

Force district hubs for problem solving and prevention

Developing of 12 district prevention hubs with a centralised co-ordination function enabling a structured approach to implementation and delivery of problem-solving and prevention activities.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Community engagement Neighbourhood crime
Organisation	Greater Manchester Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Greater Manchester Police
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Region	North West

Key details

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police Business and commerce Community safety partnership Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Education Government department Health services Local authority Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2022
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

The aims of the intervention mirror the aims of the National Police Chiefs' Council Prevention (NPCC) Strategy, which are to have fewer victims, fewer offences, and less demand on policing by addressing the underlying causes through problem solving.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of prevention hubs are to:

- improve the quality and governance of problem solving across the force
- improve overall quality of the scanning, analysis, response, assessment (SARA model) and problem-oriented policing (POP) approach
- improve the process of identifying and sharing good practice using the force-wide repository
- reduce demand on a victim, location, and offender basis
- reduce the number of reports of individuals missing from home (MFH)

Description

Through the force structured approach to problem solving, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has improved its approach to prevention and addressing repeat demand. Prior to implementation, a systemic review found less than 10% of open problem-solving records across the force were being used to problem solve using a SARA based approach. The overall quality of SARA and POP approaches showed that less than 1% of records met academic, College of Policing, or good practice expectations for SARA.

The force created district (basic command unit) prevention hubs to address this. These are formalised teams with dedicated resources and processes to address the outcomes highlighted above. The resources included an inspector and sergeant, with subsequent resource investment dependent on scanning. This included case workers (problem solving police officers), licensing officers, hospital officers, school engagement officers, and MFH prevention officers across the 12 district prevention hubs.

GMP has also developed its own force prevention hub within the prevention branch, utilising performance and intelligence analysts, a performance manager and problem-solving inspector as a subject matter expert (SME) around problem solving. These combine with a team of dedicated crime reduction co-ordinators who operationally deliver activity, develop training, and provide a qualitative audit function.

Prevention Branch

- A key aspect of the prevention branch has been the inclusion of a senior leadership team to engage and drive strategic pieces of work across the force and embed the desired approaches with counterparts within local policing.
- There is a strong focus on governance from the force prevention hub, this includes a monthly audit for all newly opened force record management system problem solving plans. This reviews the quality and direction of SARA and assists in directing continual professional development (CPD), training, and overall response to a problem.
- The district prevention hubs monitor the performance of problem solving through the application of interim assessments, which follows a standardised template and training for prevention hub inspectors and sergeants. Interim assessments seek to ensure the intervention is working, identifying how it can be amended, improved, or changed as required.
- At a strategic level, the force prevention hubs undertake thematic audits and qualitative assessments into problem solving for force level meeting structures. As an example, a full review of all MFH and anti-social behaviour (ASB) problem solving activity was undertaken and fed into force governance and performance structures chaired by the deputy chief constable (DCC) and assistant chief constable (ACC). At these meetings, repeated demand is highlighted to identify emerging demand issues. This follows a 3T methodology from evidence-based practice which looks at targeting, testing, and tracking.
- The force prevention branch influences how the force prevents crime and reoffending. The prevention branch prepares force-level data for demand categories, profiles of demand at district level and the details of repeat callers. This has now evolved into a POP dashboard, which relevant stakeholders can utilise to access data drawn from GMP's record management system. The display is user-friendly to help target, develop, and implement problem-solving.
- Police officers and police staff work with local partnership organisations to prevent and deter crime, ASB, and vulnerability. The force structured approach to problem solving requires links with relevant partners at the scanning phase and co-producing a tailored response to the problem where possible. It is encouraged to allow partners to take the lead where they are best placed to resolve the problem.
- The district prevention hubs subject their problem-solving plans to a final assessment by checking for a reduction in demand and completing a comprehensive problem-solving assessment. This focuses on demand reduction for police, demand reduction for partners, displacement, sustainability, cost benefit analysis and feedback from stakeholders. They also apply a cost-benefit analysis to each plan.

- The finalised problem-solving plan is evaluated and scored. Those with strong evidence of practice are considered for the internal 'what works' section of the intranet page which is available for all to access. The district prevention hubs through the scoring system can track and monitor their performance as a prevention hub, including the performance of their operational teams, such as neighbourhood policing, safeguarding, and CID teams around problem solving.
- GMP has introduced activities to share good practice between district prevention hubs. The force uses a peer review evaluation process as part of an annual cycle of organisational learning and testing. Problem records are peer reviewed alongside structures, processes, and governance with a report being produced for senior leadership to assist with the continued development and embedding of problem solving and prevention methodology.

Overall impact

GMP has reduced demand around missing persons by 5,854 missing from home events and has reduced reported events from care homes by 19.6%. This has been a sustained reduction over the course of one year.

The development of 12 district prevention hubs with a centralised co-ordination function through a Force Prevention Branch has enabled a structured approach to implementation and delivery of problem solving and prevention.

The district prevention hubs:

- provide regular updated repeat demand data through a user friendly and easily accessible format, to enable problem solving to be focused on the highest repeat demand generators
- increase the quality and consistency of SARA based approaches
- embed prevention and problem solving within daily working practices across the organisation
- routinely assess problem solving, which is supported and facilitated through a force governance structure that measures reduction in demand, cost benefit analysis and evaluates effectiveness
- have access to additional support, analytical resource, and tactical advice through the force prevention branch
- facilitate identification of suitable prevention and problem-solving examples for the problem-solving awards, Tilley awards and Goldstein awards

Learning

- An ethos of prevention requires embedding in force strategy, performance, and governance, with a mandate from the chief constable to create an environment that will deliver the capability, opportunity, and motivation to enable behaviour change.
- A key enabler was an initial investment of dedicated analysts within the force prevention branch to enable a data led approach to focus problem solving on repeat demand both at force and local level.
- There have been challenges in relation to finding and sustaining the resourcing levels when balanced against operational priorities. A significant amount of work has been (and continues to be undertaken retrospectively) to align strategic intent and operational delivery with resource capacity and capability.
- Tenure within key roles has been a challenge; problem solving, and prevention work undertaken at a more advanced level requires investment from both the individual and organisation in terms of training, coaching, mentoring and external CPD sessions. Often due to the skills gained, these officers are desirable appointments to other roles within the organisation. Whilst this has significant benefits in terms of spreading problem solving and prevention as a methodology into wider business areas, it does make sustaining effective delivery a challenge at times.
- A challenge seen across neighbourhood policing and prevention is there is no formal accreditation or qualification process like that of detective or specialist operation policing. As such, this can decrease satisfaction and increase abstraction rates into other areas of policing.
- There are aspects of positive learning that could be taken forward by other forces looking to implement a similar work stream. Starting small and undertaking development in cycles is recommended to get things off the ground. Initially, GMP focused on basic problem-solving skills then started to introduce elements of the wider NPCC Prevention Strategy including primary, secondary, and tertiary. Despite the positives of starting small and growing the approach throughout GMP, there is a lesson to be learned in terms of defining what resources are in scope for inclusion prior to inception including how structures and governance will be supported at a force level.
- Building strong partnership relations, especially with academics and experts in their respective fields, is key to enhancing delivery. Developing this area across GMP has significantly expanded the professional network and, therefore, access to best practice nationally and worldwide. This assists in keeping training current and CPD relevant to evolving trends and research.

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Tags

Operational policing