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Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and Child Criminal Exploitation in Runnymede

Sami Halepota, neighbourhood police officer
Surrey Police

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**Winner of the Tilley Awards Police Now and Student Officer Category 2021 |
Police Constable, Sami Halepota, Surrey Police, 2019 National Graduate Leadership
Programme**

In 2021, Police Now officer Sami Halepota was awarded the Tilley Award in the Police Now and Student Officer category for his work on tackling ASB and Child Criminal Exploitation in Runnymede. PC Halepota's work is one of five winning projects chosen from a total of 92 entries from police forces and partner agencies across the country.

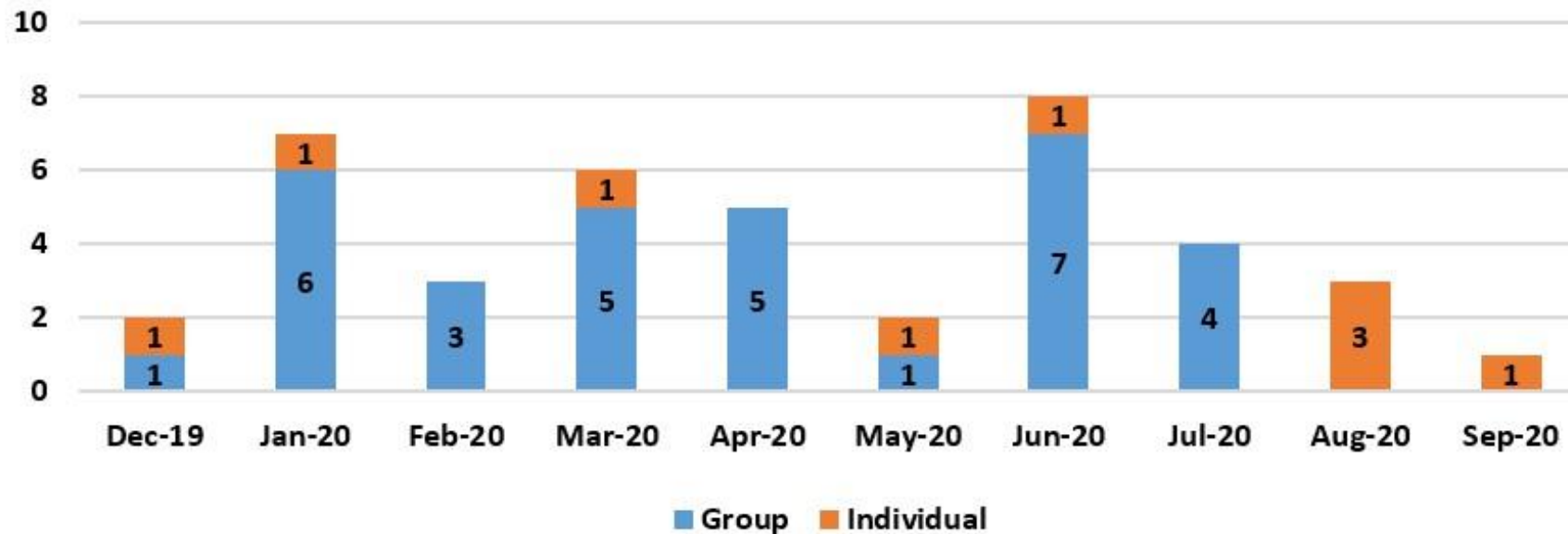
The problem: "I became aware of repeat drug-related ASB in a local estate and local youths being harassed. Investigating this further, I identified two criminal youth peer groups operating in the area, led by several adults with potential links to county line drug dealing, firearms and violence. Children from one of these groups were scared to leave their houses due to the threats and harassment they were experiencing from the rival criminal peer group."

“This was a deprived area, and the children in both criminal peer groups had learning disabilities and mental health issues. It became clear that what had initially appeared to be low level ASB and drug use on the estate was actually the visible tip of a much larger underlying problem involving Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). The high risk involved had not previously been flagged on police systems for reasons including a distinct lack of reporting and confidence in the police among the local community, poor evidence and isolated ASB incidents being classed as “low risk”. As a result, I was motivated to address the root cause of the issue.”

The approach: “Calls and visits were conducted to all residents reporting ASB in the estate to provide reassurance and gather information. Multi-agency meetings were held between Children’s Services, the police and partner organisations to aid with intelligence gathering and information sharing. The adult offenders were targeted using innovative tools such as Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) and tailored use of ASB legislation was used to both restrict criminal activity and actively safeguard the youths at risk of exploitation. In addition, support was offered to vulnerable children and their families.”

The impact: Since July, we have not had reports of any further offences by either of the criminal peer groups. “We are no longer receiving reports of harassment and no further significant concerns have been raised to the police or Children’s Services. Through the joint work of all involved, relationships have been built between the community and partners and we have open communication channels for ongoing support.”

'Group' Vs 'Individual' Occurrences



Additionally, there has been nearly a 50% reduction in overall ASB on the estate, compared with a 5% reduction in the surrounding town.

“Lastly, to ensure sustained impact, there are civil orders in place for key offenders and set policies and procedures prepared with partner agencies. This means that should the youth or the criminal peer groups come to attention again, police action will be much more effective and efficient.”

Commenting on PC Halepota’s work in Surrey Comet , Chief Inspector Mark Offord said: “This was a holistic problem-solving approach, delivered in partnership with other agencies but driven by PC Halepota when he was in his first year with us on the Police Now scheme. The operation has led to lasting change with a significant reduction in crime, and in delivering this, PC Halepota demonstrated a level of performance far beyond that which we would expect to see at his level of experience.”

