# Crime hot spots mobile phone app

An application that directs officers to geographical locations with high concentrations of serious violence.

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# Key details

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| **Stage of practice** | Independently evaluated |
| **Purpose** | Prevention |
| **Topic** | Neighbourhood crime<br>Digital, data and analytics<br>Investigation |
| **Organisation** | [Thames Valley Police](#) |
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| **Region** | South East |
| **Stage of implementation** | The practice is implemented. |
| **Start date** | April 2020 |
| **Scale of initiative** | Local |

# Aim

The aim of the mobile phone app is to:

- prevent and tackle serious violence and homicide
- improve the use of technology to support officers
- help successfully embed hot spots policing as an approach

# Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the mobile phone app are:

- a reduction in serious violence and homicide
- improved use of technology
- increased efficiency among officers

# Description

In-force analysts in Thames Valley Police have developed a serious violence dashboard (using PowerBI). The dashboard is accessible to officers and is fed information through police data records. The dashboard includes information on:

- which crimes are happening
- where crimes are happening
- who is involved and their offending history

A simple and intuitive mobile phone app identifies hot spots near the officer's current location. Within a few clicks in the app, officers can be directed to a hot spot. This enables them to patrol a focused geographic location at a time when serious violence has happened, rather than where and when they think it might be happening.

## App design

The app has been designed to be simple to use and encourage changes in patrol behaviour. The new technology can tell the user why an area is an allocated hot spot and also provides a short briefing by way of background. Officers have a space in the app to record any activity during their patrol. The data officers record feeds back into the serious violence dashboard to monitor compliance and measure impact.

While officers are patrolling a hot spot, the app can monitor their activity using geolocation and record information. This includes information such as:

- how much time officers spent in the hot spot
- if they stopped in the hot spot
- if they patrolled on foot or by vehicle

# Evaluation

A [randomised control trial evaluation of Thames Valley Police's hot spot policing approach](#) is currently ongoing with the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing.

Thames Valley Police is also running their own analysis using the data from the first year of their hot spot policing approach. This analysis looks at crime data to assess crime reduction and harm caused by violent crime.

Early findings from this analysis have shown a non-statistically significant reduction in violent crime and a reduction in harm caused by violent crime. The findings also suggest a good use of hot spot policing by the force.

# Overall impact

Early findings suggest there have been improvements in how crimes are targeted by officers in Thames Valley Police.

There has been feedback from communities that they notice and appreciate the visible presence of police officers.

The mobile phone app has been placed on the Police Digital Service library so that it is available to other forces.

The mobile phone app has been used as part of two force-wide randomised control trials (RCTs) to test the effects of overt hotspot patrolling by officers on serious violence crime hotspots. The impact of these two RCTs has been evaluated and has been submitted to an academic journal for publication (currently awaiting peer review).

# Learning

- Senior engagement is vital to success. This initiative requires a change in mindset away from calls for service dominating resource planning.
- It's important to get officers engaged and onboard. This involved training them in the use of the app and the hot spot policing approach so they can effectively patrol.
- The force has used positive reinforcement to praise officers who are top performers in patrolling hot spots.
- It's important that the app is easy to use – within three clicks of the app officers can be directed to a randomised hot spot location.
- To measure the effectiveness of hot spot patrols, the baseline of police activity in these areas needs to be measured alongside the activity of the additionally tasked officers.

# Best available evidence

See the crime reduction toolkit for the best-available evidence on hot spots policing.

## Tags

Information communication technology (ICT)     Hot spots policing