



DISC Whitepaper: Partnership Engagement Platform

Enhancing police support for local crime reduction partnerships – and lowering costs

SUMMARY

Police forces support and work closely with a wide range of local partnerships for the purpose of detection and prevention of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour.

Some of these partnerships operate within the public services sector, such as Community Safety Partnerships; others are 'private sector partnerships' which operate independently of the public services sector.

Private sector partnerships such as Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs) are controlled by their Members and are generally self-funded through Members' subscriptions.

While essentially independent of police control, private sector partnerships such as BCRPs invariably work closely with police forces, and vice versa. For BCRPs, police support provides access to police intelligence and manpower which can be deployed for the benefit of their Members; for police, BCRPs help support neighbourhood policing at low-cost, provide invaluable low-level, local intelligence, and help police to communicate directly to important local business communities.

Close interworking between police and BCRPs provides further and wider benefits such as opportunities for early intervention and restorative justice.

The challenge for police is to deliver effective – and legally compliant – support for BCRPs in a manner that is cost-efficient and low-cost.

This White Paper shows how an online Partnership Engagement Platform (PEP) can achieve this. Further, by adapting the current provision of neighbourhood policing around online partnership engagement, an effective PEP has the potential to enhance policing while reducing policing costs.

**THE BENEFITS OF
PRIVATE SECTOR
CRIME-REDUCTION
PARTNERSHIPS**

Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs) reduce low-level crime and anti-social behaviour that impacts local businesses – mostly retailers and licensees. Because this reduces losses/increases business for the Members, BCRPs are financed by Members' subscriptions.

Reducing low-level crime and anti-social behaviour is a key part of neighbourhood policing so constabularies around the country are increasingly supportive of the work of BCRPs. And because reduction in low-level crime and ASB in specific locations generates social benefits within and around the areas covered by BCRPs, public safety agencies and local authorities are also keen to support BCRPs.

BCRPs deliver a wide range of benefits in local crime detection and reduction. Many operate Exclusion Schemes whereby offending individuals are banned from accessing all the premises of the Members of BCRPs. This not only reduces the level of low-level crime and ASB in the location but provides local opportunities for early intervention by public community safety agencies and for the application of 'restorative justice' (ie out-of-court case resolutions). For local police, BCRPs are a valuable and low-cost source of local-level intelligence, supporting evidence in the case of prosecution or applications for Criminal Behaviour Orders. BCRPs also provide police with direct communication with the communities they represent

New technology, in the form of DISC – the secure online system for information-sharing and partnership administration – is now available which enables BCRPs to operate more efficiently and effectively, to enhance their services to Members, and to allow closer interworking with police.

The ability of DISC to encourage greater levels of participation by Members is a key reason why DISC is the most widely used system of its kind in the UK, and used directly by many thousands of partnership Members, as well as many hundreds of police officers from dozens of constabularies. One of the most important tools within DISC which serves to increase Member-participation is its automated weekly eNewsletter, sent to all Members of DISC-enabled partnerships and which brings them back to use the system, time and time again.

Likewise new secure, online technology can enable police to provide enhanced direct support to individual BCRPs in their force area, including BCRPs as well as shopwatches and pubwatches efficiently, effectively, at low cost and in compliance with statutory obligations (eg Data Protection Act 1998) and Home Office obligations and Codes of Practice (eg MOPI) .

**THE CHALLENGE:
ENABLE POLICE TO
ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR
PARTNERSHIPS WHILE
REDUCING COSTS**

Private-sector crime reduction partnerships represent an invaluable resource for police in delivering their statutory remit to detect and prevent crime. The current financial restraints under which the police operate only serve to underline the importance of close interworking and mutual support between the police and these self-funding or voluntary partnerships. However interworking and support is costly. How can police enhance the level of

support they can offer to private-sector partnership while keeping costs controlled while exploring opportunities for reducing them?

**THE SOLUTION:
'PARTNERSHIP
ENGAGEMENT
PLATFORM'**

The solution is to deploy a version of DISC specifically designed for police, called DISC Partnership Engagement Platform (PEP). DISC PEP is based on the established DISC online information-sharing system and enables police to make full use of online technology and secure communication processes to deliver support efficiently, effectively, compliantly and at low cost to any number of appropriate crime reduction partnerships.

What is PEP?

PEP is built around a modified version of Littoralis' highly successful DISC information-sharing system currently (April 2015) installed in over a 110 local areas, covering in excess of 160 towns and city-centres throughout the UK.

DISC (*Database & Intranet for Safer Communities*) ensures secure and compliant information-sharing between Members of local crime-reduction partnerships, provides an effective platform for communicating between Members and the partnership Administrator, and provides partnership Administrators with a complete range of membership-management tools. With its built-in automated communication tools, DISC not only makes partnership administration easy – it also generates increased levels of participation by Members in the work of the partnership itself. DISC is also compliant not only with Best Practice, but also with the Data Protection Act. Without DISC it is difficult for crime-reduction partnerships to comply with those obligations; with DISC it is almost impossible not to.

DISC PEP enables police forces to create an online network of partnerships in their force areas and to support directly the work of each partnership while dedicating a fraction of the time and resources that it currently deploys for the purpose. PEP engages with all partnerships in a force area and provides a platform for delivering a wide range of support to them; where PEP engages with partnerships that are themselves users of the DISC system, important additional benefits accrue to the police.

How does DISC and DISC PEP work?

Using DISC PEP, a police constabulary can integrate every partnership, irrespective of size, into one network - the Partnership Engagement Platform itself. Adding partnerships to the network is as simple as adding the Chairperson's or Administrator's email address to DISC PEP.

For their part, in order to access the PEP, each partnership Chair or Administrator must confirm agreement with the force Information Sharing Agreement, which is delivered on-line (a paper-less system which allows the agreement to be updated and periodically re-confirmed by the Chair or Administrator with virtually no administrative work on the part of the police).

Only when the partnership Administrator or Chair is properly signed up to the police Information Sharing Agreement can that partnership join the PEP. When they do so they will be able to access a wealth of information and features which will not only keep them and their Members better informed,

but will also provide additional support from the police that has either been impossible, or become too expensive, to deliver with paper-based systems.

With DISC PEP, police can distribute appropriate personal data of offenders, individuals wanted on warrant, released on licence, ASBOs and, especially, unidentified Subjects of Interest ('ID-Sought') to Partnerships throughout the force-area; Partnerships themselves can use the system to upload incident reports and intelligence reports either back to safer neighbourhood teams or to a central police department – or both. DISC PEP is a two-way communication system – managing the flow of information as much from individual partnerships and their Members to police as from police to Partnerships and their members.

DISC PEP enables police to keep Partnerships up-to-date not only about offenders, but also about recent incidents and *modus operandi*, news about safety and crime issues, and upcoming events. The system can also be used to help individual police officers support individual Partnerships better not only by publicising up-coming meetings, but also by distributing agendas and minutes on-line without the cost and inefficiencies of paper. The system also includes an online library of useful documents and guides – all deliverable by download at any time, at zero cost, at the click of a button.

Just as DISC has increased the participation levels of Members within their local partnerships, so DISC PEP will increase the level of participation between partnerships within PEP, and through it, with the police.

Centrally administrated – locally delivered

DISC PEP can be implemented in a single HQ-based department, run perhaps by a single police officer, usually within his or her existing workload. Or DISC PEP can be set up to be run by a number of officers each serving different locations or functions.

But whether centrally-managed or with management dispersed around a force area, DISC PEP is certainly not a one-size-fits all solution that pays little attention to the needs of individual local partnerships.

For example, when partnerships sign up with the PEP system, they identify what kind of partnership they are – a pub-watch, for example, or a shop-watch; they also identify in which division or other area they are located. So, for example, when the police want to use the system to send out an alert about an offender known for night-time disorder in a specific area of the county, Alerts can be sent only to pub-watches in that specific area. But when a new shoplifting *modus operandi* is reported, an Alert can be sent to shop-watches, for example, right across the county.

DISC PEP also provides the ability for police to designate 'Coordinators' who have a special responsibility for managing Members within a specific area or division. It is not practical for a central Administrator to be responsible for adding new Members (police staff or Chairs/Administrators of partnerships) to the PEP; instead the Administrator can designate individual police Members as Coordinators responsible for their own sub-group of Members, which they are in a better position to manage due to their local contacts and knowledge etc.

Improving police compliance

Most constabularies throughout the UK are keen to support local crime reduction partnerships – and those that aren't are under increasing pressure to do so, not least from their Police & Crime Commissioners.

But supporting multiple partnerships around a force-area is not only labour-intensive and time consuming – it can lead the police themselves into problems with the law. PEP can help here too.

Police Information Sharing Agreements can be extremely time-consuming to administer. Most need to be re-confirmed every six or 12 months. And crime-reduction partnerships suffer from staff-turnover just as much as any other organisation. DISC PEP enables police to set automated re-certification periods of as little as one month so that Chairs or Administrators are forced to re-confirm that they are still compliant with the ISA, and also to confirm any change in the identity of the partnership Chair or Administrator.

Police can also ensure higher levels of compliance with PEP than they could ever achieve with paper-based information-sharing systems. For example, instead of obliging partnerships to destroy – or return to the police – sensitive personal data after a given period of time or by a given date, with PEP police can set an automated expiry period after which the information is automatically withdrawn from display on the PEP – and therefore from circulation.

A key function of DISC PEP is the efficient, secure and compliant distribution of personal data from the police to partnerships, under an ISA. In addition to the partnership being compliant with the police ISA, the police themselves must comply with the Home Office Code of Practice for the Management of Police Information. DISC PEP enables police to manage data-sharing automatically in rigorous compliance with MOPI.

DISC PEP and DISC-enabled crime reduction partnerships

Because PEP is based on the DISC system, which is already in use by crime-reduction partnerships around the country, PEP brings extra benefits for police when dealing with DISC-enabled partnerships.

Subject to mutual agreement on both sides, police can use DISC PEP to 'author' into all DISC-enabled partnerships in their force-area. This means that they can publish and distribute information not only to the crime-reduction partnership's Chair or Administrator but direct to all the partnership's Members themselves.

This not only gives the police a powerful publishing and communication platform to speak directly to important communities – it also provides direct and valuable support to the work of the partnerships' Administrators themselves, adding value to service provided by police, and strengthening local cooperation and organisational ties.

With DISC PEP, police can author across any number of DISC systems already established in their force-area. A news item, alert, new document or information about an upcoming event can be added just once into DISC PEP and be immediately 'published' on any or all the DISC-enabled partnerships

across the force area. DISC PEP allows police to publish across only a selection of partnerships where appropriate - for example, information about a police event being held in the east of the force-area might be of little interest to partnerships in the west.

Offender Dataview – a unique window into low-level crime and ASB

Perhaps the most important benefit of DISC PEP when linking in with other DISC-enabled partnerships, is the opportunity to access a single consolidated 'Dataview' of all offender information and intelligence gathered and stored within the databases of each of the DISC-enabled partnerships in the force-area.

Larger BCRPs are now gathering substantial volumes of intelligence, including CCTV images, about offenders reported by their members, usually for low-level crime and anti-social behaviour. This is exactly where police spending cuts have been felt most acutely and where police have most to gain from close cooperation and interworking with crime reduction partnerships.

DISC PEP allows police to access a consolidated 'dataview' of all offender information and intelligence gathered by each DISC-enabled partnership in its PEP, to identify offenders who appear to be more active than had previously been assumed – potentially 'Level Two' offenders.

For more information about DISC

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