



Evidence based approaches to community policing

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Evidence-based approaches to community policing in the UK

- Community policing is about police working with local people to understand problems and prevent crime. College of policing (2021). Evidence-based policing means using research, crime data and community information to decide what works best. College of policing (2018)
- This presentation will look at POP, SARA, hotspot policing, prevention, 5WH and body-worn video.

What is evidence-based policing?

Evidence-based policing means police use research, data and real results to guide what they do. It helps officers ask whether a tactic actually reduces crime, harm or anti-social behaviour.

It is not just about doing what has always been done. It is about learning from evidence and checking if the police response is working. College of Policing (2018)

Community engagement

Community engagement means police listening to people who live in the area. It can include community meetings, talking to young people, school visits, surveys, social media updates and working with local groups.

This helps build trust because people feel like their worries are being heard. It also makes the police seem fairer, because they are not just telling people what to do. Hanway and Hambly (2023)

What Works Centre and Crime Reduction Toolkit

The Crime Reduction Toolkit gives police access to research evidence about different ways of reducing crime. It helps show whether the evidence for a policing tactic is strong, weak or mixed. This helps police forces make better choices instead of relying only on opinion. It also helps them compare different tactics before using them in the community. College of policing (2021)

But police should not only copy what worked somewhere else. They still need to think about the local area and what local people are saying.

Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)

Problem-Oriented Policing, also called POP, focuses on repeated problems rather than single incidents. Instead of only responding again and again, police try to understand why the problem keeps happening. POP often involves working with other organisations such as schools, councils, youth workers, housing teams and businesses. This is because community problems usually cannot be solved by police alone. College of Policing (2023), Wood (2026)



POP works better when local people are involved, because they often know why a problem keeps happening in their area.
College of policing (2021)



Problem Analysis Triangle

- The Problem Analysis Triangle helps police look at why a problem is happening. It looks at three things the victim, the offender, and the place.
- This is helpful because police should not just rush in and blame one person. For example, if there is anti-social behaviour in a park, police can look at who is being affected and who is causing the problem, and why that park keeps being used.
- Police can then work with other people like the council, schools or youth workers to try and fix the problem properly. College of policing (2022)

SARA model

- The SARA model is a problem-solving method used in policing. It stands for Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment.
- Scanning means finding the problem, analysis means understanding it properly, response means choosing an action, and assessment means checking whether it worked. This stops police rushing in too quickly, and it gives them time to listen to people before deciding what to do. College of policing (2022), Wood (2026)



5WH analysis

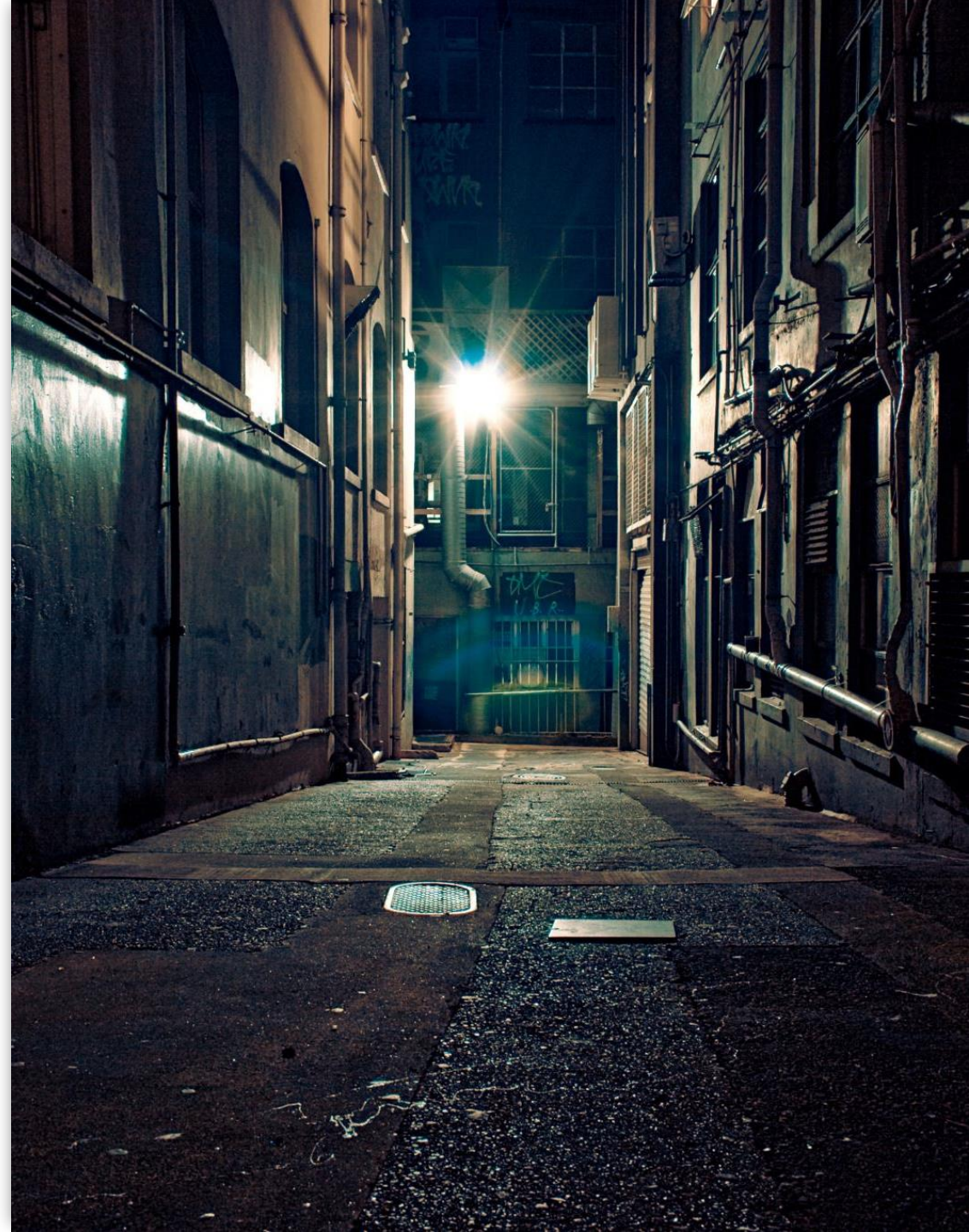
The 5WH method helps police ask better questions during the analysis stage. It looks at **what** is happening, **where** it is happening, **when** it happens, **who** is involved, and **why** or **how** it is happening.

This can help police understand the real causes of a local problem. For example, anti-social behaviour in a park might be linked to poor lighting, lack of youth facilities, certain times of day or alcohol use. College of Policing (2022), Wood (2026)

5WH can also stop police making guesses about people or places, because they have to look at the facts first.

Hotspot policing

- Hotspot policing is based on the idea that crime is not spread evenly across an area. A small number of streets, parks, shops or estates can have a much higher amount of crime or disorder. Home Office (2025)
- Police can use crime data to go to these places at the right times. But they need to explain this clearly to people, because too much police action in one area can make people feel picked on or over-policed. Home Office (2025), Hanway and Hambly (2023)



Body-worn video

- Body-worn video records interactions between police and the public. It can help collect evidence, support complaints investigations, and improve accountability. NPCC (2024)
- But body-worn video does not automatically make people trust the police. It needs clear rules about privacy, when cameras are turned on, and how the video is stored. It can help with accountability, but police still need to speak to people properly. College of Policing (2021)



Neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing means police getting to know the local area and the people who live there. It is not just about turning up after something bad has happened. It is about being seen, talking to people and finding out what problems are happening. College of Policing (2021), Wood (2026)

This is one of the clearest ways police can build trust. If officers are known in the area and listen to people, the public may feel more confident reporting crime and giving information. HMICFRS (2023), Hanway and Hambly (2023)

Trust, fairness and community voice

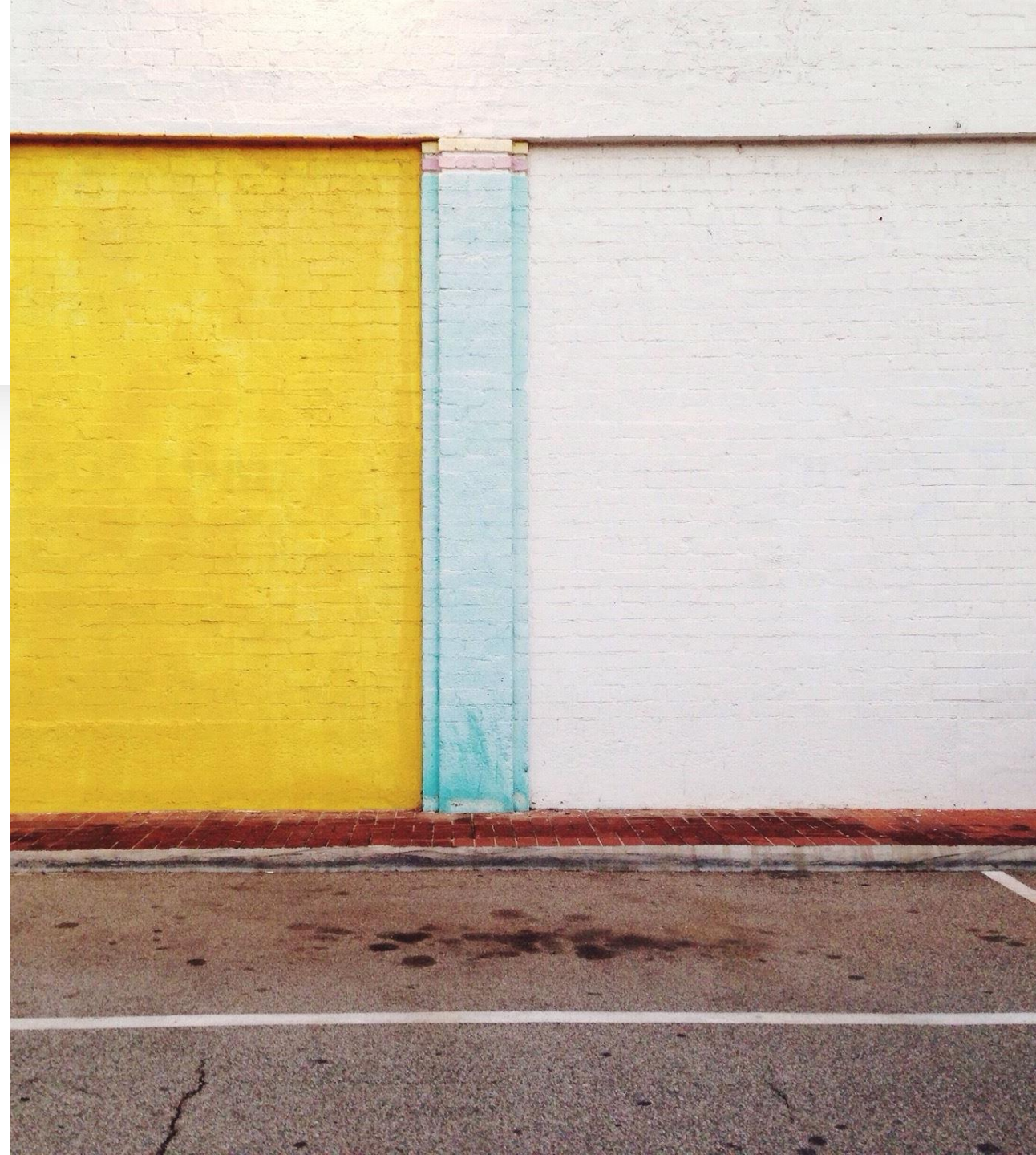
Trust is important because police need people to report crime, give evidence and help them understand what is happening locally. If people think police are unfair or do not listen, they may stop helping.

Community engagement can make police seem more legitimate because it shows they are not just using power over people. They are listening, explaining decisions, and treating people like they matter. Hanway and Hambly (2023)

Anti-social behaviour and visual disorder

Anti-social behaviour and visible disorder can make people feel unsafe in their own area. This could include graffiti, vandalism, litter, street drinking or people causing trouble in public places. College of Policing (2025)

This links to neighbourhood policing because police and local services can deal with small problems early. But it must be done fairly. If police are too strict about small things, people may feel unfairly targeted and trust can get worse. Hanway and Hambly (2023)



Challenges of using EBP in community policing

Evidence-based policing can be hard to use in real life. Police may not always have enough time, training or staff to look at research properly. Some officers may also prefer doing things the way they have always done them. Rogers, Pepper and Skilling (2022), Wood (2026)

Another problem is that evidence from one area might not work the same in another area. This is why police still need to listen to the local community and not just follow data by itself. College of Policing (2018)

Conclusion

Evidence-based community policing means police should use research, crime data and what local people say. It is not just about picking a tactic and hoping it works. Police need to check if crime goes down, but also if people feel safer and fairly treated.

Community engagement is really important because trust does not come from police being seen more on its own. Trust comes from police listening, explaining what they are doing, and treating people properly.

College of Policing (2018), Hanway and Hambly (2023), College of Policing (2023)



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