

# Evaluation of the Making WAVES project in Liverpool, England: improving support for intimidated witnesses

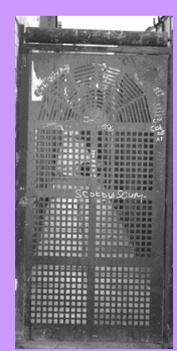
Ian Warren

Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University  
WHO Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention



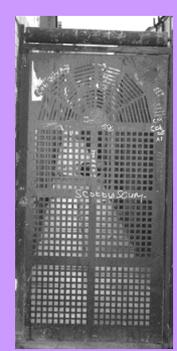
# Background

- Witness intimidation:
  - ‘...may involve threats to harm someone, acts to harm them, physical and financial harm and acts and threats against a third party (such as a relative of the witness), with the purpose of deterring the witness from reporting the crime in the first instance or deterring them from giving evidence in court.’ (Home Office, 1998)
- In the UK witness intimidation is now a criminal offence
- Witness intimidation occurs in nearly one in ten reported crimes.
- Three types of intimidation:
  - Low-level harassment, non life threatening but serious intimidation, life threatening intimidation
- The cultural stigma of being a known ‘grass’ (informer) can be a powerful deterrent to reporting a crime, and can become a cultural norm within communities.
- Reduced levels of reporting due to intimidation



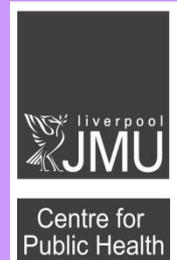
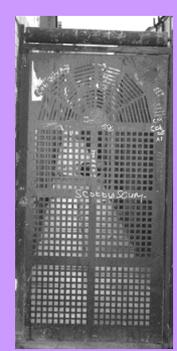
# Making WAVES

- Making WAVES (Witness And Victim Encouragement and Support)
  - Breckfield, Liverpool, July 2007
- Breckfield is an area with severe deprivation, crime and unemployment.



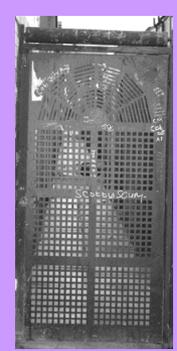
# Making WAVES

- Aims of the Breckfield Making WAVES pilot project:
  - Bring together local support services in identifying and supporting intimidated witnesses through the witness pathway
  - Improve levels of reporting of crimes
  - Reduce witness intimidation, increase the number of convictions and reduce overall crime
- Local project coordinator employed
  - Based at the local community centre
  - Act as focal point for intimidated witnesses
  - Support witness progression through the criminal justice system
- Training provided to local agencies to help them identify intimidated witnesses and respond appropriately
- Multi-agency steering group formed locally to coordinate local agency actions in supporting intimidated witnesses
- Pilot project evaluated by ourselves at the Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University



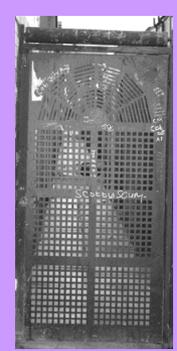
# Evaluation methodology

- Community crime and witness intimidation survey
  - Pre and post project
- Case file analysis
- Interviews with intimidated witnesses supported through the WAVES project
- Interviews with multi-agency steering group members
- Analysis of multi-agency data (police, emergency services) to assess any changes in levels of crime over the course of the project



# Findings

- Community crime and witness intimidation findings:
  - Residents felt less safe during the evenings
  - 75% of respondents reported being a witness whilst 58% had been a victim of crime
  - Witness intimidation a significant problem in the area
    - E.g. verbal abuse to property damage and threats
- Perceptions of the police
  - Not responsive to crime
  - Not approachable (45%), not helpful (47%) or not trustworthy (50%)
- Levels of reporting of crime and witness intimidation
  - Of those who had been victims of crime only half were reported to the police
  - Of those who had witnessed a crime only four in ten thought it had been reported to the police
  - Less than half of intimidation experienced by victims and witnesses was reported to the police
  - Fear of intimidation a significant factor in not reporting crime



# Findings

- Project caseload (12 months)

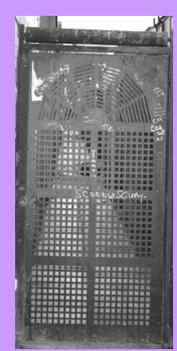
- 93 witnesses supported (82 cases). Six cases led to perpetrator arrest.
- Over half of witnesses were provided with advice and support by the coordinator; many were referred to another agency.
- Positive feedback from victims:
  - “Just the fact knowing that he’s there is a help.”
  - “We knew someone was doing something, because we did not know where to go for information or anything (before).”

- Impact on local agencies

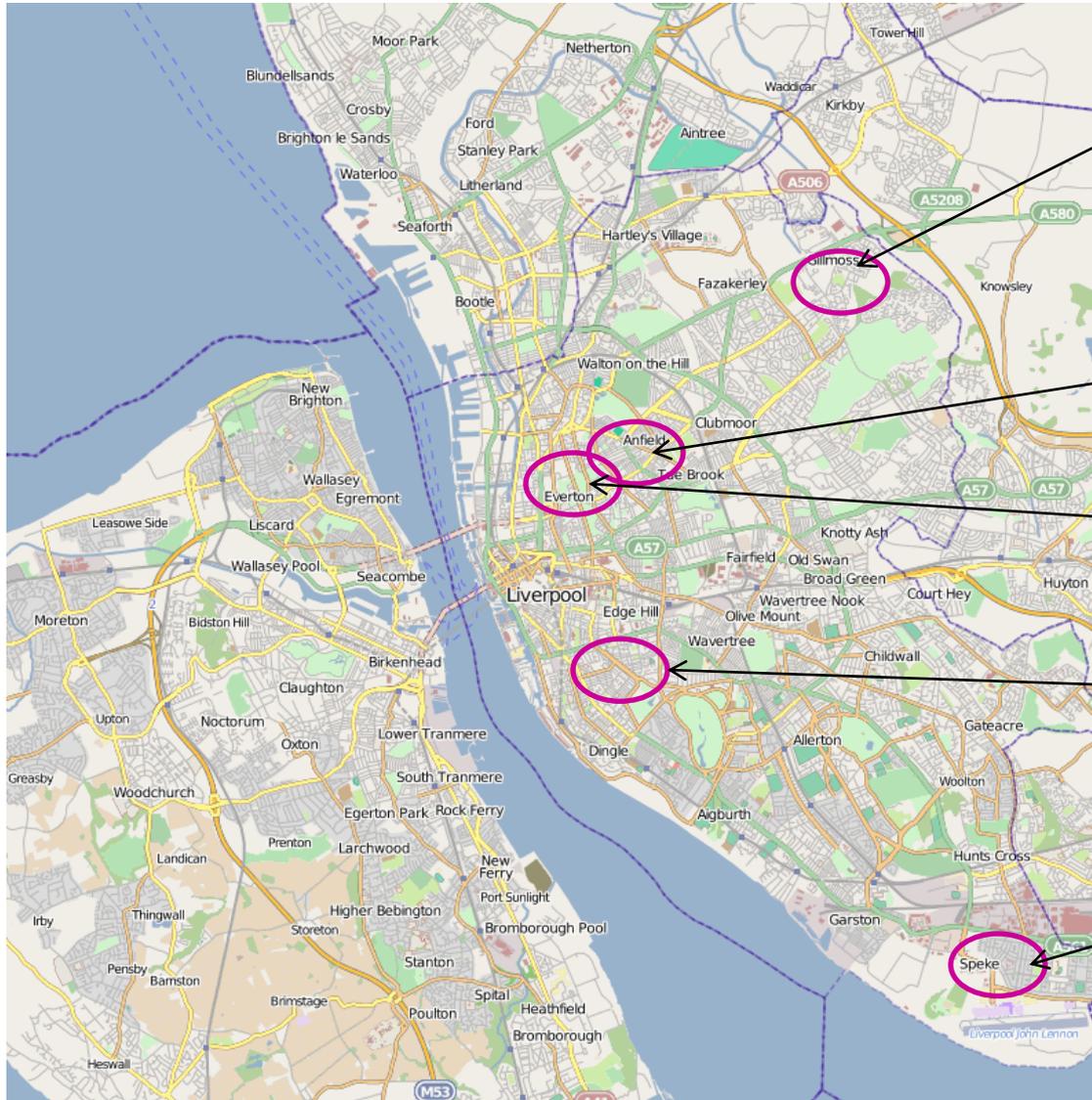
- Local agencies felt multi-agency working had been greatly enhanced by the WAVES project

- Impact on the community

- Data from the crime and witness intimidation survey showed that the number of victims, witnesses and their family members who had been intimidated significantly decreased during the evaluation period.
- Significant reduction in police recorded crimes (1,386 incidents prior to the project and 1,089 during the project).



# Expansion



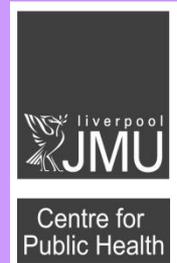
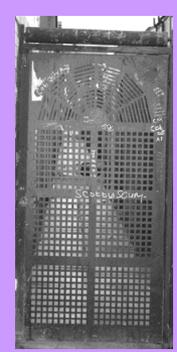
Alt Valley Making WAVES

Anfield Making WAVES

Breckfield Making WAVES

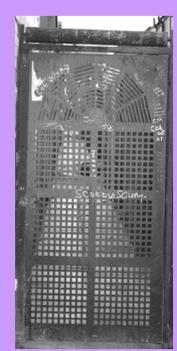
Princes Park Making WAVES

Speke Making WAVES

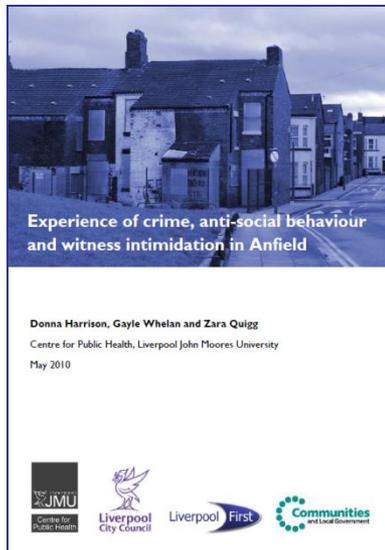
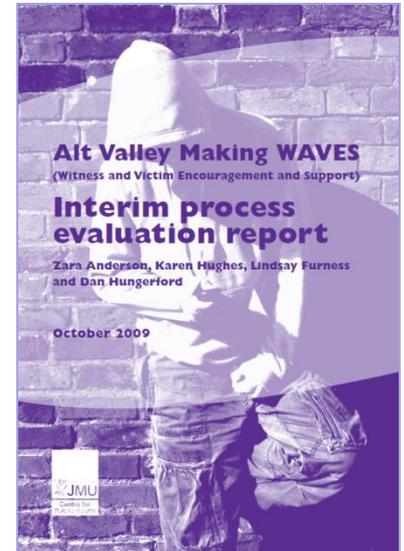
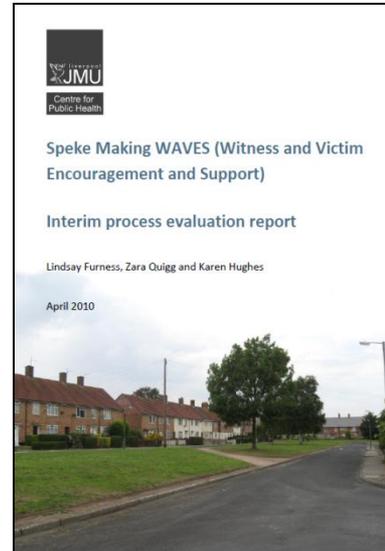
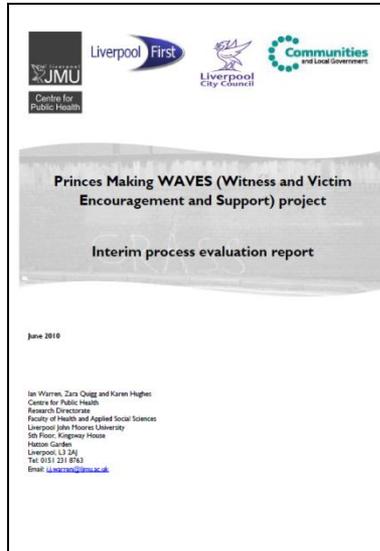
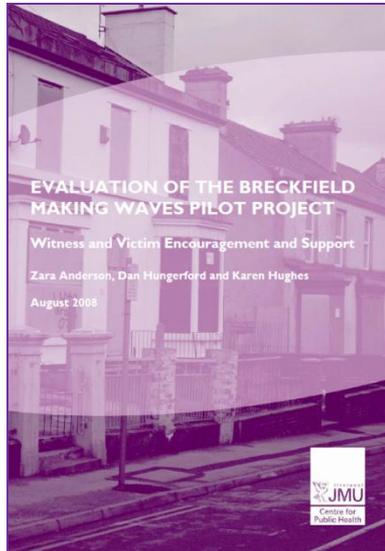


# Summary

- Witness intimidation has devastating effect on both the physical and psychological well-being of victims, families and the community
- Making WAVES aims to facilitate multi-agency working in supporting witnesses through the criminal justice system. By doing so the intention is to tackle witness intimidation and improve levels of crime reporting.
- In the Making WAVES project areas the project has brought together agencies to support witnesses and has supported dozens of witnesses and dealt with dozens of cases.
- There have been findings indicating reductions in both levels of crime and witness intimidation as a result of the WAVES project.
- Expansion across Liverpool .... Make it city-wide because of local variations in delivery



# Reports produced



Ian Warren  
Centre for Public Health  
Liverpool John Moores University  
[i.j.warren@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:i.j.warren@ljmu.ac.uk)

