

Using the community trigger to address anti-social behaviour

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Dyfed-Powys Police uses the community trigger to guide their actions and tactical options

Case study 5 mins read

The anti-social behaviour (ASB) community trigger – also known as the anti-social behaviour case review – is a national process that notifies agencies to work together when there are three reported incidents of ASB within six months.

The approach is flexible and allows for different situations. For example, single reports from victims detailing a lengthy history of ongoing issues can be considered for the trigger.

The ASB powers and tools consist of mainly civil measures which allow for a wider amount of evidence to be admissible. The burden of proof is lower and action can be taken on the balance of probabilities.

The ASB community trigger at Dyfed-Powys

Video Transcript

With the civil enforcement tools, it's on the balance of probability. It doesn't need to meet a criminal threshold so it's invaluable to us, because a lot of ASB doesn't involve crime, but it's that persistent drip, drip, drip effect. It's the impact it has on somebody and before you could use these sort of tools, it was people had to sort of learn to live with it, but they don't now.

A lot of problems start before police are ever involved and by the time it gets to police involvement, you're sort of looking at a bigger problem.

We prefer early intervention and prevention than enforcement. Early intervention may be looking at support networks, for example, a young person trying to divert their behaviour into diversionary schemes.

We look at the support mechanisms around vulnerability and that is whether they're the offender or the victim. So we take a harm-centred approach to everyone that's involved in that case and ensure that they are adequately receiving the support they should be.

MAVIS is our case management system for anti-social behaviour and low-level vulnerability, so the OSARA model is built into that system. So every time an officer uses that system, they're going through each stage of the process. They have an objective of what they want to achieve, how and when, and then it takes them through the scanning process, where they start to look at what data they have. They may call in the partner agencies to provide data as well. Then the analysis stage is looking at the data, seeing whether there are any patterns, any peak times – for example, days of the week. And then they start to look at their responses, so what are they going to do to solve that problem? Once the responses are actioned, they will then come back to the assessment to look at what has worked? What has worked well? What would we do differently? What have we learned from the process and what can we share as best practice?

A lot of the time you're not going to fix it, but there's a lot we can do with OSARA to be able to say, 'Right there's gaps here, there's gaps here, there's gaps here we need to fill. This is causing this. This is causing this.' And it gives us that way of thinking logically and really looking at a problem-solving approach to be able to say who else can be involved. We look at everything holistically with the OSARA model, rather than 'We need that to stop now'. The likelihood is then we're going to get repeat offenders and repeat victims. So we use that to say, how can we do this now and give that resolution that has got legs, rather than, 'There's a sticking plaster and it's solved it for today'.

A lot of it's the emphasis on, 'We're giving you the opportunity to change and to stop this behaviour'. And we always give them that, with words of advice or a letter of expectation. We would outline the behaviour that is not acceptable and it gives them an outline of behaviours that are acceptable, by things they can do to avoid it. And that's giving them the opportunity to say, 'Take this, we urge you to take this opportunity to stop and think of how your behaviour is impacting on your neighbour or the community'. That's been crucial to the way we've worked as a force and a team, because it's giving people the opportunity not to be criminalised.

Until you can understand the problem and maybe some of the reasons why it's happening, you can't prevent it. Look at the bigger picture, so don't just concentrate on the offender and the

enforcement side of the offender. Look at everybody and what they all need as individuals, and look at the location. So does it need to have improved lighting? Does there need to be improved security? So rather than just from a police perspective, think enforcement, we've got tools and powers. Look at everything before you get to that stage, so that you try and prevent rather than enforce.

I think it's really important that our neighbourhood police teams have got the capacity to achieve what we want them to work towards, which is long-term problem solving. By giving them the skills, you've given them the capability. But what we need to ensure is they've got the time and space to pursue those pure neighbourhood activities, to allow them to achieve problem solving and the other activities. Is it achievable all the time? I think we're realistic that, you know, when there's a major incident and we need our neighbourhood police teams to help with cordons or with house-to-house inquiries, then yes, that's all hands on deck. But generally, we will try and give them time and space to achieve those neighbourhood objectives.

The neighbourhood policing team (NPT) considers each person's needs and identifies triggers behind the behaviour by reviewing vulnerabilities and signposting at the earliest opportunity. This can only be successful through a joined up approach, not only with partner agencies, but also with colleagues and departments within the police.

Response officers are key to supporting this approach to ASB. Response teams need to be aware of the use of civil powers for problem solving. They are often key witnesses who can report behaviours.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) are trained to deliver mediation if both parties consent. Mediation is always preferred to enforcement as it allows for effective resolution without criminalisation.

The force's legal team are consulted early in the process and regularly review material as it is being prepared.

The ASB community trigger process

Evidence files are collated and legally validated to make sure they reach the required standard. A structured process is adopted and this process is described in a persistent/vexatious caller document.

All interventions use the same process and are documented within MAVIS – a case management system for anti-social behaviour and low-level vulnerability.

Interventions are documented using the problem solving methodology OSARA – observation, scanning, analysis, response and assessment. This information is then used to build the lead officer statement if civil action is required.

The neighbourhood policing approach

Dyfed-Powys Police has a structured approach to tackling ASB. The first consideration is liaising with partner agencies and addressing any immediate vulnerabilities. If the behaviour continues there are opportunities to provide ASB warning letters or a letter of expectation.

If the behaviour persists after letters have been issued, officers use a multi-agency approach, jointly issuing a community protection warning (CPW) followed by a [community protection notice \(CPN\)](#) should there be any breaches. The next stage would be the application and service of a community protection order (CPO). Throughout this process, support and signposting is offered.

Supporting neighbourhood policing teams for successful implementation

Where possible, Dyfed-Powys Police ensures resourcing for officers and staff working in neighbourhood policing is ring fenced. This means that neighbourhood teams are not routinely deployed to other areas of operational policing. This approach supports officers and staff working in neighbourhood teams and allows them to focus on problem solving and early prevention.

Case study: using the ASB community trigger to protect a victim from cuckooing

A vulnerable victim with learning difficulties was living in a housing association property on an estate in the force area. Her partner was drug dependent and would periodically live at the property.

Her home was being visited and used by a number of individuals who were exploiting her by keeping her awake through the night, using illegal drugs and causing noise nuisance and intimidation to other residents. The victim was intimidated by these individuals and was afraid of any repercussions if she reported the incidents to the police or housing association.

The situation came to police attention through regular patrols of the area and engagement with local residents. Through partnership working and links with the housing association, a clear picture of the situation was building and sensitive intervention was required.

The concerns were raised and discussed in a problem-solving group meeting, which gave other agencies the opportunity to provide their knowledge of the individuals and offer further support to any proposed tactics.

The victim was visited by the neighbourhood policing team and housing officers. Drug and alcohol charities and mental health services became involved, offering support to both the victim and her partner. The offending individuals were identified and issued with first-stage ASB warning letters.

There was a period of calm with a reduction in calls, but this was short lived and the offending individuals returned to the area.

Community protection warnings (CPWs) were then issued. However, it was clear at this stage that more stringent safeguarding measures needed to be put into place that had tangible actions to deal with the individuals.

The decision was made to apply for a [closure order](#) on the property. This would protect the victim and her partner and allow the support agencies the time to engage and make positive progress with the victim to prevent the behaviour continuing.

The CPW's remained in place and could be replaced with community protection notices should there have been any breaches by the offending individuals.

By approaching this problem in a structured way with multi-agency involvement from the beginning, Dyfed-Powys were able to evidence the need for a closure order.

The lead officer statement was completed using the MAVIS (vulnerable adult) record. This had been updated chronologically with all the partner agency involvement, support offered and joint visits made and the warnings provided to the problematic individuals.

Call demand to this property went down for both the police and the housing association.

Those offending individuals still had CPW's so any dispersal of their behaviour could be dealt with immediately with community protection notices, leading towards a criminal behaviour order or civil injunction.

By using the ASB tools in this way, Dyfed-Powys were able to continue to work with the offending individuals if their behaviour moved to another location.

- [Find out more about the community trigger](#)

Get involved

This week is neighbourhood policing week of action and there is lot's to take part in. [Find out about our webinars and events.](#)

Tags

Neighbourhood policing Community engagement