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Community Confidence Action Research – Levenmouth Final Report



February 2024



OFFICIAL

Acknowledgements

The Project Team would like to thank everyone who participated in this project in Levenmouth by providing their views and attending the various community conversations. We would also like to thank the community organisations and local partners who gave time to support the project and promoted our work in the community. Your willingness to be involved and your honesty during this work has been integral in supporting the continuous improvement of policing in Scotland and helping Police Scotland provide a better service to local communities.

Introduction and context

In 2021 the Chair of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and the Deputy Chief Constable for Local Policing (Police Scotland) requested research be conducted exploring the relationship between deprivation and confidence in policing in selected areas of Scotland. This stemmed from national research that suggested areas experiencing deprivation are less likely to have confidence in policing.

Delivered by the SPA Strategy and Performance Team and Police Scotland's Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing Division (PPCW), Levenmouth in Fife was selected using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and information from Police Scotland. The project was also keen to work in areas with local partners who were willing to engage in and support the work.

We used a wide definition of "deprivation" drawing from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. This index uses a range of data relating to income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. Therefore, there can be many different reasons for an area to be identified as "deprived".

The project aimed to investigate confidence in policing in Levenmouth and work with the community to develop initiatives to try to enhance it. A six-stage model was developed comprising of:



In total these stages took approximately 16 months to complete. During this time there have been increasing financial pressures on policing in Scotland, coupled with the rising cost of living and its effect on communities, as well as [decreases in confidence](#) in policing nationally. The wider picture on trust and confidence in policing will be explored as part of the final report for the whole project and not in this area report.

It is within this context that the [Community Confidence Action Research Project](#) delivered the aforementioned work in Levenmouth. The following sections provide further detail on the activity undertaken as part of these six stages.

About Levenmouth

Levenmouth is classed as a 'semi-urban' area in the **East** region of Scotland.

Levenmouth has an estimated population of 35,138 ([NRS, 2021](#)) and is classed as the most vulnerable community in Fife in the Improvement Service Community Outcomes Improvement Database.

Levenmouth is made up of fifty-two data zones, with the following ratings on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\) 2020](#) (0 equals most deprived and 100 equals least deprived).

Data Zones in Windygates and Coaltown	SIMD Percentile	Data Zones in Wemyss	SIMD Percentile
S01009614	63	S01009541	46
S01009615	71	S01009542	7
S01009616	45	S01009543	42
S01009617	69	S01009544	34

Data Zones in Buckhaven, Denbeath and Muiredge	SIMD Percentile	Data Zones in Kennoway and Bonnybank	SIMD Percentile
S01009618	19	S01009655	22
S01009619	17	S01009656	5
S01009620	19	S01009657	40
S01009621	11	S01009658	14
S01009622	1	S01009659	11
S01009623	22	S01009660	28
S01009624	15	S01009661	60

Data Zones in Largo	SIMD Percentile	Data Zones in Leven North	SIMD Percentile
S01009651	42	S01009648	36
S01009652	71	S01009649	27
S01009653	76	S01009650	81
S01009654	52		

About Levenmouth

Data Zones in Leven West	SIMD Percentile	Data Zones in Leven East	SIMD Percentile
S01009643	80	S01009639	79
S01009644	32	S01009640	5
S01009645	35	S01009641	11
S01009646	30	S01009642	32
S01009647	6		

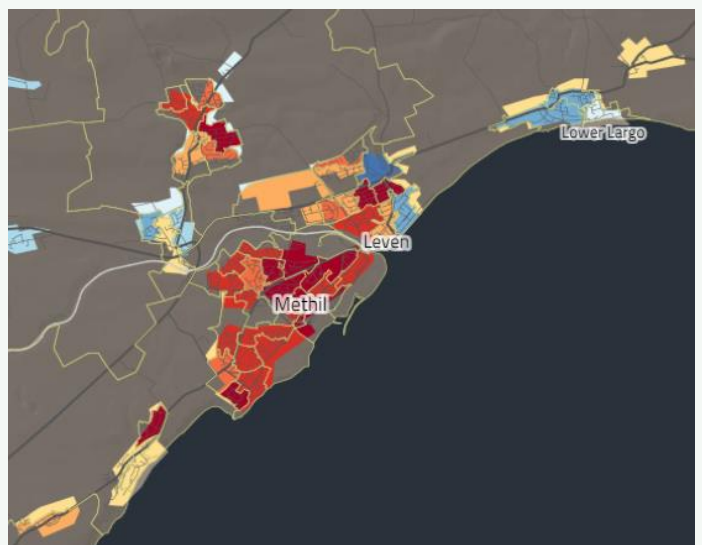
Data Zones in Methil West	SIMD Percentile	Data Zones in Methil East	SIMD Percentile
S01009631	4	S01009635	20
S01009632	3	S01009636	2
S01009633	3	S01009637	20
S01009634	12	S01009638	5

Data Zones in Methil Methilhill	SIMD Percentile
S01009625	13
S01009626	5
S01009627	25
S01009628	16
S01009629	15
S01009630	13

The average percentile ranking across all the data zones in Fife is 51. This means that the majority of areas in Levenmouth are classed as deprived in the SIMD when compared to Fife.



Above – Location of Levenmouth
- [Google Maps, 2023](#)



Above – Map of Levenmouth
- [SIMD 2020](#)

About Levenmouth

In 2022 the majority of properties in Levenmouth were clustered in council tax bands A, B and C (77%), with 18% in D and E and 5% in F, G and H. In Fife the majority of properties were also clustered in council tax bands A, B and C (62%) and similar proportions concentrated in bands D and E and F, G and H compared to nationally (26% compared to 27% and 12% compared to 14%, respectively) ([Scottish Government](#)).

Notably in relation to Fife Council and Scotland as a whole Levenmouth has:



Lower educational attainment
([CPOP, 2021/22](#))



A higher proportion living within 500 meters of a derelict site than Fife and Scotland
([ScotPHO, 2021](#))



A higher rate per 100,000 of alcohol related hospital admissions than Fife and Scotland between 2012/13 and 2021/22
([ScotPHO, 2021](#))



A higher rate of depopulation than Fife and Scotland
([CPOP, 2022/22](#))



Lower life expectancy for males and females than Fife and Scotland
([ScotPHO, 2021](#))



A higher percentage of those claiming out of work benefits
([CPOP, 2021/22](#))



A higher rate of children in poverty
([CPOP, 2021/22](#))



A higher rate of early mortality than Fife and Scotland
([CPOP, 2021/22](#))

There has been a similar level of drug related deaths recorded within Levenmouth in recent years with no decrease noted.

There were a number of suspected suicides recorded by police in the area in 2023 with the level slightly above the Fife and national average.

Levenmouth – Crime Data

Group 1: Non-Sexual Crimes of Violence

Violent crime in Levenmouth has increased slightly in the past year however this may be due to changes in recording processes with different crime categories now recorded as Group 1 crimes as the volume of this crime type has increased at both Fife and national level compared to 2021 and earlier years. The rate for this crime type remains only just above the national and Fife average for this crime type.

Group 3: Acquisitive Crime

Acquisitive crime levels increased year on year post Covid and is at its highest level in the past 7 years within Levenmouth during 2023. This again can be seen at the Fife and national levels which have both increased in 2023. Drug related crime has reduced in the past couple of years but remains above the Fife and national average and has seen an increase in recorded crime in 2023.

Group 5: Other (including drug related)

This crime group has continued to decrease in Levenmouth and Fife since 2020. Figures for 2023 are currently at their lowest across the 2017 to 2023 period. In contrast, national figures in 2023 increased against the 2022 figure.

Source: Police Scotland Management Information

Group 2: Sexual Crime

Recorded Sexual crime has decreased in Levenmouth in 2023 after seeing an increase during 2022. The level of crime does appear to fluctuate year on year and may be attributed to historical abuse allegations. Levenmouth is also above both the Fife and national averages for this crime type.

Group 4: Damage Related Crime

Damage related crime has decreased in 2023 within Levenmouth whilst the Fife and national figures have both also shown a decrease. The same is seen for miscellaneous crime which shows a higher level locally compared to the Fife and national rate every year. Traffic related offences have reduced to the lowest level in the past 7 years in Levenmouth whereas the Fife and national levels are both higher than the local figure in 2023.

Group 6: Miscellaneous Offences

Miscellaneous crime offences have seen decreases across Levenmouth, Fife and nationally. Figures for Levenmouth and nationally are currently at their lowest across the 2017 to 2023 period.

Group 7: Road Traffic

Traffic offences in Levenmouth have decreased for the first time since 2020 and are at their lowest since 2018. This trend is also seen in data for Fife, whereas traffic offences nationally are at their highest since 2017.

Levenmouth – Call Demand Data

Encouragingly, the level of calls have predominantly reduced in Levenmouth in 2023.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Antisocial behaviour calls have reduced with the lowest level of calls in the past few years with a 4% decrease compared to the 2022 figure. The 2023 level is still above the local authority and national rate for antisocial behaviour.

Crime

Crime related calls have risen slightly and remain higher than Fife and national levels. In Fife, there has been a continued increase since 2018. At a national level, crime related calls in 2023 are at their highest since 2019

Personal Safety

Personal safety calls in Levenmouth in 2023 remain at the same number as in 2022 and have continued to increase since 2020. Call demand numbers for Fife and nationally have also seen increases over the past few years. However, 2023 figures for Levenmouth, Fife and Scotland are significantly less than 2018 and 2019.

Public Welfare

Public welfare calls have remained low and are only slightly higher than the Fife and national average where call levels at these levels have increased in the past couple of years compared to the local level.

Traffic

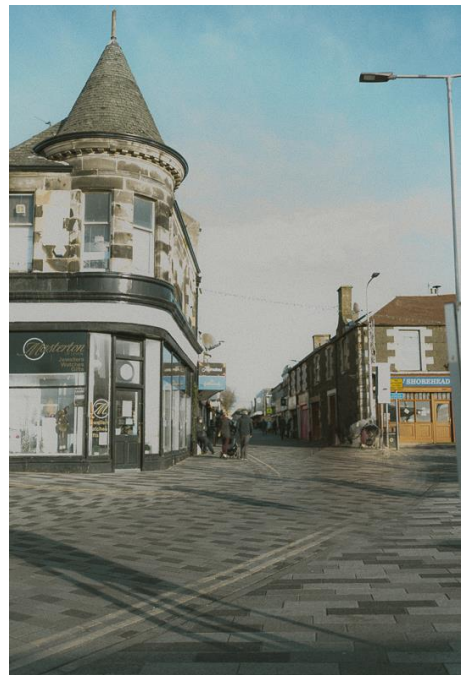
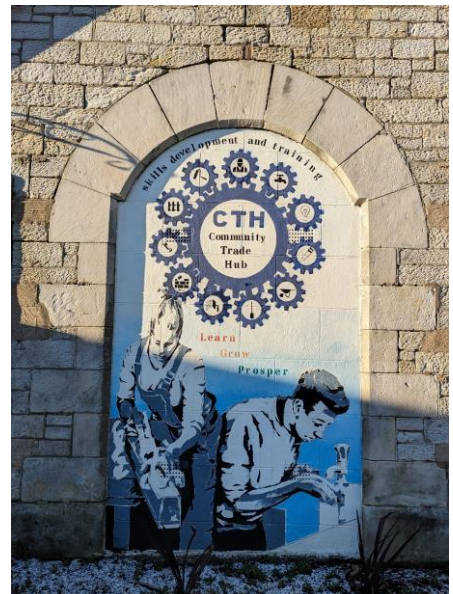
Traffic related calls remain consistently lower in Levenmouth compared to the Fife and national level

Source: Police Scotland Management Information

1. Initial Engagement

Engagement with community organisations commenced in Levenmouth in October 2022.

These contacts were essential to the successful running of the project in Levenmouth through helping share information with the community, advising on the design of the project surveys and facilitating our community conversations.



2. Community Confidence Survey

Community Confidence Survey

Between 1st February to 15th March 2023 a survey was conducted to gather the views of those aged 16 and over on Levenmouth and confidence in policing. Questions were made available online via **SPA Citizen Space** page and on paper via community organisations with a freepost envelope to the SPA office for returns. There was also the option to request another format if required. In total there were 100 responses to the survey.

This was analysed alongside results for the Police Scotland [Your Police Survey](#). There were 102 responses for Levenmouth in 2022/23 (51 responses for Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages and 51 responses for Leven, Kennoway and Largo).

The findings were published in [April 2023](#) and key findings included:

- Levenmouth community cohesion is not particularly strong. Just over one-third of respondents agreed that Levenmouth has a strong sense of community and over a quarter of respondents to the Levenmouth survey disagreed.
- Your Police Survey insights show that 61% of survey respondents from Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages (n=31) and 57% of survey respondents from Leven, Kennoway and Largo (n=29) stated they felt fairly safe in 2022/23.
- However, when asked to comment on views of Levenmouth, responses were largely negative and related to the poor condition of their local areas, the high levels of poverty and inequality, youth anti-social behaviour, and drug use.
- High levels of confidence in policing were mostly associated with policing in general, and it is notable that the highest proportion of respondents scored 'Low' or 'Medium' in their level of confidence for most indicators.
- Your Police Survey data also indicates that 56% of respondents from Leven, Kennoway and Largo and 41% of respondents from Buckhaven, Methil and Wemyss Villages 'disagree/strongly disagree' that they have confidence in local policing in 2022/23.
- Respondents in Levenmouth had generally positive feelings in relation to trust and local policing, with a higher proportion scoring 'High' in three out of four indicators.
- Regarding performance, 'A very good/somewhat good job' and 'A somewhat poor/very poor job' were each the most common responses in two scenarios. These responses were equally common in 'Keeping your area safe'.
- The majority of respondents noticed no changes in local policing in the last six months, nor had their opinion of policing changed.
- The qualitative responses highlight that police presence and visibility and tackling crime appear to be where respondents' confidence issues lie.

2. Community Confidence Survey

Community Confidence Under 16s Survey

After permission was received from Fife Council, between 20th February and 15th March 2023 a survey was run across local primary schools in Levenmouth and Levenmouth Academy secondary school to gain views on policing from those under the age of 16. Questions were also developed for children from Primary 1 to Primary 3 with completion facilitated by teachers. It was at the discretion of schools on how these questions were made available to pupils and in total there were 207 responses.

The findings of these questions were published in.

Key findings included:

- The majority of pupils in Levenmouth had a positive view of the police.
- The main areas of importance to respondents were a greater level of police engagement with local schools, tackling anti-social behaviour, drugs in school, and vandalism.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of these surveys cannot be generalised to the entire Levenmouth population.

3. Community Conversations

On May 15th 2023, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland held an engagement session with representatives from the community of Levenmouth.

The day focused on the findings of the Community Confidence Survey and sought to gain insights on how people felt policing in Levenmouth could be enhanced via table and room discussions of the following questions:

- Do you recognise Levenmouth in these findings and in what ways?
- Is there anything you feel is missing from the findings or would want to add?
- What do you think could enhance confidence in policing in Levenmouth?

There were 20 attendees, including council officers, locally elected members and community group leaders.

The key themes for policing that emerged from these conversations were:

- Communication and Engagement
- Visibility
- Education

Those who provided feedback found the event useful, and it was noted that it was useful to hear from Police Scotland (e.g. more information on day-to-day duties, workloads etc.), other services and allowed service providers to present issues experienced by their users. Further detail is available [here](#).

On 17th January 2024 SPA staff attended an Improving Levenmouth Together (ILT) meeting as part of a visit to the area by officials from the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). SPA staff had conversations with representatives to gather feedback on the project and other areas of interest during this visit.

4. Initiative Implementation

This section outlines small-scale initiatives implemented by local policing and PPCW based on community feedback.

Communication and Engagement

- Utilising ILT partnerships to improve communication
 - ILT Hub – Advertising when officers are available
 - ILT Social Media – General source for information
 - ILT Website – Including contact forms and links to partner/help pages
- Community Champions – Initiative to raise local policing profile with partners/public.
- Updated social media approach
- Community Leaflet/Newsletter – Produced by local police to be made available through social media or hard copy



4. Initiative Implementation

Visibility

- Presentation/Blog
 - Who are the Police
 - Interviews from community members/pupils
 - Spotlight on Departments – CID, Road Policing, Specialist Resources
- Quarterly Public Forum – Allowing local police to be available to the public to answer any questions
- Supervisors “Walking the Beat” – Allowing senior officers to speak to members of the community to find out what the problems are and allow for informed decision making.



4. Initiative Implementation

Education

- Facilitated as part of Communication and Engagement/Visibility strategies
- Local communities will help drive and feedback on that work – nationally
- Meeting with partner agencies on roles and responsibilities of local policing
 - Mental Health workshop with NHS partners around the responsibilities of each partner agency and improving the relations between the services.
 - Meeting with architect of new rail line and partner agencies and councillors to provide overview of police expectations



5. Evaluation

Community Confidence Evaluation Survey

Between 13th November 2023 and 27th December 2023, an evaluation survey was conducted to gather the views of those aged 16 and over on Levenmouth and confidence in policing. Questions were made available online via SPA Citizen Space page and on paper via community organisations with a freepost envelope to the SPA office for returns. There was also the option to request another format if required. In total there were 43 responses to the survey.

Key findings included:

- The majority of respondents didn't notice any of the initiatives undertaken by local policing;
- Overall, the rate of trust increased between Feb-Mar 2023 and Nov-Dec 2023. However, rates of confidence recorded during this period remained 'low'. This is similar to the downward trend in confidence documented in SPA national polling between July 2022 and 2023.
- When disaggregated by awareness of initiatives, those who were aware of at least one initiative tended to have high confidence and trust in policing and felt local police were doing a 'very good/somewhat good job'. Those who were not aware of any initiatives tended to have low confidence and trust in policing and felt local police were doing a 'somewhat poor/very poor job'.
- A higher proportion of respondents feel Levenmouth does have a sense of community. There was an increase in those who 'strongly agreed/agreed' and 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' between Feb-Mar 2023 and Nov-Dec 2023.
- Comments on Levenmouth largely centred around anti-social behaviour, with some mention of police response times, police visibility, drugs, and a lack of police funding.

5. Evaluation

Community Reflections

In January 2024, SPA staff had conversations with representatives from community groups in person and via Teams to gather feedback on the project. Overall, the project was received positively.

- Members of the Improving Levenmouth Together (ILT) found that the initiatives put in place had a positive impact on the local community. One member commented:
 - The project has been of some value and noted that the ILT have worked closely with the police in a range of areas which have contributed to community cohesion post-COVID.
 - The project couldn't have been done differently in terms of the way it was developed and engaged with the local community. Post-Covid there is more community reluctance to get involved in activities outside their normal life.
 - Their confidence in local policing was not impacted. The ILT has a good relationship with the police with a mutual level of appreciation and trust even outwith the project.
- Officials from the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) also visited the area and commended the work of SPA staff and local policing for the dedication and hard work put into the project. OPCC officials considered the findings to be insightful and helpful in supporting their own work in the West Midlands.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of these surveys cannot be generalised to the entire Levenmouth population and should be considered indicative only.

The full evaluation report is available [here](#) on the SPA website.



6. Project Closure and Next Steps

This publication marks the formal closure of the Community Confidence Action Research Project activity in Levenmouth.

Regarding the future of the initiatives implemented by local policing in Levenmouth, these will continue where possible.

At a future date, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing Division will return to Levenmouth to review if there are any longer-term impacts of this work in the community.