

Community engagement – PowerApp and Power BI dashboard

Using a PowerApp solution and a Power BI dashboard to record and evaluate community engagement.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Digital, data and analytics Productivity
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	June 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Communities General public
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Aim

To have the ability to log, record, track and evaluate the force's interactions with community engagement through a user-friendly app which is accessible on the mobile devices of neighbourhood teams.

This will provide a data set which is both quantitative and qualitative and viewable on a Power BI dashboard, which is interactive with the wider suite of neighbourhood policing products.

The aim of the data captured is to:

- tailor the force's activity to the concerns and feedback raised
- show the impact of community engagement activity through evaluation
- capture a 'You said, we did' approach when giving feedback around the activities to communities who had raised concerns

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the community engagement PowerApp and Power BI dashboard are to:

- increase the amount of data held on communities' issues and problems to obtain a better understanding of what matters
- increase positive outcomes from engagement using 'You Said, We Did'
- increase communication with communities
- update results of engagement-driven activity

Description

Through local policing command boards, it was apparent that within the force there was a gap in information and data relating to community engagement. Staffordshire Police were unable to track

activity and did not have any quantitative or qualitative data that could articulate the effectiveness or impact of their community engagement activity.

This was raised at the same time as gaps were identified during the early stages of the Police Race Action Plan. The force had previously not been monitoring its community engagement with ethnic minorities. During the 2021 PEEL inspection, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) identified the requirement to improve how the force identify the needs of their communities.

Consultation

A consultation process was conducted at a local level which identified that there was no consistent practice in the approach to community engagement. There was also no consistent way of recording, tracking, and evaluating the force's engagement.

The consultation was in forums such as command boards and performance meetings. In these board meetings, local commanders canvassed local officers, and supervisors provided an input to the meeting. The following questions were raised:

- how do you plan, book and update community engagement events?
- how are individual interactions recorded?
- how is the data available for viewing?

Interim solution

The initial interim solution was to collate all engagement and community contact records (CCR) data through Microsoft Forms, while the intervention was being designed, built, tested and implemented. Initially the engagement platform was implemented at Stafford. This was an ad hoc innovation by a neighbourhood sergeant based at the location, to solve a problem of understanding the results of community engagement events.

This was then raised by the local policing team (LPT) inspector as good practice and adopted by other LPTs in the interim. The Microsoft Forms idea was adapted to create electronic CCRs and adopted by LPTs across the force. Sanctioned at superintendent level, each commander and deputy commander owned the Forms for their LPT. All ward aligned Police community support officers (PCSOs) were involved in using the platform.

Extensive work was undertaken by the IT department to build the platform through Microsoft Lists/PowerApps with testing. It was built in line with the expectations of their information governance and assurance team. There were no training requirements involved.

Test group

33 PCSOs were initially engaged with for the test group, with around 15 providing data through the test app. These were sourced from the force wide PCSO working group. This ran for one week as the scope of data needed was limited.

Feedback identified small changes that would make the app more accessible to all officers. Feedback highlighted that there was a desire to be able to record more detailed information, however, this was intentionally not included as it was outside the scope of the project and presented risks around data.

The final build was developed post-test and launched on 20 June 2024.

The app

The app is owned and managed in the IT department. Following the launch, further feedback is being sought which will allow the project team to discuss further development. Updates can be provided to some of the data collection for emerging threats and community cohesion. Any bugs or technology issues are resolved through an internal IT Helpdesk provider, Hornbill. There was no financial outlay for the product.

The new app, Community engagement, allows teams to book events, update events, record the quality of community engagement at an event, and share any feedback received from the public. The app also provides an option to complete a CCR.

All the data from the app is then fed directly into a Power BI dashboard. The dashboard displays the themes generated from the community feedback in graphs and word clouds. This helps local commanders in making more informed decisions on what neighbourhood officers and PCSOs focus on.

The Power BI dashboard is designed to allow the force to understand and crucially, evaluate, the impact of their activity.

Main features and attributes

- Community events completed: at force and LPT level, the event name and type conducted, total number of people in attendance, total number of officers involved, communities supported, such as young people, elderly or business. Mapping visualisation to complement the data set.
- Community event outcomes: as above and key top five issues raised, word cloud of issues, number of intel submitted, events suitable for publishing, value gained and a 'you said, we did' function that visualises key activities such as media appeals, patrol plan and reassurance.
- Community engagement submissions analysis: the analysis contains a visualisation of the number of events, officer volume at the events, distinct officers at events, mapping visualisation, total events by date, total events by type, total events by officers.
- CCR outcomes: key issues raised, the outcome section contains the total number of CCRs, number of information submitted, number of issues raised, diversity consent, smart alert sign ups, main issues, details of each CCRs, age, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability breakdown, mapping visualisation.
- CCR submissions analysis: total CCRs, total officers involved, CCRs recorded at community events, total CCRs by date created, total CCRs by citizen per area and total CCRs by name.

Evaluation

An evaluation is planned and will look at:

- problem solving cases/persons/locations – change over time
- change over time – issues raised by communities, positive outcomes from engagement and communication
- customer satisfaction figures.

Proposed evaluation methods:

- internal survey to neighbourhood staff after 4-6 weeks of implementation
- follow up survey to be conducted every 3 months
- PCSO working group – You Said, We Did methodology with an opportunity for follow up feedback
- through the data, the force intends to see the improvements made in comparison to the pre-intervention period
- constant feedback channel available through the product owner

- there will be full visibility of the evaluation through the local policing improvement board, which is led by an assistant chief constable.

Overall impact

- Within two weeks of introducing the initiative, over 200 new engagement events have been added to the calendar.
- Staff members have complimented the initiative as it allows for all users to use a single platform to manage their engagement events. The Community engagement PowerApp and Power BI dashboard has replaced officers using spreadsheets which took much more time to complete and were less visible to the wider organisation. Officers have commented that the force have listened to their concerns around logging, tracking and updating their engagement in designing and implementing this initiative.
- Staff members have commented that the initiative is user friendly and quick to log and update an engagement event.

Further feedback is being sought and this will capture feedback from members of the public now the force have commenced the 'You Said, We Did feedback' to the local communities.

A further evaluation is planned as the initiative matures, although initial findings suggest that it will achieve as designed.

Learning

Challenges

- Staffordshire Police have experienced limitations to the capacity of their Data Enabled Policing and Microsoft 365 teams, due to limited staffing and competing demands in other areas of the service. This initially meant that the development of the initiative was delayed by a number of months. There was a possibility of outsourcing the works, which would have come at considerable cost, however the force wanted to utilise the talent that within their teams, to build their own products which are compatible with others across the suite of their Microsoft 365 and Power BI products. By taking this approach the force has been able to see these products dock into the broader local policing suite to make their products even more insightful and data rich.

- As this initiative collects data, the force has had to comply with the information governance and assurance team to ensure only relevant data is collected. The force has conducted a benchmarking exercise with other forces to learn how others have navigated these challenges. This however was time consuming, again due to the competing demands of their Information governance/assurance team, and until they were completely satisfied, the product could not be launched.

Financial

- As this initiative was built in house by their own team, there were no financial obstacles or funding requirements. The initiative was however approved through an internal governance board (local policing improvement board) which tracked the progress monthly, and it will continue to do so, to assess the impact and performance of the product.

Organisational buy-in

- Staffordshire Police launched a new Neighbourhood Policing Strategy in August 2023, with a focus on Community engagement. This strategy is overseen by an assistant chief constable who drives improvement in neighbourhood policing through a local policing improvement board. This has led to a very supportive environment in which to design, build and implement this initiative, as well as other neighbourhood policing focused IT products. The organisation has trusted and provided autonomy to the small team in providing this initiative, which has allowed for a product to be built by practitioners and specialists in neighbourhood policing delivery for their teams. It has been designed with Staffordshire in mind, tailored to their engagement strategy, however the core objectives and deliverables could be transferrable to all police services.

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Tags

Community engagement Operational policing