

Formative evaluation of Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Counties Manukau District

Final Report

A report prepared by

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Contents

Summary	5
Background	5
Introduction	9
Background and Context	11
Learning from International Research on Neighbourhood Policing	15
What contributes to effective design?	15
What contributes to successful implementation?	15
Findings from Formative Evaluation of four NPTs	17
Establishment	17
Recruitment and training	18
Early operation	19
Issues arising from early implementation	21
Conclusions	23

Summary

Background

The introduction of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) in New Zealand was a result of a number of factors:

- the then Commissioner's vision for introducing the teams in New Zealand based on what he had seen in England and Wales
- the Police Executive placing emphasis on a preventive policing approach
- Counties Manukau District considering options for how to deploy an additional 300 staff to ensure a reduction in demand for policing services in their District: one of which was the implementation of NPTs in vulnerable communities.

High-level outcomes expected from the implementation of NPTs in New Zealand are: a reduction in crime and crash, the community feeling safer, and an increase in levels of trust and confidence in, and satisfaction with the police. Whilst it is intended that NPTs tailor their approach to be appropriate for the communities they are working within, a number of key activities are expected:

- Be active and visible in communities
- Engage with communities to understand what the crime and safety priorities are within the community
- Solve these problems by working with the community and in partnership with other agencies.

The evaluation of NPTs consists of two phases: formative, which focuses on the development and establishment of NPTs; and process-outcomes, which will focus on how the teams are operating and how effective they are. This report is a summary of findings from formative evaluation of NPTs in Counties Manukau District.

Formative evaluation findings

The international research in relation to the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing in achieving crime reduction is mixed. However, where it has been found to be effective this has been due to the initiative being well-designed and well implemented. Focusing on quality design and implementation of NPTs as they are introduced nationally will therefore be integral to their success.

Implementation

The following is a list of factors important for ensuring successful implementation of NPTs. These factors were identified in the evaluation in Counties Manukau District and

were also supported by the international research. Areas that could be improved in future implementation are also noted against each point.

- Good leadership at the senior management level as well as NPT Sergeant level is required to obtain staff buy-in. District communication about the work of NPTs and processes for sharing the results of their work with other policing staff is likely to assist with ensuring a common understanding of what NPTs do.
- Consistent messaging and effective communication strategies to staff about NPTs, the areas they are working within and their priorities facilitates better working relationships. Recruitment processes could be improved with clearer communication about the role of NPTs and skills required to do the job.
- Careful selection, including consultation with local staff helps to ensure selection of the right neighbourhood. Allowing time for the NPT to become familiar with the neighbourhood they are working within before 'fixing' area boundaries is necessary to ensure key parts of the local area are not excluded.
- NPTs need adequate resourcing and organisational support to be able to operate effectively - particularly in relation to vehicles and office space.

Implementation issues identified in the formative evaluation so far that should be addressed in advance of further implementation include a need for:

- clarity of line management arrangements (district vs area) and alignment of tasking and reporting processes with existing systems
- a simpler and shorter prevention plan and sign-off process
- clear guidance for developing prevention plans and other aspects of NPT work
- further consideration of when and how the NPT will withdraw from the neighbourhood.

Design

Preventive policing activities supported by the international research as being effective in reducing crime and fear of crime include: high-quality problem solving and focused foot patrol. Community participation in priority setting, and police activity that is perceived as fair and legitimate also show promise in being able to reduce crime and fear of crime.

Problem solving, community engagement and foot patrols are a core part of NPT work in Counties Manukau District. Suggested good practice and areas for improvement identified from formative evaluation of NPTs in Counties Manukau District are:

- focusing on visibility and relationship building prior to approaching communities about crime and safety priorities may facilitate better engagement by communities
- recruiting NPT staff with cultural knowledge about the NPT communities and/or working with other staff with cultural knowledge of the area helps to ensure the NPT approach is appropriate for the communities they are working within

- partnership working could be enhanced further by engaging partners in priority setting and identifying and delivering solutions to problems
- further effort needs to be placed on working with communities in a collaborative problem solving approach - particularly in identifying and delivering solutions to problems.

While it is too early to be making evaluative judgements about achievement of outcomes, early community perceptions of NPT progress are positive.

Introduction

This report presents a summary of findings from formative evaluation of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) in Counties Manukau District. The focus of this formative evaluation has been on the development of the NPT approach in Counties Manukau District and the establishment of the Mangere South, Papakura East, Homai and Takanini NPTs.

It is intended that these findings be used to refine the role and function of the NPTs in Counties Manukau District and inform the design requirements and implementation of teams in other districts.

Background and Context

Characteristics of Counties Manukau Police District

In 2009, when Neighbourhood Policing as a concept was being considered for the Counties Manukau district, supply of policing services was not keeping up with the high levels of demand.

As one measure to help manage the demand in the Counties Manukau district in 2009, the Government committed to deploying an additional 300 police officers in the district. To prepare for the deployment of extra staff a review of policing in the district was commissioned (Stokes Report).

Stokes' overarching finding was that in order to reduce the gap between supply and demand in the medium to long term, a three-fold approach was required which involved:

- finding opportunities to increase productivity
- coming up with a strategy to reduce demand
- deploying additional staff.

As part of the strategy to reduce demand, Stokes suggested the need for a change in culture to ensure more resource could be focused on preventive initiatives to reduce demand.

Counties Manukau - The Future Project (2009)

In response to the findings in the Stokes report, the then District Commander Superintendent Mike Bush commenced work on Counties Manukau - The Future Project: a programme of change initiatives for the district. This programme consisted of three main workstreams: demand reduction, resource allocation and productivity improvement; as well as a number of new policing initiatives.

As part of the work on the demand reduction workstream of Counties Manukau - The Future Project, different tactical options were considered as possible policing responses, depending on the scale and nature of the problem and the location. The three main response options decided on were: to increase police visibility (requiring little extra resource); increase problem solving activity and engagement with stakeholders (requiring some further resource); and for the areas with high re-victimisation, gangs and intergenerational crime a sustained police presence working in partnership with other agencies. The concept of Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Counties Manukau District was developed from further consideration of what was required for this third type of response.

National developments towards shifting resource to preventive policing

At the time changes in policing approach were occurring in Counties Manukau, the then Commissioner, Howard Broad, was developing a vision for designing and implementing an initiative similar to Neighbourhood Policing in England and Wales, in New Zealand. Furthermore, NZ Police was designing the Policing Excellence programme of work. This programme consists of a suite of initiatives that focus on making policing activity more effective and thereby creating efficiencies that can be reinvested into preventive activities. One of these initiatives included the targeted use of Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

In sum, the concept of Neighbourhood Policing Teams and the design of this initiative was borne out of a need to ensure effective deployment of additional staff within a highly challenging operating environment in Counties Manukau District, a need to shift resources to focus more on preventive policing, coupled with the Commissioner's vision for Neighbourhood Policing in New Zealand.

Development of the NPT approach

The approach for NPTs was developed in consultation with the Commissioner, international experts and local advisory boards.

The NPT project team agreed the main outcomes for NPTs in New Zealand would be: to improve trust and confidence in the police, satisfaction with the police, perceptions of safety in the area, and to significantly reduce crime, crash and revictimisation in the area. The primary purpose of NPTs is to be a prevention-based team that will engage with communities to create a safe and secure neighbourhood with a community confident that they have ownership and control, and a sense of pride in their community.

In designing the NPT approach, the project team drew heavily on learning from implementations of similar initiatives elsewhere, where Neighbourhood Policing has been a core part of policing for a number of years. The concept of NPTs in NZ is very similar to that in England and Wales in that they are highly visible in the community and work in partnership to identify and address priorities using problem solving techniques. The main differences are the lifespan and location of NPTs: NPTs in England and Wales are based in every neighbourhood permanently, whereas NPTs in NZ are only being implemented in priority neighbourhoods and it is intended they will eventually withdraw from the neighbourhood. The intention is for the teams to be based in the community for up to five years, to empower the residents to continue to take responsibility for addressing the problems themselves and to withdraw once the priorities have been addressed.

In order to determine where the NPTs should be deployed, the National Intelligence Centre (NIC) was asked to develop a methodology to identify neighbourhoods in greatest need of an NPT. The NIC adapted a methodology previously used in the UK to calculate a Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI) for each census area unit. A number of

demographic and crime variables are used in the calculation. The area units in CMD with the highest VLI were considered for an NPT and a subset of these were selected for NPTs. The methodology was modified slightly for the national rollout¹.

What has been implemented?

At July 2011, a total of 12 NPTs had been deployed in Counties Manukau policing district. NPTs in Counties Manukau District are made up of 1 Sergeant and 6 Constables. The NPT Sergeant reports to the Senior Sergeant responsible for prevention (ie youth and community policing). Some of the staff on NPTs volunteered to form part of a team whereas others were asked to join the team. The teams are made up of a combination of probationers and more experienced staff.

Following the scanning phase of their work (which includes intensive consultation with communities) the teams develop prevention plans that detail activities they will undertake to address the priorities identified by communities and how they will assess their progress. The NPTs use the SARA² framework to guide their work overall and the PIERS³ framework guides specific activity planning.

Key strategic activities of NPTs are to:

- Be active and visible in communities
- Engage with communities to understand what the crime and safety priorities are within the community
- Solve problems with the community to address the crime and safety problems they have identified
- Work in partnership with communities, other police, and other agencies to address problems.

NPT evaluation

The evaluation of NPTs in New Zealand has two phases: formative and process-outcomes evaluation. This formative evaluation phase is focused on the development and establishment of NPTs and includes a review of the international research as well as qualitative data collection from police staff and community members. The process-outcomes evaluation will investigate how NPTs are operating, whether or not they are achieving the outcomes expected and if so, how, and if not, why not.

¹ The new methodology includes crime and demographic information but not demand information. Because the VLI is intended to identify at risk communities, who tend to have a reduced sense of entitlement to Police intervention, the inclusion of demand data has the potential to shift the results away from this so it is no longer included in the methodology.

² Scanning, analysis, response, assessment

³ Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement, Reassurance, Support

A total of seven NPTs are involved with the evaluation, of which four are from Counties Manukau District. The formative evaluation of NPTs in Counties Manukau District is now complete and this report presents a summary of findings. The four teams evaluated were: Mangere South, Papakura East, Takanini and Homai.

Implementation of NPTs is now occurring in most other districts and sharing the learning from the formative evaluation of NPTs in Counties Manukau District is therefore timely. The next stage of the evaluation will be to conduct formative evaluation of NPTs outside of Counties Manukau District: one in each of Waitematā, Bay of Plenty and Eastern districts. The process-outcomes evaluation phase will commence in 2012.

Learning from International Research on Neighbourhood Policing

The review of international research on neighbourhood policing initiatives suggests that in terms of achieving outcomes, neighbourhood policing has most success around improving community confidence in and satisfaction with the police. These outcomes are also expected for NPTs in NZ and based on the research evidence, a focus on using these as a measure of progress of NPT work should continue.

Other outcomes expected for NPTs in NZ are to improve perceptions of safety with particular emphasis on preventing and thereby reducing incidences of crime and crash. The international research in relation to the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing in achieving crime reduction is mixed. However, where it has been found to be effective this has been due to the initiative being well-designed and well implemented.

In implementing NPTs nationally, Police should pay particular heed to this finding and effort should be placed on quality of implementation of the teams. There should be a focus on critiquing and improving the design given the opportunities to do this with the phased implementation approach that is being taken.

What contributes to effective design?

There is strong evidence from international research that high-quality problem solving and focused foot patrols are effective in reducing crime and fear of crime. Good problem solving requires good leadership and management; data, analysis and evaluation; training; working in real partnership with communities; and committed, stable teams. Community participation in priority setting, and police activity that is perceived as fair and legitimate also show promise in being able to reduce crime and fear of crime.

All of these activities have generally also been found to be effective in improving perceptions of the police. Based on this evidence, NPTs should be encouraged to place a particular emphasis on using these activities in their work.

What contributes to successful implementation?

Early findings from the formative evaluation work with the NPT project team in Counties Manukau District that are supported by the international research suggest the following factors are integral to successful implementation:

- **good leadership:** this involves championing the approach at the senior management level, strong communication about the purpose and value of NPTs and

at team level, effective messaging to staff within NPTs as to their role and how it differs to reactive policing functions

- **consistent messaging and effective communication strategies:** it is important that staff across the district understand and appreciate preventive policing approaches and are aware of the neighbourhoods the NPTs are working in, their policing role and the priorities they are working on
- **careful selection of neighbourhoods, allowing time for consultation with local staff (and boundary flexibility as NPT knowledge of communities develops):** it is important that analysis of crime and crash data to identify vulnerable neighbourhoods is complemented with consultation with local intel, community and response staff on where an NPT could make most impact
- **adequate resourcing and organisational support:** resources and effective organisational support is necessary when implementing any new initiative.

Findings from Formative Evaluation of four NPTs

In this section, findings about the establishment and early operation of NPTs are compared with good practice as identified from the international research on neighbourhood policing. Areas of NPT practice showing promise and areas for improvement are highlighted. The section concludes by detailing a number of issues that have arisen that sit outside of the core evaluation questions but that are worthy of attention.

Establishment

Leadership and communication

The implementation of NPTs in Counties Manukau District was led by the District Commander. This leadership from the top has helped in emphasising the importance of the initiative through district communications and in driving the implementation through within tight timeframes. The four teams involved in the evaluation also commented on the importance of the NPT Sergeant being a good leader. This was seen as particularly important in managing the change in working practice to a more preventive focus.

Despite a range of communication efforts around the introduction of NPTs in Counties Manukau, there is not yet a common understanding amongst staff as to what NPTs do. Staff understanding of the initiative is largely dependent on informal contact or familiarity with NPTs. Further communication about NPT priorities, work and results throughout the levels of management in the district is still needed. Formal processes for sharing the results of the work of the NPT (such as the amount of crime prevented but also community intelligence gathered, through the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey and ongoing community engagement) with the Intel section and other police work groups in a systematic way are required.

Area boundary

As was intended, the areas within which the NPTs are working were selected on basis of a methodology developed by the NIC to determine neighbourhoods of the highest priority, complemented by some local level consultation about the areas themselves. The evaluation findings suggest further consultation with local community constables on specific area boundaries may have been beneficial.

Due to the implementation timeframes, the Sergeant was not consulted on the boundary prior to the teams commencing. In some cases, the Sergeant and team have suggested slight changes to the area boundary following their early operation which have been

accommodated. This process for not fixing the boundary until after the team has been operating in the area for a while is recommended. In determining area boundaries in other districts, those involved may also want to take into account the implications of excluding certain parts of the community from the boundary into consideration.

Even after the boundary is fixed, however, it should be acknowledged that the NPT will need to work outside of the boundary from time to time - to address issues of relevance to the neighbourhood. The NPT should be allowed to use discretion on when and how this should occur.

Location and resources

Different locations for the NPT office are being trialled in Counties Manukau District: some teams are located in the police station and others at a community base. There are advantages of being based in the police station, such as more informal information sharing with other staff and easier access to resources. However, being based within the community also has its advantages. There is not one right answer on where the NPT should be located - this will depend on the closeness of the police station to the NPT area, systems for information sharing and resourcing and availability and affordability of being located at a community base.

Regardless of where the NPT is located, the team needs to be resourced adequately. In some cases NPTs in Counties Manukau District have had very limited access to vehicles which is impacting on their ability to do their job.

Recruitment and training

Communication

Despite a range of communication efforts around the introduction of NPTs in Counties Manukau, there is not yet a common understanding amongst staff as to what NPTs do. It is important that clear communication about purpose and role of NPTs is given at all levels within the organisation – this may help to increase the likelihood of successful recruitment. To encourage staff to apply for an NPT role, it is important that they understand the contribution of NPTs and see the work as credible (as this is not always the perception of staff). Publicising results and achievements of NPTs may assist with this.

Recruitment

Recruitment for two of the teams involved in the evaluation took place after eight NPTs were already operating the district. Staff recruited to these teams had a better understanding - mostly through word of mouth - of what NPT work involved. This was not the case for the first teams established in Counties Manukau District, who had little

understanding about NPTs. Learning from the recruitment process for four NPTs in Counties Manukau suggests other districts will need to provide effective communication about NPTs, including a clear role description, the skills required for the job and provide examples of NPT work.

A range of skills were identified by NPT staff and community members as being necessary to have on the team, including: being approachable, having good communication and people skills, being self-motivated and able to take the initiative, being effective problem solvers and having respect for other cultures. Having some knowledge of the local area and experience as a police officer were also seen as an advantage. Aspects of the work that had attracted staff to the NPT role were being able to work in a community role but as a team, having a change from frontline work and knowing that the sergeant was a good leader.

Training

The NPT training package has gone through a number of changes since the fieldwork for this formative evaluation was conducted. The new training package is being evaluated independently of this evaluation (by the Training Service Centre) and will be reported on separately.

Early operation

Community engagement

NPTs in Counties Manukau are using a range of strategies to develop relationships with communities and engage them in the priority setting process. For example, teams are conducting a door to door survey of households to identify crime and safety concerns, attending community events, organising community fun days, forming Neighbourhood Safety Panels (with the purpose of providing information, developing partnerships, priority setting and developing strategies to address priorities), and establishing neighbourhood support groups. NPTs are sharing results of the Neighbourhood Engagement Survey and, in some cases, analysis of police data, when discussing priorities with the Neighbourhood Safety Panel. Ideally, information from both the police and community should be shared to enhance community engagement (ie a two-way information sharing process).

Findings from the evaluation suggest that informing communities of the existence and role of NPTs, focusing on visibility and relationship building prior to approaching communities about crime and safety priorities for the area would be beneficial. The message is clear that it takes a long time to build effective relationships with communities and partner agencies and, as part of this process, to identify which partnerships are likely to be most effective. In adapting their approach in this vein, the two teams implemented later had distributed leaflets about the NPT prior to conducting their door to door survey.

Having staff on an NPT with a range of cultural backgrounds or those who have cultural knowledge about their communities is important. Working with other staff with cultural knowledge and relevant community contacts can help to ensure the NPT approach is appropriate for the communities they are working within.

In sum, it is important not to underestimate the value of investing in relationship building with communities for a period of time before approaching the community to identify crime and safety concerns (eg through the door-to-door survey) and establishing partnerships. This will help to ensure subsequent activities such as forming a Neighbourhood Safety Panel and formalising the prevention plan are well informed and involve the right people.

A couple of the NPTs are focusing on further developing Neighbourhood Support in their area to facilitate the community to get to know each other and empower them to take responsibility for the area improving feelings of safety and security. It is important to acknowledge that the main intention in setting up these groups is not to reduce crime per se. Expectations around crime reduction from establishment of Neighbourhood Support need to be managed in the broader context as Neighbourhood Support by itself is not supported by the international research as being effective in reducing crime.

Partnership working

The evaluation findings show that partnerships are developing between NPTs and other organisations/community bodies. Depending on the level of existing social services and community structures in the area, NPTs are taking different approaches to establishing partnership in the area. For example:

- Where existing relationships between police and other agencies already exist, the team is tapping into these relationships and building on these. In some cases, previous relationships with the Police have been at a more strategic level whereas now they are developing at a more grass-roots level.
- Where a community residents group has already been established, the team is using this as a basis from which to form a Neighbourhood Safety Panel.
- Where the area in which the NPT is working lacks a community identity or centre, the teams are developing strong partnerships with an existing community facility (eg recreation centre, school) and focusing a lot of activity within this to try and develop this sense of a community centre.

It is too early to make judgements about the impact of the NPT work on partner agencies - the agencies spoken to welcomed the partnership working even if it meant an increase to their workload. However, some have recognised that there may come a point where the NPT work increases their workload beyond their capacity.

The international research suggests that good partnership work includes engagement that goes beyond a simple briefing and involves partners in priority setting. There is some evidence of this occurring with the NPTs, but in some cases further emphasis on genuine engagement in priority setting as well as problem solving work is needed.

Problem solving

Use of problem solving and foot patrol is evident in the findings of the evaluation. Problem solving is being used in the development and delivery of prevention plans. Staff are conducting detailed analysis of problems and identifying solutions that involve working with other agencies.

However, further effort needs to be placed on working with communities and partners in a collaborative problem solving approach, particularly at the solution identification and delivery stage if we are to take heed of what constitutes high-quality problem solving in the research evidence. In this regard, the use of the Neighbourhood Safety Panel to obtain input from the community into the NPT work could be enhanced – particularly in terms of identifying, discussing and delivering solutions.

Progress towards outcomes

It is too early to be making evaluative judgements about achievement of outcomes. However, early community perceptions are positive. Comments made in interviews with community members and partner agencies suggest that NPTs have been received positively by their communities. Community members have noted the increased police presence and there is anecdotal evidence that residents are feeling safer and in some cases perceive there to be a reduction in crime.

Issues arising from early implementation

Tasking and reporting

The reporting arrangements for NPTs in Counties Manukau District are that NPTs report to the district implementation team until their prevention plans are signed-off, after which they report through the area management. This process has helped to ensure the staff are not extracted to other duties and are kept focused on NPT work. Needless to say, area management have needed to be kept briefed on the work of the team and in some instances these arrangements have led to confusion for the NPT (as well as management) as to who has responsibility for tasking the NPT and consequently reporting lines.

Related to the issue of responsibilities for tasking and reporting, is the issue of how this process is aligned, if at all, with the usual tasking and coordination process within the area. The NPT is tasked through its prevention plan rather than through the area tasking and coordination process. Some further work to align these processes and ensure information sharing across groups is needed.

Rostering

The teams in Counties Manukau have trialed a number of different rosters and determined that a roster enabling them to work as a team is necessary. In addition to

this, some flexibility for the NPT Sergeant to be able to change their roster to meet the needs of their work is required.

Prevention plans and guidance

NPT experience of developing prevention plans has been mixed. The teams that were implemented in the later stages of the roll-out in Counties Manukau had the advantage of being able to use the plans of previous teams to inform the development of their own. However, the process for developing and signing-off (by community, area and district) the plan was generally seen as long and complicated. It would be preferable to provide new teams with a template and for this template to be a simplified version of the current design of the plan. Furthermore, it would be good to find ways of simplifying and shortening the sign-off process.

As NPT work develops and more teams are implemented, clear guidance and manuals for different aspects of the work may assist early operation. Resources such as a manual of core NPT activities, advice on how to access community funding and a forum for sharing NPT work were mentioned by NPT staff as being a useful aid to their work should they be provided.

Withdrawal process

Finally, if the intention is still for NPTs to withdraw from their area in 2-5 years, further consideration needs to be given to the strategy for exiting the area. Although NPTs do not plan to exit from the area for at least two years, early consideration should be given to when and how the exit process will occur. This planning should help in developing an NPT approach that ensures sustainability of progress to address crime and safety problems after the NPT exits the area.

Conclusions

In order to increase the likelihood of NPTs in NZ achieving a reduction in crime and crash, particular attention should be paid to the quality of design and implementation. In implementing NPTs in other police districts, good leadership, effective and consistent communication about preventative policing and the NPT role as well as careful selection of neighbourhoods that utilises local knowledge and experience are key to ensuring the success. Furthermore, adequate resources – particularly in relation to office space and vehicles – and organisational support and clarity in relation to processes and guidelines help facilitate effective implementation of NPTs.

NPTs are conducting a range of activities and these are dependent in large part on the type of problem they are working on. Activities such as high-quality problem solving techniques, focused foot patrol, engaging communities in priority setting and problem solving, and activity that is seen as fair and legitimate by communities are supported by the research evidence as being effective in reducing crime and fear of crime. These activities should be considered a core part of NPT work.

Developing relationships and building trust with communities, including different groups within communities, takes time and ensuring time for communities to get to know the NPT before approaching them to determine their crime and safety concerns should elicit better cooperation and a truer reflection of their concerns. Following on from this, working with communities and partners not only to identify their concerns but also to come up with and help deliver solutions is a fundamental part of effective problem solving and NPTs need to place further emphasis on this.

Potential issues concerning NPT implementation identified in Counties Manukau District include the need:

- for clarity of line management arrangements (district vs area) and alignment of tasking and reporting processes with existing systems
- to simplify and shorten the prevention plan and sign-off process
- for clear guidance for developing prevention plans as well as other aspects of NPT work
- for further consideration of when and how the NPT will withdraw from the area.

Whilst it is too early to be making evaluative judgements about achievement of outcomes, early community perceptions of NPT progress are positive.