Whole-system approach – Leicestershire Police

Leicestershire Police is using a whole-system approach to prevent homicide by tackling serious violence.

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Key details

Does it work?	Smarter practice
Topic	Violence including homicide
Organisation	[Leicestershire Police](#)
Region	East Midlands
Target group	Communities

Smarter practice

Problem

Leicestershire Police has embarked on a whole-system approach to prevent homicide – specifically by tackling serious violence as a driver of homicide. Its approach is underpinned by effective partnership working at all levels. It achieves this through clear governance structures and positive working relationships with colleagues in other partner organisations.

Within the force's own system, there is a widespread and unequivocal commitment to tackling serious violence as a precursor to homicide. The force is in the process of developing a fully trauma-informed workforce, understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences and aiming to avoid re-traumatisation.

Background

Leicestershire Police and partners have addressed a problem affecting many areas – namely, engaging and aligning complex partnership arrangements and force structures to support a more holistic, comprehensive and coordinated response.

Over the past six years a committed senior leadership team, open to using strategies and tactics from evidence-based policing research, has directed the attention of the force to preventing serious violence and reducing the harm it causes.

Response

The Leicestershire Police system now benefits from a single chief officer lead (deputy chief constable (DCC)). The chief officer chairs governance boards where thematic leads for crime, local policing and criminal justice report. These governance boards have developed a serious violence prevention strategy and each department in the force has plans that reflect the force's priority of preventing serious violence.

A single officer (an experienced senior investigating officer (SIO)) leads on preventing homicides by targeting serious violence, investigating homicides and managing offenders. The force believes this approach offers significant benefits in resource allocation and ensuring the force achieves its aim of preventing serious violence.

The approach to partnership working is also effectively coordinated and geared to early interventions, using a public health approach.

This includes:

- a single meeting (described as the engine room) for all partners involved in the prevention of serious violence in child protection, domestic abuse and youth violence settings
- a multi-agency dataset feeding accessible dashboards, allowing police analysts to focus on evaluation rather than data processing
- a domestic abuse threat assessment app used to understand risk and identify the most dangerous offenders
- a cross-disciplinary vulnerability executive working to the single aim of achieving an improvement to the lives of the people identified as needing intervention
- a multi-agency substance misuse meeting with public health as a key stakeholder agency, which uses early interventions led by recovery and outreach specialists, working with police

Whole-system approach logic model

Problem

- Complex partnership arrangements.
- Force structures didn't support a coordinated force response.
- Twenty-five hotspots accounting for 19% of serious violence in Leicestershire.
- Serious violence disproportionally affecting young men – force campaigns not reflecting this.

Response – diversion

- Young people provided with a violence intervention project worker when in custody for their first violent offence.
- Custody centres allocated separate, age-appropriate booking-in areas for young people.
- Provision of diversion opportunities to young people at risk of involvement in violent crime.

Response – communications and use of technology

- Development of an app identifying perpetrators and victims.
- Creation of a social media campaign around knife crime.
- Creation of a violence against women and girls bystander-based social media campaign.

Response – use of data

- Multi-agency data presented in a dashboard available to all partners.
- Twenty-five serious violence hot spots identified through multi-agency data.

Outputs

- Number of young people working with violence intervention project worker.
- Number of young people diverted from involvement in violent crime.
- Number of high risk domestic abuse perpetrators and victims identified.
- Tailored problem-solving plans for each hot spot's problem-solving plan.

Outcomes	- Reduction of re-traumatisation of young people in the criminal justice system. - Improved data sharing between partners. - Improved engagement from young people on social media. - Reduction in crime harm.

- [View the logic model as a poster](#)

Implementation

Leicestershire Police has implemented its whole-system approach incrementally, building on long-established partnership relationships. It has made strategic, structural and technical changes to support the successful integration of the approach at all levels, driven by senior staff who act as critical ambassadors.

How the whole-system approach works

- Multi-agency data feeds a dashboard available to police and partners, including local authorities and health. The dashboard increases agencies' understanding of problems, allowing them to more effectively mobilise resources to tackle serious issues when they arise. The data is fed automatically from the force crime system and at set intervals from partners' systems. It supports the identification of crime hot spots, such as areas around some schools, so resources can be focused on problems at an early stage.
- The identification of serious violence hot spots using the Cambridge Harm Index identified 25 hot spots, accounting for 19 percent of serious violence (from actual bodily harm to murder) in Leicestershire. A focused operation over 12 months in each hot spot involved police stop and search, and the GPS tracking of officers within the hot spot to monitor their activity. A tailored problem-solving plan was also developed for each hot spot. Effective community engagement (informed by an equality impact assessment) and assurance activity (such as the reviewing of all body worn video in stop and search encounters) helped to ensure communities remain supportive of police tactics.
- The use of an analytical approach to identify people who are causing the most harm has been overlaid with hot spot locations to focus activity on people committing serious violence. This cohort are subject to enhanced police action (Operation Lassoed), including consideration for remand in custody applications, more detailed liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

to make sure appropriate criminal justice options such as ancillary orders are considered, and providing pathways out of serious violence with partner organisations.

- The use of a domestic abuse app to identify its most dangerous domestic abuse offenders and most at-risk victims. The app uses a recency and frequency measure to allocate a score to the person from occurrences in the last 90 days. A problem-solving plan is then developed that identifies tasks intended to reduce the risk of harm. Alerts can then be applied to police crime recording systems to identify to call takers the heightened risk at the first point of contact. A team of domestic abuse specialists manage the risk highlighted by the app, using ancillary orders where possible.

- A Violence and Complex Crime Unit (VCCU) works closely with the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) to prevent serious violence. All young people have access to a violence intervention project worker when in custody after being arrested for their first violent offence. Police custody centres have separate, age-appropriate booking-in areas to avoid re-traumatisation of young people, particularly those with adverse childhood experiences.

- The Violent Crime Joint Action Group provides diversion opportunities to young people (aged between 11 and 25 years) at risk of becoming involved in violent crime, including the siblings of gang members.

- A targeted and credible communications strategy led the force to stop using ineffective social media platforms for knife prevention messages. It harnessed the knowledge of the VRN and focus groups involving young people to allocate its modest budget to an impactive 'We Don't Carry' campaign, which is based on social norm theory. It is now effectively targeted at the right audience, using radio, Instagram and Snapchat, which can be targeted to specific locations.

- Well-considered external communication tactics are also being used in the force's violence against women and girls bystander campaign, 'You're right, That's wrong', which urges men to be the solution to the problem.

Enablers for implementation

Organisational culture

The force fosters a progressive culture, endorsed by senior members of staff. Trauma-informed practice is evident in its treatment of juveniles in custody. Evidence-based approaches, risk management solutions based on academic research, and the use of social media platforms to convey credible prevention messages operate together effectively.

Governance structure

Leicestershire Police has the clear aim of preventing serious violence, which its departments understand and contribute towards. A single partnership meeting at a strategic level means things get done and a superintendent leading homicide prevention, homicide investigation and offender management supports continuity in decision making.

Partnership working

Partnerships have been forged over time and the force has invested energy in strengthening them. Leicestershire Police understands the role of other organisations in problem solving, such as public health leading on substance misuse. Data is shared between partners where possible to allow multi-agency management of serious crime.

Outcomes and impact

An evaluation of the whole-system approach is not feasible. However, ongoing evaluations are being conducted into some of the specific interventions that feed into the force's approach.

A recent report by the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing concluded that Leicestershire Police was performing very well in this area. The report, 'Getting a grip on serious violence hot spots: A report for Leicestershire Police', was conducted as part of a wider review of how the 18 GRIP-funded forces approached the policing of serious violence hot spots (Sherman L, Rose S and Neyroud E, 2020). (GRIP funding was provided by the Home Office to 18 forces with the highest rates of serious violence to support the roll out of hot spots policing.)

Links to any relevant evaluation reports will be added when they are available.

Learning and recommendations

Leicestershire Police identified the following considerations for other forces wishing to implement a similar whole-system policing approach.

- The whole-system approach starts internally with the police organisation, with every relevant constituent policing function sharing the same aim.
- Time needs to be invested in strengthening partnerships with external organisations, ensuring buy-in from people at a senior level.

- Governance structures need to be simple and agile. A single senior officer chairing a strategic board for police and partners has successfully geared the whole system into serious violence prevention for Leicestershire.
- Serious violence prevention approaches should be positively reflected by senior leaders. They should act as ambassadors.
- Effective equality impact assessments are needed to identify gaps in public confidence, so engagement can take place prior to hot spot-based stop and search operations.

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Tags

Homicide   Crime reduction