

Hampshire launches unique new system to report and record incidents of crime in the community



Fifty Community Safety Officers across Hampshire have started using a new system that is designed to make them more effective and will improve crime reporting throughout the county.

and file them, which was time-consuming and entailed additional administration time searching and collating reports.

At the heart of the new system is a handheld PDA carried by every officer on the street that enables the rapid reporting of incidents and their prompt transmission to the County Council's new CADDIE (Crime And Disorder Database & Information Exchange) - www.hantsiowcaddie.gov.uk - where they are used to compile crime statistics by postcode and can be placed on a web map to street level for public information.

Now, using the handheld unit linked to a global positioning system (GPS), Community Safety Officers can benefit from the bespoke new reporting format designed by CMS SupaTrak, which speeds up the process and uses standard police reporting categories of crime, ensuring uniformity of reporting and thus more accurate and relevant information.

Operation is simple. After logging on, the officer is taken step-by-step through a series of screens and inputs the information relevant to a specific incident they have identified or been asked to investigate. An incident number, together with the time, date and position (by latitude and longitude) is recorded automatically, and all the officer has to do is record the category of crime and enter its specific details along with the details of the aggrieved party and the offending party (if known). Making the process even simpler, once the officer has designated the incident type, they are taken directly to the relevant page.

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Jon Whale,
Assistant Head of Regulatory Services

The reports will be summarised and made available to District Councils, the Police and other agencies needing reliable information about trouble hotspots to formulate crime statistics, prevention strategies and allocate the required resources to deal with them. Designed by Hampshire County Council in collaboration with CMS SupaTrak, the new wireless 'crime in the community' reporting system removes the previous requirement for CSO's to manually log incidents

Report entries are simply made using a touchpad and a stylus to check specific boxes or input description text. The standard police crime categories covered by the report are: vandalism, graffiti and property damage; noisy neighbours; intimidation and harassment; abandoned vehicles; rubbish, litter or fly tipping; drunk or rowdy in a public place; drug-related anti-social behaviour; street lighting, ASCO community incidents (such as noise, crime, dog fouling, theft etc); and Trading Standards.

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Units also contain a camera device that can be activated to take photos of incidents, and when all the information has been input the officer presses a single button to send the entire report and photos to a secure website where they are recorded and any follow-up action initiated automatically. This can include a note of any official warning or caution issued through to calling the police, issuing a fixed penalty notice or the sending of a letter to the parents of an offending juvenile.

Describing the new system as a quantum leap forward in local community crime prevention, Hampshire County Council's Assistant Head of Regulatory Services and the person looking after its Community Safety Officers, Jon Whale, said it marked the start of a new era in the way that modern problems such as antisocial behaviour and environmental issues are tackled. "Hampshire County Council led the way when it became one of the first local authorities in the country to set up an accredited Community Safety Service two years ago and to employ uniformed officers that patrolled the streets looking into and reporting instances of crime and other unacceptable behaviour," he says.

"But with our 48 officers using a manual system and reported incidents averaging over 1,200 a month and rising, it was clear we needed a faster and smarter way to record the information and to produce reports that were more user-friendly and of greater use to others. "We were also developing CADDIE at the time and it made sense that any new system should be able to dovetail into this to streamline operations, improve the information flow to partners and associates, and produce figures that accurately reflected the true extent of the problem on the ground.

"The Council began discussing the best way forward with Eye Spy, a company that specialises in wireless solutions, and after examining several of their proposals we thought that the JobTrak system provided by CMS SupaTrak could best meet our aims. We have since worked closely with these two companies to develop a bespoke version of JobTrak that is exactly tailored to our requirements and I believe the resulting system could become a blueprint for other councils."

"It saves time, so officers have more time on patrol, and by linking directly into CADDIE it enables us to do a better job for the communities we serve and can, in time, I believe, lead to a real reduction in crime in the most troubled areas. "Another significant benefit of the new system is that it enables us for the first time to show the residents of a particular area what incidents are taking place in their neighbourhood and where, along with the information they want on what we are doing to address the problem.

"This will be an important safety measure and one that many other councils around the country may want to emulate. It will also reassure the public that we are doing everything we can to identify crime in the community and reduce it," he adds.

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