



Community Confidence Action Research – Irvine Fullarton Engagement Results

Introduction

On 25 May 2023, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland held an engagement session with representatives from the community of Irvine Fullarton, North Ayrshire as part of the Community Confidence Action Research Project.

There were approximately 26 attendees, including council officers, locally elected members, community group leaders, school pupils and members of the public. The day focused on the findings of [recent surveys carried out in Irvine Fullarton](#). The aim of the event was to gain insights into how people felt policing in Irvine Fullarton could be enhanced via table and room discussions. Conversations were structured using the following questions:

1. Do you recognise Irvine Fullarton in these findings and in what ways?
2. Is there anything you feel is missing or would want to add?
3. What do you think could enhance confidence in policing in Irvine Fullarton?

This paper summarises the key themes from the engagement session and the ideas people had for enhancing confidence in policing.

Notes taken by facilitators at each discussion table were collated to identify ideas expressed by people that could enhance confidence in policing in the area. This led to the identification of five key areas which are detailed in this paper (Communication, Visibility/Contact, Targeted Resourcing, Partnership Working, and Young People).

Views on the survey results

When asked if the survey results reflected what it is like to live and work in Irvine Fullarton, there was a range of responses from delegates.

Most people felt that they did recognise their community in the findings, for example many people agreed that Irvine Fullarton had a strong sense of community and that they were proud of the area. Multiple people shared stories which emphasised the formal (e.g. community hub, partnership working) and informal (e.g. looking out for each other) civic engagement which they felt made Irvine Fullarton a nice place to spend their time. Regarding the issue of antisocial behaviour, the attendees expressed that this reflected the reality in the area – especially in the mall and beach area. Some conversations connected the issue

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of drug use with antisocial behaviour, and noted how these concerns are propelled by one another. Attendees also noted long 101 waiting times and shared experiences of reporting intelligence to police with no observable response.

Comparatively, there was some disagreement on what aspects of the findings indicated. Some attendees thought that the area didn't feel as "forgotten" as per some of the qualitative responses in the initial survey. Many people highlighted the variety of improvement work currently underway which, again, diverges from what was highlighted in the survey findings.

Furthermore, it was expressed that the issue of sexual violence in the area was missing from the survey findings in light of recent incidents. When considering antisocial behaviour, it was felt that specific discussion of fire-raising and off road bikes were also missing from the survey.

From a young persons' perspective, it was felt that the under 16s survey results reflected being a resident in the area. In particular, young people attendees felt that vaping was a priority issue, particularly in schools. They also felt that the school police officer was a positive addition to schools - noting that good work is taking place through attendance in schools as well as youth groups and extra-curricular activities.

Ideas for Enhancing Confidence

When discussing new ways of working to enhance policing, the conversation points can be grouped under five thematic areas: Communication, Visibility and Contact, Targeted Resourcing, Partnership Working, and Young People. These ideas are now discussed under the themes outlined.

Communication

Communication and engagement from the police was felt to be a key element in building confidence and best serving their local community. More targeted communication approaches for different audiences in order to inform them about appropriate work streams were discussed (e.g. using different social media channels for different groups to communicate different messages, etc). It was also noted that a process for sending out regular emails to partner and voluntary groups would be appreciated, in order to cascade police activities out to the specific group members.

It was felt that there was a gap in consistent contact/engagement with key partners, and that community councils or elected members do not receive updates from local policing. It was felt that if they regularly received updates they felt they could better inform constituents. It was also expressed by many voices that it was good to know what police are doing in the area. Discussions identified that receiving 'good news' updates would likely improve confidence throughout the community (e.g. use of quadbikes).

Similarly on the topic of communication, it was recognised that Police Scotland's use of social media was effective – but it should also be enhanced further to

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make it hyper-local. It was felt that more content would be appreciated to allow people to stay informed: such as information campaigns, upcoming work, and examples of partnership working.

It was noted that Police Scotland could move beyond emails and social media to communicate with the community, and instead interface with the local members of the public using more innovative methods. More public meetings with police was seen as being of value (e.g. drop in sessions at various times, in evenings, different events in the area etc.) so that a range of people with varying commitments could communicate with the police. Having a pop-up stand or an information stall set up at certain times around the Irvine Fullarton area (e.g. the mall, or during peak times, when events are on) was also suggested. It was agreed that the input from Police Scotland at the community conversation event was helpful and dispelled feelings of anxiety since people were better informed about the plans in place to address local issues.

Visibility/Contact

Overall there was confidence in local policing and an understanding that, due to resourcing issues and budget pressures, they are doing as much as they can to remain visible in the community. People expressed that seeing the police can affirm feelings of trust by simply knowing that their presence is nearby. Generally increased visibility of patrol officers was thought to be valuable (e.g. traditional "bobby on the beat"), however it was also noted that officers on bikes or quadbikes would improve visibility. It was felt that visible patrols should not solely be focussed on the town centre as well.

More generally on the topic of visibility, people said that they would be keen to see police officers in the wider community and not just when responding to an incident (e.g. it was noted there used to be an officer at the local ASDA). For example, it was suggested that even just kicking a ball around with young people could be an idea to diversify visibility.

Targeted resourcing

There was a feeling that the police are doing a good job, but they need to be better resourced. When considering this Community Confidence Action Research project, it was suggested that the improvement/enhancement exercises should not be a one-way effort and that the community also need to support the police in different ways. It was suggested that the police could target their resources to utilise pre-existing community arrangements to build relationships and communicate with the public. Furthermore, it was noted that community leaders and ambassadors supporting policing initiatives could be a powerful generator for grass-roots public confidence.

Partnership working

Many attendees felt that a clearer understanding of which organisations are responsible for what local issues would be valuable. It was suggested there should be more relationship building if possible, however work should be

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streamlined with less paperwork for non-crime related issues like safety issues. Attendees felt there should be an infographic which maps and communicates the work of different services in the local area to improve public understanding. A lack of awareness of multi-agency preventative work was also noted. Considering the work of the Community Planning Partnership, it was recognised that this should be clearer and speak to the needs of the community.

Thinking about internal partnership working it was expressed that response police and community police need to work together more effectively, in order to communicate and problem-solve. It was noted that response officers do a different job and often don't have time to interact with the local community, which can come across as abrupt and can impact confidence. It was suggested that internal conversations between the community and response teams might be useful.

Young people

In addition to working with secondary school children, it was noted that police should work with primary school aged children. The impact of the new Campus officer in a local school (particularly with disengaged pupils) was described as "impressive" and many young people who have had issues with police described him as 'alright'. It was noted that these positive feelings have also filtered through to the parents of the children which may help to break down intergenerational barriers. It was suggested further work in this area should continue.

The challenge associated with engaging with young people at formative points of their lives was identified. The importance of building relationships with young people not in schools was also noted. It was suggested that police could visit scouts and guides meetings, and continue to build confidence out of school time (e.g. night time clubs).

Event Feedback

In total there were 8 feedback forms received. All 8 returned forms reported that they found the event useful, with comments noting: how beneficial it was to find out and be informed about what was going on with regards to policing in Irvine, and how the event was a good opportunity to engage and talk with others.

The feedback form also asked if there were any other suggestions on how confidence in policing could be enhanced. Out of the 3 comments received, people suggested: police could convene more community meetings, to engage in further work to enhance public understanding of local preventative work, and police attendance at groups that sit outside of school.