

Sharing lived experience – Community Speakers Project

Humberside Police invite seldom heard communities to share their lived experiences of the police to aid officer and staff understanding.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement
Organisation	Humberside Police
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Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2022
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Offenders Victims
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Aim

The project aims to develop relationships and open dialogue between the force and various communities within Humberside.

Intended outcome

By opening dialogue between communities and the force, the community speakers project intends to:

- increase the force's understanding of diversity, equality and inclusion
- inform staff and officers about how it may feel for different groups to be policed in Humberside
- allow members of the community to provide feedback directly to officers and staff

This is measured through hot debriefs following the community speakers' inputs to find out how officers and staff feel after the sessions.

Description

Officers and staff invite members of local communities to come and speak with colleagues on an ongoing basis. This is to help develop the force's understanding of how individuals from diverse backgrounds feel about, and interact with the policing system.

Humberside used demographic data to identify nine protected characteristics to ensure a broad representation of individuals in the Community Speakers Project.

Neighbourhood policing inspectors play a key role in identifying diverse groups and communities within their constituencies. Officers use My Community Alert data (Acorn and Origins overlays) to do this. Neighbourhood policing inspectors collaborate with the community safety unit to develop relationships with individuals from seldom heard communities, and invite them to share their experiences with officers, staff and volunteers.

Efficient partnership working is central to the success of The Community Speakers Project. Working within a network of victim support and health services creates a wider range of people to call on, as non-policing practitioners can invite individuals from their services to share their experiences of policing.

Each neighbourhood policing team has access to a HD digital camcorder and SD card. The force ask the speaker if they can record their conversation and share it with the force on a wider level. It is important that the team gain consent from the community speaker prior to recording. Recording the community speaker sessions was beneficial when taking into consideration social distancing after the COVID-19 pandemic. The recordings are stored in the force's system and are available for officers and staff to watch.

At the beginning of the initiative the recording was circulated around the neighbourhood policing teams, however the force has begun to share relevant content with more specialised teams.

The input should be flexible and allow the community speaker to express how they are feeling in their own way. The following four topics are given as key areas of interest:

- community culture/background
- experience of policing, what has gone well/what could be done better
- any concerns they or their community might have
- what is great about their local community

Police officers and staff are encouraged to ask questions. If the input is not live, staff are invited to ask questions in advance and these questions are shared with the community speakers prior to the input.

Overall impact

After each input, there is a hot debrief where the lived experiences and cultural education team can receive feedback on the value of the Community Speakers event. Feedback from these sessions indicate that staff find the events eye-opening and beneficial in increasing their understanding of diverse communities.

The force continue to reference the lived experience videos in briefings and interactions with student officers.

Learning

Community cohesion officers supporting local neighbourhood policing commanders have been key in identifying community speakers. The community cohesion officers have helped establish relationships and identify emerging seldom heard communities.

The force was surprised by the amount of people who volunteered to take part as a community speaker. This suggests that members of seldom heard communities want to share their experiences with the police.

It was identified that the community speakers are giving up their valuable time to take part in the event. As a result, Humberside are considering financial reimbursement to thank the speakers for their time. The force is looking into opportunities for sponsorships and funding to further the project.

Using a cross-agency approach to the Community Speakers Project, by collaborating with victim support and health services, will increase the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

The events can be difficult for officers and speakers due to the complexities of lived experience inputs. There is a risk of re-traumatisation for speakers as they share their lived experiences with the force – this is particularly difficult if an experience is negative. It is important that those running the event are using a trauma-informed approach and the force can offer further support, such as counselling services. This issue can also be relevant for the officers, who may find it difficult to hear communities' experiences with the force or find themselves being re-traumatised by the content of the events.

It is essential that the videos remain up-to-date, the force will look to refresh this on an annual basis.

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