

Problem Solver's Handbook

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Application of a Problem Solving

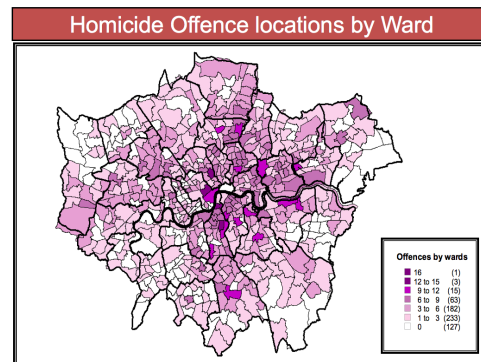
Within Policing and Community Safety a Problem Solving approach can be used for the following:

- 1 Reducing Crime and Disorder.
- 2 Reducing Calls for Service. (Including Road Collisions)
- 3 Neighbourhood Policing.

Reducing Crime and Disorder

Crime and Disorder problems can be identified using a Strategic Assessment. The results are usually grouped under broad terms such as Burglary or Harm Reduction.

These broader terms become Strategic Aims which need to be assessed, in order to identify the specific problems. Key Crime Theories have been detailed later in the handbook.



Reducing Calls for Service

There will be certain calls which are either frequent in nature or costly on resources (officer's time / money) or both. These will usually have a theme, such as Missing Children, Disorder in a Town Centre or Repeat Callers and would need to be further assessed in order to identify a precise location or a specific caller.



Neighbourhood Policing

There will be crime and disorder problems which may not be a crime priority or rank highly as a call for service, but would still have a detrimental impact on the community.

Officers assigned to a specific area would engage with the community to identify the specific problems and work with them using a problem solving approach.

A Community Engagement Process is detailed later in this handbook.

What is Problem Solving?

Here is our definition:

Problem solving is changing the current situation into something better, and keeping it that way. Neil Henson

To help make the change, there are stages that need to be undertaken. These stages form part of a Problem Solving Process. There are many Problem Solving Processes. One of the first to be used by the Police is called **SARA**. www.popcenter.org



Are there alternative Problem Solving Processes?

Yes, a number have been developed over the years. This handbook will be working through one called **PARTNERS**, developed by Neil Henson, who has been working in Problem Solving since the 1980s. You will see that it follows the same key stages, but isolates each stage with more information, to make it easier for the user. Also, the mnemonic PARTNERS, reminds people to seek out those who share their problem and get the benefits of working with them.

S	P	Problem and Partner Identification
	A	Aim Setting
A	R	Research and Analysis
R	T	Thinking Creatively
	N	Negotiating the Changes
A	E	Evaluation
	R	Recognition and Reward
	S	Sharing Good Practice

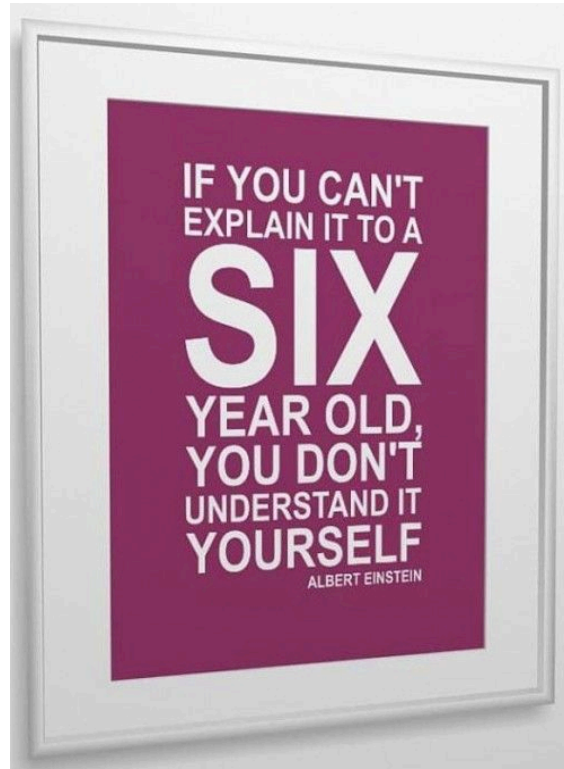
What is your problem?

Defining the problem accurately is the keystone of problem solving. Define it incorrectly and all subsequent work could be aimed 'at the wrong goalposts'.

A well-defined problem can usually be recorded in one sentence, but be prepared for it to take a long time to get it right.

We have found that there are eight **common mistakes** that people make when defining their problems.

Here they are:



1 Multiple problems	5 Not being clear
2 Consequences	6 Limited description
3 Aspirational	7 Implied cause
4 Too much jargon	8 It is just a statement

1. Multiple problems – If you can't describe your problem in a single sentence, you've probably got more than one problem e.g. Crime in the Bus Station. You must separate the problems or you'll be setting aims that cannot be met and your responses will not work. Be specific e.g. Assaults on staff, robbery, criminal damage.

2. Consequences – When what you have described are symptoms or the consequences of the problem, rather than the problem itself e.g. Injuries from broken bottles, as opposed to sale of alcohol to under-aged youths resulting in drunk and disorderly behaviour and assaults.

If you and your partnership only have the capability to tackle the consequences, then acknowledge that's what you're doing and select the most applicable response from the **Impact Scale**. Details of the Impact Scale can be found later in the book.

- 3. Aspirational** – Where someone records the aim without defining the problem e.g. "We want more people to come into the town centre at night", as opposed to identifying the reasons why people don't come and defining them as separate problems.
- 4. Too much jargon** - The use of acronyms is exclusionary and most organisations have their own jargon which means nothing to people from other organisations. This isn't an issue until you want to involve other partners. Then it can be one of the biggest blocks to working together and making sense of information. Do you want to have to employ an interpreter for every meeting? If in doubt, explain an acronym or, even better, get rid of it.
- 5. Not being clear** – Clarity is all important if you want people to understand the precise nature of the problem. Plain English should be used always. Some people are reluctant readers. Some are poor readers. Some have English as a 2nd or even 3rd language. Unfortunately, it's been our experience that, on occasions, some people have not understood the problem and not had the confidence to say so. They then mask this with terminology that looks knowledgeable but doesn't stand up to scrutiny.
- 6. Limited description** – This is when just two or three words are written and the reader is expected to know exactly what they mean. We are supporters of brevity, but if you write just a couple of words you make it unnecessarily difficult for others to appreciate the problem and therefore they cannot help you.
- 7. Implied cause** – Where a person has built what they believe to be the cause into their definition e.g. "We are unable to provide training opportunities at all of our sites across London as we do not have an office at each site". Are you basing your definition on what you know or what you believe? The problem is only being examined with one possible cause in mind.
- 8. Making a statement** – Where what you've recorded is a statement rather than a problem e.g. "Cars driving up and down the sea front at night". So what? It's better to isolate specific problems being caused e.g. "Cars being raced recklessly causing danger to pedestrians".

Working with others

You can work on your own but there are so many benefits of working with others, best described as your partners.

Benefits

They can give you a different perspective, more information on the problem, additional resources and support when negotiating with others.

One way is to ask yourself the question, **"Who shares my problem?"**

You can also find your partners by asking **"Who shares my aim?"**



What is it you want to achieve?

This would be **your aim**. Here is a mnemonic to help set your aim.

- S Specific** Make sure the Aim "hits the nail on the head".
- M Measurable** Decide on effective ways to measure success.
- A Achievable** Your resources will influence this.
- R Relevant** Are your actions working towards your Aim?
- T Time-bound** It will need a specific end date.

Deciding what is achievable can be difficult and hard to express to others. Fortunately, the following has been written. It is called the **Impact Scale*** and gives you five choices on what to aim for.

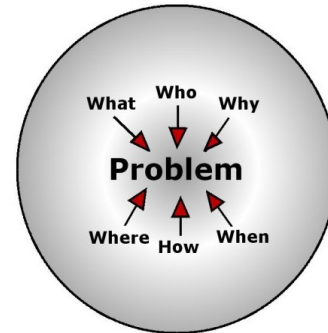
- 1 Eliminate the problem
- 2 Reduce the problem by degrees
- 3 Reduce the seriousness of a problem
- 4 Deal with the problem more efficiently
- 5 Persuade another body to take the lead

*The Impact Scale is based on an idea by Prof John Eck and is used here with his kind permission. Source: John E Eck and William Spelman (1987) *Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing In Newport News*. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum.

Researching the problem

The first part focuses on our problem and asks specific questions. This is known as **convergent** research.

What's going on?
Who is involved?
When is it happening?
Where is it happening?
How much is it costing?
How long has it been a problem?
Did anything change before the problem started?



So far, the questions have concerned the effects of the problem itself. An additional approach is to ask '**opposite**' type questions. Here are some examples.

Who is not affected by the problem?
Where is there no problem?
When is it not happening?

Answers to these questions may provide some ideas on how your problem can be resolved.

Getting a measure of the problem

You will need to get a 'a snapshot' or measure, of the problem before any changes have taken place. This is known as a **baseline**. It can involve quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative data involves numbers. You can count such measures before and after your response(s), and note the difference. Qualitative data asks for opinions, some based on feelings and impressions.

The demand to make a change

As well as finding out all about the problem you need to know who is behind the requirement to have something done? The three questions you need to ask to establish the demand are:

1. **Who** is asking?
2. **What** is it they want?
3. **Why** is it important to them?

If you discover these people have unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved, they need to be told why it is not possible.

Analysis – Making sense of what you've found

It's about making inferences based upon the Research and honing the information down into a usable form and concentrating your efforts on the information that will be most useful.

Why? Why? Why?

Firstly, summarise the problem. Then ask the question "Why might the problem exist?" (Only use *might* at this stage as we may not know the definite reasons, only the possible reasons). Then ask 'Why?' again against each of the reasons given.

Storyboards

To increase your effectiveness, it helps if you and your partners get an appreciation of the all events which are causing your crime, disorder or anti-social behaviour problems. You can do this by isolating each stage and describing the role played by all those involved.

We describe this method as a 'Storyboard'. A system used in film making to demonstrate a required sequence of events and are made up of sketches, photographs and film footage. So, we thought, why not use the same system to present the sequence of the crimes being committed.

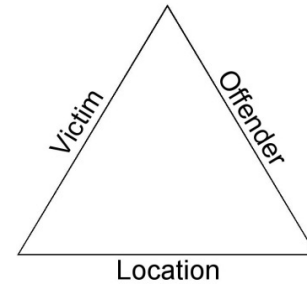


The very process of completing the stages will identify any gaps in your knowledge about what is going on and make it easier to clearly task others to undertake further research to fill the gaps.

Crime Theories

The Problem Analysis Triangle

It shows that all events, problems or incidents have three components. For crime, they are **Victim**, **Offender** and **Location**. Sometimes Time is added and it is described as VOLT.



Routine Activity Theory



Physical convergence in time and place

This is a theory first developed by the criminologists Marcus Felson and Larry Cohen.

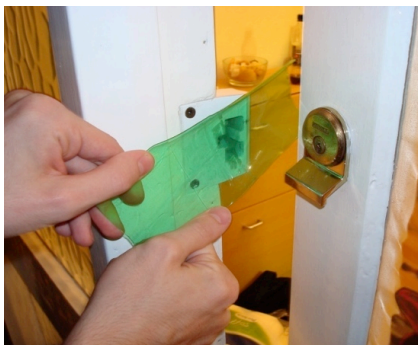
They argue that when a crime occurs, three things happen at the same time and in the same space: a suitable target is available; there is no capable guardian to prevent the crime from happening; and a likely and motivated offender is present.

A **capable guardian** is anything - either a person or thing, which discourages crime from taking place. For example: CCTV, police patrols, security guards, fences and locks.



A **motivated offender** is someone who wants or needs to commit crime. Try to think like the offender. Why are they committing the crime?

Rational Choice Theory



Another theory that builds upon the Routine Activity Theory is Marcus Felson and Ron Clarke's Rational Choice Theory.

It means trying to see the world from the offender's perspective: How does the offender make crime choices? What drives them? Why do they pick certain locations, goods or victims?

Broken Windows Theory

James Q. Wilson and George Kelling developed the **Broken Windows Theory**, which suggests that crime is the almost inevitable result of disorder.



They suggested that the following sequence of events could be expected in deteriorating neighbourhoods:

Evidence of decay (broken windows, deteriorated building exteriors) remaining in the neighbourhood for a reasonably long period of time.

People who live and work in the area feel more vulnerable and begin to withdraw. They become less willing to intervene to maintain public order or to address physical signs of deterioration.



Sensing this, offenders become bolder and intensify their harassment and vandalism. Residents become yet more fearful and withdraw even further from community involvement and upkeep.

This atmosphere then attracts offenders from outside the area, who sense that it has become a vulnerable and less risky site for crime.

Situational Crime Prevention

It focuses on reducing the opportunities for criminals to commit crime. It concentrates on the criminal and what they think about.

If they think they can get away with a particular crime, then make it appear harder, riskier and less rewarding to commit that crime. It was written by Ronald V Clarke.

He identified **five** separate headings.



Increase the risks

- Strengthen formal surveillance
- Assist natural surveillance
- Utilise place managers
- Extend guardianship
- Reduce anonymity



Remove the excuses

- Set rules
- Post instructions
- Alert conscience
- Assist compliance
- Control alcohol

Increase the effort

- Harden the targets
- Control the access
- Screen the exits
- Deflect offenders
- Control weapons

Reduce the rewards

- Remove the targets
- Deny benefits
- Disrupt the market
- Conceal the target
- Identify property

Reduce the provocation

- Reduce frustrations
- Discourage imitation
- Avoid disputes
- Neutralise peer pressure
- Reduce emotional arousal

Thinking Creatively



As you work through the Problem Solving Process you will get to a point where you know what the problem is and you are moving towards developing options to resolve it.

This is the time to have a think about doing something creative. Creativity is defined as **“Original ideas that have value.”**

Firstly, assess other's good practice and see whether their responses could be employed to solve your problem. You are likely to have to adapt them to your situation. Making these smaller changes to something that already exists is called **Incremental** creativity. Doing something new is called **Radical** creativity.

Realising Opportunities

Here are four ways we could consider when deciding how we could change the current situation to something better.

- 1 Create something new
- 2 Increase your capacity
- 3 Increase your flexibility
- 4 Improve your efficiency



Negotiating the Changes

Now you have gathered your options, you and your partners will need to decide which ones you will use to make the changes needed. These changes can be described as actions.

Monitoring is continually assessing whether or not any of your changes are working.

If the changes are not happening it could be that others who could assist you are choosing not to do so. This situation is not new to those involved in problem solving and, as a result, guidance notes have been produced on how you can encourage them to accept responsibility. (See next page).

10 ways to convince others to accept responsibility for Problem Solving

1. Educate others regarding their responsibility for the problem.
2. Make a straightforward informal request for others to assume responsibility for the problem.
3. Make a targeted confrontational for others request to assume responsibility for the problem.
4. Engage an existing organisation, that has the capacity to help, to address the problem.
5. Press for the creation of a new organisation to assume responsibility for the problem.
6. Shame the delinquent organisation/ person/ department by calling public attention to its failure to assume responsibility for the problem.
7. Withdraw services related to certain aspects of the problem.
8. Charge fees for services related to the problem.
9. Press for legislation mandating that organisations/ persons/ departments take measures to prevent the problem.
- 10 Bring a civil action to compel another organisation/ person/ department to accept responsibility for the problem.



The above advice has been adapted from a document called: *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems - Community Oriented Policing Services* by Herman Goldstein and Michael S Scott (2005). – US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Response Guide No.3 Available for free download from the Center for Problem Oriented Policing website www.popcenter.org

Evaluation

Firstly, **Impact Evaluation**. To determine what happened to the problem, you need to ask the following questions:

Was the Aim met? If not, why not?

Did my responses cause the changes?

Secondly, **Process Evaluation** requires you to look at what you've done and, regardless of results, to ask what went well and what didn't go well and the reasons.



Recognising others

If things improved, then celebrate it! **Reward good work**. Ensure people get the credit they deserve. This is a part of problem solving that can get overlooked. If people feel that they have been part of something worthwhile, they will be more inclined to take part again.

Sharing good practice

Within your organisation. Add a section on 'Sharing Good Practice' into internal staff appraisals on how the person identified and applied the good practice.

Outside your organisation. Attend a conference and present details of your good practice.

Further information

A book on problem solving and partnership working called "Who Shares your Problem?" has been written by Neil Henson, winner of the UK Home Office Tilley Problem Solving Award.

It provides more information on the PARTNERS Problem Solving Process with a number of examples. It is available in Kindle and Paperback versions from Amazon.



Engaging Communities – Five Stage Process

Stage 1 Understand the Community



To be efficient in engaging with the local community it is vital to find out everything about the people living and working in your area.

This assessment will inform you on how to select the most suitable engagement methods.

It would make sense to find out if there are other organisations who are currently engaging with your target groups. You could see if you could be part of their programme.

How you can divide up your area?

In the UK, these are described as Ward, Neighbourhood or Output Area Summaries. (The Health Service makes use of Output areas)

What should be included?

It should include: a map; the population statistics and characteristics; services and facilities; housing types; transport; education; corporate and retail businesses: faith centres and libraries.

Also include: Community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch; Resident and Tenant Associations and Voluntary Organisations.

There are companies that can provide information about your area.

You could record the results of public attitude surveys, which identify sites of Anti Social Behaviour, as well as Intelligence Assessments on crime.



Stage 2 Engage with the community and identify their concerns / problems

Once you have information about the communities in your area you need to make contact with them to find out what issues are causing them most concern. Below are the different levels of engagement.



Information Giving

- Purpose** To provide people with information about your plans and services.
- Expectation** That information will be accurate, balanced and updated as necessary.

Information Gathering

- Purpose** To collect information about attitudes, opinions and preferences on specific policies and proposals that will assist your understanding and decision making.
- Expectation** That information gathered will be treated and used responsibly, that feedback will influence decisions and that people will be kept informed.

Partnership Collaboration

- Purpose** To establish through consultation and discussion what the issues and priorities are and to work together in effective partnerships to improve services.
- Expectation** That decision making will be shared and some resources will be held in common. That all parties will be circulated with progress bulletins.

Ways to engage with the community

Firstly, make use of your understanding of your community to identify the types of people living in your area. For example, they could be predominantly older people or daily commuters. Select which group you are targeting.

Secondly, make a decision on what you are trying to achieve from the time you have with them. (See the different levels on the previous page) Do you want to give them information or are you looking to discuss the priorities for your team?

Finally, examine the engagement methods available and apply the ones that are most likely to be effective with these people. For example, commuters can be best contacted at the train stations.

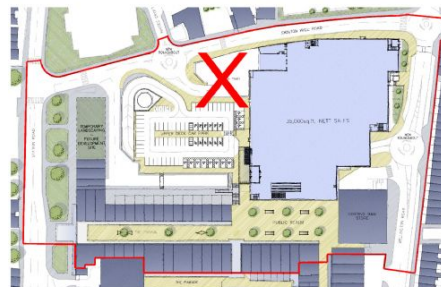
Commonly used engagement methods

Key Individual Network (KIN) This is made up of key local people whose views can help to establish priorities for policing in their area.

One of the key activities is to survey their views about local issues of concern and to identify target activities for the Neighbourhood Policing teams. There are also 'on-line' versions available.

Surgeries These provide an easy way for people to voice any concerns. Policing teams organise surgeries where people can have a one-to-one conversation with their local police officer or community support officer about any concerns they have.

X marks the spot These are similar to postcards but there is a map of the area on the card and the person marks with crosses the areas where they do not feel safe.



Environmental Visual Audits

An environmental visual audit (EVA) is a way of assessing what an area is like.

It can identify the good things in place, but it is generally used to identify the things in public that are a problem, such as graffiti or fly-tipping.

You will need to decide whether it is better to have members of the community with you. They will give you their perspective of an area, that you may not have considered.



You could also invite a local councillor to come with you. Not only are they going to be a partner, but they may be able to assist you when you are trying to make a change. A risk assessment may need to be undertaken. Here are some other points to consider.

- Location** Consider the size of location to be covered.
- Time** What is the best time to get an accurate assessment? If checking for drugs paraphernalia, just after street cleaning would not be a good time.
- Transport** How to get there and back. If a large area is to be covered, how best can it be done?
- Method of recording information** A camera the best method, supported by a written record. However, individuals should not be photographed as this would require authorisation.
- Achievable time limits** Can the EVA be done within a reasonable period of time? Will splitting an EVA across days affect results?
- Personnel** How many people involved? All personnel should be given a specific task and also given a start and finish time. Also provide people with a contact number.
- Contact** How will you all stay in touch? Visual? Radio? Mobile? Everyone should be contactable at all times.
- How is the information recorded?** Date and time. Precise location. Comments made by people to yourselves as you walk around their area. Any evidence recorded, such as pictures.

Stage 3 Prioritise the problems

You will reach a point when you have made contact with sufficient members of your community and have a good appreciation of the problems in your area. However, it is not simply a matter of asking people what they want and giving it to them. Even if there were sufficient resources to give people everything they wanted, public priorities may be contradictory.

Therefore, it is about understanding the perspective of the community and then deciding fairly what can and cannot be worked on. One way to make these decisions is to hold public meetings to clarify the issues and select the priorities or have a representative group who then select the priorities. This approach has emerged across the United Kingdom and, even though the groups have different names and variations in their approach, they are fundamentally the same. Here is a summary of the main ones.

Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)



A NAG is a multi-agency, problem-solving group that consists of relevant partner agencies, key stakeholders and members of the local community.

NAGs attract a broad and diverse membership with a variety of skills and experience. Practical and communication skills are all highly valued.

'Have your say' meetings

At the 'Have your say' meeting people tell the Neighbourhood Team what issues concern them.

Alternatively, some areas offer people the facility to register their problems and to suggest or vote on the local priorities.



After the meeting, a sub group decides how they will work together to resolve the neighbourhood priorities. The Neighbourhood Policing Team report back to the next meeting on progress and update their local website.



Partnership and Community Together (PACT) meetings

PACT meetings are an opportunity for the community to have their say on what matters most to them in their area. They provide an accurate picture of what is really happening locally. The problems encountered are discussed and solutions explored. From the issues raised at the meeting and those brought to the meeting by the local police they decide on the PACT priorities.

Ward / Neighbourhood Panels

A Panel is made up of local people who live and/or work in the area. They would have been identified through the engagement activities carried out in the area. It is important that the group is representative of the community and has its support.

This can be achieved by nominations being made at public meetings or events. An ideal size for the group would be about twelve people.

The Panel negotiates with the Neighbourhoods Policing Teams on the priorities for the local area by examining the results of community consultation and research. It also includes results from public events where the community have voiced concerns. The purpose of these panels is to agree a realistic and achievable course of action to address the issues raised by the community.

What about involving local councillors?

The Ward panel may also benefit from the involvement of the local Ward Councillors. The role of the councillor is to observe the process and contribute their local knowledge of problems. The Councillor should abstain from deciding the priorities in order that the delivery of services is not seen to be affected by politics.

Stage 4 Work to resolve the problems

Once the problems have been identified and prioritised they need to be resolved. Otherwise what was the point of asking people what issues were causing them concern. In fact, the very process of engaging with the community will have raised their expectation that something is going to be done. The problems identified have invariably been around for a while and so are the ones that are difficult to resolve. Therefore, a problem solving approach is most likely to be needed.

Stage 5 Update the community

At some point, you will want to provide information to the community. It could be information about a future community engagement event, specific crime prevention advice or an update on things that have been done to resolve a problem. You could create a leaflet, write an article for a newspaper, or produce a newsletter. Here is some advice on how to produce them.

Guide on writing leaflets

So why produce a leaflet?

A leaflet gives you a chance to draw attention to your team, cause or event. Furthermore, as people can take your leaflet home with them, it means they have more time to absorb your message and can keep a visual reminder of it.

Indeed, once distributed, the leaflet may end up being read by many more people than the person it was handed to, widening its impact still further.

What do you want to say to the reader?

Clearly define your objective in your own mind before you start:

Are you looking for a response?

What action or attitude do you hope to influence?

Are you providing information?

You may be doing one, or several of these things. But which is the most important? Sort out your priorities before you begin to write or your message will be muddled and the reader will get confused.

Who is it for?

Your audience will determine (1) the tone of your leaflet, (2) the kinds of arguments used, and (3) any action requested.

You should have information on how large the audience is, where they are located and some idea of their needs, attitudes and preferences.

The content

The message content should appeal to the audience. This appeal could be:

Rational - appeals to audience's self interest.
Emotional - stirs up a positive/negative emotion that will motivate an action.

Moral - directed to the audience's sense of what is right. The message format should be strong in order to catch the attention of the audience.

Layout design Your readers get bombarded with leaflets, lots of them. Most get thrown straight in the bin. So, if you don't want your message to end up in landfill, you'll have to use your artistic ingenuity to make your leaflet stand out from the crowd.

The big advantage of leaflets is that you can use photographs, drawings and logos to attract the reader's attention.

The layout of your leaflet needs to be thought about very carefully. Consider what text and pictures you want to include. If necessary, sketch the layout on a piece of paper or try a few different designs using computer-based publishing programmes.

How big should it be? Leaflets are for delivering useful, reusable information. The size and shape of the leaflet is a major factor in its success. A leaflet that people can't fit easily into a pocket or a bag will be thrown away. The best size is known as A5.

Proofreading You can never over proofread your text. It doesn't matter how good your design is, if the text is full of mistakes. A simple typing error or spelling mistake can destroy an entire campaign.

How to write it All messages should be based on the principle that the purpose of your communication is to 'cause a change of mind leading to an action'.

Evaluate the results It is important to measure the effectiveness of your leaflet campaign. You could count up how many responses your leaflet produced. Was the response rate what you predicted before you started? Keep a note of what happened, and keep this lesson in mind for the future.

What makes a good news story?

It tells readers something new

To ensure your story is new, send it to your press liaison officer or direct to the local media within 48 hours of the event taking place.

It's interesting

It interests a large number of readers because of one of the following reasons:

It meets local needs as a result of listening to the community.

Something successful was achieved.

It reflects outstanding work.

Don't take it personally if the newspaper does not run with your story.

You need to appreciate the media requirement to interest their readership and not just provide a public information report.



How to write it

Opening paragraph One sentence giving the 'who, what, where, when, why and how' of your story.

For example "Officers from the Neighbourhood Policing team worked with Community Payback to improve a children's playground."

Second paragraph Provide more information under each of the sections, who what and where etc.

Third paragraph Get a supporting quote. Try someone independent of your own organisation.

Fourth paragraph If relevant, also include details of where they can get further information or support.

Final paragraph Contact details. Give the name, rank, telephone number and email address of an officer who can provide more details or quotes if required.

Producing Newsletters

Procedure

Date your newsletter.

Columns are easier to read than the full width of the page.

See if your own organisation has a template already prepared. It may be the case that you can only use the one format.

Use Plain English.

Font size 10 Arial or Verdana is suitable on the internet whilst Font 12 Arial / Verdana are more suitable on a printed document.

Keep the same font style and size that is set on the template throughout the whole newsletter.

Write any numbers under ten in full instead of using digits.

Spell out any acronyms in full the first time you use them. For example, Problem Solving Process (PSP).

You should make an effort to make your newsletter available in other formats.

You could include a sentence on the newsletter stating that they could contact you to obtain a different format.

Explain in clear terms what are police initiatives or policies.

Content

Consider what you put on the front page - don't use a general update, use something positive that you have done.

Photographs on the front page and throughout the text makes it more interesting. If using photos where a member of the public can be identified, be sure that you have their permission to use it.

Details of your local priorities, how you have resolved them and the positive effects they are having on residents.

Keep the information local and relevant – people want to read about what is happening in their area and what you are doing to tackle it.

Think about including a crime prevention slot which could focus on a crime particularly prevalent in the ward area, or it could be seasonal advice.

Include a box of useful contacts on the newsletter - including addresses for local police stations, opening hours, non-emergency police phone numbers, email addresses, website address, etc.

Contact your partner agencies to find out if they have anything they would like to be included.

Assessing a Problem Solving Initiative

You may want to assess your own initiative or have been asked to assess another's. You may decide to enter a Problem Solving Competition. Below are a series of questions to assist you.



You may want to grade them. For example, the grade could be between 1 and 10, with 10 being the highest. You may even want to provide feedback for the person to justify your grade.

Defining the problem and working with partners

Was the problem defined well?

Did they find any other people who shared the problem?

The Aim

Was the aim specific?

Was the aim measurable?

Was there an end date set?

Did they consider use made of the Impact Scale?

Research and Analysis

Did they find out what was happening and why?

Did they find out when it was happening and why?

Did they find out where it was happening and why?

Did they find out who the victims were and why?

Did they find out who the offenders were and why?

Did they find out how long it had been a problem, and whether it was getting worse or better?

Did they establish a baseline?

Thinking about what could be done

Did they make use of research from other areas about similar problems to their own?

Did they consider good practice from elsewhere?

Did they create opportunities to develop other ideas?

Did they make use of any sessions to generate ideas?

Negotiating the Changes

Did they explain how the changes selected supported the Aim?

Did they identify partners who they worked with to support the changes?

Did they demonstrate consideration of the timings of the changes?

Did the changes have a clear lead for each change?

Did they have a method for monitoring the changes?

Evaluation

Did they find out whether the Aim was met?

Did they show impartiality when selecting the methods of measuring their success?

Did they contact the people who had made the original demand?

Did they review what went well and why?

Recognising Others

Did they give any recognition to someone inside or outside of their organisation who they consider to have supported the initiative?

Did they provide good reasons why they selected that person?

Sharing Good Practice

Did they share with others their good practice?

Did they make it clear why it was good practice?

Did they share anything that they did which did not go well?

Summary of Problem Solving Processes

SARA

PARTNERS

Scan

P Problem Definition and Partner Identification

Define the problem. (Avoid the common mistakes)
Find your partners – those who share your problem?

A Aim Setting

Specific, Measurable and Time bound. Make use of the Impact Scale when deciding what is achievable.

Analysis

R Research and Analysis

Convergent Research (Who? What's going on? Where? When? How much? How long?). Analysis (Why?) 'Making sense of what you've found. Who is making the demand, what do they want and why? Establish a Baseline.

Response

T Thinking Creatively

Identify existing good practice. Think about other ways to resolve the problem.

N Negotiating the Changes

Set out your actions and decide who is leading on each of them. Monitor the responses to see that they are working as intended.

Assess

E Evaluation

Impact Evaluation. Was the aim met? If not, why not? Process Evaluation. What went well and why? What did not go well and why?

R Recognition and Reward

Recognise people for their help and effort.

S Sharing 'Good Practice'

How are you going to share what you have learnt with others?