

Applying your community engagement skills



This item contains selected online content. It is for use alongside, not as a replacement for the module website, which is the primary study format and contains activities and resources that cannot be replicated in the printed versions.

About this free course

This version of the content may include video, images and interactive content that may not be optimised for your device.

You can experience this free course as it was originally designed on OpenLearn, the home of free learning from The Open University –

www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/leadership-management/applying-your-community-engagement-skills/content-section-0

There you'll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

Copyright © 2023 The Open University

Intellectual property

Unless otherwise stated, this resource is released under the terms of the Creative Commons Licence v4.0 http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB. Within that The Open University interprets this licence in the following way:

www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn. Copyright and rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons Licence are retained or controlled by The Open University. Please read the full text before using any of the content.

We believe the primary barrier to accessing high-quality educational experiences is cost, which is why we aim to publish as much free content as possible under an open licence. If it proves difficult to release content under our preferred Creative Commons licence (e.g. because we can't afford or gain the clearances or find suitable alternatives), we will still release the materials for free under a personal end-user licence.

This is because the learning experience will always be the same high quality offering and that should always be seen as positive – even if at times the licensing is different to Creative Commons.

When using the content you must attribute us (The Open University) (the OU) and any identified author in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Licence.

The Acknowledgements section is used to list, amongst other things, third party (Proprietary), licensed content which is not subject to Creative Commons licensing. Proprietary content must be used (retained) intact and in context to the content at all times.

The Acknowledgements section is also used to bring to your attention any other Special Restrictions which may apply to the content. For example there may be times when the Creative Commons Non-Commercial Sharealike licence does not apply to any of the content even if owned by us (The Open University). In these instances, unless stated otherwise, the content may be used for personal and non-commercial use.

We have also identified as Proprietary other material included in the content which is not subject to Creative Commons Licence. These are OU logos, trading names and may extend to certain photographic and video images and sound recordings and any other material as may be brought to your attention.

Unauthorised use of any of the content may constitute a breach of the terms and conditions and/or intellectual property laws.

We reserve the right to alter, amend or bring to an end any terms and conditions provided here without notice.

All rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons licence are retained or controlled by The Open University.

Head of Intellectual Property, The Open University

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| 1 Setting the scene | 5 |
| 2 Sandford Town | 6 |
| 3 Collaborative problem solving | 8 |
| 3.1 Applying this to Sandford Town scenario | 8 |
| 3.2 Your own application of stakeholder analysis | 10 |
| 3.3 Taking stakeholder analysis further | 10 |
| 4 Use of data | 12 |
| 5 Sure, I know how to talk to people | 14 |
| 6 Empowering communities | 16 |
| 7 Justice, fairness and mediation | 18 |
| 8 Engaging with children and young people | 21 |
| 9 Step up to leadership | 23 |
| 10 Evidence-based policing | 25 |
| 11 Innovation | 27 |
| Course summary | 29 |
| References | 29 |
| Acknowledgements | 29 |

Introduction

This course is the last of 10 courses developed on the theme of community engagement. The courses cover a wide range of topics that should have equipped you with the ability to make good decisions when dealing with members of the public, especially in a community policing setting. This course brings all of these ideas together in one scenario. We strongly advise that you do not start this course until you have completed the other nine courses, which can be found here: [Community engagement and policing](#).

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- understand the practical tools and ideas in the set of courses on community engagement
- improve your ability to assess the stakeholder needs of a wide community
- apply skills to plan out and deliver communication with large numbers of engaged community members
- make key decisions about how to tackle some tricky problems a community is facing
- use data in a practical way to assess local crime figures
- conduct research into the evidence base for a suggested police initiative
- draw on what you've learned from the topics covered by the community engagement courses for use in your own setting.

1 Setting the scene

You are going to be presented with an unfolding scenario that uses the knowledge you have gained from completing the [Community engagement and policing courses](#). You will start by first reading an initial description of a fictitious location we have called Sandford.

You take the role of a police officer who is working in a new and slightly challenging location who has to build relations with the local community and address the issues they are facing. As you read through the description try to relate the situation described to similar towns or cities near you.

Review the scenario carefully to understand the situation you are in. You may wish to take a few notes about some of the key features of the location.

Scenario: Sandford Town part 1

Sandford is a well-established large town that is currently enjoying a period of economic redevelopment and population growth after a long period of post-industrial economic decline. The area of Sandford we are concentrating on is a suburb on the edge of the town that is experiencing changes associated with the redevelopment process.

As an area of urban regeneration, old terraced housing is being cleared away for modern social housing developments. Most recently a modern block of flats has been built on behalf of a local housing association. The nearby university is also investing in new student accommodation in association with a private company who have built the student facilities. Other areas of the suburb are still 'work-in-progress'. Next to the new block of flats is an area of cleared land which is awaiting new house building, where children have started to gather to play football and socialise. On the border of the wasteland is an uninhabited terraced street, in a state of disrepair, awaiting demolition.

There is a community centre that is located in a 1970s-style shopping area that contains a small set of shops, including a GP practice, pharmacy and a mini-supermarket. There is a much larger supermarket a mile further down the road.



Figure 1 A local shopping area

2 Sanford Town

Continue reading through the scenario to understand the situation you are in. You may wish to make a few notes about some of the key features of the location.

Scenario: Sanford Town part 2

One of the first residents of the flats that replaced the terraced houses is a heroin user, which is not known by the landlord. As a vulnerable person, his dealer takes over the property to sell heroin and crack in return for a small supply to the tenant. His drug dealing attracts drug users who come to the flat at all hours to buy their drugs.

Heroin and crack users look for safe secluded locations near their supply and soon break into the derelict houses to take the drugs. They also need a constant source of cash, maybe around £200 a day for heavy users. The area around the dealer, roughly a space of one mile radius, gradually becomes subject to an increase in serious crime. This includes muggings, burglary, carjacking, serious assaults as well as an increase in offences such as shoplifting and theft from motor vehicles. Students become frequent victims of robbery passing through the area as they are seen as soft targets often carrying items such as laptops and mobile phones.



Figure 2 Serious crime is on the increase

Alongside crime, Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) becomes an increasing problem in the immediate area and complaints to the council and local police increase. The wasteland area becomes covered in litter including drugs paraphernalia discarded by users, some of which is hazardous to health, especially curious children. A high volume of unknown visitors to the block of flats has been noticed by other residents who report it to the landlord.

Inevitable interactions occur between users crossing the waste area and children there resulting in altercations and violence. Drug and alcohol abuse often come hand in hand resulting in an increase in drug/drink driving in and around the area.

Some users sleep rough in the derelict houses causing them to become a health hazard due to increased structural damage, human refuse and drug paraphernalia. Inquisitive children are put at great risk if they go exploring in the houses.



Figure 3 Derelict buildings

Considerations

Children may often be seen as the source of ASB in an area but in this scenario they are potentially the biggest victims. At the beginning of the scenario the cause of the problems is unseen and unknown but will become increasingly clear as things deteriorate.

Tackling this scenario would need a multi-agency approach between the police, council, housing executive/association, probation, drugs workers and any other stakeholders.

Possible remedies

- securing the derelict properties, thorough cleaning of wasteland
- crime prevention advice tailored to residents and students (target hardening)
- crime prevention advice to children educating them about drugs paraphernalia etc. and the hazards around derelict properties
- police enforcement around the drug dealer/users and support for the vulnerable tenant
- crack house closure (England and Wales) under ASBO legislation.

3 Collaborative problem solving

This section tests your knowledge of the course [Collaborative problem solving for community safety](#). You may wish to refresh your memory of the course content .



Figure 4 Community meeting

In Week 2 of *Collaborative problem solving for community safety* you were introduced to a number of key tools for exploring and analysing stakeholders. You were also introduced to the Brixton Splash case study and considered how these tools might be applied.

These tools included:

1. Mapping primary and secondary stakeholders.
 - Primary stakeholders: individuals and groups that have a direct, specific interest in how community policing is run, its mission, its effectiveness and other day-to-day issues.
 - Secondary stakeholders: those who may also have an interest in the community policing but perhaps not as directly or as specifically as primary stakeholders.
2. Evaluating and mapping stakeholder power and interest using the power/interest grid.

3.1 Applying this to Sandford Town scenario

Now place yourself in the scenario. Imagine that you are new to the district and need to quickly get up to speed on the local issues and perspectives. You have decided that you need to understand the key stakeholders and their needs.

How would you do it? Is there a structured or methodical approach you should take?

Activity 1 Primary and secondary stakeholders

Make a list of the primary and secondary stakeholders you can see in the scenario.

Provide your answer...

Understanding communities and community stakeholders is key. In many ways the stakeholders in scenarios such as this are obvious: there are the local residents and residents' associations, local politicians, government agencies providing social supports to the community, local third sector organisations providing support to the local community as well as many others. In undertaking an exercise such as this, however, you should also consider the less obvious stakeholders. These might be local shop owners who have to deal with various challenges caused by anti-social behaviour, rubbish and waste collection services who might have to collect refuse containing used syringes and other paraphernalia, or even the local media and newspapers.

The logical 'next step' after identifying key stakeholders is to analyse them in terms of their attitudes and perspectives. This can help to provide additional, meaningful insights and supports a clearer understanding of how you might engage with them.

Activity 2 Power and interest

Having identified both primary and secondary stakeholders, you should now attempt to map them based on their relative levels of power and interest.

The diagram below maps out the type of analysis you may have come up with. You should reflect on what this tells you about the current situation.

| | | Level of interest | |
|-------|------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Low | High |
| Power | Low | e.g., general public | e.g., service users, staff (often) |
| | High | e.g., policymakers | e.g., funders, members |

Figure 5 Power and interest of stakeholders matrix (Source: adapted from Johnson and Scholes, 1999)

3.2 Your own application of stakeholder analysis

This type of stakeholder mapping can be useful for thinking about how you might engage with the different stakeholders in your community role, whether that be in a service organisation like policing, emergency response, health or social care, or as an active member of community groups like the parish council or Neighbourhood Watch.

In general, most ordinary members of the community are low power/low interest, but by studying this course you are perhaps indicating that you have a higher interest. If you are an employee or volunteer in a community-based organisation/service, it is likely that you will be low power/high interest, but if you are in a locally elected role your power will tend to be higher.

If you are in a senior role in an organisation with a branch in the community, or are involved in national policy making which affects communities, you are likely to be high power/low interest. If you also live in a community affected by policy decisions you may face a conflict of interests.

3.3 Taking stakeholder analysis further

So far you have used one of the most common frameworks when assessing stakeholders. There are many more ways to both analyse stakeholders and also use the information it generates. One of the ways in which stakeholder analysis can be used is to understand how stakeholders are affected by change.

Activity 3 Organisational change

This interview with Dr Paul Walley highlights how he has previously assessed stakeholders when working on projects that involve organisational change.

Watch the interview and then reflect on how this approach might be used to think about the scenario.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video: Paul Walley



.....
From the interview there are two main points to consider:

- Your stakeholders may have very diverse needs and won't always agree on what needs to be done. Part of the task sometimes is to be able to reconcile different views or needs.
- The stakeholder analysis provides some good information about how people may respond to change and how they may need to be engaged.

4 Use of data

Over the weekend a number of the shops in the precinct suffered minor damage, such as broken windows. One newsagent reports that someone had tried to gain access via the front door, possibly targeting the cigarettes behind the counter, but the attempt failed. This has led to local business owners contacting local councillors to complain about the repeated problems. The general message has been that 'the situation seems to be getting worse and other areas don't have these problems'.

As a consequence, you have been invited to attend a forthcoming community meeting involving local councillors and business leaders who wish to discuss their views about increasing crime. You need to be armed with some of the latest data to objectively study what is going on.

The following interactive allows you to look at general crime patterns across your area.

Activity 4 Identifying crime data patterns

Part A

Follow steps 1–3 and input all the information requested. Then answer the questions.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Step 1: Select the date range September 2016 to January 2021.

Step 2: Select the crime 'Anti-social behaviour'

Step 3: Select your police region, e.g. Police Service of Northern Ireland

- i. What patterns and trends do you see in your graph? Think about the crime pattern over the past two and a half years (has it gone up or down), and seasonal patterns.

Provide your answer...

Comment

The data shows that reports of anti-social behaviour generally varied between 4,000 and 6,000 incidents per month across the force as a whole. Although the data appears to be cyclical there isn't a clear time-of-year seasonality as some of the peaks are in summer and others in spring or winter, so there aren't too many obvious conclusions about causes. The obvious spike occurs in late 2019-early 2020 and there is a clear underlying potential cause.

- ii. Now return to the interactive and add another force to the data set. (Pick any you think may offer some similar characteristics). Compare patterns of anti-social behaviour. Are they similar?

Provide your answer...

Comment

In the example above, it is remarkable that the data shows some apparent similarities, with the same spike in incidents from late 2019. In the case of South Wales the spike was just as high (and as a proportion, it was worse) but the peak did not last as long and incidents fell quickly. In such a case it would be worth asking if there were any differences in police or community reactions to the demand spike.

Assessing other offences

The same interactive can be used to assess patterns for other policing demand and activity. You may wish to look at a few other types of crime.

Are there any crimes where the general pattern is decreasing significantly?

The following table lists those with clear patterns, with the caveat that some of the recent changes may have been affected by COVID-19 lockdowns and changes in patterns of home occupancy created by working from home (Northern Ireland data).

| Increasing crime rates | Decreasing crime rates |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Drug offences | Burglary |
| Violence and sexual offences | 'Other' theft |
| | Robbery |
| | Shoplifting |
| | Theft from person |
| | Vehicle crime |

Other sources of data

There are also opportunities to look at local postcode crime patterns, should you wish to do so.

What message will you give to the community and business leaders based on this data?

Your message based on the above data shows general decreases in many crime patterns but some spikes in anti-social behaviour. If you chose to look at crime patterns based around postcodes you may find some variations. Where a general trend is down but a local trend is up then you need to look at possible explanations for the differences. In this scenario could it be that the local situation is worse because of an urgent need to improve the areas waiting for redevelopment? Is there evidence here that derelict sites are creating opportunities for more anti-social behaviour?

5 Sure, I know how to talk to people

After several months of hard work by all community stakeholders, the local residents' association has called a meeting to discuss progress on key initiatives. They are keen to get some updates from the police on developments in recent months, steps the police have taken to combat anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood and plans for the coming months.

The meeting is open to all interested members of the local community and it is expected that there will be a strong turnout. This will likely include representatives from a range of community organisations, each with their own perspective on the challenges faced and potential solutions.



Figure 6 Anti-social behaviour can take many forms

In your role as community liaison, you have been asked to lead the presentation for the police and to respond to any questions which might emerge.

You know the data and you're comfortable talking about statistics and specific measures taken by the police. However, you are conscious that you will need to tailor your presentation to meet the needs of the audience and to ensure that your key points are communicated effectively.

Activity 5 Adaptive and maladaptive behaviours

In [Sure, I know how to talk to people!](#), you learned about the Interpersonal Circle. Revisit your learnings from that course and note down some examples of adaptive and maladaptive behaviours you might expect to encounter at a community meeting.

Using the insights from the interpersonal circle, make some brief notes on how you might respond to those behaviours.

Provide your answer...

As discussed in *Sure, I know how to talk to people!* the interpersonal circle – also known as the interpersonal circumplex or interpersonal wheel – is a psychological tool that helps explain why we experience various reactions when engaging with people.

Interpersonal plotting tool

Interactive content is not available in this format.



While it is important to think about various adaptive and maladaptive behaviours and your responses to them, the real value of the interpersonal circle is felt when you are able to consider how you might response to real people in real situations. The following activity asks you to do just that.

Activity 6 Reflecting on the needs of the community

Drawing on the challenges outlined both in the main scenario and above, your task is to reflect on the communication needs of three members of the local community. Specifically:

- A public representative
- A concerned parent with young children who often play in the wasteland area
- An elderly resident who is nervous to walk to the shop to pick up necessary food items.

For each you should make some notes on:

- Their preferred mode of communication.
- How you might need to tailor a message to their particular needs.
- What barriers to communication might you expect to encounter.
- The steps you might take to overcome these.

Provide your answer...

In undertaking this activity you will inevitably find both consistent themes and vital differences between your approach to communicating with different people. These will likely be driven by your relationship to that person as well as by an understanding of their communication needs. Ultimately, successful communication relies on engaging with and understanding others, so taking the time to do so is key.

6 Empowering communities

There is a community centre that is located in a 1970s-style shopping area that contains a small set of shops, including a GP practice, pharmacy and a mini-supermarket. There is a much larger supermarket a mile further down the road.

For years now the local community centre has been a hub of the community. The centre regularly hosts all sorts of meetings and events, from parent and toddler groups to active retirees. It has also recently been used by members of new communities in the area to gather and host cultural events. These events are always well attended and underline the Community Centre's place as an open and welcoming environment at the heart of the community.

Of late, however, the community centre has been attracting the wrong kind of attention. Anti-social behaviour has been spilling over from the nearby shops, particularly late at night. On a number of occasions the alarm has been activated by people trying to break into the centre, though thankfully these attempts have not been successful. It has also become more and more common for used syringes to be found in the doorway to the centre when people arrive in the mornings.



Figure 7 Drug use

Leading members of the community are keen to take some appropriate action, but they are really at a loss as to what to do in order to make a positive, lasting impact on the situation. In simple terms, they are unsure what they can do and also unsure whether they have authority to do anything to help improve the situation.

They have now turned to you as a trusted member of the community for support and guidance.

Activity 7 Residents' association meeting

You have been asked to address the next meeting of the residents' association which is due to take place at the community centre. The chair of the residents' association has asked if you might draw upon your own experience working in the community to provide some insights into how the community can be empowered to more effectively deal with crime and anti-social behaviour.

In preparing this you should refer back to the [Empowering communities](#) course to inform your thinking. You should also spend some time reviewing and considering the comments made in the following clip by Jane Roberts, previously Leader of Camden Borough Council in London.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video: Jane Roberts



Reflect on the interview. How do the interview answers help guide your preparation.

Provide your answer...

Jane Roberts shares her insights into some of the challenges and opportunities of empowering communities. Jane particularly highlights the importance of communities being given the opportunity to take ownership of their local challenges, though with the support and engagement of relevant authorities. In her discussion of ASBOs, Jane also highlights the important role that local authorities can play in putting in place structured responses to issues that might emerge locally, in a way that individual residents or even groups of residents might not be able to do.

7 Justice, fairness and mediation

Despite several months of concerted effort by police and social workers, It is becoming increasingly apparent that the drug problem both in the flats and on the street is worsening. More and more people are coming into the area looking to buy drugs and seeking out places to inject. This is leading to greater levels of anti-social behaviour and increased risk for vulnerable people living locally, including both the young and the elderly.



Figure 8 The sight of people sleeping rough or under the influence of narcotics can be quite scary for vulnerable members of the community

During a recent fight, the doors at the entrance to the flat complex were kicked in and a brick was thrown through a window. As the fight was caught on CCTV, both the police and local community leaders know who was involved in the fight and was responsible for the damage caused. The primary culprits were local youths who have recently become involved with some low-level criminality, including street dealing.

The local residents have had enough and are demanding that action is taken. As a local police officer they are looking to you to take the lead and bring the full rigours of the law to bear, ensuring not only that justice is done, but also that it is seen to be done. But what kind of justice?

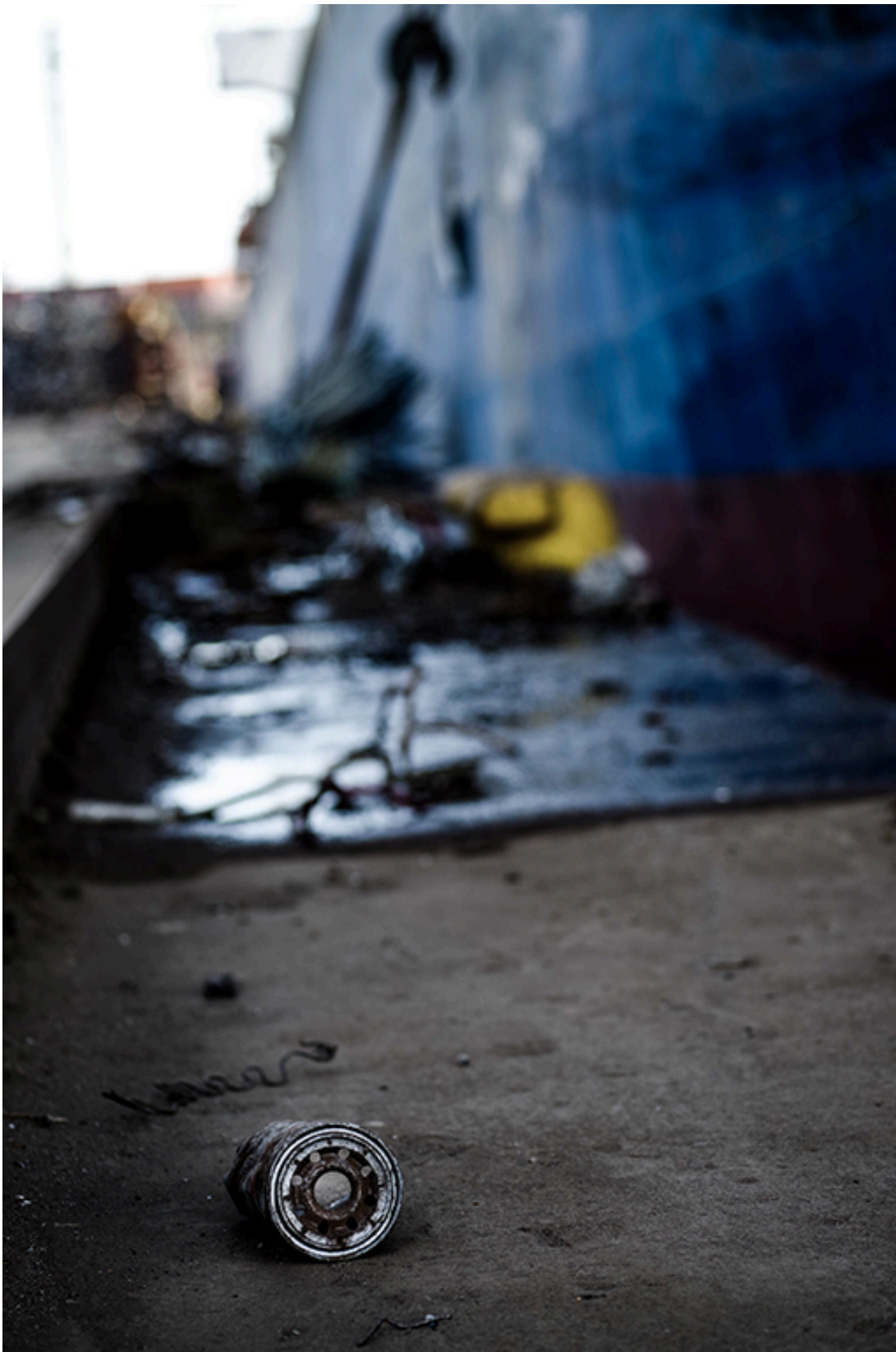


Figure 9 The local environment has become blighted by anti-social behaviour

While most people are familiar with the idea of legal sanctions applied through the courts, there are of course other ways to approach justice. In the course

[Justice, fairness and mediation](#) you were introduced to a range of forms of justice. These included:

- Restorative justice
- Alternative dispute resolution
- Mediation

Activity 8 Forms of justice: advantages and disadvantages

Reflect on the situation outlined, or similar situations you may have been involved with.

Based on both your experience and what you learned in the [Justice, fairness and mediation](#) course, list the advantages, disadvantages and potential impacts of each of the three forms of justice discussed.

You should try to consider each not just from your own perspective, but also from the perspective of the community members directly impacted by the anti-social behaviour described.

Provide your answer...

8 Engaging with children and young people

During a regular, scheduled meeting with the head of a local school you are asked your thoughts on some of the key vulnerabilities of young people and how they can be dealt with effectively. The school is relatively close to the flats and its pupils include children who live in the flats and so are exposed to drug dealing and anti-social behaviour on a daily basis. Their parents are not happy about this, but they feel that there is very little they can do about the situation without risking a confrontation with the dealers in the area.

The head was very interested in what you had to say about vulnerability and suggested that it would be great if you could attend a forthcoming meeting of the school's parents' association to share your thoughts. As is highlighted in the scenario, while children may often be seen as the source of anti-social behaviour, they are potentially the biggest victims.

In particular, the head is keen that you might outline some thoughts on:

- steps to better engage with children and young people, and
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) particularly, how these can be recognised and managed

After discussing this with your superintendent you have been authorised to go ahead and present on these two topics at the next parents' association meeting.

Activity 9 Adapting style and tone

1. You should first review the [Engaging with children and young people](#) course and test your knowledge by answering the following true/false questions:

When engaging with children and young people it is important to adapt your style and tone to meet their needs.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

ACES are a good predictor of adult criminality.

- ☐ False
- ☐ True

Police have a crucial role to play when it comes to helping children and young people find alternative pathways.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

Consultations have very little impact on children.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

2. You should develop a short presentation summarising key points on both engaging with children and young people more broadly and also ways that ACES

can be recognised and managed. You may wish to present this to your colleagues once complete to support their learning.

9 Step up to leadership

It is a fairly ordinary Monday afternoon. For a change you had Sunday off and spent a relaxing time with your family, thinking about anything but anti-social behaviour. As you walk your regular beat with a colleague a woman comes running out of a nearby house and starts yelling at you to come and help. You have met the woman before and know that she is normally quite calm and relaxed, so you know immediately that something serious must be happening.

As you approach her she explains in a loud and agitated voice that a group of teenagers from outside the area have been hanging around and drinking in the laneway behind her house. At first she ignored them hoping that they would just go away, but they have now started fighting and bottles have been thrown at people's houses, including hers.

While your colleague attempts to calm down the local resident, you take a moment to reflect on the situation and think about the best course of action. Your first response is to contact the station and ask your supervising officer for guidance on what to do and how best to handle the situation, however, the distress shown by the woman (not to mention the loud yelling coming from the back of the house) makes it clear to you that more immediate action is needed.

Activity 10 What makes a good leader in policing?

In [Step up to leadership](#), Constable Michael Allen of the PSNI discusses what both good and bad leaders in policing do, and how people can step up and become better leaders.

Drawing on the insights shared by Constable Allen, reflect on the situation described above along with the broader case study and make notes on the following questions:

- What could you do to 'step up to leadership' in this situation?
- How would you work with your colleagues to demonstrate leadership in this situation?
- How would you demonstrate effective leadership to the local community members in this situation?

Having reflected, spend a few moments summarising the implications for your leadership, most particularly in challenging situations.

Provide your answer...

Leadership in any context can take many forms, and this is just as true in policing as elsewhere. A key theme developed during the *Step up to leadership* course is the need for police at all levels to do exactly that – step up to leadership. Rather than being a trait or behaviour possessed by just a few, stepping up to leadership in a policing context can be understood as an attitude that anyone can develop.

Importantly, being a good leader in policing involves recognising the needs and concerns of a wide range of very diverse stakeholders and addressing those wherever possible. This does not mean simply trying to keep everyone happy, but it does imply that leadership in policing involves recognising stakeholders, understanding their challenges and needs, and involving them in decisions that impact them to the greatest extent possible.

10 Evidence-based policing

This section focuses on evidence-based policing, framed around a typical conversation between three concerned members of the community.

At a local café one morning you overhear the following conversation between three members of the local community:

CONCERNED CITIZEN 1

'We need to do something, we cannot just let things run on like this. I am just fed up of all the crime and anti-social behaviour. It is ruining what used to be a lovely place to raise a family!'

CONCERNED CITIZEN 2

'Well, in America they do things completely differently. They don't tolerate any of this rubbish. Why don't we follow their lead? We need to be much stricter and really show these louts the consequences of their actions.'

CONCERNED CITIZEN 1

'Yeah, but that's America... and what evidence do we have that the same techniques would work here?'

CONCERNED CITIZEN 2

'Have you ever heard of 'Scared Straight'? They take young offenders into prisons and show them what the future holds for them if they don't just smarten up and get their act together. That's what we need to do... some real discipline!'

CONCERNED CITIZEN 3

'Mmm, I'm not so sure... And what evidence do we have that it even works in America... it is all well and good to see something on a crime drama on TV, but we live in the real world and are dealing with real-world problems! We all want things to be sorted around here, but we need to do it properly! We definitely do not want to make things worse.'

New ideas about policing and approaches to dealing with challenging situations emerge all the time. While there is a real benefit to home-grown innovation, it is also important to learn from the experience of other police forces around the world. What have they done that has worked? What have they done that has not worked? And why? As Concerned Citizen 3 highlights above, what works in one place – in this case, America – might not work elsewhere due to a range of factors: social, historical, economic and legal amongst other things.

Moreover, how do we even know that they really work so effectively in other contexts? New crime reduction initiatives might appear effective at first and might grab the headlines, but the reality is that it can take years before we really know the full impact and whether new approaches are really so effective.

A prime example, highlighted by Concerned Citizen 2, is 'Scared Straight'. This was a high profile intervention which involved bringing young offenders and also those at risk of offending into prisons to meet people who had ended up in a life of crime. The idea is quite simple – seductively so... expose young people to the harsh realities to a life behind bars and they will, so the thinking goes, be 'scared straight'. The reality, however, is quite different: extensive research has shown not only that Scared Straight programmes do not work to nudge young people away from a life of crime and criminality, they actually make things worse (Wilson, 2011).

So, what might on the surface seem like a great, common-sense idea can actually have the opposite effect. But how can you tell? And where might you get evidence from?

Activity 11 Benefits and challenges

Drawing on the insights shared by Constable Allen, reflect on the situation described above and the broader case study, making notes on the following areas:

- The evidence-based benefits.
- The evidence-based challenges.
- Your conclusions on whether it would help the community deal with the anti-social behaviour issues outlined in the scenario.

To do this you should use an internet search engine of your choice to search for evidence both for and against the Scared Straight programme.

You should summarise your thoughts in a brief paragraph you can share with a colleague.

Provide your answer...

There are many sources online discussing various Scared Straight programmes. The key to looking for evidence online is finding and then drawing on evidence-based research.

The College of Policing has assembled a detailed overview of a wide range of crime prevention interventions. These can be viewed on the College's [Crime reduction toolkit](#).

As you scroll down the list you will see, for example, that there is evidence-based detail on programmes such as Scared Straight, as well as a whole range of other interventions.

Having undertaken your own research on Scared Straight it would be worthwhile to compare your findings with those outlined by the College of Policing.

11 Innovation

Following on from a recent community meeting at which the ongoing challenges of anti-social behaviour in the flats was discussed, the Superintendent has called her leadership team together to discuss ways of tackling the crisis. The community meeting was quite heated with local community members calling for more resources and a more structured response to what they see as a crisis of anti-social behaviour.

Together with community partners, the police have tried a number of different approaches to tackle the problems. Yet no matter what the police have done, the impact only seems to be short-lived and in some cases the actions taken have simply pushed the anti-social behaviour problems into other communities rather than resolving them altogether.

The Superintendent and her boss, the District Commander, are both clear: new ideas, new thinking, and new approaches are needed, but what will they be and how will they work? And how can things be done both quickly and cost effectively to meet the needs of the local community?

At the end of the meeting the Superintendent has asked you to be in charge of a new innovation team to lead innovation efforts. There will be a follow-up meeting with community leaders in two weeks time and she expects you not only to have assembled a strong team but also to have put in place a plan for developing and implementing innovation approaches to the local problems.

Activity 12 Innovation

As the person in charge of the innovation team, reflect on the following questions and develop thoughts on what you would do.

The [Innovation in policing](#) course outlines a number of approaches to innovation. Drawing on that course, which approaches do you think would be most appropriate for addressing the specific challenges encountered in this community, and why?

A key step of the design thinking process outlined in the *Innovation in policing* course is empathy – putting yourself in the shoes of others to understand their needs, concerns and challenges. How might you put yourself in the shoes of the local community in order to develop policing solutions that work for them, as well as meeting the needs of the police?

Provide your answer...

Video content is not available in this format.

Video: Laurie Knell



Course summary

In this course you have been able to apply your skills in tackling community issues and communicating with people. There has been some further extension to what you have covered including:

- further understanding of stakeholder management
- working with data to understand crime patterns
- conducting your own evidence-based research

You can now reflect on the learning across all of the ten courses. How well did you do in finding the right actions to take in this scenario? Is there any further work you can do to build skills?

For more free courses related to themes relevant to policing visit [Centre for Policing Research and Learning](#).

References

Wilson, T. (2011) *Redirect: The surprising new science of psychological change*, London: Penguin UK.

Acknowledgements

This free course was written by Paul Walley and Laurie Knell and was first published in June 2023.

Except for third party materials and otherwise stated (see [terms and conditions](#)), this content is made available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 Licence](#).

The material acknowledged below is Proprietary and used under licence (not subject to Creative Commons Licence). Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce material in this free course:

Images

Course image: courtesy, Jeremy Morton/South Leeds Life.

Figure 1: Brian Hickey/Alamy Stock Photo.

Figure 2: TheDigitalWay/Pixabay.

Figure 3: Akin Cakiner/Unsplash.

Figure 4: Felicia Buitenwerf/Unsplash.

Figure 6: Hajran Pambudi/Unsplash.

Figure 7: Grav/Unsplash.

Figure 8: 1000words/Dreamstime.com.

Figure 9: Hans Ripa/Unsplash.

Every effort has been made to contact copyright owners. If any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Don't miss out

If reading this text has inspired you to learn more, you may be interested in joining the millions of people who discover our free learning resources and qualifications by visiting The Open University – www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses.