



College of
Policing

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Neighbourhood policing guidelines

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Foreword – modernising neighbourhood policing

The Policing Vision 2025 describes how the link between the police and the public will continue to form the bedrock of British policing. The defining features of neighbourhood policing can be traced back to the Peelian principles. The clear emphasis on prevention, the recognition that the police are part of the community and that their power depends on public approval, are as important today as they were at the inception of the police service. There have been different approaches to neighbourhood policing and, on occasion, different names, however, a connection to the original foundations has remained throughout.

Previous guidelines were based upon the National Reassurance and National Neighbourhood Policing programmes and supported by substantial investment in dedicated neighbourhood resources. The focus was on establishing public priorities to reduce crime and the fear of crime and improve public confidence in the police, recognising the importance of this for maintaining police legitimacy.

The context now is different. Demand on policing services continues to escalate at a time of decreasing resources, particularly those dedicated to local roles, strengthening the need to find sustainable system-wide solutions across public services. Increased reporting of crime committed in private spaces, often against the most vulnerable in our communities, coupled with new and emerging threats means that the day-to-day activities of neighbourhood policing teams have changed dramatically. At the same time, they are using new technologies to engage communities and solve crime, and they are working to strengthen partnerships in new areas, for example, around mental health and social care.

When implemented effectively, the benefits of neighbourhood policing, whether directed at geographic communities or communities that share an interest, can include:

- a flow of vital community intelligence on a range of issues, from neighbourhood to national security
- promoting community safety and feelings of safety
- prevention of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour
- protecting the vulnerable and reducing repeat demands
- the opportunity to create resilient communities less reliant on police support
- the legitimacy necessary to enable policing by consent.

At its best, and when properly integrated with other services, neighbourhood policing becomes an important part of neighbourhood management, which then has broader benefits for all.

In its 2016 Police Effectiveness Report, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue (HMICFRS) raised concerns that local policing had been eroded and that many forces had failed to 'redefine' neighbourhood policing in the context of reduced budgets and changing demand. These guidelines have been developed to directly address that concern. While they do not cover force structures and neighbourhood policing resources, as these are matters for chief constables and police and crime commissioners, they do provide an evidence base to assist forces in designing and

implementing a modern neighbourhood policing function to get the best from local investment.

In developing these guidelines, College staff sifted over 1,600 studies for relevance and quality, supplemented with a call for practice evidence which received over 200 responses from forces and local partnerships. Their development was overseen by a guideline committee of frontline practitioners, subject matter experts and academics, who shared their experiences and views to augment the research material. This is, however, just the starting point. While the guidelines are based on the best available current evidence, we have also developed a comprehensive set of in-practice examples to enable forces to identify how the guideline principles are being used to practical effect. In addition, where there is an absence of evidence for newly emerging neighbourhood policing practice, we will work with forces to fill that gap.

Neighbourhood policing remains an essential element of modern policing. These guidelines focus on enabling the whole of the policing system to operate and ensure forces have the best available evidence on which to implement it effectively.

DCC Gavin Stephens

College guideline committee chair and NPCC lead for neighbourhood policing

Defining neighbourhood policing

The defining features of neighbourhood policing are:

- Police officers, staff and volunteers accessible to, responsible for and accountable to communities
- Community engagement that builds trust and develops a sophisticated understanding of community needs
- Collaborative problem-solving with communities supported by integrated working with private, public and voluntary sectors

The combination of these features distinguishes neighbourhood policing from other broader policing functions. It is an essential part of the UK policing approach that aims to connect our communities directly and seamlessly to specialist policing services at local, regional and national level. It recognises that those involved in neighbourhood policing need time and space to work in a proactive and preventative way to:

- Protect local neighbourhoods or communities
- Safeguard the vulnerable
- Manage and divert offenders
- Earn community confidence

It encourages the use of locally tailored evidence-based practice to have a sustained impact on reducing harm, repeat demand and increasing community resilience. Alongside community engagement, it requires effective data sharing between different agencies for problems to be identified and properly understood, and for effective

decision making and action at the neighbourhood level. Defining problems with precision helps to better target action, assess the effect of interventions and ensure limited resources are not wasted on ineffective activities.

Supporting neighbourhood policing

Levels of investment and organisational structures are matters for police and crime commissioners and chief constables.

However, a modern neighbourhood policing approach is directly in support of the Policing Vision 2025. In order for it to be effective, its implementation must be supported by active political and operational leadership at senior levels. For example, there is a need to ensure sufficient capacity, capability and continuity of resource – in line with available funding, agreed priorities and needs – to enable productive and trusting relationships with communities and partners to be maintained.

Summary of the guidelines

A College guideline committee – consisting of frontline practitioners and subject matter experts, supported by College of Policing specialists – has developed seven guidelines on implementing effective neighbourhood policing.

The guidelines cover the following areas:



The guidelines are informed by the best available evidence, be that practitioner knowledge and experience and/or social research.

Evidence base ratings:



Overall strength of the empirical evidence



Availability of practitioner evidence

Delivering neighbourhood policing

1. Engaging communities

Chief officers should work with police and crime commissioners to deliver and support neighbourhood policing and must ensure it is built on effective engagement and consultation with communities.

Essential elements include:

- Officers, staff and volunteers being responsible for and having a targeted visible presence in neighbourhoods
- A clearly defined and transparent purpose for engagement activities
- Regular formal and informal contact with communities
- Working with partners (eg, by identifying communities and sharing arrangements for engagement)
- Making available information about local crime and policing issues to communities
- Engagement that is tailored to the needs and preferences of different communities
- Using engagement to identify local priorities and inform problem-solving
- Officers, staff and volunteers providing feedback and being accountable to communities
- Officers, staff and volunteers supporting communities, where appropriate, to be more active in the policing of their local areas.

Community engagement in neighbourhoods should:

- Provide an ongoing two-way dialogue between the police and the public
- Enable the police to develop a better understanding of communities and their needs, risks and threats.

This guideline is underpinned by **section 34 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011** which provides a legal requirement for chief officers to make arrangements to consult with the public in each neighbourhood, provide local information about crime and policing and hold regular public meetings.

2. Solving problems

Chief officers should ensure officers, staff and volunteers use structured problem solving to deal with local priorities, working collaboratively with communities and, where appropriate, private, public and voluntary sector partners¹.

Essential elements include:

- A focus on proactive prevention
- Systematic use of a structured problem solving process, such as SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment)
- Detailed problem specifications based on multiple sources of information
- Involving communities in each stage of the problem solving process
- Using evidence-based and innovative responses that target the underlying causes of problems and are tailored to local context
- Routinely assessing the impact of responses and sharing good practice
- Integration with other parts of the organisation to support its delivery
- Working with partners (eg, by sharing data and analytical resource and delivering responses).

Problem-solving in neighbourhoods should:

- Enable police and partners to address long-term issues affecting communities and provide reassurance
- Reduce demand on the police service and partners.

¹ Hereafter 'partners'

3. Targeting activity

Chief officers should ensure policing activities within neighbourhoods are targeted according to the needs of different communities, taking account of threat, risk, harm and vulnerability.

Essential elements include:

- Scanning and analysis that takes account of all relevant information (including public perceptions) in order to target people and places effectively
- Identifying what different communities need from neighbourhood policing (including reassurance and harm reduction)
- Identifying and prioritising those people, groups and places with the greatest needs
- Being clear about how police and partner responses are coordinated and target places, victims and offenders.

Targeting activity should:

- Provide greater focus to community engagement, problem-solving, prevention and early intervention
- Inform resource deployment decisions
- Lead to a more coordinated response with partners and reduce demand.

Supporting neighbourhood policing

4. Promoting the right culture

Chief officers should promote an organisational culture that encourages the public to participate in neighbourhood policing. They should take steps to ensure that all police contact with colleagues, partners and the public seeks to build trust and is consistent with procedural justice².

Essential elements include:

- Treating people fairly and with dignity and respect
- Giving people a chance to express their views, listening and taking them into account
- Making impartial decisions and explaining how they were reached
- Being open and honest.

Promoting procedural justice should:

- Lead to officers, staff and volunteers treating the public fairly and with respect
- Improve public confidence in the police
- Increase local capacity by increasing the willingness of communities to help the police, be involved and take greater ownership of problems.

² Requiring fair decision making and respectful treatment



Empirical evidence: good | moderate | limited



Practitioner evidence: available

5. Building analytical capability

Chief officers should ensure there is sufficient analytical capacity and capability necessary for problem solving.

Essential elements include:

- Officers, staff and volunteers thinking analytically when dealing with problems
- Officers, staff and volunteers accessing appropriate data and tools to carry out their own analysis
- Facilitating access to skilled analysts
- Sharing of data, analysis and analytical resources between police and partners
- Sharing of good practice within forces, across the service and with partners.

Effectively building analytical capacity and capability should:

- Ensure problem-solving activities are based on a good understanding of problems
- Enable the impact and outcomes of responses to be assessed
- Lead to greater efficiencies through sharing resources.



Empirical evidence: good | moderate | limited



Practitioner evidence: available

6. Developing officers, staff and volunteers

Chief officers should work with the College of Policing to support and equip officers, staff and volunteers to work in neighbourhood policing and ensure they receive learning and continuing professional development on the areas identified in these guidelines.

Essential learning includes:

- Community engagement
- Partnership working
- Prevention
- Problem solving
- Procedural justice

Effective learning and development should:

- Improve the knowledge and skills of officers, staff and volunteers in neighbourhood policing
- Lead to stronger collaborations with communities and partners.



Empirical evidence: good | **moderate** | limited



Practitioner evidence: available

Evidence gaps

7. Developing and sharing learning

Chief officers should work with the College of Policing, the wider police service, partners and academia to identify and share learning about neighbourhood policing and current threats.

Evidence gaps include:

- How to identify and respond to those people and places that are vulnerable or high risk
- The role of neighbourhood policing in reducing serious harm (eg, violent extremism, organised crime and exploitation)
- The police role in effective early interventions
- How social media can be used to improve visibility and community engagement
- How neighbourhood policing can make communities stronger and more cohesive
- The effectiveness of different approaches to neighbourhood policing.

Developing and sharing this evidence should:

- Support forces to take a more evidence-based approach
- Help the police to work better with partners
- Lead to better integration between specialist units and neighbourhood policing
- Lead to a better understanding of costs and benefits of different approaches and inform decisions about where to invest resources.



Empirical evidence: good | moderate | **limited**



Practitioner evidence: available

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We're the professional body for everyone who works for the police service in England and Wales. Our purpose is to provide those working in policing with the skills and knowledge necessary to prevent crime, protect the public and secure public trust.

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