

Update on AVANTE (Alcohol, Violence and Night Time Economy) & Operation Erase (Saturday daytime alcohol-related disorder)

Background

1. The AVANTE Task Group was established in January 2013 and soon identified a specific trend of alcohol-related disorder on Saturday daytimes (roughly 11am – 10pm). A specific sub-group was established in June 2013 to address this particular problem and took the police operational name of Operation Erase.
2. Agencies represented across both task groups include: City of York Council, North Yorkshire Police, British Transport Police, University of York, University of York St. John, Lifeline, Street Angels, Pub Watch, Railway Station management, Train Operating Companies, Make it York and York Racecourse.

Progress in 2014 & 2015

3. In February 2016 North Yorkshire Police commissioned a Crime Pattern Analysis report into alcohol-related crime, anti-social behaviour and Public, Safety and Welfare (PSW) occurrences reported in the York Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ) area over the 2014 and 2015 periods.
4. The findings showed:
 - The number of recorded occurrences within the CIZ decreased in 2015 compared with the previous year. Alcohol-related occurrences decreased by 3% (-50 incidents).
 - ASB continued to be the most prevalent occurrence type, however a decrease was also evident and this included alcohol-related nuisance. ASB nuisance reports decreased by 11% (-172 incidents). Those reports included: begging and vagrancy, buskers, street urination, public order behaviour such as fighting or drunkenness and verbal abuse.
 - Violence-related reports increased by 18 incidents in 2015. Alcohol-related violence also increased by 18 (violent crime covers a wide spectrum from minor assaults, harassment and abuse that result in no physical harm to the victim, through to incidents of wounding and murder).
 - Theft-related offences recorded notable decreases during 2015.

- The highest concentration of offences continued to be in areas of high footfall (Coney Street, Micklegate, Blake Street, Blossom Street and Clifford Street). Those areas encompass a high concentration of licensed premises.
- The highest levels of reported occurrences were during the summer months of July and August, together with December.
- Calls for police service were at their highest on weekends; Saturday and Sunday. This was consistent across 2014 and 2015.
- Activity is highest between 1pm-6pm and midnight-4am. Those periods incorporate the traditional Night Time Economy period as well as representing the trend of visiting revellers coming into the city late morning on Saturday through into early evening when they catch the last trains home.

Progress in 2016

5. Throughout 2016, both the AVANTE and ERASE groups continued to meet on a regular basis, delivering an established programme of initiatives, including:
 - Operation Safari - NYP-led violence and theft in the Night Time Economy (NTE).
 - Alcohol Diversion Programme.
 - Monitoring of the Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ)
 - Pub Watch
 - University of York Nightsafe scheme
 - University of York St. John 'Plan Safe, Drink Safe, Home Safe' schemes.
 - Street Angels
 - River Safety – both universities offer student briefings.
6. Initiatives relating specifically to Operation Erase included:
 - A number of multi-agency Op Erase days of action were held throughout the year.
 - 'Had Enough? We Have Too' poster campaign.
 - Multi-agency Days of Action from May – September.
 - Intermittent temporary deployment of ticket barriers at York Station. Barriers are always deployed on Race days and where possible for the Days of Action.
 - Deployment of 'Dry Trains' when routes and resources allow.
 - Licensees Code of Conduct (licensees police their own venues in line with the code of conduct)
 - Increased police presence

7. Much of the low-level disorder conducted on Saturday daytimes did not fall within the realms of criminal behaviour and was therefore not recorded, but nonetheless it had an impact upon peoples' perception of the city and their feelings of safety.
8. North Yorkshire Police (NYP) conducted perception surveys with a sample of 148 city centre visitors which showed that:
 - 93% of respondents felt that York was a safe city;
 - 52% felt that York was not family friendly on a Saturday afternoon;
 - 50% felt that partner agencies were working well together to make York safe on Saturdays and;
 - 94% felt that seeing a police presence in the city made them feel safer.
9. Anecdotally both the NYP and BTP felt that things were improving. Saturday day-time problems had initially focussed around visitors from the North-East, but both police forces confirmed that this had been resolved through targeted campaigns and initiatives. Similar work was then undertaken to focus on visitors from South Yorkshire and improvements were made. Implementation of the temporary ticket barriers deterred people travelling without a ticket and provided a valuable opportunity for engagement with people as they queued at the barrier. As a result, BTP experienced a 'marked decrease' in crimes and arrests on a Saturday.
10. Recognising the importance of continued focus on those issues, both task groups continued to meet, and in October 2016 additional city centre patrolling resources were introduced in the form of CYC Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEOs) and BID Rangers. The BID Rangers were deployed both Friday and Saturday evenings until midnight and the NEOs took part in the Days of Action. In addition, CYC looked to recruit two full-time Licensing Enforcement Officers who would work evenings and weekends and whose duties would include visits to licensed premises to ensure they were complying with the Licensing Act 2003 and any additional licence conditions.

Progress in 2017

11. Work from the previous years has continued:
 - A River Safety Task Group meets on a quarterly basis and is chaired by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

- A number of multi-agency Op Erase days of action have been held throughout the year.
 - Operation Erase (Saturday daytime ASB) and Operation Safari (violent crime in the NTE) multi-agency task groups continue to meet quarterly.
 - In terms of accountability, both of those task groups feed into an overarching strategic group chaired by Superintendent Adam Thomson (York and Selby Commander) and attended by Cllrs Lisle and Looker). Both contribute to the 'Keeping the City Centre Safer' priority within the Community Safety Plan. Superintendent Thomson is the lead for this priority and reports progress to the Safer York Partnership Board.
 - Licensees are now using the SentrySIS intranet system to share real-time information and intelligence on incidents in the night-time economy. Partner agencies are also signed up to SentrySIS so they can also use the system to post messages and alerts.
 - CYC and NYP licensing are holding meetings with York licensees to review and refresh their Code of Conduct, and to discuss the benefits of SentrySIS and how it can be used most effectively.
 - The 'Had Enough? We Have Too' campaign is to be re-launched for next season. The Safer York Partnership is funding a redesign of the poster and the campaign will be promoted by British Transport Police along the rail network.
 - The railway station continues to deploy the ticket barrier on race days and other key dates when resources allow.
 - Police continue to allocate resources to both priorities and will also be deploying a number of Special Constables over the coming months.
 - The University of York continues to run the Nightsafe campaign and are in discussions to extend this to the University of York St. John.
12. Following the introduction of a new approach in December 2016 to joint working re street urination, 23 people have been prosecuted. NYP provide the witness statement(s), the Neighbourhood Enforcement officers put the case files together and CYC's legal team present the cases in court. NYP have also deployed a cleansing van from the BID, and people who have urinated but made some effort to do this discreetly, are requested to clean up after themselves.
13. The latest crime figures show reports of crime and ASB are down compared to the same time last year with less calls for service between 9am and 9pm on Saturdays.
14. A review of OP ERASE is currently underway to reflect on what has previously been tried, what has worked well and what could be done

differently, and the tactical options. In addition, NYP and CYC plan to hold a Licensee meeting, at which the use of SentrySIS will be promoted and a review of the code of conduct will be completed.

15. In 2017 Perception Surveys have again been carried out by the Police and York Bid with residents, businesses and visitors, and the results compared to last years – see below:

Resident Survey (sample size: 27)

Do you view York as a safe city? – Yes = 81%

Do you believe York is family-friendly on a Saturday? Yes = 78%

Would you recommend visiting York to your family and friends on a Saturday? – Yes = 78%

Do you feel York has an alcohol-related ASB problem on a Saturday? Yes = 74%

Do you feel that partner agencies are working together successfully to make York safe on a Saturday? Yes = 70%

Business Survey (sample size: 109)

Do you believe York is a safe city? – Yes = 83%

Do you believe York is family-friendly on a Saturday. Yes = 39%

Do you feel York has an alcohol-related ASB problem on a Saturday? – Yes = 80%

Does ASB affect your business? – Yes = 47%

Do you feel partner agencies are working together successfully to make York safe on a Saturday? – Yes = 79%

Visitor Survey

Do you believe York is a safe city? –

Do you believe York is family-friendly on a Saturday? –

Do you feel York has an alcohol-related ASB problem on a Saturday? –

Does ASB affect your business? –

Do you feel partner agencies are working together successfully to make York safe on a Saturday? –

16. The results are very much the same as previous years with local businesses and residents appearing to indicate that York is a problem location for alcohol related crime and ASB, but visitors stating that they do not see a problem.

16. Again, this was not a detailed survey but it gives a good indication of the mixed public perception of York – the headlines that have appeared in the papers previously, appear to have stuck with some residents regarding York having an ASB problem.

17. What is true is that York is a very safe city that attracts people because it is so safe. These people choose to drink as is the culture change of daytime drinking. The shops are located close to the pubs and hence the two do not mix well. The CIZ statistics show that ASB and violent crime is reducing in the city centre so it suggests the work of the AVANTE group and Operation ERASE are having a positive impact. NYP continue to work to combat those who come to drink in the city in large groups and work is continuing with the partners, particularly the licensees who along with the Police play a major part in managing those visiting the city. A positive media strategy is also required so that good messages can be delivered well through the media.