Local priority targeting to reduce neighbourhood crime

Combining data and feedback to target police activity and improve relationships with local communities.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Crime prevention Digital Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Intelligence and investigation Neighbourhood crime Operational policing Organisation including workforce
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Key details

Region	North East
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	November 2022
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public

Aim

To provide a tool that:

- uses data within My Community Alert (a sign-up messaging system operated by Humberside Police) more effectively
- enables all officers and staff to have a better understanding of local communities, including cultural demographics and local communities' priorities, needs, risks and threats
- supports officers to provide bespoke and meaningful engagement that meets the needs and preferences of different communities
- identifies and prioritises people, groups, and places with the greatest needs
- enables targeted activity and enhances problem solving solutions using the data available
- promotes long-lasting relationships between officers and the local community

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are:

- all houses in Humberside being visited to inform them about My Community Alert and invite them to register
- increased number of members of the public aware of and registered on My Community Alert and increased response rates to the associated surveys
- more effective use of data within My Community Alert
- increased understanding of officers and staff about local communities, including cultural demographics and local communities' needs, risks, and threats
- increased contact between the police and communities and community members
- bespoke and meaningful engagement that meets the needs and preferences of different communities
- increased engagement with diverse communities and members of the public from ethnic minority and underrepresented backgrounds
- identification and prioritisation of people, groups, and places with the greatest needs
- increased use of targeted activity based on insights from the data available
- a reduction in neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour following targeted policing activity
- an effective feedback mechanism, providing communities with updates about police action to address communities' concerns and areas of focus highlighted by the tool
- more diverse independent advisory group (IAG) membership
- increased recruitment from diverse communities to ensure the workforce reflects local communities
- improved public trust, confidence and satisfaction in the police

Description

Neighbourhood alert – known as 'My Community Alert' within Humberside – is a community alert system web page. It allows members of the public to register to be sent communications from the police and invites them to complete police-related surveys.

Registration

Humberside Police made a commitment to knock on every door in Humberside to inform the public about My Community Alert and invite them to register, while also asking for their feedback on local issues through their HumberTalking survey. So far, 212,824 houses have been visited and over 59,000 people have registered. People are also able to self-register for My Community Alert if they become aware of this by a different method.

Data collected

Data collected by My Community Alert includes personal details that members of the public are asked to provide when they register. This includes demographic information, their postcode and whether they are a member of any groups (for example, advisory groups or community groups). It also includes survey data, particularly the force's public survey, which those registered on My Community Alert are invited to complete every three months. This survey asks about aspects such as trust and confidence, local priorities, and concerns or issues.

Local Priority Targeting

Development

The local priority targeting tool is bespoke software that has been built into the My Community Alert web page with the aim of using the data on this system more effectively. VISAV web design, who own Neighbourhood Alert, were commissioned to develop the tool. The IAG was also involved throughout its development. The tool allows the data collected by My Community Alert to be combined with the force's crime data from their systems and social and economic data (from Acorn). This facilitates a clearer understanding about who is signed up to the system and where they are located.

It enables survey feedback, crime data, demographic and personal data (including postcodes and identification with any groups), and social and economic data to be linked. This means that specific feedback, issues or concerns and potential vulnerabilities can be identified according to location or area, demographics, involvement within particular groups, and social and economic data. The tool can provide insight at a variety of levels – force, ward and street level. The tool also allows any changes in the data to be tracked over time.

How it's used by police

The tool provides instant and live access to the data available. Using the datasets together, the tool recommends streets for the police to focus on and actions to be taken. The insights from the tool can be shared with groups of officers internally, providing bespoke priorities and actions for them. For example, highlighting the public's priorities and concerns within certain areas or demographic groups. The insights shared also include key contact details of members of the public in groups and communities, such as IAG members and key individual contacts.

These contacts have significant contact with community groups and members and can put messages out and are approachable for advice and information about particular issues. Based on the insights, appropriate action is taken, which can involve collaboration with businesses and local authorities. For example, drugs were reported to be an issue in a particular area and the task force have addressed this. The tool is accessible to all officers, however, their access to the data and insights is restricted to what they need access to.

Engagement

Feedback is given via notifications to those signed up to the tool about what the data is showing at an aggregate level and what the police are doing in response. This can be done at a force level and for hyper-local areas. All officers have the authority to send messages to their local areas. The public are able reply to the police if they wish to enable further engagement. Engagement is then monitored, tracked and proportionate.

Individuals choose to opt into the tool. There is no automatic registration and registered members can opt out at any time they wish. The tool aims to improve engagement with underrepresented groups. The local priority targeting tool provides an additional functionality to the My Community Alert web page, accessed via the internet. Users do not have to download applications, reducing the risk of digital exclusion.

Overall impact

The initiative's evaluation is yet to begin, so evidence of impact is largely anecdotal at this stage, though appears to be positive. An evaluation is planned but the date is yet to be confirmed. It will link to the neighbourhood policing performance framework via the HumberTalking survey responses and will focus on public confidence in the police over time, staff focus groups and data analysis.

The use of targeted activity has increased and has been informed by the insights from the data available on the tool. This has enabled the identification and prioritisation of people, groups and places with the greatest needs for targeted activity to be carried out.

Early indications show that the tool is being effectively used to provide feedback to communities with updates about police action. This addresses communities' concerns and areas of focus highlighted, resulting in:

- an increase in response rates to associated surveys
- an increase in recruitment from diverse communities
- a reduction in neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour following targeted activity
- an increase in engagement with diverse communities and members of the public from ethnic minority groups and underrepresented backgrounds
- more diverse IAG membership, ensuring representation of local communities
- improved relationships between local communities and the police, particularly underrepresented communities
- improved public trust, confidence, and satisfaction in the police

During force operations, the mapping tool has been used for targeted engagement with the force's seldom heard communities, progress on this can be monitored using the included reporting tool. Whilst attending the Alert Summit earlier this year, it was great to hear a couple of examples from other forces that haver now adopted this, for example, a force used it to identify and engage with the Jewish community during Operation Tarlac and another used it to engage with the Polish community following a homicide.

Learning

Mechanisms that make the initiative successful

- Due to the scale of officers involved, this initiative is taking a more holistic approach to community engagement. This is likely to be helping to reshape views of the police more broadly than that for individual officers.
- Officers are involved with and can therefore understand the end-to-end engagement process – from helping to engage communities with the tool, asking communities for their views, understanding insights gathered and taking appropriate action in response.

- All officers have the authority to send feedback to and communicate with those registered on My Community Alert. This enables tailored feedback at a force level and for more bespoke feedback to be provided at a local area level.
- Physically visiting every house in Humberside enables engagement both through the visible presence and the subsequent registration to access and engagement via My Community Alert. It also ensures that all residents have an opportunity to become aware of My Community Alert and to register.
- The online nature of the tool facilitates a wider reach of members of the public.
- The tool is accessible to officers via their mobile phones. The interface is easy to use and provides digestible insights, which facilitates the tool's use.
- The tool requires minimal internal maintenance once the data is linked to the tool and the surveys are sent on an automatic basis.
- The insights from the data within the tool are available quickly and consider all of the data available. Additionally, the tool can provide insights into any changes in the data over time. This enables bespoke and targeted activity to be undertaken.
- The tool enables insights to be shared with groups of officers easily.
- Time is required for officers to use the tool and send notifications of updates to those registered.
- Once the tool is in place, additional cost and resourcing requirements are minimal and become business-as-usual work.
- The tool securely imports and stores data and has data security processes in place, such as restricted access to data. This ensures sensitive data is held in accordance with GDPR and that risk of access to data is managed appropriately.
- Supervisors can review, evaluate and monitor progress. This ensures that appropriate action is being taken to respond to the insights based on the data.
- This tool is not a standalone solution and should be used alongside a broader community engagement approach.

Challenges requiring consideration

- Continuous professional development sessions were required to show officers how to use the tool and the benefits of this. This increased officer buy-in to use the tool.
- Not all people who register on My Community Alert provide their demographic information. This can be challenging given that functions offered by the tool relate to demographics.

- It is important for officers to not provide feedback via the tool too frequently because the public may perceive this as junk and consequently deregister. Social media principles and policy is applied to providing feedback via the tool.
- Initially members of the public reported difficulty in replying to communication and feedback provided on the tool by the police. This was because the tool required them to log in to do so. Therefore, the requirement to log in was removed to enable this.
- It is important to manage the risk of access to data through permission settings for officers depending on their role and where they operate.
- To have used of the tool, a suitable package is required from the developers (VISAV).
- The public feedback received is dependent on community members being registered on and engaging with My Community Alert. Therefore, efforts to engage the public with this are essential to ensure as many people as possible are providing feedback and that the feedback received is representative of communities' views.
- The option to "archive" a targeted set up has been added, this ensures a a priority set up doesn't remain open indefinitely and it's not deleted which would lose the reports that are available. An amendment has also been made so that during set up you can now select whether or not you wish people that have already signed up to alert to be revisited. The reason being, there are times when surveying and signing up new members is a priority, however, there are sometimes occasions when you may need/wish to complete engagement with an identified group regardless of whether or not they are already signed up.

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Tags

Neighbourhood policing   Crime reduction   Community engagement