

PE1367/A

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1367](#): Mosquito devices

The Co-operative Group is the largest UK's largest mutual retailer. We are the fifth largest food retailer, the third largest retail pharmacy chain, the number one provider of funeral service and the largest independent travel business. The Co-operative Group also has strong market positions in banking and insurance. The Group employs 120,000 people, has 5.5 million members and around 4,800 retail outlets.

We aim to be open, responsible and rewarding, putting co-operative values and principles into everyday practice. We also seek to enhance the lives of our people, members, customers, and the communities in which we trade.

The Co-operative is constantly seeking and implementing innovation to reduce crime and issues of anti-social behaviour. The implementation of any innovation is always balanced against the Co-operative's reputation of being a responsible retailer, whose values and principles are at the heart of the business. As a responsible retailer we pride ourselves in our commitment to reducing crime, thereby making our premises and the community in which we trade, a safer, stronger community.

As a retailer in the heart of the community, our food premises can attract the congregation of youths and related anti-social behaviour. The co-operative believes there is a clear distinction between the 'congregating of youths' outside our store and that of 'anti-social behaviour'. Whilst youths simply stood talking with friends should not be regarded as anti-social behaviour, committing criminal acts such as verbal abuse or criminal damage is to be taken seriously.

This statement at this juncture is fundamental to the approach taken by the Co-operative. We do not intend to discriminate against those who are not committing acts of crime, hence our business decision not to introduce the use of Mosquito in our premises, instead introducing and developing the use of the playing of classical music outside selected premises nationwide.

The congregating of youths can cause some alarm and distress to our customers, especially the elderly. We believe that everyone has the right to shop with us without fear or violence or purely having to walk through a group of teenagers to get through.

The pilot included 9 stores around the country. Different types of music were played in the immediate area outside our store. A speaker was securely fixed outside the store, securely wired to a play device. The impact on the local community was also a consideration, ensuring that those in the immediate to the front of our store could hear the music, not local residents. The most effective type of music, when measured, was classical music. The idea was

simple – play something the youths don't like and they won't stand there. We gave staff the facilities of an off and on switch to the music device as well as a volume control. The youths simply didn't like it and they did move on. The youths were consulted with regard their perception of the music and the actual scheme. This is not just about the displacement of crime, but how can the Co-operative through its values and principles engage and potentially fund activities to reduce crime. This has also been achieved.

Research with our customers found that they were more reassured when shopping; they didn't notice the music, just no youths hanging around. The staff were more than happy with not having to tackle anti-social behaviour and get on with their real jobs. Although not subject of the research paper, improve the moral of your staff and you have less staff turnover. Reducing staff turnover reduces the cost of recruitment and training and provides good motivated experienced staff.

The business demonstrated that it had an increase in sales as well as footfall. But what about the youths – as a co-operative society we invest in the community, therefore in several areas where we installed the devices we funded various activities in the community – giving the kids some where to go and or do.

A review of the crime reported in each of the stores found that on average (assessing 5 months pre and post installation); overall crime had reduced by **21%**.

The business then embarked on a roll out of classical music, as it was an effective tool against crime. To date, the Co-operative has invested about £100k on installations (£645.00 per installation).

A post implementation review of a further 43 stores where the scheme was introduced established a **67%** reduction in overall crime. A further roll out to 105 stores then saw a **70%** reduction in overall crime.

Equally important to the actual internally reported crime benefits, is the perception of our management and staff in terms of the success of the scheme in their store and the positive impact it has had.

An extensive management and staff perception survey of implemented stores identified that **89%** of our management and staff stated that it had reduced Anti-social behaviour externally. **49%** stated that it had reduced Anti-social behaviour in-store, something we had never set targets against.

The surveys also identified the perception of its effectiveness in terms of a sliding scale. The surveys also captured information in relation to specific days of the week and times the store experienced ASB.

During the evaluation of the scheme, whether through the crime reporting information or the management and staff perceptions, it was evident that a

limited amount of stores did not benefit in full from the installation. On each occasion, this store was visited by field management to establish the root of the problem. Classical music is an effective tool in crime prevention, but in some cases, not in isolation. Engagement and a partnership approach is key to resolving issues in difficult areas.

Police Forces throughout the UK, Regional Government Offices and local authorities have made contact with the business in order to identify the benefits of the scheme and whether this innovation could be used by them for their own crime prevention schemes. The Co-operative is seen as the experts in this area.

the Co-operative has also received extensive media coverage with regard this innovation and our stance against Mosquito, the coverage of which is available on the world wide web.