



SOLVING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

A PARTNERSHIP TOOLKIT FOR HUMBERSIDE

Commissioned by



HUMBERSIDE
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER



Prepared by

**THE
POLICE
FOUNDATION**

The UK's policing think tank

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**Prepared by The Police Foundation
for Humberside Police and Crime
Commissioner, Humberside Police
and their partners**

CONTENTS

Click on the section headings
to go straight to that section

Contents	1
The toolkit on a page	2
About this toolkit	3
Anti-social behaviour	5
What is anti-social behaviour?	5
ASB and problem solving	5
What is problem-solving?	8
Problem-Oriented Practice	8
SARA	8
So, what is a problem?	11
Can problem-solving reduce ASB?	11
Scanning	13
Defining problems	13
Using Information	14
Prioritising problems	14
A problem shared	17
Analysis	18
Pinch-points and patterns	18
Asking analytical questions	18
Situational prevention and environmental design	22
Response	24
Take a breath	24
Mechanisms, Theories of Change and logic models	24
Situational mechanisms	26
A word on implementation	26
Drawing on 'what works'	27
The ASB evidence-base	27
Situational prevention	27
Supporting individual behaviour change	29
Interactions with the Criminal Justice System	30
Addressing alcohol, drugs and homelessness	31
Assessment	34
Reviewing and evaluating	34
Process evaluation: What activity happened?	34
Tracking change: What happened to the problem?	35
Cause and effect: did the activity change the problem?	35
A word on displacement	36
Promoting a problem-solving culture	37
Virtuous circles	37
And finally ... tell everybody!	37
Appendix 1: Checklist of problem-solving tools	38
Appendix 2: Summary of ASB powers	39
Appendix 3: A brief history of UK ASB policy	40
Appendix 4: An assessment case-study	42

THE TOOLKIT ON A PAGE



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been developed as a shared resource to support partnership efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Humberside. It is rooted in the problem-oriented or problem-solving methodology, which has proved effective across numerous studies. It also draws on the wider evidence-base about ‘what works’ to reduce ASB.

The toolkit aims to provide an accessible introduction for those new to problem-solving, but also offers more experienced practitioners with insights, examples and evidence that can stimulate ideas and improve practice. While a problem-solving approach can be applied to many types of crime, disorder and other harms, the research evidence and case studies included here are especially relevant to ASB.

Tools

The ‘tools’ within this kit are pieces of theory, evidence and thinking aids, that can be used to define and understand local ASB problems, design tailored responses and assess their impact.



The kit does not deal, in any detail, with the range of enforcement powers available to police and partners to tackle ASB (a short summary of ASB powers is included as [Appendix 2](#)). The emphasis instead is on thinking through exactly *how* these powers (or other measures) might be used to prevent or disrupt ASB in specific situations. Detailed guidance on ASB legislation and powers is available from the [Home Office](#) and [College of Policing](#).

Similarly, this is not a collection of ready-made practice examples to be taken ‘*off the shelf*’. The case studies and practice examples show how others have applied problem-solving techniques to ASB issues, but problem-solving warns against simply replicating practice from elsewhere, without understanding local causes and conditions.

Many other problem-solving resources exist, and some have been useful in preparing this guide.¹ A selection is provided below.

Problem-solving guides and resources

[Successful police problem-solving: a practice guide](#) (Problem Solving and Demand Reduction Programme, College of Policing)

[Problem solving for neighbourhood policing](#) (UCL, Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science)

[The ASU Centre for Problem-Oriented Policing](#) (Arizona State University)

[Problem-solving policing](#) (College of Policing)

[Anti-Social Behaviour: A practitioners guide](#) (UCL, Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science)

The [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#), collated by the College of Policing summarises research evidence on “What Works” for reducing crime and ASB.

The College of Policing [Practice Bank](#) contains examples of innovative and promising practice and has recently been updated to include additional ASB examples.

1. In particular, the format used in the [Problem-Solving Guide to Knife Crime](#), developed by the College of Policing, has provided a useful loose template for this work.

Case studies

The six case studies included within the toolkit are summaries of recent entries to the [Tilley Awards](#), an annual prize for effective and innovative problem-oriented practice. Many more examples can be found within the [Knowledge Hub](#), which can be accessed by UK police and partner organisations.

Partnership practice examples

Three short practice examples are also included to show how partners are working together, and with communities, to tackle ASB.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

WHAT IS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) describes a range of nuisance, disorderly and (sometimes) criminal activity that negatively affects people's everyday lives. Legally, it is defined as “*conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person*”,² but precisely what is, and is not, ASB is not always clear cut. The government has long encouraged local partnerships to produce their own definitions, priorities and measures to reflect how ASB affects their area.³

In deciding whether and how to respond to ASB, agencies need to consider its impact on individuals, communities and businesses, particularly where the issue is persistent, and the impact cumulative. It is often these factors, rather than the acts in themselves, that mean the behaviour is problematic and requires a response.

ASB is sometimes divided into three categories:

- **Personal ASB** is specifically targeted at individuals or groups (e.g. harassment).
- **Nuisance ASB** affects the community and impacts on general safety, well-being or quality of life (e.g. drugs related activity or nuisance motorcycles).
- **Environmental ASB** causes damage to the built or natural environment (e.g. criminal damage or littering).

In 2004, the Home Office produced a detailed typology of ASB (see Table 1, next page), which still forms the basis of the 13 categories of ASB listed on many police websites.

ASB AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Several features of ASB make it well suited to a problem-solving approach.

- It often consists of a pattern of similar, recurring events.
- It is a broad and varied category, so it's difficult to know what to do about it until you break it down into smaller problems.
- Responding to individual incidents is likely to be time consuming and ineffective.
- It often goes unreported so it may be necessary to find out more before knowing how to tackle it.
- It is often visible and important to communities, meaning you have many potential allies in dealing with it.
- It often cuts across the remits of several agencies.

2. And in the context of housing, “conduct capable of causing nuisance and annoyance”.

3. A brief history of ASB policy in the UK is included as Appendix 3.

Table 1: Home Office typology of anti-social behaviour (2004)

Misuse of public space	Disregard for community/personal wellbeing	Acts directed at people	Environmental damage	
<p>Drug/substance misuse and dealing</p> <p>Taking drugs</p> <p>Sniffing volatile substances</p> <p>Discarding needles/ drugs paraphernalia</p> <p>Crack houses</p> <p>Presence of dealers/ users</p>	<p>Noise</p> <p>Noisy neighbours</p> <p>Noisy cars/motorbikes</p> <p>Loud music</p> <p>Alarms (persistent/ malfunctioning)</p> <p>Noise from pubs/clubs</p> <p>Noise from business/ industry</p>	<p>Intimidation/ harassment</p> <p>Making threats</p> <p>Verbal abuse</p> <p>Bullying</p> <p>Following people</p> <p>Pestering people</p> <p>Voyeurism</p> <p>Sending nasty/offensive letters</p> <p>Menacing gestures</p> <p>Can be on grounds of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Race Sexual orientation Gender Religion Disability Age 	<p>Criminal damage/ vandalism</p> <p>Graffiti</p> <p>Damage to bus shelters</p> <p>Damage to phone kiosks</p> <p>Damage to street furniture</p> <p>Damage to buildings</p> <p>Damage to trees/plants/ hedges</p>	
Street drinking	<p>Rowdy behaviour</p> <p>Shouting & swearing</p>			<p>Litter rubbish</p> <p>Dropping litter</p> <p>Dumping rubbish</p> <p>Fly-tipping</p> <p>Fly-posting</p>
Begging	<p>Fighting</p>			
<p>Prostitution</p> <p>Soliciting</p> <p>Cards in phone boxes</p> <p>Discarded condoms</p>	<p>Drunken behaviour</p> <p>Hooliganish/loutish behaviour</p>			
<p>Kerb crawling</p> <p>Loitering</p> <p>Pestering residents</p>	<p>Nuisance behaviour</p> <p>Urinating in public</p> <p>Setting fires (not targeted)</p> <p>Inappropriate use of fireworks</p> <p>Throwing missiles</p> <p>Climbing on buildings</p> <p>Impeding access to communal areas</p> <p>Games in restricted areas</p> <p>Misuse of air guns</p> <p>Letting down tyres</p>			
<p>Sexual acts</p> <p>Inappropriate sexual acts</p> <p>Indecent exposure</p>				
Abandoned cars				
<p>Vehicle-related nuisance and inappropriate vehicle use</p> <p>Inconvenient/illegal parking</p> <p>Car repairs on street/ garden</p> <p>Setting vehicles alight</p> <p>Joy riding</p> <p>Racing cars</p> <p>Off-road motorcycling</p> <p>Cycling/skateboarding in pedestrian areas/ footpaths</p>	<p>Hoax calls</p> <p>False calls to emergency services</p>			
	<p>Animal related problems</p> <p>Uncontrolled animals</p>			

Partnership Practice
Example A describes how agencies came together to address ASB on a housing estate in Barnsley.

Partnership Practice Example A: Council-led Closure Orders in Barnsley

Barnsley Council – working with South Yorkshire Police and a local housing management organisation – implemented a series of Closure Orders at addresses on a social housing estate.

A problem-solving process was initiated when a survey of residents – many of whom had complex health, mental health and addiction challenges – identified high levels of unreported ASB.

Much of the ASB was linked to the activities of a ‘county lines’ organised crime group (OCG) that was ‘cuckooing’ vulnerable tenants’ properties to supply Class A drugs.

The Closure Orders diverted users from the estate, enabled support services to access vulnerable tenants and allowed the management organisation to secure further Possession Orders against several other tenants in breach of their housing agreements.

Target hardening work, including improvements to CCTV, street lighting and natural surveillance, was also carried out

The interventions led to an increased flow of community intelligence, leading to enforcement action, which included civil orders against non-local OCG members, excluding them from the area.

3 WHAT IS PROBLEM-SOLVING?

PROBLEM-ORIENTED PRACTICE

Problem-solving is a structured approach to dealing with social harms like crime and disorder. It is also known as Problem Oriented Policing (POP), but that doesn't mean that only the police can do it, in fact, collaboration is a key feature of the approach, and sometimes other partners are best placed to lead problem-solving work.

The ideas behind POP were first put forward by American criminologist, Herman Goldstein, in 1979. At the time, although lots of effort was being put into improving the way police agencies were run, research was beginning to question whether 'standard' policing activities (rapid response, random patrol and reactive investigation) were actually effective.

Goldstein used the example of a bus driver who could only stick to his timetable if he didn't stop to pick up passengers, to illustrate what he called the "*means over ends syndrome*". He saw the police putting great effort into doing what they had always done faster and more efficiently, without considering whether it actually made things better for communities.

The solution, he argued, lay in moving away from an 'incident driven' model – endlessly responding to similar calls and investigating crimes after they had happened – to focus on the underlying 'problems' that gave rise to them.

By understanding the background conditions that led to incidents recurring time and again, Goldstein thought that the police would be better able to find creative, tailored solutions – working with other agencies and communities – that prevented crime rather than reacting to it and were less reliant on contentious law enforcement activity.

SARA

Goldstein's ideas were developed into a four-stage process known by the acronym SARA. This sequence provides the backbone of many problem-solving initiatives (and the framework for this toolkit). The four phases are:

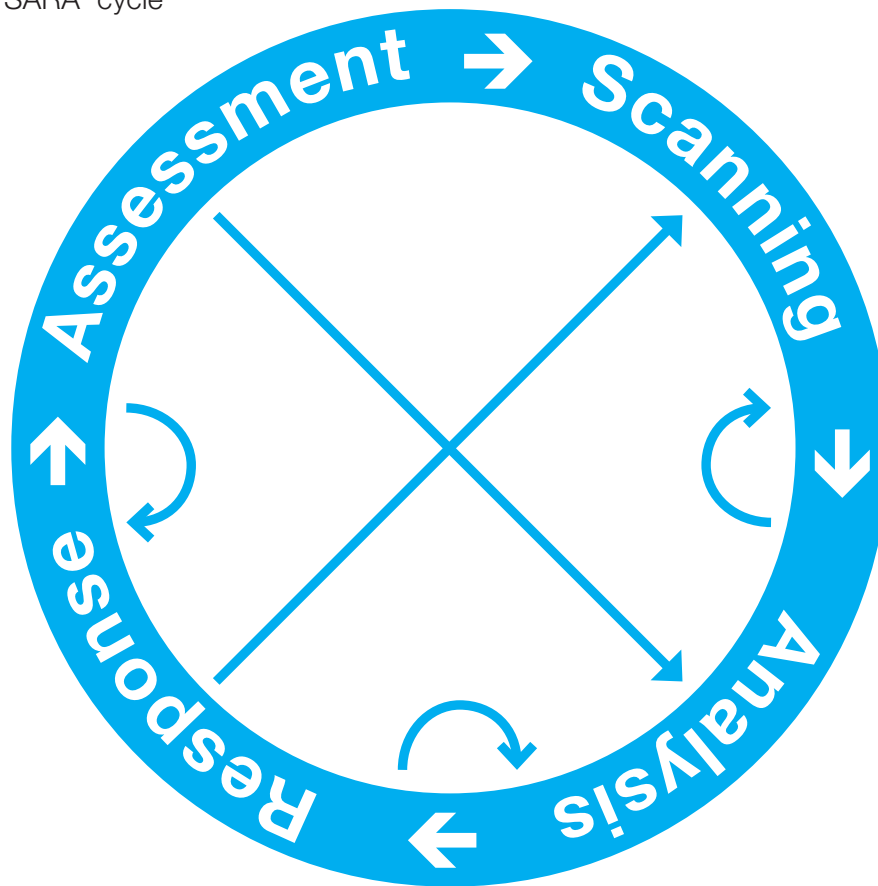
SARA: The four phases of problem-solving

- **Scanning:** identifying, describing and prioritising problems
- **Analysis:** studying the nature, conditions and causes of the problem to understand it in detail
- **Response:** developing and implementing measures to minimise, alleviate or eliminate the problem
- **Assessment:** investigating what impact the response has had to inform future decision making.



Some versions of SARA emphasise that it should be seen as an 'iterative' or cyclical process, rather than a linear sequence, e.g. learning during the Analysis phase might mean that the problem definitions (produced during Scanning) need to be revised, or findings from Assessment might lead to adjustments in the Response.

Figure 1: The SARA 'cycle'



Sections 4 to 8 of the toolkit work through the four phases of SARA in more detail. It is worth noting, however, that SARA is not the only approach to doing problem-solving. The [5Is](#) framework, for example, provides more emphasis on the delivery stage of interventions.

The 5Is framework for crime prevention, security and community safety



- **Intelligence:** covers the problem finding and definition (i.e. both scanning and analysis).
- **Intervention:** relates to designing responses that block or disrupt the problem.
- **Implementation:** is about putting the intervention into practice.
- **Involvement:** emphasises getting partners and the communities to contribute.
- **Impact:** is about evaluating the process and effect.

Case Study 1

illustrates how partners in Sheffield used SARA to define and analyse an ASB problem, before implementing a tailored response and then evaluating its impact.

Case Study 1: Reducing ASB linked to the use and supply of Spice in Sheffield City Centre (Tilley Award Category Winner, 2018)

Scanning

In 2017, Sheffield's Cathedral Square and surrounding streets were experiencing high levels of ASB caused by users of 'spice', a class B synthetic cannabinoid. A group of rough sleepers, street drinkers and crack and heroin addicts, were congregating around a day centre for homeless and vulnerable adults, located at the rear of the cathedral. While in the area, they would deal and use spice, with users frequently found collapsed and unconscious in the surrounding area due to overdoses. The location, in the centre of the city's retail district, made the problem highly visible and was intimidating for shoppers, workers and the cathedral's congregation.

Analysis

All three sides of the Problem Analysis Triangle were investigated (see [Figure 2](#)). Victimisation was complex, with the vulnerable users among those affected, as well as local businesses and the cathedral. The spice users' chaotic lifestyles were found to be hampering efforts to provide treatment and support. In addition to the day centre, specific benches in the square were identified as significant locations. Intelligence suggested the group operated as a 'community of users' rather than following a traditional organised crime-led supply model.

Response

The Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team commissioned a mobile treatment van to provide support at the location, increasing the chances of engagement, and reducing reliance on appointment-based provision. Training sessions were provided to local businesses to improve communication with emergency services. Benches were removed and shrubbery (in which items were being concealed), was cut back. This allowed street cleaners, who had been reluctant to work near the users, to return. CCTV was installed, which along with community intelligence, enabled targeted stops and searches of those believed to be involved in supply. Criminal Behaviour Orders, bail conditions and dispersal notices were used to deter known offenders from entering the area.

Assessment

Pre-to-post comparison showed a 35 per cent reduction in crime and a 65 per cent reduction in harm-weighted crime in the immediate area, alongside a large reduction in ASB incidents. Treatment services reported increased numbers of users accessing services. Survey and qualitative feedback from local businesses showed that many reported an improvement.

SO, WHAT IS A PROBLEM?

We use the word ‘problem’ all the time; when something goes wrong or we get stuck, we say we ‘have a problem’. In problem-solving, however, the word means something a bit more specific.

We need to get into the habit of thinking about problems as *things that exist in the world* with their own shapes, sizes and structures. As we have seen, problems are not individual incidents, (neither are they people), but they are also not broad categories like ASB as a whole, or even sub-categories like ‘rowdy youths’, ‘criminal damage’ or ‘nuisance motorbikes’. Instead, problems tend to be ‘medium sized’ phenomena, with more specific descriptions, that sit ‘in-between’ incidents/cases and more general ‘Classes of Harm’.⁴

Eck and Clarke list six characteristics that help us to spot problems, summarised by the acronym CHEERS:

Identifying problems: say CHEERS!

- **Community:** Problems are experienced by the public (individuals, groups, businesses etc.). If it’s not directly affecting anyone, then it’s not a problem.
- **Harmful:** Problems cause damage, suffering or loss (physical, emotional, financial, to property etc.). If it’s not causing harm (even if it is illegal) it’s not a problem.
- **Expectation:** Somebody expects public agencies to do something about it.
- **Events:** The problem comprises, or manifests as, harmful incidents or events.
- **Recurring:** More than one event must have occurred, and it must be likely that, unless something is done, more events will occur.
- **Similarity:** Something about the events ties them all together or indicates that they are related (this could be about the people involved, the location, the circumstances etc.). If they have nothing in common, they are not part of the same problem.



CAN PROBLEM-SOLVING REDUCE ASB?

In a word, yes.

A research study, that combined findings from 34 separate evaluations of problem-solving work, found an overall 34 per cent reduction in target indicators (such as crime or disorder levels) compared with control groups/areas. The authors concluded:

“Following the tenets of the SARA model to identify specific problems, conduct analyses to examine underlying causes and develop and deliver tailor-made responses is an evidence-based approach to crime prevention”.

It also found that problem-solving was particularly effective for tackling ‘disorder’ problems (similar to ASB) as well as property crime.

A separate study, that brought together findings from 28 assessments of ‘disorder policing’ strategies (i.e. efforts to deter more serious crime by tackling ASB/disorder and ‘minor’ offending), found that initiatives using problem-solving and community-based approaches had a positive impact, while those that relied on aggressive law enforcement did not.

4. Sparrow, M. (2010) *The Character of Harms: Operation challenges in Control*. Cambridge University Press.

Case Study 2

illustrates how police are working with partners in Dungannon, Northern Ireland, to address the community and environmental conditions underlying a long-term ASB hotspot.

Case Study 2: “Between the Lines”. Addressing youth disorder in Dungannon, Northern Ireland (Tilley Award Finalist, 2023)

Scanning

“The Lines”, a pathway, parkland and retail area, along the route of an old railway line in Dungannon, has been the site of ASB, crime and alcohol and drug misuse for many years. Police officers often faced open hostility in the area; shoppers and staff felt intimidated and, despite generating numerous calls for emergency services, many incidents went unreported as local residents saw the situation as irresolvable. Among the numerous victims, a large supermarket was particularly affected, offenders were young people, mainly (although not exclusively) from Roman Catholic communities, with long-standing hostility to the police. Incidents occurred during evenings, weekends, school holidays and during good weather.

Analysis

Incident analysis and extended engagement with recent victims, partners and stakeholders, led to a set of hypotheses about the underlying causes of the long-term problems. These included deep-seated mistrust (particularly of the police) leading to a ‘culture of lawlessness’ and lack of community reporting/cooperation, a lack of youth provision, the nature of the physical environment and security arrangements at the local supermarket.

Response

The response began with the introduction of consistent community policing. By establishing a familiar, visible presence, officers were able to engage with youths and began to build a working knowledge of names, faces, families and links. This deepened through contact with youth and school liaison officers. Training and crime prevention support was provided for the supermarket. A set of situational improvements including new hedgerows, lighting and alcohol enforcement zones was introduced. Community use of the space for cultural events, police dog training and by local sports clubs increased. An evening educational programme, providing food, was set up, targeted at those ‘on the fringes’ of problematic behaviour. Information flows between police and the community increased.

Assessment

Entrenched, long-term issues such as these are not fixed quickly, and assessment is ongoing and qualitative, as well as quantitative. Positive partner and community feedback accompanies measured reductions in ASB incidents and theft offences in the area.

SCANNING

DEFINING PROBLEMS

Scanning is the entry point to the problem-solving process. It is about defining, selecting and prioritising problems for further attention and action. The output of scanning should be a succinct, working description of the problem(s) needing attention.

As we have seen, problems are sets of recurrent, similar events that harm the community, and that police and partners are expected to do something about (CHEERS!). The scanning phase needs to focus in on what it is that links the events together and reflect this in a problem definition.

For instance, the link could be the people involved (as perpetrators or targets or both), the time that incidents occur, the location, an implement or vehicle used, a generator/enabler or some other linking factor. In may well be several of these.

Concise problem definitions, for Case Studies 1 and 2, might read:

Case Study 1: Addicts and rough sleepers who use the day centre behind Sheffield Cathedral are acquiring and taking the drug spice. After leaving the facility they congregate on nearby benches in the afternoon and early evening, regularly becoming unconscious due to the effects of the drug. This causes concern and intimidation to shoppers and businesses and generates numerous calls to emergency services.

Case Study 2: Groups of young people congregate in 'The Lines' area of Dungannon. They drink and take drugs, commit vandalism, threaten other users, and steal from the local supermarket. This activity is most intense during evenings, weekends, school holidays and warm weather. It has been going on for many years, leading other users to avoid the area and is characterised by open hostility to services.

Remember, we need to think about problems 'naturalistically' (i.e. as things that exist 'out there'). This means being careful about using standard legal and administrative categories to define them.

For instance, a category like 'criminal damage' might be the aggregate of several unrelated problems (e.g. graffiti by a group of youths, drunken rowdiness on Saturday nights, attempted break-ins, hate-crime targeting a specific community etc. – as well as many one-off incidents), each problem might need a specific type of response, so it's best to deal with them separately.

Equally, our recording categories might obscure parts of the problem. An increase in acquisitive crime in an area, might have the same underlying causes as complaints of drugs activity in a local park. Making the link between them could prove important for understanding what's going on and deciding how to tackle it.

So, we should try and approach problems 'on their own terms' rather than imposing our own categories, or, as Professor Malcolm Sparrow advises, we should:

"Respect the natural shape and size of the harm itself. Fashion your response around its structure, rather than forcing the harm into your structure. Use a control structure which mirrors the structure of the harm itself".⁵

5. Sparrow, M. (2010) *The Character of Harms: Operation challenges in Control*. Cambridge University Press.

USING INFORMATION

Defining and describing ASB problems requires information. Information about ASB can come from a wide range of sources, including:

- Police recorded crime and incident data.
- Local authority records of calls for service relating to ASB.
- Data from environmental services (for instance about fly tipping or needle find locations).
- Fire service data (e.g. about bin fires).
- Resident surveys or feedback through face-to-face forums, or digital engagement platforms.

It's important to remember that lots of ASB goes unreported, so official data may only reflect part of the problem. You may need to go out and find out more, e.g. by:

- Engaging with people who live, work in or use the area.
- Making observations (e.g. by visiting the area or looking at CCTV footage).

These data sources will also prove useful in the analysis phase and can provide a baseline measure of the severity of the problem to use during assessment.

To form a useful, working problem definition its worth having a go at answering the following questions (the *5Ws and an H*), based on the information you have available:

Scanning Questions: 5 Ws and an H

- **What:** ASB events are happening?
- **Who:** is involved in the ASB and who is being affected?
- **Where:** is it happening?
- **When:** is it happening?
- **Why:** is it happening? (i.e. what are the motivations of those involved?)
- **How:** is it happening? (e.g. are those involved following a method? Is there a sequence of steps involved?)



The answers to these questions may well indicate important features of the problem, which might form the focus of interventions in the response phase – however, you will probably have some ‘unknowns’ to address during analysis.

PRIORITISING PROBLEMS

As well as describing problems, scanning is also about deciding whether and why it is important to spend time and effort tackling them – particularly if there are several possible problems to work on, and limited resources. Agencies often face more ASB, and more ASB *problems*, than they can respond to, so which do you choose to work on?

There are many reasons why you might decide a problem is worth dedicating time and resource to:

- It might be generating significant harm or distress to one or a few people.
- It might be affecting lots of people and generating lots of complaints – even though each event is less harmful.

- It might be creating significant demand on agencies' time and resources.
- It might be getting worse or pose significant risks.
- It may fit with organisational priorities.
- There might appear to be something productive that could be done about it.

Reading the signals

Signal Crime Theory provides a way of thinking about which ASB (and other) problems are having most impact on the community. The theory was important during the development of Neighbourhood Policing because it provided a way of addressing the '*reassurance gap*' (the fact that, although crime was falling, people weren't feeling safer).



The key idea is that incidents carry different *meanings or messages* to people about their safety and security. Importantly, the strength of these messages is not always related to the (legal) 'seriousness' of the event. So more serious crimes may not worry people if they are thought of (e.g.) as being 'one-off' events that could have happened anywhere, while more 'minor' ASB can cause substantial fear and concern, if it seems to 'say something' to people about what is wrong, lacking or changing for the worse in the area – particularly if the signal is highly visible and repeated. Different people may also interpret signals in different ways.

Tools have been developed to help find the problems that carry strong signal values in an area or community e.g.:

- **Key Individuals Networks (KIN)** or Neighbourhood Sentinels are people who are well placed to know what is happening, either due to their social connections or because they spend time in public spaces. Engaging with them in a systematic way can provide a way of 'tuning in' to local sentiment (although care should be taken to ensure 'harder to hear' groups are included).
- **Neighbourhood Security Interviews** or SENSOR surveys were used to capture the security concerns of residents during the Neighbourhood Policing Programme. The approach used semi-structured interviews and local area maps to explore perceptions of local problems and concerning events.

It may not be feasible to design in-depth community 'problem-finding' processes like those above, but it's likely that you will already have community engagement processes in place. Thinking about how and why different forms of ASB convey 'signals', or mean different things to different people, can be a helpful way of identifying problems to prioritise.

Case Study 3

describes an innovative response to a neighbourhood issue that, although often considered 'minor', was found to cause substantial community concern. It also shows how neighbourhood feedback was used to assess the effectiveness of the activity.

Case Study 3: Operation Park Safe – Reducing dangerous and anti-social parking in North-West Sheffield (Tilley Award Finalist, 2023)

Scanning

Resident surveys identified 'parking issues' as the second most pressing community concern in the area (after burglary), with the problem particularly acute in areas of high-density terraced housing, where the parking space available was insufficient for modern vehicle ownership levels. In addition to generating resident complaints, anti-social parking was obstructing emergency and service vehicles, and a potential factor in above average rates of road accidents involving children in the city. Existing enforcement procedures were confusing, with police and the council sometimes referring complainants to each other. Previously introduced signage had been ineffective.

Analysis

Observations and a review of offenders' responses to prosecution notices, identified a potentially relevant 'contagion' effect, in so far as motorists were seeing unchallenged anti-social or obstructive parking, as permission to follow suit. The lack of a credible deterrent (and resident dissatisfaction) was ascribed to slow and inconvenient police and council processes. Using the Problem Analysis Triangle (see [Figure 2](#)), the absence of capable guardianship was identified as a salient problem driver and a potential 'pinch-point'.

Response

The response sought to enlist and enable the public to act as capable guardians by providing an online reporting tool, through which they could submit photographic evidence of parking offences. PCSOs received additional training and triaged submissions to the scheme's inbox, issuing advisory notices for minor offences or generating Notices of Intended Prosecution where there was danger to the public. Decisions not to prosecute were explained to complainants with appropriate onward referrals. The scheme was supported by public communication, online and via social media. The initiative made explicit use of situational prevention techniques, focusing on increasing risks, neutralising peer pressure/discouraging imitation, and posting instructions/alerting conscience (see [Table 3](#)).

Case study 3 *(continued)*

Assessment:

In 11 months, the scheme generated almost 650 reports, over 80 per cent of which resulted in prosecutions. Records showed an initial surge in reports on the worst affected streets after the roll-out and publicity, followed by a marked reduction – suggesting the public were using the portal and the activity then had an impact on motorists' behaviour. The proportion of residents ranking parking as a top three priority problem dropped from 49 to 29 percent. The more effective use of PCSO time also resulted in a substantial cost benefit improvement.

A PROBLEM SHARED

Partnership and collaboration are key features of problem solving. Numerous local stakeholders – including residents – can contribute to solutions. It is a good idea, therefore, to involve others in helping to frame and describe the problem at an early stage. Others may have a different perspective on the issue, or information that you don't have. Coming to a shared understanding of the problem can provide a sound basis for collaboration later on.

5 ANALYSIS

PINCH-POINTS AND PATTERNS

Scanning should have given you a well-defined problem that you've decided is important enough to do something about. Analysis is about digging deeper, to find the *causes and conditions* that allow the problem to exist and persist.

But we are not looking for any and all causes here. Important though they are, high-level factors like poverty or lack of job opportunities probably aren't things you can do much about, at least in the short term. It's the more specific or 'situational' causes and enablers, which might be amenable to local action, that you are trying to find here. These are sometimes called 'pinch-points'.

ASB incidents are often highly concentrated in time, place, and/or in terms of repeat involvement etc. These concentrations tend to be places where 'pinch points' can be found. During scanning, we identified the most obvious features of these concentrations. As we move into analysis it's worth returning to the *5Ws and an H* questions to fill in the gaps, (perhaps by sourcing and analysing additional data, making more observations or talking to relevant people).

The main job of analysis, however, is to move from **descriptions to explanations**. For example, going beyond knowing *where* a problem is concentrated to understanding *why* it happens there. This involves **interrogating the data**, in other words, asking (and trying to answer) analytical questions.

It's important to recognise that analysis isn't just for analysts; it's useful to have access to someone who knows how to work with data, but the most important thing is having an *analytical mindset* – in other words, knowing what questions to ask and thinking carefully about how to support or challenge your working theories using evidence and information.

ASKING ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS

Some analytical questions will emerge from the information you have already collected; you may have ideas about why a problem persists that you can explore and test.

Other questions can be prompted by more formal theories about how and why ASB and crime tend to occur.

The Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT) is a good place to start, it provides a way of breaking a problem down into its component parts and looking for the points where interventions might be possible. The PAT draws on two criminological theories.

Rational Choice Theory

Highlights the way some aspects of disorderly or criminal behaviour are based on the kind of logical decision-making we all use every-day. In particular, perpetrators/offenders may, consciously or unconsciously, take account of the likely **benefits and risks** of their actions. This doesn't mean they always make the best choices or plan what they do in advance, but they may stop doing something if it becomes less rewarding or if they perceive the risks to be greater.

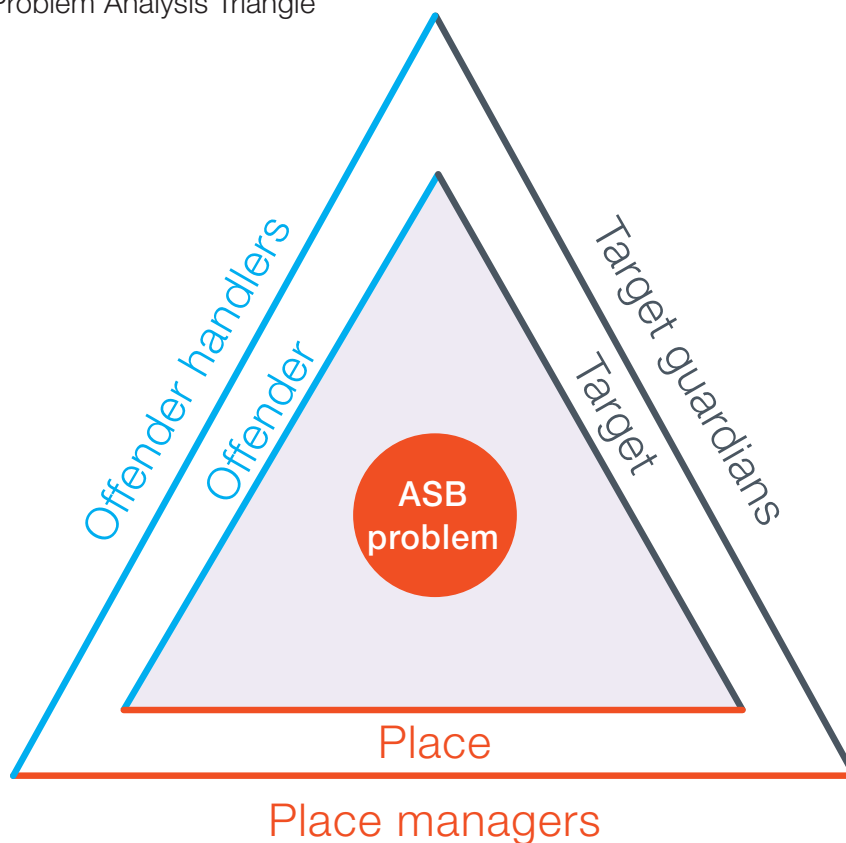


Routine Activity Theory

Emphasises the way crime and disorder events are often linked to the rhythms and patterns of everyday life. It points out that these incidents usually involve **a motivated offender and a suitable target coming together in space and time, in the absence of capable guardians**. Thinking through how and why these elements come together, and how the circumstances surrounding them could be modified, can be a useful way of approaching an ASB problem.

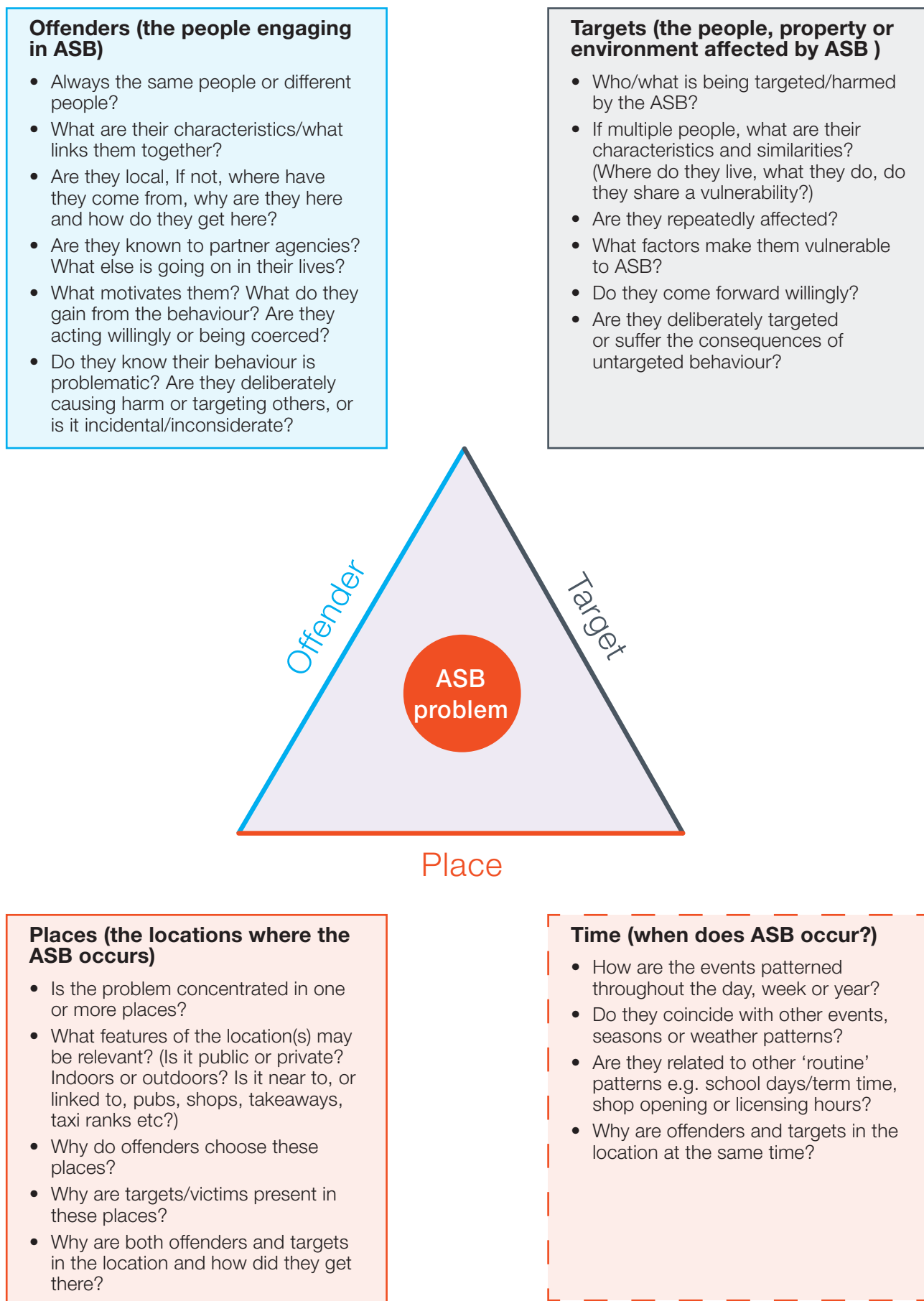


Figure 2: The Problem Analysis Triangle



The inner layer of the PAT prompts you to ask questions about three different aspects of the problem: **offenders, targets, places** and the way these converge in **time**. Figure 3 provides some examples of questions you might ask.

Figure 3: Examples of problem analysis questions



Going deeper using VOLTAGE



An extended version of this framework uses the acronym **VOLTAGE** to prompt attention to:

- **V**ictims – the people impacted or targeted
- **O**ffenders – the individuals or groups committing the ASB
- **L**ocations – the geographical concentration of the problem
- **T**ime – the ‘temporal’ features of the problem
- **A**tractors – the features of a place, time or victim group that are attracting offenders or inadvertently generating opportunities
- **G**roups – the associations, allegiances, organisations, families etc. that might be relevant to the problem
- **E**nhancers – things like drugs, alcohol, mental health or behavioural issues that might be contributing to the problem.

The second layer of the PAT then prompts you to think about the actors who may be able assist in managing or controlling these aspects of the problem.

- **Offender Handlers:** are people who could exert influence or control over offenders (e.g. parents, spouses, peer groups, teachers, mentors, probation workers, housing providers, police officers etc). The category covers both supportive and more coercive forms of influence.
- **Target Guardians:** potential victims can be encouraged to increase their own guardianship, for instance by ‘target hardening’ their property or adapting their behaviour. Guardianship can also be provided by friends, family, colleagues or community members, or by wardens, security guards or police patrols. Increasing informal vigilance or formal surveillance and encouraging neighbours to ‘look out for one another’ are ways of improving guardianship.
- **Place Managers:** are those who have some influence over, or responsibility for, controlling/ managing behaviour in the places where ASB occurs. This could include licensees or door staff in pubs and bars or landlords in rental properties. It could also include those who can modify or maintain spaces to reduce opportunities and make them less likely to attract ASB.

Some versions of the PAT include a third layer highlighting ‘**Super-Controllers**’. These are people who can influence the Handlers, Guardians and Managers (who in turn help to control the problem). For instance, door staff and bar managers can be encouraged to manage the behaviour of drinkers in and around a licensed premises, but gaining their cooperation may require input from head office or the local licensing department.

Handlers, Guardians and Managers (and Super-Controllers) are all potential allies in tackling ASB problems. Identifying who they are and what they can do to help, is a key step in moving to the next (response) phase.

SITUATIONAL PREVENTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Routine Activity Theory and Rational Choice Theory highlight the role that **opportunity** plays in generating and controlling crime and disorder. They also broaden the focus of potential interventions, from targeting offenders, to addressing the wider environmental/managerial settings in which crime/ASB occurs. Changing these conditions, to make offending more difficult or less appealing, is known as **situational prevention**.

Situational prevention covers a range of strategies, some – such as [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\)](#) – focus on the way physical security, natural/formal surveillance, movement control, and clear ownership of ‘defensible’ space’ are ‘designed in’ to the built environment to prevent crime and disorder from occurring. The [Secured by Design](#) initiative supports this work by producing design guidance and promoting uptake through police-backed accreditation schemes – [Park Mark](#), for instance, is awarded to parking facilities that adopt strong crime prevention measures.

At a local level, [Designing Out Crime Officers](#) work with architects and local authority planning departments to ensure building developments are secure and minimise opportunities for crime and disorder.

The emphasis of this work is often on preventing problems from occurring in the first place, however, aspects of the approach can also be applied reactively, e.g. as part of a problem-solving process, through the use of [Environmental Visual Audits \(EVA\)](#).

Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs)



EVAs are visual inspections conducted by Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCOs) – sometimes accompanied by relevant partners and community members – in response to an identified crime or disorder problem at a location. The aim is to understand how features of the environment contribute to the problem and make recommendations for modification. EVAs look at seven attributes of the environment:

- **Access and movement:** how people arrive at and move through the location.
- **Structure:** how buildings and spaces used for different purposes relate to one another.
- **Surveillance:** how lines of sight facilitate or inhibit responsible guardianship.
- **Ownership:** how spaces are defined and designated for specific usage.
- **Physical protection:** the security measures in place.
- **Activity:** the extent and type of use.
- **Management and maintenance:** how the area is maintained, including to remove signs of crime and disorder.

Case Study 4

describes how an EVA was used as part of an ASB problem solving initiative on an estate in Warrington.

Case Study 4: Tackling ASB and drug use on St Elphin's Estate, Warrington (Tilley Award entry 2021)

Scanning

St Elphin's was a deteriorating social housing estate near the centre of Warrington, plagued by fly tipping, graffiti, drug use and persistent ASB. Open drug dealing took place, assisted by young 'spotters' on electric scooters. Residents had become either hostile or fearful and unwilling to engage with local services, particularly following a murder several years previously.

Analysis

Reviews of crime and incident data and community engagement identified two interconnected strands to the problem: drug supply, and ASB. An EVA identified numerous design factors that enabled both to persist, (including walls and unsecured bins that could be sat/climbed on, recessed doorways and other small spaces to congregate, blind spots in alleys and unlit areas, low fencing around gardens, overgrown foliage blocking lighting and natural surveillance, ambiguous spaces and lack of rule setting in car parks, boarded up windows and other signs of disorder, and public telephones that were being used to order drugs). Intelligence analysis identified two addresses linked to much of the problematic behaviour, which were used by numerous people for excess drinking and drug taking, leading to fights and criminal damage in the surrounding area.

Response

An intervention plan was designed around a 'weed and seed' approach, involving law enforcement, community policing, and neighbourhood restoration. Enforcement included plain clothes police patrols, the seizing of illegally used electric scooters to disrupt drugs distribution networks and warrants and closure orders at problematic addresses. Following this, resident engagement activity could shift from telephone contact to more visible methods, including uniform patrols, which in turn led to information being provided about fly-tipping and enforcement action being taken. A council-led environmental 'clean up' operation and design modifications were then carried out.

Assessment

ASB calls reduced from 30 to 40 per month to zero following the closure of the problematic addresses. Resident feedback indicates a marked change in feelings of security, for instance enabling children to play outdoors.

6 RESPONSE

TAKE A BREATH

You've taken time to define the problem and thought about why it's important. You've studied the offenders, the victims/targets, locations and times, and should have some working theories about how and why the problem is occurring. You have identified some potential 'pinch-points' and some allies who can help you intervene. Surely it's time to get out there and take action?

Despite the temptation (and also, perhaps, the pressure) to get going, it's important to pause at this point, to think carefully about what you are going to do next: *designing* responses is just as important as *delivering* them.

The key here is to ensure your actions are *specifically matched* to what you learned about the problem during scanning and analysis. It's likely that there are some standard options available, or 'best practice' examples from elsewhere: but think carefully before reaching for these. Are they really the best tools for this particular job? Perhaps they need to be adapted for your local context? Or, maybe something different altogether would be more appropriate, even if it takes time and effort to set up.

MECHANISMS, THEORIES OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODELS

The key to good problem solving is thinking through exactly *how* the action you take will lead to the outcome you want. This is called the *mechanism*. One or more mechanisms can form a *Theory of Change*. You can clarify your Theory of Change by writing a **logic model**.

Logic models

Logic models present a theory about how an intervention is intended to lead to a desired outcome, within a particular context. A simple logic model could have four main parts.

Context: It is helpful to begin with a recap of the **problem**, focusing on the 'pinch-points' you identified during analysis and other relevant factors.

Intervention: The next step details the **activity** you plan to take and the **outputs** you intent to deliver (even though this comes next in the sequence, you may want to work backwards to it after thinking about outcomes and mechanisms). You can also consider the **inputs** and **resources** that you will need to do deliver the activity.

Mechanisms: This is a detailed description of the immediate changes 'in the world' that you anticipate will happen as a result of your actions (it's the crucial statement of how it will work).

Outcomes: Finally, what **outcomes** do you want to achieve as a result of the intervention? (Some versions of SARA include an O for Objective (i.e. OSARA) this is intended to keep you focused on the intended outcome as you work through the process).

Actions and outputs can also activate **unintended mechanisms** and result in **unwanted consequences**. Logic models can help you anticipate and avoid or **mitigate** these.



Setting everything out in this way can help to identify weaknesses, oversights or dependencies in your plan (see Table 2).



Does the flow of actions and outputs to mechanisms and outcomes seem plausible and likely to happen? If not, you may need to go back and think again.

Table 2: Example logic model, (based on Case Study 3)⁶

1. Context		
Problem summary	The available parking on residential streets in Northwest Sheffield is insufficient for modern vehicle ownership levels. This frequently leads to motorists parking illegally and inconsiderately (e.g. on pavements, zigzags and near junctions etc.), creating danger for pedestrians, obstructing service vehicles and causing nuisance to residents. Current enforcement is ineffective, and the presence of unchallenged, illegally/inconsiderately parked vehicles encourages other motorists to also ignore the rules.	
2. Intervention		
Inputs and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to develop portal and publicity • Training for PCSOs • Budget for publicity • Analytical resource to assess impact 	
Actions and outputs	Create and publicise a public online-reporting portal with capacity to collect photographic evidence. Promptly respond to public reports with warnings, prosecutions, referrals and explanations. Together, this will result in increased number of warnings and enforcement actions.	
3. Mechanisms		
How it will work	<p>Intended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motorists who receive warnings and penalties will refrain from further infringement. 2. Motorists who become aware of more effective enforcement, and anti-social consequences of poor parking through publicity, will change behaviour. 3. 1 and 2 will, in turn, reduce the potential for ‘contagion’ by reducing excuses and implicit ‘permission’ given by poorly parked vehicles. 	<p>Potential unintended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motorists may see and confront residents taking photos. 2. Motorists will look for alternative (inappropriate) places to park. 3. Motorists may avoid coming to the area.
4. Outcomes		
What will happen	<p>Intended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fewer illegally/inconsiderately parked vehicles. 2. Reduced danger and obstruction. 3. Reduction in nuisance/complaints by residents/improved quality of life. 	<p>Potential unintended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arguments, threats, confrontations 2. Displacement of parking issues to other streets 3. Local businesses suffer from reduced customers

Mitigators:

1. Issue guidance for residents on safe procedures
2. Consider possible displacement when designing coverage
3. Engage and monitor.


6. NB: this is an illustrative example prepared for this toolkit based on the scenario described in Case Study 3.

SITUATIONAL MECHANISMS

In Section 5 we saw how situational prevention approaches, that seek to reduce opportunities are often used in problem solving. [Cornish](#) and [Clarke](#) set out 25 types of situational mechanisms that can help when designing a response and writing a logic model. It's worth thinking through which might be most applicable to your problem.

Table 3: 25 Situational techniques

Increase effort	Increase the risks	Reduce the rewards	Reduce provocations	Remove excuses
1. Target harden	6. Extend guardianship	11. Conceal targets	16. Reduce frustration and stress	21. Set rules
2. Control access	7. Assist natural surveillance	12. Remove targets	17. Avoid disputes	22. Post instructions
3. Screen exits	8. Reduce anonymity	13. Identify property	18. Reduce emotional arousal	23. Alert conscience
4. Deflect	9. Utilise place managers	14. Disrupt markets	19. Neutralise peer pressure	24. Assist compliance
5. Control tools	10. Strengthen formal surveillance	15. Deny benefits	20. Discourage imitation	25. Control drugs and alcohol



A WORD ON IMPLEMENTATION

Once you have identified a set of activities that you think might trigger mechanisms that will impact on your problem, its (finally!) time to get going. There isn't space in this guide to go into detail about the practicalities of effectively delivering intervention programmes, but it's worth emphasising that good project management, organisation and tasking process are all crucial for putting a well-crafted problem-solving plan into action – especially when it has multiple components and/or involves several agencies or contributors.

Partnership Practice example B describes how agencies in Cumbria have set up partnership 'hubs' to coordinate problem-solving activity.

Partnership Practice Example B: Local Focus Hubs: Cumbria

Partners in Cumbria have set up six Local Focus Hubs to coordinate problem-oriented partnership working. Hubs are staffed by co-located managers and coordinators, employed by local authorities and police, who facilitate inter-agency working, support information sharing and administer a problem referral and analysis process. Wider contributors coordinate via a Microsoft Teams data platform and meet monthly to agree priorities, progress cases and set tasks.

THE ASB EVIDENCE-BASE

When identifying mechanisms and designing problem responses, it is useful to know what has been tried previously and how successful it has been.

There may already be a history of local efforts to tackle the problem, so it is worth finding out what has been tried already and what was learned.

In addition, problem responses can be informed by the wider body of research evidence about the *kinds* of interventions that have been shown to be effective in the past.

There is a need for care here, however. Unfortunately, it's rarely as simple as replicating "what works". This is because research shows that very little (if anything) works everywhere, or every time, and that subtle differences in the nature of the problem, the context in which it occurs, or the way the response is delivered, can make big differences to the outcomes.

Because similar interventions can produce different results, researchers carry out exercises called *systematic reviews* and *meta-analyses* to bring findings from multiple studies together and assess whether an approach appears to be effective *overall*.

The next sections summarise some of the wider evidence-base, that can help to inform problem-oriented responses to ASB. Where there is high-quality evidence⁷ that a type of intervention is effective, it is highlighted in **in bold**.⁸

SITUATIONAL PREVENTION

Several forms of situational intervention have a strong evidence base. This is generally best for acquisitive crime prevention, but some studies show an effect on ASB (or disorder) as well, for example:

- **Alley gating** (installing lockable gates on passageways, particularly around older style urban terraces) is effective for reducing burglary. Some studies show that residents also report less ASB (across a range of categories) when gates are installed. There is also some evidence that closing off whole streets can have a positive impact on issues like drugs activity and prostitution, although this is likely to be highly specific to the situation.
- Meta-analyses show that **CCTV** is effective at reducing a range of crimes, including drugs offences, although there are differences across context, with the best results relating to car parks. Taken together, the small number of studies that measured the impact on disorder/ASB, did not find a significant effect.

7. i.e. based on systematic reviews or meta-analyses. Many of these can be accessed via the [What Works Centre for Crime Reduction](#), hosted by the College of Policing.

8. It is worth noting that the evidence-base specifically on ASB is relatively limited, and we have therefore also included studies and reviews covering categories such as 'disorder' and 'delinquency'. In other areas, where there is either strong general evidence of effectiveness (but less specifically relating to ASB), or where the evidence is less extensive but there is a firm theoretical link to ASB, we have had to make judgements about which material to include and leave out.

- A systematic review of 15 studies on the effect of **'watching eye' imagery**, which aims to increase the *perception* of surveillance, showed a positive reduction in anti-social acts (including littering, dog fouling, cycle theft and engine idling) of 35 percent overall, compared with controls.
- There is good evidence that **enhanced street lighting** can be effective. A systematic review of 13 studies from the USA and UK found an average 21 per cent reduction in outcome measures in trial sites, compared with controls. Although most of these studies focused on property and violent crime, there is some evidence of an impact on disorder as well. The review examined two potential mechanisms: 1) deterring offenders by increasing visibility/natural surveillance and 2) demonstrating investment in the neighbourhood, leading to increased community pride and informal social control (see below). Greater reductions during daylight hours suggested the latter was more plausible.

Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy refers to how well neighbours know and trust one another, and whether local people feel others will step in to help sort out local issues. There is evidence that neighbourhoods with high collective efficacy suffer from less crime and disorder. This could be because potential offenders, who know the area, will change their behaviour if they feel they are more likely to be challenged or reported by residents.

The research evidence is less clear on what (if anything) local agencies can do to increase collective efficacy (and therefore increase protection against crime and ASB). A recent rapid evidence review found that, where people think the police are effective and supportive they are more likely to take collective action. One study indicated that visible policing may have a small positive effect on collective efficacy (operating through perceived fairness).

Collective efficacy (or similar neighbourhood processes) may help explain why **Neighbourhood Watch** has been found to be effective for reducing burglary.

Partnership Practice example C describes how participatory budgeting is being used to build collective efficacy in Merseyside.

Partnership Practice Example C: Participatory Budgeting in Merseyside

Participatory budgeting brings communities together to make decisions about how funds should be spent. Merseyside Police have run several events in areas suffering from crime, ASB and deprivation. Coordinators involve partners, local businesses and community members in securing funding, publicising the scheme and convening community events, at which applications from local charities and community groups are considered and put to a public vote. The process provides engagement opportunities, brings community groups together and empowers local people to make a collective difference to their community.

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

There has been substantial research on the effectiveness of various forms of social support, thinking skills and therapeutic interventions on individual-level anti-social behavioural outcomes. These interventions are less often associated with problem solving, but some SARA processes have identified gaps in service provision, or local cohorts or individuals for whom targeted service provision could be beneficial.

- There is good evidence that **social skills training** aimed at young people can reduce anti-social behaviour. A review of more than 80 studies (mostly from the USA) found that structured programmes that taught non-aggressive thinking skills (social-control, anger management, victim empathy etc.) had a small but robust impact on anti-social behaviour (variously measured using self/parent/teacher-reported behaviour, observations and official incident records), with larger effects on other measures of social skills. The best results were for programmes with a strong basis in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (which also has a supportive **evidence base**, although studies have tended to focus on more serious criminal behaviour), and for young people who were already showing signs of problematic behaviour.
- **Sports programmes** designed specifically to address crime and delinquency have demonstrated positive impacts. A review of 13 studies, including nine from the UK, found statistically significant reductions across a range of outcomes (including official and self-reported reoffending, arrests, aggression, drug use and social control) as well as on measures of self-esteem and mental well-being. There is some evidence for a positive effect of **music making** programmes on social skills but not on behavioural outcomes.
- **Wilderness challenge programmes**, involving physically demanding group activities in remote locations, have been used to address delinquent behaviour in young people, particularly in the USA. A review found an overall positive impact on reoffending behaviour, compared to non-participant controls, potentially relating to improved self-esteem, social skills and self-control. Evidence on **boot camp** programmes (in the USA) is more mixed, with greater indicators of success where a therapeutic element is included and where attendance is voluntary.
- **Mentoring** (extended interactions between a more experienced mentor and an 'at risk' mentee), has a generally strong evidence base in terms of impact on ASB ('delinquency') among young people, although several studies have shown a negative effect. A review of 25 (mostly US) studies found a statistically positive effects on delinquent behaviour (variously measured) and academic achievement. The effects were strongest where advocacy or emotional support were prominent features of the relationship, however a **second review** emphasised practical support and 'role modelling' as potential mechanisms.
- For young people with chronic behavioural problems, who cannot live at home, placement in the care of **foster parents** who have had therapeutic training, (often as part of a wider programme of structured support) has been shown to have a significant positive impact on delinquent/anti-social behaviours. Part of the effect may relate to the way fostering separates the individual from peers compared with other forms of mainstream care.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Responses to ASB will often involve contact between offenders and the police and criminal justice system. Evidence indicates that:

- For young people in particular, **pre-charge diversion** (such as various forms of police caution or reprimand, which can be linked to early intervention and support work) is (modestly, but statistically significantly) less likely to lead to reoffending, compared to a criminal prosecution.
- In general, there is evidence that **restorative justice conferences** reduce reoffending, but the evidence is limited to violent crime, and when undertaken as part of a criminal justice process. Effectiveness in relation to ASB specifically, has not been tested.

Focused deterrence

Focused deterrence strategies concentrate on a small number of individuals responsible for a disproportionate amount of offending. They bring agencies together to offer targeted support and assistance to support behaviour change, while also reinforcing the criminal justice consequences of continued offending. Some versions also mobilise community members to reinforce key messages.

A **systematic review** of 24 (mostly US) studies indicated that overall, the strategy is effective, however most studies dealt with violent gang-related crime or prolific criminality. Interventions targeted at crime and disorder associated with street-level drugs markets were less effective.

Procedural justice

There is strong evidence linking people's perceptions of *procedural justice* during their interactions with police, courts and other public agencies, to their willingness to obey the law, comply with authorities and act in a pro-social way.

Procedural justice can be broken down into *fair process* (e.g. being given a voice, being listened to, experiencing neutral and even-handed decision making), and *decent treatment* (being treated politely, respectfully, with concern for dignity etc.). In other words, if people feel they are being treated fairly and decently by authorities, they may be less likely to commit ASB, and more likely to comply with requests or orders to change their behaviour.

Research has identified ways that ASB powers such as Community Protection Notices and Public Space Protection Orders can be applied in more procedurally just ways. Any response involving the use of powers should consider how these will be received and perceived by those subject to them.

Procedural justice also applies to interactions with those who report ASB and communities more broadly. **Community engagement and dialogue** can support perceptions of procedural justice/legitimacy and provide a firm basis for community involvement/cooperation in problem solving work.

ADDRESSING ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND HOMELESSNESS

ASB is often linked to wider social issues such as drug or alcohol misuse, or homelessness:

- A systematic review found a positive effect of **increasing the price of alcohol** across a range of public health measures, including violence, drug use, driving offences and (based on a small number of studies) wider 'misbehaviour'/disorder/police contact incidents. Studies of the effect of **restricting alcohol sales** (e.g. through licensing variation) show mixed findings, although they generally tend to indicate greater harm associated with longer opening hours. These studies tend to focus on wider public health outcomes including drink driving and violence rather than ASB.
- There is evidence that **drug treatment** is effective in reducing offending (in general) and some international evidence for specialist **drug courts** that support and supervise drug addicted offenders during rehabilitation.
- The [Centre for Homelessness Impact](#) has collated an evidence-base of interventions that are effective in tackling homelessness. The best evidence relates to:
 - Providing access to health services.
 - Case management (Critical Time Intervention).
 - Discharge support for those leaving institutions (such as prison).
 - Housing First programmes (that provide housing to those with complex need with minimal obligations).
 - Supporting substance misuse.

Case Study 5

shows how a multi-agency problem-solving process was used to address ASB related to homelessness in Leamington Spa.

Case Study 5: Operation Redgate, a response to aggressive begging in Leamington Spa (Tilley Award Category Winner, 2018)

Scanning

From 2013 onwards, community concerns began to grow about the number of people aggressively begging, rough sleeping and engaging in related ASB in and around the centre of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. The problem was also linked to an increase in theft, shoplifting and drug use. Numerous locations, including pay and display machines in car parks, were being targeted, with problems persisting throughout the day and into the evening. University students were among those targeted in the night-time economy.

Case Study 5 (continued)

Analysis

Analysis drew on a survey of those found begging in the town, which found that all were addicted to drugs and were begging to feed their habit. Most (but not all) were also rough sleeping; few had previously received drug treatment, and begging was considered a preferable option to committing acquisitive crime. Specific begging locations and rough sleeping sites in and around disused buildings and doorways were identified. A public survey showed a level of awareness, annoyance and concern, rather than intimidation. Previous enforcement activity was judged to have largely been ineffective.

Response

Two multi-agency groups were established. The first sought to manage and target the highest-risk individuals with tailored support and intervention, including moving some into supported treatment programmes. The second focused on supporting those affected by the begging behaviour, including through sharing information and considering enforcement options against persistent individuals (and/or referral to the first group). The forum also coordinated situational modifications, including boarding up doorways and placing planters in rough sleeping/begging locations, replacing coin with card-only payment machines in car parks and introducing signage. Based on a public survey, a media campaign was launched to channel public donations into a charitable fund rather than giving directly to those begging.

Assessment

A large reduction in incidents relating to the scheme's top ten nominals was reported. Public surveys showed clear improvement in how well people thought the problems were being managed. The work of the partnership was recognised by the award of a significant grant to open a rough sleepers' hostel in the town.

Case Study 6

describes an innovative approach to tackling ASB linked to street drinking.

Case Study 6: Reducing street drinking in Wakefield (Tilley Awards entry, 2020)

Scanning

Wakefield town centre was experiencing daily anti-social behaviour incidents, linked to street drinking. Previous enforcement of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) had proven time consuming and ineffective.

Analysis

Licensing visits identified several independent off-licences believed to be disregarding their obligations (e.g. selling to intoxicated drinkers, charging below minimum unit prices, off-till sales, turning off CCTV etc.) as well as indications of other criminality (e.g. illicit tobacco sales). It was hypothesised that these practices were driving the problematic behaviour.

Response

A can-marking scheme was introduced using a novel Smartwater technique (an invisible, traceable substance, made visible by UV light). This allowed seized cans to be linked back to the store from which they had been bought. The scheme was voluntary, with all six premises of concern who were approached, agreeing to take part.

Assessment

Two of the premises immediately removed all of the higher strength alcohol products from sale. Another was found to be in breach of the agreement, and engaging in illicit tobacco sales, and had its licence revoked. Others were challenged over breaches and agreed to licensing variations that restricted sales of stronger beers and ciders. The number of PSPO alcohol confiscations in the area reduced by over 50 per cent following the Smartwater introduction.

8 ASSESSMENT

REVIEWING AND EVALUATING

Assessment is often the phase of SARA completed least comprehensively, but if done well it can transform a limited tactical response into a more dynamic process of learning and refinement.

Assessment is about reviewing the response activity, understanding whether it (or some aspect of it) 'worked' and informing decisions about what to do next.

There are three questions to consider:

1. **What activity happened?**
2. **How did the problem change?**
3. **Did the activity change the problem?**

In practice, if the initiative is smaller in scale or if analytical support is limited, it might be enough to address the first two questions. But if the work involved more resources, or if there are plans to roll it out, exploring cause and effect (question 3) should also be considered.

The following sub-sections deal with these three questions in turn. A worked example (based on a burglary problem-solving initiative carried out in Luton (Bedfordshire) is included as Appendix 4).

PROCESS EVALUATION: WHAT ACTIVITY HAPPENED?

To investigate what (if any) impact the response had, it's first important to be clear about exactly what was done. Often, the activities set out in the logic model or project plan, don't happen as anticipated and it's important to take this into account. For instance, if you find out that the intervention wasn't effective, it's important to know if the idea was flawed (sometimes called *theory failure*), or if it just wasn't delivered properly (*implementation failure*).

To decide which it is, you'll need to carry out a **Process Evaluation**. This involves reviewing the activity to understand any gaps between the plan and reality.

Process evaluation can involve:

- Collating records of the activities undertaken.
- Keeping a response 'diary' to log activities, decisions, and challenges.
- Speaking to people involved in delivery, to find out what they did, what problems they encountered and what they learned from the process.

It's important to plan for this during the response phase by keeping good records.

(See Appendix A4.2 for an example of a process evaluation).

TRACKING CHANGE: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PROBLEM?

During scanning and analysis, you assembled a detailed picture of what the problem was like before you implemented the response. The second task of assessment is to establish what, if anything, changed during and after the activity.

How you do this will depend on the scale and nature of the problem. If it only affects a few residents or businesses, it may be enough to speak to them periodically, to see if the issue has persisted, improved or changed.

Often, however, you will need to make an assessment using data. It's likely that scanning and analysis gave you a quantitative (or numerical) measure of how severe or intense the problem was before the intervention began (e.g. a count of relevant ASB incidents in an area over time – perhaps covering a series of weeks, months or quarters).

Continuing these counts during and after the response can indicate whether the problem has changed. This is sometimes called a **time series** analysis or making a **pre-post** comparison. (Appendix A4.3 contains further details on testing for **statistical significance** and **shift-share** analysis, which can be used to identify changes in a target area when there are also background trends to consider).

Finally, it is worth remembering that counts of incidents or crime records can be influenced by changes in public reporting levels or organisational recording practices, not just by changes in the problem itself.

CAUSE AND EFFECT: DID THE ACTIVITY CHANGE THE PROBLEM?

You now know what response activity happened and whether the problem changed. The most difficult question to answer is whether the activity *caused* any changes you have observed.

You can never be completely certain of this, but you can find evidence that your intervention is a more or less likely explanation. There are two strategies for doing so.

Look for data signatures

Your logic model described the mechanism(s) through which the response activity might be expected to impact on a problem. Sometimes, it is possible to find patterns or 'signatures' in the outcome data that correspond to your mechanisms. This can support the hypothesis that it was your intervention, and not some other factor, that led to the change.

For example, if you are seeking to reduce ASB in an area by improving streetlighting, a reduction in incidents during hours of darkness (only) would suggest it had been effective.

Use a counterfactual

Counterfactuals are used to estimate what *would* have happened if the response activity had not taken place.

There are several ways to generate counterfactuals; the most robust (those used in high quality scientific studies) tend to be more difficult to implement and may involve doing the response differently.

The **Maryland Scale** presents a hierarchy of approaches to generating evidence about impact using counterfactuals. Pre-to-post comparisons (see above) sit at level 2 of the scale, because they do not attempt to rule out other explanations for change.

Level 4 and 5 studies require multiple cases or experimental sites, which are not available in most 'real-world' problem-solving initiatives.

The Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods



- Level 1** Correlation between intervention and an outcome measure
- Level 2** Pre-to-post comparison of outcome measures
- Level 3** Pre-to-post comparison of outcome measures, compared with pre-to-post comparison in a similar control site/group
- Level 4** Pre-to-post intervention comparisons across multiple programme and control sites/cases
- Level 5** Random assignment of sites/cases to intervention and control conditions

An aspiration for good-quality problem-solving assessment, therefore, should be to reach Maryland level 3.

To do this, you will need to identify an appropriate **control or comparison** site (or group). For a place-based initiative, the idea is to find a similar location (or locations), where it is reasonable to assume that the outcomes would have been similar to your intervention area, if the intervention activity had not taken place.

There are no hard and fast rules about how to select a good comparison site, but you should have a sound reason to believe that it is similar to your activity area in ways relevant to the problem. For instance:

- You'll probably want to find areas with similar levels, rates or patterns of the problem indicators (e.g. ASB levels).
- If your problem relates to (e.g.) the night-time economy, you might look for an area with a similar profile of pubs and bars.
- If your problem relates to ASB in car parks or parks, you will want to find others with similar characteristics.
- If the intervention relates to (e.g.) a targeted family support programme, you might choose an area with similar levels of deprivation, employment, educational attainment etc.
- If displacement is a potential issue (see below), you should avoid choosing areas adjacent to your activity area.

(Appendix sections A4.4 and A4.5 describe a problem-solving assessment that examined data signatures and used matched comparison sites).

A WORD ON DISPLACEMENT

It's important to look out for negative or unintended consequences of responses, as well as good ones. Displacement – or just 'shifting' the problem, rather than solving/reducing it – is one example. Displacement can involve the problem moving to another place or time, or offenders changing to a different tactic or offence type.

Research tends to show that a **diffusion of benefits** is actually more likely than displacement. For example, hotspot policing is more likely to have a positive impact in surrounding area than to move the problem elsewhere, but it's a good idea to check for displacement, (and there are [ways of doing this](#) based on mapped crime data).

PROMOTING A PROBLEM-SOLVING CULTURE

VIRTUOUS CIRCLES

As we noted in Section 3, SARA is best seen as cycle rather than a sequence. Whether or not your response has been effective, working through the phases of scanning, analysis, response and assessment, should have left you better informed about the causes of the ASB problem, the barriers and enablers to responding effectively, and left you well placed to decide what to do next.

It should also have left you better connected and with new allies. Jointly working through problems, finding a common understanding, sharing goals, and learning what others can contribute, is a surefire way to galvanise partnership collaboration.

It is also likely that you have improved working relationships with the public. As many of our case studies show, good problem solving often engages, consults and involves local residents and communities, and there is good evidence that this process, in itself, improves citizen satisfaction and perceptions of local disorder.

In short, there are benefits to problem solving that go well beyond the measurable crime and disorder reductions it can produce.

AND FINALLY ... TELL EVERYBODY!

When regulatory expert Professor Malcolm Sparrow was asked to summarise problem-oriented practice he offered eight words: “*pick important problems: fix them: then tell everybody!*”. The final two are important.

Problem solving interventions makes great stories. They have beginnings, middles and ends. They contain revelation and discovery, offer new ways of looking at the world, feature alliances forged, setbacks overcome, real people in real places saved from misery, and the triumph of sense and order over chaos and dysfunction. These are the types of stories that your colleagues, partners and communities want and need to hear. And they are not just stories: they contain data, analysis, close observations and carefully weighed evidence about cause and effect. They may even persuade your bosses that there are different ways of doing things! So, finally, get good at telling problem-solving stories and let everyone know what you've done.

APPENDIX 1

CHECKLIST OF PROBLEM-SOLVING TOOLS

Stage	Tool	Summary
Overall	SARA	Problem solving is often divided into four phases: Scanning (identifying, defining and prioritising problems), Analysis (studying problems to explain why they persist), Response (designing and delivering interventions), Assessment (reviewing the response and its impact, to aid future decision making). It can be helpful to see SARA as a cycle.
	5Is	The 5Is framework provides another way of structuring the problem-solving process. Intelligence is about understanding the problem, Intervention is about designing a response, Implementation focusses on delivery, Involvement emphasises collaboration and Impact is about evaluating process and impact.
	CHEERS!	Helps ensure you are thinking about problems in the right way: if the issue affects the Community , causes Harm , generates Expectation and comprises Events that Recur and are Similar . Then it is probably suitable for a problem-solving response.
Scanning	5Ws and an H	Scanning starts by describing the problem: What is happening? Who is involved? Where and When is it happening? Why is it happening (what are the actors' motives)? And, How does it occur?
	Signal Crime Theory	Is a way of thinking about the messages that crime and disorder sends to the public about their security. Structured engagement activity, like KIN surveys, can help prioritise the problems that worry people most.
Analysis	Rational Choice Theory (RCT)	Prompts you to think about how altering the perceived benefits and risks of anti-social action might change behaviour.
	Routine Activity Theory (RAT)	Focusses on the way crime and disorder involve motivated offenders and suitable targets , coming together in the absence of guardians . How might conditions be modified to prevent this from happening?
	The Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT)	Draws on RCT and RAT to focus on three facets of the problem: Offenders, Targets and Places and on the Handlers, Guardians and Managers who can help control them.
	VOLTAGE	Adds extra dimensions to the PAT. What factors relating to Victims, Offenders, Locations, Time, Attractors, Groups or Enhancers might be important for understanding and controlling the problem?
	Environmental Visual Audits	Well-designed spaces can help prevent crime and ASB. EVAs are conducted by Designing Out Crime Officers to identify environmental factors that might be contributing to the problem.
Response	Logic Models	Are detailed descriptions of exactly how an intervention is intended to work. They set out the Inputs and Resources required to delivery Activities and Outputs that will trigger Mechanisms that lead to intended Outcomes . They can also help you think about unintended mechanisms and consequences and take actions to mitigate them.
	25 Situational Techniques	A list of potential mechanisms that might help reduce ASB by increasing the effort or risk involved for offenders, reducing perceived rewards or provocations or removing excuses .
Assessment	Process Evaluation	To assess the response, it's important to understand what was actually delivered . Did the activity happen exactly as planned, and if not, how might that influence the outcome? Process evaluations can involve analysis of activity records and seeking feedback from the people involved.
	The Maryland Scale	Grades the different types of evidence that can help you understand whether a response had an impact. For most problem-solving responses, it should be possible to undertake a pre-post comparison (level 2) and perhaps add a comparison site/group (level 3).
	Counterfactuals	Allow you to estimate what would have happened if you hadn't undertaken the response activity, for instance by selecting a comparison site.

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF ASB POWERS

Power	Summary	Who can apply/use?
Civil Injunctions	Issued by county, High or youth courts to prohibit individuals from engaging in specified behaviours or requiring engagement with services. Must be shown (on balance of probabilities) that individual has engaged/ threatened to engage in conduct likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress (variation when housing related). Breach can result in unlimited fine or two years in prison (over 18s).	Local councils Social landlords Police Environment Agency Others
Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)	Issued by criminal court against person convicted of an offence where shown (beyond reasonable doubt) that offender has engaged in conduct caused/ likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress. Breach is a criminal offence.	CPS following request from police or council
Dispersal Power	Applied to specified area for up to 48 hours by authorising police officer (Inspector or above). Where in place, a police officer in uniform (or PCSO) can direct an individual committing ASB to leave area for up to 48 hours (in writing if practicable). If under 16, person can be taken home or to place of safety. Officer can confiscate ASB-related items.	Police
Community Protection Notice (CPN)	Can be issued, following a warning, to individual (16+) or business committing ASB that is persistent, unreasonable and detrimental to local quality of life. Can include requirements to cease behaviour and/or rectify its impact. Breach is criminal offence punishable with a fine.	Council officers Police officers Social landlords (designated by council)
Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) (Special provisions also available for making an Expedited PSPO where rapid action is required)	Can be applied to a public area, where persistent, unreasonable behaviour has/is likely to have detrimental effect on quality of life. Failure of an individual to comply, when challenged by police/council officer is criminal offence, punishable by fine.	Local council, following consultation with others.
Closure Powers	Closure Notices (up to 48 hours) or Orders (up to 6 months) can be issued at premises where public nuisance (for Notices) or disorderly/offensive/ criminal activity (for Orders) has/is likely to occur. While in place, access is restricted (for Notices) or prohibited (for Orders). Breach carries prison sentence or fine.	Council Police (Rank/seniority of authorising officer depends on duration. May require Magistrates authorisation).
Absolute Ground for Possession	Where tenant (or other occupant/visitor) is convicted of serious crime or breach of order/injunction that affects locality/local residents, landlord can apply for outright possession of premises.	Local Authority landlords Housing associations Private landlords
Community Remedy	After community consultation, PCC publishes a Community Remedy document, setting out appropriate punishment for less serious crime/ ASB incidents, that are dealt with by Community Resolution. Where police officer (or other authorised person) has evidence that individual committed ASB, (where they admit behaviour and agree to participate), officer and victim together decide on appropriate remedy option.	Used by police officer (or other authorised person) in consultation with victim.
ASB Case Review	ASB victim can request case review. Where locally set threshold is met councils, police (and other agencies where relevant) must review case to ensure problem-solving approach is adopted to identify relevant causes and implement solutions.	ASB victims or representatives. Police, council (and others) must review where threshold met.

APPENDIX 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UK ASB POLICY

It has long been recognised that a wide range of troubling activities take place in communities that extends well beyond ‘crime’: American sociologist Egon Bittner famously described police work as dealing with: *“something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now!”*.⁹ This broad police mission often overlaps with the remit of other agencies, particularly when it is less about dealing with what is happening *now!* and more about the fact that it’s happening *again!*

In the 1990s, the British government began focusing on the way persistent disorder and (so called) ‘low level’ crime had a major impact on people’s lives but wasn’t always dealt with effectively.

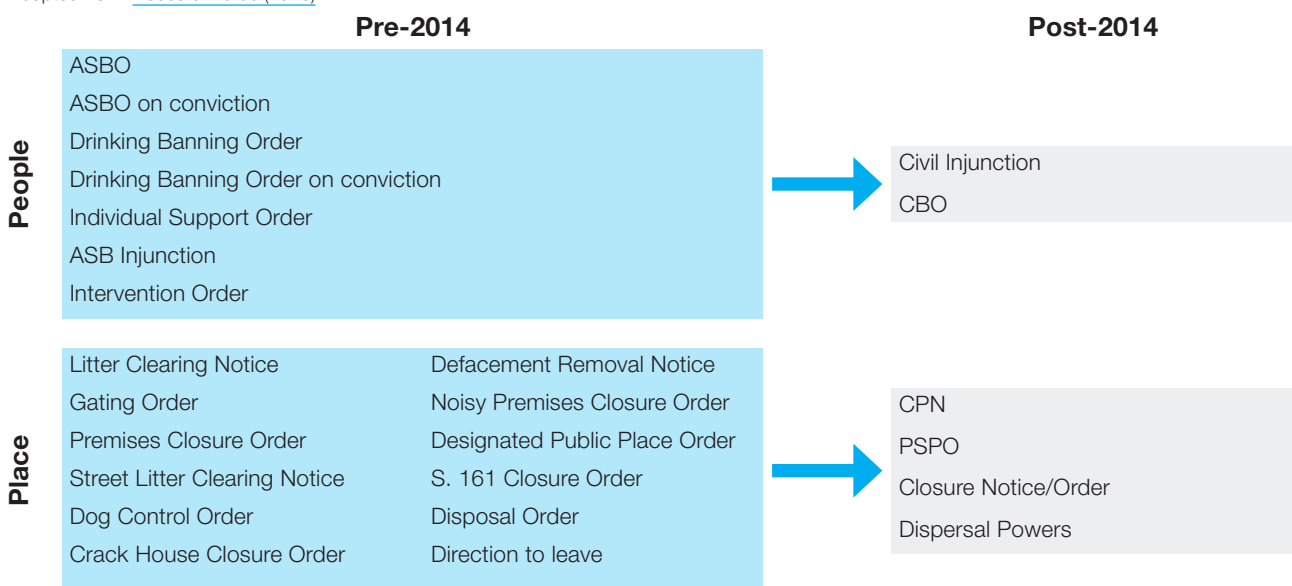
In 1998, new legal powers were introduced to impose extra controls on people who were causing disorder (including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, ASBOs) or in the places where ASB occurred (including Dispersal Orders). Tackling ASB was also set as a priority for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), (which later became Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)), and Neighbourhood Policing Teams, when rolled out nationally from 2005.

Tragic cases like those of Fiona Pilkington, who killed herself and her disabled daughter in 2007 following years of harassment, and David Askew who died in 2010 following an altercation with a group of youths, served as reminders of how harmful ASB can be, and aligned it with a wider shift for many agencies, towards vulnerability and safeguarding.

In 2014 the Coalition government decided to consolidate the many powers available to deal with ASB (see Figure A1) and introduced new sanctions and out-of-court tools. They also brought in a Community Trigger (now called an ASB Case Review) which requires local partners to review cases highlighted by residents where a threshold is met. More broadly, there was a shift away from central government initiatives towards more local control and accountability for how ASB was handled.

Figure A3.1: Anti-social Behaviour Powers pre and post 2014

Adapted from: [House of Lords \(2016\)](#)



From 2012 until 2020 the national Troubled Families programme sought to improve a range of

9. Bittner, E., 1990. Aspects of policework. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

outcomes (including involvement in ASB) for families with complex and costly needs, through targeted, multi-agency support and early intervention. The programme demonstrated a range of positive results including indications of reduced ASB.

Most recently, the 2023 government ASB Action Plan set out plans for investment in police hotspot patrols and enforcement, new Immediate Justice provisions, a ban on nitrous oxide, expanded in-custody drug testing, new laws to address aggressive begging and speedier evictions of disruptive tenants. Some on the spot fines were also increased and there are more funds for youth support and council renovations.

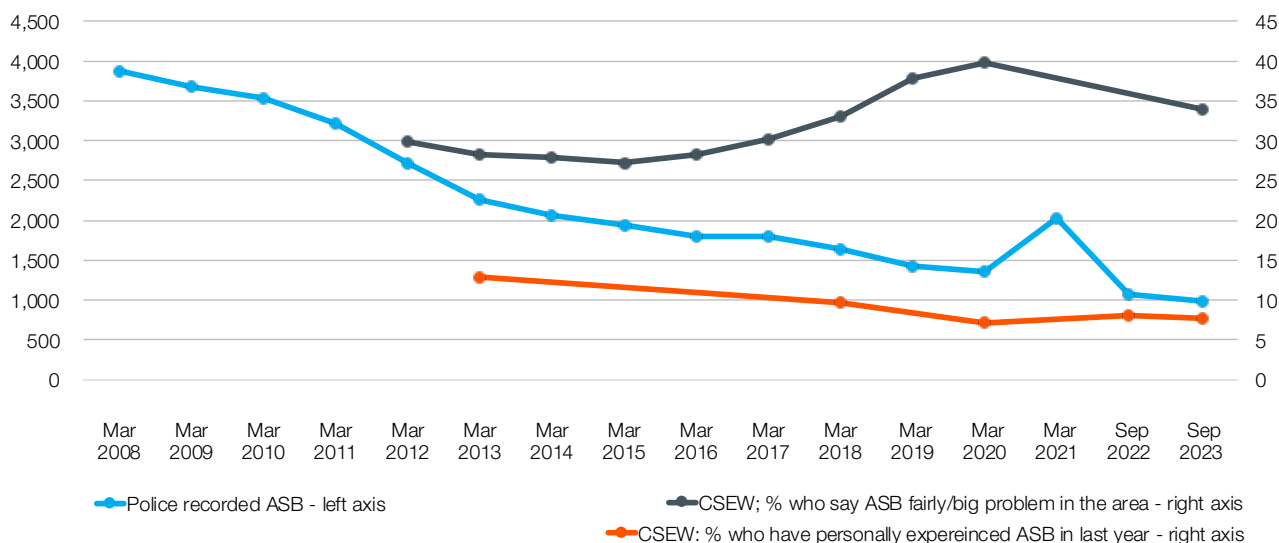
National trends in ASB are difficult to assess. The proportion of Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) respondents who say that ASB is a 'fairly' or 'big' problem in their area increased between 2015 and 2020 but had fallen back a little when the survey resumed after Covid-19 in 2023.

During the same period, however, the proportion who said they had *personally* experienced ASB declined slightly.

Police recorded ASB figures should be treated with caution due to changes in recording practices, but (with the exception of a spike during Covid) have been on a downward trend for the last 15 years.

Chart A3.1: ASB trends in England and Wales

Source: ONS and ONS



APPENDIX 4

AN ASSESSMENT CASE-STUDY

A.4.1 EVALUATING THE LUTON BURGLARY REDUCTION INITIATIVE (BRI)

Between 2012 and 2015 the Police Foundation worked with police and multi-agency partners in two English towns (including Luton in Bedfordshire) to explore how local services might best reduce crime at a time of social, technological and organisational change.

The [research](#) took an Action Research approach and involved close cooperation between researchers and practitioners throughout a long-term problem-oriented programme. The Luton component of the project is summarised below.

Scanning: The project focused on two wards in the town, with high crime rates and changing population demographics. Burglary was a partnership priority (at the start of the period), a persistent issue in both wards, and was chosen as the focus for the work.

Analysis: Detailed analytical work identified some distinctive features of the problem.

- *Victims:* frequently lived in low-end private rented properties with poor home security. Laptops and phones were often taken.
- *Offenders:* included problematic drug users and younger ‘generalist’ offenders.
- *Locations:* offences were concentrated in ‘micro-location’ hotspots with transient, low-income populations. These areas had high concentrations of privately rented housing and low ‘collective efficacy’.
- *Time:* burglary patterns showed some seasonality, with more offences recorded during autumn nights.

Response: A set of intervention strategies were proposed.

- *Target Hardening in hotspots:* Street surveys to identify vulnerable premises and environmental issues, targeted home security advice and engagement with residents, home security assessment offers, channels of support and advocacy for residents (including private tenants) wishing to improve home security, enhanced ‘cocooning’.
- *Building Collective Efficacy:* Strengthening social connections within the wards by forming and supporting neighbourhood improvement groups.
- *Making better use of tracking technology:* Using widely available location software to help deter, investigate and recover stolen laptops and phones.
- *Improved resettlement support:* For offenders leaving prison.
- *Pre-sentence restorative justice:* For younger offenders.

Assessment: As described in the following sections, the project experienced significant delivery challenges, which meant it did not demonstrate a clear overall impact. As the examples show, however, even where problem-solving is largely unsuccessful, assessment can produce useful learning that can inform further prevention work.

A.4.2 EVALUATING IMPLEMENTATION IN LUTON

The Luton BRI included a detailed process evaluation. This drew on:

- Observations and ‘field notes’ made by researchers working as part of the project team.
- Feedback from practitioners, in several agencies, who were involved in the work, collected through surveys and interviews.
- ‘Call backs’ with local residents who had received home security support as part of the project.
- Property-level record keeping, including logs of which residents had been spoken to, provided with leaflets etc. and which properties had obvious security flaws.

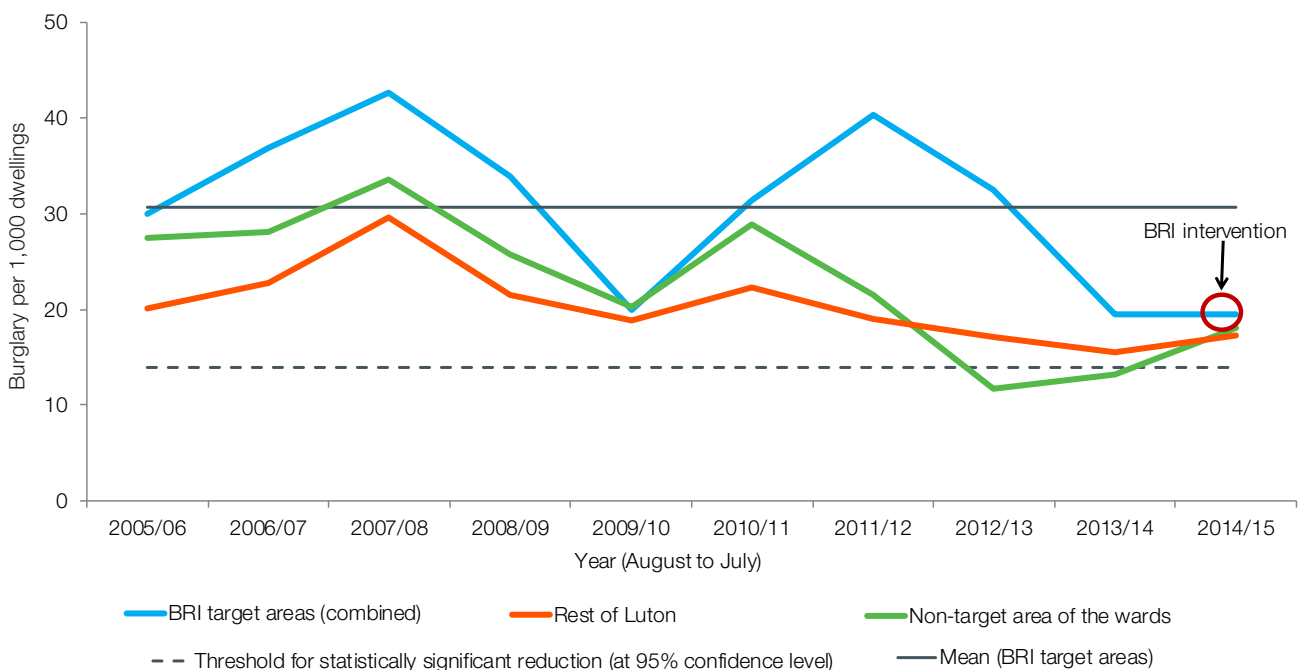
This enabled a detailed delivery ‘narrative’ to be compiled, setting out exactly what had been done throughout the year-long project. It identified aspects of the planned work that had not proved possible to deliver (i.e. some of the Target Hardening activity and a little of the collective efficacy work was completed, but other strands did not get past the planning phase) and also highlighted some obstacles and barriers for strategic-level attention.

Knowing exactly what activity had, and had not, taken place allowed researchers to generate hypotheses about how the initiative *might plausibly* have worked, which could then be tested within the *Impact Assessment*.

A.4.3 ASSESSING CHANGES IN PROBLEM INTENSITY IN LUTON

Chart A4.1 shows annual burglary levels (expressed as rates per 1,000 dwellings) in the Luton BRI target area during the intervention year, and for the nine previous years. It shows that the rate was exactly the same during the activity year as in the previous year. This (initially) suggested that the problem has not changed in intensity during the intervention period.

Chart A4.1: Burglary rates in Luton 2005/06 to 2014/15



There are two further points to consider, however.

First, we can see that the burglary rate had been quite variable in the target areas in the past. We don't know why that is, but we want to be sure that any change we might have seen wasn't just due to **random variation** from one year to the next. We can do this using statistical controls. Several methods may be applicable, depending on the situation, but one of the most straightforward is to use Standard Deviation (a measure of how much variation there is within a set of data). By convention, researchers set a 95 per cent confidence level, which applies at (just under) two standard deviations from the mean, as the basis for rejecting chance as an explanation for change.

In Chart A4.1 this level is represented by the dotted line, if the burglary rate fell below this line, we would say that the change was **statistically significant**. (If there had been less variation in the past, the change needed for statistical significance would be smaller).

Second, we can also see that burglary levels in the non-target areas of the wards, and the rest of the town, went up a little during the intervention period. This means that the **share** of the burglaries occurring in the target area went down. Although the shift was not statistically significant, this suggested that the BRI activity might have had a modest protective effect that shielded the target area from increases seen in the wider area (explored further below).

A.4.4 LOOKING FOR DATA SIGNATURES IN LUTON

Despite the implementation challenges, practitioners in Luton did manage to deliver several waves of targeted communication and crime prevention advice to householders within the target areas, over the course of a year. Most of this engagement focused on a sub-set of 'priority' properties identified as being 'vulnerable' (mainly based on a 'street survey' exercise, which produced a log of dwellings with obvious home security flaws).

As we saw, shift-share analysis suggested the possibility that the initiative had had a small protective effect, although we could not rule out chance variation as an alternative explanation.

To explore this further, researchers hypothesised that any impact would be most visible for 'priority' dwellings (that had received most attention), compared to those receiving only 'standard' communications.

To test this, separate burglary rates were calculated for the priority and standard dwellings during the intervention and previous year.

As shown in the table below, the burglary rate for the priority dwellings was substantially greater, than for the standard dwellings, and also substantially above the rate for the same set of dwellings in the previous year.

Table A4.1: Burglary rates in priority and standard dwellings¹⁰

	No. of dwellings	2013/14		2014/15	
		No. of burglaries	Rate per 1,000 dwellings	No. of burglaries	Rate per 1,000 dwellings
Priority dwellings	567	9	15.9	14	24.7
Standard dwellings	3,714	48	12.9	58	15.6

10. For simplicity, a third group of 'repeat victim' dwellings has been omitted from the table

This suggests three conclusions:

1. It looks unlikely that the activity had an impact. We cannot be sure what the burglary rate would have been for the priority dwellings if the initiative had not taken place, but we can see that it is substantially elevated, compared to previous levels and rates for standard dwellings.
2. It seems that the street-survey was an effective way of *predicting* which properties were more likely to be victimised. This technique could therefore prove useful in future work, although a different approach to improving home security in those dwellings deemed vulnerable seems necessary.
3. The fact that the burglary rate in the priority dwellings increased compared to the previous year, suggests the security flaws may be relatively transient/behavioural and easy to remedy (e.g. leaving doors and windows open rather than more permanent weaknesses). Simple improvements may be effective if these can be encouraged.

A.4.5 SELECTING AND COMPARING CONTROL SITES IN LUTON

Researchers tried several methods for selecting comparison sites in Luton. The approach they chose used Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs - small geographic areas for which some population demographics are available). They matched each of the LSOAs where intervention activity took place, to others in the town where there was no activity, using four rules:

- A similar average overall burglary rate (+/- one standard deviation of the mean rate for the town).
- A statistically significant correlation in burglary rates over the previous nine years.
- A statistically significant correlation in burglary rates over the previous five years.
- Non-adjacent to an intervention LSOA

In other words, for each of the intervention LSOAs, researchers found between one and three other LSOAs, that were not next door, had roughly similar levels of burglary, and had tended to follow the same pattern of ups and downs over the longer and shorter term.

The logic here is that, if the intervention had no effect, the activity LSOAs would have continued to follow a similar pattern to the matched control LSOAs. If it *did* have an effect then you would expect to see a different pattern (it's not possible to say for certain, as something else may have caused the two rates to diverge, but this helps to rule out, or narrow down, alternative explanations).

Charts A4.2 to A4.4 (below) show the findings for three (of the six) intervention LSOAs. They show that target LSOAs A and B saw very similar changes in burglary rate to their matched controls (as did the three other target LSOAs not shown here). In LSOA C, however, the findings look rather different: the burglary rate fell during the intervention year, (compared to the previous year and longer-term average), while all of its comparator LSOAs saw increases.

This provides an indication that, although the intervention had not been successful overall, it *may* have had an effect in this one small area. Of course, it is important to look more closely at what specifically was going on here, but homing in on differences like this, can be a valuable way to learn more about exactly what does and doesn't work and how this relates to different contexts.

Charts A4.2 to A4.4: Changes in burglary rates in target and comparison LSOAs

