You Said We Did – community focus groups

Providing a community feedback platform that feeds back directly to chief officers and leaders to support the development of policies and practice.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Crime prevention Criminal justice Diversity and inclusion Ethics and values Leadership, development and learning Organisation including workforce
Organisation	Humberside Police
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Region	North East

Key details

Partners	Police Business and commerce Community safety partnership Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2019
Completion date	November 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities General public

Aim

To listen to the community and explore opportunities where change can improve public trust and confidence in the police.

Intended outcome

- To increase public trust and confidence in the police.
- To increase reporting to the police.
- To create unity within communities.

Description

During 2019/20, four focus groups were held in public venues across Humberside. The focus groups were attended by over 50 community members and the sessions were recorded to feedback key points and concerns to the force. The aim was to identify any areas for improvement in Humberside police practice, to ensure the service provision was accessible and appropriate for local communities. All costs for this initiative were covered by the force.

Recruitment

Humberside used their independent advisory groups (IAGs) to reach a diverse range of people, specifically focusing on those typically unrepresented within policing. This included minority groups as well as other targeted demographics, such as young people. The force accessed young people by speaking to colleges and youth centres. Specific targeting of young people was also conducted on social media to increase engagement. It was important to achieve a broad representation of people at every focus group event.

Focus groups

The focus groups were designed to bring together diverse communities residing in the force area, and provide a platform where seldom heard communities could speak directly to stakeholders. Force leaders, including the deputy chief constable, members of the senior leadership team and neighbourhood inspectors listened to the communities and agreed and acted upon change that would assist their access to services. The meetings were held in various venues across Humberside, including community centres, religious centres and partner agency venues. Food was also provided as an incentive and a thank you to those offering their time to speak to the force. The meetings took place once every three months.

Key areas addressed during the focus groups included:

- the accessibility and effectiveness of the force website
- the local neighbourhood teams and their priorities
- stop and search
- general complaints

The feedback formed part of an action plan called 'You Said We Did', where the force would seek to address the community's ideas and concerns. It was important to have stakeholders and leaders present during the meetings, as it allowed and encouraged change within the force. After the initial

meeting, the force would respond to the previous concerns with their actions, showcasing what they had done as a result of the community's feedback. At each meeting the force would provide an update to the community on the work they had undertaken since the previous meeting.

The initiative ended in November 2023 and a conference was held in October 2023 to review the initiative. 130 people attended the conference.

Due to the positive impact gained from the focus groups, Humberside neighbourhood teams are working on creating a similar structure. The process involves nominating individuals and IAGs to continue sharing feedback with the force, and having regular meetings to share police practice in response. This will be discussed in more depth at the next conference, taking place in October 2024.

Overall impact

The initiative resulted in:

- increased engagement across the force
- changes in service
- changes in strategy and policy
- increased accessibility of the force website
- the creation and update of the neighbourhood team profiles on the website: the community expressed a desire to know who their local neighbourhood officer was – by having profiles of local officers it increases and encourages public engagement
- increased reporting during or after the sessions due to increased trust and confidence in the police – this was specifically seen in the reporting of hate crime

Learning

Having in-person sessions was identified as powerful and improved the accessibility of policing for those who did not have access to the internet or did not feel digitally literate. However, during the coronavirus pandemic, Humberside ran three virtual sessions. Despite the force not favouring virtual meetings, it was helpful in continuing engagement during the pandemic.

The involvement of senior police leaders is pivotal to the success of the focus groups. Having stakeholders in the room allows the conversations to have more tangible, direct impacts.

In the future, Humberside plan to use Slido as a way to capture feedback from surveys after the focus group sessions. This will allow the force to keep records and track the impacts of their community inputs.

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Tags

Community engagement