**Small Grant Award**

Evaluation of a Dispersal Zone in the East End of Glasgow

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**Introduction**

The aim of this project is to evaluate the East End Dispersal Zone, which was in operation from 12th September to 13th December 2009, and subsequently extended to 5th January 2010. A preliminary analysis of police data indicates that there was a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour in the area during the period the dispersal zone was in operation. Moreover, anecdotal information suggests that the initiative led to other positive results, including lower levels of fear of crime, better partnership working, and higher levels of youth engagement in more 'socially-acceptable' activities. However, further research is required in order to provide a valid and reliable evidence base on which to draw lessons from using this particular policing-led, but nonetheless multi-agency approach, to tackle a specific problem - in this case gang-related violence.

**Background**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 gave Scottish police forces the power to designate areas as dispersal zones for a period of up to 3 months. During the enforcement period police officers and community wardens are given the power to disperse groups of 2 or more people in the designated area, require them to leave the area (if they are not residents) and not return within a 24-hour period if they believe their presence or behaviour is causing or likely to cause alarm or distress to others (Section 21 Anti-Social Behaviour etc. Act, 2004). Failing to comply with an order to disperse is a criminal offence, as is breaching an order by returning to the area within 24 hours. Upon conviction, the penalty for such breaches can include a maximum fine of £2,500, a period of imprisonment, or both.

To date dispersal zones have been used comparatively less in Scotland than in England and Wales. For example, Scotland's largest police force, Strathclyde, has resorted to dispersal zones only 3 times since the legislation was introduced, including the case under investigation. An independent evaluation of this particular dispersal zone will add to and extend the existing research on such initiatives and enable the formulation of best practice for dissemination to wider audiences. In particular, it is anticipated that this study will extend the 'enforcement' debates of previous analyses (e.g. Crawford and Lister, 2007, Cavanagh, 2007), and related critical issues of discretion, the 'problematisation' of young people and social control by investigating the 'diversion' aspect of the initiative, which potentially mitigates some of the more negative issues raised elsewhere.

**Aims & Objectives**

The overall aim of the research is to evaluate the dispersal zone initiative in terms of meeting its main objective of tackling the issue of gang-related violent crime in the dispersal zone area by adopting a community partnership approach. In order to meet this aim, the research objectives are:

* To establish the impact of the initiative on anti-social behaviour in the area by comparing police data from before, during and after the initiative was implemented;
* To identify the expectations of the police and partners and whether they were realised during the course of the initiative;
* To review the processes involved and the strategies adopted, which include both 'enforcement' and 'diversion' activities;
* To investigate the views of the police and partners on the strengths and weaknesses of this approach to tackling ASB and gang-related violence;
* To survey local perceptions of the initiative and its impact.

**Publications:**

[**An evaluation of the use of dispersal powers in the east end of Glasgow**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141219074550/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/AnnRep2011/Dispersal_zone.pdf) (SIPR Annual Report, 2011)