

Intensive Engagement in West Mercia

Improving community engagement through advice, training, support and coordination for police and partners.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Diversion Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Crime prevention Diversity and inclusion Drugs and alcohol Leadership, development and learning Neighbourhood crime Operational policing
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Region	West Midlands

Key details

Partners	Police Community safety partnership Education Government department Health services Local authority Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	December 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Victims

Aim

IE aims to:

- engage with those living in the local community ensuring there is opportunity to voice concerns
- develop an engagement framework for multi-agency partnerships and the community
- identify community insights to build a richer picture of the communities' needs
- ensure local areas are safer to reduce demand on police, local authorities, and other local agencies
- provide local leaders with insights and voices from seldom heard communities

- focus on anti-social behaviour (ASB) in public spaces that causes a disproportionate impact on perceptions of safety within the community
- engage with residents and stakeholders to grow local capability and ownership in design as well as delivery of local actions
- use new IT and data driven approaches to ensure under-represented communities are heard

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of IE are to:

- provide a sustainable approach towards anti-social behaviour
- provide a sustainable response to community safety against backdrop of austerity
- increase the public trust and confidence

Description

In 2022, West Mercia Police approached IE to forge better community relationships within the context of the force's local policing charter. IE also sought to fulfil the force's prevention strategy and embed a problem-solving approach between the force and partners.

The force recognised that traditional approaches to embedding engagement and partnership problem-solving had not always been successful. This was seen both internally with safer neighbourhood teams, and externally with the wider partnership and beyond into community assets. IE offered an evidence-based, systematic approach to improving engagement & problem-solving whilst providing the opportunity to try an alternative method.

An early action was to introduce the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment) model of problem-solving to groups of police, partners, and community members at all levels. This was very positively received and assisted in developing an understanding of the need for better information prior to responses.

Pilot

The assistant chief constable provided their support for local policing who agreed to roll out IE in the 4 pilot areas:

- Leominster
- Evesham
- Shrewsbury
- Oswestry

A programme of briefings, workshops and 1-2-1 meetings took place with key police and partner stakeholders, to understand the operating context in each location. Support from senior management teams and community safety partnerships (CSP) was secured in each location. The force provided a dedicated police co-ordinator in each location from the safer neighbourhood team.

In each location, local policing has consulted with their CSP counterparts who are supportive and agree that an IE approach is consistent with their plans and ambitions. West Mercia Police and local partner data identified each location as being disproportionately affected by ASB and that ASB is an ongoing priority identified in local consultation processes and local meetings/interactions on a daily and weekly basis.

IE has been invited to force wide meetings, which also included South Worcestershire community safety partnership, Hereford community safety partnerships, Shropshire community safety partnership as well as other strategic partnerships.

Funding

IE was funded through round five of the Home Office (HO) Safer Streets fund. West Mercia Police are working in partnership with Intensive Engagement. £140,000 was awarded to IE to work in each of the four locations across the force.

Approach

IE uses an eight-step approach, working with police and local agencies to provide a number of deliverables through the 40-week implementation:

1. establish justification and purpose: gather data and define a common purpose with local leaders and stakeholders, such as reducing incidents and perceptions of ASB
2. develop local teams: form teams with stakeholders like law enforcement, schools, and community groups while assessing community assets

3. identify stakeholders and networks: create an asset map of affected parties, such as parents and businesses
4. deliver training: provide tailored training for problem-solving and communication improvement, engaging stakeholders
5. form local working groups: establish groups with community members ready to implement changes at each of the locations within the selected towns – this took place in the early stage of the project with the support of senior leaders from police and partners
6. develop solution rich pictures: create detailed plans for effective ASB solutions
7. agree on interventions and evaluation: define methods, roles, and success criteria for interventions and evaluation
8. establish escalation processes: develop processes for adapting to challenges and ensuring sustainability

This eight-step sequenced and monitored approach empowers communities to develop targeted, collaborative strategies for combating ASB. Currently the force has implemented the first five steps.

As part of the eight step-process, workshops were attended by local business leaders, members of the community, councillors, and housing association to identify the types of issues within the community and to come up with a set of actions.

Delivery

The following progress was made between January to March 2024. During this period of reporting the following interventions have been delivered at each of the four specified locations.

- Site visits, open-source research, and visual audit collation to understand the context of each location. It was essential to also look at other agency data such as health and education to gain a comprehensive understanding of each place and of the partnership arrangements that already exist.
- It was recognised that the community safety partnership (CSP) in each location were an essential consultee and potential provider of support and coordination. Each were briefed and connections were established with a network of CSP partners and other agencies. This was followed by face-to-face meetings and presentations to each CSP and other stakeholders in order that they were aware of the project, its purpose and progress. This ongoing engagement will continue through

project life and beyond as a part of a sustainable business as usual activity at each location.

- Working with CSP representatives, the identification and engagement of local leaders and representatives from statutory and non-statutory stakeholder groups has taken place to develop local networks, conduct joint problem solving and set priorities for integrated working.
- Local leader workshops have now been held at Leominster, Evesham and Shrewsbury, and Oswestry. The IE research history was set out and the 8-step plan was described in detail. How this links to current research and College of Policing guidelines were included. The workshop meetings reviewed available data from multiple sources, shared priorities, and contextual understanding, and set out initial joint actions for local delivery groups.
- Local delivery groups made up of police, partner and community members who live and work within the target locations were established. These groups have received training in problem-solving, and other related skills around engagement techniques. At each location the local delivery groups have been tasked with identifying key community stakeholders who are willing to contribute and participate in the programme of engagement going forward.
- The available ASB data was found to be limited in terms of providing detail upon which to build tactical interventions. The IE team worked with the force research team to configure localised ASB data packages – to inform effective problem-solving and to track progress through project life.

Further work has been initiated to develop greater depth to perceptions surveys in each target location. IE has coordinated the piloting of asset mapping to be developed in each location, whereby the newly identified assets can be categorised, mapped and shared with community coordinators

At each point, IE has shared findings with associated research partners in to to secure additional research capability. This has included presentations in UK and hosting overseas academics to focus on the work and to understand how it is progressing.

Overall impact

- Workshops with CSP representatives and local leaders and representatives from statutory and non-statutory stakeholder groups have taken place. There has been feedback that such collaborative problem-solving approaches have not taken place before. The workshops identified and agreed to collaborate of joint support for a series of activities that support the project.
- Joint problem-solving training has been a particular success. Feedback from partners revealed how the integrated training has enabled them to understand how the police are operating and

provide support.

- Local community members have been actively involved in the identification of networks of assets and local resources. This has resulted in new community 'assets' being identified- these are individuals who are highly capable, highly connected, and willing to participate and support community engagement going forwards.
- Police and community are engaged in vicinity awareness training which focuses on developing greater awareness of the locations and places within which ASB is embedded. The training includes increasing observation skills to recognise both deficits and potential assets.
- Workshops have been held with police procurement teams to explore potential social value income streams from contractors that may provide resource support to the project in the future.
- Information and progress have been shared and attracted interest and support from multiple external organisations and specifically academic interest from overseas as listed above.
- Feedback directly from police and partners has referred to the new contacts and networks that they can now access and will support problem solving approaches from multiple agencies.
- The new asset mapping approaches are applauded across each partnership as a way forward to access community capabilities and support for multiple objectives. The delivery method which will be based on an existing IT platform that the force uses is currently under construction.

Learning

- Data provision: effective problem solving relies on the provision of ASB data as a component of the SARA model that the force has adopted and trained. There are gaps in the current data provision processes of police and partners.
- Mitigation: the force has prioritised new ASB data packages to be deployed in problem-solving processes with partners at each location. This process is a priority action for the next quarter. ASB perception data is provided as part of a force-wide suite of indicators and will be further developed with potential hyper-local surveying in the next quarter, utilising existing engagement platforms.
- Problem-solving training: this is now being implemented as a joint training session with practitioners and leadership teams.
- Vicinity awareness training: initial work in each location has revealed that front-line practitioners from across agencies find significant benefit in joint training in vicinity awareness and situational awareness.
- The dedicated co-ordinator role is essential for being a critical success factor. The turnover of police staff can be a challenge and an inhibitor for success.

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Tags

Community engagement Operational policing