

Together

we can tackle it

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A checklist for police
and schools working together

To tackle truancy,
crime and disorder



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



This leaflet aims to assist partnership working between police forces and schools, to help them in working together to help deliver the local crime and disorder partnership strategy.

The focus is on activity in and around school premises to:

- prevent crime and disorder;
- reduce nuisance and anti-social behaviour;
- reduce fear of crime amongst school pupils, teachers and other staff, and the wider community;
- reduce incidents of truancy, bullying and other unacceptable behaviour.

The clear objective is to help to keep schools a safe learning environment for our children, by reducing the circumstances in which children are likely to become either the victims of crime or to be drawn into criminal or other anti-social activity.

From the school's perspective, crime and anti-social behaviour in or near school premises can have a negative impact on the learning environment and on the way that the school is regarded by the local community. It can also mean head teachers have to spend much of their time in dealing with problems.

Effective partnership working at the local level is critical. It helps to ensure that there is joint understanding of problems and joint investment in achieving lasting solutions. Schools cannot tackle these problems on their own, and a wide range of partners have a part to play. These include Local Education Authorities, Crime and Disorder Partnerships, Youth Offending Teams, voluntary agencies and representatives of the local community, including residents, shop keepers, transport providers, parents and governors and the police. There are many examples of existing good practice up and down the country and this leaflet is intended to build on those and to encourage wider participation.

What schools can do

In Kent a new headteacher identified the need to work with the community to address the problems within school linked to exclusions and truancy. At risk pupils were put on programmes involving either work placements (to make links between education and earning capability) or outward bound type courses (to show the links between education and having fun).

The success of the project was evidenced by a reduction of damage to the school from £100k per year to zero. Truancy and exclusions were almost totally eradicated. Five years on, an inspection confirmed that most of the gains are still in place.

- Headteachers can give a public commitment to local initiatives to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. This can give a strong message to young people and the public that truancy and youth crime are being taken seriously.
- Schools can identify those pupils at high risk of being involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, and work with local agencies to help combat this behaviour. Relevant risk factors include: poor parental supervision, poor school performance, truancy and exclusion from school, conflict in the home, peer pressure, friends and siblings in trouble with the police, drugs and alcohol misuse. Schools can also support pupils at risk from victimisation.
- In each case, schools are actively encouraged to work with the police, families and other agencies to help prevent offending.
- Schools can consider establishing Youth Action Groups in line with the Crime Concern Initiative.
- Teachers and governors can adopt a “whole school approach” by involving all members of staff, parents and pupils in the management of their school. This will encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility for the school's achievements.
- Schools can also help even the youngest pupils to form positive relationships with the police, through involvement in classroom activities where appropriate.
- Schools should also advise the police of any criminal activity.
- Schools could have effective electronic registration systems which enable them to contact parents on the first day of a child's absence.

What the police can do to help

- The police will participate in truancy sweeps, under Section 16 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, where the need is established following a review on a term-by-term basis of the truancy problem in the local area.
- Police can work closely with schools to help challenge young people's attitudes to criminal behaviour.
- The police have, in some areas, adopted a local community policing/problem solving approach to deal with crime and disorder related matters. Schools have a crucial role to play, but schools are sometimes reluctant to report incidents and/or offences occurring in and around schools. Schools need to address this issue if partnership working is to be successful.
- Through consultation with young people, the police can develop youth participation in community projects. This fosters good community relations.
- The police can work with schools to develop joint truancy protocols and policies to deal with drugs found on school premises.

In Thames Valley a partnership arrangement has been set up between the school, an educational social worker and a police officer. Young people are visited at home after two days of unexplained absence. Any issues emerging are addressed.

In Kent, if a young person is found on school premises in possession of controlled drugs and he or she admits the offence to the police, he or she may be offered a programme consisting of six evening sessions as an alternative to prosecution. Input is given by members of the police, health services, prisons, young people and the community. The sessions cover drug and substance misuse.

Working in partnership

In Thames Valley a police officer works full time in the school. He works with staff to identify young people at risk, and uses interventions to divert them from crime. The officer also deals simultaneously with any incidents that occur, and heads the multi-agency exclusion unit which has been formed.

A school and local bus operator in the Greater Manchester Police area identified that school pupils were causing damage to buses to and from school. Young people on a scheme, who wished to make a difference to their school or neighbourhood, drew up a charter to be adhered to by the pupils and bus operator. No further damage was caused.

The Metropolitan Police have set up acceptable behaviour contracts with troublesome youngsters who live on council estates. The personalised contracts cover different kinds of anti-social activities including graffiti, damage and throwing things at residents. The contracts are set up in partnership with the local housing authority, so if the contract is broken, the family risk losing their home. To date none of the 35 contracts have been broken.

In Thames Valley officers act as mentors to young people who have been identified as being at risk of offending. They act as role models and confidants.

Nottinghamshire police in partnership with the LEA have developed the Supporting Improvement Programme with Nottingham Forest Football Club. The scheme rewards achieving targets in good behaviour, attendance and punctuality by providing free tickets to football matches.

In the Metropolitan Police area, as well as truancy patrols, the Hammersmith and Fulham Borough, together with the Education Welfare Officer, and with the full support of schools, carry out "lateness patrols". Recent patrols stopped 114 children out of school, some being up to 2-3 hours late. Target schools are patrolled on a weekly basis.

- To ensure that young people have the best life chances, schools should actively prevent truancing and be readily involved with other partners to support anti-truancing initiatives.
- To enable this to happen each school should consider the appointment of dedicated teachers as Police Liaison Officer and Deputy Liaison Officer to ensure consistent named points of contact. This liaison can be extended to include other relevant areas.
- Good examples have involved schools working with other partners to identify key players, such as bus companies, to develop joint initiatives to prevent crime and disorder by pupils travelling to and from school.
- Effective work with young people can take place when schools work with the Youth Offending Team, police and other partners to focus on causes of crime and disorder relating to their students.
- A joint approach between the police and schools to raise awareness of the consequence of criminal activity amongst young people will give a strong message that organisations are working together to tackle the issue.
- Good relationships between schools and the police will ensure that schools are included in the local community policing/problem-solving approach at the local level.
- Successful results can be achieved when police and schools target their efforts on high-risk individuals and identity hot spot locations.

Protocol with other agencies

- The Youth Justice Board has developed an information sharing protocol for Youth Offending Teams and their partnership agencies. In line with this practice schools might want to consider developing these joint protocols with local partners such as the local police; Social Services; the Youth Service; and Voluntary Organisations to enable the sharing of information and data regarding young people.
- The police, Youth Offending Teams and Schools could provide a database from which school related crime, disorder offending and offenders could be mapped and analysed.
- Schools are key to enabling effective crime and disorder partnerships and youth justice plans to be developed by having available and supplying accurate data.
- Schools and the local police commander should consider establishing formal mechanisms for the exchange of information concerning truancy and other issues related to the school. It may be helpful if this exchange includes formal structured meetings between appropriate staff from the school and the police. The meetings can be used to determine how future action can be taken to tackle issues as they are identified through the information exchange process.
- To ensure good working relationships and to establish best practice it is suggested that the police and schools agree protocols which help schools to focus, with the help of other agencies, on the early interventions with pupils who are at serious risk of permanent exclusion, truancy and or criminal activity.
- Encouragement should be given for the introduction of Restorative Justice initiatives within schools to enable new ways of dealing with the range of problems that are encountered. This involves the victim as well as the offender. The young person has to hear how the crime has affected the victims life and may have to apologise face to face.

In Nottingham a joint protocol that has been developed between the police and schools, acts as a service delivery standard, and outlines the service police will provide in relation to children's behaviour. It covers violence, incident and crime recording, drugs, truancy and advice on potential criminal matters

Restorative justice in schools

Nottinghamshire Police and the LEA have secured £250,000 from the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme to fund a restorative justice and peer mentoring initiative targeted at reducing bullying, exclusions, truancy and offending. School staff have been trained to deliver restorative conferencing. Peer mentoring is also being used to support whole school action against bullying specifically.

All schools officers in Thames Valley are trained as restorative justice facilitators. Restorative justice principles have been used to resolve thefts and bullying incidents.

In a secondary school in the Thames Valley Police area a 14 year old youth began playing with a lighter in class. As he allowed the lighter to burn, it heated up the metal guard that was attached to the top of the lighter. At the end of the lesson, and as the students were walking out of the classroom, the youth thrust the lighter into the necks of two of his classmates causing burns, which after healing, have led to permanent scarring. The case would normally, and quite rightly, be sent before the Magistrates Court to be dealt with. With the support of the school, the victims and their parents and the offender and his parents had the opportunity to talk about how the incident had affected them. The offender had an opportunity to accept responsibility and hear how his actions had affected his classmates. The head teacher had an opportunity to talk about how this type of incident had harmed the school community. 18 months after the incident the offending youth has not been in trouble with the school or the police for any matter.

- Restorative justice represents a philosophy and a process that acknowledges that when a person does harm, it affects the person(s) they hurt, the school community and themselves.
- If restorative justice is present at every step of the school's discipline system, more serious breaches of school discipline can be prevented.
- Restorative conferences are very effective in dealing with the more serious breaches of discipline within the school community, as a process for re-integrating excluded students and even as an alternative to exclusion.
- Restorative justice has successfully been used in dealing with persistent truants and bullying.

Information sharing

- Schools and governing bodies are encouraged to develop a local information sharing protocol to assist joint working with other local agencies, including the police.
- Information sharing protocols should address the balance between confidentiality, respect for privacy and the need to share information about children and young people for legitimate purposes.
- The presumption should not necessarily be that information schools may have about children or their circumstances is necessarily confidential. Such information will often need to be shared between different agencies where this is in the best interests of the child and/or where there is evidence of criminal activity.
- Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 is intended to facilitate joint working by providing a legislative basis, where this does not otherwise exist, for the sharing of information for such purposes as preventing offending.
- Examples of circumstances where schools may need to disclose information to the police include:
 - where necessary to protect a child – including protection from physical harm;
 - where there is information about criminal activity;
 - to prevent offending;
 - where information is relevant to current criminal proceedings in relation to the young person.

Mobile phones

In partnership with the local authority, the Metropolitan Police has produced a crime prevention leaflet for schools and parents aimed at raising awareness of mobile phone robberies, and offering safety advice. Schools are also offered property marking for mobile phones.

Emerging evidence suggests that mobile phone theft is increasing, particularly amongst schoolchildren.

- Police and schools can work together to raise awareness with young people on the dangers of mobile phone theft in and around school premises, while recognising that mobile phones may improve personal safety by providing an ability to summon the assistance of the police or other adults where a young person finds him or herself in a vulnerable position.
- Governing bodies can work alongside Parent Teacher Associations to raise awareness with parents and young people regarding the risks of theft and/or bullying when using mobile phones in, or in close proximity to, school buildings.
- Schools can include protocols for bringing mobile phones into schools in Home/School agreements.