



■ SURREY ■  
**POLICE**

# PROBLEM SOLVING POLICING DATABASE

'THE' TILLEYAWARD'

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE PROBLEM SOLVING POLICING (PSP) DATABASE**

This project set out to achieve a synthesis of the critical elements of the Force Problem Solving Patrol Model and to help develop the Surrey Neighbourhood Policing style.

Using the S.A.R.A. problem solving template, the intention was to introduce a system that was simple to understand and operate, capable of receiving notifications of Policing problems and managing Policing activity in response to them, user friendly, involving minimal bureaucracy and able to record actions for future evaluation.

It was also the intention to contribute to a culture change in the way that problem solving was perceived by operational Officers.

The Police service nationally and in other parts of the world has arguably developed and promoted its own perception of what the public wants it to do. This, perhaps in response to perceived rising crime and disorder over the last quarter of a century, has emerged as the professional law enforcement model. Albeit a rational structure to adopt, such a model can significantly reduce the ability of the Police Service to take a holistic approach to the needs of the communities they serve.

As early as 1982 the potential problems associated with a predominantly reactive police culture were beginning to be recognised by Surrey. This led directly to the introduction in 1989 of a more community oriented style known as Total Geographic Policing. The project subject of this report sought to continue the developments (particularly the problem solving approach) initiated by this.

The project group devised and built a problem solving database, which has been tested both in terms of its concept and functionality. The system with all its attendant implications as a resource management tool has been approved as the Force model. It will be further enhanced by the application of customised software and linked seamlessly with the Surrey Police Computer Aided Despatch system.

The project team succeeded in facilitating the development of the Neighbourhood Policing model on different levels. In addition to credible systems, processes and structures capable of delivering a measurable product, significant progress towards winning 'the hearts and minds' of those officers at the operational 'front line' was made.

Finally the measure of success will be the proven move from reactive to proactive policing. Measured and reported on by both the PSP database and the Command and Control system. Additionally, the 2% efficiency target will be linked solely to this process.

## **1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

1.1 The project set out to achieve a synthesis of the critical elements of the corporate Problem Solving Patrol Model and to help develop the Surrey Neighbourhood Policing style in order to achieve enhanced: performance in key areas. Using the SARA problem solving model, the intention was to introduce a forcewide system that was simple to understand and operate, capable of operating within the constraints of existing technology, capable of receiving notifications of Policing problems, and managing the Policing activity in response to them and able to record actions for future analysis and evaluation. In application the system had to be user friendly and involve minimal bureaucracy. It was also the intention to contribute to a culture change in the way that problem solving was perceived by operational Officers.

1.2 The Police service nationally and in other parts of the world has arguably developed and promoted its own perception of what the public wants it to do. This, perhaps in response to perceived rising crime and disorder over the last quarter of a century, has emerged as the professional law enforcement model. Albeit a rational structure to adopt, such a model can significantly reduce the ability of the Police Service to take a holistic approach to the needs of the communities they serve. Similarly Forces often fail to recognise the fundamental message that people simply want to live and work in an environment which they feel is stable and safe. In this context opportunities for synergetic action with **and on behalf of communities can** be overlooked producing a cycle which becomes, in many ways, self-fulfilling. The Police react in isolation instead of in partnership, focusing on short term solutions at the expense of longer-term reduction or prevention. In consequence the community, unaltered, continues to produce more and more complex problems requiring proportionally increased reactive Policing. In other words the better we get at law enforcement the further away we travel from solving 'the problem'.

1.3 The Surrey view is that Policing is about more than just law enforcement. We see the Police not as acting in isolation to achieve some arbitrary goals but rather as one element in an interlinked partnership striving to build safe and prosperous communities where peace and order prevail. Recent and intended Acts of Parliament also reflect the executive, if not societal, change of direction. For example the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, amongst other things require the Police to work in tandem with Local Authorities to produce and implement Crime and Disorder and Youth Offending strategies. Other issues under consideration include significantly the need for national non-rime service delivery standards as Police performance indicators.

1.4 As early as 1982 the potential problems associated with a predominantly reactive police culture were recognised by Surrey. This led directly to the introduction in 1989 of a more community oriented style known as Total Geographic Policing. Later developments included (perhaps uniquely) an attempt to codify Policing as an emergent `science' where differing activities were categorised as **Levels**. These are:

**Level One** – Peacemaking or intervention is effective, speedy action, the police imposing the peace. However, we cannot just await the call but should predict and anticipate crime and conflict. The problem resolution system can be used to identify unstable locations, prominent offenders and people at risk. At this level we will predominately use our intervention skills and tactics, followed by investigation and problem solving.

**Level Two** – Peacekeeping or reduction is when we recognise that peacemaking is failing to deal with persistent crime and disorder. This recognition is made by the Problem Resolution System identifying persistent offenders and specific problem locations. For problem locations the tactic we will employ will be enforcement, whilst for individuals it will be disruption of activities. If the problem is of a scale that is too great for local officers to deal, specialist or Divisional resources will be utilised. At this stage we decide as to whether just police

resources can solve the problem. The primary skills and tactics at this level are investigation, followed by problem resolution and planned, intelligence driven, intervention. For this to succeed patrol officers must develop skills in intelligence driven stop and search.

**Level Three** — Peacebuilding or Prevention is our ultimate aim and it is more than simple crime prevention. It looks to assist the public to become a community which is responsive, self-organising and its individuals responsible for their own obligations as members of that community. The primary skill and tactic here is problem resolution followed by intervention and investigation. This relies on building effective partnerships. For problem locations the main tactic is reinforcement (e.g. deployment of Watch Co-ordinators, Special and Parish Constables and enlisting the help of Caretakers, Wardens and people with influence in the community). For people, the main approach will be the Care-Check. (This is communicating with people you meet during the course of your patrol that are not subject of a P.A.C.E. stop. Especially those who are particularly vulnerable or on the fringe of society). We should be trying to prevent these people from becoming victims or offenders.

1.5 This project sought to continue the developments (particularly the problem solving approach).

1.6 However it was recognised that during the implementation of problem solving as a concept, Individual papers systems emerged in isolation on Divisions and sometimes Areas. Although each had merit all suffered from at least one common drawback. Due to the lack of I.T. the paper systems were too slow to incorporate with the Problems that were emerging, sometimes daily, from the Areas, Neighbourhoods and Beats. This was particularly true of problems demanding Level 2 solutions and in consequence led to longer term level 3 projects forming the bulk of Area activity. Since such long term projects are most definitely slow time and, in the cultural context, tend to be more closely associated with the 'softer' crime prevention tasks, it increased the perception that the concept was apart and unrelated to the realities of Policing as a law enforcement activity. In a sense then the legitimacy of the problem-solving concept needed to be regained and in some cases gained, in the operational environment. In other words a re-contextualisation from the pure concept to a working and effective model.

1.7 Against this background the Home Office announced that in the year 2000 the Force was to assume responsibility for all areas within the administrative County of Surrey. This will include heavily urban localities such as Staines and Banstead, all of which presently enjoy the considerable resources of the Metropolitan Police. A critical time factor was therefore introduced into the development of the Surrey Policing style. Our system has to be effective, cohesive and ready to accommodate the transition by April 2000.

1.8 During the last decade a number of key individuals taken from all levels within the organisation have been involved in the development of the Surrey Policing model. A corporate development programme known as 'Blue Knight' was formed early on in the process to oversee this. Drawing on the work already undertaken in this field, a small project group was formed in August 1998 on one territorial Division in Surrey. Comprising a mix of Police and Civilian managers together with 'front line' operational staff, this team sought to deliver a credible problem-solving model to an agreed timescale. This project became known as the East Surrey Command and Patrol Project or E.S.C.A.P.P. for short.

## **2. PROBLEM DEFINITION**

2.1 In order to successfully impact upon Area and Neighbourhood demands Officers will require the means to identify and action local problems. The ethos of the Command and Control model and therefore a principle area for Blue Knight is that information and intelligence gleaned from beats by patrol Officers must be used as an indicator of current trends and predictor for likely consequences. In this way deviations from the norm or state of stability are identified or anticipated early on and give rise to pro-active Police action (either in isolation or in partnership). In simple terms this means the capability to collect and disseminate (both in fast and slow time) information on which action can be taken by local Officers. Inextricably linked to this principle is the perceived need to create and maintain a sophisticated dynamic profile of a particular Area, Neighbourhood and Beat in order to assist with Problem Identification.

2.2 Although there were nearly thirty projects within the Blue Knight programme, arguably the most significant was 'MENU' (now PSP). MENU was intended as a delivery system that involved Patrol Officers in problem solving Policing activity in slow time (i.e. when not reacting) using information from the intelligence system, Area Profiles and previous knowledge of the locality. This however was more than directed patrolling. It required Officers to take ownership of and responsibility for, the initiation of appropriate Policing activity at either level two or three in order to address the problems identified. As the name suggests there is an element of discretion, selection and negotiation. The work undertaken on this project was the foundation on which the Problem Solving database was built.

2.3 Initial implementation of the problem-solving ethos as expressed through MENU was only partially successful. Perhaps because of poor communication of the original concept there was widespread lack of understanding as to what it involved. It was universally perceived to be a largely irrelevant activity that was in addition to normal Policing tasks (and consequently to be avoided as extra unnecessary workload) or a system devised by management to measure individual performance. In either case it was categorised as 'not real Policing' and clashed with the prevailing cultural paradigm. This barrier was compounded by the fact that the concept was not supported by appropriate Information Technology systems.

## **3. PROBLEM RESOLUTION**

3.1 The project team had the task of facilitating the development of the Neighbourhood Policing model on different levels. In addition to credible systems, processes and structures capable of delivering a measurable product, the team had to win 'the hearts and minds' of those officers at the operational 'front line'. This involved new learning for many and the challenge to existing basic assumptions.

3.2 Issues around the creating and sharing of knowledge central to this project. In the Policing environment this equates to intelligent use of resources. To use the current descriptive phrase relating to performance it means, 'The right people in the right place at the right time, doing the right things in the right way'. To achieve this however the team had to experiment with I.T. systems and techniques that could generate and share the knowledge about problem solving amongst the Area Team.

3.3 During the implementation of E.S.C.A.P.P. a fundamental principal was the ownership by the end users of the system ultimately devised. Moreover this meant ownership of the ethos and

principles of problem solving and not just the I.T. vehicle built around it. From the outset the group established as a priority that Area staff be actively involved in developing the problem solving system that evolved from E.S.C.A.P.P.

3.4 At the start of the project it was also evident that the Neighbourhood Policing model generally and most particularly problem solving was not that well understood by many people. Despite comprehensive documentation by key individuals different interpretations of critical terms existed. It was for this reason that one of the earliest significant acts of the project team was to collectively subscribe to an 'operationalised' version of a problem solving source document and definition of what activity constituted a problem solving task. The latter was utilised as a benchmark against which all potential activity was compared.

3.5 The project team was also concerned to avoid data overload. In the system that was finally devised our understanding of this problem manifested itself in the decision to limit inputs to intelligence items that were actionable. In other words only the information that was usable in a practical way was disseminated. This data limitation was a useful means of maintaining user credibility.

3.6 One of the most significant factors emerging from the project was the legitimisation of problem solving Policing in the eyes of operational officers. Those directly involved with the project were able to resolve successfully the conceptual vision with the realities on the 'shop floor.'

3.7 Thus the manner in which the problem-solving concept was re-contextualised in the operations environment was critical in achieving early success and recognition by 'front line' staff. It was recognised early on that the principal end users of the system (the Neighbourhood Sergeants) needed to be actively involved in marketing the system as it 'rolled out' across the Division. Overall, marketing the product to a variety of audiences, was a principal part of the project team's work and a major tool for gaining legitimacy and backing.

#### **4. RESOLUTION EVALUATION**

4.1 The database that the project group devised and built has been tested both in terms of its functionality and concept. The system with all its attendant implications as a resource management tool has been approved as the Force model. Although the integrity of its functionality will remain as envisaged during ESCAPP, the I.T. system will be enhanced by the application of customised software built or acquired by Information Services. In order that it can be incorporated into the strata of the organisation, in totality the Problem Solving Database will go on to be linked seamlessly with the Surrey Police Computer Aided Despatch system.

4.2 Culturally whilst problem solving Policing still presents difficulties when discussed in some parts of the operational environment, the concept of slow time problem resolution aimed at reducing reactive demands has been re-established at the 'coal face'. Drawing on anecdotal evidence it may be argued that the system, in part due to the involvement of Area staff in its development, is no longer perceived to be principally a management tool for measuring quantitatively an Officer's performance. The principal achievement of ESCAPP in relation to problem solving has been to inextricably link it with 'real-time' credible Policing issues. In the early days the 'pump priming' necessary by the Divisional Intelligence Unit created (and will create elsewhere) a perception that the database is confined to crime matters in isolation. However the balance of the system and thus its conceptual integrity is restored once Area Officers begin to 'feed' it with non-crime problems identified from respective neighbourhoods and beats. This, it may be argued is as it should be, since the ethos of problem solving is ownership by Area Beat Officers and any system developed to support it will rely on their full participation for it to work effectively.

4.3 The significance of sharing good practice amongst operational work teams was identified, early on as being critical in the avoidance of duplication and helpful in recognising innovative Policing tactics across the Force. This recognition is manifest in the database with the 'Solutions' search option. Deriving information gained from problem categorisation at initial input, this option allows officers to interrogate the database and retrieve details of previous activity undertaken in respect of identical or similar problems. The database will allow scrutiny of both successful and unsuccessful options. This is significant in that allows officer to consider and potentially alter tactics in the light of others experiences in similar situations.

## **5. WORKING THE OPERATIONAL DATABASE**

### **5.1 Intelligence and Information Input**

5.1.1 Officers submit crime intelligence to the central collection point via the computerised crime information system (CIS). On division this will normally be directed to the Local Intelligence Officer in order that intelligence text can be updated. The department nominated to carry out the central collection function (Divisional Intelligence Unit) will become in effect a 'Hopper' and will filter the information and develop it in terms of as far as possible, ensuring its accuracy and assessing whether or not it is actionable. Information that is considered actionable will be placed onto the database.

5.1.2 Information of a non- - crime (Disorder) nature will be input at area level. The control measure here is that any information that related specifically to a nominal, known address or vehicle must go to the central collection point for CIS intelligence text update.

5.1.3 All information put onto the database will be classified into five categories. This will be achieved by marking one of the five-labelled fields. A further sub category can be selected.

5.1.4 This process will assist with the evaluation of slow time activity and in establishing a form of stability index for the relevant Area. Additionally the headings are will allow potential solutions to policing problems to be found in the future, by allowing a search against category to be made. The submission of information and intelligence is key to the move towards predominantly proactive policing and away from the reactive culture:

- Criminal Activity.
- Public Disorder
- Social Disorder.
- Community Vulnerability.
- Traffic

5.1.5 In addition the generic headings will be broken down into codification for the specific purpose of establishing a reference Database of previous solutions. These sub-headings are:

• **Criminal Activity**

Drugs  
Violence  
Burglary  
Autocrime  
Damage

• Public Disorder

Drunkenness-public  
Drunkenness-licensed premises  
Street occurrences  
Gatherings-informal  
Gatherings-formal (e.g. protests etc)

Social Disorder.

- Domestic or neighbour disputes.
- Truancy and bullying.
- Abandoned or obstructive vehicles.
- Excessive litter or noise

Community Vulnerability.

- Businesses-retail
- Businesses-non-retail
- Public areas (e.g. parks etc)
- Town Centres
- Residential
- Premises associated with young people (e.g. schools or youth clubs)
- Travel (e.g. Buses)

Traffic

- Heavy Goods Vehicles/Passenger Carrying Vehicles
- Drink driving
- Speed and Signage
- Taxis
- Motorways

5.1.6 It is important to remember that the department responsible for maintaining the central collection process (hopper) will only assess the potential for action on information passed to them. It is the areas responsibility to decide whether to action or not.

5.1.7 Area Action

a) Surrey Police adopted the S.A.R.A. principle of problem solving some time ago. It is assumed that Managers are now familiar with the principles of this model.

b) The scanning process will have taken place initially for the information to appear on the database. Therefore the next task is to analyse the information and set about planning a response. The emphasis here is that the system is dealing with predominantly slow time issues, therefore level 2 and 3 responses are those that will require planning. However it is still possible that level 1 interventions are required as a tactic to bridge the gap.

c) It is entirely possible that the area team may choose to do nothing with the information presented. If this is the case the result box must be endorsed accordingly and an Area supervisor, normally the Inspector will then finalise the item.

- d) If the information is to be actioned, then the 'Desired Outcome' box will be filled in. The desired outcome must be thought through very carefully. It will need evaluating and measuring later to assess whether the plan has been a success or not.
- e) There are two boxes that require completion at this stage. These are the 'Police Strategy' box and the 'Community Safety Strategy' box. The 'Police Strategy' box will allow the officer completing, to identify which one of the 6 Force Strategies the PSP task seeks to help achieve. Likewise, the 'Community Safety Strategy' box identifies which one of these strategies is being achieved through the task. By identifying these strategies and recording the time spent on tasks, an accurate picture of costs can be seen, as well as the transition from reactive to proactive policing.
- f) The 'Action Required' box will be completed in conjunction with the neighbourhood constable(s). This joint approach is desirable to facilitate the ownership at grass roots level.
- g) The 'Review date' box must incorporate a realistic time frame. If no date appears here the 'Over Due' flag will not activate.

#### 5.1.8 Tasking

- a) Before activity commences, consideration must be given to any other department/agency/group who may be required to assist in the resolution of the problem. This could include local supporters such as Neighbourhood Watch, Pubwatch or specialist support departments, Mobile Support, Territorial Support, Dog Section etc. Again the inclusion at this stage of the process will maximise the chances of at least part ownership.
- b) The notification of a tasking can be communicated in two ways. The input screen of the database has a button marked 'Print Tasking Sheet'. This sheet contains all the information of the input screen and can be printed using the standard print command. The alternative method is to use the Microsoft Outlook Task feature and send it by email.
- c) In addition to using the above technology for the assigning of tasks, the ICAD computer can be used to measure activity by using 'Out of Service' codes. Officers assigned to PSP tasks will 'book on and off' the assignment using personal radios in the normal manner.

#### 5.1.9 Progress

- a) As activity gets underway, there is a text box that allows for the entering of progress reports. This should be updated each time activity is undertaken in order to provide a history of the resolution.
- b) The result can then be added in a free text box. A comprehensive note should be added here so, that a fair evaluation can be made in the future as to whether or not the process worked. This will be invaluable to assist other areas in the problem solving process.
- c) There is also a check box that will indicate whether or not the desired outcome has been achieved. Before this is ticked or not, the Area Inspector should review the process and judge the success or otherwise.

#### 5.1.10 Finalisation

- a) The ultimate responsibility for the finalisation of the action rests with an area manager, normally the Inspector. Once he/she is satisfied that there is no further action required and that the text boxes are complete and the programme removes it from the active actions list at area level.

### 5.1.11 Reporting Functions

a) Currently there are a selection of pre determined reports available.

- Active Actions

Selecting this button will produce boxes that require you to enter your area code i.e. 'ESR' this can then if required drill down to neighbourhood level. The area active actions will appear as a report in preview on your screen. This can be viewed or printed using the standard print function.

- Daily Intelligence Briefing

By selecting this, you will be given the same options as above. However the report that is produced will differ slightly. This provides information for the whole area on actions and what progress is being made and by whom. This will be printed regularly to ensure all officers are up to date on neighbourhood issues.

- Intelligence Submissions

This will allow for an analysis of who is submitting what type of information or intelligence and can be used as a personal performance indicator if included in a suite of indicators.

- Solutions

The solutions button takes you through to a further screen that asks you to input data regarding search criteria. This will allow you to search the database for potential solutions for problems of a similar nature. Note that the database will return those solutions that have resulted in a successful outcome as well as those that have not.

- Police Strategies

This will provide a report on the amount of tasks undertaken in support of the police strategies, broken down by strategy and number of tasks completed. Also indicated are the amount of hours spent at level two and three for each category.

in addition, the above report will be replicated to show the activity against the community safety strategies as these are also identified during the tasking process.

### **6.0 Additional Information**

This has now been implemented forcewide with training in operating the system being delivered to all ranks. Online help is available as part of the package although a training manual is available in hard copy and through the Intranet.

A User Group is being set up to begin refining the product to continually improve its effectiveness and usability. Whilst the project team look to enhance the technical capability by linking it to the command and control computer and other predictive computer systems.

Training in problem solving, the how and why, will be delivered to Constables and Sergeants commencing in July 1999.

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