

Public spaces protection order (PSPO) app

A police mobile app developed for recording engagement, compliance and breaches of public spaces protection orders (PSPOs). Reports are submitted to the respective council community safety/enforcement team for logging and decision making as the prosecuting agency.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Neighbourhood crime Operational policing
Organisation	South Wales Police
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Region	Wales
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Local authority
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2023

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Offenders

Aim

- to provide a mobile phone app solution for recording breaches of PSPOs, which are a criminal offence
- the app was enhanced with the introduction of a compliance/engagement function to record details of individuals who were engaged with as part of a PSPO and or complied with a PSPO request
- multiple engagements/compliance may be considered as a breach of a PSPO prohibition and relevant enforcement action is considered
- the mobile app allows for completion of a report outside of a police station, ensuring visible presence in the community and action being taken in a timely manner

Intended outcome

- timely and structured submissions of evidence to local authorities
- faster cross referencing against existing PSPO log information
- faster decision making as an early intervention or punitive measure for persistent/repeat offenders

Description

Breach information is referred to the local authority as the prosecuting agency and the principal decision makers for enforcement action. South Wales Police do not issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for PSPO breach offences. Under the PSPOs in South Wales, police will enforce in as much as requesting an individual to stop consuming and/or surrender alcohol, however if the individual does not comply, the force will support the order by submitting evidence of the non-compliance (breach) to the local authority as the prosecuting agency and lead decision makers.

Previously, the absence of a mobile reporting tool necessitated manual processes, requiring officers to recall and document key details after the fact, often leading to inefficiencies. To address this, anti-social behaviour (ASB) leads partnered with the in-house eServices team, employing agile methodologies to design and deliver a robust mobile solution.

The development and associated costs of the PSPO breach app were managed internally, as the application was designed and built by the in-house Digital Services Division. A key objective throughout the project was cost-efficiency. By utilising the internal capabilities of the eServices team, there was no need for external development resources, thereby maximising internal expertise and minimising overall expenditure.

Creation of the app involved liaising with the local authority ASB co-ordinators and PSPO single points of contact (SPOCs) in the local authority to ensure the product met operational requirements and delivered sufficient information for them to progress internally. Additional discussions were held with South Wales Police neighbourhood police officers who patrol the designated areas, to ensure any challenges they previously faced with PSPO breach reporting were resolved with the implementation of the app.

The PSPO breach app integrates directly with Niche, the force's record management database, enabling:

- automatic updates to officers' electronic notebooks
- completion of the occurrence enquiry log
- capture of officer statements
- generation of tailored PDFs covering details of the PSPO breach/engagement

Built-in validation ensures that all mandatory fields are completed, enhancing the quality and consistency of submitted data.

Information gathered as part of the breach submission includes:

- the location
- what the individual is in breach of
- the description (date, time, behaviour, directions to leave)
- MG11 statement

Tasks are automatically sent to the ASB unit in the local authority, who will review and confirm if there has been a breach of PSPO or if it is an ASB matter. They will then action as per their local process of enforcement action. In addition, links to body worn video record references can be added within the app, as well as any additional supporting evidence.

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Feedback received from neighbourhood officers and colleagues in the local authority has been positive.

A neighbourhood beat manager has reported that the app is an improvement from the manual process and works well when there is stable phone signal and connectivity.

A local authority officer from the ASB team has reported that the app is a positive initiative, as ASB referrals are easier to read and the process is more streamlined, making extracting the information more efficient.

Overall impact

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Learning

- The force are investigating some ongoing issues with “errors” where the report is not submitted. There is a feedback option built into the app, but this is not used to its full potential and identifying issues after the fact can sometimes be difficult.

- The force cannot generate Niche occurrences from the app. It can take time liaising with the control room who may not be able to create an occurrence for officers in “fast time”. This could be resolved if the app was built into iPatrol, Pronto, or similar platforms used by other forces.
- When referrals come through, they automatically have the same title which must be amended before saving the referral file or forwarding it on to the local authority, to avoid confusion between requests.
- Local buy-in can still be a challenge with some officers, but where PSPO breach referrals or compliance/engagement reports are submitted, councils are proactive with education and enforcement.
- The app has since been updated with an option to select ‘no fixed abode’ in the contact details section.

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