

# Seeking to improve trust and confidence in local police

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My idea: Hyper-local problem solving – 40 wards, 40 problems, 40 solutions

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Community Matters is a new concept of hyper-local problem solving that seeks to improve trust and confidence in the local police.

The community in each ward is given the opportunity to nominate a single priority, for example, visible drug taking on the street. This is done through ward panels and online engagement platforms, such as [Nextdoor](#). The community then own the problem and work in partnership with the police to identify a longer-term solution.

This is a total partnership approach, involving all internal and external partners, including CID, Neighbourhood Teams, Safer Neighbourhood Boards, safeguarding, emergency response, schools, ward panels, local authorities and charitable organisations.

The dedicated ward officer for each ward is responsible for being the public face of the work. They build legitimacy by engaging with the community, resolving local problems and establishing themselves as someone who the community can trust.

The police and its partners dedicate resources to focusing on the issue for one week. Once a solution is identified, feedback is given directly to the local community about the nature of the problem solving, its success and any follow-up work that is needed.

Community Matters is scalable for smaller or larger forces. Smaller forces could focus on one ward's problem each week, moving around the force area in a rolling plan. In larger forces that have greater access to resources, all wards could undertake this activity in the same week.

Through its focus on hyper-local problem solving and ongoing community evaluation, this quarterly cycle of Community Matters can:

- increase police legitimacy
- reduce demand for service
- build in continuous improvement
- ensure community ownership
- highlight and supplement core policing activity around vulnerability
- drive trust and confidence (and allow for measurable improvement through surveys and community feedback)

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This article was peer reviewed by Inspector James Hoyes, Lincolnshire Police.

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