

Op Hope: Getting a Handle on Harlesden

Harlesden is a complex area with a variety of problems. The issues affecting local people are vastly different from road to road, although there are themes throughout. Operation Hope, an ongoing string of police activity, targets drug dealing & use, street prostitution and associated antisocial behaviour — all of which have been found to be linked both in terms of the harm to the local community, and individuals involved.



The key objectives of Operation Hope are...

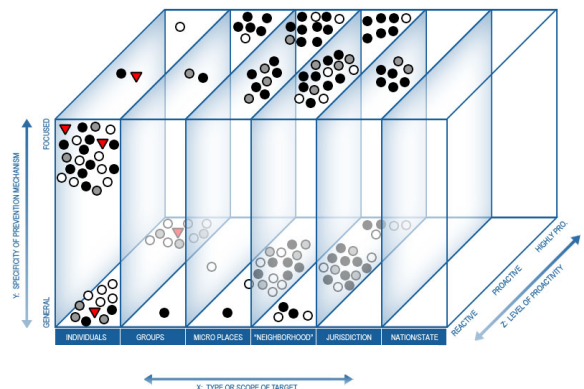
- to disrupt deep-seated drug dealing & use and street prostitution issues and reduce demand on resources;
- to develop intelligence of individuals and patterns of crime to enable long-term intervention;
- to increase the confidence, specifically around high-demand locations and individual repeat callers.

What does the Evidence Base say?

The Center for Evidence Based Policing Crime Policy (CEBCP)'s Evidence Based Policing (EPB) Matrix shows that when dealing with more than a lone individual, proactive policing yields much more successful results than reactive. In a 'neighbourhood' setting, which Harlesden fits neatly into, the most successful interventions have been proactive and sharply focussed.

- Non-significant finding
- Successful finding
- Mixed results
- ▼ Harmful/'Backfire'

Prior to Operation Hope, local intervention was sporadic and sparse. The target issues were treated as separate from one another and the response took no particular pattern. The College of Policing's 'What Works' toolkit highlights a study by Braga in 2012 which found that, when combined with a 'hotspot' strategy, 'problem-orientated policing' was particularly effective. It



found that this meant more than just 'more policing' in an area, rather specific, problem-based interventions, the effect of which often diffused into surrounding areas.

Ideas into action



There was a vast body of intelligence available. Quickly, this was converted into warrants — across three weeks 13 were obtained. The main target was a high profile flat that was the epicentre of repeat calling and a perceived safe-zone for drug dealing and misuse, frequented by the girls who in turn worked the streets of Harlesden controlled by pimps who made this particular flat base. Other targets included a shop which is now being prosecuted for licensing offences, seven residential addresses frequented by drug dealers and users and numerous vehicles concerned in the supply of drugs.

Following a successful warrant, three people were arrested and a Closure Order was obtained at the flat, preventing entry to the premises for three months. The vulnerable tenant who had been taken advantage of has been rehoused out of Harlesden following months of failed attempts, and calls for service have ceased completely. This was as a result of a long period of targeted influence of partner agencies such as Brent Antisocial Behaviour team, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Genesis housing, the tenant's housing provider.



Throughout the operation, officers were deployed in covert cars and in large numbers aboard highly visible vans. Throughout night-time deployments, another officer teamed up with council CCTV operators to guide units to disorder leading to successful stops and drugs seizures which would have been lost. This combination allowed maximum deterrent effect while enabling officers to deal with offenders where crimes occurred. The CEBCP's matrix is clear that for individuals, reactive policing is significantly more successful. It certainly made an impact on one man when I pulled up in an unmarked car, picked up the cannabis he had tried to hide and immediately attributed it to him.

Did it work?

Objective 1: The flat at the epicentre of Harlesden's issues was the subject of 24 calls in the year before Operation Hope commenced. Half were 'significant' or 'immediate' graded calls. Since the Closure Order was obtained, this has dropped to zero. 11 street prostitutes have been profiled, offered diversion and issued formal prostitution warnings, opening new avenues for prosecution in future.

Objective 2: The prostitute profiles have been converted into a briefing and circulated to local officers. This work is ongoing and the database grows weekly. The warrants have uncovered new intelligence about drug dealing in Harlesden that was previously unknown, and new relationships have been built with local people to obtain information in future. The licensing intelligence obtained has become part of the solution for an issue believed unrelated.



Objective 3: At the latest Kensal Green Ward Panel Meeting, residents were vocally impressed with Operation Hope and keen to learn how the results were being applied to their neighbourhood through Operation Lonbeck. Particular compliments have focused on residents being pleased that police are 'listening',

Where next for Operation Hope?

Harlesden's Operation Hope was intended as a trial for this method of policing. It was prioritised due to risk factors which put vulnerable people at risk which had to be addressed quickly. Its success has led Operation Lonbeck on the adjoining

Kensal Green ward. With a minor substitution of prostitution for street drinking, the operation is formatted similarly. Initial action has resulted in a successful warrant resulting in three arrests, the investigation for which remains underway.

