

ROTHERHAM  
COMMUNITY  
SAFETY  
DEPARTMENT

*"together we can make a difference"*



South Yorkshire

**POLICE**

JUSTICE *with* COURAGE

Contact: Inspector Steve Lavin  
Rawmarsh Police Station  
Community Safety Department  
Green Lane  
Rawmarsh S62 6JW

T: 01709-832467

F: 01709-832438

E: [steve.lavin@southyorks.pnn.police.uk](mailto:steve.lavin@southyorks.pnn.police.uk)

**ROTHERHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY DEPARTMENT ( East Area)**  
**Radio-Linx Project**

*"Together we can make a difference"*

**Background Information**

The idea for the 'RadioLinx' project stemmed from a scheme called, 'Retail Radio Links', which was launched in 1992. This was further developed in the West Midlands in 1998 to become 'CATCH' (Community Action Tackling Crime & Harassment)<sup>1</sup>.

The scheme is based upon the principle of linking people together with two-way radio communication. It has been shown to have a positive impact on improving communication and strengthening communities.

The 'Motorola' Communications Company have joined together with Neighbourhood Watch, Community Groups and the Police to provide low cost, licence free, two way radios. The radio used for our project is the 'Motorola TA288' two way radio.<sup>2</sup> (Appendix 1)

We decided to carry out a pilot scheme based upon this project, calling it 'Radio-Linx', and submitted a bid for funding from a programme initiated by the South Yorkshire Police Authority called the Community Initiatives Programme. (CIP). The vehicle for this was the 'ABC' (A Better Community) Awards, 2001.

The project was linked to a local action group called the 'Rawmarsh and Parkgate Project'. The membership of this group comprised of the Police, members of the community, local housing officers, private landlords, area assembly officer, community development worker, environmental health, neighbourhood wardens and youth services. This group was well established in the area and had made excellent progress in trying to tackle local problems.

We were able to obtain a total of £1500 for the project. (Appendix 2 is a photograph of the group receiving the cheque from Police Authority member Mr Alan Hartley)

This allowed us to purchase a total of twenty radios including chargers from Motorola.

**The Aims Of The Project**

The aims of the project were:

1. To improve communication between residents the Police and other agencies.
2. To reduce the fear of crime and disorder and improve confidence of people in the community.
3. To reduce crime and disorder in identified local 'hotspot' locations.

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1. Inspector martin Wright of the West Midlands Police was the founder of the 'CATCH' scheme.  
2. At the time of purchasing for this project the radios cost £69.50p each.

### **The Target Area**

The area targeted for this project was Rawmarsh and Parkgate, two adjacent residential areas on the outskirts of Rotherham town centre.

Rawmarsh and Parkgate have a combined population of some 20,000 people.<sup>3</sup> Rawmarsh is a fairly large mainly, residential area whilst Parkgate has a mixture of some heavy and light industry, large retail parks and local retail businesses. There is a substantial proportion of old terraced housing alongside newer housing estates.

Rawmarsh and Parkgate are well known for being areas frequented by drug users and suppliers. In particular Parkgate has the reputation for being the area where the suppliers of controlled drugs are most located in the Rotherham area.

The crime statistics for 1999 and 2000, showed the following:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total crimes</u>	<u>Burglary</u>	<u>Car crime</u>	<u>Violence</u>
1999	1883	298	452	100
2000	1916	557	515	76

Clearly there was an increasing trend in all-main offences with the exception of violence.

Taking into account this information, linked to the number of requests for Police to attend all incidents in the target area, we were able to identify a number of 'hotspot' locations. This information was put together by our District Analyst, which enabled us to target selected areas of Rawmarsh and Parkgate in which to issue the radios.

We decided to select two locations to begin with one in Rawmarsh and one in Parkgate. They were as follows:

1. Rawmarsh - Green Lane.

Between 1.9.00 and 10.8.01 this area had suffered 35 recorded crimes and 161 requests for Police attendance at incidents. There were approximately 222 people living in 102 houses. There were also 10 business premises.

2. Parkgate - Ryan Place/Netherthorpe Lane/Goosebutt Street/Spalton Road.

These four streets were categorised together due to their close proximity to each other.

Between 1.9.00 and 10.8.01 this area had suffered 54 recorded crimes and 68 requests for Police attendance at incidents. There were approximately 331 people living in 257 houses. There was only 1 business premise.

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<sup>3</sup> Based upon the 1991 census

### **Operating Practice**

In each location responsible individuals would be identified to be the holders of a radio. Each was then supplied with a pack containing a letter outlining the aims of the project along with a guide regarding use of the radio and a diary / evaluation sheet on which to record details of incidents and results. (Appendix 3). Each was asked to sign a receipt for the radio and a simple survey was carried out to identify their feelings about communication and the fear of crime and disorder in their area. (Appendix 4) . A decision was made not to disclose the identities of those holding the radios in order to prevent any possible victimisation taking place.

In addition the two local Community constables and local Traffic Warden were each supplied with a radio along with the newly formed Neighbourhood Wardens and the local Council Housing Officers.

The Neighbourhood Wardens are based in the local Council Housing Offices situated on Rawmarsh Hill. These were funded by the Home Office as a part of the Governments national strategy to encourage local authorities to employ wardens. Their main remit was to deal with low level nuisance and environmental problems, though overall they had an aim to reduce crime and disorder in the area.. They were managed through the local Authority Housing Department and this was a pilot scheme for Rotherham Borough. It therefore made sense to utilise their services as a part of the Radio-Linx project as it was felt they could make a significant contribution to it. As could the Housing Officers themselves who frequently had responsibility for dealing with anti social behaviour by tenants.

### **First Steps**

The initial response to the scheme was very positive by the community and the statutory agencies who worked in the area. The difficulty we found was actually finding members of the community who were willing to take part and have a radio. The main reason for this was the fear of possible retribution from offenders if they were identified as being a part of the project.

In fact this only served to reinforce the fact that the fear of crime was high in the area and that such a project as the radio-linx was needed to try to address that. It was for this reason we decided not to publicise the scheme in great detail in the target areas to start with. We did not wish to initiate 'witch hunts' in those areas where opponents of the project would seek out those with the radios. Publicity could come as we made progress and the when the time was judged to be right.

We persevered in working with the local community representatives including Neighbourhood Watch and residents groups and started off with small numbers of people in each of the target areas. This gradually increased to a total of thirteen radio holders in the community and five Police and other agencies.

The radios were gradually distributed and the project actually commenced operation on the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

### **The Initial Survey**

The results of the initial survey of those people who had received a radio showed the following:

1. 100 % ( 7 and 6 respectively) felt that crime and disorder was very high/high in the area.
2. 91% ( 6 in each category) felt that it was very likely/likely that they would be a victim of crime and disorder.
3. 69% ( 9 ) had been a victim of crime and disorder, with burglary being the most common.
4. Drugs related incidents and burglary caused most concern (30% each) followed by violence (23%).
5. Communication with:  
Police : Was felt to be; acceptable 46%, poor 46% ( 6 in each category).  
Neighbours: Very good/good, 46%, acceptable, 23%, (comprising of 6 and 3 in each category).  
Other agencies: Acceptable 61%, good 23%, ( 8 and 3 in each category)
6. The average age of the group was 53 years and of this 54% were aged 55 years and over.
7. It consisted of eleven female and two male participants.

### **Progress**

It was clear that initially the members of the public taking part were reluctant to actually make use of the radios. We encouraged them to do so and as their confidence increased they began to make more use of them.

We continually monitored the progress of the scheme.

Several incidents were reported over the radio's resulting in Police attendance. This did not result in any arrests but it did show that the system worked.

In addition the participants made use of them to speak to each other about other more domestic matters and this was encouraged as it was all part of the intention to improve communication and reduce the feeling of being isolated and vulnerable.

## **Results**

After 3 months of operating, at the end of January 2002, we carried out follow up surveys (Appendix 5) with the radio holders and this showed the following results:

1. There had been a clear reduction in the fear of crime .The number of participants who felt that crime was very high in the area had dropped from 7 down to 3 ( 23% ). Two now felt the level to be acceptable and one low.
2. Similarly the number of participants who felt that it was very likely that they would be a victim of crime and disorder had dropped from 7 to 2. ( 15%).
3. None of the participants had been a victim of crime and disorder since taking part in the project.
4. Drugs related incidents and burglary remained the main causes concern.
5. Communication with:
  - Police:  
Very good/good ( 84%).
  - Neighbours;  
Very good/good (69%).
  - Other agencies;  
Very good/good (77%).

## **Aims Of The Project**

AIM :

1. To improve communication between residents the Police and other agencies.

ACHIEVED:

1. This had increased dramatically across the board but particularly so regarding the Police .The initial survey showed 12 participants (92%) felt communication was acceptable/poor. This was improved to a tremendous 11 participants (84%) in the follow up survey feeling that communication with Police was Very good/good.  
  
There were similar improvements for communication with Neighbours with 69% feeling it was very good/good compared to 46% and other Agencies 77% stating it was very good/good compared to 61% feeling it was acceptable initially.

Clearly the project achieved the aim of improving communication.

AIM:

2. To reduce the fear of crime and disorder and improve confidence of people in the community

ACHIEVED:

2. There had been a clear reduction in the fear of crime .The number of participants who felt that crime was very high in the area had dropped from 7 down to 3 ( 23% ), compared to 100% feeling it was very high/high in the initial survey. Two participants now felt the level to be acceptable with one even feeling it to be low.

Similarly the number of participants who felt that it was very likely that they would be a victim of crime and disorder had dropped from 6 to 2. ( 15%) compared to 91% in the initial survey feeling it was very likely/likely.

In the initial survey 69% of participants had been a victim of crime and disorder in the past. It was very pleasing to note that none of them had been a victim during the three months of the project.

This aim was achieved. The participants clearly felt much safer and less vulnerable.

AIM:

3. To reduce crime and disorder in identified local 'hotspot' locations.

ACHIEVED: The follow up analysis for the two target areas did not show any significant reduction in the number of crimes recorded or requests for Police attendance at incidents.

So it is clear that the project did not have the expected impact upon local crime and disorder. We did recognise from the outset that this was the most ambitious aim of the three and so it has proved in practice.

It is still felt that this project can impact upon crime and disorder but we need to look at how we deploy the equipment in the future.

## **Conclusion**

The overall aim for this project was to increase communication for members of the community and by so doing reduce their fear of crime. It was hoped that along with this the increased activity would effect localised crime and disorder.

Clearly the people taking part in the project were unanimous in their support of the idea and from the follow up survey results there had been a marked improvement in their communication with the Police and the other agencies. This did indeed lead to a similar marked reduction in the fear of crime and disorder.

Unfortunately there was not the knock on effect we expected of actually making any significant reduction the crime and disorder incidents, which may have been optimistic given the number of participants.

The conclusion is that we really need to focus on smaller areas utilising all of the radios in that one location which should give us more chance of impacting upon local crime and disorder. There is also clearly a need for more radios, which will allow for more involvement from the community. This is something we will look at in future bids for funding.

The overall feeling is that this has been a very positive pilot project, which has increased community involvement and partners from other agencies, working with the Police, to good effect. The overall impact has been positive and the community wishes the project to continue and it is intended that it will do so.

Inspector Steve Lavin  
Rotherham Community Safety Department.(East Area).  
11<sup>th</sup> February 2002



# TALKABOUT™

WALKIE-TALKIE



Appendix 1

**Rawmarsh and Parkgate**

**Radio Linx Project**

The 'RadioLinx' project is sponsored by the South Yorkshire Police Authority's, Community Initiatives Programme, (CIP) through the 'ABC' (A Better Community) Awards, 2001.

The aims of the 'Radiolinx' Project are as follows:

1. To improve communication between residents, the Police and other agencies.
2. To reduce the fear of crime and disorder and improve confidence of people in the community.
3. To reduce crime and disorder in identified local, 'hotspot' locations.

It is intended that Motorola two way short-range radios will be issued to identified members of the community in Rawmarsh and Parkgate where there are incidents of Crime and Disorder.

In addition the local Community Constable will have one of the Radios as will the Rawmarsh and Parkgate Neighbourhood Wardens .

The intention is that the radios will enable members of the community to communicate with each other quickly and easily to pass on details of any crime and disorder taking place in the area. For those who reside alone or do not have ready access to a telephone this should reduce the fear of being isolated and vulnerable.

The radios will also provide direct access to the Neighbourhood Warden or Community Constable when they are within range. **The maximum range of these radios is two miles and obviously the warden and Community Constable will not be within that distance all of the time they are working.**

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT RELY SOLELY ON THE RADIOS TO REPORT INCIDENTS TO THE POLICE. PLEASE USE THE NORMAL METHODS OF CONTACTING US. EITHER 999 FOR EMERGENCIES OR 0114 2 202020 AND ASK FOR THE ROTHERHAM CONTROL ROOM.**

Please find attached a guide, which will explain how to operate the radios.

Also attached is a diary/ evaluation sheet for you to complete. The purpose of this is to assist you with making accurate reports of what you have observed by writing it down as soon as you can after the event. It will also be useful to us in evaluating the effectiveness of this project. These forms will be collected from you at suitable periods.

If you have any concerns about the project or the equipment then please contact the following : Project Manager : Inspector Steve Lavin – 01709 832467 / Sergeant Stuart Price 01709 832427

**Record of allocation of radio and initial survey**

I acknowledge receipt of a Motorola 'talkabout' radio and charger,  
serial number: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the radio and charger remain the property of the South Yorkshire  
Police at all times and that I am required to take reasonable care of the equipment  
and return it to the Police upon request.

Signed:

Address:

T/No:

**Survey**

Q1. Do you feel that the levels of crime and disorder in your area is:

Very high    High    Acceptable    Low    Very low

Q2. How likely do you think you are of being a victim of crime and disorder:

Very likely    Likely    Possibly    Not likely

Q3. Have you been a victim of crime or disorder. If yes what?

Q4. What crime/disorder worries you most:

Q5. How do you feel about communication with:

The Police:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor
Neighbours:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor
Other Agencies:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor

Q6. Age and gender:

## **HOW TO USE THE MOTOROLA TWO WAY 'TALKABOUT' RADIO**

1. When you receive the radio it will be fully charged and ready to use.
2. To turn on and off simply press the small orange button on the left side of the radio as you look at it. Press and hold the button in until you hear a beep. It will then be on/off.
3. To speak into it press the large black button in the centre of the radio. This has 'push to talk' inscribed on it. Hold this button in whilst you are talking and then release it when you have finished.
4. It is suggested that you always finish off with the word 'over' when speaking. Those listening will then know you have finished.
5. The radio has a battery indicator at the top left of the display screen. When it is in need of charging the meter will be down to one bar and the radio will emit a periodic tone warning.
6. To charge follow this procedure:
  1. Turn the radio off
  2. Plug the charger into a wall socket
  3. Lift the charging jack cover on the bottom right of the radio as you look at it.
  4. Insert the charging jack into the radio
  5. The radio will now charge and the indicator light on the charger will show red.
  6. The indicator light on the charger will flash green when the radio is almost charged and this will turn to a constant green when it is fully charged.
  7. Then disconnect the charger and the radio is ready for use again.
  8. The charging process should take around three hours.
7. Any other problems then contact Inspector Lavin on 01709 832467 or Sergeant Price on 01709 832427.
8. Report the loss or damage to any of the equipment as soon as possible to the officers named above.
9. Your call sign when using the radio is .....  
This will identify you to us but maintain your anonymity as far as others are concerned.

**Rawmarsh and Parkgate**

**Radio-linx Project**

**Follow up Survey**

Having received a radio and taken part in the project we would welcome your comments about how effective it has been.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

AGE:

GENDER:

Q1. Do you feel that the levels of crime and disorder in your area is:

Very high    High    Acceptable    Low    Very low

Q1a. Has this changed since taking part in the project? Yes / No  
Reason:

Q2. How likely do you think you are of being a victim of crime and disorder:

Very likely    Likely    Possibly    Not likely

Q2a. Has this changed since taking part in the project? Yes / No  
Reason:

Q3. Have you been a victim of crime or disorder since receiving the radio. If yes what?

Q4. What crime/disorder worries you most:

Q4a. Has this changed since taking part in the project? Yes / No  
Reason:

Q5. How do you feel about communication with:

The Police:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor
Neighbours:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor
Other Agencies:	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very poor

Q6. Do you think that the project is worthwhile - Yes / No  
Reasons:

Q7. Please tell us what is the best/worst part of the project:

Best:

Worst: