

Brief Lines

A bridge between business and the local community

About CSP

Welcome to the latest edition of the Brief Lines newsletter, published by Community Safety Partnerships Ltd (CSP), which offers quality solutions to help address safety and other risks. Specialising in personal, community and system safety issues, CSP provides a holistic intelligence-led approach to partnership between business and community, business and regulator and other interfaces where risk arises.

If you have any news to share, details of an event you want to highlight, or want further information on Community Safety Partnerships Ltd contact suenelson@comsafetypartners.com or aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com

LX Info takes off!

The website for global level crossing practitioners in road and rail has won plaudits from around the world. The site, launched by CSP in December, hosts a monthly e-magazine to which a search facility has now been added. In the few weeks since it went live it has moved to Number 1 on the Google search facility and almost daily new subscribers are registering to receive an alert when each issue is published. Go to www.lxinfo.org for more information.

Crackdown on metal theft

A new clampdown on the growing problem of metal theft — estimated to cost the country £360m each year — has been announced by the Home Office.

The new national metal theft crime unit is being piloted for six weeks to clampdown on rogue scrap metal dealers who are illegally handling metal stolen from railways, church roofs, man-hole covers and even telephone lines. The unit - to be run by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) with British Transport Police, and jointly funded by the Home Office and the Energy Networks Association — will share best practice ideas with police forces throughout England and Wales. It aims to highlight the tools and powers available to tackle this problem. The pilot will be evaluated at the end of March and then may be rolled out across the country.

Assistant Chief Constable Paul Crowther of British Transport Police and ACPO lead on metal theft said: "We welcome the commitment from the Home Office to assist us in tackling this major crime.

"Police forces across the UK have devoted considerable resources to driving down this type of crime, through targeted policing including intelligence-led operations, proactive patrols using dogs and off-road motorbikes and scrap yard visits.

"We hope this approach will enable us to make a real impact and further our efforts to arrest those involved and put them before the courts."

Crime maps online across England and Wales

People across England and Wales can now access details of crime trends in the areas they live in at the push of a button.

The neighbourhood crime maps provide a rich picture of crime in police force areas. The public can now access crime maps on the websites of all 43 local police forces to see volume of crime as well as crime trends and comparisons with the rest of the country.

The crime maps also allow the public to see how local crime fighting partnerships are impacting on issues of local concern and give people the information they need to dictate local priorities. Information provided is at least ward level and includes information about burglary, robbery, theft, vehicle crime, violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

According to the government, crime mapping offers people perspective and puts crime into a very local context. The Home Office claims many people will be reassured by what they read and this breakdown of crime figures offers crime fighting partnerships an opportunity to showcase their achievements where they are making a positive impact on issues of local concern.

Neil Rhodes, deputy chief constable of Lincolnshire and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead on crime mapping, said: "For many years, all forces have mapped crimes and incidents to help them focus investigations, analyse hot spots and tackle crime vigorously. The information now on forces' websites has a different more community-focused perspective and means the public can now look at crime levels in their community simply by putting their postcode into their local police force's website."



Dedicated drugs court pilot launched

The first of four new, dedicated drug courts announced by Justice Secretary Jack Straw has been launched in South Yorkshire. The new court will tackle the problem of drug abusing offenders who commit low-level crime to fund their addiction.

When an offender is found guilty and sent to the dedicated drug court to be sentenced, the same magistrate or district judge will sentence the offender and review the progress of offenders on community orders with a drug rehabilitation requirement. Offenders will also be required to undergo regular drug tests.

The dedicated drug court encourages closer working between agencies and treatment providers in Barnsley, from the police to the judiciary, to reduce drug abuse and related offending behaviour. Wherever possible the same magistrate or district judge will deal with any breaches and re-sentence if necessary, considering all the options including custody.

The dedicated courts form part of the national initiative to take a more holistic approach to dealing with offenders with specific needs. The idea behind the court is that seeing familiar faces can help build a relationship of trust and confidence between the judge and addict, motivating defendants to salvage their life from the hold of drugs.

Two other dedicated drug court pilots were launched at Leeds and West London Magistrates' Courts in December 2005. The decision to extend the pilot scheme to four more courts was announced in April 2008, after an evaluation indicated they can have a positive impact on reoffending, court attendance and compliance. The remaining three drug court pilots will be officially launched in Cardiff, Salford, and Bristol magistrates' courts later this year.

Quarterly crime statistics released

Latest national crime figures to September 2008 show that crime held steady last year compared to the year before.

The statistics, based on British Crime Survey (BCS) interviews and police records, show that the number of crimes recorded by police fell by 3% during the third quarter of 2008, compared to the same period in 2007. BCS interviews found that the risk of being a victim (23%) held steady compared to the previous year.

The British Crime Survey is said to be the more reliable measure of trends in crime, as it has a consistent methodology, and is unaffected by changes in reporting by police, or by recording practices which can vary among forces.

The figures found that the violent crime held steady, while police recorded violence against a person fell by 6%. There were also falls in police recorded sexual offences (down 7%), and robbery (down 3%), although robberies involving knives or sharp instruments increased by 18%. Provisional figures in the report also show a 29% fall in firearms offences.

The BCS figures found that from September 2007 to September 2008:

- Domestic burglary rates remained stable
- Vandalism rates remained stable
- Vehicle-related thefts fell by 10%
- Thefts from people, and home burglary rates also held steady
- Drug offences increased by 9%, and fraud and forgery reports increased by 16%, likely as a result of changes in the way cheque and card fraud are recorded.

According to the Home Office, since 1997 crime overall has fallen by 39%, violent crime reports have decreased by 40% and burglaries are down by 55%.

New truckers awareness film

A new film aimed at raising level crossing safety awareness among commercial vehicle drivers has been produced by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Operation Lifesaver of California. The five-minute film reviews the legal responsibilities of drivers as they approach and travel over

level crossings. Additionally, the film helps provide situational awareness by highlighting important aspects of railway operations at crossings.

The film is available in both English and Spanish, along with closed-captioned versions of each, and is brief enough so it can be shown quickly to truck drivers before their shifts or in safety meetings.

The film, which can be used on a one-to-one basis or with groups can be downloaded at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/2109>

Safety messages vital

Continually reinforcing educational messages to change behaviours is essential as illustrated by the more than 9,000 arrested in Britain for drunk driving during the run up to and through the recent Christmas period. Sitting behind the headline number of arrests is an increase in the number breath tested of more than 25,000 taking the total for the month-long campaign to 183,397. The percentage of those tested with a blood alcohol level above the legal limit was essentially static at 4.99% when compared with the previous year's campaign. However, within this data, the number of people under the age of 25 increased to 5.62%. Thus, at best the combined effects of education and enforcement have held the position; at worst they are not getting through to younger drivers as they should.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from other areas where the number coming to harm or at risk of harming others doesn't reduce as might be expected from continuing education campaigns, for example, level crossing abuse and adult trespasser deaths on the railway at home and abroad. Some might argue that this is the case because an irreducible minimum has been reached. Others will argue that the penalties need to be increased and others that the awareness initiatives are not properly targeted. All may, to some degree, be right.

If drunk-driving, level crossing abuse, firework safety, trespass or other element of community safety is to be

cost-effectively reduced, a willingness to share successes and indeed failures between initiatives is vital. In short, "ripping off and replicating" what works is just plain common sense. After all, what each campaign is seeking to do is to get people to realise that it is just common sense not to drive when drunk or otherwise put themselves or others at risk.

Not just the male of the species

Recently released British crime statistics show that arrests of females, particularly the younger among them, are reaching record levels. Indeed, the offending pattern of females is starting to take on that of males. Central to the increase detailed in the report 'Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System' is the crime said to be fuelled by under-age and binge drinking.

Taking 2002-03 as the base, arrests of females for notifiable offences had by 2006-07 increased by 18%. The comparable increase for males was 12%. Looking at the types of crime on a gender basis shows that the percentage of arrests of females in respect of violence against the person is running at a marginally higher rate than for males. An area where a significantly higher percentage of female arrests are made is for theft and handling stolen goods. Areas where a lower percentage of arrests than of males are criminal damage, burglary and sexual crimes.

Although the number of females arrested remains significantly lower than arrests of males, the recent trends and growing similarities in the area of assaults and public disorder suggest that a reappraisal of pro-active policing approaches to females is justified. This is particularly relevant when considering the very significant increase in the number of females aged between ten and 17 who are dealt with by Youth Offending teams across England and Wales. The figures for violent assaults by this group show an increase of 48% over the period 2003-04 to 2006-07. The comparable statistic for other public order offences shows a 37% increase.

The Ministry of Justice and community safety practitioners recognise the need

to address female crime issues and the imperative of addressing causal factors and not just the consequences once offenders are within the criminal justice system.

Major young people review

A major review on the way that society responds to youth offending has been launched by the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.

The commission, set up by the charity the Police Foundation, will seek to minimise the harm that children and young people do to the community and themselves. It will ask experts to examine international research on prevention of youth crime and different approaches to youth justice. It will report in the summer of 2010. For more information go to:

www.youthcrimecommission.org.uk

ASBO review for young people

New rules relating to Ant-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) mean that young people with ASBOs now have to have their cases reviewed after a year. From February 1, any authority that applied to have an ASBO placed on someone under the age of 17 now has to review the young person's case by law on an annual basis. The aim of the change is to recognise good behaviour and also acknowledges that young people's lives and circumstances can undergo rapid change. Authorities will also have to look at what additional support could be offered to a young person or their family as part of the review.

Community Safety Villages

A number of local agencies in Canada and the United States have sponsored the development of community safety villages. For example in the York area of Ontario the facility provides teaching facilities for young drivers, sports and water safety as well as pedestrian safety, drug awareness education, internet security, fire and home safety.

The York facility features a full-size teaching building plus a child-size village environment of 5/8 scaled streets

and buildings and small electric vehicles to be driven by the children themselves. All this is located on an almost six acre campus which is surrounded by a natural forest conservation area. Fifth grade students specifically learn about Internet safety.

Corporate as well as grass roots community support is an important feature of community safety villages. For example in York, Motorola is supporting cyber-bullying education with the creation of a building for students and parents to learn, in an interactive and fun way, about this topic. With the continuing growth in the number of young people using information and communication technologies, the issue of cyber-bullying is increasingly important. Education in this domain has to address not just the Internet but also mobile phones and text messaging.

Cyber-bullying is an issue to which virtually all children and teenagers have to face. In Canada, 94% of children in fourth to eleventh grade have Internet access at home. Research in 2005 showed that 34% of Canadian students have been bullied and 27% of these were bullied over the Internet. As far back as 2002 a National Children's Home survey found that 25% of those aged 11 to 19 had been threatened via their computers or mobile phones.

CSP wins European work

CSP is working with the International Red Cross on a European Union funded project to help citizens from across the member states prepare themselves in the event of disaster or civil emergency. The Informed Prepared Together project on which CSP is working to develop communications tools and key messages, will complete in summer 2009. To learn more of the IPT project go to:

www.ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/prote/projects_2007.htm