

TRUANCY PATROL

**WORKING POLICY AND
PRACTICE**

**INTEGRATED CHILD SUPPORT SERVICE
METROPOLITAN POLICE
YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**

WORKING TOGETHER

September 2011

Working Policy and Practice

Introduction

In 1998 the government launched a package of measures to tackle school exclusions and truancy with a national goal of reducing both permanent exclusion and truancy by a third. Tackling truancy is not the responsibility of any one agency alone. The power provided by Section 16 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, allows multi-agency initiatives to tackle truancy in which the police, schools and LEA's identify and discuss local problems and draw up strategies to deal with them.

Since September 2004, the Education Welfare Service (EWS), Metropolitan Police and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) have initiated truancy patrols during the Autumn and Spring terms. Each patrol team is generally made up from the following personnel: 2 Police Officers with 1 Education Welfare officer or 1 member of the YOS.

This policy is the working document for the truancy patrol and ownership of this document is a prerequisite for safe working procedures and effective health and safety management. The working policy along with any guidance produced by Southwark Children's Services Health and Safety Department should be read in conjunction with the completed risk assessment for this activity.

The patrols are a means of support for schools, children and families rather than a purely punitive measure for dealing with young people found to be out of school.

Whilst the importance of the patrols should not be diminished, they should not be seen as the only solution, but as part of a wider package of initiatives for dealing with the problem of truancy.

For some young people, getting picked up during a truancy patrol can be the first step towards sorting out their problems.

Strategy.

A tasking group consisting of Lead Officers from the above agencies plus Officers from Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, Housing, Safer Neighbourhood Team and Community Wardens Service regularly liaise to consider intelligence led initiatives and strategic planning for patrols. Intelligence gathered from the borough's fortnightly Partnership Tactical Tasking Co-ordinating Group, Partnership Tasking Group, schools and directly from the public is also assessed when planning where and when patrols are needed.

Working Practice

1. Before patrols:

- 1.1** It will be the responsibility of the Truancy Patrol Co-ordinator to inform staff of the dates of the patrols and to brief them of expectations and protocols. A copy of this Working Policy will be issued to all staff.
- 1.2** All personnel involved with truancy patrols will have received all relevant dates and times in advance.
- 1.3** It is the responsibility of all officers to have ensured that the patrol is priority for that day and that any other work commitments have been adequately covered.
- 1.4** All participating Officers need to be at Walworth Police Station for 8:30 a.m. prompt on the day of the patrol. All Officers will be required to start the patrol by 9.00 prompt. Any variations to this will be made known in advance.
- 1.5** A briefing session will be held for all personnel involved in the patrol, including arrangements for health and safety.
- 1.6** All Southwark Council officers will have use of a mobile 'phone for use in an emergency and for making contact with schools.

2. Health and Safety during patrols:

- 2.1** Adults will be allowed to travel in the minibus at the discretion of the driver.
- 2.2** No pupil should sit behind the driver in the truancy vehicle.
- 2.3** By law it is the responsibility of anyone over the age of 14 to wear a safety belt within the minibus. This must be adhered to. The driver will remind all pupils to put on their belts regardless of age.
- 2.4** Whilst on patrol, L.B. Southwark Officers should not be isolated in the truancy patrol vehicle at any time.
- 2.5** No Southwark Council Officer should ever work alone and should always be accompanied by a Police Officer when approaching a pupil / pupil with parent.
- 2.6** Whenever a pupil is being transported to a designated place in the minibus, a Southwark Council Officer will always be seated at the back of the vehicle. Police Officers will be seated at the discretion of the driver / risk.
- 2.7** An EWO or YOS worker (and a Police Officer too, if considered necessary) will remain with the young person at the designated place until a parent/carer arrives.
- 2.8** Should any incident occur where there is potential danger, it is the responsibility of Southwark Council Officers to assume the role of that of any other member of the

public and allow the Police to take control. In the event of this happening, clarification and advice should be sought from the Police as to what action (if any) needs to be taken to ensure continued safety and a satisfactory resolution.

- 2.8** During truancy patrols Southwark Council staff shall have their Service Identity Card visible at all times.
- 2.9** If the Police Officers find themselves to be in a situation that may require further assistance, they will call for back up using their police radios. (A delegated truancy officer may be asked to telephone for assistance.)
- 2.10** No smoking / consumption of food is permitted in the minibus.

3. On approaching pupils / adults:

- 3.1** The Police have the power to detain a young person and use reasonable force if necessary. If the young person being questioned decides to run away then he / she is not to be pursued.
- 3.2** Any young person who appears to be of statutory school age will be questioned, whether he / she is accompanied or not, and details noted on a standard form.
- 3.3** The police will make the initial contact with the young person and will be accompanied by a member of the EWS or YOS .
- 3.4** A courteous greeting should be made and Officers will need to introduce themselves.
- 3.5** The nature of the patrols will be explained to the pupil(s) / adults and a document outlining the reasons for the patrol, and containing the contact details for the Patrol Co-ordinator will be handed to them. They will then be asked some standard questions.
- 3.6** The first question should be to enquire why the pupil is not in school.
- 3.7** At the discretion of the Officers, pupils may be invited into the minibus in order to answer questions.
- 3.8** The Southwark Officer questioning the pupil should contact the school where there is any doubt regarding the reasons given by the pupil for their absence. All patrol teams will be provided with contact numbers for all Southwark (and neighbouring boroughs) secondary schools, as well as an identity chart of all school uniforms and start, lunch and finishing times.
- 3.9** If the pupil offers a legitimate reason for not being in school and it is substantiated, then he / she will be thanked and allowed to leave. A record will need to be kept of any dialogue and phone calls made.

- 3.10** Where the reasons given for the absence are not accepted and the pupil attends a Southwark School, he / she will be returned to the school. It is important that ALL parts of the information form are filled in legibly and that the witnessing officer is also named on the sheet.
- 3.11** Where there may be some Child Protection concerns or it is felt that the child may be in danger, the patrol will take the pupil to Designated Premises, which will be identified prior to the patrol, where appropriate action will be taken.
- 3.12(1)** If a pupil is accompanied by a parent/carer, as much detail as possible needs to be taken and the adult reminded of the responsibilities of the requirement to ensure that a pupil is in school.
- 3.12(2)** Where a pupil has been sent home from school and stopped by the patrol, confirmation should be sought from the school that the pupil's parents have been informed. If this cannot be ascertained then the pupil should be returned to school.
- 4. After the patrol:**
- 4.1** At the end of the patrol there will be a debriefing session. ALL officers are required to attend.
- 4.2** All paperwork needs to be completed and handed to the Truancy Patrol co-ordinator for further evaluation immediately after de-briefing session.
- 4.3** The respective schools and families, of all the pupils who are stopped, where non-legitimate reasons have been provided, will be contacted by letter after the patrol and a record is kept on the LEA database. Case EWOs will also be notified.
- 5. Incident reporting and investigation.**
- 5.1** Any accident, incident of verbal or physical abuse, dangerous occurrence or a near miss (which does not include actual harm but could easily have done so) must be reported to the co-ordinator as soon as possible after the incident occurs.
- 5.2** In the event that an injury has resulted requiring the injured patrol officer to receive first aid this will be administered by a trained first aider at present this would be a Police Officer involved in the truancy patrol. If the injury sustained requires further treatment or where the injury is beyond the capabilities of a first aider(s) an ambulance will be called and the injured person will be taken to hospital.
- 5.3** All reported incidents will be investigated by the co-ordinator and reported to Southwark Council Children's Services Health and Safety Department by the quickest possible means (via telephone, e-mail, fax) and followed up with a written report within seven working days.

- 5.4 Following any incident a review of the risk assessment and / or working procedures will be made.
- 5.5 This policy may be reviewed periodically and at least annually.

Whilst this explains some of the procedures, the list of possible scenarios is not exhaustive and not every eventuality can be covered.

Ron St. Louis.
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