

Case study: improving community safety

What was the issue to address?

In autumn 2007, a very serious and tragic event took place in Kirklees which resulted in the death of a young man. There was, understandably, a very strong local reaction to this tragedy and strong emotions and feelings were expressed. In the aftermath of the event and while emotions were still high, further threats were made against those who were alleged to have been involved in the incident. The Internet was used by individuals and groups to issue threats of reprisals. Previously, there had been reports of anti social behaviour in the locality as well as alleged threats made by gangs against each other. In the aftermath of the incident, threats were made against the safety of the parents and families of the alleged perpetrators. Rumours spread in the community about possible retaliation and retribution, the media also became involved. A feeling of fear began to develop in some sections of the community who were concerned for their safety.

What did we do?

Local elected members quickly called a meeting to discuss and plan how the situation could be managed. The meeting was attended by Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, the Police, Youth Service, council officers and representatives of local churches and schools. The Police attended a Local Area Committee meeting in order to provide accurate, factual information on the situation. Media releases were issued which outlined what services and agencies were doing to manage tensions in the area in order to reduce people's fears and to combat rumours with accurate information. The Police, Fire Service, local church representatives, elected members and council officers met on a weekly basis to monitor and review the ongoing situation.

The family of the deceased received visits from the Police and local clergy in order to support them in their sad loss. Practical support and advice was given to parents and family members of the alleged perpetrators to help them with their personal safety and security. Community rangers and housing representatives increased their visits to local people and contacted residents in the streets and at school gates to explain what services and agencies were doing to reduce tensions and threats of further violence. Police patrols were increased. Daily updates on incidents and intelligence was shared across services and agencies, this was organised by the local Community Safety Officer.

What difference did we make?

There were no significant further incidents and residents were reassured that their well-being and safety were taken seriously. Every effort was made to keep local residents informed by media releases and word of mouth on the ground. Police Patrols and visits by other professionals to the area were increased. Local intelligence gathered by those involved was shared and examined with a view to



developing a fast response action plan. There was increased partnership working and cooperation. All services and agencies decided together when to lower the profile when they were sure the risk had been reduced.

What are we doing next?

Following the final review of the task group who were managing the above issues, Local Members, the Local Community Safety Officer and the Neighbourhood Management Group began to take up the wider issues associated with the Locality and these are currently being worked on. Issues such as the installation of CCTV, more activities for young people and a more focussed approach to tackling anti social behaviour are currently under consideration.

Shaping our future Together
Kirklees community cohesion strategy

