A six month operation focussed on street prostitution has yielded impressive results.

STORY AMANDA BEADMAN
POLICE MONTHLY

Earlier this year investigators from Liverpool LAC helped uncover a shocking child prostitution ring operating out of Warwick Farm. The investigation into the syndicate, which is still ongoing, led to the formation of Strike Force Woodvale and resulted in six people being charged with 70 offences. Following on from the success of Woodvale, Liverpool command recently conducted another operation in the same area, a location notorious for prostitution related crime.

The operation involved investigators from Liverpool conducting surveillance and coordination while undercover operatives posed as both potential clients and prostitutes. Liverpool LAC Crime Manager Det, Insp Danny Doherty said Operation Streetwalker formed part of the command’s ongoing commitment to targeting vice in the local area.

“This area is fairly well known for street prostitution and we have run similar operations in previous years – although this one has been the most successful, and was conducted over a longer period of time,” Det Insp Doherty said.

“It’s part of our ongoing commitment to continue targeting vice in the area. There’s a great line of communication between local community groups and police. They let us know when things are escalating.”

Operation Streetwalker was conducted from May to October this year throughout the Warwick Farm/Liverpool area. Eight deployments resulted in 60 arrests.

Ten charges were laid against women for the offence of prostitute solicit client within view of prescribed premises, and 50 charges were laid against men for the offence of client solicit prostitute within view of prescribed premises.

Det Insp Doherty said the combination of high visibility policing, ongoing targeted operations and a healthy degree of community engagement was helping to clean up the area’s trouble spots.

“We find a lot of our crime prevention and reduction strategies are effective from a grassroots level, word of mouth plays a big part in deterring where these sorts of crimes are occurring. Community engagement and consultation definitely plays an important role,” he said.

“We do a sweep and that lets people know that we are locking a lot of people up. The word gets out through the girls engaging in the prostitution and hopefully also to their potential clients. Then we continue to monitor the situation.”

Other strategies include targeting brothels in conjunction with local council and where possible, using media coverage to deter potential clients from popular prostitution venues in the wake of a bust.

Det Insp Doherty said everyone involved in the success of Operation Streetwalker did an amazing job, and he extended particular thanks to the officers from the Undercover Branch.

“Without the assistance of the UCs we wouldn’t have been able to do the job,” he said. “Everyone involved was outstanding, and the results reflect that.”