

NEW ERA: Working more effectively to make force area safer for people to enjoy a better quality of life

Bringing it down to a local level

IN APRIL 2000 sector policing was officially introduced across the whole of the South Wales Police (SWP) area. There are seven basic command units each coterminous with its respective unitary authority. This command unit is then sub-divided into sectors which reflect local communities and wards.

Sector policing and problem oriented policing are examples of priorities set by the Chief Constable and confirmation that SWP is committed to a style which is intelligence-led, problem-oriented but above all community-based.

As part of the New Era Team based at SWP headquarters, Insp Joe Ruddy is involved in implementing these priorities. "Sector policing means that the accountability and responsibility for policing has been taken to local areas with an inspector in charge aided by sergeants and constables," she says.

"This model provides the local community with a focal point – someone they know who is responsible and accountable at local level for policing and looking at crime and quality of life issues within the area."

Because basic command units are coterminous with local authorities there is a more integrated approach with other agencies which can help reduce crime and affect quality of life issues for people in those areas.

Insp Ruddy says, "The accountability this system affords is the basis of sector policing."

In addition to sector policing, SWP has looked at a model called problem oriented policing.

This provides a change of focus by looking at the root causes of crime, as opposed to the traditional method of reaction. Using the hybrid sector-policing model SWP has local accountability and officers can pose questions like – Why this location? Why this offender? Why this victim?

"If these basic questions are analysed we come up with a more appropriate response which isn't always a police response," says Insp Ruddy. "A lack of street lighting or a run-down environment, for example, are not police responsibilities but a local authority matter."

The 1997 Crime and Disorder Act brought statutory responsibilities for the local authorities and other partnership agencies to work



PRIORITIES: SWP is committed to an approach which is intelligence led and problem oriented but, above all, community based

together with the police and come up with solutions to crime and disorder issues. The model of sector policing allows SWP to do this at local level.

Inspectors know their counterparts at other agencies and this has led to a reduction of crime and the tackling of the causes of crime.

Intelligence-led policing is another initiative being undertaken by SWP.

Although policing has always been intelligence-led this means at a basic level that with technology it becomes easier to provide officers with 24-hour, up-to-date, appropriate information at the touch of a button.

"When officers are briefed they are directed towards specific areas

or targets and not just traditional routine patrol," Insp Ruddy says. "This is where intelligence fits in with policing. You cannot solve the problems unless you know what their cause is. Intelligence-led policing in conjunction with a partnership approach will reduce crime."

Problem solving embraces two models which SWP and its partners can examine. These include the problem analysis triangle which, instead of targeting the offender in the traditional police manner, looks at the victims and the location of

crime to prevent crimes happening in the first place. In a recent national crime survey 1pc of commercial premises account for 44pc of robberies.

In the past the approach would have been to target the offenders who commit the 44pc of robberies. Now time will be spent on targeting commercial premises and trying to make them less vulnerable to crime.

"We have to understand that while the police have a duty to detect crime the people of South Wales are more interested in how

much we have reduced crime and how safe their area is. This is what problem oriented policing is about," says Insp Ruddy.

The emphasis is on long-term sustainable solutions that can only be achieved through partnerships and problem solving. To illustrate this, Insp Ruddy uses a simple example of a school where children played during the summer holidays causing annoyance and damage. This was looked at it in a problem-solving way and the decision reached not to cut the grass. As the grass grew the children turned to the street and played there, causing problems for the residents.

"It was then decided to cut an area of grass at the furthest point away from the school and the

street. The children went and no damage was caused to the school and no annoyance to residents in the street," says Insp Ruddy.

Similarly in the fight against auto crime SWP has adopted a six-point initiative called Act against Autocrime being implemented across the force which looks at enforcement together with partnership, education and public awareness.

"With such initiatives in place and intelligence led policing we will strive to make everything we do community based," Insp Ruddy says. "We will look at problems together with our partners and in this way work more effectively to make the SWP area safer for people to enjoy a better quality of life."

“Officers can pose questions like – Why this location? Why this offender? Why this victim?”

Insp Joe Ruddy

Mobile phones mean increase in police emergency calls

THE explosion in mobile phone sales has increased the number of 999 calls being made to South Wales Police at the area control rooms in Bridgend, Cardiff and Swansea.

In addition to the 250,000 emergency calls the force has to answer over 2.3 million non-emergency calls

"We have seen a significant improvement on last year's answering times," says Supt Nic Lanagan, head of the communications division.

SUPT NIC LANAGAN

A new initiative undertaken to further increase response figures has been that of call handling in relation to the Incident Management Units at Barry and Bridgend and the separation of the emergency and non-emergency calls, which can end up on enquiry desks awaiting the attention of a particular station.

"It has also been important to look at the way we handle our in-

ternal calls so they give a greater priority to the public."

"That is our life-blood in terms of information and intelligence and the setting up of Incident Management Units ensures the local issues are dealt with at a local level.

"Our current research shows the public questioned are happy with this service," said Supt Lanagan.

To ensure the success of this initiative, South Wales Police has equipped each IMU with the nec-

essary staff to monitor calls while making sure they have the necessary technology available to deal with them.

Difficulties that arise can range from the internal problem of trying to locate officers within the force, to answering questions on where someone may be held in custody.

The solution to these problems is ultimately the setting up of a single call handling centre for the force. This could, however, cost up to £7m.

With present budgetary restrictions the IMU initiatives now being replicated through the South Wales Police area is a way of improving the service in a more cost-effective manner.

Supt Lanagan said, "What we look at is the success of the locally-based IMUs which provide the short to medium-term solution in the territorial divisions."

Looking to the future, the Best Value report indicates that South Wales Police should move towards a single call handling facil-

ity, but this will be at least three years away.

"The IMUs can be developed over a three-year period and then ultimately, when buildings and infrastructure are in place along with other technological innovations, a dedicated call centre can be introduced," said Supt Lanagan.

"At present we have to ensure everything we do is consistent but the immediate priority remains to ensure those who ring with a genuine emergency can get through."