

Tri-service safety officers to reduce demand and improve community safety

A collaboration role between the Police, Fire and Health services, focusing on prevention, early intervention and reducing vulnerability.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Crime prevention Neighbourhood crime Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	Devon and Cornwall Police
HMICFRS report	Police performance Getting a grip: PEEL spotlight report
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Region	South West

Key details

Partners	Police Community safety partnership Health services Local authority
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2014
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Offenders Victims

Aim

To problem-solve from a multi-agency perspective, improving community safety and reducing vulnerability.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- reduce demand on emergency services
- improve information sharing between services
- improve prevention and intervention work within the fire, police, and health services
- reduce financial costs of prevention and intervention work within all three services

Description

The Tri-service safety officers (TSSO) role started in 2014 with a pilot in Hayle (West Cornwall) and has now developed into 13 full time positions. In addition to this, a two year pilot in Holsworthy (Devon) commenced in April 2024.

When comparing health inequalities data, crime hotspots and fire hotspots, the force found that the data geographically overlapped almost perfectly. This indicated that all three services were attending the same areas, without appropriately communicating. At least three individuals (one from each service) would be attending the same location, costing more money. The TSSO role seeks to address this, by providing one individual who can work within all three services, addressing each issue collectively.

The role

The role focuses on prevention, early intervention and reducing vulnerability. TSSOs look to problem solve from a multi-agency perspective. The TSSO's have some limited police powers under the community safety accredited scheme (CSAS), are retained fire fighters and in addition offer an emergency response for the ambulance service as community responders.

It should be noted that the emergency response work takes up less than 10% of TSSO time. The role focuses on identifying and reducing vulnerability in individuals and communities. The force recognise that emergency services often deal with the same individuals, often based in the same deprived areas where health inequalities are prevalent. Working smarter together to address these issues is an obvious solution, it reduces frontline demand and improves the quality of lives for individuals and makes communities safer.

Data sharing

Problem solving is further enhanced by having access to data across all the services with Information Sharing Agreements in place. There is an information sharing agreement between the council, the police and the fire service that allows tri-service safety officers full access to their data bases. The TSSOs don't have full access to the health data bases, however there is still an information sharing agreement in place, it just has a more limited function where TSSOs must receive approval before they can access the data.

Recruitment

The TSSOs have a rigorous application process before they can be employed as a TSSO. The recruitment takes around 6 months and the council assist with this. One month before the recruitment begins, the team hold a positive action month where they go and talk about TSSOs with communities traditionally less likely to apply for the role, for example women. Then the advert is published on all services pages and promoted on their social medias. The applicants must meet the standards of:

- initial application sifting
- a fire fighter fitness test
- police vetting
- a practical problem-solving day
- a formal interview.

The number of successful applicants depends on the funding, for example their latest recruitment phase had approximately 80 applicants, of this only 5 people were successful.

The starting salary for TSSOs is approximately £32,000 a year, however this does differ depending on the skill set of the individual. TSSOs can also work as a retained firefighter in extra-time to earn more money, this means they can work on call for fire stations in case of an emergency.

Training

The TSSOs are employed under Cornwall Council services, they have two days training around Cornwall Council standards. Then they receive 6 weeks of police training at their headquarters, this is similar to Police Community Safety Officer (PCSO) training, however TSSOs have slightly less powers than PCSOs.

To become a TSSO, they need to successfully complete police, fire-fighter and medical/ambulance training and this is signed off by their relevant line manager. The Neighbourhood Policing Supervisor will sign off their completion of training and continued professional development (CPD) continues throughout their career, similar to a PCSO. They also receive CPD through the ambulance and fire service.

This training is bespoke to individuals' previous experience and skills, for example, they recently hired a paramedic to become a tri-service safety officer. Due to the paramedic's extensive past experience, they did not require as in-depth health training, however they needed more in-depth training with the police force.

A consultant created a high-performance handbook that is given to new recruits to set out the team mission, vision, and values.

Management structure

There are currently 15 tri-service safety officers in Cornwall and a pilot is currently taking place in Devon. There are 3 tri-service team leaders, who are responsible for the administrative management and mentor guidance provided to the TSSOs. Due to the large geographical area of the force area, the tri-service team leaders are not always based in the same area as the TSSOs, so they are more closely managed by the Neighbourhood Policing Lead, and this is how they are tasked.

Monitoring Performance

The TSSOs are monitored through regular performance reviews.

- The team have daily team meetings at the beginning and end of their shifts
- A strategic governance board is also held quarterly, consisting of an Assistant Chief Constable, a Chief Fire Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the County Commander for the South-Western Ambulance Foundation Trust. The board was recently established to provide strategic direction at an executive level to the TSSOs. Risks are brought to the board, and the members provide strategic guidance.

Evaluation

The practice has been subject to two full evaluations that took place in [2016](#) and [2018](#).

Overall findings indicate that the Tri-service safety officers (TSSOs) have a unique opportunity to gain access to the most vulnerable members of our community through referrals from the police for reassurance visits, or home fire safety check referrals from the fire service.

As a standalone post outside each of the three services, the TSSOs can engage with members of the community which may not otherwise be possible. The TSSOs often deal with many of the more routine tasks in the community and can spend more time engaging with them and identifying potential safety issues. With their training across multiple areas, they can identify issues and process the appropriate actions in a timely manner freeing up services to do other critical work.

Overall impact

From April 2022 to March 2023, TSSOs:

- attended 604 police logs
- responded to 493 ambulance calls
- carried out 486 domestic premise risk reduction visits (Fire/Police/Health)
- engaged with over 1500 children in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to support junior life skills
- have attended over 50 incidents where they have had to administer urgent first aid (CPR/Defibrillator).

There has been a significant benefit for the fire service as the TSSOs have increased the availability of fire fighters across Cornwall. This has also benefitted the early intervention and prevention goals of the fire service, in identifying vulnerability and risk of fire hazards in homes. By having access to police data, the TSSOs can have a fuller picture of a household and better assess risk.

Learning

- The force highlights the importance of identifying the most relevant health partner to work with. Currently in Devon and Cornwall Police, the TSSO's work with the ambulance service however they highlight that this may not be the most effective route, as the ambulance service is commissioned for response work only. As the TSSO has developed into a prevention and early intervention role, they suggest GP services and mental health services may be more relevant partners to the work TSSO's do.
- Leadership support has been key in sourcing relevant funding for TSSOs. An MP in Cornwall took particular interest in TSSOs and requested more in their area. This led to the MP taking the TSSO initiative to Parliament to achieve more funding from the NHS to expand the TSSO model across more of Devon and Cornwall.

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Tags

Crime reduction Community engagement