



**Researching Community Safety, Young People
and Anti-Social Behaviour
Thursday 30th September 2010
Glasgow Centre for Population Health**

Seminar Report

This report is a summary of the presentations and discussions from the seminar and does not necessarily represent the views of the GoWell partners or sponsors.

GoWell is a collaborative partnership between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, the University of Glasgow and the Medical Research Council/Chief Scientist Office Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, sponsored by Glasgow Housing Association, the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

Introduction

GoWell's 'Researching Community Safety, Young People and Anti-Social Behaviour' seminar took place on Thursday 30th September 2010 at the Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

The event was arranged to coincide with the publication of two GoWell reports, which are available to download below.

- [Briefing paper 8: Who says teenagers are a serious problem?](#)
- [Evaluation of Glasgow Housing Association's Youth Diversionary Programme](#)

Professor Carol Tannahill, Director of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and GoWell Principal Investigator, opened the morning. She gave an overview of the GoWell programme and advised that the aim of the seminar was to bring together a range of people from different sectors who have an interest in the issues of perceptions of safety, community cohesion and youth anti-social behaviour to consider the implications of the research findings for national and local policy and practice.

GoWell and the community safety agenda

Professor Ade Kearns, GoWell Principal Investigator, was the first to present and raised the question of why GoWell, as a study of the impacts of housing regeneration and improvement on health and wellbeing, was considering issues around anti-social behaviour. He demonstrated that levels of mental wellbeing in participants were linked to perceptions of anti-social behaviour and to whether people considered their neighbourhoods to be 'quiet and peaceful'. He advised that, if regeneration is to have an impact on places and people, it is important the community safety is taken into consideration.

Ade outlined findings that showed that perceptions of anti-social behaviour had worsened in the GoWell study areas over the period 2006-8, increasing by 10% in regeneration areas and by 39% in peripheral estates. He also advised that feelings of safety at night had declined during the same period in the same types of places with the majority of people identifying a number of local problems, including: youths hanging around, drugs, gangs, vandalism and rowdy behaviour.

Ade suggested that the following factors could be important in shaping individuals' perceptions and experiences, of anti-social behaviour, and could be areas for policy attention in future:

- Community balance, enabling the exercise of informal social control
- Amenities and activities
- Neighbourhood management
- Personal support and mentoring
- Culture change
- Strengthening communities

In summary, crime, safety and anti-social behaviour should be seen as health and wellbeing issues which negatively affect adults, young people and communities. Parties who share local public space need to be brought together to act as a force for change.

Ade concluded by describing the approaches that will be taken in future GoWell analyses. In the immediate future these include:

- Examining further residents' experiences and tolerance of anti-social behaviour, using focus group data.
- Investigating how perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour in the GoWell study areas (and sub-areas) relate to levels and patterns of recorded crime. For example, is heightened concern about safety in some areas justified, or a response to high-profile or serious crimes?
- Using ecological data for the city of Glasgow to examine whether levels of crime in local areas are influenced by community structural issues, including: demographic composition (e.g. household types and age distributions); housing tenure mix; and density of offender residents.

Ade's presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

Young people, community safety and GoWell

Dr Matt Egan, GoWell Research Scientist, presented findings which are included in the above-mentioned Briefing Paper 8 "Who says teenagers are a serious problem?" He advised that, in the GoWell survey of 6000 householders, specific questions were asked in relation to perceptions of anti-social behaviour. He went on to explain that the issue which was perceived to be a serious problem by the highest number of respondents was that of 'teenagers hanging around on the street', which was cited by over 20% of those interviewed.

Matt reported that analysis of the findings had shown that, perhaps contrary to stereotype, it was young adults and those with young families who were more likely than older people to report teenagers hanging around as a serious problem. In addition, he advised that concern about young people hanging around is associated with other indicators, such as feeling that you do not have supportive relationships, feeling vulnerable and feeling that the neighbourhood environment is of poor quality, insecure and declining.

Matt concluded by highlighting a key finding from the GoWell focus groups, namely that anti-social behaviour is a problem that affects, and is perpetrated by, both young and older people.

Newspaper coverage of these findings can be accessed [here](#).

Matt's presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

Police response to youth/gang disorder

Chief Superintendent Bob Hamilton, of Strathclyde Police Territorial Policing, gave an insight into how Strathclyde Police are addressing youth/gang disorder and of his particular remit. He advised that anti-social behaviour and gang violence uses up a great deal of resource in Glasgow and therefore data and intelligence are used in a number of ways to inform strategy and to enable prioritisation and dealing with the volume of incidents which take place every year. Bob gave an overview of the different types of activities and analyses which are employed, including:

- Pyramid analysis

This consists of mapping incidents to street maps and colour coding by volume of incidents. This then enables prioritisation of resources to specific areas.

- Recency, frequency & gravity (RFG) lists

These are lists of individuals who have committed crimes, categorised by recency, frequency and gravity of crimes. Bob advised that the algorithm used was similar to that used by companies who market products to their customers based on the recency, frequency and nature of their buying habits. He went on to say that the benefit of this method, for a large police force, was that it was an essential tool in targeting individuals who were most likely to re-offend. This information is also shared with organisations such as Glasgow Community and Safety Services and is monitored on a fortnightly basis.

- Hotspots and indoors

Over the past ten years, there has been an increase of 11% in violence which occurs indoors as opposed to outdoors and this provides additional challenges for the traditional police response. Data are therefore now gathered on specific problematic properties and locations, which can again assist with targeting.

- Offender management

Offender management was highlighted in relation to the RFG lists and the information obtained from these enables proactive offender management activities to be implemented, including home visits, warning letters and enforcement activities, such as following up on payment of fines.

- Referral processes

Bob advised that it was important that coordination between relevant organisations was achieved when referring offenders.

Bob concluded by summarising future plans in this area and advised that sustained activity was vital. He also advised that new initiatives will be planned, including the increased use of social media to monitor gang activity.

GCSS – Responding to youth crime and anti-social behaviour

Suzanne MacLeod, Operations Manager within Glasgow Community Safety Services (GCSS) began by outlining the aims of GCSS, which are:

- To prevent and reduce antisocial behaviour and crime
- To reduce fear of crime and antisocial behaviour and support those affected by it
- To promote positive behaviour by improving the appearance of communities

She stated that one of the reasons that GCSS was established was to strengthen partnership working, in particular between Glasgow City Council and Strathclyde Police, and that GCSS have brought together a number of existing community safety services into one organisation.

Suzanne described GCSS' approach as 'intelligence led', using a process which begins with initial intelligence gathering and leads to the targeted delivery of initiatives and activities, followed up by evaluation. Suzanne discussed one of GCSS' objectives in more detail – that of working with children and young adults to direct and divert them away from anti-social behaviour and crime. GCSS takes a

preventative approach and Suzanne outlined some of the activities and initiatives which have taken place in order to meet this objective, which included:

- Schools support services
- Outdoor adventure services
- Mobile resources deployed in 'hotspot' areas
- Support and guidance programmes for adults and young people involved in anti-social and criminal activity – including placements and access to training
- Restorative approaches – such as facilitating meetings between the offender and the person or community harmed, as well as using the Community Reparation Service to improve the appearance of communities
- Employability programmes – such as 'Get Ready for Work'
- Warning letters – sent to first-time offenders
- Positive Behaviour Agreements - signed up with through home visits to second-time offenders

She went on to advise that future developments include community payback orders and restorative approaches with adult offenders. Suzanne's presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

National policy in relation to community safety and the GoWell findings

Catherine Skinner, Project Manager for the National Community Safety Strategic Assessment, Scottish Government and Rebecca Robinson of the Reducing Crime Project, Scottish Government Community Safety Unit gave a joint presentation on national policy. Catherine began by explaining that the Community Safety Unit had responsibility for strategic/policy aspects of community safety as well as delivery through the funding of programmes. She continued by specifying the policy areas which the Community Safety Unit covers, which are:

- Violence reduction, including gangs & knives (but not violence against women)
- Anti-Social Behaviour, including the Anti-Social Behaviour Act
- Reducing Crime project
- Coordination for the personal safety agenda

Delivery focussed on the 'Cashback for Communities' Programme and providing support to five partner bodies including the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and Community Initiatives to Reduce Violence (CIRV).

Catherine commented on the operating environment within which Community Safety operates and advised that issues which need to be considered include the potential for differences between current and future policy direction and the financial climate. She also went on to explain that she perceived a lack of connectivity between academia and operational community safety projects and commended GoWell for its ability to link these areas. Catherine concluded by advising that she felt that the GoWell findings raised questions as to what influences people's perceptions of anti-social behaviour and also what makes people feel safer, and why.

Rebecca gave the second part of the presentation and advised that she had recently taken up a new role as part of the Reducing Crime Project, in which she will consolidate what evidence there is across the Scottish Government of activities and policies outwith Community Safety and Justice, which also have an impact on issues around crime and community safety. She gave the examples of Education Services

and Equally Well as having a role in reducing crime and advised that the main emphasis of her first six months in post will be to bring together the evidence for these examples of cross-cutting activities. She also advised that she was particularly interested in activities which demonstrated protective factors (such as resilience in communities). Rebecca therefore advised that she was very keen for those present to contact her if they had any suggestions on evidence she could use in these areas.

Rebecca concluded by advising that her report will be presented to a range of stakeholders who will then use this to decide upon the next stage of the strategy.

Catherine and Rebecca's presentation (which includes contact details) can be downloaded [here](#).

Reflection and next steps

A number of questions were posed in order for delegates to reflect upon the presentations delivered. These were:

- i) Do you find any of these findings surprising?
- ii) How well do you think that existing policy and research fit with the issues raised?
- iii) What are the implications for research, policy and practice in the future? In particular, what should we stop doing, what should we focus on more and are what should be doing differently?
- iv) Who else should be involved who isn't represented today?

Feedback from these groups was facilitated by Professor Lyndal Bond, GoWell Principal Investigator, and reflected a number of issues and comments arising from the presentations, including:

- What are the opportunities available for sharing of data and resources between organisations
- Whether information sharing should be considered a necessary requirement of organisations rather than discretionary
- What are protective factors in reducing anti-social behaviour and its impacts
- How can the voluntary sector have a bigger voice in these matters
- The need for sustained rather than short term initiatives
- How to balance informing the public of incidents alongside reassuring communities of their safety
- The balance between offender management initiatives, diversionary initiatives and of removing offenders from communities through custodial sentences
- How can diversionary activities best be employed
- How can the environment be used to support reductions in anti-social behaviour such as through creating balanced communities and spaces where informal social control can take place
- How to reduce any impact the financial climate may have on the provision of youth diversionary activities

The dominant, overarching themes from the seminar discussion were, firstly, a recognition of the need to ensure that work takes place with host communities (including aspects of the physical environment) and that the focus is not solely on the offenders themselves; secondly, the importance of the personal development components of 'diversionary' projects and also of strengthening the relationship between immediate offender management support and mainstream/longer-term

cultural and leisure services; and, thirdly, the need for future information-sharing and joint research.

Lyndal concluded by thanking everyone for their attendance and advised that it would be ideal if those present could, in future, continue to consider ways of working together to address the issues raised above.

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