



# Neighbourhood WATCH

## Toolkit

### Module 16: Problem solving

**This module will help you and your scheme to understand how Neighbourhood Watch fits in with problem solving in the local community.**

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- understand what problem solving is;
- know how to identify problems;
- know how to get involved in problem solving;
- appreciate that local communities and groups, as well as statutory agencies like the police and the local authority, can get things done; and
- know how to find out more about problem solving.

#### Introduction

This module explains how problem-solving techniques can help local communities to identify local problems, prioritise them and work with both statutory and other agencies to address crime, disorder and quality of life issues in an effective way.

The focus of problem solving is to understand problems and their causes rather than responding directly to symptoms, thus ensuring sustainable outcomes.

In the past, many local problems were dealt with by just one agency, in a less than effective way. The emphasis now is on bringing partner agencies together to identify priority issues affecting the community, breaking down these priority problems into smaller elements and allocating them appropriately. In some cases, actions are taken on by the community.



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### What is problem solving?

An integral element of Neighbourhood Policing is the ability to involve the community and partners in finding solutions to the problems that have been identified by the community and others. By doing this, it is more likely that the identified and implemented solution will be a sustainable one.

Many police forces use the mnemonics **ID PARTNERS** and **SARA**, along with a 'problem analysis triangle' to identify problems and the most appropriate solutions to them.

The **ID PARTNERS** mnemonic stands for:

- I Identify the demand** - Where/who is it from?
- D Drivers** - What do people want and why?
- P Problem** - Define it.
- A Aim** - What do you want to achieve?
- R Research and analysis** - What is happening and why?
- T Think creatively** - What are your options?
- N Negotiate and initiate responses** - How? When?
- E Evaluate** - Did you meet your aims?
- R Review** - Did the methods you used work?
- S Success** - Celebrate it and learn from it.

**SARA** is a mnemonic for a four-step model:

- S Scanning** - Spotting problems using knowledge, basic data and electronic maps.
- A Analyse** - Using hunches and information technology to dig deeper into problems, characteristics and underlying causes.
- R Response** - Devising a solution, working with the community wherever possible.
- A Assessment** - Looking back to see if the solution worked and what lessons can be learned.



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The **problem analysis triangle** involves separating the elements of the problem into offender, victim and location. If you remove one of these aspects the triangle will collapse, and the problem will probably disappear or reduce.



Whichever problem-solving method is used (and there are many of them) the principles are broadly the same.

### Case study: A kit for solving community problems

Humberside communities felt that the partner agencies were not listening to them, and the partner agencies were frustrated at what they saw as inadequate information from the communities in order to support action. To overcome this issue, Humberside Association of Neighbourhood Watch Groups (HANWaG) developed the Community Problem-Solving Kit (CPSK) to help the communities to identify their problems, so that partners would know exactly where to focus their attentions. At the same time, using the CPSK improves the quality of community intelligence.

HANWaG recognised that the problem-solving process had to be uncomplicated, flexible and capable of dealing with wide-ranging community issues (both high and low levels of crime). In addition, it needed to have a strong visual impact and be community focused. Information gathered using the CPSK had to be coherent, structured, focused, living and tangible. They adapted 'SARA' and developed the CPSK as a four-step problem-solving process that would be flexible enough to feed in community information.



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The process is used within the community to identify the key priorities and collect valuable intelligence, enabling HANWaG both to access valuable information and to overcome the challenges offered by community members.

The CPSK is used once a year and the process takes about two hours. The community becomes part of the problem-solving process because the CPSK encourages its members to agree on the priority problems to be addressed and on potential approaches for addressing those problems. This, in turn, increases the confidence of community members in the partner organisations.

The manner in which the information is collected means that it can easily be transferred to police data-collection systems, making it easier for partners to access and use.

If you would like more detailed information on problem solving, please go to the Home Office Crime Reduction website ([www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)) and search on 'problem solving'.

### How can you get involved?

The Police Service now has Neighbourhood Policing Teams in all 43 forces in England and Wales.

Part of the expectations and requirements of the police at the local level is that local police teams consult with the community - either through existing groups or via new arrangements - to identify problems seen as important to that community.

Neighbourhood Watch is well placed to be part of the community-based consultation group, and can help to identify and prioritise problems and assist by taking some actions forward. In some parts of the country, Neighbourhood Watch groups are already actively involved in problem solving.



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### Remember

It is likely that no one agency (the police, the local authority or the Fire Service, etc.) or community can solve ingrained and ongoing problems on its own. But when several agencies work together **with** the community, anything is possible!

### For more information

To find out more about problem solving and how it works, visit the Home Office Crime Reduction website ([www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)).