

What works: implementing neighbourhood policing

Exploring the impact of implementing neighbourhood policing on public perceptions.

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There are several police activities that have been shown to have a direct impact on public perceptions. The police have a higher degree of influence over these activities, which could form the basis of a public service model of policing.

Implementing neighbourhood policing

A [systematic review](#) of the international research evidence shows that neighbourhood policing has, overall, significantly improved public confidence and trust in the police.

[Research from England and Wales](#) also shows that:

- implementing neighbourhood policing to a high standard in local areas can lead to quick, large and sustained increases in public confidence
- providing people with information about neighbourhood policing can improve public perceptions of the police

What works

A College review of the evidence shows that [neighbourhood policing can have a positive impact on public perceptions](#) when its three core components are implemented in combination.

Targeted visible presence

Increased foot patrol in crime and anti-social behaviour hot spots or places of low levels of trust can:

- deter crime and anti-social behaviour
- provide opportunities for informal engagement
- show the public that the police are taking steps to tackle local problems

However, increased police visibility is only likely to improve public perceptions if the other two components of neighbourhood policing are also implemented in combination.

Community engagement

A structured programme of engagement activities between the police and public is needed to:

- identify the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter to people locally
- prioritise the most important issues for police problem-solving

Proactive methods of engagement involve the police going into communities, such as:

- street briefings
- door-knocking
- environmental visual audits
- 'bobby in the supermarket lobby' events

These proactive methods tend to be more effective than reactive methods that rely on people going to the police, such as townhall meetings and surgeries. When done well and with the right people, community engagement can provide the police with invaluable intelligence about serious crime. This is because the public tend to have a good idea of what is happening locally.

Problem-solving

For neighbourhood policing to have a positive impact on public perceptions, the police need to tackle the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter the most to local people. A structured approach to problem-solving is most likely to be effective.

This approach requires neighbourhood officers to:

- analyse the nature and extent of problems
- put in place solutions that target their underlying causes
- assess whether the police response makes a difference
- work with local people and partners to ensure problems that are not the responsibility of the police are referred on to the appropriate organisation for problem-solving

Providing people with information about neighbourhood policing has also been shown to have a positive impact on public perceptions. Relevant information includes:

- how to contact their neighbourhood policing team
- when and where community engagement events will be held
- what the community priorities are for local area

Resources

- [Evidence-based guidelines on neighbourhood policing](#)
- [Evidence-based guidelines on effective implementation of problem-oriented policing](#)
- [Authorised professional practice on communication and engagement](#)
- [College evidence review on neighbourhood policing](#)
- [College guidance on problem-solving](#)

You can also search for examples of police practice on the College's [practice bank](#).

Tags

Evidence-based policing Community engagement