

Closure orders to reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) and serious violence

A partnership approach to enforce multiple closure orders to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and serious violence in the communal areas of a block of flats.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Neighbourhood crime Investigation
Organisation	Metropolitan Police Service
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Region	London
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	July 2023
Completion date	January 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities General public Offenders Victims

Aim

Enforcing closure orders enables officers to take proactive action against individuals who breach the order and intend to cause harm to residents.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the closure orders are to:

- increase residents' confidence and feelings of safety
- reduce the number of reported anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents and complaints
- reduce the number of reports of crimes such as drug dealing, murder and burglaries
- reduce the repeat demand on police and local authority services

Description

The implementation of closure orders was enforced in response to persistent crime and antisocial behaviour on an estate in Barnet. The estate had become associated with drug-related crime, ASB, and serious violence. This peaked between December 2022 and May 2023, when 15 shootings had occurred. Residents had previously raised their concerns with the Metropolitan Police Service

(MPS) and Barnet London Borough Council.

Planning process

Following a review of the concerns and crime data, the estate was deemed suitable for a partnership problem-solving approach. The force and council collated local neighbourhood intelligence, police computer aided dispatch (CAD) data, crime and housing reports. The review revealed there were:

- repeated reports of drug supply, weapons possession and serious violence linked to communal areas
- a high volume of antisocial behaviour reports from residents and housing wardens
- escalating risk indicators, including firearms discharges and intimidation of residents
- environmental factors creating permissive spaces for criminality

A problem-solving group was formed and included representation from:

- Barnet London Borough Council
- Barnet Homes housing association
- MPS North West basic command unit
- MPS local neighbourhood policing teams
- MPS specialist crime and violence units
- Colindale Communities Trust
- other locally commissioned support and outreach services, including rough sleeping and safeguarding partners

The problem-solving group was formed to collectively identify a solution to reduce the number of ASB incidents and crimes reported, while improving residents' feeling of safety. The force proposed the use of enforcing multiple closure orders to tackle the criminal behaviour. The targeted enforcement is part of Operation Dakota (tackling organised criminality in the local area), which uses closure orders as part of a wider clear, hold, build (CHB) approach.

Terms of the closure orders

The closure orders are applied to specific residential blocks, rather than the entire estate. The orders covered communal areas, such as stairwells, corridors, landings and shared accessed

routes. The closure orders restrict access to the blocks of flats to residents and authorised persons only, with exemptions for:

- invited visitors
- housing and council staff
- maintenance contractors
- emergency services

The closure orders were drafted to be legally compliant, proportionate and time-limited, with breaches constituting a criminal offence. A consultation took place between the MPS and Barnet London Borough Council, which involved:

- early and ongoing engagement with Barnet London Borough Council and Barnet Homes
- briefing elected members and local ward representatives of the terms of the closure orders
- a formal written consultation with directly affected residents

Content and distribution of the resident letter

A letter was sent to approximately 500 residents who lived within the block of flats. The letter outlined:

- the crime and ASB issues being addressed
- what a closure order is and what it would mean in practice
- clarification that residents would retain full access
- contact details for questions or concerns

Enforcement and current status

The closure orders were granted and enforced from July 2023 and were initially implemented for three months before being extended for six months. The closure orders are no longer required in all areas, as stability has been achieved and sustained through continued partnership and neighbourhood presence. The estate has now moved into a sustained “hold” phase, rather than requiring constant reactive policing.

Cost and partnership approval

The initiative was part of the CHB pilot site. There were minimal costs for the court application; the primary investment was officer and staff time, with wider supporting measures such as CCTV being funded by Barnet London Borough Council.

Overall impact

The implementation of the closure orders has enhanced MPS' plan to tackle ASB and serious violence. There have been 49 enforced closure orders on the estate, which has contributed to:

- 33% decrease in ASB calls
- 41% decrease in public order offences
- 50% decrease in reported burglaries

The residents welcomed the initiative, with only one objection to the implementation of closure orders. Feedback from the community indicated that residents' feelings of safety have improved and that they are now more likely to report crime:

- *"It's been a lot better since the drug addicts were moved on. It's so much quieter."*
- *"When things started changing, I think everybody noticed a difference. It's been incredible to be honest with you."*
- *"You feel more safer... the whole place is cleaner."*

The initiative has since been replicated by MPS across similar CHB sites, as well as by several police forces nationally.

Learning

What went well

- It is essential to have support from the council and housing partners to ensure success of the initiative.
- During the planning and implementation of the enforcement of closure orders, there were no significant financial challenges.
- Clear communication was established with residents at the earliest opportunity, which enabled the force, local council and partners to build trust and confidence.

Challenges

- During the planning stage, the evidence gathering process was time and resource-intensive. Sufficient time should be allocated to research and gather evidence.
- The High Court judgment initially restricted the closure orders to open spaces, rather than to a defined premises. In response, the force adapted the application of the closure orders to meet the requirements of the initiative.

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