Crowd Psychology and Communications

Effective Communication

- No surprises and no promises approach
- Builds trust and confidence
- Establishes and maintains links with:
  - Communities
  - Relevant parties
  - Partners, etc
- Most appropriate policing style
- Identifies and mitigates potential for disorder
- Clear Audit Trail
What is a crowd?

- Physical Crowd -v- Psychological Crowd
- Collective action within crowds

What defines you as a person?
How would you define yourself?

I – v – We

I – v – Group

Inter-personal – v – Inter-group

Behaviour

Research indicates that:

- There are multiple and separate psychological groups within a crowd

- Since these groups have separate psychological identities they will not always be influenced towards violence by other groups in the crowd

- External factors (police action) can cause these groups to coalesce into one group
Groups within Groups

Perception, Behaviour & Action

- Most groups tend to view police action as legitimate
- The groups’ perception of the legitimacy of police action can be a factor that can initiate and escalate disorder
- The undifferentiated use of force by police against a crowd can cause the groups’ perception of police legitimacy to change and can therefore trigger disorder
- That communicating with the crowd before and during the event reduces the likelihood of disorder
Police should always seek to:

- **Educate** themselves about the crowd
- **Facilitate** peaceful protest by the crowd
- **Communicate** with the crowd and groups in it
- **Differentiate** between groups in the crowd, particularly when using force
Devolving Responsibility

- Bronze Commanders are best positioned to perform this function because they can adapt operational protocols and tactical plans.

- Bronze autonomy is important in allowing police tactics to adapt efficiently and effectively to the dynamics of risk.

- Important to empower Bronze Commanders and train them with strategic competencies and theoretical knowledge.

Protestor Liaison Teams

What Are They?
Protestor Liaison Teams

- Provide a link between the police and protestors by providing the key components of dialogue policing:
  - Negotiation
  - Mediation
  - Initiation
  - Communication
  - Sensing

- Reduce the risks of disorder by avoiding misunderstandings and rumour control

- Creates confidence and trust between police and protestors

Considerations

- Early involvement in planning process to allow relationships and trust to be developed
- Facilitates protest in line with ECHR whilst minimising the recourse to the use of force
- Engagement strategy with a links to key stakeholders and individuals;
- Does not replace responsibility for all officers to communicate;
- Command protocols
- Information sharing
- Appropriate training
- Potential impact on crowd dynamics
The Protestor Liaison Team

Bronze Commander
  • Accredited as a Bronze Commander

Team Leaders
  • Minimum Rank of Sergeant
  • Knowledge of Public Order Tactics

Everybody
  • Trained to fulfil the role of Bronze Protestor Liaison
  • Highly developed communication skills

Levels of Dialogue

• **Pre-event** - Initial dialogue allows police to explain the need for restrictions on an event and to facilitate the legitimate objectives of the organisers and other protestors

• **During the event** - They concentrate on establishing communication lines with protestors

• **Post-event** - Dialogue officers facilitate post-event reviews between police and protesters
Command Structure

Silver
- Bronze Public Order
- Bronze Intelligence
- Bronze Engagement
- Bronze Protestor Liaison

- Sub-Bronze Community
- Sub-Bronze Social Media

Protestor Liaison Team

Communicating with Crowds - How is it done?
- Public address system
- Large screen/signs
- Crowd liaison officers/stewards
- Loud hailers
- Microphones and speakers
- Digital text messaging
- Independent negotiators/intermediaries
- Protestor Liaison Teams
Social Media

Outcome of the Communication

Considerations:
- Impact on Power and Policies
- Further actions required

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Conclusion

- Guidance for the police on developing effective communication strategies with protesters and the wider public
- More sophisticated media strategies
- A number of core principles can be discerned that have clear application to public order policing