used effectively to tackle the issues.

The following crime statistics show a reduction in the number of crimes recorded around Oak Lane.

1 August 2005 – July 2006 Oak Lane = 20 Crimes

1 August 2006 – July 2007 Oak Lane = 7 Crimes

The role of the site warden is being developed further to reinforce the importance of her role as the direct link between the council and the traveller community and the contribution this makes to fostering community cohesion. We have also been working with the West Midlands Consortium Services to Traveller children and the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning to ensure the education needs of traveller children are being met.

For further information contact Theresa Kelly, Strategy Development Manager, Private Sector Housing

Email: theresa.kelly@dudley.gov.uk

Telephone 01384 815109

Community Safety Bids 2007/08

The criteria for selection and funding of bids is as follows:

- Does the bid represent value for money?
- Does the bid improve the safety of residents?
- Does the bid improve the area and enhance the sustainability of the estate including the impact on anti social behaviour crime and nuisance?

North Dudley – Budget £90,000

Works carried out in the year include:-

- The creation of a secure communal garden to eliminate the problem of drinking and asb
- Removal of trees and shrubbery to reduce the fear of crime, remove hiding places and to open areas up
- Upgrading of communal door entry system to replace with vandal proof high security doors
- Additional lighting to reduce the fear of crime and to deter asb
- Creation of secure parking area
- Installation of CCTV at a sheltered scheme
- Fencing and gating to deter alleged drug dealing from motor vehicles

Dudley – Budget £152,130

Works carried out in the year include:

- Upgrade communal entrance doors
- Fencing
- Security lighting
- CCTV
- Barrier and bollards
- Door entry systems, locks, lighting, fencing and gates
- Parking bays

Stourbridge – Budget £79,000

Works carried out in the year include:-

- Lighting to help reduce crime and youths congregating in certain areas
- Fencing to provide extra security and safety
- Closure of alleyways to reduce high level anti-social behaviour and improve security on the claycroft estate
- Improve internal security by upgrading door entrances from wood to steel on the Claycroft Estate, due to high level anti-social behaviour

- Install door entry phone system to bungalows to improve security for elderly tenants

Halesowen – Budget £70,000

Works carried out in the year include:-

- Widening of access way to enable refuse vehicles to collect rubbish from rear of flats safely
- Removal of trees and shrubbery to reduce the fear of crime, remove hiding places to enable CCTV to work more efficiently
- Upgrade of Estate lighting to enable CCTV to work more efficiently
- Upgrading of communal door entry system to replace with vandal proof high security doors and remove sheltered areas where asb was caused
- Additional lighting to reduce the fear of crime and to deter asb
- Fencing and gating to deter asb from alleyways to rear of houses
- Gates to Garage site to prevent asb

Brierley Hill – Budget £98,000

Works carried out in the year include:-

- The provision of piazza lights at The Gables (housing with care scheme) to improve security and enhance the environment
- The replacement of a static camera at Brickiln Court with a 360 degree camera, and the installation of cameras to the lifts at Brickiln Court, Chapel Court, Dean Court and Briar Court, all to deter crime/asb and reduce the fear of crime
- Provision of lockable barriers to improve security at several garage sites where the garages had been refurbished
- New doors together with the provision of a secure door entry system to flats at Sandfield Road, where people had been getting into the block and causing nuisance to residents
- Fencing off an area of housing land close to the canal at Waldron Avenue to provide a safe and pleasant amenity space requested for children and older residents
- Cycle hoops and T gates at various locations to prevent the riding of motorbikes along Housing owned footpaths
- A number of fencing and lighting schemes throughout the area in response to locally identified needs

Valuing People Policy – People with learning difficulties and Hate Crime

Issues and challenges

- People with learning difficulties do not always feel safe in their communities
- People with learning difficulties face hate crime, often from young people, because of their disability – this can range from name calling to physical assaults
- People with learning difficulties often do not/cannot report the crime. Police processes can be inaccessible or unwelcoming
- The monitoring of hate crime has not identified people with learning difficulties as the victim. Often it is referred to adult protection and not recorded as a crime.

The way forward

The Home Office is going to produce good practice guidance to help in reporting, dealing with and stopping hate crime against people with learning disabilities. The Home Office are also funding “Learning Together”, a project run by Inclusion North and Coast2Coast to assist local Learning Disability Partnerships, advocacy groups and community safety partnerships to improve understanding and reporting of hate crimes against people with learning disabilities.

This will help Dudley review and revise its policies and procedures with its partners to identify and address this criminal activity towards people with learning difficulties. The outcomes can be shown in the next DACHS Section 17 report.

For further information contact Richard Carter, Assistant Director Learning and Disability and Mental Health (DACHS)

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Substance and Alcohol Misuse

Substance Misuse services are provided in Dudley by the PCT and the Warehouse, a voluntary sector provider which operates from Atlantic House in Lye, where it is able to offer a wide range of services. Historically, the main focus of the PCT service has been alcohol abuse and liaison within the acute hospital, together with a dual diagnosis service.

Performance of these services as measured by the National Treatment Agency has generally been good over the past three years, and has improved markedly in some areas such as waiting times and planned discharges. During 2007-08 however, the targets for numbers in treatment and retention were not met. Performance on the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) also gave cause for concern, although there has been a significant improvement in the last six months of the year.

Government funding for drug services is levelling out, after several years of relatively generous uplifts. In future, funding through the pooled treatment budget will also be linked to performance over the previous year and could be reduced further if targets are not met. The new funding formula, even without any adjustments for performance, means that Dudley will actually receive less in 2009-2010 than in 2008-09 (£2.052M instead of £2.128M), and that savings of up to £300,000 will have to be found from programmes.

Some of these savings will be achieved from a tendering process for drug treatment services. Services have been commissioned from the Warehouse since 1992 under service level agreements. The mainstream service has never been subject to an open, fair and transparent procurement process to demonstrate value for money, although some smaller services have been procured e.g. contract with Turning Point to deliver structured day care. It has been agreed that the following specifications will go out for tender: Young Person Substance Misuse Service; Drug Intervention Programme; Tier 2 Services; and Tier 3 Services. The Tender will go out to advert week commencing 8th September 2008.

Finally, work has commenced on a new alcohol strategy for the Borough. A mapping exercise is planned for June 2008, to begin to develop a vision for the new Strategy, identify gaps in current provision and to identify priorities. Alcohol has been accorded a higher priority, through inclusion in the Local Area Agreement of a target to reduce alcohol-related hospital admissions.

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Services For Older People

The Home and Community Safety Group is a practical working partnership between West Midlands Fire Service, Age Concern Dudley, West Midlands Police Service and Dudley Council Directorate of Adults, Community and Housing Services. It is a sub group of the Older Persons Strategy Board.

The front line officers and Managers involved are committed to making Older People feel safer and more secure in their homes and in their communities.

We know that Dudley has been successful in reducing many types of crime in the Borough.

Dudley has the lowest crime rate per thousand of the population of all the boroughs in the West Midlands and the second lowest of disorder. Yet when older people are consulted they still feel vulnerable to burglary and anti social behaviour within their local communities.

The Home and Community Safety Group wants to ensure that all older people have easy access to a range of practical measures to make them feel safer.

Home Safety

The group provides an integrated pathway so people phoning any service will receive the appropriate crime prevention information or visit from a member of the appropriate safety team to give advice and where needed fit: -

key safes, window locks, door chains, security lighting, intercoms, electronic code pads, spy holes and door bars.

The group has been instrumental in re-designing the fixing method for the “preferred” specification key safe to make it completely “tamper proof”. The manufacturer is now re-designing the fittings and the police are alerting their colleagues in other forces to this element of added safety.

Bogus Callers

There is a dedicated 24-hour a day every day of the year telephone line available to any concerned Dudley citizens who thinks they have been targeted by a bogus caller.

Information is quickly passed to the Police and a network of staff such as home carers and sheltered housing community support officers to “keep a look out” and alert vulnerable people in the community.

Personal alarms available through Home Call are linked into the bogus caller system and can be used to raise the alarm.

Home Maintenance

The Age Concern minor repairs and gardening scheme help to keep older peoples properties maintained which reduces the risk of bogus callers and thieves targeting the properties of older people.

Information

1, 000 Keep Well, Keep Safe handbooks have been distributed to public access areas
i.e. doctor's surgeries, libraries etc.

Part of the documentation will be on the internet for any individual to access. Discussions are underway with Council Plus on one number for accessing all enquiries regarding safety equipment and advice. This will make community safety even more accessible to older people.

ICE Cards

Dudley is promoting the use of ICE cards (in case of emergency) with all its citizens. These however are particularly reassuring to vulnerable adults and older people. The cards will have relevant information and contact details for the individual concerned and are very useful if people become disorientated whilst away from home. These details can also be entered onto a person's mobile phone and the fire service and police service will enter ICE into a victim's mobile at the scene of an incident.

For further information contact Val Beint, Assistant Director Older People & Adult with Physical Disability

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Telephone: 01384 815802

Libraries

Libraries provide a safe, welcoming environment for the local community. They are a neutral space, where everyone can access information, books, use the Internet and join in activities and events. They are often seen as a visible expression of the identity of a local area and help to create a sense of “place”.

Libraries have a vast range of resources reflecting their local communities including books and newspapers in community languages. This tailoring of resources to the needs of local communities helps to promote cohesion with everyone able to access the service together.

Libraries’ Modernisation programme includes extending opening hours across the Borough, including increased evening opening and introducing Sunday opening in selected libraries for the first time. Open facilities increase activity in communities and promote a sense of safety.

The events and activities that take place in libraries engage the whole community. These include for example: Rattle and Rhyme sessions for parents and babies; Dads and Lads groups; Reading Groups for Adults, Teenagers and Children; Local History talks and groups and author events.

The Summer Reading Challenge takes place each year, encouraging children to read a range of books and take part in related activities throughout the summer holidays. Research has shown its impact in maintaining the reading skills of children, ready for their return to school in September.

Libraries are a gateway to information – both on the Internet and from traditional resources. Communities who are informed are more able to participate locally and become involved in the life of the local community. Dudley Libraries provide a community information service, with information on local events and groups, benefits and rights available through the Internet and in leaflet form.

Whether accessing information about health, benefits, local history, parenting, work or hobby, knowing that it is freely available and in a setting where informed staff will help you find what you need to know, can be an empowering experience.

The library also acts as a host organisation for other partners who deliver surgery type advice sessions (the Police or local MPs and councillors) or give talks on for example, safety.

Adult and Community Learning

There is a long standing awareness of the negative socio-economic impact of living in the poorer neighbourhoods. Families and individuals from these communities in Dudley usually have few or no formal qualifications and are less likely to access opportunities for learning. Community learning is the primary factor that reduces poverty in places and enhances people's life chances.

Lifelong learning strengthens local communities by increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence local decision making processes through participation. Learning outcomes focus on improving confidence and self esteem, healthier lifestyles with adults and an engagement target for older people. Joint working with the Primary Care Trust in 2007/08 has strengthened referrals to health and fitness programmes and recording of fitness starting points.

It contributes to strengthening social capital by improving the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation that communities have across Dudley in their natural networks and associations and supports active citizenship. In some instances, community based provision provides a route to qualifications which leads to voluntary or paid employment as people develop the generic skills required by local employers.

In Dudley, community learning programmes and activities focus on the issues in people lives such as better health, education, greener neighbourhoods, less crime and local employment. It recognises through inclusion policies practices that some people have restricted opportunities and influences and therefore should be supported to participate. This work contributes to reducing social exclusion and closing the inequalities gap within the framework of the Community Plan and the Local Area Agreement.

The Adult and Community Learning Team contributes to reduction of crime and disorder through community engagement activities and by offering local learning opportunities which support people into learning and jobs.

Key ACL Team Achievements for 2006/07 Academic Year

- 9734 individual learners 19+
- 1202 Families in learning
- 220 learners gained employment
- 74 employers supported
- 93% learners retained (target 90%)
- 87% learners entered achieved qualifications
- 22% learners from BME groups
- 31% learners from top 20% most deprived areas
- 7% Skills for Life learners
- 25% learners 60+ years
- 10% learners with disabilities

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Policy, Performance & Resources

Targeted activity designed to tackle crime and disorder

The Community Renewal service undertakes targeted activity designed to tackle crime and disorder within the Borough. Some key aspects of this include: co-ordinating partners and the Community Together forum with the Police in managed neighbourhoods; aligning community renewal activity in line with neighbourhood policing to ensure activities address community safety concerns in neighbourhoods and communities which includes targeted youth activity; social responsibility schemes focussing on alcohol sales; respect activity and physical improvement activities which target areas which are particularly prone to increased crime and disorder; working with excluded communities to improve active citizenship and community cohesion; working with elected members in improving community reassurance. Strategic groups such as the partnership group on community safety are systematically updated on issues arising from the work with communities and neighbourhoods.

Delivery of extensive training programmes

There is an extensive training programme on the protection of vulnerable adults. This is a range of courses, mainly targeted at awareness level for all Health and Social Care staff in the borough. This includes staff in the Private, Independent and Voluntary sectors. The aim is to raise awareness of abuse, and ensure that all staff know how to respond appropriately. There are also courses for those who have to investigate and manage such cases.

The Complaints service

The Complaints service takes a lead role in complaints received which need to progress down the vulnerable adult process and receive complaints relating to alleged theft or potential fraud relating to vulnerable people in establishments. In all instances the service liaises with relevant agencies including the Police to ensure safety of the person and property.

To make sure vulnerable people have access to the complaint service we ensure that contracts with external providers requires them to notify the complaint service/commissioning service of complaints which we follow up to a conclusion.

Visits are made to residential units for young people to provide safe opportunities for them to raise concerns and complaints in order to listen but also reduce the tension within establishments and reduce the risk of young people becoming agitated and taking inappropriate action themselves rather than using the complaint process. Young people raise complaints about the behaviours of other young people where they feel at risk and vulnerable, the complaint service acts as a link for those young people with Senior Managers with a view to addressing the risks and behaviours they have to contend with.

Financial safeguarding

Contribution to sustaining and safeguarding vulnerable people through financial assessments and through investigating bad debts. Through annual auditing of financial records the Finance Section is able to verify where clients finances are vulnerable to abuse particularly in instances where carers are acting on clients behalf. Investigating bad debts can also highlight anomalies and subsequently enable the Directorate to put in place support measures for vulnerable clients.

If you require any further information contact Shobha Asar-Paul, Head of Policy and Performance

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