

Turning Point – the street outreach service

Using street outreach youth workers to conduct hot spot policing in areas of violent crime.

First published
27 August 2024

Key details

Stage of practice	Independently evaluated
Purpose	Diversion
Topic	Violence (other) Anti-social behaviour Community engagement
Organisation	Leicestershire Police
Contact	Mark Brennan Simon Rose
Email address	mark.brennan@leics.police.uk
Region	East Midlands
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Health services Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of Implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	October 2022
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities General public Offenders Victims

Aim

To test the impact of non-uniform street outreach youth workers on seven hot spots of violence in Leicester city centre. Patrols took place on a semi-randomised schedule.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to reduce:

- serious violence crime in the patrolled hotspots
- crime harm in the patrolled hotspots

This was measured by crime count and measurement of the crime harm ([Cambridge Crime Harm Index](#) scores) on patrol days in comparison to non-patrol days.

Description

Local health and social care service provider, Turning Point, were chosen to provide the street outreach service by Leicestershire Police. The service was initially funded by the Home Office Grip innovation fund and most recently by the main Home Office's Grip fund for Leicestershire Police.

The street outreach team work from 2pm to 8pm. This pattern reflects the violent crime data showing the period of 2 to 8pm as a key time for violence in Leicester city centre.

Seven violent crime hotspots within Leicester City centre were identified (from crime data) as areas with the greatest levels of serious violence involving those aged 25 years or under (as a victim or offender) and between the hours of 7am to 10pm. This timeframe was chosen to exclude the impact of night-time economy related crime in the area.

These hotspot areas received street outreach patrols using a crossover quasi-randomised design model. Patrols took place according to a revolving shift pattern of five working days followed by three rest days. This meant the same days were not worked each week. On the working days six hot spots were patrolled subject to random allocation. This randomisation plan meant that on some days certain hot spots received more than one visit per day whereas others may not have.

The outreach staff patrol the hotspots in pairs. In consultation with Turning Point management and staff, the duration of a hotspot patrol was agreed at 40 minutes. This was to allow sufficient time for staff to walk around the hotspot and engage with multiple young people within it.

The 40 minute duration allowed sufficient time for a more meaningful and detailed engagement where information might be gathered, and an onward referral made. The 40 minute patrol also allowed sufficient time to:

- deliver six sets of patrols within hot spots
- walk between the hot spots
- have a refreshment break within the working day

The outreach staff were tasked to approach young and vulnerable people, engage with them, and give targeted crime prevention and referral advice. The advice was tailored to the person, their behaviour, and the circumstances. Some engagements might be of a shorter duration, and some might be for longer. At the end of the shift the Turning Point staff would write up a log of their activity, initiate any bespoke referrals, and submit a formal return.

Street outreach staff were issued with a GPS tracker device to enable the duration and location of the patrols to be tracked every day compared to the patrols specified by the tasking.

Evaluation

An evaluation has been completed and has been led by Cambridge Centre for Evidence Based Policing.

The impact that the outreach staff had on violent crime has been evaluated in seven hotspots of crime in central Leicester over a 47-week period covering 10th February 2023 to 10th January 2024.

A scientifically resilient and evidence-based approach has been followed in the form of a quasi-experimental design at level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (as cited in College of Policing, 2013). The study used a quasi-experimental design, measuring reported crime in hotspots on treatment days when outreach staff were patrolling, and on control days when they were not patrolling. This enabled an assessment of the impact of the outreach staff on crime rates.

The number of crimes in the targeted hot spot 11 months before the intervention compared to the 11 months during the intervention suggests that the deployment of the street outreach service significantly reduced the number of crimes and the harm caused by serious violent crimes. There was a reduction in both the frequency and severity of crime:

- the number of crimes dropped by 39% from 416 to 252 incidents
- the harm measure decreased by 36% from 60,314 to 38,421

The trial measured the amount of crime (crime count and crime harm) that occurred in the seven hotspots on days where there was non-uniform street outreach youth worker patrol and compared this to days where there were no such patrols. It was found that the patrols consistently produced a statistically significant reduction in the volume of crime and the total amount of crime harm in comparison to days where patrols did not take place.

As well as offering additional benefits in terms of increased and improved engagement with vulnerable people in hotspots the cost of the street outreach versus existing police officer patrols per minute spent in hotspots offer some considerable cost benefits. This was 32.5% cheaper than police patrols in hot spots per minute of patrol (£3.38 per minute of police patrol in hotspots compared to £2.28 per minute of street outreach patrol in hotspots).

Overall impact

- Violent crime was reduced in the hot spots on treatment days in comparison to non-treatment days.
- Due to the positive qualitative and quantitative results more funding was made available, and the initiative is continuing up to the end of March 2025.
- Minor changes have been made this year. The key changes are an additional two patrols each day have been added, new hot spots have been added, two small hot spots have been merged and the template for submitting returns of work has been revised and digitised to improve efficiency.
- There were multiple instances of where clear turning points for individuals were achieved, partly due to incremental reputational building of the staff but these evidenced the value of the approach. One very brief, but typical example is provided below. It is a substantial intervention that has made a significant difference for an individual but any impact on a statistical basis would not be likely to be apparent.

Intervention example

A woman was very loud, vocal and 'influential' with other street community females in the area by the bus station. She had previously been temporarily resident in the YMCA but had secured permanent accommodation. The Turning Point staff were aware she had been cuckooed from her flat by a group of youths, assaulted and was back on the street. The female had low confidence in policing and was not engaged with statutory authorities or reporting her victimisation.

Unreported crime was occurring, and her address was being exploited for criminal and antisocial purposes. As a result of previous engagement that the team had had with her over time, and the reputation of the staff with the street community, she sought their advice regarding her problem. She was subject of a supportive intervention by staff but engaged with in a way that policing could not. She was persuaded to take the assistance of police to re-secure her flat and the cuckooing ceased.

The bus station manager became aware of the Turning Point patrols and how they diffused and prevented trouble. The bus station manager approached Turning Point about securing additional patrols from the staff and a request was made from another bus station in the city centre to be included in the hot spot patrols for 2024–2025.

In May 2024 staff supported the same woman obtaining employment in a local bakery. Desistance from crime is a journey not an event. A correlation was observed between the engagement of staff

and drop off in offending and victimisation of this young woman.

Learning

- Regular briefing and debriefing of street outreach staff by police teams was crucial in improving the quality of patrols.
- Close partnership working with the third-party provider was essential to jointly manage the team and project so that problems were quickly addressed.
- GPS data was used to feedback to street outreach staff when their visits were not in the required place, or time, or length of time required based on the data of risk in each location. This data was crucial in improving the accuracy and timing of patrols to improve their impact and to allow the intervention to be thoroughly evaluated.
- It took time to raise the treatment fidelity and explain the experiment to the non-uniform youth outreach street workers.
- Online communication did not work. Face-to-face planning off site did work. The valuing of the staff and the taking the time to listen to them and co-create changes to the plan is important to secure their engagement.
- Building into the plan a place within the hot spot that the staff could have more detailed conversation with young people was important.
- 15 minutes was not enough to allow a more detailed conversation to take place. The patrol times were increased to 40 minutes.
- Recruiting the staff (and vetting) took three months longer than anticipated.
- Repeated briefing to local officers regarding when the non-uniform street outreach youth workers were helped.
- The local brand recognition of Turning Point with the youth was very valuable. Turning Point were already providing services in custody and A&E and working with the local authority.

Best available evidence

See [Hot spots policing | College of Policing](#)

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence.

You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.

Tags

Community engagement Crime reduction