



Home Office

# Practical lessons for involving the community in crime and disorder problem-solving

Patterns of Crime

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# Practical lessons for involving the community in crime and disorder problem-solving

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## Introduction

In the last five years, community involvement in shaping public services has become an increasingly important aspect of government policy. A variety of initiatives, some ongoing, intended to promote public involvement in policing have been established. However, a review of literature on community engagement in policing, by Home Office Research, Development and Statistics<sup>1</sup>, has shown that, so far, very few of these initiatives have been evaluated to see how the community can best be involved in solving crime and disorder problems.

This Development and Practice Report draws together lessons about community involvement in crime and disorder problem-solving. It has been put together using:

- evidence from problem-solving initiatives that have been subject to evaluation; and
- practitioner assessment of the effectiveness of community involvement in problem-solving initiatives that have not been formally evaluated.

It is intended as a resource for front-line practitioners and their managers.

The report draws on a review of available literature; case studies from the National Reassurance Policing Project (NRPP), Policing Priorities Areas, and Community Cohesion Pilots; examples provided by the National Practitioner Panel for Community Engagement in Policing; and two case studies researched by the authors. The case studies presented are not statistically representative, nor have many of them been subject to systematic evaluation. They are the best available examples of where practitioners report the effectiveness of community involvement in problem-solving. Several current evaluations, looking specifically at the impact of community involvement on crime and disorder, will in the future be able to determine the most effective ways to involve the public.

This report shows how the community may become involved in crime and disorder problem-solving. The aim of the report is to give practitioners:

- a range of types of involvement in problem-solving that might be appropriate in a given community;
- advice on devising a strategy to facilitate community involvement; and
- specific ideas about how to involve the community in a range of practical problem-solving activities.

## Community involvement

Consultation is the most popular form of community involvement. Here the agency asks for ideas from, or the approval of, the community (or some section of it). The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) makes consultation a statutory duty of all Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). Police authorities also have a statutory duty to consult. But this type of formal consultation does not exhaust the possibilities for community involvement. Local people can be involved at various levels. Beyond simple consultation, these may include active co-operation with the agency or being involved in various activities such as problem-solving.

1. Myhill (forthcoming): *Community engagement in policing – lessons from the literature*.

*Home Office Development and Practice Reports draw out from research the messages for practice development, implementation and operation. They are intended as guidance for practitioners in specific fields. The recommendations explain how and why changes could be made, based on the findings from research, which would lead to better practice.*

### Box 1: Policy initiatives promoting community involvement in problem-solving

#### *Civil renewal and active citizenship*

The civil renewal agenda aims to foster strong, active and empowered communities, where people define the problems they face and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. It assumes that local communities are well placed to deal with their own problems and to bring about sustainable change that will improve the quality of peoples' lives.

<[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/civil/index.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/civil/index.html)>

#### *Community engagement*

Community engagement is the means for achieving civil renewal. It can range from providing the public with good quality information at a local level, through consultation and participation in decisions over priority issues to taking part in service delivery. The National Practitioner Panel for Community Engagement in Policing has produced a guide to effective engagement. It can be accessed at <[www.communityengagement.police.uk](http://www.communityengagement.police.uk)>

#### *Neighbourhood policing*

By 2008 every area in England and Wales will be covered by neighbourhood policing teams. These will include police officers, special constables, community support officers, volunteers, neighbourhood wardens and other relevant groups. It involves 'active co-operation' – local people are expected to participate in identifying and solving local crime and disorder problems. <[www.policereform.gov.uk](http://www.policereform.gov.uk)>

#### *The National Reassurance Policing Programme*

The National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP) has been operating in 16 pilot wards across eight police forces since 2002. It is one possible model for delivering neighbourhood policing. It focuses on signals – from dog fouling to gun crime and murder – that may cause feelings of insecurity, depending on the community context. The NRPP seeks local views on priority issues and attempts to find solutions to them. Wherever possible the public and partner agencies take part in the process. <[www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk](http://www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk)>

#### *Problem-oriented partnership*

Problem-oriented partnership is a form of policing that involves identifying, analysing and attempting to find effective long-term solutions to recurrent crime and disorder issues within local neighbourhoods. Citizens and partner agencies have a crucial role to play. Problem-oriented work often uses the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment) process which is discussed later in this report. <[www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)>

#### *Promoting social cohesion and collective efficacy*

Cohesive communities have networks of people who trust one another and are willing to intervene in the interest of the common good ('collective efficacy'). Communities with high collective efficacy generally experience relatively lower levels of crime and disorder than similar communities with low collective efficacy. Emerging crime and disorder problems are noticed and dealt with as they occur. <[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/cohesion](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/cohesion)>

#### *New Deal for Communities*

There are 38 New Deal for Communities initiatives operating in deprived areas in England and Wales. The aim is to address a range of cross-cutting issues related to economic and social regeneration, including those concerning crime and disorder. Local residents play a key role in identifying and addressing critical local problems. <[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)>

All the above initiatives share common themes:

- the community is critical for identifying and dealing with problems;
- the community is mostly understood in geographical terms, comprising those living or working within a particular area;
- agencies are expected to be more sensitive and responsive to the wishes of community members;
- community members are expected to play a larger part in the governance of their local areas; and
- communities of involved, trusting and interconnected members are thought to be better at dealing with problems as they emerge, and are less likely to face serious problems than communities where members are uninvolved and mistrustful of one another.

Later sections of this report discuss how to put the concept of community involvement into practice.

## SARA: A model of problem-solving

There are many ways of describing problem-solving, all of which try to capture the same processes. The SARA model used in this report is the one most often applied in the UK and abroad, both in policing and crime reduction more generally. It is described in Box 2.

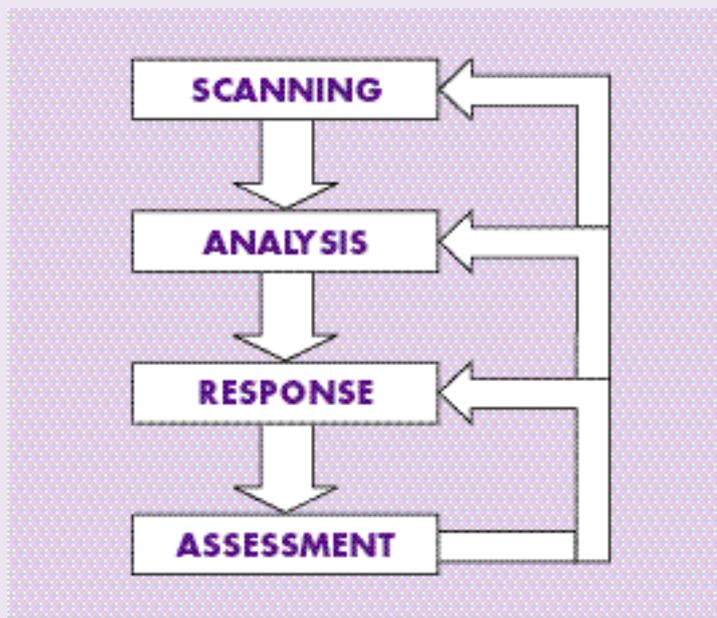
### Box 2: The SARA process

**Scanning** describes the identification of broad issues that need to be addressed.

**Analysis** describes breaking down problems and their causes.

**Response** describes what is done to address the problem, in the light of the analysis.

**Assessment** involves evaluating the effectiveness of what was put in place.



Feedback occurs between each stage and the community, the police and partner agencies can be involved at any or all stages of the process, to varying degrees.

Problem-solving in general and the application of the SARA process, in particular, can be quite complex. You will need to reflect and consider feedback at each stage and it will often be useful to involve those with specific expertise in understanding and reducing local problems. Initially promising responses, developed in the light of the analysis, might prove ineffective or unworkable, in which case fresh analysis may be needed. Monitoring arrangements may find that the problem has disappeared even before any measures are put in place to address it. This report considers how the community can be involved at each stage in the process.

### The importance of context

The challenges of involving communities in problem-solving differ widely. The potential involvement of residents and the extent of crime and disorder problems vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This may influence the type of community involvement you attempt.

### The uneven distribution of crime and disorder

Neighbourhoods experience widely different levels of crime and disorder. For example, in 2003/04, 52 per cent of recorded crime occurred in the highest-crime 20 per cent of the 376 CDRPs, while just five per cent occurred in the lowest-crime 20 per cent. Research shows that both property and personal crime tends to be very unevenly spread, particularly in high-crime areas.

The uneven distribution of crime represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to reduce the abnormally high levels of suffering experienced by particular people in particular areas. The opportunity is to direct efforts where they are most needed and most likely to yield real benefits.

Because crime and disorder problems are unevenly distributed, the nature of community involvement in addressing them will need to vary.

- It is possible to involve local resident offenders or those perceived as a threat only where these individuals or groups are stable and visible, such as prostitutes or youths hanging about.
- It is easier to involve potential victims where they are residents rather than transient vulnerable victims, as in the case of holiday resorts or motorway service areas.
- Community involvement where businesses are at risk will differ from the involvement of local residents, since the largely commercial interests of business people are narrower.

### Diverse communities

Diverse communities present a challenge, as the interests of individuals and groups are more likely to vary. It is easiest to involve relatively affluent white people living in stable communities, although they generally face fewer crime and disorder problems. Neighbourhood Watch and Police Community Consultative Groups are a good example. Involvement should be as inclusive as possible and attempt to balance the interests of all sections of the community. It is particularly easy to overlook hard-to-reach (or 'hard-to-hear') groups. These include:

- ethnic minority groups;
- gay and lesbian groups;
- children and young people, especially those at risk;
- disabled people;
- sex workers;
- victims of crime;
- homeless people;
- drug users;
- the mentally ill;
- rural/farming communities;
- older people;
- single mothers;
- poor and acutely deprived people;
- illiterate people;
- domestic violence victims;
- non-English speakers;
- those suspicious of the police;
- refugees;
- travellers;
- some faith communities; and
- transient populations.

### Crime level, crime concern and community involvement in problem-solving

Concerns over crime, however, do not necessarily match the level or seriousness of crimes in a given neighbourhood. Various incivilities, or more serious crimes, often without a specific victim but noticed by many, can act as signs of disorder and thus cause anxiety about crime. These become problems in themselves and make people feel less safe. Hence the problems of actual crime and those of feeling vulnerable to crime do not necessarily match. In those relatively affluent areas where it is easy to involve the local community, there may be real problems of perceived insecurity even where levels of serious crime are very low.

Figure 1 shows four different crime-fear relationships. It is a simple typology intended to help readers think through what kinds of community problem and community dynamic they are dealing with, to illustrate why differences in approach will be needed in different circumstances, and to indicate what overall end-point is desirable. In Type A there is high crime and high fear of crime. In Type B, there is high fear of crime but low actual crime. In Type C there is low fear of crime but high actual crime. In Type D both fear of crime and actual crime are low.

**Figure 1: Crime, fear of crime and community involvement in problem-solving**

		Crime	
		High	Low
Fear	High	<b>Type A</b>	<b>Type B</b>
	Low	<b>Type C</b>	<b>Type D</b>

Type A is approximated in many high-crime inner-city neighbourhoods. Local residents may understand their problems well enough. They may also know who the offenders are. But poverty, low collective efficacy, high levels of intimidation and low levels of trust in the police limit their ability to control or inhibit criminal and anti-social behaviour. If, however, agencies can persuade citizens to co-operate by building trusting relationships and providing them with information, they may be able to tackle crime and build confidence in the police. This could help the community move towards Type D, possibly via Type B.

Type B describes neighbourhoods or virtual communities (groups with shared attributes, identities and interests but not living in the same neighbourhood) where anxiety about crime is high, but where there are relatively few serious crimes or incidents of disorderly behaviour. Many elderly people and those in middle-class residential neighbourhoods may be found in Type B. Here local residents, environmental agencies and groups of young people who inadvertently cause anxiety could help to identify and/or pre-empt problems. In some cases people will see the presence of ethnic minorities as a sign of disorder – agencies should work with residents to combat this misconception. The aim here is to help the community to move towards Type D.

Type C areas are those with high crime rates, but where the victims and, in some cases, the offenders are not local residents. Examples include holiday resorts, towns with foreign students, stations, motorway service areas, car parks, and dangerous inner-city areas unknown to visitors. Here the at-risk population is not around long enough to get them directly involved. It comprises a ‘virtual’ community. Moreover, local residents may have little personal interest in the risks faced by the strangers. It may be possible to involve managers of shops, stations, motorway service areas, and car parks in responding to problems here. The aim is again to take them towards Type D.

Type D describes areas with neither high levels of crime nor high levels of fear of crime. Those living here are relatively safe and feel relatively secure. Many residential areas fall into this category. Many will have social networks of active citizens and formal agencies maintaining both the social and physical fabric of the local neighbourhood. The issue here is to keep crime and fear of crime down by dealing promptly and effectively with any potential threats to the status quo as they arise. This can be done by:

- ‘amenity agencies’ promptly dealing with signs of disorder, such as graffiti and litter;
- voluntary groups sustaining networks of trust and social capital, and identifying threats; and
- facility managers providing surveillance and social control over public places.

### Summary of dos and don'ts for planning community involvement in problem-solving

- DO conduct some initial research to find out about the crime and fear of crime patterns in different neighbourhoods, and their sources.
- DO work out what the overall needs of each neighbourhood are and set a strategy for community involvement accordingly.
- DO involve offender and nuisance groups as well as law-abiding citizens where it is important to do so to address local problems.
- DO consider involvement of virtual communities, such as faith groups, ethnic groups, age groups and business groups, as well as geographically defined neighbourhoods.
- DO call on local expertise in attempting to tackle complex and difficult problems.
- DON'T expect those who are intimidated and fearful to solve their problems on their own from scratch.
- DON'T neglect hard to reach or easy to overlook stakeholder groups.
- DON'T expect community involvement to let agencies off the hook.
- DON'T assume one size fits all for community involvement.

## Scanning and analysis

Scanning identifies priority problems in a community. Analysis examines these problems to find the best ways of intervening to resolve them. Therefore, we deal with both scanning and analysis here. In practice, however, there have been many more efforts at community engagement in scanning than in analysis. Members of a community often have opportunities to express their views on priority problems. They are less often involved in gaining an understanding of those problems and then helping to devise strategies to address them.

### Techniques for community involvement in scanning and analysis

'Community consultation' is the vehicle most often used for involving local people in scanning and analysis.

Table 1 (see page 8) lists the principal consultation methods and their main advantages and disadvantages in identifying and understanding local problems. None is without its limitations. None will work in all contexts. Each has a role in the right circumstances.

Box 3 shows some more innovative techniques to involve the community systematically in identifying, measuring and gaining some understanding of local problems.

#### Box 3: Innovative tools and techniques for scanning local problems

- **Handheld video cameras:** distributed to residents in areas with anti-social behaviour and youth disorder problems to record offenders and their activities.
- **Visual audits:** volunteer members of the public walk around key problem areas in the locality and record the nature and extent of problems.
- **Guided walks:** members of the community walk their local area with officers, highlighting places where they feel unsafe, or places where problems occur.
- **Mapping neighbourhood problems:** community members highlight problems and where they occur on maps or models of their neighbourhood.
- **Speed indication devices:** distributed to community members to monitor speeding in identified speeding hot spots.
- **Diary sheets:** given to residents or shopkeepers in areas identified as anti-social behaviour hot spots to record dates, times and the nature of events.
- **Interactive voting technology:** similar to 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?'. Voting on priorities takes place using handsets; instant feedback generates further discussion.
- **Door knocks:** PCs or PCSOs target neighbourhoods and visit door-to-door, introducing themselves and asking residents to highlight local problems.
- **Neighbourhood security interviews:** developed during the National Reassurance Policing Programme, these provide a framework to enable officers to identify 'signal crimes' through individual structured interviews with residents.
- **Roll-calls:** local police officers gather together in a public area for roll-call to aid familiarity and accountability with the public, who are able to describe/show local problems in detail.
- **Micro Beats:** Officers patrol more localised beats to promote ownership of a neighbourhood area, and to increase familiarity and communication with local residents.

Informal consultation on the nature and sources of local problems can take place between community members and community-oriented police officers, or members of the extended policing family (such as Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), or local authority wardens). They may canvass opinions on local problems through:

- door-to-door calling;
- high visibility patrols with face-to-face contact with members of the public;
- attendance at local meetings;
- running community or beat 'surgeries' in community centres; or
- staffing police/community contact points.

**Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of some standard techniques for community involvement in scanning and analysis**

Consultation technique	Advantages	Disadvantages	When worth considering
Public perception surveys	Random representative sample can be selected. Tried and tested standard questions can be asked. Statistical analysis possible. Can improve police/community relations if done face to face.	Difficult to get people to devote their time – high non-response rates, especially for postal surveys. Costly to do properly across many small neighbourhoods, especially if generating random samples of telephone numbers. Biases possible in who takes part – e.g. those at home in the day time. If large sample targeted, considerable staff resources needed to handle data.	Where large area needs to be covered to identify widespread priority problems. Where there are resources for the work to be done systematically. Where there is an interest in identifying local crime and disorder problems.
Public meetings	Cheap. Enable issues to be explored in discussion. Quick to get results.	Risk of use as public relations exercise. Domination by opinionated and vociferous participants. Not representative of the community/under representation of hard-to-reach groups.	For specific populations and sub-populations where representative participation can be expected. Where those running the meeting have been trained to deal with 'problem' participants.
Focus groups	Relatively cheap. Can produce informed discussion and understanding.	Technically difficult to run well. Risk of unrepresentative participants.	Where the intervention is very localised. Where there are clearly defined issues for discussion. Where specific target groups, who are likely to co-operate, can be identified.
Citizens' juries/panels	Elicit changes in views. Create informed reflective local group.	Attrition in participation. Unrepresentative retained membership. Quite expensive and high-maintenance.	Where there is an interest in tracking change in the nature, level and causes of local problems.

Community-oriented officers, although given different titles across forces, all aim to make the police more familiar to local residents. They become easily recognised, providing a first 'port of call' for residents who can pass on their concerns about crime and disorder. As well as providing a means for the police to learn about specific local problems that can then be addressed, community-oriented policing is intended to reassure the public and foster a sense of community safety.

### Problems with community involvement in scanning and analysis

There are several potential problems that have to be overcome if communities are to be involved effectively in the scanning and analysis process.

- *Tokenism and agenda setting* – formal consultation is sometimes seen as superficial or tokenistic. Some groups feel that they are only included in consultation because it is a statutory requirement and that priorities have already been decided. The police must not use public meetings to try and impose predetermined priorities and solutions on the community. Community members or groups must not be allowed to 'hijack' public meetings to pursue their own personal agenda.
- *Lack of clarity of roles and objectives* – the police and community bring different attitudes and abilities to defining and understanding local problems. Local people will know of some issues not known to the police. They will also know what bothers them most, and be aware of what is happening within their immediate area. They will not have the bigger picture, however, of local issues and of available resources. Nor will they know as much about local offending patterns as the police and local authorities. Both the police and the community need a clear statement of objectives and ground rules.
- *Managing expectations* – objectives need to be realistic in terms of what can be done. Consultation should identify one or two problems at a time for analysis and response. The public will accept that not everything can be dealt with at once. It is evident from recent projects that those with very specific and achievable targets can be extremely successful.
- *Consultation overkill or consultation fatigue* – extensive and prolonged consultation can hold up intervention unnecessarily. Partner agencies often consult separately on similar issues where a co-ordinated approach could save time and resources and maintain enthusiasm.
- *Lack of action and feedback* – agencies can be seen to fail to act upon community-defined priorities, or to re-consult with the community to determine whether problems have persisted. If people are not made aware of the impact of their participation, or the reasons why no action has been possible, they may not continue their involvement.

### The need for a localised and tailored focus for scanning and analysis

It appears that the more localised the level of consultation about problems the more successful analysis and subsequent responses can be. Local residents are better able to identify very specific problems and work towards solutions relevant to the needs of the particular neighbourhood. Consultation needs to be tailored to the particular problem, the specific neighbourhood and to relevant subgroups within the community.

Attempts to set up effective consultation over problems in areas where people mistrust the police, or where collective community action has been non-existent, can prove extremely difficult. The community, including hard-to-reach groups, needs opportunities to get involved and police/community relations need to be improved. Box 4 describes a project based in areas with differing levels of existing infrastructure for community involvement.

#### Box 4: The APEC project, Cambridge

The APEC (Abbey, Petersfield and East Chesterton) project in Cambridge ran from June 2003 until June 2004. Wards with differing levels of existing community involvement were chosen to take part. In the Petersfield ward there were some strong pre-existing community groups as well as a history of the residents working with the police and local authorities. In East Chesterton, although involvement was less advanced, a Beat Manager had established a network of community contacts. In the Abbey ward there were no pre-existing community contacts or organised groups of residents. This meant that it was much harder to engage and involve the community. Not surprisingly the Petersfield residents were much more willing and motivated to get involved in solving local problems, with notable successes. For example, the local church was providing Saturday lunches to the homeless but the behaviour of those attending was causing problems to local residents and traders. Through public meetings and community involvement the church representatives were made more aware of the distress of the local community. They consequently suspended the lunches and reviewed their practices. A different format to provide weekend support to this vulnerable community was reintroduced without problems.

Unfortunately, participants in consultation exercises tend to come from a section of the community which is often not representative of the community as a whole. The risk is that problems are defined and understood by those who turn up for police/community meetings. They will already be established stakeholders in the community, representing a narrow perspective within diverse populations. It is important, therefore, to reach those marginalised people who often suffer quite different problems.

A paradox of consultation, and community involvement as a whole, is that it works most easily in areas where involvement to address actual (rather than perceived) crime and disorder is needed least. It works most successfully in Type B communities where crime risks are low but individuals have a high fear of crime.

#### Consultation as community intelligence

Consultation, when successful, can be extremely valuable in involving the local community in scanning and analysis of local crime and disorder problems. Community intelligence can – and is – being used within the framework of the National Intelligence Model, with attempts to feed community intelligence into the Tasking and Co-ordinating process. This 'bottom-up' approach to identifying priority problems is being used to great effect.

#### Box 5 Examples of consultation as community intelligence

- The Peace Alliance (Haringey, Enfield & Lambeth, London) runs forums allowing strategic input of local people in problem-solving – such as faith leaders using the Faith Forum.
- In Ash, Surrey, local residents participating in a Neighbourhood Panel highlighted how drug dealing was taking place at a specific address. Community information was then fed into intelligence reports and arrests made as a direct result.
- In Lancashire Constabulary a similar structure is in place using Police And Communities Together (PACT) meetings, which give local residents a real opportunity to inform policing priorities and provide community intelligence.
- Oldham (Greater Manchester Police). The problem of alcohol-fuelled youth disorder was identified during a community meeting in the Faliswood ward. Trading Standards and the police decided to use local community intelligence to guide their responses to the problem, for example, relying on community reports of where under-age youths could purchase alcohol to direct a series of targeted test purchases, with good results.

### Summary of dos and don'ts for community involvement in scanning and analysis

- DO provide a clear statement of the objectives of consultation.
- DO manage expectations.
- DO be specific in identifying and analysing local problems.
- DO have very local-level meetings and focus on neighbourhood-specific issues.
- DO establish the characteristics of the local population and make use of informal police/community contact to improve community trust in the police.
- DO tailor the consultation to the individual needs and characteristics of the community.
- DO make use of existing community groups and contacts.
- DO try to include hard-to-reach and marginalised groups within the community.
- DO adapt methods of scanning and analysis to the specific circumstances of marginalised groups.
- DON'T assume that implicit objectives are shared by all those involved.
- DON'T try to analyse broad, disparate problems that cannot be addressed with the given resources.
- DON'T rely on force-level committees only, as localised consultation is vital to identify specific problems of widely differing areas.
- DON'T set up consultation without researching the area and building up police/community trust in other ways.
- DON'T rely on a one-off consultation but DO set up a regular sequence of consultations.
- DON'T restrict yourself to one method of consultation.

## Response

This section describes community responses to crime. They are normally under the control and direction of the police. Communities are rarely involved in thinking through and making decisions about how identified problems should be addressed. This may be for good reasons. It may indeed be the case that agencies are often best placed to decide on ways of addressing problems and on ways in which the community might contribute to their resolution.

### Community involvement in response

There is a wealth of different activities in which members of the public have become involved in responding to problems, and with varying degrees of success. The main types of responses include:

- surveillance, detection and provision of intelligence – often feeding into the National Intelligence Model;
- crime prevention;
- volunteering in local policing activities to deal with problems; and
- neighbourhood regeneration.

These categories inevitably overlap and many projects (especially the larger-scale ones) include various types of community involvement. Table 2 gives some examples of responses to crime involving the community.

### Surveillance, detection and intelligence

Involvement of community members in surveillance of their local area, detection of crime, and contributing towards police local intelligence is quite common across the UK. An example is responding to appeals or reporting incidents to Crimestoppers. Some other examples are listed below.

- *Neighbourhood Watch schemes.* These are based within the local community and led by a volunteer. They generally act as the 'eyes and ears' of the police, although some have also undertaken local street patrols. They have been difficult to establish and maintain without a highly committed leader to organise, recruit and mobilise the rest of the group, and without some pre-existing sense of community. Schemes are now generally set up in response to community requests and are more easily established in relatively stable lower-crime neighbourhoods.
- *Cocoon Watches.* These are set up immediately around the homes of burglary victims. Those involved are worried about being burgled and as a result are more interested in taking part. These schemes proved successful in Rochdale and were associated with rapid and sustained falls in domestic burglary rates. Cocoon Watches have since been applied to other specific problems, such as domestic violence.
- *Crime awareness campaigns.* These are used to increase general public vigilance. In some cases groups have been recruited to act as 'the eyes of the community' for the police. They have been provided with video cameras or diary sheets where they can record times, dates and the nature of incidents. This has been found especially useful for anti-social behaviour problems. It has recently been used in Walton in Surrey, where local residents kept diaries documenting anti-social use of vehicles, which then fed into police intelligence reports.

### Crime prevention

The community can be involved in a variety of crime prevention-related activities that help to resolve or pre-empt crime and disorder problems. These include use of informal social control, victim support, attention to local civilities and oversight of neighbours' properties.

Police have also worked more formally with the community to encourage (or even pay for) specific measures. For example, community consultation teams have been involved in the installation of alley-gates in identified at-risk areas. These consultation teams were largely composed of members of the public drawn from local residents' associations and NW schemes. They provide a useful link between the police and the community in explaining and gathering support for these crime prevention schemes.

**Table 2: Range of community involvement in response to crime and disorder, with examples.**

Type of response	Example	Details of response
Surveillance, detection and intelligence	Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project	Project in the late 1980s introduced the use of Cocoon Watches. Extended the use of Cocoon Watches to problem of domestic violence.
	Killingbeck Domestic Violence and Repeat Victimization Project Cambridge Residential Burglary	Formation of Domestic Burglary Task Force with range of responses – e.g. small localised Neighbourhood Watch (NW) and postal workers to look for suspicious activities.
Crime prevention	Morden (Metropolitan Police)	Two localised projects both using diaries to record events; one with local NW and one with local shopkeepers.
	North West and North East of England Reducing Burglary Initiative	Installation of alley-gates in burglary hot spots to prevent access to properties and to increase community safety. The installation was organised by consultation team (composed of community members drawn from Home Watch, residents' associations, etc.) who liaised with community.
	Leicester New Parks (Leicestershire Police)	Range of youth diversion strategies to prevent anti-social behaviour on the housing estate including youth shelters, 'boys clubs', motorcycle safety project, Youth Network Forum and youth consultation via 'Have your say' days.
Active participation in policing	Rural Suffolk	Project seeking to empower young people to encourage a sense of community and deter anti-social behaviour. Techniques included Youth Forum, Youth Village Hall Committee, youth representation on the Youth Club Committee, and involving youth volunteers in community fundraising schemes.
	North Somerset	Thirty Local Action Teams (LATs) comprised of community members and supported by Community Beat Managers; each LAT established to tackle specific localised problems.
	Burghfield (Thames Valley Police)	Community identified speeding problems and hot spot areas; police train community volunteers in speed indication devices to monitor the speed of motorists.
Neighbourhood regeneration	Edgebank, Merseyside	Residents organised themselves to tackle some of the more low-level anti-social behaviour problems (for example cleaning graffiti and clearing litter).
	Morden Green Lane (Metropolitan Police)	Community identified graffiti problem and tackled it by cleaning up the area and planting trees around affected fences to prevent graffiti. Local businesses provided with graffiti cleaning kits.
	Leicester New Parks Welling, Bexley	Organised community and police 'clean-up' days. Residents were responsible for clearing over 15 tons of rubbish in a 'clean-up' day organised by a local PCSO.

Community members may also be involved in responding to local crime problems by participating in juvenile offender rehabilitation and youth diversion work. For example, in North and South America a number of community self-help organisations aim to reach the young underclass at risk of becoming offenders as well as those already involved in crime. The organisations provide vocational training, activities to increase self-esteem, and community members become an extended family to provide pastoral support.

Youth diversion projects are also becoming popular in the UK. This includes the implementation of Positive Activities for Young Persons (PAYP) and 'Police in Schools' schemes.

### Box 6 Youth work examples

- New Parks, Leicester (see Table 2 above)
- Fieldcommon Estate in Walton, Surrey: particular efforts were made to engage with children from the local traveller population who previously felt very isolated.
- Haringey Peace Alliance, London: runs variety of youth diversion activities, including 'Inside-Out' a programme diverting young people (from 11 to 18-years-old) from crime by organising talks by ex-offenders to try to prevent the glamorisation of crime. Deals with issues such as bullying, anti-social behaviour, drugs, street and violent crime (including gun crime).
- Bexley (Metropolitan Police): officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team became involved in countering the criminal damage problems in a local school by using an office within the school and developing links with pupils.
- Rotherham, South Yorkshire: the community identified a substantial problem with youths acting anti-socially. As a result Community Constables now teach citizenship skills to children in schools and encourage their involvement in various activity clubs to divert them from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.
- St Helens, Merseyside: the police organised a drama/role play session with pupils from schools in two deprived hot spot areas to educate them about anti-social behaviour, and facilitate better links between local police and pupils.

Restorative justice initiatives also aim to prevent the offender from committing further crimes. By reintegrating the offender into the community and creating a community that supports the rehabilitation of offenders, the offender is thought to be less likely to re-offend.

Restorative justice may include:

- Victim/offender meetings;
- the offender working for the victim (e.g. on his/her home or garden);
- the offender working for a community cause selected by the victim; or
- the offender being involved in community-led rehabilitation programmes – for example improving their educational and vocational abilities or helping them to find employment.

Many restorative justice schemes focus on young offenders. They engage young offenders in non-criminal activities, teach them about citizenship, educate them about the problems caused by drug and alcohol abuse, and provide mediation and counsellor support for those identified as at risk (for example bullies, truants, those excluded from school, or identified as troublemakers).

### Volunteering in local policing activities to deal with problems

A recent trend has been to involve people in active policing roles within their local community. Their role is restricted in most cases to 'backroom' support or administration, but in some cases extends to work within the local community as a representative of the police.

All forces have volunteer Special Constables who have quite extensive training and are vested with normal police powers. Some pioneering forces have also begun to make innovative use of local volunteers within their immediate neighbourhood to help tackle key crime and disorder problems.

Sometimes the public is mobilised to tackle one specific problem, often over a short period of time. For example, in Enfield the Metropolitan Police recruited the leaders of the Al-Masjid Mosque to educate their attendees about the problems they were causing for local residents with their parking. Many of them then volunteered to act as 'street hawks' – volunteers for the local police. In Burghfield the community identified a problem with dangerous speeding drivers. Thames Valley Police then recruited local volunteers and trained them to use speed indication devices so that they could monitor the speed of motorists themselves.

Some forces have established widespread volunteer schemes where teams operate across a broad area or even the whole force to tackle a wide range of community issues and to perform a variety of roles. For example, in North Somerset, Avon and Somerset Police have established 30 Local Action Teams to tackle community-identified problems, with support from Community Beat Managers. Although each team mainly addresses one key crime and disorder problem, an infrastructure is in place to accommodate the volunteers and to deal with a wide range of issues, dependent upon the individual needs of the local neighbourhood.

Box 7 describes a well-developed volunteer police scheme in Lancashire, while Box 8 details examples of volunteer response to key local problems.

### Box 7: Lancashire Volunteer Police scheme

Established in June 2004, the Lancashire Volunteer Police scheme operates across all seven Basic Command Units (BCUs). Within each BCU a co-ordinator is in charge of recruitment, posting and pastoral care of volunteers. The scheme was set up to involve the community in a quality of service role. Therefore the volunteers were initially recruited to work in the Communications Room to provide feedback to victims of crime. This was extended after large numbers of people volunteered from a wide variety of backgrounds and they now work across the organisation in a wide range of functions.

Examples include:

- victim support roles;
- fundraising for local projects;
- educating the elderly on crime prevention and community safety;
- running rural police stations;
- liaising with ethnic minorities and gay/lesbian communities;
- representing police at Police And Communities Together meetings;
- undertaking specialist roles in forensics;
- scene of crime work in support/admin roles; and
- caring for police horses.

The scheme therefore includes a very diverse and representative proportion of the population. All volunteers are put into areas of work suited to their experience and interests.

### Box 8: Examples of Lancashire Volunteer Police involvement in responding to community problems

- Mobile phone theft: the volume and frequency of mobile phone theft is quite marked, but the police do not have the capacity to deal with each individual case. The victims can feel that the problem is not taken seriously. To address this, one volunteer within the Preston BCU is now responsible for contacting every local victim of mobile phone theft to give them information such as how they must contact their mobile phone network to inform them of the theft. They also provide feedback on what the police are doing to tackle this problem.
- Bogus callers targeting the elderly: police have identified vulnerable members of the community, such as the elderly in sheltered accommodation, who may be targets for bogus callers trying to steal from them. Volunteers visit sheltered accommodation complexes and groups of local elderly residents to inform them about the problem and what measures they can take to protect themselves.
- High visibility patrols: in identified hot spot areas, volunteers go out on patrol with police officers to provide high visibility to the local residents. This reassures residents and may also act as a deterrent for anti-social behaviour. Volunteer involvement may additionally encourage greater communication with local people as they may feel less intimidated talking to a volunteer than to a uniformed police officer.

- Lack of support in rural areas: in some sparsely populated rural areas local police stations had been closed due to lack of resources. This was identified as a problem among the local people. Volunteers now staff these local stations. They can put residents in touch with the relevant local authorities to deal with their problems.
- Disproportionate Stop and Search of ethnic minorities: in Blackburn the police identified that ethnic minorities were being targeted for Stop and Search in disproportionately high numbers. Volunteers are analysing why this occurs as a way of reducing the problem and improving community relations in an area with a high ethnic minority population.

Extensive force-wide volunteer schemes are still very new. Ad hoc and short-term use of volunteers is more common, although with success stories such as the Volunteer Police scheme in Lancashire other constabularies may well want to adopt similar programmes. The potential for the use of volunteers appears to be impressive. It is important to note though that there are issues to be aware of in the use of volunteers, including controlling their involvement and keeping it at an appropriate level, legal liability, insurance implications and security concerns.

### Neighbourhood regeneration

Community members tend to show most concern over the physical and social fabric of their own neighbourhood. Therefore, they may be most readily motivated to participate in responses to these problems. Neighbourhood regeneration schemes can be very successful as a precursor to greater community confidence and participation. If local residents are motivated to become involved in making improvements to their local area, and see the success and the impact upon their lives, they may be more easily drawn into similar projects in the future.

Such multifaceted approaches to community involvement may prove very successful as they not only tackle specific problems of crime and disorder but also improve the area and help prevent spirals of decline. Physical improvements can increase community pride in an area, leading to greater encouragement to participate in that community.

### Summary of dos and don'ts for community involvement in response

- DO think carefully about the community you want to operate in and involve – think about not only where community involvement is most likely to work but also where involvement is most needed.
- DO consult with the public, within the police and appropriate local agencies/authorities prior to implementation to avoid foreseeable problems and overlap with other schemes.
- DO make use of existing community groups and community contacts.
- DO set in place an infrastructure for community involvement to ensure a stable continuation of involvement.
- DO try to recruit the help of those who are representative of the community, especially in areas with diverse populations.
- DO set in place appropriate training and vetting procedures when recruiting volunteers.
- DO ensure that both the police and the community members involved understand their own, and each other's, roles and responsibilities.
- DO think about a multifaceted approach tailored to the individual needs and capacities of the particular community.
- DO balance the needs of different groups within communities and remember that a positive outcome from one group may have a negative impact on another.
- DO learn from experience of what worked and what did not.
- DON'T embark on setting up a scheme without extensive research into similar schemes in other areas and forces.
- DON'T restrict involvement to one particular method and DO review the effectiveness of the techniques used periodically.
- DON'T confine community involvement to low-level police service roles.

## Assessment

The assessment part of the SARA process has been notoriously weak, whether or not there has been community involvement. Relatively little problem-solving work has been subject to robust, systematic evaluation. This is because:

- assessment can appear dull and unnecessary once an apparently successful scheme has finished;
- there are few resources for assessment;
- robust evaluation is technically difficult;
- there may be difficulties with data;
- the issue of assessment is left too late to keep the appropriate intervention records; and
- small numbers often make it impossible to draw confident conclusions about the effectiveness of measures put in place.

Where there has been evaluation, the community is not generally involved in producing it.

### Community involvement in assessment

Community involvement in assessment tends to take the form of responses to questions that try to gauge the effectiveness of problem-solving efforts. Techniques include:

- surveys of the extent of certain local crime and disorder problems or of the fear of crime;
- door-to-door, postal and telephone surveys of perceived effectiveness of interventions;
- community feedback on actions collated at public meetings; and
- use of focus groups (small groups who are asked through structured discussion to give their views).

The public perception survey is most commonly used. These are most often focused on a small area where some form of police or local authority intervention has already occurred. In stronger evaluations, the post-intervention survey is directly compared to a pre-intervention survey to see if the community concerns have been answered effectively, or if old priority problems have been replaced with new ones. Table 3 lists some advantages and disadvantages of commonly used methods of eliciting community views in assessment.

### The importance of assessment for community involvement

Community involvement in assessment can form part of an effective and circular consultation process where engagement goes beyond scanning and analysis to the production of feedback following interventions. This circular form of assessment, in which community views on what has been achieved and what needs to be addressed next are canvassed, is highly desirable. Amongst the most important measures of the success of an intervention is the degree to which members of the community notice a real tangible improvement and are motivated to maintain their involvement. Community members may also be able to suggest changes in the intervention to improve its impact.

Besides assessing the outcomes of problem-solving efforts involving the community, it may be important to capture the experiences of those taking part at whatever stage of the SARA process. This is to inform efforts at creating, maintaining, deepening and extending levels of community engagement in the future. Little, if any, of this has so far happened in the UK.

Evaluation of even small projects is vital. The feedback may provide lessons about what is and is not workable in the neighbourhood. It will reinforce a sense of achievement where the problem has diminished. It may make the community more confident that it can control its own affairs. It can lead to further problem-solving activities as specific issues are resolved, leading to general improvements in neighbourhood life.

When embarking upon your own community involvement project you should always include a plan for evaluation in the early stages of planning and implementation. Independent evaluation is especially desirable as it reduces the risk of biased findings and ensures that the evaluators will have all the necessary expertise and experience needed to conduct a thorough and objective assessment. This adds considerable authority to the findings.

**Table 3: Advantages and disadvantages of some standard techniques for community involvement in assessment**

Consultation technique	Advantages	Disadvantages	When worth considering
Postal surveys	<p>Easy administration to large samples.</p> <p>Random representative sample possible.</p> <p>Easy to conduct pre- and post-intervention administrations.</p> <p>Can analyse statistically.</p>	<p>High non-response rates.</p> <p>Cannot guarantee same people completing survey pre- and post-intervention.</p> <p>If large sample targeted, considerable staff resources needed to handle data.</p>	<p>When intervention is broad-based over large geographical area.</p> <p>When large samples need to be analysed statistically.</p> <p>When resources adequate to deal with data.</p>
Telephone surveys or interviews	<p>Better response rate than postal surveys.</p> <p>Can get better information as can ask people for their views as well as filling in basic questionnaire.</p>	<p>High non-response rates – though not generally as high as postal surveys.</p> <p>Biases possible in who takes part – e.g. those at home in the daytime.</p> <p>If large sample targeted, considerable staff resources needed to handle data.</p>	<p>When wanting both statistical analysis and deeper viewpoints.</p> <p>When targeting smaller sample of people.</p> <p>When needing less structured responses to questions.</p>
Door-to-door surveys and feedback	<p>Even better response rate as asking face to face.</p> <p>Can improve police/community relations as asking people face to face.</p> <p>Can tailor questions to area and problems.</p>	<p>Very time-consuming/resource-intensive so if large-scale intervention need to be very selective in who is asked in assessment.</p>	<p>When wanting both statistical analysis and deeper viewpoints.</p> <p>When interventions very localised.</p> <p>In areas with poor police/community relations.</p>
Feedback during public meetings	<p>Low costs in time, money and staffing.</p> <p>Immediate response.</p> <p>Allows discussion and can also use as feedback exercise to community or re-consultation.</p>	<p>Could be restricted to the police feeding back on their actions without collating public views.</p> <p>Public may be more reluctant to be negative when less anonymous.</p> <p>Attracts 'usual suspects' representation.</p>	<p>Where good police/community relations and history of good consultation.</p> <p>Where intervention has been very localised.</p> <p>Where you need quick response.</p>
Focus groups	<p>Deeper opinions through discussion.</p> <p>Can select to some extent who is involved, so can include hard-to-reach representatives.</p>	<p>Difficult to run well – need to be skilled to prevent straying from the issue.</p> <p>Still may be difficult to get representative group as includes small numbers.</p>	<p>Where subgroups can be targeted.</p> <p>When community involvement in response.</p> <p>Where statistical analysis less important.</p>

### Box 9: Community involvement in assessment: some examples

- Nightingales Estate, Greenham (Thames Valley Police): this project was set up to tackle problems with youths congregating and behaving anti-socially on the housing estate. Interventions included increased surveillance of the area using CCTV, the use of a community post box to report incidents to the police anonymously and various physical improvements to the area. The community provided short- and long-term feedback about police interventions, saying whether or not the specific interventions had been effective and whether they should be continued in the future.
- Bexley projects (Metropolitan Police): residents were suffering from a wide range of ASB problems such as graffiti, youth congregation and disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, abandoned cars and fly-tipping. Individual and quite localised projects dealt with these problems using increased high visibility patrols and by making physical improvements to the area. Success was measured using statistics on the number of arrests and the reduction in complaints, as well as results from a fear of crime survey undertaken by residents before and after the interventions took place. This showed increased confidence in the police and a decrease in fear of crime.
- Nottingham Anti-Social Behaviour Task Force (Nottinghamshire Police): specific streets were identified as hot spots of youth disorder and ASB, and dispersal orders were enforced in these areas. PCSOs then conduct door-to-door surveys of residents to measure whether the dispersal order has worked, and residents are asked at points after the intervention has ceased whether the level of youth disorder has reduced and if it reoccurs.
- Volunteer Police Scheme (Lancashire Police): a wide range of community involvement in response put in place using volunteers from the local community (see Boxes 7 and 8). Internal police evaluation is under way at the time of writing, one year into implementation of the scheme. Community involvement in the evaluation was provided in two ways. First, a feedback questionnaire was given to all volunteers asking them about their experiences. Second, the effectiveness of the reopening of rural police stations is being evaluated using a public perception survey.
- Luton and Dunstable Stakeholder Policing Project (Bedfordshire Police): aims to canvass community views on whether the project has been successful using surveys and focus groups. This project was still in its early stages of implementation at the time of writing, so no further details of evaluation were available.

### Summary of dos and don'ts for community involvement in assessment

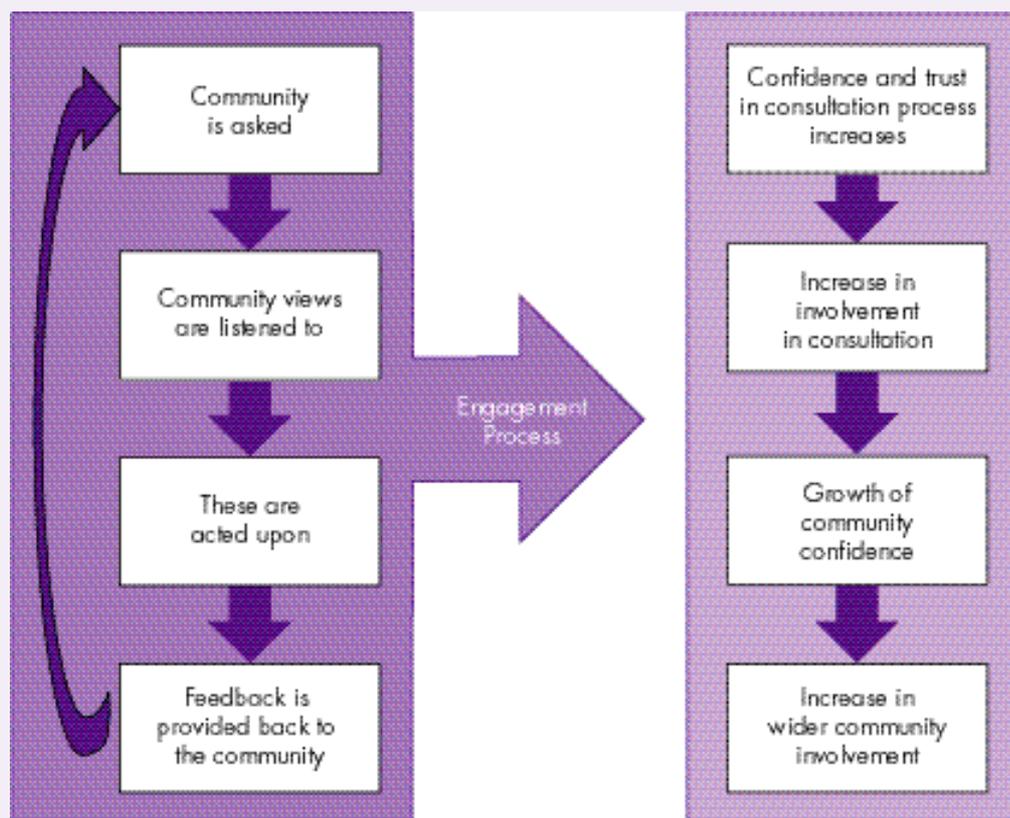
- DO try to plan the evaluation at the beginning of the project.
- DO consider using a variety of methods of assessment, but be aware of the costs of certain methods.
- DO remember that when measuring public perceptions of any improvements you need a baseline measure – so ideally DO conduct a survey of the residents both before and after intervention.
- DO be clear on the evaluation purposes and make provisions appropriate to them.
- DO consider outside independent evaluation in larger-scale, well-funded projects as this will be more objective and lend more weight to the evaluation findings.
- DON'T rely solely on 'hard' measures of effectiveness such as crime statistics; evidence of an impact on members of the local community is also valuable.

## Putting it all together

### Community involvement and problem-solving: an overall model

Good involvement in problem-solving requires community input at several stages and is ongoing. Figure 2 illustrates how community involvement can be increased by implementing an effective engagement process.

Figure 2: Increasing levels of community involvement through effective engagement.



You must ask community members about their perceptions of local crime and disorder problems rather than just telling them about police initiatives. You need to listen to these views so that the members of the community feel that their input is valued. You should act upon the priorities identified, and give feedback to the community about what is being done. Then you should re-consult, asking a variety of questions, such as the following.

- Has the problem been reduced or removed?
- What are the new priority problems?
- Bearing in mind previous interventions, what can we try now in the area? How should resources be allocated?

The process therefore becomes circular, comprising initial engagement and consultation, responding to community needs, feeding back and re-consulting. During this process public confidence and trust in consultation should increase, leading to wider community participation. People are more likely to participate in their local community when they feel they are being listened to, their needs responded to and can see improvements as a result.

### Some examples of involvement across the SARA process

Fairly broad community involvement through much of the problem-solving process is being delivered in some Neighbourhood Watch schemes, which are being taken beyond their more traditional forms and functions. Box 10 describes the processes in Humberside Neighbourhood Watch. There is clearly scope here for using assessment and feedback to the group about what is actually delivered and the results. Problems further down the list of priorities can then be addressed.

### Box 10: Humberside Association of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes (HANWAG)

Newly formed Neighbourhood Watch schemes in Humberside undertake a problem-solving exercise. An experienced facilitator takes groups through a structured problem-solving process, using a series of pre-printed wipeable boards.

- The first board invites participants to list the problems they face on a Wheel Board. This has a number of segments on each of which a problem mentioned is listed. Members of the group each have two spots that they can then attach either to a single issue or to two different ones.
- The dots are then counted and the respective scores are used in the next, Priority Ladder Board. This provides a means of scanning for and ordering problems for the Neighbourhood Watch group to address.
- The third Problem Triangle Board is then used to analyse the priority problem. This comprises a version of the problem-analysis triangle with sides for Victim, Offender and Location. It has inner and outer spaces for each side. In the inner space the constituents are listed, that is who the victims are, who the offenders are and the specific location/s where the problem is encountered. In the outer space 'deductions, responses and actions' are listed. These comprise reflections on what is significant about the offenders, victims and locations and what might be put in place to alter or remove those significant features to ameliorate or dispose of the problem. The facilitator helps elicit potential points of intervention that may be in the hands of Neighbourhood Watch members as well as measures that might be asked of local agencies, which might or might not include the police.
- The final Our Plan Board provides separate spaces for the aim in relation to the identified problem, the actions planned and the assistance needed to achieve the aim.

The deliberations of the problem-solving group are transcribed on to A4 sheets of paper mirroring the boards. The facilitator takes these away and keeps a copy whilst returning the original to the local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator. The Neighbourhood Watch group is left with a plausible practical plan to respond to its own agreed priority problem. The facilitator will not necessarily attend the next Neighbourhood Watch meeting which will focus on taking the agreed actions forward. She/he might be called back, however, to help sort out implementation difficulties.

Key benefits of this activity include:

- creating a clear purpose for the Neighbourhood Watch group;
- mobilising constructive activity to address local priority problems without undue dependence on the police; and
- building local capacity for longer-term action to address other local problems.

Evaluation has not figured significantly so far in the work of these problem-solving Neighbourhood Watch groups. Those involved in facilitating them are convinced, though, of their effectiveness.

Box 11 provides a series of further examples where more than one part of the SARA process involving community members has been put in place. In all cases community involvement has amounted to more than scanning or analysis or response and in some cases feedback processes have been set up.

### Box 11: Community involvement in multiple SARA stages: good practice examples

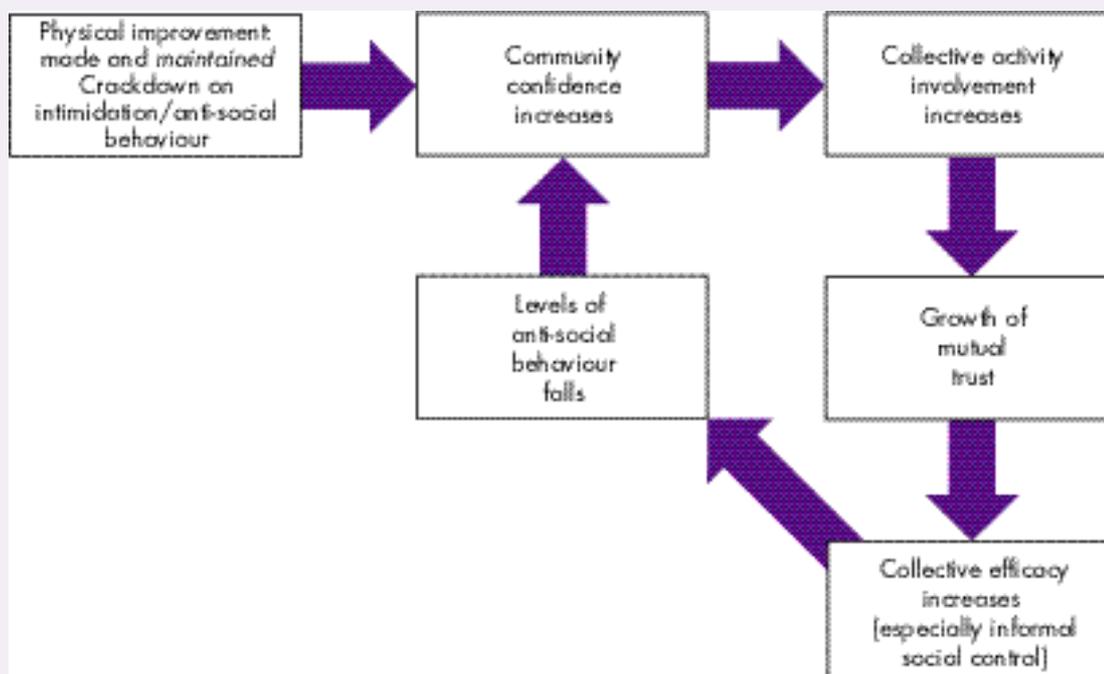
- Hartlepool (Cleveland Police): used a one-day workshop to consult the community on how partners could work better together to identify, analyse and respond to local problems.
- Barrow-in-Furness (Cumbria Police): Community Oriented Problem Solvers teams used in Streetsafe operations to tackle localised community problems with evidence of consultation with residents and responsiveness to those concerns with improved community safety reassurance.
- Local PACT meetings (Lancashire Police): Lancashire Police are highly committed to community involvement reflected in their Police And Communities Together meetings. These involve the setting of three priorities each month based upon community recommendations. These are well publicised with regular feedback provided. At these meetings the community can also make suggestions about how to deal with these problems.

- Luton & Dunstable Stakeholder Policing Project (Bedfordshire Police): community consultation to identify key problems and then the community have a say in how to allocate police and local agency resources.
- Bellegrove Parade and Bellegrove Methodist Church, Bexley (Metropolitan Police): regular consultation with the community maintained via local meetings. These meetings allow the development of good police/community relations with action taken on the problems identified and feedback provided.
- Grizedale Estate, Liverpool (Merseyside Police): surveys of local residents to identify problems, as well as a multifaceted response package including community involvement in crime prevention and involving local young people in diversion activities. Feedback was also provided back to the community.

### Community involvement in high-crime and deprivation communities

Going back to Figure 1 – the varying types of community that you may be trying to involve in problem-solving – the most troubling communities (Type A) raise particular issues. Figure 3 shows a promising model for stimulating community involvement in problem-solving within such communities. External intervention is needed before collective activity can realistically be expected. These areas will tend to have high levels of crime and deprivation. Residents may lack trust in, or respect for, the police. There may be internal divisions and patterns of intimidation. Therefore a combination of crackdowns on intimidation and anti-social behaviour, coupled with strategies such as making physical improvements to the area may prove extremely effective. There is potential for stimulating a virtuous circle that may lead to increased involvement, trust and collective efficacy, providing a context in which community involvement in specific problem-solving becomes plausible. Working within such communities necessarily involves extra planning, effort and groundwork. Due to issues of confidence and trust, it must not be assumed that these communities will be easy to engage in the short term. But remember that they are also those that have most to gain from community involvement in the long term.

Figure 3 Circle of increased social cohesion in areas of high deprivation



## Other practical considerations for involvement

- *Diverse communities* – even within small areas, groups may vary according to income, geography, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics. To successfully involve diverse members of the community is very difficult, and you may have to tailor opportunities to different target groups. All communities will contain ‘hard-to-reach’ groups who may well already feel marginalised within the community – try to be as inclusive as possible.
- *Rural communities* – most community involvement projects focus on urban areas. Different problems will affect rural communities and different types of involvement may be appropriate – for example, interventions that focus on high-visibility patrol will be less effective.
- *The size of the community* – evidence suggests that community involvement is more successful in small communities, as it can deal with very specific and very localised issues. There is less chance of involvement resulting in conflict or inequitable outcomes and community members also have a greater personal interest in problems that are specific to their immediate neighbourhood.
- *Ownership of the intervention* – if you involve a community across the stages of problem-solving and follow Figure 2, you can encourage members to take responsibility for the intervention. Ensure that they feel their participation is important and directly related to the outcomes they witness. They will be more invested collectively in the outcome of the scheme and more motivated to participate.
- *Training for police and communities* – everyone involved in problem-solving will benefit from a clear understanding of the methods and processes they are expected to use. Much community involvement will take place at public meetings, yet not all members of the community, or police officers, will be comfortable in this formal setting. Meetings can be successfully run by the police or by the community, but facilitating and controlling a meeting is a skill that must be learned. Those involved must be made aware of methods for making meetings as interesting and informal as possible.
- *Providing information* – the police must provide the public with good quality information about crime in their local area. They must also communicate clearly to those involved what information they are not allowed to provide.

## Summary of dos and don'ts for community involvement as a whole

- DO focus your involvement in small neighbourhoods where there is a more realistic chance of success.
- DO talk to other police forces and local authorities for guidance on effective practice, bearing in mind that the needs, characteristics and resources may differ in your targeted area.
- DO think about expanding your engagement from consultation to wider community involvement.
- DO consider a multifaceted package of ways to engage and involve the community.
- DO try and include a wide variety of people from within the community – it may be necessary to tailor the methods of involvement dependent upon the characteristics of the population.
- DO carry out groundwork in deprived communities to establish trust for the police within the community before anticipating their participation.
- DO consider supplementing the involvement with neighbourhood regeneration measures.
- DO regularly review your community involvement process.
- DO provide feedback and attempt to trigger virtuous cycles of increasing involvement.
- DON'T narrow your focus of community involvement to consultation only.
- DON'T forget that communities (and the problems that affect them) are not static and as they change so might your plan of who you involve and how you involve them.



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