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TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4"- 'GUN CRIME'

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THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

Transmission: Tuesday 27th March 2007

Producer: Samantha Fenwick
Reporter: Allan Urry
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URRY: Concern about teenage violence in Britain’s inner cities has reached a new high following a series of shootings and stabbings. The Government’s threatening tougher jail sentences, but critics say not enough is being done to tackle the root causes of the problem.

JOHN: When the next murder takes place, people will be wringing their hands and coming out in large numbers to attend yet another funeral, and that would simply deepen the sense of hopelessness that people have.

URRY: Yet not everywhere shares that sense of hopelessness. In the city of Manchester, juvenile crime has fallen by nearly 40% and hundreds of youngsters are in positive programmes to keep them off the streets and away from trouble.

ACTUALITY OF BOXING

MAN: What’s the matter, boy? Sit, sit, sit, you’re standing up straight …. Let’s go. There you go, move around the bag, move around.

URRY: But this is Manchester in the American North East, where they believe they're winning the fight against gang culture.

ACTUALITY SIRENS, FEMALE VOICE ON RADIO

URRY: Tonight we report from Manchester, England and its namesake in New Hampshire. They face similar problems, but we've discovered very different outcomes for each community. Is there anything Britain can learn from this tale of two cities?

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY OF SHOT

RYDEARD: The bullet, as you can see, has passed all the way through about a 30cm length of ballistic soap.

URRY: Senior forensic scientist, Phil Rydeard, testing a handgun recovered by police.

RYDEARD: It's exited the back of the soap. Now this soap is the same density and the same nature as human tissue, it's designed as a tissue stimulant and it's used for ballistic testing.

URRY: And this is about 12" deep at least.

RYDEARD: 12" deep, yes, so the bullet was passed all the way through, as it would do through a human body.

URRY: This is the Forensic Science Service's northern firearms unit, based in Manchester, UK. It's where this revolver - and others - have been traced to a local gang who've been buying guns abroad designed to fire blanks, and converting them into lethal weapons.
Can I just look down the barrel, because that looks as though not only has the blockage been removed, but it's actually been widened as well.

RYDEARD: It's slightly over-broad, yes, so bullets passing down there will do so quite freely, without any danger of the barrel blowing up.

URRY: And that is an effective firearm now, is it?

RYDEARD: This is a lethal barrelled weapon. It fulfils all the requirements of a firearm and indeed weapons of this type have been used in a number of fatalities.

URRY: When File on 4 investigated the issue of firearms tracing four years ago, British police were in disarray. Since then there's been much improvement - more intelligence gathering, better forensics. Some police areas, including Greater Manchester, dedicate extra resources. It means they can find out much more about the weapons they recover. Police now know these converted pistols have been used to wound and kill, in kidnappings and during armed robberies, including at a post office in Rochdale.

ACTUALITY OF SIREN

PATEL: The guy went to the post office, shouted out straightaway, 'I've got a gun here, this is an armed robbery, give us your money.'

URRY: Five feet four Jagdish Patel, who with his family has run this general store and post office for twenty years. It was Jagdish behind the counter one day in October 2005 when two men came in wearing motorcycle gear and full face helmets. They were both armed with pistols. One attacked the 36 year old shopkeeper, pistol-whipping him on the head. Groggy, bleeding from head wounds, he fought back, but it almost cost him his life.

PATEL: I just picked up a baseball bat, which we have, and I just vaulted the counter. I headed straight for the guy, who I could see wearing a helmet, and as I went towards him, he lifted his gun up to shoot, because he said he would fire, and I just swung my baseball bat. Luckily, as I swung it, his hand shifted up a little bit and he fired and it just missed the right hand side of my face.

URRY: And he was pointing it at your head, was he?

PATEL: Yes, straight for me.

URRY: And it did, the bullet actually grazed your head, I understand?

PATEL: It did. It grazed the side of my head, whizzed past and then lodged up in the ceiling at the top over here. I was flabbergasted, I fell back thinking, have I been shot, am I injured? As I'd fallen back, he'd run straight across, tried to get out, and that's where I was trying to get my feet across in this area so I could …

URRY: Still trying to trip him?

PATEL: Oh yeah, still trying to trip him, and someone just chased after him.

URRY: The gunmen ran off, but were chased and caught by Jagdish Patel and his friends after a hue and cry in the community. They were jailed. He was awarded a police medal for outstanding bravery. Greater Manchester Police later busted the gang responsible for converting the pistols to fire live ammunition. They'd bought them legally in Germany, then smuggled them into the UK and re-engineered them. Detective Inspector John Lyons says they still haven't found all the weapons.

LYONS: In excess of a hundred were recovered, some of those in an unconverted state, others have been recovered during various operations against criminals and investigations of serious crimes. The figure at the minute I think runs at about 110 now. We believe that up to 274 were brought into the country, so that leaves a significant number out there.

URRY: Well what sort of people were they selling them to?

LYONS: It was difficult for us to uncover actually the distribution network, how they were actually getting them out into the criminal

LYONS cont: environment, but what we were able to do is link firearms that we've recovered from particular incidents, so these guns had eventually moved from them to in the possession of gang members within the Manchester area.

URRY: And that's now the big concern - these sorts of pistols are spreading from criminals to gangs of teenagers in Britain's inner cities.

BOY: The only thing that makes Wythenshawe bad is because everybody is wanting to use guns and just kill each other with guns, innit?

URRY: Well what is all that about then? Why do people want to use guns?

BOY: For a reputation, innit?

URRY: When you say reputation, a reputation as what?

BOY: A gangster, being a gangster, man.

BOY 2: You shoot someone, you're big mate, you've got the balls and that, innit? You smoke someone, then you're not a little muppet and that, are you?

URRY: So it's a way of getting respect, is it?

BOY 2: Once you've done it and that, you are respected and that, you get me?

URRY: Aren't there other ways to get respect?

BOY: Phat cars and that.

BOY 2: Cars that you've saved up for for years we've already drove it and we're 19 years old, do you understand what I'm saying? Big cars, BMW X5s and Z3s, do you know what I mean?

URRY: You've driven them?

BOY 2: That's what fazes us, mate. Course we've driven them.

BOY: There's no good ways of getting a reputation round here. There's no good ways. You have to work to get your reputation.

URRY: A gun culture beyond traditional criminality is emerging in places like Wythenshawe on the outskirts of Manchester. In some parts, residents complain about gangs of teenagers roaming around outside. We were warned by a leading community group not to be on the streets after dark there, because of the dangers. Those we interviewed under conditions of anonymity made it clear that for them, crime was a way of life.

BOY: I've applied for jobs, meant to be getting an interview this week innit at the airport, but can't be arsed, man.

URRY: Jobs don't appeal to you?

BOY: I hate working me, it does my head in. I'd rather just go out and just make money the other way.

URRY: How much money can you make then by doing what you do?

BOY: On a normal night you can make up to like a little decent wedge would be six or seven ton, a grand tops maybe, that's just if you're going out doing a little graft, doing a little burglary or something. Plasma tellies, laptops, cars.

URRY: That's the attraction then, is it, being able to make a thousand pounds a night?

BOY: Yes.

URRY: Do you carry guns?

BOY: I ain’t obliged to say nothing to that question.

URRY: No you’re not, but I’m just curious because, from what you’ve described, I wonder how you protect yourself.

BOY: I can’t answer that question, I’m sorry, man.

URRY: How about you? Have you got access to guns?

BOY 2: I’ve got access, yeah.

URRY: But what you’re saying is you can get access to them if you feel you need to?

BOY: All day, all day mate.

URRY: Have you been shot at then?

BOY: Have I been shot at? Yeah, of course I have. I’ve had my house shot at, mate, do you know what I mean?

URRY: Was anyone hurt?

BOY: Nah, just windows went through and that innit. That’s nothing that, though, you said that in amazement like, does that happen or something, innit? Know what I mean?

URRY: We have no way of knowing how much of this is bravado, but it does fit the picture of gang lifestyle which is said to be a feature here.

ACTUALITY OF TABLE FOOTBALL, BOYS SHOUTING

URRY: The United Estates of Wythenshawe, a facility run by a group of locals, is trying to offer alternatives. Table football and other sports equipment give young people something else to do instead of hanging around on the streets – and some staff here act as mentors. But James McCullough, a local single parent who's on the management committee of UEW, is worried about the scale of the problem.

MCCULLOGH: It starts off at school, Benchill are going to beat up Newall Green. It might be fifty people from a school in Benchill who are going to have a fight with fifty people in Newall Green, and that's where the gang culture comes about. So predominantly, if you're in a gang, you're in a certain area. Now you've got to imagine at Wythenshawe we have nine wards, so potentially that's nine gangs, and if they was going to go for a fight to fight somebody, you'd get the majority of them youths going down to fight somebody, you know, so that is the reality of it. In one small area you might get ten packs of ten people, which is a hundred, and in another small area you might get ten packs of ten people, which is another hundred, you know, you've not got a thousand kids walking round with guns, there's nothing like that, but you will have certain sections who deal in certain things.

URRY: Even though UEW is a valuable community resource it gets little financial support from public bodies such as Manchester City Council.

MCCULLOUGH: We get very very little funding support. I mean, we've had small amounts, maybe £1,000, maybe £1,500, very infrequently. The old UEW ethos is funded from the profits from the gymnasium, which are quite minimal.

URRY: Is it that you're not entitled to funding or you just don't know where to get it?

MCCULLOUGH: We do know where to get funding, but we're not what the council would accept as a legitimate operation, for the simple reason that we don't operate like other projects might operate. We openly invite everybody – all the socially excluded, educationally excluded, anybody on the estate is welcome to come here and use these facilities. So because of this we operate outside of the box, and because we

MCCULLOUGH cont: do that, we can’t then go and fill in an application for funding where we’re going to tick all the correct boxes what they want us to tick, which obviously would mean that they can’t give us that funding.

URRY: The city council pointed out that in Wythenshawe more than £30 million has been spent on community facilities in the last four years, much of that on centres aimed at young people, and that there are ambitious plans for town centre improvements. A spokesman told File on 4 youth nuisance reports are down 40% following a drive to tackle the problem. But across Manchester we’ve spoken to other community groups, the grass roots organisations supposed to be at the heart of the long term prevention of gang violence, and it’s clear there’s a constant struggle to get proper funding.

EXTRACT FROM PEACE FM

URRY: Peace FM is community radio for Moss Side, a multicultural district with a troubled history of gun crime. It’s run by an organisation called Carisma, volunteers trying to improve life chances for young people in the area. Carisma says Peace FM reaches into the darker corners of Moss Side and engages those who might otherwise stay silent, to speak about gangs.

PRESENTER: … when people phone in, everyone’s saying there’s nothing to do, there’s gun crime because there’s nothing to do. There’s gangs because there’s nothing to do. There’s drugs because there’s nothing to do ….

URRY: But the licence to broadcast is expensive, so the station can only go on air for a month, because there’s not enough funding. When we were there earlier in March it was their last day. Carisma’s Erinma Bell argues it’s typical of the problems she and many other volunteer groups for which she speaks continue to face.

BELL: We do get funding, but it’s very small, it’s very short term. If we are going to get funding that is going to enable us to have a long term effect, we’re going to need long term funding – and long term beyond three years, because usually the most long term funding you can get is three year funding. Now …

URRY: Why is that not long enough?

BELL: Normally if you start a project or you've got a project that you're setting up, it's going to take you at least a good twelve to eighteen months to get the project up and running, to get people up to speed with it and to get it out there and known to other people that it exists. That takes about eighteen months to do. Then you're going to spend the next eighteen months actually engaging with people, and by the time you've engaged with people, your funding's over, and that's when people are only just beginning to engage with the project, the funding ends and then you start again.

URRY: Even when the Government does create a specific pot of money for groups like Carisma tackling gun crime, they say there are unnecessary strings attached. The Home Office gives grants under a scheme called Connected, but Erinma Bell says it isn't connected to that which she's trying to achieve.

BELL: I've looked at the guidelines for that, I've read them word for word. Whilst the project I have in my head can fulfil most of the criteria, because again I don't want to change the aims and objectives of the project that I want to run, but there's a section in it that says you have to identify how your project will work with the fact that this year is the 200 years since the abolishment of slavery.

URRY: What's wrong with that?

BELL: I want to run a community leadership programme which we have done before, where basically we take on board young people who want to just make a difference in their community. So, you know, I'm thinking, yeah, you know the Connected funding can do that, because the Connected funding is also a stream of funding that is to be used in order to direct young people away from gun crime.

URRY: But they're insisting that you do something about the abolition of slavery? And are you saying that in the context in which you want to use the money, that's just not appropriate?

BELL: Whilst I understand that that’s important, that people know that, the community leadership programme was not about that. I can certainly tell them about it, but then really they’ll probably think, well what’s that got to do with us being community leaders?

URRY: The Scarman Trust, a charity which helps communities with practical advice and support about funding, recognises the problem. Executive director, Matthew Pike, believes the bureaucracy is overwhelming.

PIKE: Starting any new initiative is hard enough, it’s hard enough to set a business up, but we are making it as complex as is conceivable. It requires acts of supreme heroism to negotiate the different hurdles that lie in people’s way. Funding should be simple, it should be clear, it should be non bureaucratic and it should put as few hurdles as possible in people’s way.

URRY: Why the complexity then?

PIKE: Well funders always feel, I think, a need to ration their resource, funders always feel the sense of public accountability. There have been examples of fraud in the past and I think there is a certain level of paranoia out there, and some of that is justified. But the question is, how do you control the risks involved in investing in people, and indeed, how do you have a healthy attitude to risk in the first place?

URRY: Why hasn’t the Government made this more simple then? If you’re telling me that there are simple and effective solutions that can be applied, why hasn’t the Government done that?

PIKE: I think the Government actually is persuaded of the case for this happening, but national Government no longer controls so many of the levers. They have devolved power and responsibility down to a local authority level and there isn’t a sufficient obligation upon local authorities to do the right thing.

URRY: The role of local councils is crucial. They're in partnership with police and communities, but some are complaining they haven't been fulfilling those obligations.

EXTRACT FROM NEWS REPORT

PRESENTER: Police in Greater Manchester have launched a murder investigation after a fifteen year old boy was shot dead. The teenager was killed in the early hours of the morning in the Moss Side area of the city.

URRY: Erinma Bell says it took the murder of schoolboy Jessie James last September before the city council responded to some of Moss Side's basic needs.

BELL: In a particular area the lighting was bad, bushes were overgrown, trees were overgrown, so it did create a very dark spot in a particular area. There was no CCTV even, so it's only when people, you know, galvanised together and actually started talking about it and saying, 'We want that changed. Why has this not been done? We want it done,' and it got done.

URRY: But what happened to trigger that?

BELL: Unfortunately what happened to trigger that in that particular area was the unfortunate murder of teenager, Jessie James.

URRY: I think people will be surprised to hear that there's been no CCTV in some of the areas of Moss Side where there's been shootings for years.

BELL: We just got used to the fact that there was no CCTV and I think also we probably thought that we could not command for CCTV to be put up there.

URRY: Who's put the money up for that?

BELL: The police put the money up for that to happen. Because we found again a lot of the things that needed changing and needed doing, whilst most people were blaming the police, it wasn’t actually the police’s responsibility. For example, street lighting – people would tell the police off for that. Whilst the police will take the flak, they would then explain to us that even though they’re not wanting to pass the buck, but it’s not really their department that’s responsible for that, so then they …

URRY: That’s a local authority responsibility, isn’t it?

BELL: Yes. So they were then instrumental in getting people like the local authority to a community meeting and getting those people to come to our community and to sit down and talk with us and listen to a lot of the concerns that the community actually had.

URRY: In their statement, Manchester City Council didn’t respond to the direct criticisms of being slow to act until Jessie James was shot, but the statement pointed out they’ve established a special team for the area, and suggested they’re doing better now.

READER IN STUDIO: We are carrying out community clean-ups with our locally-based rapid response teams removing graffiti, fly-tipping, overgrown foliage and other blights on the area within 24 hours of them being reported. In our experience this approach has been extremely well received by residents.

URRY: The statement also denied any delays in installing CCTV cameras. However Greater Manchester Police told us it had taken up to three years to put the funding together with the Council and the Government Office Northwest. The need for CCTV was identified by police through a strategy launched three years ago called Xcalibre. By then officers had realised they had to do better on gun crime. Assistant Chief Constable Dave Jones remains optimistic that Xcalibre will bring improvements.

JONES: It was very much an enforcement-led approach for eighteen months to two years, but very very quickly you realised that enforcement is a very small part of the solution. What we, I think, are trying to do is to ensure that those

JONES cont: causing the greatest harm are targeted by us by whatever methods that we've got available to us, from a legitimate point of view, but ultimately there's only so much enforcement that can be done. There are wider society issues which creates that kind of environment. If we can hold the line, ie to make sure that things don't get any worse and create that breathing space for the communities, I do fundamentally believe that things will change if other groups, other partners and working closely with the community start trying to offer an alternative lifestyle.

URRY: But some people in Moss Side have been complaining that, you know, after Jessie James was shot, the council was rushing around trying to fix street lights and cut back hedges where people might be lurking in, but that that had been neglected for a long time before that. I mean, some of the basics is not getting done here.

JONES: I think it's unfortunate in our society there's a general trend that we often wait for something to happen before there's a reaction. And I think if we go back to the point that I was making before about policing response to gun crime was a bit like that, we'd wait for something to happen and then we'd do something. I think it can only work if you create that sort of breathing space for the community, but you've then got to expect that all the other agencies are lining up with the community to deliver the longer term stuff.

URRY: The Assistant Chief Constable is reluctant to criticise his partner agencies, but others are more willing to do so.

JOHN: The City Council needs to ensure that it is responsive to the needs and circumstances of particularly the most threatened young people in the area, that it can find ways of working with gang members and those who were former gang members, and I personally did not find that it was too much to ask.

URRY: Last year, after Jessie James' killing, Professor Gus John, a leading social activist and academic, produced a report – agreed, he says, with police and the community - which contained a ten point plan for action to meet the challenges of gang violence. Professor John presented it to the council and says he was expecting them to act on it.

JOHN: That has not been Manchester's response. Rather they threw in the ball back into the court of community members themselves who do not have the money, they don't have the political clout and there is really no statutory basis on which they can come together to make these things happen. There is no concerted attempt to understand what levels of resourcing are necessary if one is going to intervene meaningfully in this situation. To work Manchester City Council, the business sector in the community of Manchester, churches, community leadership groups etc, to work together and have a plan that can actually demonstrate the possibility of making an impact on this situation we're describing.

URRY: You don't see anybody pulling that together?

JOHN: Certainly not, and I believe that it is frankly irresponsible on the part of the city authorities to allow this situation to drift. And I can tell you one thing, God forbid that it should ever happen, but when the next murder takes place, people will be wringing their hands and coming out in large numbers to attend yet another funeral, and that would simply deepen the sense of hopelessness that people have.

URRY: In a statement, the city council said Professor John's report had been discussed at their highest level and is taken very seriously. It gave a more upbeat assessment.

READER IN STUDIO: The Council is working very well with the steering group, led by local voluntary group Carisma, which we help to support. However, as Professor John himself says, the Council and other agencies will only succeed in Moss Side by working together with the community and we fully agree with that position.

URRY: The sense of hopelessness which concerns Gus John is far less evident in Manchester's namesake city, more than three thousand miles away. On the other side of the Atlantic there've been very different outcomes to the attempts to combat gang violence.

ACTUALITY OF PIPES AND DRUMS

URRY: They've been celebrating St Patrick's Day with a parade in Manchester, New Hampshire. With a population of little more than a hundred thousand, it's not a big place, but it's still the largest city in the State, and it's having its share of problems. An economic downturn in the 1990s for this former textile town left its poor districts getting poorer, and caught up in a surge of crack cocaine gangs. The authorities realised that they needed sustainable, long term solutions, and they've been putting them into action.

ACTUALITY IN BOXING GYM...

O'KEEFE: Good. Coming back on the right. One-two-one. There you go. One-two-one. Just work on the technique. Being taller comes later.

URRY: They can be found in places like this - a boxing club owned by the Manchester Police Athletic League. Young people from the most deprived city neighbourhood, known as the Zone, come here for training, under the watchful eye of police officer Brian O'Keefe. This is his full time job. Officer O'Keefe doesn't patrol the streets, he patrols teenagers.

O'KEEFE: I have kids that have been assigned here through court ordered mandates. I have kids that come in that have never been in trouble, yet they all come down here, we mould them into the same type of kids, so to speak, with a little individuality. And the kids all do a great job, they do well in school, I check their report cards. This is more than just a boxing gym, it's a foundation for life.

URRY: It does actually keep them out of trouble, does it?

O'KEEFE: Oh no doubt. In this country we have most juveniles get into trouble between the hours of 2-6pm, after school hours a lot of parents work, although the majority of these kids come from a single parent home where, if Mom works, she's not around, and if she's not working she's usually got some sort of addiction. So we have some tough inner city kids here, but by me checking their report cards and making sure they're doing the right thing out there, I'm 100% certain that we're making a difference in a lot of kids' lives in this city.

URRY: And what sort of boundaries are you setting?

O'KEEFE: Basically telling them that they need to work hard to succeed in life, and if I find out that they're even getting into any type of trouble outside of here, I meet with guidance counsellors, I meet with principals, I meet with teachers, so these kids understand I'm actually looking out for their interests – not just three hours a day here, but throughout the day.

URRY: They call these places safe havens, and after they've trained here for a while, some of these young people will join others in another of the Zone's social mentoring projects, just a few blocks away.

ACTUALITY AT SALVATION ARMY

URRY: This is the Salvation Army, which has impressive facilities. Every evening they run a kids' café feeding 100 to 150. Staff here know who comes down and what their backgrounds are, because this information is shared around the safe havens in the Zone.

ACTUALITY OF BOB SPEAKING AT TABLES

BOB: Joe there in charge of the table. Please respect them. The bathrooms are closed, you guys are older, you know the rules. You'd like a salad, please walk up …

URRY: Each table in the refectory has a mentor, mostly volunteers, who ensure standards of behaviour. For many of these young people this will be their only hot meal of the day. After they've finished here and helped with the clearing up, they can use the recreation facilities in the building or the quiet rooms to do homework, something most don't have at home. There are adults to help them with that if they need it. Manchester enjoys special federal funding for the strategy called Weed and Seed. It aims to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in high-crime neighbourhoods like the Zone - weeding out the bad and seeding in prevention and revitalisation. These things take time, so it's funded for five years. Anna Thomas from the city's Department of Health says the key to it has been forming a close partnership with residents.

THOMAS: The ultimate goal in employing a strategy like this has to be getting those residents involved and feeling like they have a voice or a say in the process.

URRY: They get a bigger voice every year under the way this thing is set up, don't they?

THOMAS: It needs to end up with an over-representation of the residents being involved, and we had residents involved in the planning, in the prioritisation when we first received the designation. But now we're at a point where this is very resident-driven. We are basically an infrastructure that serves as a complement to their work and their prioritisation. So it's our job within the city to help bring resources to those neighbourhoods, to help provide adequate planning, space or anything else that the residents need in order to be successful.

URRY: Well give me an example of how this has delivered what residents feel they need.

THOMAS: In five years we've been able to clean up the streets, we've been able to build in community gardens, we've been able to do trainings with the residents, we've now established these 41 Neighbourhood Watch groups with nearly seven hundred residents involved, and this concept of Weed and Seed is really bringing everyone together around one table where these things can be well established.

ACTUALITY ON STREET

MICHAEL: You can't do your Neighbourhood Watch if you can't see what's going on!

URRY: Kathy Michael is in one of those 41 neighbourhood groups, patrolling the snowy streets after a late winter storm. She lives in the Zone, and has seen it transformed by Weed and Seed and responsive policing. The residents of inner city Manchester, New Hampshire don’t have to wait for a teenager to be shot to get their street lights fixed.

MICHAEL: We go out, and if we’re walking and we see an area that’s not well lit, we jot it down and we mention it to the police and they go through all the proper channels to get lights put up. There’s two or three areas up here where there was really poor lighting. We spoke to the right people at the Police Department and they took it to whoever, and there were lights put up very quickly. So yeah, it definitely is one of those things that they realise it’s a problem, you’ve got to have good lighting, because otherwise you will get problems, you know, because if you can’t see what’s going on, you can’t fix it.

ACTUALITY OF BASKETBALL GAME

URRY: Community engagement means that, as they say here in Manchester, everyone is on the same page. It’s brought coherence and cohesion. None of the voluntary groups had realised, for example, that no youth club opened on a Saturday night - a key time for keeping kids off the streets. Now there’s just such a teen night, right here at the Boys and Girls Club of America, and as many as twelve hundred attend. Weed and Seed money pays for a community police officer to be here, as well as youth workers like Bob Champagne, who says it’s all worked out in regular multi agency meetings.

CHAMPAGNE: Twenty-seven different agencies will sit at that table with the police and the US Attorney’s office and primarily we just stay in communication, that’s the big thing. I mean, we meet once a month, so we all know what everybody else is doing, we’re all on the same page, we’re all working on identified problems. And a lot of times the police will come to us and say, ‘Hey we’ve heard of this starting to happen,’ and through our own little investigations we’ll usually nip that stuff right in the bud before it even, you know, gets underway. Last summer we had a few kids who were causing problems, the police came and said, hey, we had some problems from the neighbours who said this was starting to happen. Well, once that got to me, I ended up doing my own investigation following up the five kids who were involved in this. Just brought them in, had a talk with them and that was the end of it.

URRY: For someone who comes from outside this area, it all sounds a bit too good to be true.

CHAMPAGNE: Weed and Seed has, not just in this community, other communities, created the same kind of atmosphere that people working together for common good, and it does seem too good to be true. If you asked me six year ago would I ever see us at this place, I would definitely tell you no.

URRY: According to Anna Thomas, who runs the overall strategy, it's getting results, keeping violence in check. Juvenile crime fell 39% in the Zone between 2002 and 2006. Serious Crimes, such as murders, rapes, robberies and assaults have seen a similar reduction.

THOMAS: What we've tried to do is compare two areas of the city. One is on the East Side, where Weed and Seed exists, and then one on the West Side, where there is similar demographics but we do not have a Weed and Seed strategy currently. And we've seen gradual reduction in those five years and on the West Side it has remained fairly stable.

URRY: It's not just, then, is it, that you've displaced the gangs on to the other side of town?

THOMAS: A lot of people will speculate that, has it been displacement of crime? I think we have some sense that even though the crime rates on the West Side have been stable, it hasn't increased dramatically. So I think what we're trying to do is curb some of that crime, we're hopeful that that's what's one of the outcomes of the initiative.

URRY: The strategy is in its final year of federal funding, but it's been so successful, Manchester's Department of Health is to take it over and plans to roll it out city wide. And alongside Weed and Seed there's been Federal money for tougher policing.

ACTUALITY OF POLICE RADIOS

URRY: Police officer Luke Hobbs is on patrol downtown on a Saturday night.

HOBBS: Take a right down here, there's a guy with a baseball hat …

URRY: When he's not dealing with street muggings, officer Hobbs and his colleagues gather as much intelligence as they can about the allegiances forming in different neighbourhoods.

ACTUALITY IN CAR

HOBBS: This here is Douglas Street, where the group of kids, the D-Blocks started. It started with a bunch of kids who lived in the same block right over here, this building here, 30 apartment building. A group of kids who live round this area started hanging out and they came up with D Block.

URRY: What kind of a gang are they?

HOBBS: More of a violent gang, assaultive, not necessarily big in the drug trade, but they did a lot of violent crimes like assaults and robberies. The majority of them are currently in jail.

URRY: Manchester police department's gang intelligence officer, Jeff Harrington, says when the latest surge in crime began two years ago, they decided on zero tolerance for gangs.

HARRINGTON: We're going out there, focusing on where these gangs are at. We have beefed up patrols, certain cruiser routes that have extra manpower on them, to basically just make life miserable for them and move them out of here.

URRY: And are you seeing some results?

HARRINGTON: Yes. We had a problem over in the West Side last summer. It was infiltrated with three four-man cars every night, just focusing and hammering on them. It's like shaking a beehive, you know, bees don't like being shaken, so they just scatter and that's basically what happened over there, when we cleaned up that area of time.

URRY: But what about arrests? Are you actually arresting and charging people?

HARRINGTON: Yes, numerous arrests. Anything that they do that's illegal that's taken place in the presence of a police officer, they are arrested. There is zero tolerance to that. And then the other side is our special investigations unit. Quite a few undercover agents working throughout the city and basically they're buying drugs off targeted areas where we know there's gang activity, and they get swept up. Sometimes thirty or forty people at a given time are swept up and they call them a street sweeper, and they are prosecuted and brought to jail.

URRY: Some of that effort wouldn't have been possible without extra help from other national law enforcement agencies. The President has made gun crime the number two priority for America, second only to terrorism. File on 4 was invited to a special multi task force meeting held at the US Attorney's office.

ACTUALITY OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

PEOPLE: …. to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation …

URRY: Just like Weed and Seed at community level, New Hampshire US Attorney, Tom Colantuono, argues enforcement is now more effective because agencies are not just pledging allegiance to the flag, but to each other, finally learning how to work better together.

COLANTUONO: It's the interpersonal relations that get developed in these taskforces that really make it work, and it's also the expertise that each agency is able to bring to bear. Like, for example, in tackling gun crime, of course, you have our lead agency of ATF, but then a lot of the crime is based upon drug dealing, so you need the drug enforcement agency in there, and then you have the FBI, which has its own expertise in the gang area. And then, when you pair them up with the local Police Department and their detectives, as well as state police, who know the local area, that's where you get the best results.

URRY: So how many people have been jailed then, as a result of this new drive?

COLANTUONO: Well we just did the statistics on a street sweeper for this last year and I believe there were almost a hundred defendants, most of them were from Manchester. Those are for drug prosecutions. You saw Operation Taps, where we’ve indicted sixteen individuals for gun crimes, and that’s just at the federal level. You have dozens and hundreds at the state local level, and it has an impact. As a citizen I perceive an impact. We’ll see what happens as the better weather comes and more people are out on the streets, the spring and the summer bring out a lot more activity and this summer will be a good test to see if the new law enforcement efforts are working.

URRY: Most of those we’ve spoken to in New Hampshire think they’ll pass that test, and remain confident about the impact their strategies are having. That’s been in marked contrast to what we’ve found in the Manchester of Moss Side and Wythenshawe. A sense of hopelessness, a lack of coherent action, gangs roaming around the estates aspiring to little else but crime, community groups struggling to get finance. We invited the Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government, Ruth Kelly to take part in this programme. Her Department’s stated aim is to help create a safe, healthy, sustainable environment for us all to live in. We were told she was very interested in the subject, but couldn’t find the time. So, we then asked to interview a junior minister in her department, Phil Woolas. We were told he too would have liked to have taken part, but was too busy.

SIGNATURE TUNE