

Yorkshire & the Humber - Crime Reduction in Halifax Town Centre, Christians Together Halifax re: NTE/business and retail crime

Scanning:

In the 1990's a report was produced on the vitality and vibrancy of Halifax town centre. Findings showed that the general public and businesses had a fear of crime. It also showed people thought it was unclean. This led to the town having a poor image. It was important that Halifax thrived as an attractive town centre, therefore more in-depth studies were undertaken to find out the seriousness of the problem.

Analysis:

In 2002 a town centre audit was produced. It aimed at businesses, residents, shoppers, workers and visitors to the town. The results were quite shocking. A snapshot showed 64% of daytime users felt intimidated and 52% of businesses were experiencing vandalism.

A partnership including Halifax Town Centre Forum, Calderdale Community Safety Partnership, West Yorkshire Police Authority, businesses, community groups got together to find a solution.

Response:

The response was an on-street patrol called 'Halifax Town Centre Ambassadors'. Their main objectives were to act as reassurance and to provide assistance to businesses and the general public, act as a deterrent to offenders and to increase the positive image and cleanliness of the town centre.

Although the Ambassadors were a great success during the day, they were unable to cover evenings. However it was important to cover both day and night. Hence the arrival of Halifax Street Angels.

They are volunteers from Churches Together in Halifax who work between 10pm and 3am at weekends. They patrol the streets looking to help vulnerable people and open the Fairtrade Café as a safe haven.

Still not satisfied with the great success of the 2 teams, St John Ambulance were invited to work in the evenings dealing with people in the town centre rather than having to go to A&E.

Assessment:

Another audit was produced in 2007 showing a dramatic fall in the fear of crime, business related crime etc. The results showed that the on-street patrols were making a real difference. Also there have been many testimonials from individuals and businesses.

One of the biggest accolades is that Halifax is now seen by many as a place for best practice and has had visits from several other towns. Many of whom have since set up Street Angels and others are looking at starting Ambassador Schemes. This is a far cry from a town which was suffering from a poor image and fear of crime 10 years ago.