



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE



Problem solving policing a Staffordshire approach

Introduction from the Chief Constable



Problem solving should be at the heart of modern policing. It's about focusing on the victim, on the offender (and what's driving the offending), and understanding the root-causes and how these can be resolved – so that when we address a problem, it stays fixed.

Before the national Uplift programme, Staffordshire Police, like many forces, faced the challenge of meeting rising demands

for its services with fewer officers, requiring us to focus on the immediate. Too many officers were spending their time reacting, without sufficient capacity in the system to enable us to get ahead of the problems we were being called to.

Since the Uplift, and despite still having fewer officers now than we had in 2010, we've rebuilt our preventative, problem solving capability, and through this we're now making a significant impact on some of the more intractable challenges facing our communities. While nothing we have done is unique to Staffordshire, what we have done is identified the best approaches from other forces and brought this together following a trial in our Newcastle-under-Lyme local policing team. The results have been outstanding, with this LPT outperforming all others in 9 out of ten incident categories, including criminal damage, robbery and both more and less serious violence.

We are now mirroring this approach across the whole of the county, recording significant achievements by tackling entrenched problems, reducing offending and – crucially – preventing repeat victimisation.

In this short document we set out what we have done and how we have done it, for the benefit of opinion formers and leaders in policing, so that others can learn from and build on our experience.

Chris Noble
Chief Constable

Establishing the building blocks

In 2022, under the new Chief Constable, a new local policing operating model was implemented creating ten locality-based policing teams. This model provided the foundations for closer, more localised policing than had been possible under the former structure. And with the addition of our Uplift officers, paved the way for the force to rebuild its problem-solving capability.

The urgency to develop our problem-solving capability was reinforced through our inspectorate, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), who identified problem-solving as an area for improvement in 2022.

But if the right structure and necessary capacity were the foundations, a problem-solving approach could not be effectively implemented without the governance to manage our approach. An effective problem-solving culture could only be established if we were able to record, monitor and review our activities, overseen by effective scrutiny and supervision, and share best practice.

Central to this was the creation of a Problem-Solving Dashboard, built in MS Power BI, a software package that enables interactive data visualisation – enabling us to 'see' more clearly where problems occurred. The dashboard was developed in our Newcastle-under-Lyme policing team, based on real-life experience, and enabled the local team – for the first time – to record and monitor problem-solving activity, and quantify the impact it was making.

Problem Solving Management		Selected Problem Profile			LPT, Neighbourhood, RIA		
		Problem Location - Problem Summary			All		
Occurrence Number	Problem Title and Summary	Full Location Address	Date Reported	Age of Problem (Days)	Name	Date of Birth	Involvement
21220109784	multiple reports from local residents stating there is drug dealing and ASB from the location. Address has been subject to a partial closure order.		15/09/2022	602			
21230128616	Numerous calls from residents regarding 15 Large number of visits to the address daily and anti-social behaviour from towards the elderly residents.		14/09/2023	238			
21230128666	is currently misusing monkey dust and appears to have drug induced mental health issues. is phoning police reporting suspicious incidents which appear to be paranoia.		14/09/2023	238			
21230149029	NPT VOL Problem Solving		24/10/2023	198			
21240013350	Travellers are located on private land near to		29/01/2024	101			



Through the Dashboard the Newcastle team were able to identify and map repeat victims, offenders and locations, and armed with this intelligence, focus on the most significant problems facing the local community.

Working closely with statutory partners, the team developed a single unified 'SARA' (situation, analysis, response and assessment) reporting tool, which captures the activity undertaken and the assessment of effectiveness. Activities are then reviewed through a two-weekly local prevention problem solving meeting, a collaborative forum involving partner agencies, to assess what is working and what isn't. This collective scrutiny and supervision has been integral in achieving buy-in from local partners, and initial results have proved exceptional, with 1,638 fewer incidents and more than 700 fewer crimes in the 15 months since the Newcastle approach was implemented.

From Newcastle our problem-solving approach has been rolled out across all ten local policing teams, with an NVQ level 3 qualified problem-solving 'lead' officer in place in each of the ten teams. This investment in the advanced skills necessary has underpinned our ability to lead and coordinate problem solving activity in each policing team; and from June, professional training will be in place for all new officers, through a mandatory problem-solving module as part of their training.

In addition to training and skills development, the force has also created a local 'What Works' knowledge bank, capturing learning from problem-solving activities, and we are now contributing to the College of Policing national practice bank. This commitment to learning and sharing what makes effective problem-solving is supported by a monthly newsletter and informal networks in each local team, enabling the force to build a problem-solving culture throughout our local teams.

Across the force, Staffordshire Police has closed 200 'problems' that had – at their peak – generated 1,988 calls to the police every month, and which over the last calendar month generated just 232 calls – an 88 per cent reduction not just in calls, but, critically, potential victims.

Problem-solving now drives and supports tactical decision-making, and is central to the force's key tasking and oversight meetings.

And for the future, work is now underway to improve our current performance framework, to create a more sophisticated dashboard and data pool which will include monetary and time savings, along with the capacity created, through our problem-solving work.

If you're interested in finding out more about our problem-solving model, please contact the executive team via email ExecOffice@staffordshire.police.uk.

Case study: Vehicle ASB at a supermarket car park

Between July – November 2022 vehicle-related anti-social behaviour at this location accounted for nearly 10 per cent of total ASB calls in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The car park is easily accessible and its 'valley-like' position within an elevated housing estate meant the noise caused by drivers doing 'stunts', playing loud music and sounding their horns was amplified across the estate in the evenings. Reckless driving posed a risk to others.

Our Newcastle team worked with our Roads Policing Unit using powers under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to seize vehicles being used to cause alarm, harassment or distress. High visibility patrols with RPU and the Central Motorway Policing Group (CMPG) at peak times were used, with spot-checks on offending vehicles for defects. We used dispersal powers under Section 35 ASB Crime & Policing Act 2014 and using the civil powers available in the ASB toolkit. We used plain clothes patrols to observe and document offences, and we implemented a zero-tolerance approach to offences at the location to put intolerable pressure on those wanting to use the car park for ASB.

Alongside this, a "Design Out Crime" report was produced by the force's Early Intervention and Prevention Unit, containing findings and recommendations that were presented at a meeting with local residents, the supermarket, the local authority and local MP, and led to new gates which were locked after supermarket hours. Officer engagement with the local community ensured continuous updates on progress with environmental redesign work.

Between July to November 2023 vehicle related ASB incidents at the location accounted for just 0.16 per cent of total ASB calls to our Newcastle local policing team, a reduction of more than 98 per cent compared to 2022.

Case study: Reduction of youth ASB and crime in local park and community

An incident of large-scale disorder involving a group of youths in Hednesford Park had resulted in numerous 999 calls during a 24-hour period. A local headteacher contacted police asking for help as the group were causing fear to other students and local residents. The group had given itself a gang name and was well known on social media platforms, although its members did not feature in any force organised crime intelligence.

Working with the head, our problem-solving team identified that none of the primary individuals were linked to organised crime or criminal exploitation; they were simply a group of youths from deprived backgrounds at risk of dropping out of education and falling into criminality.

Working with neighbouring schools we re-established a multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meeting with relevant agencies. Teachers joined officers on patrol; PCSOs returned to schools, a process which had lapsed during the pandemic; and the Youth Offending Services worked closely with individuals, with backing of the criminal justice process. The Violence Reduction Team identified a cohort of young people to engage, divert and influence disruption.

The outcome has been extremely positive. Of 12 students presented to MACE, two who received youth crime prevention interventions no longer require further support after six months of intensive work. All were at risk of permanent exclusion, however nine now attend school with 95 per cent attendance, and while three remain at risk, they continue to work intensively with the youth offending team and other agencies. The school's poor behaviour logs have reduced by 84 per cent and community engagement shows a significant reduction in concerns.



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