

Community engagement standards

Developing effective and sustainable community engagement standards to increase trust and confidence in the police.

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Key details

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| Does it work? | Untested – new or innovative |
| Focus | Organisational |
| Topic | Community engagement Leadership, development and learning |
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| Region | East Midlands |
| Partners | Police |
| Stage of practice | The practice is implemented. |
| Start date | May 2023 |
| Scale of initiative | Local |

Key details

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| Target group | Adults Children and young people Communities Disability Families General public Race/ethnicity Women |
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Aim

The aims of the community engagement standards project are to:

- develop an effective engagement strategy, delivered through the neighbourhood policing strategy
- embed elements of the Race Action Plan, with focussed strategies to reach seldom heard and hard to reach communities through the Leicestershire Police and Communities Together (LPACT) programme
- recognise barriers to engagement by ensuring existing networks and links are maximised and technology is used to provide information in accessible formats and languages
- ensure neighbourhood profiles includes socio-economic data that provide a framework for engagement
- provide ongoing diversity monitoring using Power BI

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- increase trust, confidence, and satisfaction in policing
- improve engagement with seldom heard, hard to reach, and emerging communities
- improve on meeting statutory and professional requirements

Description

Background

Leicestershire Police's "Your Views" community survey that has ran since 2019, highlighted a downward trend in public trust and confidence in the police from 78% in 2019 to 49.6% in 2023. The force recognised that there was no standardised process for engaging with the communities they served. In addition, the Crime Survey of England and Wales showed that positive work conducted by the force within communities was not being recognised. Furthermore, communities had stated that they felt as though some of the issues they were raising were not being adequately addressed by the force.

In response, a review was conducted assessing existing engagement practices and identifying good practice already operating within the force. As a result of the review, a new set of standards were developed.

Community engagement standards

Community engagement standards were established to set clear expectations for the neighbourhood policing area and to meet authorised professional practice for communication and engagement. The standards integrate with the neighbourhood policing objectives, having links to trust, confidence and sharing how local concerns were being addressed by the force. Local commanders hold responsibility for each dedicated neighbourhood team, ensuring that these standards are achieved.

The community engagement standards are as follows:

- attending at least one parish or ward (defined by the local authority) meeting per year
- conducting at least two patch walks per year with partners to address local concerns
- quarterly dedicated neighbourhood team (DNT) priorities set using community information such as surveys, beat surgeries and crime pattern analysis
- quarterly 'Your Views' surveys, set centrally and shared locally
- a monthly newsletter shared online and at key locations with updates on priorities and action taken by each dedicated neighbourhood team
- a weekly neighbourhood policing area (NPA) commander's vlog or blog update
- daily social media content via Facebook

Social media content

Leicestershire Police have invested in the social media marketing platform ORLO that schedules posts and manages social media content. Each officer requires a license, at a negotiated cost of around £15 per license to gain access and attends one day of training on the system and media rules. The Leicestershire policing area consists of 9 NPAs, each having 6 DNTs on average and 2 licensed ORLO users in each DNT.

The social media content is produced by the neighbourhood policing officers to share updates of the work conducted by each DNT. Officers have flexibility to create content relevant to their communities and their understanding of what communities want to see, however the standard content format is: 'You said X – We did Y'. This may be sharing activity related to an initiative, such as a national week of action, with corporate content to support messages.

Neighbourhood link

Neighbourhood link also known nationally as the neighbourhood alert system is an email broadcasting system, which was repurposed to be involved with the community engagement standards. NHL is free for any member of the public to sign up to. This enables the public to have access to regular updates and a monthly newsletter, containing Leicestershire Police activity within their local area. All neighbourhood policing staff have access to NHL.

NHL also holds the force's engagement tracker, which allows the force to monitor the effectiveness of physical engagements and surveys. The "Your Views" survey is sent out to the community through the NHL every six months (May and November). All the data stored in the engagement tracker is exported to Power BI for analysis. Those registered to the NHL will also receive invites to events based upon their geographic location or other registered criteria.

Reviews and performance monitoring

Monthly performance meetings are held with NPA Commanders, chaired by a superintendent or chief inspector. These meetings allow for self-assessment and to share learning and maintain progress towards objectives established in the community engagement standards procedure document.

Compliance and monitoring require approximately two days per week of administrative and analytical support.

DNTs provide feedback as a group to help standardise key engagement materials, such as newsletters, media tiles etc. This ensures that they are recognised as reliable sources of information by communities. These forms of media can be shared across a wide range of platforms, specifically WhatsApp, which increased reach and speed of delivery to communities.

Training

Staff from the force's corporate communications department conduct qualitative reviews of social media content and newsletters, allowing the identification of good practice or elements in need of development. This information is then used to create bespoke localised training, meeting the needs for each neighbourhood policing team. Officers and staff then improve the quality of content, with a specific focus on making content more engaging and relevant to their community.

Evaluation

An evaluation is ongoing and being led by Leicestershire Police.

The main evaluation is tracking the force's "Your Views" community survey, which is published via the NHL, every May and November. The survey has standardised questions, set across the NHP area and are as follows.

- Do the police understand and deal with local issues?
- Do residents feel safe?
- Are residents kept informed of what the force is doing?
- Does the force do a good job in their area?
- Do residents trust their local police?

The question set is averaged to create an overall confidence score. This score has been tracked since the launch in 2019. The survey results can be localised to specific NPAs but can also be compared nationally to the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

Single poll questions can also be utilised via social media channels, which can allow to force to track engagement quickly.

Overall impact

Since the implementation of community engagement standards in May 2023:

- community confidence and satisfaction in the police has increased from 49.6% to 52.5% in May 2024
- the steady reversal of the community confidence trend has been seen across all areas of the force
- the force has developed a deeper understanding of how policing is perceived in different communities, both geographically and demographically.
- having clear, easily read and understood minimum community engagement standards that are achievable from the beginning has provided a consistent reference point for police officers and staff

Learning

Training

- Communication and engagement are skills that needs to be developed and are highly personal. Therefore, content produced needs to display individual ability and style, whilst remaining within the bounds of professionalism and engagement objectives.
- Not all policing staff use social media or have a natural affinity for technology. Training can be used to address this, but careful consideration should be used as to whom receives an ORLO licence. This is due to licences being limited and having additional costs. Identifying those who have a natural ability for content creation, allows them to be trained effectively and publish on behalf of non-licence holders.
- Staff turnover and developing technology requires ongoing training. For the standards to be effective, quality must go together with quantity. To ensure this, staff must be trained to monitor engagement statistics such as page reviews, overall reach, impressions and how to carry out regular qualitative reviews.

Content

- Each NPA has its own requirements and needs. All policing staff must have the tools to act on this knowledge, but also have the flexibility within the framework to deliver what is needed locally

and organisationally.

- Messaging must be associated with local concerns or interests and are best received when delivered when a named, photographed officer. When messages are complex or are and appeal, a 'talking head' helps to increase engagement.

Organisational

- Abstraction from neighbourhood roles to backfill other operational commitments or duties diverts neighbourhood teams from fulfilling engagement objectives. This then creates difficulty in producing content and meeting the minimum standards established.
- Regular visible leadership is essential to maintain delivery and ensure inclusion on all neighbourhood policing staff personal development reviews. Creating key performance indicators (KPI) was crucial to gain support of staff and allows for the identification of good practice or areas in need of development.

Internet harassment

- The negative aspects of online activity, particularly social media, must be considered, and supervisors are reminded to monitor content and discuss welfare at 1-2-1 meetings. The centrally based corporate communications department monitors and highlights content that gains traction. Comments from harassers can be upsetting, affecting morale and the willingness to post.

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Tags

Community engagement