

Strategising Neighbourhood Policing.

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Neighbourhood policing sits at the heart of the UK policing model. During 2014 Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) expressed concerns that unless action is taken neighbourhood policing may be eroded to the point of unsustainability (HMIC 2014).

In 2005 a significant investment was made in neighbourhood policing in the UK. Based on extensive research and piloting across the country the Neighbourhood Policing Programme (NPP) was launched. Under an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) led implementation the NPP programme provided, and enforced, standards of compliance to a specific framework of change.

The NPP strategy focused on the delivery of neighbourhood policing. It included specific critical success factors relating to the visibility of local policing teams, the effectiveness of community engagement and the delivery of collaborative problem solving activities between police and local communities (Quinton & Morris 2008). These were to be delivered through local policing teams in order to target improvement in public confidence, reduce crime and reassure the public (Tuffin et al 2006). UK forces received increased budgets in order to recruit and train Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

In 2014 amidst a financial outlook of continuing austerity measures HMIC expressed concerns that there was an 'erosion' in neighbourhood policing as officers spent increasing time in reactive roles, HMIC called for immediate action to address this decline (HMIC 2014).

In nine years neighbourhood policing had moved from being invested in as a central component of UK policing to being considered 'at risk'.

The current outlook for policing involves an increasingly more complex demand on services against decreasing financial capacity. The expectation from successive UK governments is that policing can continue to deliver a local visible presence within communities whilst dealing with the emerging threats of terrorism, cyber-crime and organised crime.

After a good deal of enthusiasm, neighbourhood policing is entering a period of a loss of confidence. There is sparse evidence of its effectiveness, the techniques used are sporadic and often untested. Approaches to engagement and problem solving that do appear to yield results are often overlooked or judged ineffective through failed implementation. (Quinton and Morris 2008). The NPIA defined community engagement, and the definition has significant influence on the shape of neighbourhood policing in the future: engagement is 'the process of enabling participation of citizens and communities in policing at their chosen level, ranging from providing information and reassurance, to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions' (Myhill, 2012, Simmonds 2015a and 2015b). Each of

those components- enabling participation (rather than just consulting), allowing the public to choose their level of influence, empowering them to contribute to policing and influence strategy all create areas of risk and uncertainty for the LPA commander. Navigating this also has to match the rapidly changing nature of neighbourhood policing problems.

Neighbourhood policing is marked by officers trying to deal with very large demands for response, covering everything from low grade loitering on streets to domestic violence, FGM and radicalisation. Strategic approaches to neighbourhood policing has been limited to increased visibility (creating more work), thematic approaches such as a week of action on drugs, followed by a week of action on radicalisation as if a) they are not connected and b) a week is sufficient to gain traction on a problem. Senior officers are often held to account by weekly performance reviews, leading to a focus on micro-patterns of crime and policing activity, and a loss of focus on the conditions that lead to the crime patterns. In recent years, there have been some improvements, with more forces using indices of vulnerability, demand data and harm indices to manage individual activities. There have been few examples of a strategic and systematic approach to managing different neighbourhoods within a command area.

Whilst vulnerability and demand data is becoming more frequently available to neighbourhood commanders, there is very little guidance on the implications of the data. This paper describes the use of demand and vulnerability data to develop strategic options for different neighbourhoods within a given command area. The Intensive Engagement toolkit known as [Locally Identified Solutions and Practices \(LISP\)](#) has been designed to respond to and correct the weaknesses on current neighbourhood management, as well as enhance and secure tactics that are effective. This whitepaper accompanies that tactical toolkit and places it in a strategic context for senior police managers.

Figure 1 Strategic options in neighbourhood policing

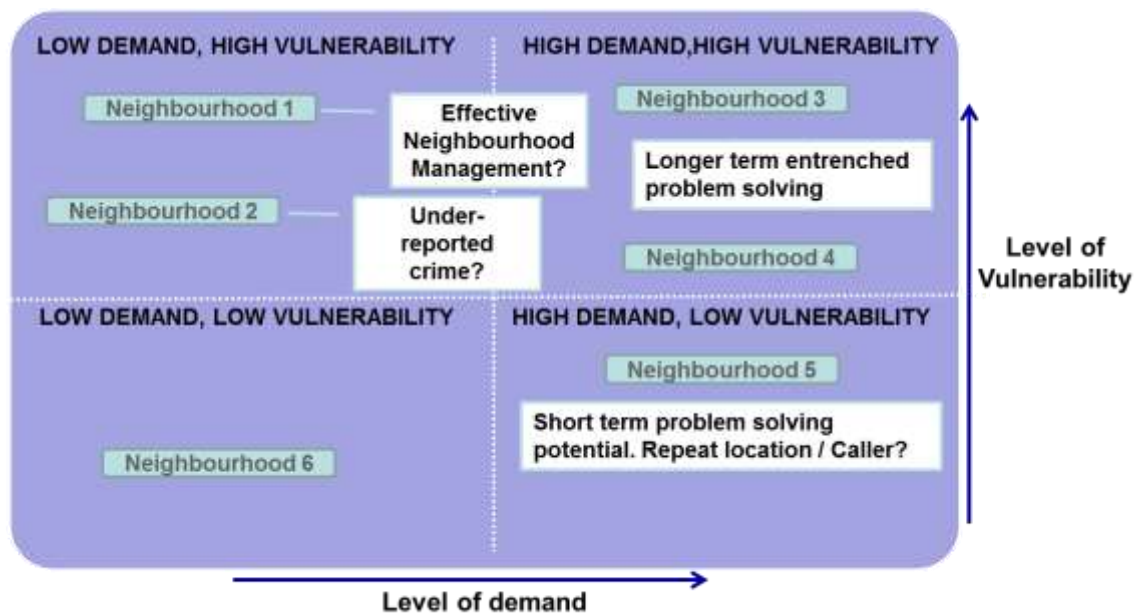


Figure 1 shows six different neighbourhoods in a given command area that have been prioritised according to demand and vulnerability data.

Neighbourhoods 1 and 2 Low demand, high vulnerability

These neighbourhoods are poor districts, with significant underlying vulnerabilities. Income, educational and health outcomes are low and there are high levels of young single people. Burglary and criminal damage in dwellings factors are chronically high, but overall demands for service in Neighbourhood 1 are higher than Neighbourhood 2.

This suggests that neighbourhood 2 has aspects of greater social cohesion that counteract the apparent vulnerability. These might be more stable residential arrangements: low levels of short-term houses of multi occupation (HMO) renting, less environmental conditions for antisocial behaviour or other aspects of good neighbourhood management. Neighbourhood 2 should have more reported crime according to its index of vulnerability, so the community culture might be leading to an under reporting of crime. This occurs when a neighbourhood becomes accustomed to a culture of crime or that those experiencing the crime think that the Police will not have any effect.

Low demand for service in an area of significant vulnerability to crime could be a sign of good neighbourhood management but the commander should not rule out significant levels of underreported crime. An audit of community associations would establish the extent of social cohesion and civilian capable guardianship and environmental visual audits would confirm whether the neighbourhood has physical weaknesses such as insecure back yards and alleyways, low levels of target hardened dwellings, or areas where people can gather close to domestic

properties to create a nuisance. If these symptoms of good neighbourhood management are not in place, then the neighbourhood is vulnerable to high levels of unreported crime and requires engagement. This would have the effect of shifting this neighbourhood into the high vulnerability, high demand box in the top right of the model.

Neighbourhoods 3 and 4 High Demand, High Vulnerability

Vulnerability indices reflect long term demographic weaknesses and are unlikely to change significantly within a two/three year cycle. Nevertheless, when high demand for service is also present, this suggests that the citizens are more aware of the crime and more active than in the first two neighbourhoods. The commander would need to ensure that the high demand for service is widespread, and not accounted for by a very small, overly vocal, minority. If the demand for service is widespread in terms of people, the next step is to establish, through hotspot analysis, what the geographical distribution of the demand is. Mapping the demand will establish hotspots which can then become the focus of intensive engagement to establish why those locations are hotspots, and not others. Long term strategic aims to affect vulnerability have to be combined with medium term objectives to address demand for service. The vulnerability might be addressed through statutory partnerships to alter the demographics- through letting and HMO policies, by challenging licensing conditions of licensed properties, through focussing on education or employment outcomes. These are areas that cannot be delivered by the police, but do impact directly on police performance. Strategies that the police can implement include improving social cohesion and capable guardianship through making the residents and businesses aware of the vulnerabilities and demand for service and supporting community associations to develop active communication links between residents and businesses.

Neighbourhood 5 High demand, low vulnerability

This neighbourhood accounts for a significant proportion of demand in this command area, but it is populated with affluent, home owning residents and high value businesses. The location is intolerant to low grade nuisance, and is likely to report street youth generated ASB regularly and experience intermittent burglary or damage to property- graffiti in sheltered locations and damage to cars. Whilst the value of burglaries might be high, the properties are capable of high levels of target hardening, but expectations of police performance (and visibility) are high. In this situation, intensive should focus on identifying and recruiting the highly capable and highly networked individuals whose self interest in reducing crime is known and understood. This point is so important- at each quadrant of the box- the appropriate community stakeholders are defined to a significant extent by the purpose- rather than by the 'usual suspects'.

Neighbourhood 6 Low demand, low vulnerability

This neighbourhood shows good resilience. Not only is it less vulnerable than the other neighbourhoods in terms of long-term structural characteristics, but also the residents and businesses are demonstrating good levels of local resilience, tolerance and guardianship. It is important to maintain a watching brief on demand for service patterns but only provide reactive response when required. Highly visible community associations such as neighbourhood watch can act as a conduit of local reactions to events, as well as highly connected and active individuals.

Although most of the focus has been on intensive engagement, where a significant police performance issues has been identified, even areas that have no 'problems' per se, but do experience a base load of calls for service that are not emergency reactive work, the principles of community engagement outlined in the LISP approach are still applicable- developing networks and relationships with highly active individuals and groups, accessing assets and capabilities to supplement policing resources, and sustaining a purposeful relationship with those stakeholders that can be readily activated in times of crisis is an important outcome of deploying LISP community engagement strategies.

Conclusions

This short note has shown the utilisation of two key data sets for strategic planning, the long-term structural vulnerabilities of a given neighbourhood, against the medium-term demand for service the locality. Where high demand is matched with high vulnerability, the primary strategic focus should be on enhancing local social cohesion and capital to improve capable guardianship rather than providing just a reactive service. Where a neighbourhood has lower demand than might be expected due to its vulnerability, then hidden, unreported crime patterns need to be investigated to ensure that a district is not considered to be a no-go area for the police, or that good neighbourhood management is in place to sustain low demand for service. The most strategically important neighbourhoods are those that are chronically vulnerable and also present higher demands for service.

Intensive engagement in such localities to improve connectivity between residents, and between residents and police needs to be balanced against the longer term expectations from statutory partners to influence the demographic weaknesses that lead to the vulnerability to crime. The same principles can also be applied to those areas that might be considered low priority, but where a plan ought to be in place should the situation suddenly change.

There are hundreds of methods for engaging with these neighbourhoods, from 'world café' events, surgeries, appreciative enquiry, rich picturing, through to surveys. The selection of which engagement technique relies primarily on the specific nature of the problems; and the most effective mode of communication with the populations in mind. There are no hard and fast rules for selecting which method, but the IE framework creates a context within which these events

can be conducted, and processes by which understanding the problem may be flipped into creating solutions. IE enhances existing experience in community engagement, rather than replaces it. Intensive Engagement also ensure that the Police has ownership and control over all aspects of the process of fulfilling its duty¹ to effectively engagement with public and to ensure that all engagement is purposeful and focussed on improving police performance and legitimacy. Outside agencies may be employed to undertake certain specialist engagement techniques, but they should fit within an overall Intensive Engagement framework to

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¹ Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

