

Anti-social behaviour off-road bike team

Introduction of an off-road bike team to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) including damage to sports grounds, parks and farmland.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Rural and wildlife crime Anti-social behaviour Neighbourhood crime
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Region	North East
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2017
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	General public Offenders
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Aim

The anti-social behaviour (ASB) off-road bike team aims to:

- build community relations and confidence
- create safer spaces in the community
- implement a team to reduce off-road biking ASB and bike enabled criminality
- increase public awareness of the off-road bike team

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the initiative are to:

- reduce ASB relating to off-road biking
- provide an increased targeted approach towards off-road biking related ASB
- improve multi-partnership approach towards off-road biking related ASB
- improve intelligence around those who are committing ASB and wider criminality using off-road bikes

Description

Off-road biking related crime was steadily increasing in South Yorkshire. Reports received from members of the public revealed three key issues associated with off-road bike related ASB:

1. Damage to the local landscape
2. Risk to other road users such as pedestrians and drivers
3. Disruptive and persistent noise disturbances

These different types of complaints indicate that people off-road biking occurs in both rural and urban areas.

Analysis conducted by Operation Civitas (identifying ASB hot spots) revealed that 57% of all overall incidents are related to off-road biking related ASB. These vehicles are often replaced quickly, as can be used in wider criminality such as organised crime. The Your Voice Counts survey revealed that within South Yorkshire, off-road bikes were among the top three concerns.

ASB off-road bike team

In 2017, an ASB off-road bike team was initially established in Sheffield due to damage caused to football pitches. Subsequently, the ASB off-road bike team has since been deployed across South Yorkshire. The ASB off-road bike team consists of a sergeant, six police constables and is overseen by an inspector. Each district has a named single point of contact (SPOC) on the team.

The teams are equipped with the following vehicles:

- Yamaha YZ250s
- Yamaha WR450Fs
- Two electric zero bikes
- Two Yamaha Ténéré 700
- Two Yamaha Grizzly quad bikes
- Land Rover Defender
- BMW X3

The riders are currently undergoing advanced motorcycle training, in addition to the specific off-road and rural crime training they have completed.

Searches for off-road bike ASB activity are intelligence led. Intelligence can often be hard to gather, as bikers are often masked and do not have registration plates. Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), CCTV and visible patrols are vital in providing intelligence, as well as the work conducted by partner agencies, neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) and police community support officers (PCSOs).

Most individuals involved in off-road bike related ASB in the South Yorkshire area are young. This prompted the development of a matrix to assesses individuals' circumstances and vulnerability, which generates a score. For example, an individual in care may generate a high score and be given additional wrap-around support to avert them from committing crime. This includes promoting legitimate places to ride bikes and career opportunities, such as apprenticeships for young people.

Social media

Using social media has been essential for capturing engagement from the public. The South Yorkshire Police motorcycle and rural crime team's Facebook page post several times a week. Posts consist of bikes that have been seized and individuals involved in ASB off-road bike activities.

Funding

The team has received support from the force and from the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner Office (now the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority). Funding has also been provided from the Home Office Civitas project, which has paid for two new quad bikes, a transport van, and a new drone. The quad bikes have proved essential for rural communities as they provide easier access to areas used by those involved in ASB. The van is essential in transporting the vehicles quickly and securely. The new drone is portable in the boxes on the back of the quad, allowing quicker and easier deployment.

Overall impact

The team's work is fully monitored through the force's performance reporting processes. In the last 12 months, the team have reported over 80 people on summons, as well as issuing traffic offence reports and seizing hundreds of bikes and quads.

Feedback from local officers is uniformly positive, and there is a monthly review meeting covering the work of the team with the district NPT, single points of contact (SPOCs) and operational support unit management.

The Facebook page, with over 30,000 followers, has received positive feedback from the community and on average each post receives 100 comments.

Public approval is measured by the number of communications (letters, emails, social media comments and posts) sent to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and chief constable.

Learning

Since many off-road bike crimes negatively affect and damage farmland, it has been important for the team to try and connect with the rural community. This has been specifically challenging in the force's rural launch events, with miscommunication and the information not reaching the relevant people. Instead, door-to-door has proved to be more successful in the community revealing how off-road bike crime affects them.

South Yorkshire Police were aware of the isolation that affected many members of the rural community. There has been increased liaison with partners such as the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales, and National Rural Crime Unit. Call handlers are also receiving training to highlight the issues of rural isolation.

The quad bikes have vastly improved rider safety and accessibility to target areas.

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