

Title: Developing an Asset Based Approach to Safer Communities

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One of the key stages in developing community safety strategies set out in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act is to consult with local people about the local picture and what are their priorities to address this.

However, when it comes to delivering interventions, arguably these have traditionally been undertaken by community safety professionals and therefore a future challenge is how we better involve local people over and above the reporting of issues.

The Kirklees Partnership Plan sets out the Safer Kirklees approach to community safety based on 4 levels of intervention (prevention, early resolution, partnership problem solving and high risk/intensive cases) with the emphasis on preventing or resolving issues as early as possible.

Whilst there are some areas such as law enforcement and safeguarding that sit firmly with professionals, the areas of Prevention and Early Resolution in particular need to use the insight and involvement of local communities to develop sustainable solutions.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to consider options of how the knowledge and expertise of local communities can be better involved in developing community safety interventions particularly at the Prevention and Early Resolution levels which are outlined in the next section.

Prevention

The Partnership Plan sets out how prevention is achieved through a combination of education (to foster notion of responsible citizenship) and community engagement to develop a shared commitment and desire to create and sustain safe communities.

Ideally, prevention takes place where individuals moderate their own behaviour so they do not engage in crime or anti-social behaviour because it runs counter to their own "moral code" which gets embedded through education and socialisation both within and outside the home.

Individuals live in communities and therefore have a range of networks which can either be risky or protective in their nature. In terms of involvement, these networks can be informal such as family and friends or more formal such as voluntary groups some of which might have a community safety focus (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch and Police Volunteers).

For prevention to work at a community level, there needs to be a combination of a shared desire to create safe communities and interaction / involvement between people to make this happen.

Early Resolution

Where community safety issues have not been prevented, the next best option is to deal with them at the earliest opportunity. This requires a wide range of front line officers, community contacts and residents to be alert to issues that “don’t seem right” and either report them or deal with them as early as possible provided it is safe to do so.

For this to happen, requires the following with communities;

- A broad shared understanding of what safe communities look like
- Some agreement of behaviours that run counter to this
- People are sufficiently motivated and confident to address issues

The Prevention and Early Resolution of Community Safety issues needs to be delivered through active community involvement – some considerations around this are set out in the next section.

Involving Communities

Feeling safe is consistently identified as the most important priority for residents to enhance their quality of life. If we are to develop interventions that are sustainable and take account of what works locally, it is vital that local people are at the heart of this through building Community Capacity.

In developing Community Capacity, it is essential that there is an emphasis on local strengths, skills, talents and resources. The levels of community capacity vary across the district which might correlate with levels of community safety issues, this is to be explored.

It is essential that there are strong links with the Kirklees Community Capacity Building Programme to ensure a shift to (1) partnerships with communities, (2) mobilising communities to take action for themselves and (3) growing Social Capital to strengthen and develop Community Networks. Achieving these will require:

- Valuing People as assets
- Co-production and reciprocal working
- Collaborative rather than paternalistic relationships with communities
- Partners moving from fixers of problems to facilitators of solutions
- Building on people’s existing capabilities
- Involving people in how services are conceived, planned and delivered

Discussion point

Ideas are sought from the Community Safety Executive Group as to how local communities can be better involved in developing community safety interventions particularly at the Prevention and Early Resolution levels.

Contact officer and relevant papers

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