

Successful Street Warden schemes: the stakeholder view

- This briefing is for all those managing and working with Street Warden schemes to improve the liveability of neighbourhoods. Those working with warden schemes are encouraged to use the information presented to inform their plans to sustain their Warden schemes. The briefing can be read in conjunction with *Street Wardens: key lessons for sustainability* (available online www.matrixrcl.co.uk).
- The National Evaluation of the Street Warden Programme (SWP) has undertaken a comprehensive review of Street Warden schemes. Stakeholders, including representatives from partner agencies such as environmental services and the police, identified some key messages regarding the need for Warden schemes to demonstrate success.
- Residents feel that litter, vandalism, graffiti, damage to property or vehicles, traffic, people using or dealing drugs, young people hanging around and dog-fouling are the greatest problems Warden schemes need to address. Warden schemes are more likely to be perceived by residents as being successful if they address these problems.
- Street Wardens need to be highly visible to deter crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), and to reassure residents.
- Street Warden schemes are attractive to local authorities and other partner agencies because they are a locally controlled resource, are popular with residents, reassure the public by patrolling the streets, engage the community in ways that other agencies are unable to, have access to and share information with partner agencies, build community capacity, and enhance community cohesion.
- There are a number of barriers to the success of Warden schemes from the viewpoint of stakeholders and partners, including an inability of other agencies to respond, wardens not being acknowledged for the good work they perform, low visibility, poor understanding of the role and potential of Street Wardens among stakeholders, and limited resources. This briefing paper suggests ways to overcome these difficulties.
- Warden schemes need to demonstrate their successes (impact and outcomes) to stakeholders, show where savings and service improvements have been made as a result of the wardens, and ensure that all stakeholders fully understand the practical role of the wardens.

Stakeholder perceptions of the success of Street Wardens

The National Evaluation of the SWP¹ has looked in detail at the aspects of Street Warden schemes which stakeholders value. In this instance, 'stakeholders' refers to residents, members of the steering groups, and partner agencies such as the police and local authority departments (for example, environmental services or housing services).

Stakeholder views: What is attractive about Street Warden schemes?

"They actually do have an impact on the quality of our streets... things like spotting things at very early stages... They are the eyes and ears, at the end of the day, they are out there, they're on the street." Street Services Manager

Wardens are a local resource: Stakeholders value wardens because they are located within and dedicated to local communities. Being local means Street Wardens are familiar with the area, take ownership of problems, and resolve them.

Wardens generate savings: Local authorities and their departments, such as environmental services, report anecdotally that there are benefits from wardens, as they boost capacity and generate efficiency savings. The Street Warden Evaluation (SWE) is currently carrying out an evaluation of impact and a value-for-money study of Street Warden schemes to measure the extent of this impact.

"... one thing the wardens do is needle [and] sharps recovery. ... it's extremely expensive to have a contractor come out to pick up one syringe and needle where a warden can just do it there and then, job done, and then move on and do something else." Scheme Manager

Wardens are popular: Local politicians value Street Warden schemes because they see them as taking ownership for improving the lives of residents within an area. Wardens are popular with the communities that they serve because people are able to approach them and resolve problems. The wardens are able and willing to 'go the extra distance' to help people and will report issues to other agencies and then monitor them to see that the situations are resolved.

Wardens have a 'good citizen' role: Street Warden schemes represent a return to more community-based services, where those working know their area and community well. Wardens act as a bridge between the community and the authorities, reflecting the needs of the people they serve, but with the contacts and the ability to access other agencies to effect change.

Wardens provide a valuable community-based support service for vulnerable people: Wardens undertake house visits and support residents in their homes.

"Anybody in uniform I think is a reassurance to the public... they like to see someone in authority, and they do have an air of authority about them because they're in uniform, but it's not just that... it's a friendly approach. We have reporting schemes for racial issues and so on, and they're focal points for that." Street Services Manager

Wardens are committed: Partner agencies feel that Street Wardens care for the community and are prepared to cross traditional agency boundaries to get the job done. This is largely a result of the high quality of staff recruited, their ability to work closely with others, and their imaginative ways of resolving problems. Street Wardens are working towards changing the perception that the local authority and housing agencies are not responsive, thus improving satisfaction with the services offered.

Wardens reassure residents: The SWP aimed to address fear of crime through providing a highly visible uniformed presence on the streets. Partner agencies felt that reassuring residents was the most important role of Street Wardens and thirty-one per cent of residents feel that Street Wardens should 'provide a reassuring presence in the community'. The SWE has found many instances of resident groups reporting that they feel safer as a result of the Street Wardens' presence and we are currently in the process of measuring the extent of this impact.

Street Wardens encourage residents to report problems: The wardens assist and advise residents by providing contact names, telephone numbers, and addresses to help them resolve problems. Alternatively, wardens report problems on behalf of residents. They can also reduce the apathy that may prevent people from reporting issues by showing that the wardens and the local authority are trying to improve things. The police particularly value increased engagement of the community.

"People actually see them as the council, and are willing to report things to them, get engaged with them, whereas before it was a case of having to actually make a phone call or wander down to an office." ASB Officer

Wardens can respond to low-level crime: Street Warden schemes are able to deal with instances of low-level crime and disorder provided they have support from the police. Street Wardens often mediate in disputes, take reports, and share information with the police. All stakeholders felt that visible patrolling has a valuable role in deterring ASB.

Wardens share intelligence: Wardens patrolling the streets collect valuable intelligence for the police on criminal activities through their observations and through engagement with the community. Street Wardens need to ensure that their intelligence-gathering role does not compromise their position as 'friends of the community'. Wardens also share intelligence with others such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).

"[The wardens have been] passing on drugs information over the last six months. Well then, is it any surprise that our arrest or charging of class-A suppliers went up by 300 and something per cent in the last performance year? Now some of that comes down to the work they did." Police Inspector

Wardens bring partnerships together: Street Warden schemes rely on pre-existing partnerships and structures to carry out their work, but also bring agencies together and set up new partnerships to solve problems. Partner agencies such as the police and housing providers felt wardens were particularly good at fostering new cultures of working within and between agencies.

"They have that ability to bridge across a number of departments so that in many respects they're not associated with any one in particular... that gives that feeling of independence and standing alone within the council because they have that ability to communicate and work with the broad range of services that we provide." Street Services Manager

Wardens are creative: Warden schemes employ creative approaches and are trusted by their management teams and partner agencies to find new ways of tackling old problems because wardens often work outside the confines of any single department and are oriented towards solving problems.

Residents' views

A residents' survey was conducted during December 2002 – May 2003 to provide information about how residents view their neighbourhoods. This survey will be repeated during December 2004 – May 2005 to allow the SWE to measure the

impact that Street Warden schemes have had on residents' perceptions of their area.

The first residents' survey found that residents felt the top environmental problems in their neighbourhoods are:

- litter;
- vandalism;
- graffiti;
- deliberate damage to property or vehicles; and
- dog-fouling on pavements.

Lone parents, women, and people renting council accommodation were most likely to feel these were problems in their neighbourhoods.

Another finding of the survey was that the top ASB problems are:

- the speed and volume of road traffic;
- people using or dealing drugs; and
- young people hanging around on the streets.

Older people, lone parents, women and people of a black or minority ethnic (BME) background were most likely to identify these as problems.

Residents felt that Street Wardens should be:

- patrolling the area to keep an eye on things;
- reducing ASB; and
- providing a reassuring presence in the community.

Patrolling is thought to be particularly important by older people and people of a BME background. Wardens therefore need to ensure that they perform these activities if they are to be perceived as a success by residents.

What are the barriers to success?

The evaluation team is interested in what partner agencies and those managing and planning local service delivery see as the factors that are likely to limit or act as barriers to the success of Street Warden schemes. The evaluation found that the following issues were of the greatest concern:

Non-response from other agencies: The success of Street Wardens in the eyes of stakeholders often depends on other agencies responding to reports from wardens. Non-response by other agencies is likely to be perceived by residents as a warden failure because Street Wardens are the visible face of service delivery. Analysis of the SWE data have shown that schemes that have strong partnerships and agreements with agencies, for example, to respond within a certain amount of time, appear to be more successful.

Wardens are often not given credit for their work:

Stakeholder interviews found that other agencies were largely supportive of Street Warden schemes; however, few partner agencies gave the wardens credit for their work; for example, many stated that they could not provide wardens with data on work carried out as a result of warden reports.

Benefits may be realised only in the long term: Many of the activities undertaken by Street Warden schemes may reap benefits only in the long term. This issue is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to measure the impact or to attribute impact to the wardens for many of the activities they engage in. The evaluation team is currently measuring the impact of the SWP and will report its findings in 2005.

Wardens have to be visible to the right people at the right time: Street Warden schemes have to consider to whom they are visible at any given time of day. Warden schemes need to vary their patrolling to maximise their exposure to different groups of residents, and target locations where they are most needed. Wardens need to find ways to increase their visibility, including being present at community events and meetings, and engaging in promotional activities.

Lack of understanding of the warden role: Partner agencies that had limited contact with wardens were less likely to understand the role of the wardens, often ascribing them powers they did not have or perceiving them to be a threat to other service providers. Poor understanding of the role of Street Wardens may

lead residents and stakeholders to have unrealistic expectations of what wardens can do. Some schemes have produced leaflets that explain the role and offer phone numbers and instructions as to which agencies to contact for different problems. Analysis to date suggests that those schemes which appear to be most successful are those that regularly reintroduced themselves to their partners and to the community to increase this understanding.

Lack of resources to fund: The partner agencies with whom the wardens work closely saw them as an extremely useful service that helped to resolve problems more effectively and more quickly and to get more work done. However, few partners expected their organisations to contribute funds to the running of Street Warden schemes. Notable exceptions were where schemes help another agency to meet their targets, spend a significant amount of their time working for them, or have established service-level agreements (SLAs).

What do Street Warden schemes need to do to enhance perceptions of success?

The evaluation has identified some things Warden schemes could do to enhance the perceptions of success amongst stakeholders. For partner agencies such as local authority departments, the police and partnerships (for example, CDRPs and local strategic partnerships), and local businesses, Warden schemes need to:

Show impact and outcomes: Warden schemes need to be able to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of their work to provide evidence to funders, prospective funders, other agencies, and the communities they serve. Schemes need to implement data-capture mechanisms that enable outcomes to be measured and, through analysis, attributed to the activities the wardens undertake. This is central to the success of a scheme. Schemes can collect data on resident perceptions using resident surveys. By repeating this at regular intervals they will be able to identify and demonstrate change. This kind of information can be invaluable when engaging in the debate over whether a scheme should be mainstreamed. The SWE has found that while most schemes are collecting good data on areas such as the number of patrols carried out and the number of sharps picked up, they struggle to collect or gain access to data showing their impact on crime figures and people's perception of their area. Schemes need to implement data-capture mechanisms that will yield outcome figures, and they need to form strong partnerships and protocols with the agencies with which they work to ensure that they are provided with data from these departments.

Demonstrate savings: Street Warden schemes need to demonstrate to partner agencies and other stakeholders the financial savings resulting from warden activity. Demonstrating savings can be a difficult task and will require the cooperation of partner agencies in determining costs and potential savings (for example, quantifying the cost of recording an abandoned vehicle and ensuring its removal, and the savings if wardens speed up this process).

Case study example: The Cambridge City Rangers have been able to secure financial contributions from the housing department on the basis that they carry out footpath inspections on behalf of the department with the aim of reducing claims made against the service. The wardens' reports keep the department up to date on the state of repair of the stock, which means that the housing department can take action more effectively to prevent a situation from deteriorating.

Demonstrate service improvement: Warden schemes need to demonstrate where their actions have led to service improvements. Service improvement is likely to be shown in quicker responses by other agencies, a larger volume of work being completed, and the development of new services as a result of feedback from wardens. These improvements are likely to be assisted by improved relationships with the community.

References

- 1 The National Evaluation of the Street Warden Programme is being conducted on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) by a consortium led by Matrix Research and Consultancy Ltd. which includes Renaisi, MORI, and an expert panel.
- 2 Christmann, K., Rogerson, M., and Walters, D. 2003: 'Fear of crime and insecurity in New Deal for Communities Partnerships' Research report 14, Sheffield Hallam University
- 3 Adapted from Haynes, B. 1999: BMJ; 319:652-653 (11th September)

Service improvement at the local level usually involves partnership working and changes in partner agency delivery. The SWE has found that Street Warden schemes are proactive in improving service delivery and bringing partner agencies together.

Demonstrate how the Street Warden scheme contributes to local floor targets and Best-Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs): Schemes can raise their profile in local service delivery and directly show their relevance through contributing to the achievement of local and national targets. Schemes working towards these targets demonstrate the contribution they are making to the delivery of local strategic priorities and improvement.

Promote warden activities to stakeholders: Comprehensive and tailored promotion activities targeted at different stakeholders will help to ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance of the warden role and the benefits the service brings. Promoting activity will raise awareness of the scheme and generate service champions and the political support necessary to secure the future of the scheme.

Case study example: The Bolsover Community Rangers collect data towards locally chosen BVPIs relating to the number of incidents attended and the number of incidents followed up (for example, number of fly tips reported and investigated). This encourages the scheme to accurately record all of its activities. The data are used to demonstrate accountability, to build the case for sustainable funding, and to demonstrate the contribution of the scheme to local service delivery targets.

Demonstrate how the Street Warden scheme is aligned with wider strategic objectives: Schemes can further demonstrate their relevance to their parent organisations, other agencies, and potential funders through adapting their existing objectives and plans to make sure they are aligned with those of the local authority, CDRP, and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) while retaining their local focus.

Involve stakeholders: Warden schemes need to involve local stakeholders in their decision-making processes. Successful schemes involve agencies such as the police, environmental management, housing, local authority senior management, residents, and local politicians in their steering groups and scheme design.

To enhance perceptions of success amongst residents and the community, schemes can:

Enhance visibility in the community: Schemes have diverse means of ensuring visibility, but residents are only reassured by

visibility if they know that Street Wardens can do something should it be necessary. This means access to the equipment and, more importantly, to partner agencies necessary for taking action. Schemes need to be aware that different members of the community may react differently to the presence of wardens, some feeling reassured by a warden presence, others less so (for example, some members of the community may see the arrival of wardens as confirmation that their community has problems)². Visibility is maintained through the warden presence on the street, particularly at key times of day and in specific areas, and through promoting activities such as those in schools or shopping centres.

Represent the whole community: Street Warden schemes need to be able to represent the community they serve. They should aim to employ a representative mix of gender and ethnic background to increase the chance of engaging successfully with local people. Wardens bring their own life experiences to the job and these are invaluable in engaging with hard-to-reach groups.

'Sign post' and refer individuals to other services: Wardens are perceived as being successful at raising the level of take-up of local services. They are able to determine local people's needs through their day-to-day work and can give out contact details where necessary.

Maintain autonomy and independence: The perception within a community that Street Warden schemes are distinct from other agencies such as the local authority allows them to be partially shielded from negative perceptions that some segments of the community may hold. This autonomy enables wardens to act outside the constraints of other departments.

Take action: Wardens will undertake work themselves where this is appropriate, and will monitor reported items until the responsible agency has resolved the problem. Street Wardens need to be seen as 'doers', and schemes need to have the partnerships in place to ensure that their reports receive responses (for example, through SLAs) and that residents are informed when problems are resolved.

Work with vulnerable people, including young people: The work of Street Wardens with vulnerable people such as the elderly, minority ethnic groups, and young people, is thought by partner agencies to be very positive. It is important that local communities understand that the full impact of this kind of work is likely to be felt in the long term because it takes time to boost confidence and tolerance.

Our approach to the evaluation

The SWE seeks to answer four key questions:

Should it work? What is the underlying *theory* or logic model that underpins the SWP to improve the liveability of neighbourhoods?

Can it work? How has the SWP been implemented in terms of the operational *processes* employed, and the management and partnership *structures* used?

Does it work? What *impact* have Street Wardens had on improving liveability?

Is it worth it? How do the *costs* of the SWP compare with the *benefits* to society?³

Matrix specialises in providing independent, evidence-based solutions that form the cutting edge of the policy-making agenda.

Knowledge informing improvement

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