



Making Northern Ireland Safer

Ards Area Command C District

Local Policing Plan Update April 09 – Dec 09

DPP Public Meeting Donaghadee 25th January 2010

**Chief Inspector Philip Knox
Area Commander**

It is my role at this meeting to provide a progress report on policing within the Ards Area during 2009/2010.

It has been a difficult year for our communities with the increasing financial pressures as a result of the difficult economic environment. I do believe that we are seeing some of the out-workings of this in the wider social context and particularly where it relates to policing and local crime.

This 3rd quarter update is a mixed report with both positive and negative aspects, there is some detail in my comments, but I would remind you that the story is in the detail and not just the headlines. Within my presentation I have provided graphics on 5 year crime trends to explain where we sit in the wider context rather than just the year on year fluctuations.



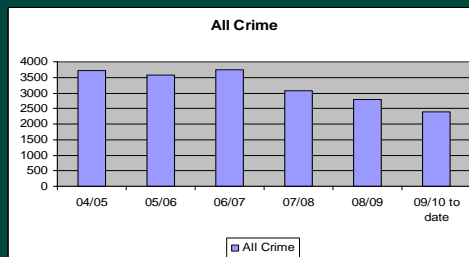
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**Overall Crime – Ards Area
Q1 – Q3 April 09 – Dec 09**

FYTD: 2314

PFYTD: 2119

Increase: +195



There have been 195 extra crimes reported across all crime types during the 1st nine months of this financial year. We have particularly seen a rise in both domestic related crime and burglary and I will discuss these further in due course.

As you can see from the bar chart there have been consistent and significant reductions in crime within Ards during the last few years. Last year was the first time that we had reported less than 3000 crimes during a single year and as of today we are on target to do that again this year albeit with an increase on last years figure.

The crime detection rate has increased by 3.5% on last year so even though we are seeing an increase in overall crime we are also actually detecting more of the perpetrators of those crimes.



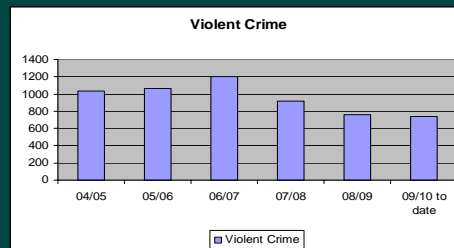
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Ards Local Policing Plan Target

1.2.2 To reduce the level of assaults

FYTD: 653

PFYTD: 535

Increase: +118



There have been 118 additional reports of offences against the person this year to date. The majority of this increase is as a result of an increase in reports of domestic motivated assaults. Analysis indicates no specific hot spots, general assaults in public places have not significantly changed during the last year – bearing in mind that those assaults had already dropped by over 40% during the previous two years.

There are a number of possible explanations for the increase. The actual number of domestic related incidents to which police are called has reduced by almost 4%. The number of those calls that are now being reported as assaults has, however, significantly increased. Recent strategies aimed at providing support mechanisms to encourage reporting by victims may be bearing some fruit. The current economic environment also places additional stress on families, it also increases the likelihood that people will socialise at home where it is cheaper rather than heading out. The lack of social inhibitors at home and alcohol consumption could be an explanation. This is particularly true in Ards which does not have a large night time economy.

During October I held a meeting with a number of our partners including Womens Aid, NIHE, CSP, DPP, Social Services and we considered options to tackle this issue. A significant media campaign ran during the lead up to Christmas paid for by DPP and a joint application through PWCF. It is worth noting that the number of reports during Dec dropped by around 30% and this reduction is evident during the beginning of January.

Additionally we are considering specialist training for Police officers together with Women's Aid as well as alternative reporting options for victims but these are still works in progress.

The recent introduction of the MARAC system is now operational within C District. MARAC monthly meetings are held with other statutory and voluntary groups to discuss families highlighted as most at risk due to Domestic Violence. The group will then develop an action plan with the aim of minimising the identified risk and protecting the most vulnerable members of that family/relationship.

I would also highlight that the clearance rate for assaults within Ards is currently up by over 9% this year to date.



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1.3.2 To reduce the number of domestic burglaries

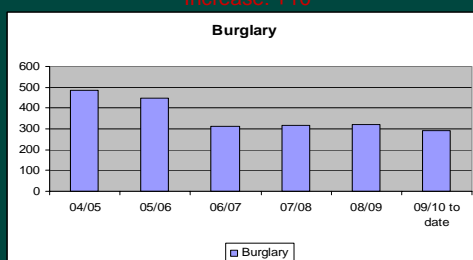
FYTD: 159
PFYTD: 129

Increase: +30

1.9.1 To reduce the number of commercial burglaries

FYTD: 121
PFYTD: 111

Increase: +10



There has been an increase in both domestic and commercial burglaries this year to date. These have come in spates with 40 domestic burglaries during the month of October (22 more than the previous Oct).

A number of District wide operations have taken place and are currently ongoing to tackle burglary particularly in Ards and North Down.

Operation 'Seasons Greetings' ran throughout December as a high profile operation focusing on hot spot areas throughout Ards. Another Operation using District resources and prioritising burglary is ongoing and will run for the next two months. (Last weekend this one operation within Ards involved 109 different Vehicle Check Points, 24 individuals stopped and searched and 41 different offences detected, ranging from breach of bail to drink driving). Unfortunately there are other priorities that arise unforeseen and that require me to divert dedicated resources to alternative policing operations within the Area – this has a knock on effect on operations like this.

We continue to monitor specifically identified prolific offenders including regular bail checks.

The Op Converter Team who aim to maximise and prioritise returns on FP and DNA hits are now taking on a similar role to maximise our returns on CCTV hits.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes continue to increase and we are also expanding the use of our text alert system to include all of Ards. A pilot programme using new social media outlets will also be used to send crime prevention messages and to make public appeals for information.

In terms of public reassurance I would point out that Burglary levels in Ards are still significantly lower than they were 4 or 5 years ago and are low per head of population in overall Northern Ireland terms.



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1.5.1 To reduce the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour to ensure a 15% reduction by 31/3/2011.

FYTD Target : -10%

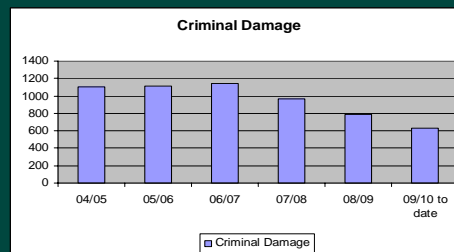
FYTD Actual : -23%

1.6.2 To reduce the number of crimes of criminal damage

FYTD: 616

PFYTD: 618

Reduction:-2



Anti-social behaviour reports reductions are being sustained. To meet the 15% target by 2011 we needed a 10% reduction this year and are currently reporting a 23% reduction which amounts to about 650 less reports. ASB reports do account for a significant number of our calls for service and as such have a major impact on local community confidence in policing. I am in no doubt that stats like this do not help those who are having problems. People want to see us dealing effectively with their specific problems and we are very much endeavouring to do that and I am always considering ways in which we can deal with these issues more effectively.

There are a significant number of diversionary and engagement programmes running and as well as that our enforcement continues. We have seized 942 quantities of alcohol during 229 separate seizures and have noted the details of over 800 young people at ASB hotspots. Each of those will have received a letter to their parents informing them regarding their son or daughter's activity.

A joined up policy of enforcement, diversion and engagement is having an impact, the reassurance aspect of that strategy requires us all to play our part.

Many of the strategies and tactics aimed at ASB also target Criminal damage. There is a minimal reduction in overall criminal damage this year but please remember that we had a reduction of almost 19% last year and the sustained reductions over the last 3 years (as can be seen on the bar chart) are evidence of sustained improvement.

Crime levels do fluctuate year on year, sustained and embedded improvements over the medium to long term should be the gauge for success.



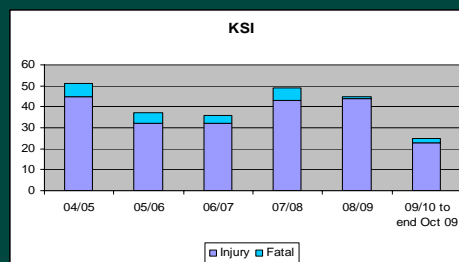
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Ards Local Policing Plan Target

1.7.1 To contribute to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on the road.

April – Oct 08: 26

April – Oct 09: 25

Reduction: -1



Once again I am having to apologise for the delay in producing KSI stats for performance meetings. The full statistics are only available up to Oct 08.

5 people have died on our roads this year with 3 people dying in one tragic incident near Comber during December.

Complete figures for all stats relating to road collisions are only available for the 1st half of the year but they would indicate that the number of persons injured on our roads has reduced by 17% with the number of collisions also reduced by 17%. Obviously we have since had a long and sustained cold spell that could have significantly impacted on these stats.

We continue to focus speed camera enforcement operations in areas where collisions are prevalent as well as making significant use of the community concern initiative. Ards is making more use of this initiative than any other Area within Northern Ireland. During the last 3 months there have been 74 separate speed camera deployment operations leading to 89 speed detections. 58 of those operations were targeted at locations requested by the community through their community representatives directly to me. 15 drivers were detected for speeding during a 2 hr spell on the Glen Rd, Comber. The Christmas drink drive campaign led to 224 breath tests within Ards with 10 drivers being prosecuted.

As well as enforcement we continue with road safety education at schools (The PSNIs Rd Safety Rd Show was brought to St Columba's Portaferry during November and hundreds of teenagers from across Ards and Down had the opportunity to experience it.)

High profile media campaigns continue relentlessly as we try to get our messages through to road users.

Collision Remedial Scheme analysis continues with Road Service to identify locations for improvement.



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DPP Questions:

Alderman Ferguson:

1. How many civilians are employed by PSNI in C District?
2. How many police officers are employed by PSNI in C District?
3. Is the PSNI considering the possibility of civilian employees drive police

Alderman Jim Shannon:

1. Will the PSNI be carrying out a Traffic Safety initiative for the Ards Borough in light of the startling figures that show an increase in death and injuries on our roads in our area?
2. There has been an unprecedented rise in burglaries and many elderly people feel vulnerable at the moment, what action will the PSNI be taking to reduce burglaries and restore confidence?

A number of questions have been asked by DPP members and committees so I can move onto them now:

Alderman Ronnie Ferguson:

1. How many civilians are employed by PSNI in C District?
A. 103 Support Staff
2. How many police officers are employed by PSNI in C District?
A. 530 Regular Police Officers and 117 POPT
3. Is the PSNI considering the possibility of civilian employees drive police vehicles for either routine or response calls?
A. There are no plans for civilians to drive Police Response vehicles. A number of Police Staff have Police Driving Cards and do use PSNI Fleet vehicles on official business.

Alderman Jim Shannon:

1. Will the PSNI be carrying out a Traffic Safety initiative for the Ards Borough in light of the startling figures that show an increase in death and injuries on our roads in our area?
I have probably answered this question already in my main presentation. The only validated figures available this year would indicate that collisions have reduced as have the number of persons injured. There are no figures to suggest that the number of persons killed and seriously injured has increased this year. One fatality on our roads is too many and there have been 5 persons killed on our roads this year to date as already mentioned. Police are enforcing across Ards in significant numbers on a daily basis. Education and awareness campaigns are running and are planned. Drink driving enforcement is ongoing. But lets remember roads are inherently dangerous places which is the reason why we need tests and licences to drive, which is why there are so many rules and regulations on our roads. Drivers on our roads must take responsibility, we will do our best to detect and prosecute but there is an obligation on individual residents of Ards to minimise the risks for everyone else in Ards.
2. There has been an unprecedented rise in burglaries and many elderly people feel vulnerable at the moment, what action will the PSNI be taking to reduce burglaries and restore confidence?
Again hopefully I have answered this in my main presentation. There has been a rise in burglaries but we are still significantly below the numbers of 4 or 5 years ago. Ards is one of the safest place to live within Northern Ireland and Police are working very hard to keep it that way. Overt and visible police operations are ongoing in a directed and influential way to target specific areas and individuals. Last weekend we conducted over 100 VCPs carried out 24 stop and searches all targetted at burglars. I would also remind you that some basic crime prevention significantly minimises any risk. Be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to Police right away. By Police and community working together we can have a major impact on this immediately.



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DPP Questions (cont):

Monitoring Group:

1. It is noted from the report that a review of the PACT process, particularly in Newtownards, is being carried out by the Neighbourhood Inspector. Could the Commander update the Partnership on the progress of the review and confirm that a copy of the report will be submitted to the Partnership for consideration?
2. The Group welcomed the extent of the Community policing activities described in Section one of the report and in particular details relating to the many youth diversionary schemes and other activities reported from across the Borough. In view however of the continuing demand on police resources can the Commander sustain this level of activity and indeed continue to introduce new and effective policing in the community initiatives?

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Can I just say that PACT is a community engagement process and we are engaging throughout Ards at various levels, with various communities and groups. The manner of those engagements differs throughout Ards and rightly so. This needs to meet the community requirements. I was at the PACT last week in Comber and it working well, expanding its membership, influencing police local priorities and delivering results. The communities in Newtownards have indicated that they don't want one such formal group and want to engage at a more localised level and this is ongoing and is also working effectively in different locations. My main concern relates to any possible gaps in that engagement or inadequacies in PSNI representation and as such I have asked 2 NPT Insp's to review all formal engagement within Ards and provide me with detail, constitutions, memberships and then look at where the gaps might be and how we could fill them. This is not a quick piece of work albeit I have some preliminary returns but want to make sure I have a good picture. I will of course share this with the DPP as you are vital in helping me fill those gaps.

2. The Group welcomed the extent of the Community policing activities described in Section one of the report and in particular details relating to the many youth diversionary schemes and other activities reported from across the Borough. In view however of the continuing demand on police resources can the Commander sustain this level of activity and indeed continue to introduce new and effective policing in the community initiatives?

It is my view that diversionary activity is an integral part of any counter strategy to deal with ASB, crime or disorder. These activities are also vital as part of our community engagement. Young people do not want to engage through formal mechanisms so we do it through such schemes. Many of these schemes are partnership driven, and the Police involvement once they are up and running reduces but the value in taking the young people off the streets lasts. You should not consider community policing initiatives to be anything other than part of policing. There will be times when other agencies step in and take over and the police commitment can reduce and we will monitor that. The main priority for our community in the DPP consultation related to ASB and young people drinking, we do not reduce that significantly through enforcement alone, we may move it from your doorstep but it goes somewhere else. Diversionary activities do impact and we must look at the value of each. Prioritising diversion and prevention can be just as important as a burglary operation when building community confidence in policing. I think what we can do better is get the message out there that we are working behind the scenes even when not visible at your door, the DPP can undoubtedly help me with that.



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DPP Questions (cont):

Monitoring Group:

3. The Group has noted with concern the continuing increase in the level of assaults and in particular the significant increase in domestic related crimes. Can the Commander report on progress to introduce MARAC (Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) into the District and is he satisfied that the scheme will help address domestic abuse in the area?
4. The Group has acknowledged and again welcomed the continuing reduction in the level of anti-social behaviour in the Borough. It is however noted that in part the reduction has been achieved through the "Maximum use of Police Officers Part Time". Can the Commander update the Partnership on the number of Part Time Officers available to him. Furthermore can he confirm the number of Office based Officers that may be released from these tasks in order to carry out front line duties in the future?

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The first MARAC within PSNI took place in C district on 6th January. Detectives from our Public Protection Unit chaired and attended the meeting with other agencies in attendance including social services, housing executive (whose premises were used), Women's Aid and representative from UHD. They considered 4 cases which had come in from uniform officers at domestic incidents following DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Killing) risk assessments. The MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) in considering these cases were able to provide a range of safety plans for the injured parties. Injured parties do not have to consent to referral to MARAC and in some cases do not know that the panel has met however we are adjusting the DASH form to ask the IP if he/she consents to MARAC considering their case. The second MARAC took place on 20th January with 10 cases, assessed under DASH as high risk, being considered. The Bangor and Ards committee will continue to meet once a month. On a positive note and without going into detail, PPU have dealt with 2 of our most concerning domestic offenders this week. Both have been charged, one was remanded whilst one was given court bail despite objections by police. Domestic violence is predominantly reoccurs and that is where risk assessments and the MARAC allow us to focus on victims and develop safety plans. I would be more than happy to arrange a detailed brief on MARAC for members. It is one aspect of an overall strategy and I am confident that it will reduce the incidents involving our most vulnerable and at risk residents.

4. The Group has acknowledged and again welcomed the continuing reduction in the level of anti-social behaviour in the Borough. It is however noted that in part the reduction has been achieved through the "Maximum use of Police Officers Part Time". Can the Commander update the Partnership on the number of Part Time Officers available to him. Furthermore can he confirm the number of Office based Officers that may be released from these tasks in order to carry out front line duties in the future?

There are 46 Police Officers Part Time in the Ards Area (Comber 8, D'dee 6, Ards 23, P'Ferry 9). Police Officers Part Time are vital in supplementing our Neighbourhood Officers and are prioritised for Friday and Saturday evenings when incidents of ASB are most prevalent.

As you are aware the PSNI is reviewing all roles throughout the service, a submission has been put forward by C District for consideration by Senior Command and final decisions have not yet been disseminated. Once I have the finalised detail to hand I will inform the Partnership.



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DPP Questions (cont):

Monitoring Group:

5. Local community groups and forums have continued to express concern about potential closure of police stations across the Borough. Can the Commander update the Partnership on the present situation?
6. What is NRG - what does this stand for?
7. Kilcooley keep safe drugs drop safe initiative - can you tell us what this is about & what it entails?

5. Local community groups and forums have continued to express concern about potential closure of police stations across the Borough. Can the Commander update the Partnership on the present situation?

The District will continue to review its estate requirements. Comber, Donaghadee and Portaferry have been mentioned for consideration but it is unlikely that any changes will take place during the next 12 to 24 months. Full consultation with the DPP and the community will be undertaken before any final decisions are made. Irrespective of the future of the buildings it is certainly my intention that you will continue to have dedicated Neighbourhood Teams in each of those Areas and that will not change.

6. What is NRG - what does this stand for?

Not sure it actually stands for anything other than a catchy name for kids. It is a diversionary programme that will cover the whole peninsula and will take place in different towns throughout the programme. It involves lots of activities including a bus with computer games, outdoor activities etc as well as education programmes relating to drugs and alcohol. A good partnership initiative that diverts local young people from the streets. DPP members may like to have an actual look at one of the events and I am sure that can be arranged.

7. Kilcooley keep safe drugs drop safe initiative - can you tell us what this is about & what it entails?

An award winning programme that aims to take drugs off the street. Anyone finding drugs or wanting to get rid of drugs can do so in a safe and anonymous manner that ensures someone else doesn't get a hold of them. Safes are placed within the community and drugs can be placed there and later disposed off by Police. Educational and awareness programmes will run in conjunction with it and the community will undertake initiatives to fully endorse and support the anti-drugs message. A lot work still required to get this started but the groundwork is underway.