



PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE

In April 2008 Worthing's neighbourhood policing team launched Op Reform to target street drinking and homeless issues in and around Worthing town centre and the seafront. Op Reform was set up as part of a wider project following complaints from members of the public and businesses in the town regarding street drinking and constitutes a dedicated team of one police officer and two police community support officers.

Taking a multi agency working approach key partners include Worthing Borough Councils' Housing and Safer Communities team, Worthing Churches Homeless Projects, Signpost, the Crime Reduction Initiative and Addaction.

Over the last eighteen months Op Reform has enabled a two pronged approach where enforcement has been used where necessary, but focused work with individuals to address the underlying issues has been highly effective in reducing reports long term. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) tied into accommodation provided by WBC have provided a forum to support individuals to address their substance misuse and any other issues.

Clearly enforcement is central to the police operation, however, working with specific individuals is also key to the process. Officers have worked very closely with Worthing Churches Homeless Project (WCHP) and the council housing department in providing accommodation for individuals. The multi agency work with WCHP is continuing to be successful in offering people clear choices in addressing their alcohol and drug addiction and providing treatment. Since the start of the operation officers have worked with individuals in providing specific support via acceptable behaviour contracts.

As a result of this combined multi agency approach there have been fewer reports of alcohol fuelled anti social behaviour in parks and seafront shelters. A number of individuals who have worked with the different agencies have really made a significant difference to their lives. These individuals have moved away from street drinking and are now in recovery, some having their own accommodation.

PC Marvin Lucas said "This operation has had a real impact in the town centre, reducing incidents of anti social behaviour. As a result this has had a lasting impact, with individuals having to make clear choices between police enforcement or addressing their alcohol and drug issues. As a result of this action a number of people have turned their lives around and are well on their way to recovery."

Recently the police team won an award at a Sussex Police neighbourhood practitioners conference in recognition of the multi agency work and sustained problem solving. As a result the team were awarded with £500 from the Sussex Police Police Property Act Fund. A recent evaluation of the project has suggested that the model is used as best practice by other police forces, this evaluation has been passed to the Home Office.

The Police Officers involved chose to pass the donation onto WCHP in recognition of their collaborative work. On Wednesday 3rd March 2010 at 10am the cheque was presented to Worthing Churches Homeless Projects outside their recovery project project in Selden Road, Worthing.

Members of the public can report incidents of anti social behaviour to Worthing Borough Council community safety team on 01903 221430 or Sussex Police on 0845 60 70 999.

Photos taken by your photographer 10am 10 March.

Background Notes

Worthing Churches Homeless Projects (WCHP) started in 1991 when four local Christians took soup, blankets and sleeping bags to the seafront to offer to local homeless people. Today this vital Christian charity has 40 staff members and over 250 volunteers who enable WCHP to provide a range of services on 4 sites offering opportunities to homeless people to regain independence.

The work undertaken by Worthing Churches Homeless Projects is crucial. People using the services receive the specialist support they need to enable them to take the first steps back to independent living.. As with many other homeless charities, last year brought a cut of 30% in Government funding to WCHP, making the support of local people even more important. If every person living in Worthing were to donate just £10 per year the services would be secure.

Further details can be obtained from Sue Stevens on 01903 227828 or sue.stevens@wchp.org.uk