



“Co-ordinating the response - hardening the approach”

A final evaluation and overview of the work undertaken within the Arson Task Force during the period of funding October 2003 to March 2006.

This is an unpublished work, the Copyright in which vests in Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. All rights reserved. The information contained herein is the property of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, and is supplied without liability for errors or omissions. No part may be reproduced or used except as authorised by Contract or other written permission. The Copyright and the foregoing restriction on reproduction and use extend to all media in which information may be embodied ©

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Date work received 28th August 2006:

Date work completed: 11th September 2006

Page 1 of 33

J:\Common\Information Management\Projects\Dean Bolton\Final report.doc

Document Control

Amendment History

Version / Issue No.	Date	Author	Remarks / Reason for Change
0.1	01/08/2006	Amanda Longworth	Draft
0.2	11/09/2006	Karen Locke	

Sign-Off List

Name	Position
John L Curtis	Director of Knowledge and Information Management
David Robinson	Business Intelligence Manager
John Moorcroft	Director of Community Fire Safety

Distribution List

Name	Position	I / R
Dean Bolton	Arson Advocate Manager	
Tony McGuirk	Chief Fire Officer	
Mike Hagen	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	
Arson Control Forum		

Related Documents

Reference No.	Title	Author	Version & Date

Ownership

Has it been agreed with the client that this is a publicly owned document? No

If Yes please state URL:

If No please state reason why:

1.	<i>AGREEMENT</i>	4
2.	<i>SUMMARY</i>	5
3.	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	5
4.	<i>METHODOLOGY</i>	7
5.	<i>INTERPRETING THE RESULTS</i>	8
5.1	<i>A BRIEF OVERVIEW / UPDATE</i>	8
5.2	<i>ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN VEHICLE FIRES</i>	10
5.3	<i>ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR FIRES</i>	12
5.4	<i>ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN PROPERTY FIRES</i>	19
5.5	<i>ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN HATE CRIME</i>	20
5.6	<i>FINANCIAL ANALYSIS</i>	21
6.	<i>CONCLUSION</i>	22
7.	<i>APPENDICES</i>	25

1. Agreement

For the purpose of this report the following agreement was made between the client and the Knowledge and Information Management Department.

This work was requested by John Moorcroft and received August 2006.

The Manager¹ has approved this report can be undertaken by the Knowledge and Information Management Department.

If the scope of the work changes, authorisation must be again obtained and would be noted within the version control document sheet.

It was agreed that this report would be produced in draft format by September 2006, and would be sent electronically to the Director of Knowledge and Information Management and Client for comment.

The Manager / Client agreed that their comments would be received back by September 2006.

The final report, which will always be in PDF format, would be produced by September 2006, subject to receiving comments.

¹ John L Curtis

2. Summary

In October 2003 Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MF&RS) received a £380,000 grant courtesy of the Arson Control Forum. This grant was in response to the bid 'Co-ordinating the response – Hardening the approach' which MF&RS had previously submitted. This report reviews and evaluates how the money was put into use throughout the Merseyside region, in terms of the initiatives implemented and partnerships developed. An analysis of trends in incidents during the period of funding (October 2003 to the end of March 2006) is also presented.

The funding was granted to assist with the development of the Arson Task Force, whose central aim was and is to design and implement initiatives which will lead to the reduction of deliberate fires in Merseyside. Many of these initiatives have developed through multi-agency partnership work. The Arson Task Force, through the employment of the Arson Reduction Advocates, have successfully forged an array of crucial partnerships, which now mean that crime and disorder in Merseyside can be tackled through a holistic approach. It is hoped that this will result in the further reduction of deliberate fire incidents.

This report will highlight that in Merseyside during the period of funding anti-social behaviour fires and deliberate fires in void properties declined. The financial cost of deliberate fires in Merseyside also reduced during this period.

This report will clearly illustrate that the funding received by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has been used effectively throughout the county.

3. Introduction

'Co-ordinating the response – Hardening the approach' was the title of the successful funding bid submitted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to the Arson Control Forum and granted in October 2003. This report will highlight how the funding has been actively put into use throughout Merseyside up to and including March 2006 and the resulting positive effects this has had on the numbers of incidents throughout the Merseyside region. Unfortunately, it is not possible to distinguish the influence of individual strategies on the total number of incidents. Therefore when statistics are provided in this report, the trends witnessed could be the result of many contributing factors, all of which will not be discussed in this report and all may not directly be related to the work of the Arson Task Force.

The bid presented in 2003 comprised of three main areas, all of which were seen as key to supporting and developing the Arson Control Forum. The focus of the task force has been, and still is, to design and implement strategies, which will significantly reduce the number of deliberate fires across Merseyside in line with the ODPM/DCLG Public Service Agreement (PSA) target.

IRMP 1 action points 8 to 13 have provided the strategic direction for the Arson Reduction Manager to achieve both the national framework target of 10% and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services target of 30% reductions in the number of deliberate fires.

The three key areas of the bid were:-

Arson Task Force (ATF)

Funding was requested to support the existing Arson Task Force. The grant was specifically required to contribute towards part funding of the police officers' post and the installation and rental costs of a police data line, which it was proposed would be installed into Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

Bi-lingual Advocates

Continuation funding was requested to support and expand the existing Bi-lingual Advocate project. (Watch Manager John Griffiths now manages the Bilingual Advocate project. The annual report for the period April 2005 to March 2006 accompanies this main report).

Arson Reduction Advocates (ARA's)

Funding was requested for the creation of five new posts within MF&RS. It was proposed that these Arson Reduction Advocates would work at district level, within local authority premises, to deliver the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service 'Arson Reduction Strategy' locally.

The Arson Task Force has developed considerably since its establishment in April 2003. It now consists of the Arson Reduction Manager, a seconded Police Officer, five district based Arson Reduction Advocates (ARA's) that are embedded within Local Authority Community Safety Teams and a Fire Investigation Dog and Handler.

In September 2003, Merseyside Police seconded a police officer to work within the Arson Task Force at MF&RS Headquarters. The secondment has proved extremely successful. This can be illustrated by the development of a partnership between Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in May 2004. This partnership was cemented with the publication and signing of the "Arson Fire Investigation Joint Agency Agreement". This Agreement emphasised 'best practice' on how the

two agencies could together to reduce deliberate fires within the county.

The Arson Control Forum grant of £380K ensured funding until March 2006 and was used to employ the Arson and Bi-lingual Advocates. On termination of this funding MF&RS have mainstreamed the advocates into the budget on permanent contracts. Furthermore, due to the size of the Liverpool District, a sixth Arson Reduction Advocate is to be recruited and placed within the Liverpool North area.

4. Methodology

To identify any significant trends in the number of deliberate incidents in Merseyside since the initiation of the Arson Task Force in 2003 the following methodology was adopted:

- The period of analysis in general covered April 2003 to March 2006. This report covers a small period prior to the start of the funding and up to and including the final day of the monetary funding. This period allows the trend in the number of deliberate incidents to be monitored during the funding. However, it is necessary to note, that with many strategies there can be a time lag from implementation of the initiative to when the full effects are observed. These are recognised as accumulative, and therefore may continue to positively influence the number of incidents after March 2006.
- This report will focus on the area of Merseyside as a whole. The Arson Task Force has and will continue to implement strategies throughout this area.
- Statistical analysis was adopted, utilising mainly the Owle (performance Management System) and Microsoft Excel. The number of deliberate incidents throughout Merseyside during the period under review was then analysed to highlight significant trends. It is again important to note that any trends in the number of incidents illustrated in this report cannot be directly statistically connected to any single strategy implemented by the Arson Task Force.
- Case studies have also been presented as evidence in this report to illustrate in a written format the work the Arson Reduction Advocates frequently do throughout Merseyside.

5. Interpreting the Results

This chapter has been divided into six main sections to enable the main findings of this report to be presented clearly. The sections covered will include:-

- A Brief Overview / Update
- Analysis of Trends in Vehicle Arson
- Analysis of Trends in Anti-Social Behaviour Fires
- Analysis of Trends in Building Arson
- Analysis of Trends in Hate Crime
- Financial Analysis

5.1 A Brief Overview / Update

The previous quarterly reports all presented a relatively brief overview of the developments made within the Arson Task Force in relation to the key focus areas of the bid. This section will summarise the major developments in the Arson Task Force, and more specifically will focus on the Arson Reduction Advocates, the Seconded Police Officer and the Fire Investigation Dog and Handler.

Arson Task Force

It can be argued that the Arson Task Force has contributed to significant advancements in the proactive element of Community Fire Safety within Merseyside. In addition to this MF&RS has continued to review internal structures to ensure that it provides the best level of service to the communities of Merseyside, in terms of preventing and responding to all incidents. The Arson Task Force now plays an integral role within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services recently formed Threat Response Group (TRG).

The TRG is an alliance of specialised teams within MF&RS focusing on the prevention, deterrence, detection and prosecution of individuals involved in fire related anti-social behaviour. Existing relationships with partner agencies, including the police and local authorities have been reinforced and developed to acquire a more proactive approach to dealing with offenders or those at risk of committing arson. In tackling fire related criminality, the Arson Task Force now works more closely with the Incident Investigation Team, Petroleum and Explosives, Fireworks Incident Research Safety Team and in the near future will work with additional seconded police officers.

The focus of the Arson Task Force continues to be the commitment to address the problem areas of anti-social behaviour fires, vehicle fires and deliberate property fires. With the knowledge, shared intelligence and

expertise provided by the TRG, it is hoped that the Arson Task Force can more proficiently monitor target areas and individuals in the future.

Seconded Police Officer

The initial role of the seconded police officer was to provide statistical and analytical support within the Arson task Force. The position has since evolved and now largely focuses on the collaborative uses of police powers within the Task Force. This can be illustrated with two recent incidents. After two separate deliberate fires in secondary schools, the offenders were detected, arrested and prosecuted as a result of joint work between both the seconded police officer and MF&RS. This partnership work is actively encouraged within MF&RS.

The seconded police officer is actively involved with both the investigation of hoax calls and school fires. When Merseyside's Mobilising and Control Centre (MACC) receive calls relating to incidents in schools, they inform the police officer based in MF&RS Headquarters, who in turn responds, thus early investigations can be undertaken. In relation to hoax calls the police officer uses her knowledge, intelligence, skills and systems to identify frequent offenders. This has resulted in reprimands, fixed penalties and police summons being issued. Further intelligence has also been collated which has led to the sanctioning of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's) on frequent offenders. Arguably, this has been achievable due to the collaborative work between the seconded police officer and the Arson Task Force.

Arson Reduction Advocates

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has continued its proactive response to Community Fire Safety by firstly employing, and then seconding Arson Reduction Advocates to each of the local authority districts within Merseyside. This has further enhanced multi-agency partnership work within Merseyside. It is hoped that this will lead to a holistic approach to tackling arson, which can only positively influence the levels of deliberate fires and hoax calls in the area.

The work of an Arson Reduction Advocate is varied and encompasses much wider areas than arson, including general crime and disorder, social exclusion and economic regeneration. It can be argued that this illustrates that the services they are offering within their local authorities are invaluable, and are making 'Merseyside safer, stronger'

A significant component of the work of an Arson Reduction Advocate is to carry out Arson Risk Assessments. These are frequently performed on domestic properties, businesses and any premise deemed as vulnerable to arson attacks. The initiative promotes community fire awareness whilst

also contributing to business continuity. The success of this initiative is a result of the strong partnership links that the advocates have successfully established within their districts with a multitude of different agencies.

Fire Investigation Dog & Handler

The fire investigation dog and handler² perform both operational and non-operational duties, both of which are of equal importance within the Arson Task Force. In relation to operational duties, the role of the fire investigation dog is to detect accelerants at the scene of fires where arson is suspected. The evidence collated in this manner has already been utilised in a murder case and led to the prosecution of numerous prolific arson offenders.

The non-operational side of their duties encompasses the proactive element of Community Fire Safety. Both dog and handler visit schools to discuss with the pupils the dangers of setting fires. A Key Stage 2 and 3 Fire Awareness programme has been developed. This is for pupils aged 6 to 16. It is believed that through engaging with pupils at this level future arson incidents may be prevented. The school visits are a result of referrals and statistical targeting.

5.2 Analysis of trends in Vehicle Fires

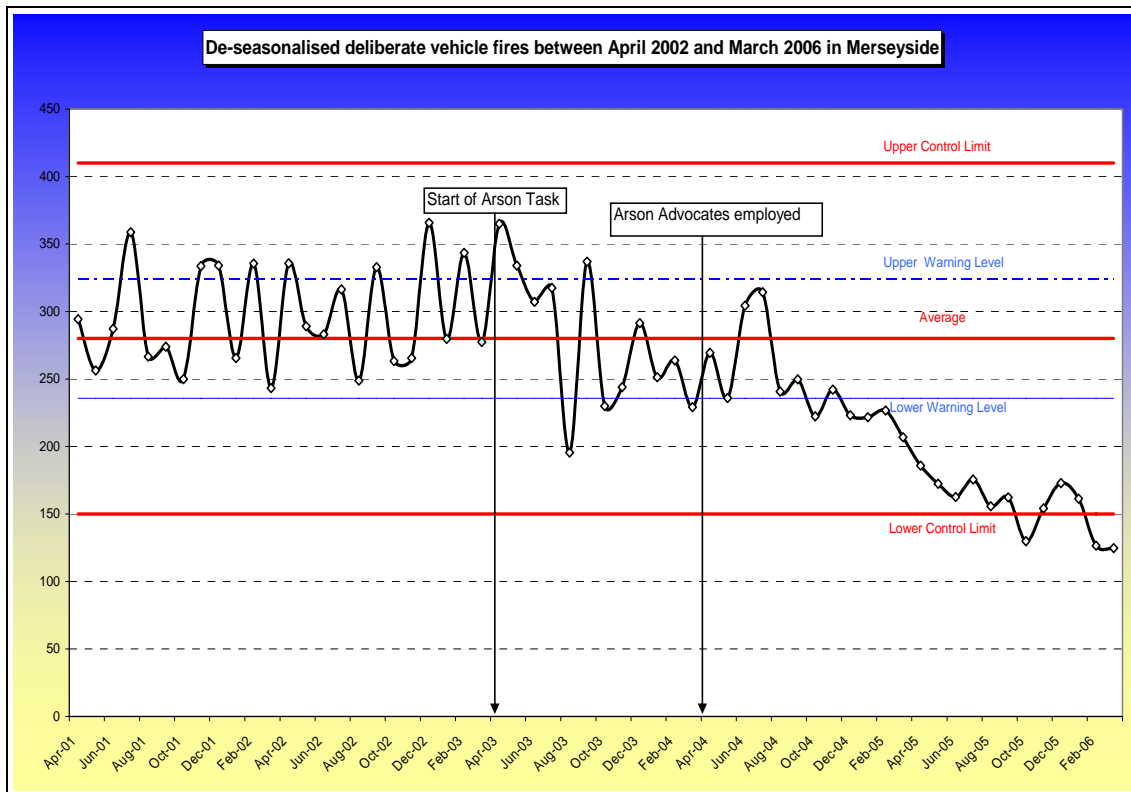
Table One: Illustrates the number of deliberate vehicle fires in Merseyside between April 2003 and March 2006.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	% Reduction
Knowsley	548	395	358	35%
Liverpool	1262	1278	888	30%
St Helens	311	190	192	38%
Wirral	518	339	252	51%
Sefton	250	173	197	21%
Merseyside	2889	2375	1887	35%

It is clear from Table One that in Merseyside between the period April 2003 to March 2006 the total number of deliberate vehicle fires decreased by 35%. This is also highlighted by Graph One.

² Please see appendices for a photograph

Graph One: Illustrates the number of de-seasonalised vehicle fires in Merseyside between April 2002 to March 2006



Graph One offers a visual presentation of the number of de-seasonalised fires by month. This allows the general trend to be observed clearly. By using total de-seasonalised fires rather than actual numbers, year on year comparisons are more realistic as seasonal variations are accounted for.

In an attempt to lower the number of incidents, targeting vehicle fires was the first strategy launched by the Arson Task Force. This graph illustrates prior to April 2003 the number of vehicle fires fluctuated between the average and upper warning levels, thus indicating that there was no control over the number of vehicle fires. Within six months of the establishment of the Arson Task Force the number of vehicle fires began to decrease. More significantly, this graph illustrates that there was some level of control over the occurrence of vehicle fires. Fluctuations became less frequent, with general month on month reductions.

A major initiative adopted by the Arson Task Force in its efforts to reduce vehicle fires in Merseyside has been the implementation of fast track vehicle removal schemes. This is a multi-agency operation, where-by abandoned vehicles are identified and removed before they can become potential targets for arsonists. Four out of the five districts in

Merseyside follow this initiative, the aim being to remove abandoned vehicles within 48 hours to secure compounds. The fifth district has also piloted a similar scheme and it is planned that the scheme will be implemented permanently in the near future. Thus, within Merseyside there is a clear commitment to reducing the number of vehicle fires through proactive programmes.

The Arson Reduction Advocates since their employment in April 2004 have been very involved with the initiatives aimed at reducing vehicle fires; they frequently liaise with Merseyside Police. The Arson Reduction Advocate for the district of Liverpool has worked directly alongside police officers in their execution of 'Operation Tango'. The advocate was able to share his knowledge of 'hot spot' areas, which led to the removal of illegal, untaxed and uninsured vehicles from the road.

5.3 Analysis of trends in Anti-social Behaviour Fires

Table Two: Illustrates the number of anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside between April 2003 and March 2006

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	% Reduction
Knowsley	2798	1822	1988	29%
Liverpool	8804	5501	4988	43%
St Helens	2537	1571	1540	39%
Wirral	3064	2059	1932	37%
Sefton	1775	1027	1236	30%
Merseyside	18978	11980	11684	38%

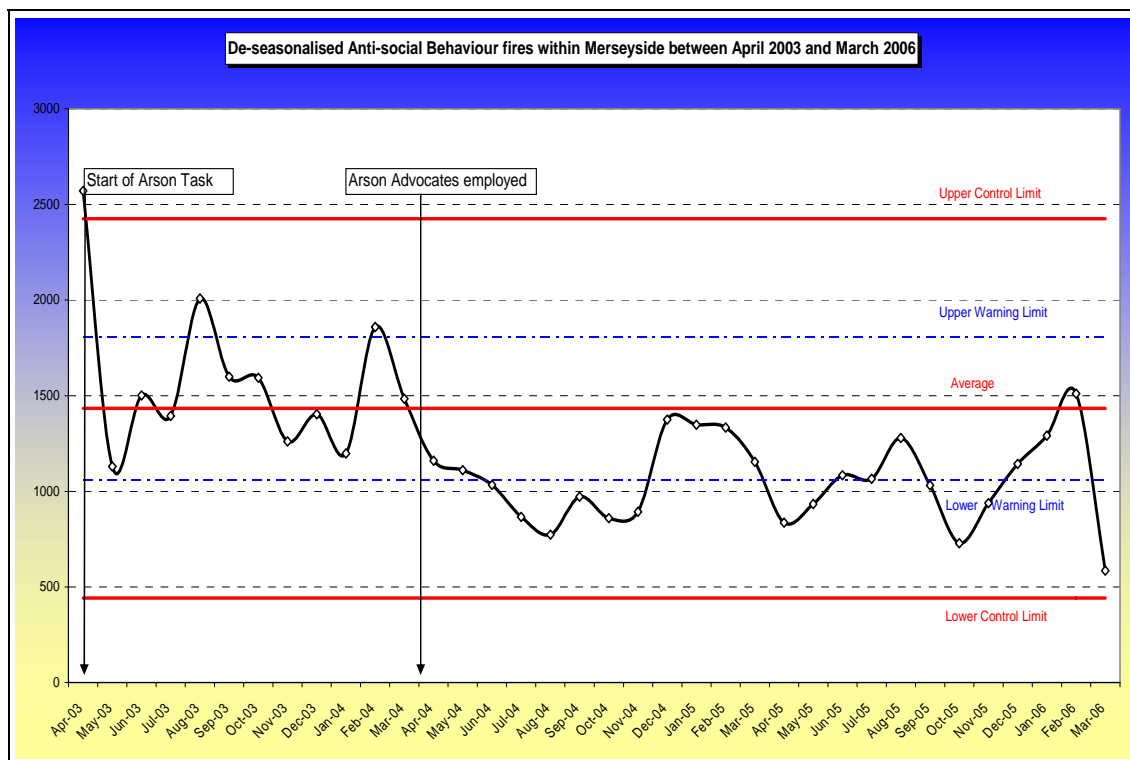
It is clear from Table Two that in Merseyside between the period April 2003 to March 2006 the total number of anti-social behaviour fires decreased by 38%. This is also illustrated in Graph Two.

Graph Two visually illustrates the general trend of all de-seasonalised anti-social behaviour³ fires that occurred between April 2003 and March 2006. De-seasonalised figures were once again used in favour of actual figures as monthly comparisons are a more accurate way to measure trends due to the removal of seasonal variations. The Arson Task Force did not comprehensively begin to tackle the issue of anti-social behaviour until the Arson Reduction Advocates were employed in April 2004. The associated initiatives have therefore not had as long to influence the incident numbers as those which were aimed at reducing vehicle fires. However, Graph Two does show that there has been a reduction in the number of anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside. Prior to April 2004 the number had fluctuated around, but mainly above the

³ Please see appendix for list of all anti-social behaviour fires

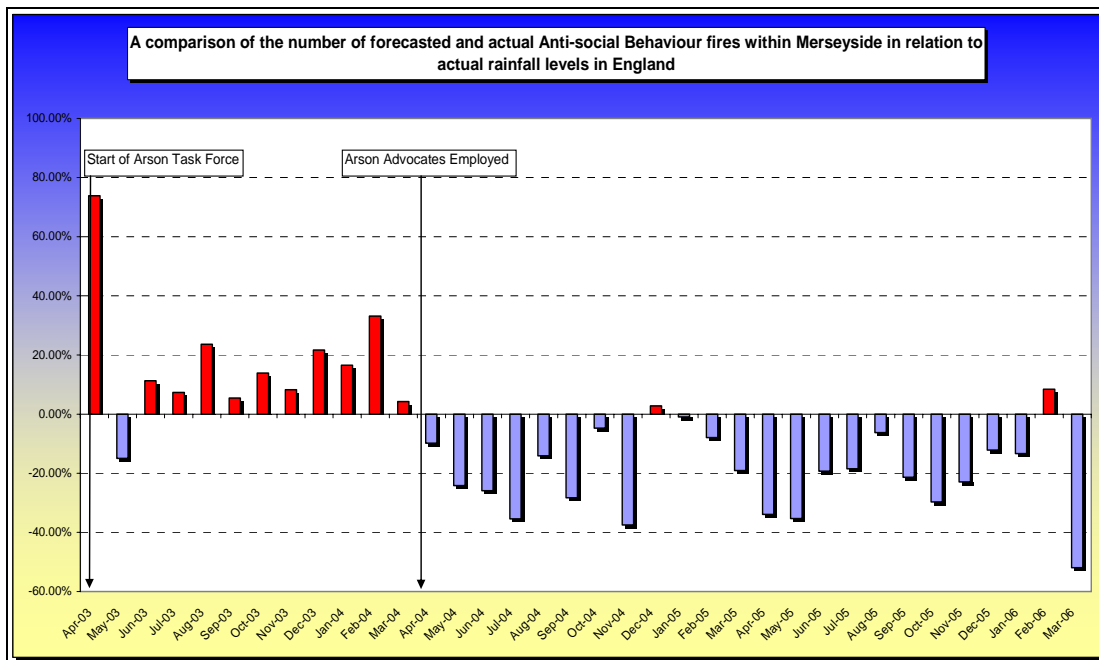
average line. Post April 2004 the number had fallen, and with the exception of a small period, remained below the average line. However, the numbers still vary significantly, illustrating that as of yet, whilst it has been possible through initiatives to reduce the number of anti-social behaviour fires, it has not been possible to gain comprehensive control of the number of incidents occurring

Graph Two: Illustrates the number of de-seasonalised anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside between April 2003 to March 2006



Graph Three offers a further means of exploring the trend in anti-social behaviour fires witnessed since the introduction of the Arson Reduction Advocates. The levels of rainfall each month influences the number of anti-social behaviour fires. This graph would indicate that post April 2004, with the exception of two months the anti-social behaviour fires are all lower than the expected level. The rainfall levels are based on averages for England and not solely on Merseyside, therefore this graph is not completely accurate. It does suggest however, that there have been positive improvements in tackling the high number of anti-social behaviour fires since April 2004.

Graph Three: Offers a comparison of the number of forecasted anti-social behaviour fires based on rainfall levels in England in relation to the actual number of anti-social behaviour fires.



Anti-social behaviour fires include fires that occur in derelict buildings, on grassland, intentional burnings, in refuse and in derelict vehicles. In this report they refer to fires that are deliberately ignited. In general, the fires tend to be relatively minor, they are however a nuisance to society and have a negative impact on the community. They also consume a large quantity of the fire and rescue services' time and resources and can deflect crews away from more serious or life threatening incidents.

In an attempt to reduce the number of anti-social behaviour fires, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, through the Arson Task Force have launched numerous initiatives to tackle the varying types of anti-social behaviour fires. They have, as already stated through the work of the Arson Reduction Advocates, forged relationships and partnerships with numerous agencies that enable more comprehensive initiatives to be developed and implemented.

The Arson Task Force have facilitated and encouraged community involvement through offering a resource on the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service internet home page⁴. This offers further consultation and the opportunity for concerns to be voiced by individuals within the community about anti-social behaviour fire activity in their neighbourhoods. This can alert fire-fighters and advocates to problem

⁴<http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/pages/Arson/arson2.htm#reporting>

areas. This enables targeting and the implementation of initiatives before occurrences of arson get out of control. This is another example of the proactive stance adopted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

Youth Engagement

It is evident that a large proportion of anti-social behaviour can be linked to youth disorder. Youth disorder is therefore one area that the Arson Task Force have focused on very closely. In partnership with other agencies they have developed numerous initiatives which try to reduce the number of youths involved in activities that result in fire. It is the design, implementation and measurement of these initiatives in conjunction with other partner agencies that contributed significantly to MF&RS receiving Beacon Status in 2006 for its work with young people.

Youth disorder covers a much wider area than arson. The Arson Reduction Advocates are aware of this and have become involved in a multitude of partnerships and groups that all attempt to tackle general crime and disorder issues. These groups are usually formed at the district level and include for example; Joint Agency Groups (JAGS) and Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS). At these meetings the advocates can raise their concerns about matters such as arson, and a tactical multi-agency action plan can be designed and implemented. The Arson Reduction Advocate embedded within the district of St Helens was able to present evidence at one such partnership meeting, which later resulted in the serving of an Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO). This order was served on two juveniles who were engaged in escalating incidents of anti-social behaviour involving deliberate fire setting. These individuals were also referred to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services Youth Engagement Team for intervention sessions. The Youth Engagement Team is another successful initiative launched by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

As Arson Reduction Advocates work within local authorities they each have their own individual initiatives which focus on the district community area. In one district, the process of informal education has been formalised and incorporated into the Youth Service's 'Active Response Provision'. Areas witnessing high youth disorder are identified through the NAG meetings. This results in the identification of hotspot areas which can then be reviewed. If fire related behaviour is identified, the Arson Reduction Advocate in conjunction with the Youth Service engage with the local youths to discuss and highlight the consequences of arson.

The Arson Reduction Advocates seize any opportunity to engage with youths at risk of committing arson. They currently work with the Royal Air Force, Anti-Social Behaviour Units, Social Inclusion Units and Youth Clubs. Individuals who are identified as needing more intensive intervention are

referred to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services 'Youth Engagement Team'.

Refuse Fires

Wheelie bin fires are a growing cause of concern, not only in Merseyside, but nationally. Bin fires are essentially opportunistic, they may be stolen and set alight in a variety of locations or ignited adjacent to residential properties with potentially fatal consequences. Wheelie bin fires have the potential to evolve into a primary fire significantly increasing the risk of injury and death to residents and fire-fighters. Fires within wheelie bins contribute significantly to the overall number of recorded anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside. However, it is not possible to report on the actual statistics as it was only in the last year that they have been monitored or recorded. More accurate and meaningful statistics will be possible in the future.

In September 2005, the Arson Task Force launched a 'Wheelie Bin Safety Campaign'. The campaign was instigated in response to a double fatality caused by fire spread from a wheelie bin to a residential property in the district of Liverpool. Further investigation into this revealed that similar incidents were occurring across Merseyside.

MF&RS approached the five Local Authorities of Merseyside with the concept that a safety sticker should be placed on all wheelie bins throughout the county. Environmental departments and community safety teams in the five districts funded the campaign jointly. The primary aim of this campaign was to raise awareness of the safe storage of wheelie bins, to prevent potentially serious fires.

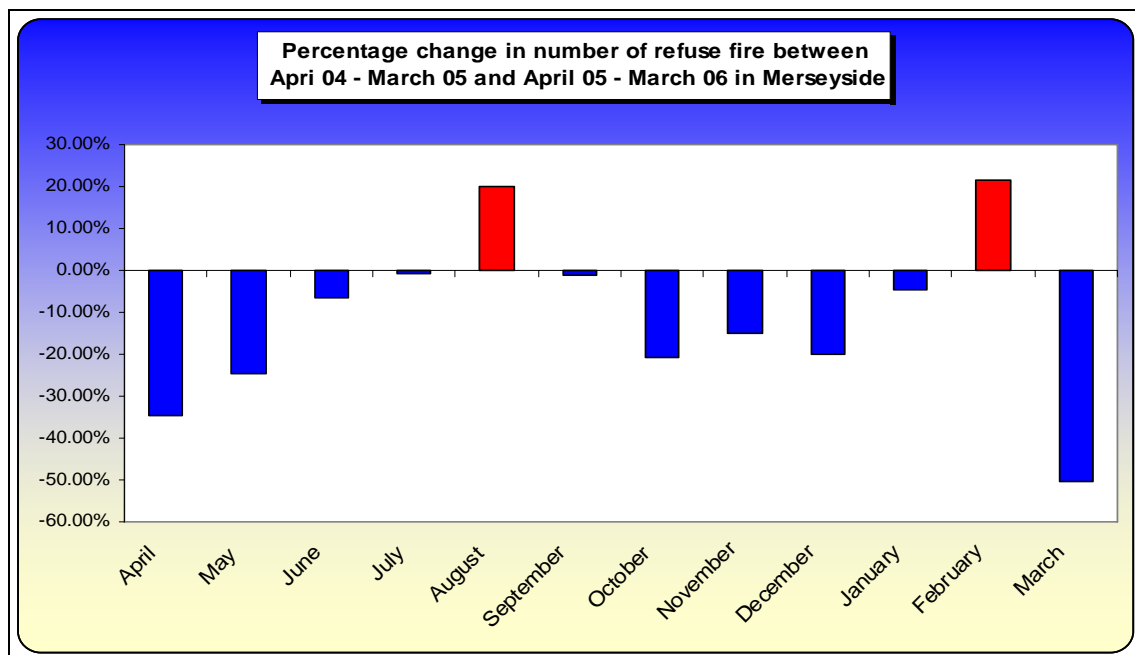
The ATF have implemented further short-term intervention measures in an attempt to prevent these fires. Measures have included targeting areas experiencing repeated attacks on wheelie bins and the delivery of advisory leaflets to residents. Arson Reduction Advocates also continually work with private and registered landlords to resolve potential risks, which could arise from inadequate storage facilities.

MF&RS have recently commissioned research into wheelie bin fires and have invited South Yorkshire's Arson Task Force to assist in this study. The aim of the research is to examine and establish potential fire growth characteristics by simulating the incident, which caused the double fatality in November 2004. The ATF is also working with researchers to explore potential benefits of using wheelie bins constructed of materials with enhanced fire retardant and the feasibility of introducing fire protection measures such as steel liners or post production treatments. The initial stage of research has identified that arson incidents involving

wheelie bins are a national concern and have an estimated financial cost exceeding £25 million⁵.

It was highlighted previously that it is not possible to provide meaningful statistics on wheelie bin fires at the present time. However, general refuse fires are presented in Graph Four to illustrate the overall reduction in incidents.

Graph Four: Illustrates the % change in the number of refuse fires in Merseyside



Graph Four highlights the percentage change in the number of refuse fires during the financial periods April 2004 to March 2005 and April 2005 to March 2006 on a like for like monthly basis. It illustrates that with the exception of August and February the number of refuse fires declined. Between April 2004 and March 2006 there has been a 14% decrease in the number of refuse fires.

Mountain Bike Initiative

A period of high frequency in relation to the number of anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside tends to fall during the summer months. Hotspot areas during this period have a propensity to be in and around more rural areas. The Arson Reduction Advocates from Liverpool and the Wirral in 2005 attempted to tackle this issue by riding through rural areas on mountain bikes. This provided youths with a visual deterrent and also offered an opportunity for the advocates to engage with young people in an informal environment. They were able to discuss / debate the consequences of deliberate fire setting. The potential of this initiative

⁵ Chiltern International Fire: Fire Engineering Consultancy and Testing Services

was recognised by the Arson Task Force and funding has been generated to develop this mountain bike project in each of the five districts. This initiative facilitates communication between the advocates and the local community.

Anti-social Behaviour Orders

The Arson Task Force, and in particular the Arson Reduction Advocates liaise with victims of anti-social behaviour. Whilst offering support, their primary role is to illustrate the preventative measures that can be undertaken to reduce the risk and lessen the effects of any future incidents. Referrals for the sanctioning of ASBO's can be made by advocates; they also indicate the need for individuals to be placed into Youth Intervention Programmes such as the 'Face' and 'Beacon' projects. The Arson Reduction Advocates communicate information concerning individuals who have been granted either ASBO's or Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) to fire-fighters. This ensures that the appropriate people can be informed if known individuals are identified at the scene of a fire. Since the establishment of the Arson Task Force in 2003, four individuals have been given ASBO's and there have been over fifty ABC's sanctioned to individuals who have been involved in arson related behaviour or hoax calls. The evidence gathered to enable this action has been supplied by the Arson Reduction Advocates. This practice could positively influence the number of anti-social behaviour fires occurring in Merseyside.

Restorative Justice Programmes

The bonfire period is a period of high activity in relation to the number of anti-social behaviour fires in Merseyside. During the period in 2005, the Arson Task Force co-ordinated a partnership initiative. The primary focus of this initiative was the removal of bonfire material and rubbish, the aim being to reduce the level of opportunist arson. Individuals serving 'Community Restorative Orders' provided the labour and each of the District Councils provided funding for vehicles. This scheme resulted in the removal of 268.75 tonnes of rubbish and it can be argued also contributed to the 21.3% reduction in anti-social behaviour fires during the period. This initiative is to be repeated during the 2006 bonfire period.

The Arson Task Force work in partnership with the police and environmental departments in an attempt to tackle the issue of fly tipping throughout the year. Individuals from the 'Restorative Justice Programmes' are recruited to remove rubbish from their local area. It is hoped this will increase the individual's sense of community, whilst also removing the opportunities for arson. Thus, the number of anti-social behaviour fires may be reduced.

5.4 Analysis of trends in Property Fires

Fires in void⁶ properties contribute significantly to the high number of arson incidents attended annually by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. These properties frequently lack adequate security measures and therefore become easy and accessible targets for arsonists. The Arson Reduction Advocates have formed partnerships with housing providers and other agencies in an attempt to address the problem of arson in unsecured void property⁷.

The Arson Task Force in 2004 published a 'Good Practice Guide For The Securing of Void Property'. The primary purpose of the guidance note is to recommend appropriate security measures, which will help to protect against arson attacks. The Arson Reduction Advocates promote the best practice guide within the Registered Social Landlord (R.S.L) arena, to both private landlords and local authorities. Housing Associations throughout Merseyside have incorporated the recommendations into their void property strategy and have extended the implementation of these measures throughout the tendering process. The Guide also supports the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) "Living Through Change".

Two out of the five districts in Merseyside operate a private landlord registration process. The respective Arson Reduction Advocate's for these districts have worked to ensure that Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services' 'Good Practice Guide' has been incorporated into the accreditation process.

Between the financial years 2004/05 and 2005/06 Merseyside witnessed an 18% reduction in the number of deliberate void property fires.

The number of arson attacks in schools across Merseyside is also concerning. In an effort to address this issue, one of the initial tasks given to the Arson Reduction Advocates was to identify the top ten schools most at risk of arson, based on statistics, in their respective district. After these premises were identified the schools were approached and arson risk assessments were undertaken. This initiative has since evolved and staff at schools can now request that these assessments are completed. This can be done through the MF&RS official website⁸.

Educating pupils about the consequences of arson is a further initiative adopted by the Arson Task Force. Whilst the advocates are directly involved in this process, they work closely with the Arson Reduction

⁶ Where a 'void property' refers to a property that is either temporarily or permanently unoccupied or derelict.

⁷ Evidence of this partnership work is presented in the appendices.

⁸<http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/pages/Arson/arson.htm#school>

Manager, who has developed a Key Stage 2 fire awareness lesson. He engages pupils with the assistance of the fire investigation dog, Floyd. Other partner agencies including the police and environmental services are also involved with this initiative. This multi-agency approach illustrates the scale of anti-social behaviour in the community, highlighting to the pupils that arson is only one small but significant area with many serious consequences.

The Arson Task Force is also involved closely with the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) 'Improving School Security Project Group' in the district of Liverpool. This group now exists in three of the districts and key partners include Zurich Insurance and Merseyside Police. The advocates play a pivotal role within this group. The principle aim of the group is to offer recommendations to head-teachers and to members of the Local Education Authority on the measures which could be taken to reduce the threat of arson on their premises.

A 'School Arson Risk Assessment' pilot was initiated and implemented by the Arson Reduction Manager, in the summer of 2005. The pilot was coordinated by the Arson Reduction Advocate for the district of Knowsley and executed by fire-fighters during the school summer holiday period. Master keys to school sites were given to each of the five fire stations covering the district. Fire-fighters proceeded to visit all schools in that district. Crews were able to identify potential arson risks and forward recommendations for the necessary control measures to Knowsley's School Security Advisor. Action was taken by the district council who responded immediately to the recommendations. This initiative has also been actioned for all districts in Merseyside during the summer period of 2006.

It is hoped by tackling school fires through this multi-faceted approach, the number of incidents will reduce significantly.

5.5 Analysis of trends in Hate Crime

Table Three: Illustrates the number of 'Hate Crime Arson Risk Assessments' performed by the Arson Reduction Advocates from April 2004 to the end of April 2006.

	Race	Domestic Violence	Homophobic	Hate Crime	Witness Intimidation	Total
Liverpool	27	25	0	37	2	91
Wirral	1	1	0	3	2	7
Sefton	2	2	0	20	5	29
Knowsley	11	2	0	10	3	26
St Helens	0	0	0	4	11	5

Hate Crime is another issue that the Arson Reduction Advocates address very seriously. The act of arson is frequently used as a method of hate crime and it can have potentially serious and even fatal consequences. Victims of hate crime are often vulnerable members of society, but their vulnerability can be the result of a wide array of reasons from their sexuality to witness intimidation. Table Three above illustrates that Arson Reduction Advocates assist many victims.

Whilst hate crime is too great an area for Arson Reduction Advocates to tackle alone, they attempt to address the issues of vulnerability by advising individuals on the best way to protect themselves and their property from attack, and to reduce the impact if an incident occurs. The advocates carry out a risk assessment and provide, if necessary, smoke detectors, fire proof letterbox bags, a fire extinguisher and fire survival advice. In extreme circumstances further modifications are made to the property. The District Community Safety Teams or local Crime Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) cover the financial aspect of this initiative.

Whilst there is no statistical method of measuring the effectiveness of this initiative, it is evident the safety of vulnerable members of the community is being improved.

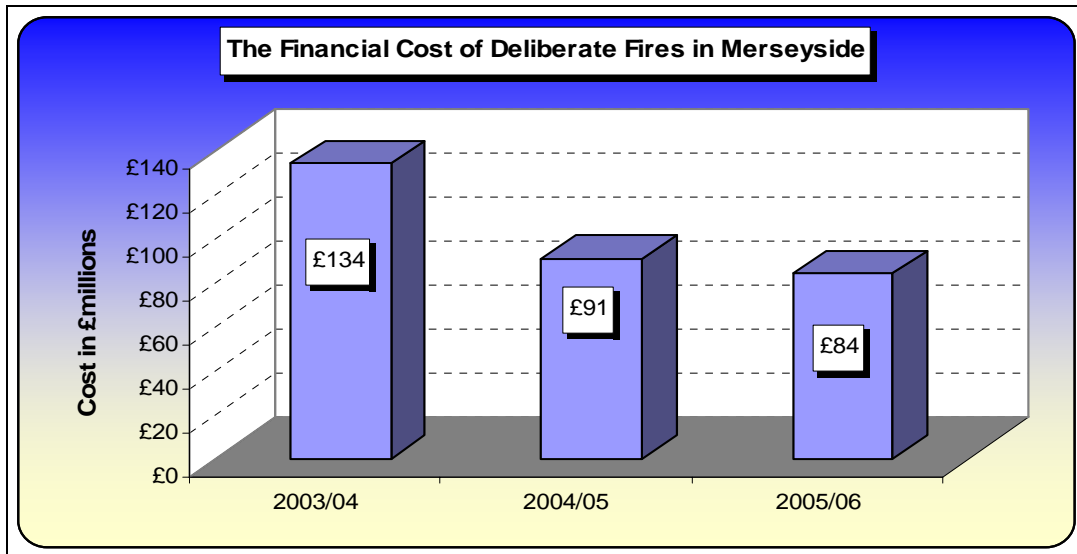
5.6 Financial Analysis

All fires have significant financial implications for both Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the community in general. With the reduction in fires this cost has reduced, as Graph Five illustrates. Whilst, it cannot be directly statistically proven, it can be argued that the work of the Arson Task Force combined with the numerous other initiatives implemented throughout Merseyside, by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and partner agencies, has reduced the financial consequences of deliberate fires within the county.

Between April 2003 and March 2006 there was a £50 million decrease in the cost of deliberate fires in Merseyside. This is equal to a 38% decrease. To calculate the cost of fire, the following areas are taken into consideration; human costs, costs of property damage, loss of business costs, Criminal Justice System costs and fire and rescue service response costs. The cost is taken from figures published in the 'Economic Cost of Fire'⁹ which is accessible through the Department of Communities and Local Government website.

⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1125058>

Graph Five: Illustrates the financial cost of all Deliberate Fires in Merseyside



6. Conclusion

This report has presented a review and evaluation of how Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has actively made use of the funding received in October 2003 through the bid entitled 'Co-ordinating the response - Hardening the approach'.

It reflects on the downward trend of deliberate fires witnessed within Merseyside during the period of funding October 2003 to March 2006 and the initiatives implemented by the Arson Task Force.

It is important to emphasise that it was not possible to directly statistically measure the influence of the individual initiatives implemented during the stated time period on the total number of incidents. Other factors not discussed in this report may have contributed to the reductions observed. However, this report clearly illustrates that the funding received by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has been used effectively throughout the county and arguably has assisted in the development of strong partnership work between Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and numerous agencies including the police and the local authorities.

The key findings from this report were:

Significant dates

- In April 2003 the Arson Task Force was established within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services bid for funding ('Co-ordinating the response – Hardening the approach') was granted in October 2003. The Arson Control Forum grant of £380,000 was for the period up to and including March 2006.
- In April 2004 the initial Arson Advocates were employed by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and then seconded to each of the five Local Authorities within Merseyside.
- In May 2004 a joint partnership between Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was cemented with the signing of the 'Arson Fire Investigation Joint Agency Agreement'.

Incidents

- During the period April 2003 to March 2006 the total number of deliberate vehicle fires reduced by 35% from 2889 to 1887.
- During the period April 2003 to March 2006 the total number of anti-social behaviour fires reduced by 38% from 18,978 to 11,684.
- During the period April 2004 to March 2006 the total number of refuse fires reduced by 14%.
- During the period April 2004 to March 2006 the total number of void property fires reduced by 18%.
- Between April 2003 and March 2006 there was a £50million decrease in the costs of deliberate fires in Merseyside. This was a 38% reduction.

Initiatives

This report has highlighted the numerous initiatives implemented during the period April 2003 to March 2006. These initiatives have been designed to tackle the major types of deliberate fires. These being anti-social behaviour fires, vehicle fires, void property fires and fires on school premises.

The initiatives vary in nature but a significant number are based on the concept of multi-agency partnership work, with the Arson Reduction Advocates acting as a central and pivotal role to this.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service received the funding at a crucial time. The grant facilitated the development of the Arson Task Force, which through the employment and secondment of the Arson Reduction Advocates resulted in increased partnership work between MF&RS and other agencies. This made it possible for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to work in collaboration with agencies within the Crime Disorder and Reduction Partnership framework. By working together with one holistic goal, core objectives were and are more likely to be achieved.

Future

The grant supplied by the Arson Control Forum has facilitated significant developments within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services' Arson Task Force. At present the team consists of the Arson Reduction Manager, a seconded police officer, five district based Arson Reduction Advocates (a sixth post has been advertised) and a Fire Investigation Dog and Handler. The team is now fully established and will continue to work within the communities of Merseyside alongside partner agencies to address the general issues of crime and disorder. The continual implementation of proactive initiatives by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will further support the overall aim of reducing the number of deliberate fires and hoax calls occurring within Merseyside.

7. Appendices

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR FIRES

In this report Anti-Social Behaviour Fires refer to deliberate fires that occur in either:-

- 04 01 Derelict Buildings
- 04 02 Grassland
- 04 03 Intentional Burning / Bonfires
- 04 04 Outdoor Structures
- 04 05 Refuse / Refuse Containers
- 04 06 Derelict Vehicles

ARSON REDUCTION ADVOCATES – ‘INCIDENT ACTION REPORTS’

The work of an Arson Reduction Advocate has been illustrated throughout this report. In Chapter 5.4 attention was drawn to their work in relation to deliberate fires on void property. The following ‘Incident Action Reports’ illustrate the ways in which Advocates have worked with other agencies to try to reduce the risk of arson.

TESTIMONIALS

To illustrate how well accepted the Arson Reduction Advocates have become in the community testimonials have been attached.

FIRE INVESTIGATION DOG AND HANDLER

A photograph of the Fire Investigation Dog, Floyd and his Handler is provided.

INCIDENT ACTION REPORT

District Knowsley

Location of Incident

Two sets of maisonettes on Eden Hall Estate, Halewood. One on Eden hall Road the other on Merrivale Road. Both owned by Knowsley Housing Trust.

Incident/Issues

Maisonettes on Eden Hall used for drinking and drug taking. Also used by large number of youths at weekends for drinking. Evidence of fly tipping.

Maisonettes on Merrivale Road suffered a number of fires and also fly tipping. Bricks were used as missiles from a damaged brick wall at the side of Merrivale, fire crews were targeted but youths missed and hit a female aged 6 who was a resident of the area.

Background/stats

Since 16.10.05 when the last resident of the maisonettes moved out fire crews had attended 3 fires in Eden Hall maisonettes and 1 fire in Merrivale maisonettes.



Action

- Contacted by John Arslanian, Liverpool Arson Reduction Advocate as he had heard from Speke & Garston fire station about the problems in Eden Hall Estate.
- Site visit with John Arslanian to take pictures and observe the problem for ourselves, whilst in attendance we had to call for the fire service as there was a fire in the Eden Hall maisonettes. Also approached by a resident at number 68 to talk to us about the situation.
- Went to KHT Halewood Housing Office (5-21 Ravenscourt, Halewood) to find out who was responsible for the properties. Left my contact details at the office.
 - A member of the KHT Regeneration Team contacted me 01.11.05 to inform me that Riverside Housing was buying the property. He did not know that there had been a number of fires and one maisonette had lost its roof. He said he would pass that information onto his line manager Lisa Harris who was in charge off the Halewood area.
 - A resident of Eden Hall Road contacted Speke & Garston fire Station to inform the fire service that a residents meeting was taking place on 09.11.05 at 1900 on Merrivale Road. I called the resident back to confirm that I could make the meeting.
 - Attendees of the residence meeting:, KHT area manager, 2 CSO's, 1 Halewood Neighbourhood Wardens, 4 local councillors, A chair for the meeting and a large number of residents. It was explained that the maisonettes would be sold to Riverside Housing but there was a few problems to be sorted out before the sale could go through, until then there was be a clean up project on both sites as well as the re-securing of all properties and a full security fence would be in place around each of the sites. I gave a list of recommendations of what should be "cleaned up" from the site and that all utilities should be disconnected. Residents were satisfied with the outcome of the meeting.

Outcome

- KHT have contacted all the utility services and the water, gas and electric to each flat has been turned off. The rubbish in the grounds of the maisonettes has been completely cleared away and a 6 ft security fence has been placed around both sites.
- I visited the site (06.12.05) again and found Eden Hall site fully secure and clear of all fly tipping. The fence around the Merrivale maisonettes had been breached and a bed had been fly tipped on the site. I called Lisa Harris of KHT to inform her and she said someone would be out that day to fix the fence and remove any rubbish.
- I revisited the site (07.12.05) both sites were fully secured and clear off all rubbish.



INCIDENT ACTION REPORT

District Sefton

Location of Incident

Orrell Primary School,
Aughton Road,
Bootle
Merseyside

Incident/Issues

Alerted by Arson Reduction Manager of our attendance to two fires at the above location. The school was unoccupied and had been empty for several months.



Action

- Site visit to the property highlighted acts of vandalism and fire setting within the property and also to the perimeter of the property. Work had previously been carried out in securing the windows but I suspected that work had been done on a reactive basis. The building contained large quantities of combustible materials, which would also assist to develop a serious fire.
- Contacted by a School Teacher from a local Primary School who stated that she was aware that some of her pupils were visiting the empty school on a nightly basis. She had concerns with the security of the building and asked for my assistance. I also requested that I might visit the school to talk to the pupils by giving advice for their own personal safety and arson related issues. I suggested that the visit take place by me and a Neighbourhood Police Officer. A date was agreed for a visit.
- Contacted Education and Technical Services departments to ascertain the plans for the building and to tackle the security issues. Both departments agreed on a site visit, which took place on 27th April. A full inspection of the building with all agencies identified several issues and the following recommendations were given:
 - All ground floor and first floor vulnerable windows to be secured with perma-screen sheeting.
 - Anti vandal paint to be applied to flat roofs which offer access onto the school.
 - Drainpipes to be removed.
 - Soft strip of the building – removal of all combustible materials
 - Heavy duty padlocks to be fitted to entrance gates.

Outcome

- Technical Services and Education advised that the building was to be sold under the HMRI but a time scale had not yet been estimated. Funding was approved for the work to be carried out.
- Visit to Springwell Primary School along with a Police Officer from the Behaviour Improvement Programme, where we had an informal discussion with pupils to highlight our concerns for their safety around the empty school.
- Visit to site on 10/05/2006 and work has begun in target hardening the school.

No further fires to date.



www.merseyfire.gov.uk



TESTIMONIALS

Liverpool District City Safe Team.

Since taking up his post John Arslanian has worked conscientiously to promote the new role of Arson Reduction Advocate within the Local Authority, Citysafe, Police, and other partner agencies and organisations.

There are numerous urban renewal schemes across the City that have created large clusters of empty dwellings, which in turn has attracted fire setters.

In his capacity as the Fire Reduction Advocate John is actively involved advising RSL's and private landlords managing these schemes, as to how best to secure their properties against arson attack, by the prompt removal of combustible materials, and securing windows and doors with proven methods and materials. Where these measures have been implemented they greatly reduce the opportunities for arson attacks, and make considerable financial savings for all involved.

Increasingly R.S.L'S, Council Housing Dept, Police and the LASBU team call upon John to carry out domestic fire risk assessments in cases of race hate and domestic violence, in these incidents John is able to offer advice, and arrange for the installation of physical security measures, such as smoke detectors, fireproof letterboxes, and other measures deemed appropriate.

John has also been involved in talks, exhibitions and fire prevention initiatives and I would have to say that the role is now known, recognised and appreciated by all the major agencies in Liverpool.

Thanks

Phil Jones

Citysafe Tel 0151 225 4833.

Wirral District

Lowell Williams has operated in this role extremely effectively. Within the Wirral District community safety team is well respected and known for his tenacity in achieving positive outcomes. Performance figures achieved across partnerships are a testimony to his commitment.

<u>2008 target</u>	<u>achieved 2006</u>
Reduce deliberate 1ry fires by 36%	78%
Reduce deliberate 2ry fires by 38%	36.6%
Reduce deliberate vehicle fires by 38%	52%

I would strongly suggest that Lowell is considered to continue his role and absorbs that of the proposed ASB advocate as well. After all there are many cross cutting themes within these two roles. This will give the continuity within the Wirral partnerships especially the Community Safety team that we have worked hard to produce the above outcomes.

Daryl Oprey
Wirral District Manager

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

BRIEFING NOTE

ARSON REDUCTION ADVOCATE

St HELENS DISTRICT

From inception in October 2004, the Arson Reduction Advocate has been embedded within the Safer Communities Team. This team has a base within the Town Hall complex and contains two members of Merseyside Police, in addition to the Council employees.

The Safer Communities Team has the responsibility for co-ordinating the activities surrounding the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service reports to the CDRP on the performance of the following indicators:

BVPI 206i deliberate property fires
BVPI 206ii deliberate vehicle fires
BVPI 206iii deliberate secondary fires
BVPI 146 malicious false alarms

The Arson Reduction Advocate, along with other partnership work and youth engagement, has been instrumental in the continued performance of the above indicators.

The Arson Reduction Advocate is firmly involved in a range of partnership activities and the following are some examples:

Arson risk assessments on all schools, colleges and libraries.

Advice given (including arson risk assessment) to the business community.

Co-ordination of a multi-agency scheme of bonfire removal for the last two years. This has resulted in the development of a scheme that runs all year round.

Creation of a multi-agency referral scheme, which involves operational fire & rescue service crews and field officers from Registered Social Landlords reporting fly tipping and abandoned vehicles.

Chris Howard
District Manager

The Fire Investigation Dog and Handler

