

sixth sense

Training with a sense of humour

Problem Solver's Handbook

Contact details

Neil Henson 07759 538 364

neilhenson@sixthsensetraining.co.uk

www.sixthsensetraining.co.uk

Contents

Application of a Problem Solving Approach	Page 3
Problem Solving and Processes	Page 4
Defining a Problem and Common Mistakes	Pages 5 and 6
Setting an Aim	Page 7
Research and Analysis	Pages 8 to 10
Crime Theories and Subversion	Pages 11 to 14
Thinking Creatively	Page 15
Risk Assessment	Page 16
Negotiate the Changes	Pages 17
Evaluation and Recognition of Others	Page 18
Purpose Oriented Strategy and POP	Page 19
Community Engagement Process	Pages 20 to 25
Dealing with the Unrealistic and Vexatious	Pages 26 to 28
Updating the Community	Pages 29 and 30
Writing an Effective News Story	Page 31
Producing a Successful Newsletter	Page 32
Assessing a Problem Solving Initiative	Pages 33 and 34
Critical Success Factors for Mainstreaming Problem Solving	Page 35
Summary of Problem Solving Processes	Page 36

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Application of Problem Solving

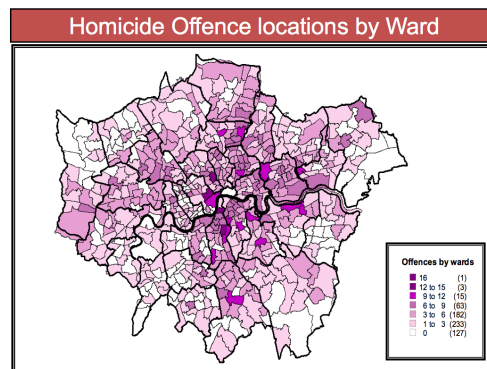
Within Policing and Community Safety a Problem Solving approach can be used for the following:

- 1 Reducing Crime and Disorder.
- 2 Reducing Demand / Calls for Service.
- 3 Neighbourhood / Community 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 Demand / 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 priority or rank highly as a Call for Service / demand, 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 book.

What is Problem Solving?

Here is my definition:

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

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 available. 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 produced over the years. This handbook will be working through one called **PARTNERS**, developed by myself, in the late 1990s. You will see that it 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.

Ultimately, you as the practitioner, should have the freedom to choose the Process you prefer. It could be different from the ones I have mentioned here, so long as you cover all the points needed.

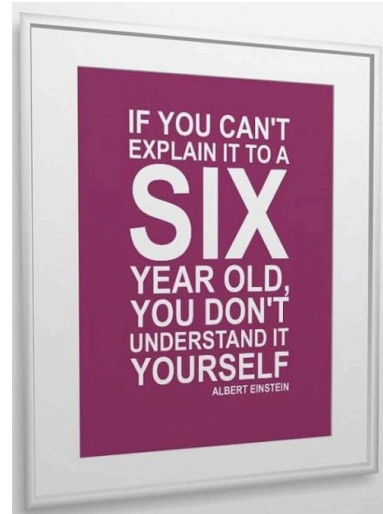
S	P	Problem and Partner Identification
	A	Aim Setting
A	R	Research and Analysis
R	T	Thinking Creatively
	N	Negotiating the Changes
A	E	Evaluation
	R	Recognition and Reward
	S	Sharing Good Practice

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.

I 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's 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.

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.
- 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.
- 6. Limited description** - This is when just two or three words are written and the reader is expected to know exactly what they mean. I am a supporter 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 addressing the problem or supporting your Strategic 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 options 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 or **Diagnostic Questioning**.

- 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?
- Is it getting worse, better or the same?
- Did anything change before the problem started?

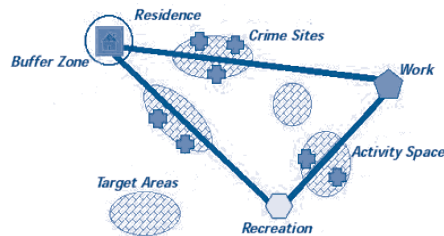
TED PIE

One way to open your question is to start it with a word from the first line. Then combine that with a word from the following line, followed by one from the third line and finally with the specific area of interest. You should vary the combination of the first two lines.

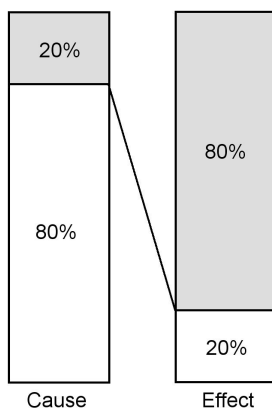
Tell me		Explain		Describe	
Precisely		In detail		Exactly	
Who	What	Where	When	How much	How long
Followed by your question					

Crime pattern Mapping and Crime Pattern Analysis

This look for the similarities and differences between crimes and other forms of offending. They can help us to find relationships between crimes which, in turn, can link crimes to particular offenders.



It identifies where prevention and diversion initiatives will be the most effective and reveals new and emerging trends.



Pareto – the 80/20% Principle

Vilfredo Pareto, a 19th Century Italian economist, made the observation that many things in life can be measured in 1/5 ratios (80/20%).

20% of your offenders cause 80% of your crime. 20% of your callers take up 80% of your recourses. Therefore, you should direct your efforts toward the 20%.

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 informed opinions and some based on impressions.



The demand to make a change

As well as finding out all about the problem you need to know who or what 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.

The Opposites

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

Who is not affected by the problem?
Where is there no problem?
When is it not happening?
Who is not effected by the problem?
(What are they doing or what did they do?)

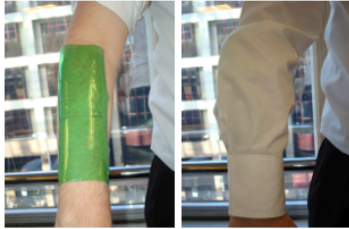
Answers to these questions may provide some ideas on how your problem can be resolved.



Storyboards

This method is called 'Storyboard'. It is inspired by the film industry which is used to demonstrate the required sequence of events.

So, the same method can be used to present the sequence of a crime or anti-social behaviour problems. Isolate each stage and describe the role played by all those involved.





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.

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. Then again ask why. Keep going until more information emerges.

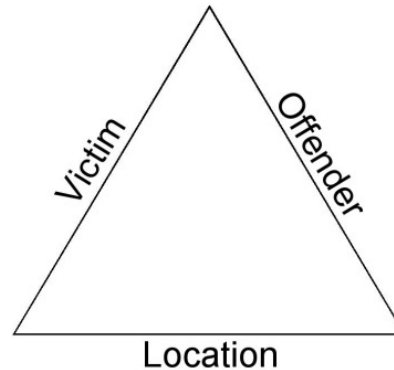
Use of Crime Theories

If you have a crime problem you will benefit by examining crime theories to give you a different perspective and ideas on how you can resolve it. Below is a summary of some of the main ones.

The Problem Analysis Triangle

It shows that all events, problems or incidents have three components.

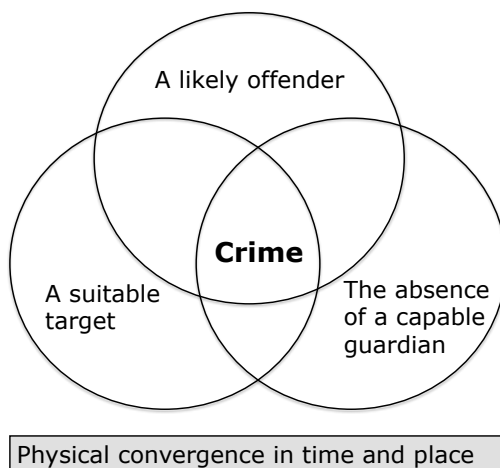
For crime, they are **Victim**, **Offender** and **Location**.



Routine Activity Theory

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 therefore a less risky site for getting caught when they commit 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.

Ronald V Clarke identified five separate headings.

Increase the risks

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

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

Remove the excuses

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

Reduce the provocation

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

Subvert the Offenders ability to function.

Some crime problems are complex in nature and the offenders are usually part of an Organised Crime Group. In the late 1990s in central London I was part of Police Community Action team who, with others in the Metropolitan Police, tackled two of the largest drugs markets London. We, like others, treated the drug dealers as a business.

This is (in my own words) the Strategic Purpose of a Drugs Dealer.

**To achieve the maximum profit,
with the minimum risk of being caught,
by providing drugs that people want to buy
in a way that can be easily hidden and consumed.**

As a Community Action Team we had limited resources and therefore had to develop a Strategy and Tactics which we had the capacity to deliver.

We decided we would to identify the key business processes of the Street Drug Market, and isolate the critical success factors.



We did this by employing a Business Improvement Process to identify each component part. Here is what we found.

Drug	Suppliers	Accommodation
Transport	Storage	Market place
Communication	Customers	Money
Security	User Sites	Morale

But unlike Business Improvement Process, where problems were found and then resolved, we did the opposite. We sought out what the dealers needed and then created problems for them. We, by both design or opportunity, systematically worked to **reduce, remove or reverse each point** that was supporting the dealers. It had mixed results, but our approach was sound.

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.

The first thing to do is to find out what others have done about the same or similar problem.

Then discover what worked for them and also what didn't work. You can then consider whether their responses are applicable to your problem.

You must not do a straight lift as the problem and its context may be different.

The next part is your opportunity to think about doing something creative.

Creativity is defined as '**Original ideas that have value.**'

Most likely you will make modifications to existing good practice. These are called **Incremental Changes**. A most exciting thing is that you can also apply new and far responses. These are called **Radical Changes**.

Techniques for Creative Thinking

The next part is to generate ideas to make both radical and incremental changes. One way is to run a **Problem Solving Session**.

There are many techniques that can be used to generate ideas in these sessions. Below are the ones which I use the most.

Brainstorming

What if

Discussion

Comparisons
with others

Brain Writing /
Leaving Card

Making the
problem worse

Ideas Board

Visualisation

Incubation



Risk Assessment

Once you have generated some ideas, you need to look critically at what might go wrong with them, or where there may be resistance to their acceptance. By asking questions such as 'What might happen if? Also consider such things as funding, resources, timescales, human rights, legality and risk assessment. All possible interventions **must** be properly risk assessed. Most Risk Assessment systems follow a basic four stage plan:

1. Identify the Threats

What threats exist to affect or prevent your response from working?
 What physical threats are there? Environmental? Natural? Human?
 What technical threats are there? Procedural? IT failure?
 What financial threats are there? Budget limits? Postponed funding?

2. Estimate the Risk

One way of putting a figure on risk is to use this formula:

$$\text{Risk} = \text{probability of event} \times \text{cost of event}$$

3. Manage the Risk

Once you have identified the threats and objectively calculated the level of risks, you can start looking at ways of managing them.

4. Review your Assessment

Once you have carried out a risk assessment, it is worth carrying out regular reviews. The very action of putting interventions in place can change the nature of the risk. Professional Health and Safety experts often refer to a 'Rolling Risk Assessment' – one that constantly changes as events occur.

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.

You can then develop an **Action Plan** to initiate and monitor your responses during their life spans. Your changes are directly linked to your **Aim**. You must build regular feedback into your Action Plan.

Action Plan			
Objective	Lead	Start Date	End Date

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 confrontation request for others 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

Monitoring

This 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 or there is a logistical reason why it's not happened. You also need to ensure that you are causing unforeseen consequences, especially if you're going to use cardboard police officers to prevent shoplifting.



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**. This 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 why.

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

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 myself, a winner of the UK Home Office Tilley Problem Solving Award.

Who shares
your
problem?

Neil Henson

Purpose Oriented Strategy

Organisations or teams should have a clearly defined purpose or ultimate goal. The term I use is the **Strategic Purpose**.

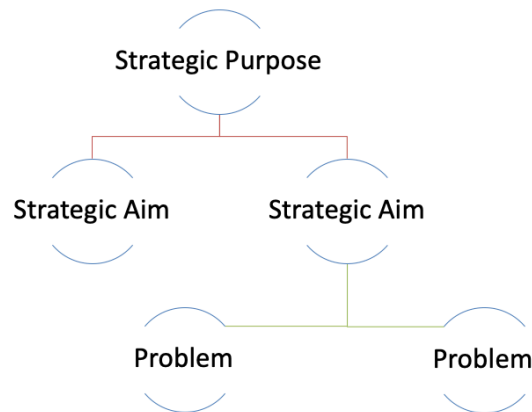
Strategy

This is defined as a unifying idea that links purpose and action.

Orientation

This means all activity, the planning, the analysis, the resources and the responses, revolves around the Strategic Purpose.

This is the framework that supports a Purpose Oriented Strategy.



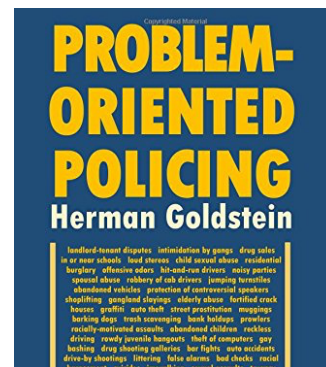
It is ideal for Community Safety Partnerships to manage their work.

It also takes advantage of the functions of the National Intelligence Model. For example, the use of Strategic Assessments.

This Strategy was influenced by the late Herman Goldstein's Problem Oriented Policing.

What is the difference between POP and SARA / PARTNERS?

POP is the Strategy while PARTNERS, SARA and OSARA are Problem Solving Processes which guide people who are using a Problem Solving approach.



Engaging Communities – Five Stage Process

Stage 1 Identifying the Community



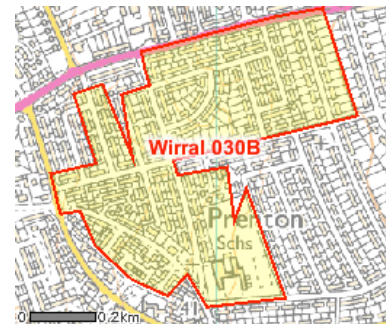
To be efficient in engaging with the local community it is vital to find out everything about the people living and working in your area.

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 a Ward, a 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; faith centres and libraries; corporate and retail businesses.

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 up-dated 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.

Postcards



These are made available in places such as libraries.

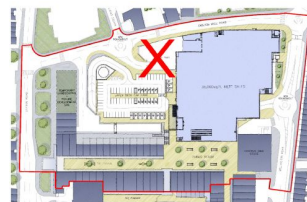
People need only provide two pieces of information: their postcode and a brief description of their concern.

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. You would need to find out why.



Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs)

An environmental visual audit 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 is ideal, supported by a written record. I would recommend photographing a street name to make it easier when you are selecting a picture. |
| 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 contacted 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.

The Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious

The fact that you are engaging with the community makes it likely that you'll meet a lot of complainants. Here are the different types.

Clear	Seeking compensation, reparation or just an apology. They may be upset, frightened or angry at being involved in some wrong doing. Accepting of conciliation and reasonable solutions.
Difficult	Seeking compensation and often some degree of retribution. They are angry. They exaggerate damage, but will accept a 'best offer'.
Altruistic reformers	Seeking change and justice for all; sacrifice their immediate interests in pursuit of better outcomes for others.
Hobbyist	Recreational, serial complaining. Achieving sense of self-importance.
Dishonest	Seeking financial gain. For example, looking for pay out. Avoiding justice. For example, cross-complaining against those prosecuting them.
Unreasonably persistent	These are self-absorbed, not open to reason and engage in a range of unreasonable complaint behaviours.
Vexatious	These seek retribution and personal vindication, as well as compensation or reparation. On a mission for "justice" and "principles". They engage in vexatious litigation and tend to involve multiple agencies.

Unreasonably persistent complainants may have justified complaints or grievances but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways, or they may be intent on pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance or which have already been investigated and determined.

Their contacts with you may be amicable but still place very heavy demands on staff time, or they may be very emotionally charged and cause distress for all involved. The fact that they are prepared to continue with a complaint (s), involve others, attend community meetings and employ a range of tactics means that they will take up a considerable amount of time and resources. This results in them taking up more time than the priorities you agreed on with the community, which is not fair to the majority of people living in your area.

Suggested course of action

When you first get a complaint, unless you know the complainant, you will not know whether the complaint is genuine, or not. If the complaint is genuine, yourself or another within your team visiting the person, identifying the problem and resolving it may resolve it. Or it may be that you provide the complainant with the details of another agency best placed to take the lead for it.

Assign a Single Point of Contact (SPOC).

You could appoint one person to be the complainant's single point of contact. Assigning one person makes it easier for the complainant, who does not have to relive the previous problems and actions. It also benefits the organisation by reducing the chances of other people being 'trapped' by the complainant into making unsolicited comments or of being played off against each other.

The Investigation

The investigating officer will identify and examine each of the problems raised by the complainant and focus on the problems raised and not the complainant. These problems will be assessed and those that are not for that organisation will be separated and passed on to the agency best placed to take the lead. The agency will be informed that, although they will be supported, they are the lead and the complainant will be informed of that fact.

Taking a Statement

For the genuine cases, taking a statement will support your work, for example when using Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) legislation.

If the complaint is genuine, it proves very useful to get as much evidence as possible and identifies other issues that can be investigated. At the same time, the complainant will also be provided with an Incident Log, as this helps when further statements.

Having a statement makes it easy to forward to others for their opinion, which is useful if the complainant is complaining of criminal offences or anti social behaviour when the views of an expert would be beneficial to the investigation. Those who just want to complain, and have previously exaggerated the problem, are faced with the dilemma of describing each of the incidents in great detail. For some, this choice could be enough for them to stop pursuing their unreasonable or vexatious complaint.

If during the interview(s) you discover that the complainant is unreasonable, here are the most common types and suggestions on how to manage them.

- Unreasonable persistence** It's all about saying 'no'. Tell complainants firmly that something is 'not going to happen'. Maintain a 'no means no' stance. Don't allow complainants to re-enter the process by reframing the complaint. Make it clear that a decision is final. Adopt a 'no further correspondence' stance, which can only be varied at a senior level.
- Unreasonable demands** Clarify the limitations of the complaint system. Avoid being drawn into an unproductive argument. Don't do more for unreasonably demanding complainants than would otherwise be normal. If necessary, inform the complainant that your organisation finds their interactions unreasonably demanding and set defined limits for further contact.
- Unreasonable arguments** Decline or discontinue your organisation's involvement as soon as it becomes clear that the complaint is groundless or ludicrous (e.g. delusional, conspiracy theory etc.). If there is a mixture of reasonable and unreasonable arguments, refuse to deal with the unreasonable portion.
- Unreasonable behaviour** Set limits and conditions for future interactions. Overt anger, aggression or threats are never acceptable, whether in person, on the telephone or in writing. Return letters that are excessive and request they be reframed in more moderate language. End telephone calls if the complainant becomes abusive or confrontational.

Case Management

If you believe the complainant is either persistent or vexatious then it may assist you to open a Record of Activity form. It means you have a record of everything that has been done and, if the complainant tries to bring in others, it can be forwarded to them. It also provides a record for others to refer to in the future.

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 'create 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 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, otherwise block out their face.

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 being done.

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 5, with 5 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 places?

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?

Critical Success Factors for Problem Solving

1 Dedicated Problem Solvers

These are people, who should ideally be based in a recognisable Neighbourhood. They should be given the time to pursue their work, otherwise their initiatives could stall and they would lose the confidence of those in the community affected by the problems.

2 A Problem Solving Process

Provide the practitioner with a structure to guide them on their work. There are many available, such as SARA and PARTNERS.

3 Knowledge and Skills

People need to be capable of applying a Problem Solving Process to their own problems and know how avoid making the most common mistakes.

4 Strategy Supporting Problem Solving

Problem Solving needs a framework to ensure it is compatible with the organisation's Strategic Purpose and Strategic Aims.

5 Leadership

All those committed to employing effective problem solving need to know that those people in leadership positions will support them. The leaders should delegate the decision making to those working on the problems, and make it clear that they have done so. They should also make it clear that they can make mistakes.

6 Recording Process

People need to record their work, to show the work being done to resolve the problem. It must be easy to use, and preferably able to be shared with others outside their own organisation.

7 Problem Solving Advisors (PSA)

These are people will have been identified as practical problem solvers. They would have to be prepared to play an integral role within existing local structures, and promote a proper Problem Solving approach. To be effective this must be a dedicated post.

For a role description email me neilhenson@sixthsensetraining.co.uk

8 Problem Solving Unit

This team should be made up of credible experienced practitioners who have the ability to advice people, mentor individuals, deliver training and supporting the locally based Problem Solving Advisors.

Summary of Problem Solving Process

SARA	PARTNERS
Scan	P Problem Definition and Partner Identification Define the problem. (12 to 20 words in length). Avoid the eight 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?). Who is making the demand, what do they want and why? Establish a Baseline. Analysis (Why?)
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?