

Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnerships – SCRIBE project

Summary

The Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnerships developed an innovative data sharing system, SCRIBE, to support partnership working to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Bedfordshire.

Key learnings

- Trust is key in a partnership. It will mean greater knowledge sharing and a deeper understanding by partners of crime and anti-social behaviour issues.
- Using information and analysing issues in the context of the local area enhances the solutions which can be adopted.
- Working in partnership can save money and time by learning from one another rather than 're-inventing the wheel'.

Who is involved?

Bedfordshire's Community Safety Partnerships are a cooperative of responsible authorities. The main organisations involved in these partnerships are:

- Bedford Borough Council
- Bedfordshire County Council
- Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
- Bedfordshire Police
- Luton Borough Council
- Mid Bedfordshire District Council
- South Bedfordshire District Council.

The problems and how we tackled them

The aim of Community Safety Partnerships in Bedfordshire is to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the county. In order to create a shared understanding of the extent of crime issues in the county and support partnership working, it was agreed that a system to facilitate information sharing was required.

The problem was that each organisation held its own disparate data, in different formats and based on different records. A central electronic data store was therefore required that would support the storage and presentation of all the disparate data and provide a quick and easy process for sharing and accessing the data.

The central electronic data store, called 'Sharing Community Related Information in Bedfordshire Electronically' or SCRIBE, would support the partnerships to:

- improve and increase data collection
- improve data analysis
- enhance the monitoring of crime and anti-social behaviour.

SCRIBE is an ambitious project, which delivers key solutions to the issues partnerships face.

1. The electronic data store was developed into a Geographical Information System (GIS) available to the partnerships over the internet on a secure website. This provides a quick and easy interface to access the data. The site is hosted at Mid-Bedfordshire District Council, which reduced the technical costs associated with developing and running the project.

2. Each partner organisation submits its information, which ranges from crime incidents recorded by the police to fire incidents recorded by the fire and rescue service, to the central SCRIBE manager. This data sharing is managed by a data sharing agreement.
3. The central manager ensures consistency with the data so each member of the partnership understands the data in the same way. Using the same information also means that each member will have the same understanding of the crime issues in a particular locality.
4. The central data store is kept secure by using a vetting procedure before password access is granted to users.

Outcomes and impact

The SCRIBE project provides many examples of tangible and intangible benefits.

1. Each member of the partnership has a shared understanding of the local crime issues by having access to the same data, available at street level with details of each incident provided within the secure website.
2. Time is saved for each partnership member when providing reports because the capabilities of the system means that the user can access and download hotspot mapping, data tables and trends independently from the website.
3. One example of using SCRIBE was to inform the targeting of resource allocation by the Stotfold Problem Solving Group. The group was set up to tackle concentrated anti-social behaviour incidents in the village. SCRIBE provided data on the exact nature, location and time of the incidents. The results were fed in to the Home Office Crime Reduction model of SARA – Scanning, Analyse, Response and Assess – to accurately tackle the issues and allocate resources effectively. Without SCRIBE, action planning and response would have taken much longer because the data would have to have been gathered from each agency individually.

The SCRIBE project ultimately is a success story where trust and good will have shown real benefits for citizens. Each partner has been willing and able to share its intelligence in order to support partnership working and gain a deeper understanding of crime and anti-social behaviour in Bedfordshire.

What could we have done better?

The SCRIBE project has suffered, like many others, by a lack of communication to people outside the core user group. This has meant in practical terms, the IT infrastructure and settings necessary to access SCRIBE within each organisation has had to maintain a basic level of functionality, not always possible in the ever-changing world of IT systems.

In the future, the SCRIBE team plan to maintain regular communications with the IT professionals in each organisation. This will ensure that users do not suffer from IT developments undertaken in individual organisations, that could affect access to the SCRIBE website.

Next steps

The next steps for the SCRIBE project include new members of staff to support the growing system. The team also plan to extend the system to other local agencies involved in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and examine whether further data can be included and shared with partner organisations.

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