



## Practice Note 24

### North Ayrshire Multi-agency Problem-solving Group

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### Project Background and Aims

In December 2008 the North Ayrshire Multi-agency Problem-solving Group (MAPSG) was formed. MAPSG formalised procedures surrounding existing multi-agency work to enable a focussed approach to service provision, using an intelligence-led approach to allocate resources.

The aim of MAPSG is to share information and intelligence, target resources to 'hot spots', or problem areas, and address wider antisocial behaviour problems in local areas.

Membership of the group includes North Ayrshire Council ASB/Community Safety Services, Strathclyde Police, North Ayrshire Council Community Services, North Ayrshire Council Youth Justice, North Ayrshire CCTV Ltd, North Ayrshire Council Trading Standards, North Ayrshire Council Streetscene, local Registered Social Landlords, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue, and K:A Leisure. Other services are also invited on to the group on an ad hoc basis. The group is chaired by the North Ayrshire Director of Community Safety.

Once hot spots are identified and agreed for action the local policing plans are adapted with a view to directing resources to these areas as required. In addition, there is a problem-solving team made up of four fulltime Community Policing Officers who are deployed to enhance high profile patrolling in the designated areas for the duration of the partnership action plan. The problem-solving team is funded through the Fairer North Ayrshire Safe and Secure Programme.

MAPSG coordinates the activities of several other local projects when implementing action plans. General diversionary activities for young people are provided through K:A Leisure and North Ayrshire Council Youth Services, including mobile resources. For example, KA: Leisure can provide a Portable Sports Pitch and North Ayrshire Council can deploy a Mobile Youth Centre to provide facilities in local areas. K:A Leisure Health and Fitness Team also have an Activator van which can be used to carry out health checks in local areas. North Ayrshire Council Communications prepare press releases to promote awareness of the local initiatives (and encourage people to report crime to the police or to Crimestoppers).

### Outcomes

National	9: 'We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger'
Local	6c – The harmful effects of alcohol and drug misuse are reduced; 9a - Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour has reduced; 9b - Levels of crime and antisocial behaviour have reduced and crimes being detected have increased; 9c - Road safety has improved; and 9d - Fire safety has improved.

### Resources

Funding:	Mainstream funding.
Partners:	North Ayrshire ASB/Community Safety Services, Strathclyde Police, North Ayrshire Council Community Services, North Ayrshire Council Youth Justice, North Ayrshire CCTV Ltd, North Ayrshire Council Trading Standards, North Ayrshire Council Streetscene, local Registered Social Landlords, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue, and K:A Leisure.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring data is collected detailing the work of the Problem Solving Team. Further information is available from the Principal Officer in Housing Services.

### Activities

MAPSG has targeted the partners' resources in three identified hot spots: Pennyburn in Kilwinning from February and March 2011; Redburn, Vineburgh and Castlepark in Irvine in April and May 2011; and Milton in Kilbirnie in May and June 2011. The former two areas are covered by Community Wardens. All of these areas contain pockets of deprivation and experience antisocial behaviour and youth disorder in particular.

In each area the Problem Solving Team uses the **EPIC (Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence and Communication) Action Log** to identify priorities, causal factors, actions, interventions and outcomes. EPICs recommend the tasks that require completion by the relevant partner agency in the short, medium and long term to try and enable a lasting impact. EPICs share a similar set of core desired activities and outcomes, including youth diversionary activities, enforcement, public reassurance

through high visibility policing, and addressing environmental and tenancy-related problems.

Elected members are briefed about the initiatives taking place in their areas. The local Elected Members are an important conduit between the communities and partner agencies, ensuring that community concerns are fully articulated and providing reassurance that partnership action plans will be followed through and long-term engagement will be sustained.

In Pennyburn several tasks were actioned as a result of the EPIC. Young people had complained that they were often bored and had nothing to do. Hence, it was recommended within the EPIC that the Mobile Youth Centre and Portable Sports Pitch should be deployed to the area. Flyers were distributed to local schools to inform young people of the days and times that the facilities would be available in the area.

A core group of youths had also been identified as an issue in Pennyburn. Consequently, intelligence was requested on known gang members and high visibility police checks were carried out at weekends, with the mobile CCTV van deployed to monitor hot spots within the area. All reports of antisocial behaviour by residents in the area were followed up by the North Ayrshire Council Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT) and Irvine Housing Association, with warnings disseminated as necessary.

To ensure that a lasting impact would be made in Pennyburn a local working group was established. The group includes Irvine Housing Association, Pennyburn Community Association, Community Wardens, CPT officers. The aim of the group is to discuss local issues and improve working relationships between agencies and the community.

In Milton a number of serious incidents had resulted in legal proceedings, with an anticipated increase in community tensions as the cases come to court. The main focus of the EPIC here was to conduct high profile police patrols within the area to address ongoing feuds, gain intelligence and identify those responsible, and for partner agencies to work together to make a safer community for residents. Skills Development Scotland were involved as an additional partner in Milton to provide weekly careers workshops for local residents at a nearby community resource centre.

Redburn, Vineburgh and Castlepark are three neighbouring but very distinct areas where territoriality amongst young people is high, which also contributes to antisocial behaviour. Youth Services already had activities in place for each individual area, but it was agreed to arrange some events to bring together young people from all three areas to try to reduce issues of territorialism.

The consumption of alcohol by young people early in the evening had been identified as a significant contributing factor in the increase in violent crime and

vandalism in the three adjoining areas. A key strand of the subsequent action plan was thus for Trading Standards and the police to work with local off-licence premises to deter adults from purchasing alcohol for under 18 year olds.

Environmental Visual Audits (EVA) are also carried out in the targeted areas. EVAs identify key environmental issues and recommend agencies to task responses. These can range from the removal of offensive graffiti, the improvement of lighting or the cutting back of shrubbery. For example, in Pennyburn official statistics and engagement with local residents had identified fly tipping as local priority. The fly tipping was subsequently removed by North Ayrshire Council Streetscene.

In a regeneration area within Vineburgh there were also issues with substantial fly tipping, specifically around empty properties awaiting demolition. MAPSG partners agreed these would receive extra attention from the police as well as Community Wardens. In Redburn, problems with littering and dog fouling were identified and it was agreed that Streetscene would provide more bins.

In Milton overgrown hedges were partially blocking public footpaths, and the roots of overgrown trees were coming up through the pavement. MAPSG actioned Streetscene and Roads and Housing Services to address these issues. There was also an accumulation of bricks (which could be used as potential missiles) at a garage site and Streetscene was tasked to remove these whilst Housing Services advised tenants of their responsibilities regarding keeping the site tidy. Fly tipping in the nearby river was another environmental issue and police and Streetscene agreed to carry out additional patrols to monitor the area.

## Impact

In 2008 the problem-solving team was deployed to the Saltcoats Central datazones. Their chief tasks were to engage with the community, enable public reassurance and identify and tackle local problems. SIMD 2009 statistics illustrate that the crime count has subsequently fallen in each of these four Saltcoats Central datazones. This suggests that a more targeted approach has had a positive impact on crime reduction in areas with higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. It is, however, too early to tell whether or not MAPSG's actions will have a similar effect.

Community engagement has been variable across the targeted localities. In Pennyburn the work of MAPSG partners benefitted from strong public participation, particularly through the involvement the Pennyburn Community Association.

Longstanding histories of territoriality made community engagement more difficult in the Redburn, Vineburgh and Castlepark localities. This targeted area was also far larger than Pennyburn, thus the range of actions required were more ambitious and more difficult to achieve in the short term. To achieve significant advancements in this geographical area will require additional resources.

It has also proved difficult to engage with the local community in Milton. Residents were reluctant to report their concerns to police and housing services partly because they felt nothing would be done and partly because of fear of reprisals from a known criminal element. However, the community has become more involved confidence after initial enforcement measures were implemented.

### Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

Partnership working is the paramount feature of MAPSG and this process has been smooth, with relevant agencies keen to be involved. The tasking process has therefore been smoothly implemented and rapid response is possible once hot spots have been identified.

The process of community engagement has been less straightforward. In two local areas it has proved difficult to enable strong public participation for various reasons. Community engagement worked best where there were established community groups within the locality. This enabled local people's voice to be more easily heard.

MAPSG is now embedded within the community safety framework in North Ayrshire. The activities of the group may shift in future from an area-based approach to a more horizontal, thematic approach, such as targeting antisocial behaviour across the local authority area. The group will also influence the targeting of Cashback for Communities sports funding within North Ayrshire. Badminton, for example, is to be introduced in August 2011.

### Summary

The Multi-agency Problem-solving Group is an information sharing and tasking vehicle that targets resources to 'hot spot' or problem areas in North Ayrshire. The group coordinates the work of the partners at local level who carry out visual audits and community engagement activities within the targeted areas, and also several local interventions aimed at addressing antisocial behaviour.

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