

CASE STUDY

Theme:	Our Streets
Local Authority:	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Good Practice:	Alleygating scheme
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Like many inner towns, Barry, in the Vale of Glamorgan, has a number of houses backing onto networks of alleyways. These lanes gave opportunity for crime and antisocial behaviour, typically burglary, dumping, drug abuse, graffiti and arson. The lanes were a "rabbit warren of escape routes for criminals". In consultation with residents and partners, the Vale were one of the first councils in Wales to introduce a major and innovative "alleygating" scheme.

The scheme involves erecting robust gates to prevent access to the rear lanes for anyone except the immediate residents, the council, other utility services and emergency services. The gates have resulted in significant reductions in crime.

Overall the whole scheme although resource intensive has been a relatively smooth journey. From the very early days, everyone, including internal and external partners, believed this was a good idea! Fundamental to this was involving partners at all stages of the scheme including a joint visit to view Liverpool's implementation of



their alleygate scheme. This was particularly useful for the police and fire services and council officers in highways, planning and legal services to meet their counterparts and discuss professional issues and experiences arising out of the scheme. As a result of this shared knowledge base, open and honest communication, recognition of partners contributions; commitment and effective partnership working practices were established at the very early stages.

The Key Challenges

Some of the key challenges have been:

- **“We are not locking you in, we are keeping the crime out”**
- **Using existing legislation**
- **Learning to bid for money**

“We are not locking you in, we are keeping the crime out”

A crime statistical analysis was carried out by the Police with input from the council's Visible Services Division, which includes waste management and cleansing, to determine the target areas.

Consulting and engaging with residents. Extensive consultation and engagement is undertaken with residents, through leafleting, letters to residents and public meetings to address residents concerns. In addition to promoting the close working partnership with the Police, residents from successful schemes are involved in promoting new schemes, to give their personal perspectives. In one particular instance, a lady whose wheelchair access was successfully accommodated within an alleygate scheme, was able to allay the fears of a resident with similar disabilities about how the council were able to customise the gate handles and that her quality of life had improved significantly.

Councillors have played an important link with the community and ensuring the council's on-going commitment to the scheme.

The council's ethos has been about working in partnership with residents to improve their quality of life, creating a safe environment and

as a result the council has shifted its approach from the traditional model of “the council knows best” to a more facilitating role. In one proposed area where the council were unable to reach residents consensus, they shifted the scheme to another area. The residents from the proposed area have since been convinced by the overwhelming success and have approached the council to re-instate the scheme.

In addition, the Council are facilitating and supported other residential areas towards acquiring alleygates where the residents purchase the gates, the council undertakes the implementation and maintenance

Each scheme is customised to the requirements of the area. This includes the gate structure and where the gates are placed and in mixed commercial and residential areas, where commercial premises require regular access to the alleyways, special arrangements are made, to ensure that the area remains secure.

To date, 166 gates have been installed, protecting over 2600 properties in the Castleland, Court and Cadoc areas in Barry.





Maintaining alleygates

The maintenance of the gates is an important element of sustaining the credibility of the scheme. Gates in disrepair, undermine the scheme. Experience has shown that once the gates are installed, fear of crime drop dramatically; however, any damage to the gates such as they cannot be closed or operated properly means that fear of crime

rises above pre-installation levels.

The Alleygates Co-ordinator liaises with the community and programmes the maintenance of the project infrastructure, including the issue of duplicate keys where necessary.

The gates are manufactured and installed by the Lighthouse Project (part of the Merseyside Drugs Council) using former offenders to make the gates. Additionally, side fence panels are manufactured by Parc Prison, Bridgend, as part of the rehabilitation programme of using local offenders to prevent further crime. There are on-going improvements built into the design of the gates, such as multiple rollers at the top of each gate to resist jamming. Pre-and post installation consultation is carried out with the residents to inform the design of the gates.

Using existing legislation

The legal issues of the scheme were:

- closure of a public thoroughfare
- publicising limited access

The Council's legal officer was part of the site visit to Liverpool and having seen the benefits of the scheme and discussed the legal issues with his counterpart in Liverpool, he was then able to advise as to the statutory options.

Most of the lanes are adopted highways and covered under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, ss1 and 2. To ensure that the

momentum of the scheme was maintained, it was decided to use existing legislation for the closure of the designated area i.e. Traffic Closure Orders. The Council are confident that the extensive consultation that was undertaken prior to the implementation will address any potential objections.

It was also decided to seek approval from the Welsh Assembly Government's approval for signage on the gates to advertise restricted access. The template has now been agreed and can now be used by any Welsh local authority.

Learning to bid for money

The funding for the scheme has come from various sources: the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) – including Special Grant Aid that the fire Service were able to access, Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), Community Safety Partnership, Area Renewal schemes, Police service and Newydd Housing

Association. The funding has been used creatively as matched funding to secure additional monies from WEFO. The bidding process was made easier by using advice and support from other council departments, namely Finance, Legal services and the council's European officer.



Making a Difference

Since the first alley gate installation at the beginning of 2004, the council have installed 166 gates, protecting over 2600 properties in high crime areas (Castleland, Court and Cadoc wards), resulting in a significant reduction in crime.

- Burglaries of dwellings- 73%
- Burglaries of commercial properties 60%
- Theft of motor vehicles- 749%
- Theft from motor vehicles- 44%

In addition to using Police crime statistics to evaluate the impact of the alleygating, the council commissioned an independent evaluation of the Cadoxton alleygating scheme by the University of Glamorgan in 2005.

This periodic evaluation includes looking at the effects of the gates on criminal and antisocial

behaviour as well as the perceptions of people who live in the area about crime and fear of crime. The preliminary results have indicated that:

- there is an overwhelming belief that the implementation of the gates is a "good thing" and therefore a positive step in the eyes of the community
- that the introduction of the alleygate scheme has a very good chance of influencing people's perceptions over crime and disorder which may well be witnessed in the secondary phase of the evaluation
- there are a large percentage of people who do not use the lanes and alleys at the rear of the house and a significant number do not use them in the hours of darkness.

Future Plans

The council are committed to sustaining the benefits of the scheme and to incorporate improvements. Some of these have been informed by the University of Glamorgan independent evaluation:

- working with residents and neighbourhood watch schemes to take a more active and co-ordinating role in the monitoring of the existing schemes.

- to give the residents "ownership" of their alleyways by raising awareness of the possibilities of its usage.
- expand the boundaries of the alleygate area and private residents offered the facility of purchasing the gates in advance of waiting for a scheme to reach their area.
- on-going improvements to the design of the gates.

Lessons learnt

Effective partnership with the community and internal and external partners is key to the success of the alleygating scheme.

- Cross departmental working, using in-house skills to achieve successful bids.
- The Council chose to use the most effective use of existing legislation to achieve the outcome.

- "One size doesn't fit all"- each scheme should meet the needs of the area and the community.
- Prompt maintenance ensuring credibility and sustaining benefits.

