

How to guide:

Neighbourhood Policing

What is the J4A ‘How to’ series?

The guide is part of a series of products developed by J4A to communicate lessons learned from projects and pilots, to provide stakeholders with guidance on how to adapt and replicate the initiative in their own context.

Who is this ‘How to’ guide for?

Influencers and decision makers in the justice sector (police, prisons, judiciary and civil society).

Reference tools

Accompanying reference tools are available at www.j4a-nigeria.org or by request from info@j4a-nigeria.org

This Guide should be read in conjunction with the How to Guide: Community Safety Partnership. There are also separate How to Guides on Divisional Intelligence Units and on Nigeria Police Force and Voluntary Policing Sector coordination, which is relevant when considering how the Neighbourhood Policing Teams will provide information and how intelligence will be provided by the community.

Background

This initiative is part of a wider initiative to focus on community safety issues. This initiative concentrates on putting officers back into the community through the introduction and deployment of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT), also known as Neighbourhood Beat Officers or 2x2s.

Police have become detached from the general public. There is a need to focus on delivery of service to the general public in day-to-day policing matters.

These officers will work with partners, such as the Voluntary Policing Sector, and others within the community who have influence to deal with community based policing problems.

The officers concentrate on developing contacts within the community, identifying problems and working with problem-solving techniques to develop and enhance the community/police relationship.

At the divisional level the NPT style of policing is mainly to respond to reports of crime rather than patrol proactively. The level of communication and opportunity to understand community concerns and fears is limited as patrolling is primarily completed in vehicles. The opportunity for the police and public to interact is minimal unless the member of the public is a complainant, witness or suspect.

The relationship between the police and public is best addressed through the initiatives of forming Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and developing NPTs.

Currently the concerns of the community, in terms of policing, crime, traffic management, etc. may not enter into the knowledge of police because of the lack of communication between the parties, other than when a member of the community becomes the 'subject' of a police intervention. There is contact between senior divisional police, such as the DPO, and community and tribal leaders within a division, but the day-to-day contact between members of the community and police is largely missing.

Community safety is about delivering local solutions to local problems that have been identified by local people. One of the best ways to identify these local problems is to acknowledge that local people often have the best understanding of local problems. Access to this understanding is gained by the deployment of an NPT and by responding to public concerns the police can commence the rebuilding of public trust.

What you can do

Introduce a NPT to ensure that the community, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, have direct, daily, routine and functional contact with the police. In this way the voice of the community will be heard and their real concerns can be taken on-board by police who can then work to solve these concerns, either alone or through partners by devising a joint way forward.

What you can achieve

- More precise identification of community concerns and issues.
- Better resolution of crime and community safety issues.
- Reduction in crime and community concerns.
- Reduction in the fear of crime.
- Closer working between the NPT and communities to solve problems.
- Better identification of community safety issues.
- Improved trust and confidence in the police.
- Making the police more accountable to the public.
- Better management of police resources.
- visible police presence through the NPT will provide reassurance to the public and help to reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- An NPT will allow more ready access to the police by the community thereby increasing the police ability to respond to local needs.
- The NPT will link to community leaders and representative groups, such as the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and be able to work with them to solve problems and improve the quality of life of the community.
 1. NPTs are able to capture community intelligence that would not normally be available to police officers.
 2. NPTs will deliver an intelligence-led, proactive, problem solving approach enabling them to focus and tackle specific community issues.
 3. NPTs can involve local communities in establishing policing priorities.
 4. NPTs are introduced to help bridge the gap between public demand for reassurance and contact provided by uniformed police officers patrolling on foot.
 5. NPTs will reassure the public, increasing orderliness in public places by being accessible to communities and partner agencies working at local level.

Neighbourhood Police Teams: Steps for Implementation

Identification of the area

The identification of the geographical area where the officers are to be placed is of critical importance. The area may be identified for a number of reasons. Experience has shown that making the area too small, or too big can have a detrimental effect on the performance of the NPT. The NPT should cover an area within a police division that is seen as a community in its own right, where people have a sense of belonging with schools, mosques and churches, businesses and shops at its heart as well as being a residential area. Communities experiencing problems of crime and/or disorder should be the initial targets for the creation of an NPT.

The role of the police is to catch and convict offenders, information and direction from the public that leads to that result reinforces the role of the police in the eyes of the community.

The NPT interact with the community – the community communicate with the police – as a result of that communication a problem within the community is identified – the police work to solve that problem, either alone or with partners – resolution of the problem reinforces the police/community relationship.

Identification of personnel

- The personnel appointed by the DPO are of significant importance to the success of the NPT.
- As the main role is to establish a dialogue between the police and the community a member of the NPT must have the ability to talk to the members of the community, but more importantly to listen to the community and react to their concerns.
- A Community Policing manager should be appointed usually of ASP rank or higher. That officer will have a key management role with the NPT, VPS and the CSP on behalf of the DPO
- Experience has shown that membership of the NPT should not be determined by rank; Constables, Sergeants and Inspectors have fulfilled this role. The appointment should be made solely on ability.
- To preserve their core role, and for the sake of clarity for all concerned, it will need to be made clear that the officers within the NPT have a specific role and should not be used for other or 'special' duties, other than in cases of extreme necessity.
- The officers within an NPT should expect to be in post for a minimum of 1 year, allowing the community to form a relationship and trust an individual officer.
- NPTs should not be abstracted to perform tasks that do not form part of their core role as this reduces the effectiveness for which they are employed. Communities quickly become attached to 'their' police officer and see the individual as part of their community. Rotation of NPT officers, for no good reason, causes difficulty for the community as they are being asked to regularly place their trust and form a working relationship with new officers.
- It is imperative that senior officers in the Divisions within the NPF are aware of the importance of the role and that NPT officers are used effectively within their role.
- There is no general pattern of supervision for NPT officers, for example in various divisions they report to PNG1, the DPO or other supervisory ranks. Whatever supervisory model suits the particular management style of the DPO should be adapted.
- The number of officers in a particular NPT is a matter for the DPO based on need, but the minimum is 2 officers working as a team.
- The NPT should primarily work during the day where they can be seen and can interact with the public but their responsibility to the NPT is a 24-hour commitment. They will be expected to work whatever shifts are needed to solve particular crimes or community concerns.

Activities

- NPTs will be in a position to gather considerable intelligence, which will need action. If the community place their trust in the police, through the NPT, to deal with a problem, they will have an expectation that police will respond.
- The DPO should reinforce the existing linkages with the Voluntary Policing Sector (Vigilantes) to use the NPT as a platform to introduce joint patrolling between the police and vigilantes, and the exchange of information between both organisations.
- The potential for NPTs to gain access to people who might not countenance giving information to a police officer should not be overlooked. Again it will be imperative that a proper and timely response from the police to community concerns will improve mutual trust.
- NPT officers should spend the majority of their time in the community through visible patrol and engaging with the community.
- NPT officers will be seen as more accessible than other police officers. Experience and evidence shows that the community view the NPT officer as ‘their’ officer and form a closer

more dependant relationship than with those who drive by in a police vehicle. Therefore, the community are more likely to report issues to NPT officers than to P&G, but by the same token are more likely to expect a response.

- The NPT is dedicated to the needs of a specific community within a division, with the policing priorities for that community decided in partnership with local stakeholders - the public, community leaders, tribal leaders, CSP priorities etc.
- Through engagement with police the local community gets a real say in deciding the priorities for the area in which they live, allowing the police to provide long-term, solutions to local problems while maintaining their focus on reducing crime.

Cost Implications

No specialist equipment is required for NPTs. There are indirect costs, as the officers employed on this duty must be extracted from other duties.

Lessons Learned

Lesson 1:

Select the right geographical area within a division.

Lesson 2:

Allow the NPT to remain in post to engage with the community.

Lesson 3:

Empower the NPT to take ownership and leadership of their community.

Lesson 4:

Encourage the NPT to solve problem at a local level.

Lesson 5:

Provide an effective supervision and support structure for the NPT.

Lesson 6:

Have a direct involvement of the DPO in supporting the NPT initiative.

Lesson 7:

Use the existence of the NPT to form a more complete working relationship with VPS.

Lesson 8:

Ensure that once a problem is raised that the efforts of the NPT are on bringing about a resolution.

Lesson 9:

Assess the effectiveness of the operation of the NPT through town hall meetings and other community contacts.

Lesson 10:

Encourage the NPT to take every opportunity to engage with the community or sections, whether based in schools, religion, business or other interests within the community.

Lesson 11:

Make every effort to facilitate the NPT to engage with elders, community leaders and others of influence within the community.



Improvements

The creation of NPTs will lead to an improved quality of community and police contact. This leads to better partnerships working and flow of information to the police about local crime and community safety issues.

Contact

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