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# Final Report

Community Confidence Action Research Project  
December 2024



Inspector Stephen Mezals speaking to a community conversation in Wick, August 2023



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### We're Listening

From our last event, it was

- Improved visibility and a
- Retention of experience
- Improved communication

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# Acknowledgements

The Project Sponsors and Project Delivery Team members would like to thank a large number of local and national organisations, statutory and non-statutory, for the time and assistance they have given to the Community Confidence Action Research Project over the duration of its lifetime.

Many local community organisations from the third sector provided valuable practical assistance to the Project, by offering up meeting rooms at little or no cost, by promoting awareness of the Project among their service users, by helping to encourage participation in the surveys and community conversations, and also by giving advice to the Project Delivery Team on how best to reach and involve local people and sustain their interest. Without this level of support the Project would not have been possible.

Officers from local authorities in each of the four areas also gave up their time to support the Project, sharing local knowledge and expertise with the Project Delivery Team, providing meeting rooms and workspaces, and also facilitated the administration of surveys in local schools wherever this was possible.

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The Project Sponsors would also like to acknowledge the expert advice, contributions and guidance given by the diverse membership within the Project's Steering Group.

Finally, and most importantly, sincere thanks must go to all of the local people who took the time to complete surveys, attend and participate in community conversation meetings. People told their stories about their life in the community, their experiences of crime and antisocial behaviour and, and their experiences of police contact. The Project Sponsors are especially grateful for these contributions, as well as for the ideas and suggestions on how local policing might be improved. The topic of confidence in the police is far from an easy one to discuss face-to-face with police officers, in public and in a group setting, and the courage in this regard should not be underestimated.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

In 2021 the Scottish Police Authority and Police embarked on a 3-year, place-based, participatory action research Project called the Community Confidence Action Research Project (CCAR).

Whilst confidence in the police in Scotland is high among most of the Scottish population, a number of surveys over the last decade have shown that levels are not as high for people who live in areas classed as being deprived. These surveys include the Scottish Government's Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), and the Authority's own independently commissioned regular public polling.

The CCAR Project aimed to better understand what sits behind lower levels of confidence in the police. The Project focused on four communities in Scotland, all four of which have been experiencing deprivation in some form or other. The Project has worked with those communities and local partners to identify small-scale, sustainable initiatives that local policing teams could implement in an effort to improve local people's confidence. The CCAR Project was keen to understand the extent to which certain initiatives were regarded by local people as being positive developments which, if sustained, would help to build confidence.

To guide the CCAR a Project Steering Group was established in 2021, co-Chaired by the Authority's Chair and the Deputy Chief Constable for Local Policing from Police Scotland. The Project Steering Group included a range of partners and advisors from a many relevant organisations, both statutory and non-statutory. The Project Delivery Team consisted of a small number of staff from the Authority and Police Scotland's Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing department (PPCW), working on an occasional basis across the 3-year period. The Project Delivery Team has also worked closely with the local policing teams from Police Scotland that have implemented initiatives locally, and who have also participated in community engagement activity relating to the Project.

Throughout the 3-year period, the Authority has been publishing a series of reports for each of the 4 localities that have taken part in the research, setting out findings from initial surveys, ongoing community conversations, and final evaluation surveys.

This overall final report:

- summarises the research approach and engagement model that has been used;
- brings together the main findings relating to what underpins low confidence;
- summarises the various small-scale initiatives that have been implemented in the four localities;
- collates the observations/reflections made by the Project Delivery Team over the period of the research; and
- documents the lessons learned for future research activity of this nature.

People who have an interest in any of the specific reports for the individual localities can find these on the Authority's website. Those reports contain a high level of detail on survey results, the outputs of community conversation events, details on the local policing 'test of change' initiatives, and initial feelings towards those initiatives.

The four localities that have taken part in the CCAR Project are:

- Letham in Perth and Kinross;
- Irvine-Fullarton in North Ayrshire;
- Levenmouth in Fife; and
- Wick in Highland



# 2

## CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE

What do we mean by confidence in the police in the context of the CCAR Project, and what does wider survey data show?

Confidence in the police relates to whether people think that the police are performing well and delivering high quality, effective policing services that make them feel safer and more secure at home and in their community. Confidence can be shaped by direct contact and experience with the police service, or indirectly based on hearing about others' direct experience, observing police activity, or by seeing/hearing media stories. Confidence in the police is not the same as trust in the police. Trust in the police relates to whether people believe that police are honest, act with integrity, treat people fairly and with respect, and therefore can be relied upon to provide a legitimate, consensual policing service to the public. It is possible for people to have high trust in the police but low confidence and vice-versa, although the two concepts are often interrelated.

In Scotland and the UK as a whole, there are several sources of empirical evidence available for judging whether or not the public has confidence in the police, the majority of the evidence being collected by social surveys and polling activity. The questions and wording used differs slightly between surveys, jurisdictions and over the passage of time, meanwhile the surveys themselves vary between being administered online, and/or in-person and/or via telephone. It makes comparisons difficult, but brings about the benefit of being able to triangulate data for additional assurance, and essentially all of the approaches share at their heart an interest in whether the public thinks the police service is doing a good job.

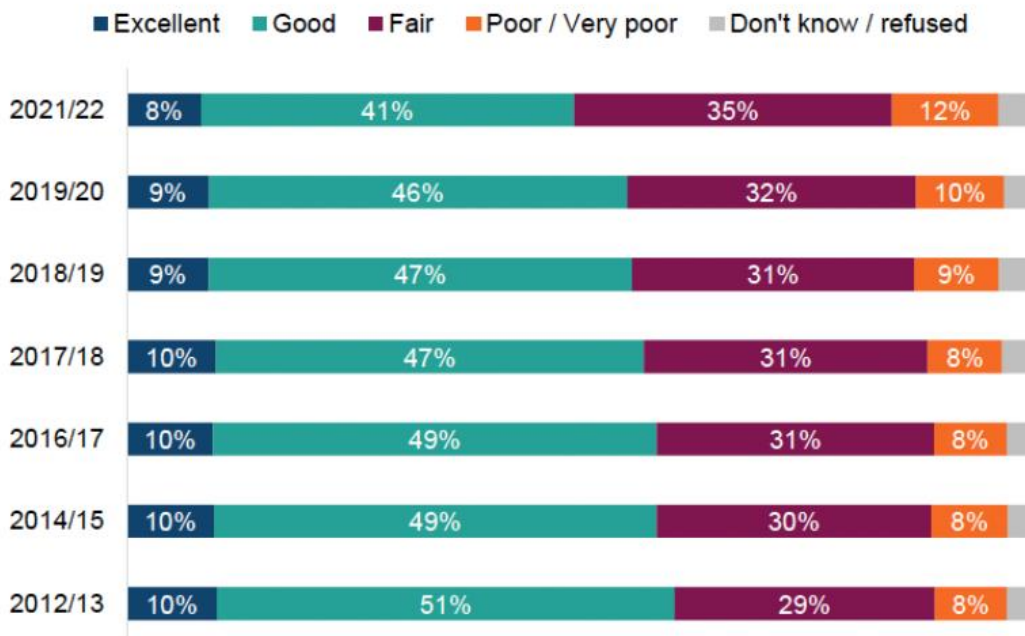
Reach and representativeness is an ongoing issue for all of these surveys. There are undoubtedly many people with certain characteristics that are unlikely to be reached via large-scale survey methods for a wide variety of reasons. Research into the views of seldom-reached / seldom-heard communities instead benefits from different methodological approaches, usually of a qualitative nature, with highly-targeted participant recruitment activity.



The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is the longest-standing survey which asks, among other topic areas, a question about whether respondents think that the police are doing a good job locally. The latest findings from the 2021-22 survey show that 84% of people think that the police are at least performing fairly, with 49% of people regarding police performance as being excellent or good. It is notable, however, that the proportion of people rating police performance positively has been falling during the course of the last decade: in 2012-13 for example, 90% of people rated police performance as at least being 'fair', with 61% of people giving an excellent or good rating.

When looking at how views vary according to a range of factors, including deprivation, it is evident from SCJS data that some sections of society have more confidence in the police than others. In terms of deprivation, people living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are less likely to rate police performance as positively as others, with the proportion rating police performance as being excellent or good typically being 5-8% lower than the rest of the population (See Table A1.15).

### Views on the overall performance of the police in the local area.



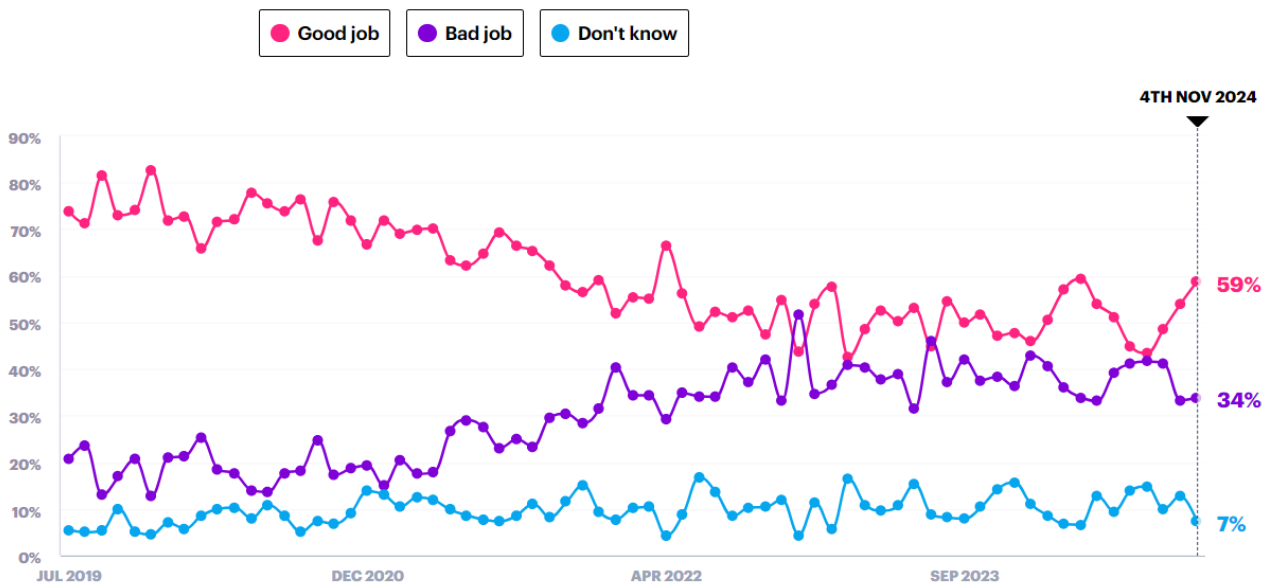
Source: Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2021/22: Main Findings - gov.scot



More recent data (2019 to the present) on confidence in the police is collected via the organisation YouGov. It is based on a UK-wide survey and is collected regularly as a 'tracker', available at this link. Although the size of the sample for Scottish is relatively small, the consistency and frequency of the survey provides reliable information when viewed as a trend. The latest finding available at the time of writing is for 4th November 2024 and shows that 59% of people in Scotland think that the police are doing a good job.

The tracker for Scotland shows that between 2019 and 2021, between 70 - 80% of people rated police performance positively. A decline then occurred between 2021 and early 2023, followed by stabilisation at around 50%. The drop in confidence in 2021-23 coincides with period when lockdowns were still in effect, and public frustration was high in relation to people 'breaking the rules' and 'keeping others in lockdown'. The Authority tested this position in several waves of public polling carried out during the pandemic, where the public were asked about their views on the police in relation to lockdowns and compliance with the rules. There was clear evidence by 2021 that the public had become frustrated with the police for not being 'tough enough' regarding enforcement of breaches of the regulations and non-compliance with guidance. The 2022-23 period also coincides with the emergence of the 'cost of living crisis' and growing levels of discontent towards governments and public bodies.

## Are the police doing a good job?



Source: YouGov Are the police doing a good job?

The Authority has also been commissioning polling through an independent supplier (the Diffley Partnership). The polling uses the established *ScotPulse* panel, and core questions on confidence and trust are asked on a six-monthly basis. The CCAR Project has included these questions in the surveys administered in each of the four localities in an attempt to establish whether trust and confidence in the police was lower than average in each of the areas that had been selected.

The latest round of Authority polling (August 2024) shows that 46% of people rate the police as doing a very good or somewhat good job, an improvement from January 2024 (42%) and July 2023 (44%). The improvement in 2024 aligns with what is showing in the YouGov tracker data.

In terms of the CCAR Project, most of the questionnaire surveys and community conversations took place during 2022-23, a time when confidence in the police was falling, both in Scotland and across the UK, and it is against this trend that the CCAR Project's insights must be considered.



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# 3

## PLACE-BASED APPROACH AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

In technical terms the CCAR Project has taken a place-based approach to deliver participatory action research. But what does this actually mean in practice?

Place-based interventions by local agencies, local authorities, and community groups have become more common in recent years and at the heart of the place-based approach is recognition that geographical communities, even those experiencing deprivation, are often characterised by physical assets, cared for and valued by many members of the community.

These assets might include community centres, village halls, pubs, schools and nurseries, libraries, places of worship, recreation centres, and open spaces. The presence of such assets in communities helps to bring people together and maintain a sense of togetherness and community identity (community cohesion). It is often the case that there are key, influential individuals who are particularly active in community life and have an attachment to these community-based assets.

Place-based approaches, aimed at improving outcomes for local people, intentionally aim to get support and buy-in for improvement-focused initiatives by working with, and building on, existing community strengths, recognising that people who live and work in communities know and understand life in those communities better than others, and also have influence: they can help to make (or break) an initiative, and it is important that ideas for change are tested with communities, based on community-led identification and definition of local issues. Within the public sector, the place-based approach has become synonymous with the terms and phrases 'Total Place', the 'Place Principle' and 'Doing things with communities rather than to communities'.

The CCAR Project was therefore keen to work closely with communities with high levels of community cohesion and deliver the Project locally in accordance with what communities themselves thought would be most effective.



The CCAR Project adopted a Participatory Action Research methodology for delivery. This approach entails delivering positive change directly through the actions of the Project, alongside conducting research, observational study and gathering learning.

The ultimate goal is to create a positive, post-Project legacy for the benefit of participants, with insight gathering being a secondary benefit of the work. Participatory action research methods are deliberately flexible, with primacy given to taking action that participants have actively shaped and consented to, irrespective of whether they are purely the 'right' things to do from a research and knowledge gathering perspective.



# 4

## RESEARCH CONTEXT AND OTHER LIMITATIONS

When conducting participatory action research, the wider context must be understood as it can influence the quantity and quality of participation, especially when a research project seeks participation over a protracted period of time with repeat interactions. The CCAR hoped to secure participation from local residents, and local community leaders and groups over a period of up to 9 months, as this would enable the Project more effectively to evaluate whether the tests of change implemented by local policing had been well-received by the very people who had suggested them in the first place.

A number of factors, linked to wider socio-economic context, are likely to have affected Project participation. These are outlined below.

### *Peri-pandemic period*

The first of the four localities taking part in the CCAR was Letham in Perth and Kinross. Initial visits to the neighbourhood took place in the summer of 2022, with the fieldwork (surveys and community conversations) starting in late 2022 and running until late summer of 2023. This was a period when the COVID-19 pandemic was still taking place, with requirements such as wearing face coverings or self-isolating having only been dropped in the Spring of 2022. It was not until May 2023 when the World Health Organisation declared that the global health emergency was over.

In meetings with community group representatives and local authority officials the CCAR Project Delivery Team was advised that resident participation in community group activity was slow to recover from the pandemic as people were not confident to meet and mix. Additionally, representatives suggested that survey work of their own had been limited by low response rates and difficulties in getting reach and engagement in communities.



## ***Cost of Living Crisis***

The rise in the cost of living, linked to rising inflation for everyday items (including utilities), emerged as an issue during the early days of the Project, with the Winter period 2022-23 being especially difficult for many households, especially households in deprived areas of the country and with less disposable income. In terms of participation in the CCAR Project, the Project Delivery Team observed how many of community groups taking part in the Project were increasingly focussing on how the cost of living crisis was affecting local people, and a considerable amount of time and effort was being spent to set up, and raise awareness of, community 'warm spaces', as well as 'food banks' and other sources of support. It is possible that the attention of community group leaders and representatives was understandably diverted away from being able to support the research aspects of the Project more fully, with the CCAR Project's local reach and engagement being compromised. It is also possible that local people (potential participants) experiencing difficulties due to the cost of living crisis had less interest in the topic of local policing, crime and antisocial behaviour than they might normally have.



## ***Sample Sizes and Generalisation of Findings***

Surveys were issued to people in all four localities, at the beginning of the fieldwork period and at the end of the fieldwork period. These surveys were used to generate discussion at Community Conversation events. Response levels to the surveys varied between the localities and are relatively small in number. This means that survey statistics informing the CCAR, and presented in this Final Report (and the individual locality reports on the CCAR website) are not of sufficient statistical quality (size and composition) to draw inferences or any other quantitative findings. The CCAR never sought to survey all local people in a representative way using stratified sampling methods. Rather the CCAR sought participation from people with an interest in the subject and who had a willingness to be part of identifying and defining local issues and generating ideas for making small-scale improvements, in partnership with the police. None of the findings from the CCAR can therefore be generalised, either to all people living in the four localities, or to all people living in deprived areas of Scotland.





# 5

## LOCALITY SELECTION

The CCAR Project aimed to work in a small number of localities in Scotland. In keeping with the place-based approach, it was intended that the localities would be relatively small in size (neighbourhood level), and be experiencing deprivation in some way, given the CCAR's focus on working with communities that were likely to have lower levels of confidence in the police than the average.

A long list of localities were assessed using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation at the Intermediate Zone level. An Intermediate Zone typically comprises between 2,500 and 6,000 people, corresponding with large villages and/or suburbs within smaller towns. The Project Steering Group advised that localities under consideration should ideally not be acutely deprived as (a) these localities can be saturated with community improvement initiatives and it might prove difficult to establish a presence within the community in sufficient time and (b) the findings from the research might be less representative of large parts of Scotland.

A large number of potential localities were presented to the Project Steering Group for consideration, and local area profiles were developed for nominated localities. These local area profiles contained a range of social, economic and demographic statistics, alongside policing data (crime and incidents and the findings from ongoing police engagement surveys). The views of local policing teams were also taken into account regarding the suitability of particular localities, factoring in their professional judgement about whether a particular locality has sufficient community activity, community assets and key individuals.

In total four localities were adopted by the CCAR Project: two from the North Regional Command of Police Scotland (Wick South in Highland, and Letham in Perth), and one each from the East and West Regional Commands (Methil in Leven, Fife, and Irvine-Fullarton in North Ayrshire).

During the course of delivering the Project in each locality, the boundaries flexed from the Intermediate Zone administrative geographical boundaries, to more locally-recognisable boundaries. Thus Methil in Leven expanded to cover the whole of Levenmouth, and Wick South in Highland expanded to cover the whole of Wick and the Caithness region more generally.



Below is a summary each locality's main characteristics. Further details can be found in the various reports for each locality on the CCAR website.

### ***Letham (Perth)***

Letham is a small community within Perth and has an estimated population of more than 5,000 people. Letham differs from much of the wider Perth area in that it contains more affordable housing and a higher percentage of local authority and rented accommodation. The majority of the housing stock was built in the 1960s and is clustered in Council Tax Bands A, B and C. The population is relatively young, approximately two-thirds of residents are of working age, with the majority of occupants being a mix of families or single parent households.

The neighbourhood of Letham is home to a community centre (a new community hub was being built during the time of the Project's fieldwork in Letham, and has since opened in the summer of 2024), a modern place of worship, a sports/leisure facility, a small shopping parade, a pub, a bowling club.



Levenmouth itself is a conurbation rather than a town, and is made up of three small towns (Leven, Methil and Buckhaven) and a number of other small coastal villages. There are areas of relative affluence and deprivation across the area.

In total, around 38,000 people live in the Levenmouth area. Coal mining has been a traditional source of employment for many local people for generations, however the decline and fall of the industry in the latter part of the 20th Century has resulted in high levels of unemployment. Methil has also experienced economic decline as a result of the decline of the Methil Docks, which previously played a major role in the transportation of coal.

The Levenmouth area is currently experiencing transformation. At the time of the CCAR fieldwork taking place in the area in 2023, the Leven Link railway line was close to being completed, with the line formally opening in June 2024, which now restores rail connectivity with the rest of Fife and Dundee via a link to Thornton, Glenrothes.

From a policing perspective, the Levenmouth area of Fife has higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour than Fife generally, with violent and drug-related crime higher than the Fife average. There has also been a specific issue in recent years relating to youth antisocial behaviour. For example, off-road motorbikes have been used in areas of open space to the west and north of Leven (including Methil), generating high numbers of complaints from residents, although intervention efforts by the police and partners through the Improving Levenmouth Together partnership have been making a positive difference.



## ***Irvine-Fullarton (North Ayrshire)***

The Fullarton area of Irvine is located close to Irvine Bay and the town centre, and encompasses a large retail park and mall, industrial estates and a harbour area close to Irvine beach. The area around the harbour and beach is a cultural centre, hosting a maritime museum and an arts centre.

Fullarton has a population of more than 2,600 people and is classed as North Ayrshire's second most vulnerable community according to the Improvement Service, and scores as being relatively deprived in a North Ayrshire context in terms of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The area has higher levels of deprivation than North Ayrshire and Scotland as a whole, particularly in terms of lower educational attainment, housing proximity to derelict sites, lower life expectancy and the proportion of people claiming out of work benefits.

The main area of housing can be found between the retail parks, the town centre and the river, and dates to the early post-war period, with 93% of households clustered in council tax bands A, B and C. Housing is currently undergoing transformation, with a set of high-rise flats being demolished at the time the Project's fieldwork was taking place. New housing has also recently been built on beach Drive.

The main community centre for Fullarton is the Fullarton Community Hub, located next to the Loudon Montgomery primary school.



## ***Wick (Highland)***

The town of Wick is a coastal town in the historic county of Caithness in north eastern Scotland.

Wick has a population of about 7,000 people and is an important fishing town, with three harbours. The NC500 tourist route also passes through Wick, bringing thousands of visitors each year to the region.

The town has a range of retail units, shops, civic buildings and community facilities. Pulteneytown is an area on the south side of the town, home to a well known malt whisky distillery established in 1826. the south side of Wick is an area of deprivation, relative to the both Scotland and the Highland Council local authority.

The Project identified Wick South as an area of interest at an early stage based on metrics relating to deprivation, however via discussions with the local policing team and community group leaders, this expanded to Wick as a whole, and the wider Caithness area.

Partnership working and collaboration between organisations is strong in the Caithness area, an innovation that is linked to the area's relatively remoteness and sparsely populated communities.



The CCAR Project was initiated in the summer of 2021 by co-Sponsors Martyn Evans (Authority Chair) and DCC Will Kerr (Police Scotland Deputy Chief Constable for Local Policing).

## ***Project Aims***

Four main aims were identified:

1. Enhance the policing system's understanding of what drives public confidence in policing at a day-to-day community level.
2. Improve relationships between the police and the public at a local level by improving understanding and awareness of modern policing demands and challenges.
3. Develop insights into what communities consider to be confidence-building, small-scale, sustainable interventions that the police and partners can put into effect.
4. To develop a model for engagement and positive action that Police Scotland could adapt and adopt as appropriate to improve confidence in local policing.



## ***Establishment of a Project Steering Group***

The Co-Sponsors established a Project Steering Group in 2021. The Project Steering Group met regularly throughout the lifetime of the Project (2021-24), usually on a quarterly basis.

The Project Steering Group provided advice and guidance to the Project Delivery Team (Project Delivery Team) regarding area identification and selection, framing of research questions, suggestions on organisations and agencies to reach out to, advice regarding Project evaluation, and advice regarding communication and engagement strategies for the Project (including post-Project closure) to maximise reach and impact.

The Project Steering Group has been represented by the following organisations:

- Scottish Police Authority
- Police Scotland
- The Improvement Service
- Scottish Community Safety Network
- University of Edinburgh
- COSLA
- SOLACE
- College of Policing
- Public Health Scotland
- Poverty Alliance
- Involve

## ***Establishment of a Project Delivery Team***

In conjunction with setting up the Project Steering Group, a Project Delivery Team was also established. The Project Delivery Team comprised specialist research and engagement staff from the Authority's Strategy and Performance Team, and Police Scotland's Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing (PPCW) department. All staff supporting the Project did so on an in-kind, occasional basis, balancing other work commitments to accommodate the needs of the Project, although one staff member from the Authority allocated up to 0.5 working days per week on average to support and manage overall Project delivery.



Project Delivery Team members preparing for an event in Letham



## **Project Budget**

The Authority's budget for the Project was intentionally small. This limitation meant that the CCAR Project had to work to make the largest contribution and impact possible using existing resources and minimal expenditure, to avoid producing a model and results that could not be adopted post-Project due to any unreasonable resource burden.

Over the three-year period, £1,650 was spent in total on local venue hire to support 17 community conversations, with light refreshments/catering included in this cost. A total of 25 locality visits took place in total, in support of the community conversations, but also to meet with local community groups and stakeholders, and to carry out initial environmental audits. Travel and Project Delivery Team subsistence costs amounted to £4,700 over the three years. The fieldwork in Wick required overnight stays, given the travelling distance for the Project Delivery Team.

The overall spend for the Project was therefore £6,350 over the course of the three years.



Community assets were used for hosting community conversations

# 7

## ENGAGEMENT MODEL

The Project Steering Group adopted the four localities to participate in the research in 2021-22 and an approach to engagement, consisting of 7 steps, was endorsed prior to commencing fieldwork in the first locality (Letham, Perth).

The Project Steering Group agreed that for the purposes of the Project, personal data would be handled by the Authority and not Police Scotland, and would therefore be subject to the Authority's Privacy Policy.

It was agreed that fieldwork across the four localities would take place on a staggered/phased basis to align better with resource availability of the Project Delivery Team, and to enable the fieldwork approach and overall engagement model to be tweaked throughout the Project lifecycle based on ongoing learning and feedback.



## **Step 1**

The first step involved making contact with the relevant local authority for each locality, contacting Chief Executives who then referred the Project Delivery Team to the most appropriate local point of contact.

Initial online meetings were used to discuss the aims of the CCAR Project and the plans for working in the local area, seeking advice on points of contact within the community. Introductory online meetings also took place between the Project Delivery Team and local Elected Members (usually via dropping into an existing local forum), and between the Project Delivery Team and the local policing team for the area, including the local area commander and member of the senior Divisional Management team.

Step 1 also entailed the Project Delivery Team making an initial visit to the area, to meet with local groups to discuss research tools (e.g. surveys and community conversations) and dissemination /communication channels. Introductory meetings also took place with local police officers, who assisted the Project Delivery Team in carrying out an environmental visual audit of each locality.



Project Delivery Team members on an 'environmental visual audit' exercise in Letham, Perth

## Step 2

The second step involved issuing a community questionnaire survey among local people, including an adapted, shorter version for completion by children and young people via local schools (where this was possible).

The surveys typically began about 6-12 weeks after the initial introductory meetings in Step 1, although for Letham in Perth, there was a longer lead-in time, with Steps 1 and 2 lasting for almost 6 months.

They were available for people to complete online and in paper form (with a pre-paid envelope) for a period of about six weeks. Social media and paper posters displayed locally were used to raise awareness of the surveys, and local community groups and the local policing teams used their existing networks to promote them.

The initial community questionnaire survey asked people for their thoughts on the local area, whether there was a strong sense of community and where people help and support one another. People were also asked about their views on local policing, and what they thought could be done to raise levels of confidence in the police.



728 people completed this initial survey across the four localities, including 347 adults completing the detailed survey, and 381 persons aged under 16 completing the shorter survey.

Among adults, more than three quarters of respondents said that their main reason for being in or visiting the particular locality is because they live in the area. The age profile of adult respondents was balanced, although two-thirds of respondents identified as female. Just over a third of respondents said that they had experienced some kind of contact with the police in previous 6 months.

People under 16 attending local schools were not asked these particular questions.

### **Step 3**

The third step involved running a community conversation in each locality. These were usually held as one session taking place within a local community building.

The purpose of the conversation was to discuss the findings from the local community survey and consider suggestions for how the local policing time might introduce small-scale initiatives or 'tests of change' in response to points raised.

The sessions ran for about 2.5 hours and included inputs from the Authority about the purpose and scope of the project, and an input from Police Scotland (PPCW and the Local Policing Commander) about local community and response policing and the types of challenges and demands that local policing teams face on a daily basis.

Participants could sign up for these community conversations via the Authority's Citizen Space portal (using a QR Code), or could contact Project Delivery Team staff via email or through two dedicated mobile phone numbers. Participant information (personal data) was held by the Authority and not shared with Police Scotland.



These first community conversations were well attended by local community groups and local residents, and local partners, and although some sessions were better attended than others in terms of numbers, some of the smaller sessions also yielded high quality and focussed conversations.

The largest of all the initial conversation sessions took place in Letham (the first locality), with around 35 people in attendance at the meeting. The smaller sessions typically involved between 8 and 20 people attending and had a 'focus group' feel to them. The Project Delivery Team believes that the longer lead-in period for the work in the Letham community meant that awareness of the CCAR project was greater, and therefore resulted in more people attending the first community conversation.

Apart from an input on community policing arrangements and current demand, local policing teams attended these community conversations in listening mode, and committed to taking away the points that had been raised and coming back to community with proposals for feasible and sustainable initiatives for testing (see Step 4).



A community conversation taking place in Letham, Perth



Inspector David Cameron leading a community conversation in Irvine-Fullarton

## Step 4

The fourth step involved running a follow-up community conversation in each locality. These community conversations were shorter in length, and this allowed the Project Delivery team to organise multiple sessions over the course of a day in some of the localities. Feedback received at the initial community conversations at Step 3 had mentioned that the timing of the events during the working/school day, may have led to some people feeling unable to participate. Some sessions therefore took place during the early evening, with the latest schedule conversation taking place between 6 and 8pm in one of the localities.

These shorter community conversations mostly involved the local policing team presenting their suggested initiatives to the local community and seeking feedback on the proposals prior to their implementation as 'tests of change'. The Project Delivery Team observed that in some cases, the proposals being put forward by the local policing teams were not received as being innovative by the community, or especially substantial in nature. By way of example, references to introducing a community newsletter evoked comments that there used to be a regular newsletter.

The Project Delivery Team noted that sign-up and attendance at these second community conversations in each locality was lower than for the first set of community conversations. The largest of the sessions typically involved up to a dozen participants, whilst some sessions only attracted between 3 and 5 participants. However, the quality of the conversations was high, and the PDT observed that some participants from the first conversations were in attendance at the second set of conversations, in all four of the localities, and therefore there was evidence that interest in Project had been maintained, if to a lesser degree than had been envisaged.

It is possible that because the second conversation was pitched as being a follow-up to an earlier community survey and community conversation, that some people who had not taken part in that prior engagement activity felt that they could not join in the Project's activities at a half way point.

Most of the proposals made by the various local policing teams across the four localities related to improving communication and engagement, being more present at community group events and becoming more embedded in communities and therefore more accessible to local people. The proposals had the support of most participants, although PDT members observed that initial expectations around what the CCAR Project might do for the local community had required careful management.

### **Step 5**

In each of the localities, local policing teams from Police Scotland a period of around 3 months introducing Tests of Change (initiatives), with implementation typically commencing within a month of the second community conversation taking place.

Detail on the various initiatives, and what people specifically thought of them after 3 months as part of 'checking in' (Step 6), is set out within each of the locality reports on the CCAR website.

The following is a list of all of the tests of change from across the four localities. There is commonality among them: a focus on being more visible to communities, more embedded within in communities, and providing more enhanced communication, including information about the work that the police are doing locally.

Each local policing team implemented between 3 and 6 initiatives during the three month 'tests of change' period, although it was apparent to the Project Delivery Team, through ongoing discussions with the local policing teams during the delivery period, that in some cases, the initiatives were implemented towards the end of the 3 month period due to operational capacity.





## ***Letham***

- Introducing named community police officers
- Hosting pop-up events
- Developing links with local organisations
- Promoting the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers scheme
- Delivery of a presentation about policing in 2023

## ***Irvine-Fullarton***

- Issuing leaflets and email communications to stakeholders
- Equipping local officers with quadbikes to assist with beach/dune patrols
- Campus officers giving more frequent school visits
- Delivery of a presentation about policing in 2023

## ***Levenmouth***

- Hosting pop-up events
- Supervisors walking the beat
- Hosting of a quarterly public forum
- Community leaflets and newsletter
- Revisions to the local social media approach
- Communicating more through the Improving Levenmouth Together partnership to reach more people
- Increasing community officer engagement
- Delivery of a presentation about policing in 2023

## ***Wick***

- 'Coffee with a Cop' community drop-in sessions
- Local policing bi-monthly newsletter "Caithness Community Update"
- More localised approach to recruitment to help retain officers
- Local policing marquee set up at local community events
- Delivery of a presentation about policing in 2023





## Step 6

The sixth step took place at the end of the 'tests of change' period in each of the four localities. It was initially conceived to be a period when formal evaluation of each of the tests of change would take place. However it became apparent that many of the initiatives introduced by local policing teams had not had chance to embed or be observed by communities. For example, preparing a quarterly local newsletter would mean that there would have been only one newsletter in circulation at the time 'evaluating' its effectiveness at raising confidence. On this basis, Step 6 took the form of a 'checking in' engagement step, to see whether local people had noticed some or all of the initiatives that had been introduced in their area, and to gather their initial views.

A community survey (the second of such) was used at Step 6 and ran for about six weeks in each locality. This asked similar questions to the initial community survey, but specifically asked people about their awareness of the named initiatives in their communities, and whether they felt they could help to improve confidence in local community policing.

The questionnaire surveys were administered both online and in paper form, and were disseminated locally via community groups and with the support of local policing teams. Schools were also used in an effort to reach younger audiences, however this was only possible in Letham (Perth) and Irvine-Fullarton (North Ayrshire) due to the timing of the surveys in relation to holiday and exam periods.

202 people completed Step 5 surveys (including 37 primary school pupils in Letham and 9 Under-16 pupils in Irvine-Fullarton). This overall response represents a marked reduction from response to the initial community survey and was consistent across all four localities.



The Project Delivery Team monitored completion rates over the course of the six weeks survey period, and noted slow uptake. The Team took the decision not to go to additional lengths to boost participation beyond the promotional methods already used at Step 2 for the initial community survey.

This decision was taken in recognition that a key part of the CCAR Project's purpose and guiding principle was to achieve the best response and impact within the available resource envelope, working within time constraints and documenting/recording such challenges as part of the CCAR Project's learning and overall test of trying to deliver the Place Principle in practice i.e. 'doing things with communities rather than to communities'.



## **Step 7**

The final step in the engagement model entailed bringing the community together for a final meeting, focussed on the insights generated via the 'checking in' survey at Step 6, as captured in an evaluation report for the area and final report.

At each final meeting, the Project Delivery Team summarised the CCAR Project's overall footprint and impact over the course of the fieldwork and delivery of the engagement model, explained next steps, and thanked those attending for their contributions along the way.

The final 'project closure' events took place in a similar way to the previous community conversations, although they were much shorter in duration (around 1 hour long), and were less conversational in nature.

Attendance at these final meetings was much more limited than at previous community conversations, with numbers varying between 3 and 6 people.

So what has the CCAR discovered through application of the engagement model about community cohesion, confidence in the police, and views on different types of initiatives? And what else did the Project Delivery Team observe and learn through reflecting on delivery?

The following is a summary of the main insights attributable to delivering the CCAR in the four localities. Details and analysis are also captured in the individual locality reports published on the CCAR website. These are broken down by locality and by the different steps of the engagement model.

### ***Sense of community spirit is strong***

There was a relatively high level of agreement among people that their locality had a strong sense of community. Participants frequently referenced how people in the local area help and support one another, and that most people are friendly towards one another. People generally know one another in the streets where they live, had often lived in the area for a long time, and people had family living close by.

Where people did not feel that there was a strong sense of community spirit, a diverse range of reasons were given:

### ***Visible drug dealing and endemic antisocial behaviour***

Drug dealing (and openly consuming drugs) was frequently cited as being a problem, making people feel afraid of the people around them. There was also a common perception that the police should/must know who is involved in such activities but are not prioritising intervention. Scenes of young children gathering in groups and 'openly vaping' also raised concerns among some participants about how they had acquired these, and why teachers and police were seemingly not intervening. The availability of disposable vape pens was also cited by children and young people through their surveys as being an issue that concerned them.

Certain forms of antisocial behaviour were described as being endemic in the communities. The spectrum of behaviours mentioned was broad, ranging from noisy gatherings, neighbour disputes and issues, littering in public places, youths loitering about, aggressive begging, and vandalism.

## ***Disrespectful attitudes***

Some participants also referenced a general trend towards more disrespectful, uncivil and impolite behaviour and attitudes among people. There was often an intergenerational aspect woven into the discussions: older people felt that younger people were disrespectful towards them, and younger people felt that older people were rude, unfriendly and judgmental.

## ***Road safety***

Road safety was frequently cited as an issue where people felt that the police could be taking more action. Children and young people also mentioned how road safety issues are a matter of concern. The predominant point related to speeding, both in residential streets and, in the case of Wick and Caithness, country roads.

## ***Deteriorating community fabric and feeling of abandonment***

The closure of shops and other community facilities was seen by some to be a sign of abandonment and economic depression. Some people said that the physical fabric of the community is becoming run down and that nobody seems to care. A common theme was that people (and agencies) are not uniting strongly enough and instead turning a blind eye to community deterioration, which is leading to a loss of community pride.

## ***Mixed views on the term deprivation***

The term 'deprivation' was discussed during early meetings with community group representatives at Step 1.

A view was expressed to the Project Delivery Team that the term is stigmatising and could put people off from participating. In response to this, the Project Delivery Team re-branded the Project as the Community Confidence Action Research Project (the original name being used was the 'Deprivation and Confidence Project').

Since the genesis for the Project was based largely on the evidence of a link between deprivation and low confidence in the police, and since localities had been identified and selected using deprivation statistics, all Project materials continued to explain the aims of the Project and why deprivation was important to the Project, for reasons of being clear and transparent.

The Project Delivery Team tested the stigmatisation theory in the course of community conversations and found that views and feelings were mixed. Some participants felt that the term 'deprivation' was a 'fair and real description' of where they live, whilst others said that they didn't feel the area they lived in was especially deprived. Others said that they did not like the term but understood that it is a term used by government based on a social metrics.



## ***Relatively low confidence in the police but high trust***

The question of whether people had confidence in their local police, and the reasons for this, were explored both through community surveys and in community conversations. As expected, people reported having generally low levels of confidence in policing. However, people spoke favourably about policing as a public service, and it was clear that people valued the principle of policing. People had high levels faith in the police officers that they have had experience of dealing with, and strong, anti-police sentiments were not expressed. There was also no sense that the police were in any way 'over-policing' areas or 'over-reaching' with their powers.

## ***Positive views on 'campus cops' and dedicated community officers***

There was a positive view regarding the deployment of 'campus cops' in local schools, and also a very positive view of community officers who were more embedded in community roles, and who meet the public in community settings at scheduled and regular times.

## ***Provision of policing viewed as insufficient to meet local demand***

The main point that came up repeatedly in conversations is a belief that the community is being under-serviced by the police and other local agencies, relative to the scale, repetition and predictability of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour matters.

## ***Police not sufficiently visible and accessible***

People felt that the police are not sufficiently visible to them in their community, with many people saying that they never or rarely see police officers patrolling their communities.

People also felt that it was difficult to access police officers and speak to them about issues that concern them or share intelligence with them. This was largely because the local police station's front counter had limited opening hours, or was frequently closed despite being advertised as being open. In a similar vein, people frequently expressed frustration in their use of the 101 telephone system, due to what felt like long and increasing call waiting times.

## ***Positivity among children and young people***

From the surveys issued to children and young people, the majority viewed policing very positively, seeking more engagement with schools.





## ***Confusion regarding the tackling of antisocial behaviour***

People also frequently cited antisocial behaviour as an issue that they not only experience and witness often, but have also reported to the police, with little or no action being seen to be taken from their perspective. People often said that they are not sure what matters are worthy of reporting to the police, and questioned whether they are reporting things to the right agency. There was a keenness to avoid wasting police time, but people did not know what else to do in order to get help.

## ***Police attendance at local community events***

People also felt that although the police might sometimes proactively attend community events/meetings as a means of trying to maintain relationships with the community, the officers attending would often be pulled away at short notice to respond to incidents. Some participants said that this discourages people from speaking to the police because they are not sure whether they are attending in a proactive capacity or in a response capacity, and would not want to disturb them if it is the latter.

There was a common view that local community police officers should be dedicated to carrying out community policing activity rather than trying to do this in between responding to calls, and the use of physical, semi-permanent devices such as stands, marquees and portakabins at events can help to create the perception that the police are present for the entirety of the event, are accessible, and want to be part of the community.

## ***Information about policing and local priorities***

People also said that they were unaware of information about policing, crime and antisocial behaviour for their area, in the form of statistics and information as opposed to just 'social media news items'.

Awareness of the existence of local police plans and local performance reporting to local authorities was extremely minimal, and people did not know that Police Scotland publishes local plans, and some local authority level statistics, on its website.

The Project Delivery Team observed surprise among attendees at community conversations when the local policing team management presented statistics, often showing reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour. People were surprised that they had not heard this before, and felt that wider communication of positive information would build confidence and lead to people feeling safer.

## ***Unfamiliarity with Local Officers***

People also mentioned that they do not know, by name or face, who the local policing team is. On a related point, some local stakeholders said that when they have managed to establish a relationship with the police, the officer(s) in question frequently move on to other roles, leading to a relationship characterised by gaps and inconsistency, with less investment in any relationships that form.

## ***Education around modern policing demands***

People also felt that the police should be doing more to explain to communities the nature of modern policing and what it entails. People were surprised to learn that a lot of police time is spent safeguarding people experiencing mental health distress, as well as dealing with less-visible protective work e.g. domestic abuse, child protection, and online crime such as fraud and threats to public safety. People said that if they don't see the police out on patrol, don't come to community events, and don't get to hear about this less visible but important work, then it is easy for local people to jump to the conclusion that the police are not doing very much with their time.

People also agreed that the police, and governments, continue to promote policing services using images that reference high-visibility and interactive community policing, and questioned whether this sets false expectations about what modern policing means.

## ***Social media use should be more interactive and more 'hyperlocal'***

People also said that if the police are going to rely more on social media to communicate and engage with communities, then they need to be active on multiple platforms and at a more hyper-localised level, to ensure that the reach is satisfactory and the content meaningful.

There was also a feeling that many police communication pieces on social media are very generic in nature, do not feel local enough, and the accounts are used in a one-way messaging capacity, rather than being genuinely interactive. There was a feeling that the police need to get with the times and make better use of digital channels for reporting, intelligence gathering and intelligence sharing as communities are keen to interact with the police in this way and be part of the 'policing effort',





## ***Understanding of the policing system in Scotland is limited***

The Project Delivery Team observed that most people attending the community conversation sessions were not familiar with how the system of policing in Scotland had changed in 2013 as a consequence of the enactment of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

Very few participants had heard of the Scottish Police Authority or understood what its role is, in terms of allocating funding to Police Scotland, publishing a strategic police plan, promoting continuous improvement in policing, and holding the Chief Constable to account for policing.

There was more awareness of how the regional police forces had merged to become Police Scotland, but limited awareness of changes to local policing. As mentioned before, awareness regarding local police plans and local police scrutiny arrangements was minimal.

### ***Limited awareness of the Tests of Change***

At steps 6 and 7 of the engagement model, the Project Delivery Team was keen to understand how people felt about the tests of change that had been implemented by local policing teams.

The survey at step 6, and the final conversations at step 7, revealed that only half of participants had seen, or were aware, of one initiative (usually via a social media platform). The vast majority of people had not seen (or were not aware of) two or more initiatives taking place in the community.

The reasons for this were discussed at the final community conversation in each area (Step 7). There was an agreement that some of initiatives targeted particular sections of the community (e.g. engagement in school settings) or had been delivered through social media platforms that they were not members of. Other initiatives had simply not had enough time to embed (e.g. newsletters and drop-ins).

Where people had been aware of an initiative, the feedback was positive and optimistic, however the reduced number of people answering the 'checking in' survey (Survey 2) and attending the final community conversations, minimises the value of insights into the effectiveness of particular 'tests of change' at building confidence.

Inspector Matt Spencer shows the Project Delivery Team the Community Trade Hub in Buckhaven, Fife

## PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM REFLECTIONS

The Project Delivery Team met regularly throughout the life of the CCAR Project to reflect on its progress and make adaptations to the engagement model wherever these were feasible. These reflective sessions built on the debriefs that took place with local policing teams at the conclusion of a community conversation, and took account of suggestions given by participants at events via anonymous feedback forms.

The following reflections, based on the experience of delivering the Project and trying to 'do things with communities rather to communities' within the existing resource envelope, have been captured to support organisational memory, and are summarised below,

The Project Delivery Team debriefs at the conclusion of a community conversation in Letham, Perth



## ***Low confidence is linked to apathy***

Low confidence in the police came across as being interrelated with low confidence in other public services and statutory agencies. Apathy and low confidence often go hand-in-hand with one another, and this can have the effect of dampening the enthusiasm and commitment required to secure participation in community improvement initiatives and be 'part of the solution'. Some local partners had commented that the post-pandemic environment, combined with the 'cost of living crisis', was affecting the response and levels of participation in their own initiatives through a depressive effect on people.

## ***Community conversations***

The Project Delivery Team noted how some people attended community conversations to discuss a specific individual matter with the attending police officers. It was as though some people perceived the community conversation to be a local policing surgery or forum, rather than a tool being used to inform a research project.

## ***Expectation management***

A high level of expectation management was exercised at the first community conversation in each locality. The Project Delivery Team and attending local police officers were keen to emphasise that the tests of change were likely to be small-scale in nature and not result in a transformation of policing in the way that some people may have hoped. This could have led to some early participants losing interest in the Project.

## ***Data handling and anonymity***

The Scottish Police Authority handled all personal data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. Survey respondents did not have to supply their names and contact details unless they chose to. People signing up for community conversations did need to provide their contact details for registration purposes and to facilitate organisation of events (room size, catering requirements). The Scottish Police Authority members of the Project Delivery Team managed registration at events, so as not to reveal personal data to Police Scotland staff and officers, and in presentations to participants, the data handling policy for the Project was explained.

On reflection, the approach raises a quandary: by stressing that the Police would not see personal information, this may encourage greater participation for some people who take assurance from this confidentiality, but could also reinforce impressions that it would be unsafe if the Police were to see such information, and therefore add to any existing feelings of mistrust.

## ***Staggering of the fieldwork***

The Project Delivery Team phased the fieldwork across the four localities in a staggered way, to ensure that the Team had the capacity to carry out fieldwork. In practice this meant that as fieldwork in Locality 1 was approaching its closure (around Step 6), work in Locality 2 would start. There was therefore some overlap between localities. However, due to reasons beyond the control of the Project Delivery Team (including holiday periods, school term times and operational policing commitments), the overlapping became considerable at one point (late 2023) where fieldwork was taking place simultaneously in all four localities.

## ***The first locality should have been treated as a pathfinder***

Locality 1 (in this case Letham in Perth) should have been allowed to complete the engagement model fully, prior to any work starting in the other localities. This would have picked up on declining participation and interest, and allowed the Project Delivery Team to capture learning and tweak the engagement model before commencing work in the other localities. As it was, the planned engagement model was presented up front to localities 2, 3 and 4 before Step 6 had concluded in Locality 1.

## ***The short, informal conversation at a reachable moment***

In addition to using surveys and community conversation events, the Project Delivery Team felt that the fieldwork could have been supplemented by holding short, less formal conversations with people at reachable moments within their community. These conversations could have been very loosely structured and taken no more than a few minutes of a person's time. In terms of resource management, they could have taken place on the margins of the other meetings and events, to avoid travelling to the locality for this purpose alone.





Community outreach officers attached to Police Scotland's Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing Division, were viewed very positively by communities

### ***Online participation and more diverse timings of events***

Early engagement with community groups referenced the benefit of in-person events and going to the community, rather than asking the community to come to the Project Delivery Team. This led to community venues being booked for events. However, this often meant, combined with travel and officer shift patterns, that events had to be held during the middle of the day on weekdays. This may have unintentionally excluded some people for participating, especially the first community conversation as it lasted for almost three hours.

Using a mix of in-person and online events could have improved inclusivity, with online events being more flexible regarding their timing.

## ***Allow more time to secure permissions to work with schools***

The Project Delivery Team underestimated the amount of time that would be required to secure permission to reach children and young people via schools.

Securing support from senior teaching staff was a relatively quick process, but a period of time was then required before commencing with surveys, to allow for engagement with the relevant local authority teams, and allow schools to communicate with parents and guardians in advance of surveys taking place. Additionally, the timing of surveys in schools depended on school schedules (holiday periods and exam periods, for example). On this basis, it was not possible to conduct the surveys via schools in all four localities both at Step 2 and at Step 6 of the engagement model.

## ***Candour and perseverance pays dividends***

The Project Delivery Team felt that the candour exhibited by officers at community conversations was appreciated by people taking part, and helped to break down barriers and generate honest and meaningful conversations.

The relatively low sign-up rates for some of the community conversations, especially in the latter stages of the fieldwork, led to reflective debate within the Project Delivery Team about whether some events should be rescheduled. An agreement was reached to continue to hold advertised events, irrespective of anticipated low turn-out, to demonstrate the high level of commitment to community from both the Project and the local policing team, and respect for the relationships that had been developed up to that point with participants, some of whom had been part of the CCAR journey from the very beginning.





# PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

The Project Sponsors and Project Delivery Members are grateful to the following individuals for sharing their views and agreeing to have their name and role published in this Final Report.

Excellent sessions and communication.

**Tina Irving**

**Local Partner working closely with the police  
Wick**

The aim of the project is admirable and I am sure some/most want it to be a success but unless resources are available to tackle anti social behaviour then locals won't recognise this as a success.

**Andy Selbie**

**Local Resident  
Levenmouth**

It was great to find out all that was happening already and have input into how to get that information out to a wider audience and to input new ideas and influences.

**Ruan Peat**

**Local Partner working closely with the police  
Wick**

It was really informative on what was being down in my area and to help people understand the various roles the modern force has to deal with. As a lot of people were unaware of all the work that is carried out by the force in the back ground.

**Billy Ellwood**

**Local Partner working closely with the police  
Levenmouth**

Am glad that residents in my area are being given the chance to have their voices heard. Many people say the Police are unapproachable but I have not found this to be the case.

**Shelagh Cooper  
Local Resident  
Levenmouth**

I felt the Project Team were fantastic at communicating with me and kept me up to date all the way through. We had regular e-mails, contact, and popping in to drop off information and update me on where things were.

**Craig Hamilton**

**Local Partner working closely with the police  
Irvine-Fullarton**

I was involved in one session and attended with a range of stakeholders, where I felt the views and opinions were very honest and the platform enabled that discussion.

**Arlene Campbell  
Local Partner working closely with the police  
Levenmouth**

The project has been very worthwhile and this type of engagement should be offered throughout the rest of Scotland. Given the recent troubles south of the border, I also see an appreciation for the police in Scotland.

**Darren Campbell  
Community Group  
Leader/Member  
Wick**

The project seems to have been fairly well-subscribed with many friends and colleagues reporting that they have contributed. The project will be successful in my eyes if it results in some positive changes in terms of police resources and priorities so our local Bobbies can get down to properly dealing with the things that are harming our communities.

**Bryan Dods  
Community Group  
Leader/Member  
Wick**

I fully support the project and hope to see positive outcomes soon.

At present my confidence in the local community police is extremely low.

**Donna Hill  
Local Resident  
Wick**



Members of the Project-Delivery Team sorting out the catering ahead of a community conversation