



THE  
*Bournemouth*  
PARTNERSHIP

# The Pier Project

## Final Report

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To reduce incidents of dwelling burglary, street robbery and vehicle crime throughout the Borough of Bournemouth by identifying the most chaotic drug dependent offenders and by offering selected individuals a premium partnership support network aimed at securing a crime and drug free lifestyle (The Pier Project stated purpose 2005:20)

## **Introduction**

This is the Bournemouth University Business School's final review and evaluation of the Pier Project, Bournemouth. The Business School is part of the Institute of Business and Law, and has a developing expertise in evaluation studies. This concluding review is written as a synopsis of the previous four monitoring studies.

The review is divided into four major sections:

Section one provides a history and background to the project, an overview of its central aims and the methodology by which it is designed to intervene.

Section two presents an outline of the evaluation methodology employed by the evaluation team.

Section three is concerned with the experiences and outcomes of the project, in terms of the major stakeholders – the project clients; the police; the project partners; and society in general.

Section four presents a set of conclusions and recommendations that arise from the foregoing.

## **One: Project background and methodology**

You can access all the treatment, housing and support agencies which will enable you to live a drug and crime free life and you will be provided with every assistance to do so. If however you refuse assistance and there is evidence that you are committing crime, then police activity will concentrate on you, which will lead to your probable arrest, conviction and imprisonment. (The Pier Project Bulletin November 2005:22)

The Pier Project is an initiative targeting persistent and high profile offenders in Bournemouth and has been operational since November 2003. This multi-agency crime reduction project is based on an assertive intensive supervision model and seeks to target drug users by offering a fast-track into treatment and a variety of social support mechanisms, thus attempting to reduce the incidence of drug-related crime in the area. It is funded through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and Police funds. The Project has a high profile both locally and nationally, being regarded as an example of good practice by the Home Office. It is managed on a day to day basis by experienced police officers, probation workers and members of CRI. Oversight is provided by a multi-agency Steering Group, which is in turn a sub-group of the CDRP. Importantly, the Project contracts the services of a local GP and attached drug counsellor who facilitate the early assessment and treatment of clients. Wider social support is provided through a variety of local voluntary and statutory organizations.

The most persistent and prolific offenders in the area are identified through intelligence, the use of an evidence based matrix, and the professional judgement of staff. They are then given the opportunity to sign a client contract, through which they are offered immediate support for their drug use and lifestyle issues as an alternative to being 'hard targeted'. In this it largely follows the successful model pioneered by Blackpool (The Tower Project), and attempts to 'reduce crime, increase public confidence and reduce fear of crime in the community' (Pier Project Bulletin November 2005:20)

## **Two: Evaluation**

The programme evaluation has been carried out by utilising a variety of methods. Principal among these has been the use of qualitative interviews with project clients and service providers, in order to capture their experiences of implementation and to identify what factors had facilitated or hindered project operation. In addition, quantitative data for the targeted crimes has been utilised in an attempt to track the impact that the project

has had in the locale. Through this dual methodology both the objective outcomes of the project as well as the subjective experiences of a range of participants have been tracked, and adjustments made to the operation of the programme. This final evaluation report is intended to summarise and to stimulate consideration of the operation of the programme in the future.

### Three: Experiences and Outcomes

In this section the basic data relating to the project is presented as a way into discussing the experiences and outcomes of the major stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Basic data

##### Bournemouth Crime Figures December 2001 – January 2006

<b>BOURNEMOUTH DIVISION</b>			
<b>OFFENCE</b>	<b>DEC 01-DEC 03</b>	<b>JAN 04-JAN-06</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
<b>DWELLING BURGLARY</b>	2724	2084	-23%
<b>COMMERCIAL BURGLARY</b>	3029	2406	-21%
<b>ROBBERY</b>	562	397	-29%
<b>AUTOCRIME</b>	7772	5235	-33%

<b>BOSCOMBE SECTION (EAST BOURNEMOUTH)</b>			
<b>OFFENCE</b>	<b>DEC 01-DEC 03</b>	<b>JAN 04-JAN-06</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
<b>DWELLING BURGLARY</b>	1129	1051	-7%
<b>COMMERCIAL BURGLARY</b>	850	764	-10%
<b>ROBBERY</b>	223	143	-36%
<b>AUTOCRIME</b>	1920	1396	-27%

<b>CENTRAL SECTION</b>			
<b>OFFENCE</b>	<b>DEC 01-DEC 03</b>	<b>JAN 04-JAN-06</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
<b>DWELLING BURGLARY</b>	526	345	-34%
<b>COMMERCIAL BURGLARY</b>	1057	711	-33%
<b>ROBBERY</b>	215	147	-32%
<b>AUTOCRIME</b>	2726	1143	-58%

<b>BOURNEMOUTH NORTH</b>			
<b>OFFENCE</b>	<b>DEC 01-DEC 03</b>	<b>JAN 04-JAN-06</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
<b>DWELLING BURGLARY</b>	890	855	-4%

<b>COMMERCIAL BURGLARY</b>	966	931	-4%
<b>ROBBERY</b>	115	104	-10%
<b>AUTOCRIME</b>	2864	2696	-6%

An obvious point to be made about such data is of course that it does not indicate a simple causality between the activities of the project and crime reduction, and indeed the sponsors of the project would not wish to make such a claim. Crime and crime reduction are complex matters that yield to no such easy claims, and, as the project managers assert, it runs alongside other police activities of a more ‘traditional’ kind, so that the effects of Pier are cumulative with those other activities. However, as is indicated by the data, a good number of persons who were well known to be committing large amounts of crime, are no longer doing so, as a direct result of their engagement with the project. Further, the continued operation of the project seems likely to contribute to the decline of crime in selected areas.

### **3.2 Clients**

A total of 44 clients have engaged with the project. At the time of writing, 5 are known to be drug free, having completed treatment. 10 are currently in treatment and a further 6 are in prison. It is anticipated that 3 of the latter group will re-enter treatment on release, in addition to others who are currently waiting specialist treatment to become available. A small group are in the community having no contact with the project or are being targeted.

The qualitative evidence gathered during the earlier research activity suggested that the project was largely meeting the needs of clients by being accessible, speedy and, above all, delivering on its promises. Despite being highly associated with the police and requiring a certain amount of engagement with the latter, interviewed clients found the police response to be, on the whole, a positive one. Particular praise was forthcoming for the project members who dealt with clients on a daily basis.

Not all clients have been able to find the experience positive, however. Stories of broken promises and hidden agendas have been recorded. These were very much the minority however. As has often been stressed in projects of this type, clients have to be ready to change at the point of intervention, and it may well be that those that found the experience difficult were simply not ready to engage with the process. It is notable that many of those interviewed had been in drug treatment on at least one occasion before, suggesting that simply facilitating entry into treatment is not enough for some. It is a

truism, but no less true for that, that change requires a willingness to change as a precondition.

It is notable that no drug-related deaths among known drug users on the project have been recorded.

At least two of the interviewed clients have suggested that a greater degree of ‘after-care’ would be very valuable in sustaining their drug-free lifestyles. In particular, guidance on education and employment, as well as access to drug-free accommodation were regarded as essential prerequisites to continuing to lead drug and crime-free lives.

### **3.3 Police**

Related to the above, a persistent theme of the Project is that it represents a sea-change on the part of the police – from a largely punitive approach to a more nuanced and sophisticated attempt to resolve long running crime issues in the locale. As in Blackpool, a rise in drug usage and long waiting times for treatment has led to a concern to approach the problems differently. In addition, the apparent success of the Tower Project has been a source of inspiration. There is certainly a good deal of the passion and commitment reported in the latter project at work in Pier.

It appears that the operational issues have been managed well, with prompt responses and an appropriate approach to clients. This has clearly been a steep learning curve for officers used to working in different ways with persistent offenders, but as can be seen from the client feedback, is one which has been negotiated well. As also noted above, relations between some clients and some police officers have been less than perfect, with perhaps mutual suspicion and historical animosities in play. Nevertheless, those clients willing and able to make the move have found genuine concern and support in making that all-important first step into treatment and away from offending behaviour.

Areas of concern in previous reports have largely been centred around the collaborative relationships between the police and the other project partners. It is to the latter group that we now turn.

### **3.4 Project Partners**

Although the term partnership is one that has been regularly applied to the project ethos, it might be more appropriate to regard the situation as one of a loose coalition with elements of purchaser-provider relationships, of which more later. There is good evidence of considerable buy-in on the part of the partners and of great enthusiasm for both the project aims and methodology. For many, the opportunity of working with the police, and the considerable enforcement powers that have come from that relationship has been a

positive one, with individual and societal aims being met, in large part. In addition, the project has provided something of a forum for more coordinated working in tackling drug related issues.

Where problems have been identified they have typically arisen in circumstances where supply, if we can use so crude a term, has dried up, so that expectations about numbers of clients have not always been met. Further the term ‘partnership’ itself can be seen to have created problems such that one implication of it is in the sharing of power, or perhaps more appropriately here, in the consulting about decisions. When such implications have not always been seen to be delivered upon, there have been problems.

These have been expressed in a variety of ways, ranging from concern at a perceived lack of communication through to debate over the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the client identification matrix. Many of these concerns have arisen as a result of the duality of the position of some of the partners, such that they are both social actors *and* commercial enterprises, a potential conflict of interest is therefore perceived to be in play, at least from the position of the police. They have also arisen, due to the inherently difficult nature of the enterprise. As many commentators<sup>1</sup> who have observed attempts at collaborative working have observed, these things are highly complex and demand a great deal of micro-management if they are to be successful over time. Productive collaborative working demands skills that are not commonly found and take time to develop, in this context the relatively high success rate of the project, and the relatively low degree of friction is a testimony to those principally charged with its operation – the police, although all partners deserve praise for their contribution. Positively, when these points of friction have been identified, all parties have been keen to work towards their resolution.

It would seem that the partners can consider themselves reasonably well satisfied at the end of the project period reported upon here. Problems there have been, but lessons have been learned, and more responsive and open systems of management and communication have been developed.

### **3.5 Society**

Impacts on society at large are notoriously difficult to assess and have not formed a central theme of this evaluation activity. Nevertheless the project’s own assessment of the economic savings made through their interventions, using Home Office formulae, are highly impressive, with evidence of large sums of money saved through the reductions in crime noted above. Against a backdrop of a relatively small outlay, perhaps averaging

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<sup>1</sup> See for the example the extensive work of Huxham and Vangen (2005) *Managing Collaborative Advantage*.

£160,000 per year over the life of the project, the assessed savings are considerable, and demonstrate the extraordinary cost of drug related crime in an area.

Direct evidence is hard to discern but one might imagine that people in the immediate locality have noticed the reduced levels of crime activity and associated anti-social behaviour associated with drug usage. This should, in the long run, lead to greater levels of felt safety and security.

Crime appears not to have been displaced to other areas, a common feature of more 'hard-edged' forms of drug-related crime enforcement.

The recent establishment of the project as a charity, with a community-based trustee board, should enhance its status as a community initiative and give a greater degree of local ownership and accountability.

#### **Four: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall it would seem that all stakeholders in the Pier project can regard themselves as having achieved a good deal, in terms of the goals with which they set out.

Points of difficulty have been largely dealt with, systems of management and organization have been developed, and new forms of collaborative working have been established. Given the relatively short period of operation and the level of initiative and innovation required, this is a considerable achievement.

Recommendations that may assist further development of the project include:

- A continual monitoring of the identification matrix to ensure its fitness for purpose in the light of changing patterns of drug use and crime.
- A highly proactive communication strategy with project partners, and the locale, in terms of decisions taken and future plans. Many of the issues that have arisen over the lifetime of the project have been due to perceptions of inadequate communication.
- A continued recognition of the sheer hard work that collaborative working involves. Such recognition should ensure a fruitful partnership in the future.
- Consideration might be given to finding more mechanisms of support after clients have achieved drug-free lifestyles. There is some anecdotal evidence that a greater degree of support would ensure the continuance of such a lifestyle.

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