



# FIRST AID APPROACHES TO MANAGING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

FROM CONCEPT TO POLICY

BEN ROGERS

JULY 2012

[www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)  
[www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)

**Nesta...**

2020  
Public Services Hub  
*at the RSA*



---

# Contents

---

About the author	3
About the 2020 Public Services Hub	4
About Nesta	5
Introduction	6
Context	9
Why this review is needed	14
Afterword	22



## About the author

**Ben Rogers** is a Visiting Fellow at the RSA and Director of the Centre for London, a new think tank focusing on the big challenges facing the capital. He has written books on philosophy and history, including A J Ayer, *A Life and Beef and Liberty* and has worked in think tanks, local and central government. He is author of the 2010 RSA pamphlet, *The Woolwich Model, Can Citizens Tackle Anti-social Behaviour?*

# About the 2020 Public Services Hub

2020PSH is a research and policy development hub at the RSA, created from the legacy of the 2020 Public Services Trust, the charity which convened and supported a major Commission on public service reform between 2008 and 2010. 2020PSH specialises in developing practice-based research on social productivity in public services. As part of RSA Projects, the Hub works collaboratively with local public service organisations, national sector leaders and other national partners to develop social value and social productivity thinking into local and national practice. The pressures on public services are many and varied spending cuts, future demands, and the challenge of engaging more effectively and creatively with citizens and communities. Within this context, 2020PSH seeks to apply a long-term, strategic perspective and develop socially productive responses in collaboration with its partners.

# About Nesta

Nesta is the UK's innovation foundation. We help people and organisations bring great ideas to life. We do this by providing investments and grants and mobilising research, networks and skills. We are an independent charity and our work is enabled by an endowment from the National Lottery.

Nesta's Public Service Innovation Lab is trialling some of the most innovative solutions to tackle today's toughest social challenges – from climate change, declining health and a rapidly ageing population, to equipping young people to face future challenges.

We look to apply our expertise with those of partners in order to find ingenious new ways of delivering our public services. For example, The Citizens' University is a project with the Young Foundation that explores new ways of equipping communities with the skills needed to deal with everyday crises and pressures, including anti-social behaviour. [www.youngfoundation.org/news/citizens-university](http://www.youngfoundation.org/news/citizens-university)

---

# Introduction

---

While it is still too early to come to final conclusions about many aspects of last summer's riots, there seems to be widespread agreement that the Metropolitan Police took too long to get enough officers onto the streets – it was only with a massively expanded police presence on the fourth night of the riots, that the police finally got a grip on the turmoil.

But by the fourth night it was not only the police who were beginning to make their presence felt on the streets. So were civilians. Many of these came together in groups. In Enfield, north London, and Eltham in South London groups of residents patrolled the town centres. Shopkeepers in Hackney closed their shops for the night, and took up position in Kingsland High Street. Residents and shopkeepers chased off would-be looters in East Ham and Bethnal Green. Several hundred Sikh men gathered to defend their temple in Southall. There were also examples of individual residents and shopkeepers standing up to and confronting the rioters alone.

As David Lammy, MP for Tottenham has observed, there were some troubling dimensions to these civilian responses to the riots. 'For the most part people sought refuge and expressed solidarity and defiance within an ethnic community'.<sup>1</sup> The groups patrolling in Enfield and Eltham were largely white and many voiced support for the English Defence League and the BNP. The Hackney shopkeepers were Turkish. The defence groups that formed in East Ham and Bethnal Green were Bangladeshi. But the motives that led people to muster in this way were far from all bad. People came together in part from civic pride and a determination to uphold the law. As one of the Sikh's outside the Southall Temple said, 'We are not here just to defend our Temple but the whole of Southall'. Some of the individuals who confronted the crowds did so in a way that was positively inspiring, including Pauline Pearce, whose harangue before rioters in Hackney became a YouTube sensation.

And whatever one makes of the way groups and individuals responded, they do serve as a reminder that as important as the police are to maintaining public order, civilians matter too.

The current coalition government has signaled its determination to encourage and support citizens who 'have a go' and intervene to stop criminal behaviour.<sup>2</sup> For the first time ever, many police forces are actively supporting local civilian patrols.<sup>3</sup> In the wake of the riots, Brian Paddick, who has twice run as Liberal Democrat candidate for Mayor

*For the first time ever, many police forces are actively supporting local civilian patrols*

1. David Lammy, *Out of the Ashes*, Guardian Books, London, 2011, pp188–191.

2. "“Step in to Tackle Yobs” says new Home Secretary, Theresa May", Daily Telegraph, 14 May, 2010, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/7726640/Step-in-to-tackle-yobs-says-new-Home-Secretary-Theresa-May.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/7726640/Step-in-to-tackle-yobs-says-new-Home-Secretary-Theresa-May.html)

3. [www.street-watch.org.uk](http://www.street-watch.org.uk)

of London, has called for more police support for civilian patrol in London.<sup>4</sup> And there is growing interest within Government, the police, local government and voluntary bodies in the potential of training people beyond the police to tackle and defuse crime, conflict and anti-social behaviour.

But how far do we want as a society to go down this route? When does civilian patrol cross the line into vigilantism? What sort of support and training can and should government provide to civilians who find themselves confronted with criminal and anti-social behaviour? And what can be done to prevent some of the risk inherent in permitting or encouraging more civilian involvement in maintaining order and civility?

These are big questions and this paper doesn't claim to answer all of them. Instead it focuses on one particular domain. In a previous paper for the RSA, I argued that we should explore whether we could apply a 'first aid' approach to community safety and train members of the public in how to address conflict and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).<sup>5</sup> However, organizations and initiatives that teach 'defusing' skills are relatively young and underdeveloped, and the evidence base on which they rest needs strengthening.

This paper sets out to explore what we know about this emerging area of community safety policy and practice. In particular it:

- Sets-out the current policy context
- Identifies organisations that provide first aid style training in managing anti-social behaviour
- Sets-out what we know about the benefits that training in managing anti-social behaviour brings
- Sets-out various approaches to training that have been tried and their costs and benefits
- Looks at the potential of non face-to-face ways of delivering training, including the role of print, audio-visual and interactive training materials.

The paper is directed at two broad audiences. It is intended to:

- Provide central government, local government, police and other community safety services with an overview that will allow them to make a considered judgement on the potential of this emerging area of community safety policy and practice, and decide if and how they can best support and promote it.
- Help organisations that offer training in managing conflict improve the quality of their 'offer' and the effectiveness of their work more generally.

4. 'Let Residents reclaim their streets with night patrols says Brian Paddick, Evening Standard, 5 Jan 2012, [www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard-mayor/article-24025527-let-residents-reclaim-their-streets-with-night-patrols-says-brian-paddick.do](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard-mayor/article-24025527-let-residents-reclaim-their-streets-with-night-patrols-says-brian-paddick.do)

5. B. Rogers (2010) The Woolwich Model, RSA, [www.thersa.org/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/327082/0882RSA\\_21CE\\_benrogers\\_web.pdf](http://www.thersa.org/___data/assets/pdf_file/0004/327082/0882RSA_21CE_benrogers_web.pdf)

This paper is based on:

- Interviews with a range of experts including civil servants in the Home Office and Department for Communities and Local Government, Senior Police Officers, and criminologists.<sup>6</sup>
- Interviews with people who provide training in managing anti-social behaviour or have worked with providers.
- A series of ‘conversations’ with members of the public including radio-phone-ins, response to blogs, a workshop in Peterborough with local residents, volunteers and community workers.
- Observation of one training session.<sup>7</sup>
- Review of ‘feedback’ questionnaires from participants who have taken part in first aid for community safety training sessions.<sup>8</sup>

This paper represents, as far as I am aware, the first proper review of the potential and limits of first aid approaches to managing anti-social behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

6. Since publishing the Woolwich model, I have had meetings, informal and formal, with at least 40 civil servants, police officers and criminologists to discuss the paper’s arguments and explore how they might be applied in practice.

7. Training session provided by Dfuse at ‘Only Connect’, a London charity that works with offenders and former offenders.

8. See below for further details.

9. The research for this paper was entirely UK focused – an international search would almost certainly reveal parallel approaches in other countries.

---

# Context

---

Interest appears to be growing in the potential of training people to defuse social conflict and address anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. One possible model for this training is provided by first aid, as suggested by a pamphlet that I wrote for the RSA in 2010: *The Woolwich Model: Can Citizens Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour?*

This pamphlet sparked considerable interest within the police, central government, and local community safety services both public and voluntary. When I wrote the paper, I assumed that very little training of the kind I advocated was available. I have since become aware that there are one or two providers offering training, though they are relatively small organisations that work ‘under the radar’.

Independently of this, Nesta and the Young Foundation have been sponsoring the creation of a new approach to adult learning, the Citizens’ University (“The U”), aimed at teaching a wide variety of core life skills and civic skills, like first aid, and conserving energy in the home, in an intense, easily accessible way. The Citizens’ University has developed training in ‘defusing’ skills and wants this training to become a core part of its offer.

All of this suggests that taking a first aid approach to managing ASB could be an idea whose time has come.

There are at least four reasons why first aid for community safety skills might be of particular interest now.

First, ASB remains a stubborn problem. It is true that it is important not to exaggerate the scale of the issue. It is very hard to define anti-social behaviour precisely and even harder to measure it. Perceptions of it, as measured by the British Crime Survey, appear to have fallen from a high of 21 percent in 2002/3, to around 15 percent today – *a fall of more than a quarter*.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it remains an issue – especially in poorer, hard pressed areas. The police recorded 3.3 million incidents of anti-social behaviour in 2010/11.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, as Martin Innes and others have argued, the type of behaviour classed as anti-social can’t be dismissed as universally trivial.<sup>12</sup> Obviously dog fouling, littering, drunk and noisy behaviour, petty vandalism, etc, aren’t as directly harmful as, say, burglary, rape, or assault. But they can cumulatively have very harmful consequences (especially where the behaviour is targeted at a particular person or people) and they act as ‘signals’ that foster a fear of crime, and undermine public confidence in the police and related services.

*It is very hard to define anti-social behaviour precisely and even harder to measure it*

10. ONS. Crime in England and Wales: quarterly first release December 2011, Home Office 2012.

11. Statistical News Release: Crime in England and Wales 2010/11. Home Office 2011

12. M Innes. “Reinventing Tradition?: Reassurance, Neighbourhood Security and Policing,” in *Criminal Justice* 4; 151 <http://crj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/4/2/151>. 2004.

*Building people's own capacity to manage anti-social behaviour might be a more fruitful and realistic way forward*

Secondly, there is a limit to what the police can do to tackle the problem on their own. The police have a central role in policing low-level crime and incivility. The horrific case of Fiona Pilkington (who killed her disabled daughter and herself, after the police repeatedly failed to respond to her requests for support in tackling local youths who taunted the family) is a painful reminder of the costs of police failure. But as is widely acknowledged, social order is maintained not just by the police but by the public – where the public take an active, vigilant role, crime is lower. Yet politicians, commentators and the public at large all worry that we are as a society increasingly unwilling to take a stand on behalf of ourselves or others, and there is some evidence to bear this out. To take one example, the number of citizen's arrests recorded by Met Police has fallen by around 85 percent over the last decade, from 14,000 to 2,500.<sup>13</sup> There is also evidence to suggest that Britons are less likely than citizens of other countries to intervene when confronted with ASB. Around two thirds of Germans say that they would intervene to stop a group of 14 year olds vandalising a bus-stop, while only a third of Britons says they would intervene.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, after a long period in which spending on the police grew year on year, the police and other community safety services are facing a tight spending squeeze – spending on the police is due to decline by about a fifth over the course of this parliament. This makes the need to strengthen the public's role in maintaining social order especially urgent.

Finally, politicians of all parties largely agree that we have to continue to find more participatory, citizen-centred ways of providing services and meeting social challenges. There are striking similarities between New Labour's desire to promote what it called active citizenship and civil renewal and the current government's desire to grow the Big Society. Yet despite their public commitment to tackling Britain's 'walk on by' culture, the Coalition Government's thinking on the Big Society as it applies to anti-social behaviour feels fairly underdeveloped. Almost all their reform efforts in relation to ASB have been devoted to simplifying and strengthening the powers available to police and other professional community safety providers.<sup>15</sup> Building people's own capacity to manage anti-social behaviour might be a more fruitful and realistic way forward. The police can't be everywhere. And there are limits to what the police can do to address everyday conflicts and challenges. These are often best dealt with by other public servants or the public themselves. Already, skills to help professionals manage conflict and anti-social behaviour are taught beyond the police service, not only to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), but to neighbourhood wardens, park keepers and others. But this is not happening in a systematic or co-ordinated way with a view to achieving wider social benefits. The benefit of encouraging these skills among citizens directly has received little attention.

One model for spreading public safety skills among the public is provided by first aid – first taught in Woolwich in 1878 (hence, the

13. Citizens arrests plummet due to work on by culture' Daily Telegraph 3 January 2012 [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8966738/Citizens-arrests-plummet-due-to-walk-on-by-culture.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8966738/Citizens-arrests-plummet-due-to-walk-on-by-culture.html)

14. *Anti-Social Behaviour Across Europe*, ADT 2006.

15. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/consultations/cons-2010-antisocial-behaviour/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/consultations/cons-2010-antisocial-behaviour/)

‘Woolwich Model’.) As I suggested in my original paper, first aid has four key features that mark it out. First, it is a skills-based approach, with the curriculum designed by professional experts and regularly revised in light of developments in expert knowledge. Second, the curriculum is simple, so that almost anyone can master it. Third, despite its simplicity, it is aimed primarily not at children but adults. Fourth, it appeals to both civic or humanitarian motives and to less selfless ones – first aid skills can be helpful in saving strangers but also a family member or friend, or even oneself. And it can enhance a CV and provide people who are relatively unqualified, or not employed, with public recognition.

### **An overview of training in managing anti-social behaviour**

As indicated earlier, there are already a number of organizations that provide training in this space.

#### **Dfuse**

Dfuse is a small charity set up in 2007 that provides training in defusing social conflict and responding to crime and ASB. Training is provided by experienced police trainers and hostage negotiators. Courses are adapted to their audience. Courses have been provided to senior managers in private and public sector organizations, front-line public servants, ordinary citizens/residents, children and young people, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending, and victims of crime and domestic violence.

Dfuse’s founder, Jane Atkinson, traces the origins of Dfuse to her daughter’s decision to become a police officer. Atkinson was impressed by the apparent confidence with which her daughter dealt with street crime and conflict, and had the idea that the skills that she had been taught at police college could be taught more widely. [www.dfuse.org.uk](http://www.dfuse.org.uk)

#### **International Institute for Restorative Practice UK & Ireland**

IIRP offers a wide range of services including running of restorative conferencing and training in restorative practices and consultancy for organisations wanting to develop a restorative ethos or strategy. Most of its work is geared towards promoting restorative practice in an institutional context – within the CJS, workplace, schools and colleges, or among housing managers. However, the Institute also offers training in “Restorative Practices in Neighbourhoods”, aimed at anyone working in a public or community setting. The aim of the day-long course, according to the IIRP website is: ‘to give attendees an understanding of restorative practices and several processes that they can begin to use in their daily work in neighbourhoods. The workshop includes practical hints and tips as well as role plays of neighbourhood/street-based scenarios’. [www.iirp.org/uk/training\\_uk\\_rpn.html](http://www.iirp.org/uk/training_uk_rpn.html)

#### **Citizens’ University – The U**

The Young Foundation is working with Nesta and others to develop a series of short practical one-off modules in core life skills, including first aid and other medical skills, fire prevention, and community organizing, family finances and reducing household energy use. It has also developed a 90 minute course, ‘Give and Take’ aimed at giving people the skills and confidence to address low-level conflicts in their neighbourhoods and

*Clearly the training that these organisations offer finds its context in a much broader field of conflict training and support*

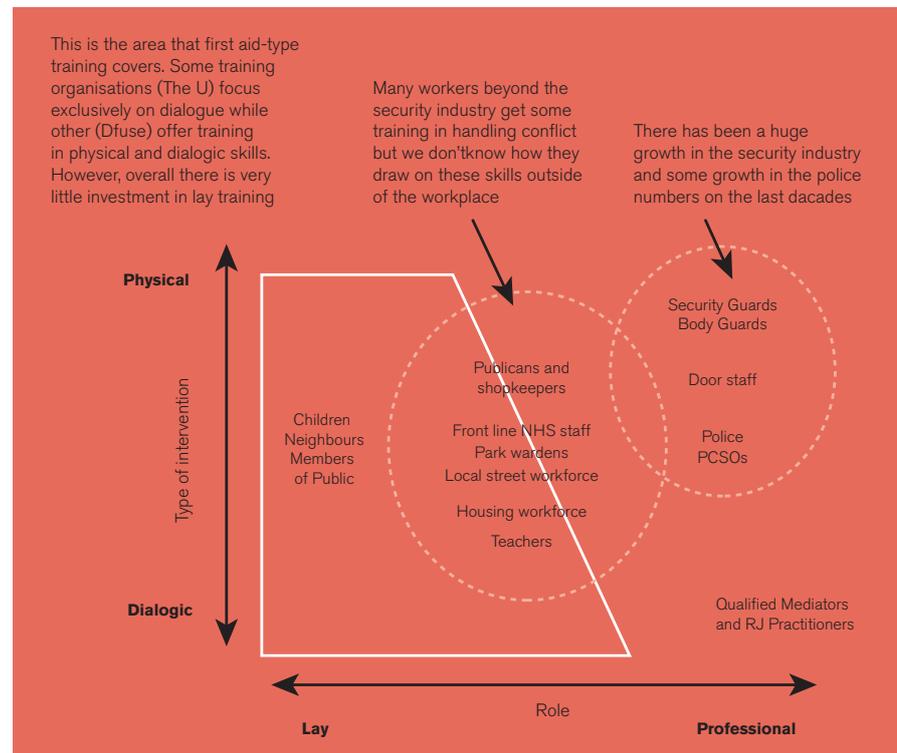
daily lives. This course is currently being piloted in two areas – Sutton and Northumberland at time of writing (February 2012). They have worked with Dfuse to develop the course.

Clearly the training that these organisations offer finds its context in a much broader field of conflict training and support. One way of thinking about this field would be to define it in terms of two dimensions.

One dimension takes us from training directed at members of the public at one extreme, to training directed at police officers, prison officers, and other security professionals – security guards, bouncers – at the other. Between these two extremes is training provided to employees whose work is not conflict related but might occasionally, in the course of their work, have to deal with conflict and violence, such as teachers, medical staff, social workers, public transport workers, park keepers, publicans and shopkeepers.

The other dimension takes us from training that is exclusively physical in focus (e.g, self defence training, the training door staff receive in reasonable restraint) to training and support that is conversation or ‘dialogue’ based and is informed by an ethos of mediation, mutual understanding and restoration (e.g. neighbour mediation, restorative justice involving offenders and victims, restorative practice in schools, restorative policing).

**Figure 1: Dealing with crime, conflict and anti-social behaviour – a map of the field**



As already said, this is a large field. However, the training courses offered by Dfuse and others occupy a distinct and relatively uncrowded space within it. They are mainly focused on equipping members of the public to deal with conflict and ASB in public places and they tend to be relatively mediatory in ethos. That is, they aim first and foremost to

equip people to mediate conflict and defuse antisocial behaviour, though Dfuse's courses also cover basic physical skills around protecting oneself and others from violence.

---

# Why this review is needed

---

While the organisations and initiatives above are all doing excellent work, they are all young or, in the case of the Citizens' University, entirely new. Our understanding of the potential and limits of promoting a first aid approach to dealing with crime and ASB in the public realm is under-developed. Moreover while there is widespread interest in the potential of this approach, there has been very little strategic thinking on the overall contribution that a first aid approach could make to community safety, how it might relate to other approaches and services, or how it could be taken forward to best effect.

*It asks what conclusions can be drawn about what training practices and approaches seem most effective*

The rest of this paper summarises the findings of our research. It looks at the nature of the training being provided (who are the trainers and the trainees? What exactly is being taught?) It then looks at how the training has been received by participants and also by sector professionals. Finally – and with due recognition of the narrowness of the evidence base – it asks what conclusions can be drawn about what training practices and approaches seem most effective, and how public policy could recognise these going forward.

## **What experience and qualifications do trainers have?**

Dfuse uses both police trainers and police hostage negotiators. IRRP UK uses a range of 'qualified restorative justice and community mediation practitioners', including former teachers and police officers. The Citizen's university has used Dfuse trainers to help develop their training module, but the training itself is to be provided by ordinary members of the public who have been trained-up as trainers.

## **To whom has training been offered?**

As already said, the principal audience for Dfuse type training is members of the public, but training has been offered to a wide variety of audiences including:

- Public realm work force including park keepers and playground supervisors, street wardens and housing estate managers
- Publicans and shopkeepers
- Residents of social housing
- Victims and their supporters
- Young people in a school setting
- Ex-offenders
- Senior managers and executives in public and private sector organisations

**The Dfuse website includes the following statement about the needs that their training aims to meet:**

Most of us don't want to stand by when someone else is in difficulty or when we see others vandalising, bullying or being threatening. We have a natural urge to try to cool arguments or prevent fighting but in today's streets such actions feel very risky. Worse still, there are frequent reports of people who were trying to help getting hurt. Mostly we feel unable to do anything and this sense of powerlessness leaves us feeling bad about ourselves and sends all the wrong messages to those who are behaving antisocially.

We need a way to respond, somewhere in between keeping our heads down and doing nothing and intervening and putting ourselves and perhaps others in danger. We need to be able:

- to read the risks of a situation continuously and consistently;
- to have some ideas of what might be said or done;
- to be able to treat with respect those whose behaviour we reject;
- to stand up for ourselves and our values without escalating confrontation;
- to find ways to change people's behaviour without either party 'losing face', and to have some confidence in our own capacity.

Whether you and your neighbours are concerned about vandalism, threatening behaviour, keeping the peace between embittered neighbours or other anti-social behaviour, the training Dfuse offers will help because all the trainers we engage have dealt with many situations like these as serving police officers.

**What form does training take and what type of skills do training providers aim to teach?**

Training has largely been offered in workshop settings. Most of these are day-long sessions, sometimes broken up into several shorter evening sessions. Workshops involve a mixture of presentations, and participatory role play, often drawing on participants' own experience. Dfuse has also provided longer courses aimed at senior managers and executives in private and public sector organizations, with training provided by hostage negotiators, and focusing less on street skills and more on management skills, especially crisis management skills.

However, Dfuse, working with Nesta, Victim Support and others, are exploring the potential in shorter 'bite sized' courses. The Citizens' University's new 'Give and Take' course takes the form of one 90 minute session.

Training providers aim to teach three broad skills:

- **Reading a situation**
  - how to assess if a situation is a) trivial and does not merit intervention b) so serious and/or potentially dangerous as to require resort to the police, c) meriting and allowing for intervention. The training is not aimed exclusively at giving people confidence to intervene. Those involved in training report that one effect of the training can be to check participants' tendency to rush to judgment and intervene.

- **Self-protection, self-defence and defending others**
  - how to position yourself so as to minimise risk of attack,
  - how to ward off attack and escape restraint, how to restrain an assailant
  - the law on citizen's arrests and self-defence
  
- **Defusing and mediating**
  - how to empathise and understand other people's feelings
  - how to broach and talk to people who are agitated and upset
  - how to sound authoritative rather than confrontational
  - how to defuse a quarrel and encourage agreement and forgiveness

### **Dfuse's Generic Programme**

Dfuse has developed the following 'generic programme'. They use this as a starting point from which to tailor individual courses, depending on the needs of those attending a training session.

#### **1. At the flash point**

- Notice that something is happening (or about to happen) that would benefit from being defused (overcoming the bystander effect, what causes and escalates conflict, and individual perceptions of conflict situations)
- Don't do or say what comes spontaneously (pause, manage assumptions, manage anger, don't take it personally)
- Adopt a pro-defusing mind-set (put aside your own opinions/ emotions and focus on your actions, not escalating the situation)

#### **2. Assess the situation**

- Your personal safety is paramount (dynamic risk assessment)
- Understand the conflict (what, why, who, why now, etc.)
- Consider responses (take responsibility, identify a positive outcome, manage risks)

#### **3. Response options**

3.1. *Dangerous – get away* (deterrence, self-defence, the law of self-defence)

3.2. *Risky – do something rather than nothing – indirect interventions* (a range of actions to defuse without becoming directly involved)

3.3. *Communicate to defuse*

Open dialogue (Techniques to make your opening line effective – the purpose of opening dialogue is to give yourself the best chance of defusing a situation, safely. A good opening line may be sufficient to defuse the situation. It is the most critical and risky part of approaching a conflict situation. If your intervention is going to escalate the situation then it will most likely do so at this point)

- Continue dialogue (What to do if the opening line has created dialogue – techniques for relationship building and understanding the other person's position)
- Influence and persuade (Getting to the outcome you want – a range of influencing and persuading techniques)

### What does training cost?

Dfuse has provided courses at cost or for free, but a standard course costs around £1,500 (excluding VAT) for a day's workshop for up to 20 people. This covers cost of trainer (£500–700) and overheads.

IIRP UK & Ireland's day-long training workshop on Restorative Practices in Neighbourhoods (see above) cost £150 per attendee where individuals attend a course at a venue provided by IIRP. Costs are lower where training is set up and hosted by an organisation like an employer or service provider – fees work out at as little as £30–40 per attendee.

The model of training provided by The U involves, as already said, use of volunteers to provide training, and training sessions are shorter – no more than ninety minutes long. Costs are correspondingly lower.

### How is the first aid approach viewed by 'professional' community safety providers?

There is no simple answer to this question. The view at an RSA expert roundtable exploring the first aid approach was that it had potential but it was important not to 'over-sell' it, and to be clear about the sort of behaviour at which it might be directed. Several contributors made the point that the police have an automatic authority, in virtue of their uniform, the physical force available to them, and their legal powers, which 'civilians' don't. Against this, others argued that many other people possess a public or street authority by virtue of their roles – shop owners, public realm workers, publicans – and that children do tend to recognise adults as having a natural authority over them.<sup>16</sup>

Several senior police officers have expressed strong interest in first aid approaches and said they would like to see further testing and evaluation of them. But RSA, Dfuse and others interested in getting police and local authority involvement have struggled to secure the very modest sums needed to pilot training.

One Home Office civil servant seconded to a senior management role at the Metropolitan police speculated that most middle ranking officers would be wary of first aid approaches, as bringing extra responsibilities and extra-risks. They would, as he put it, view any initiative as a bit 'grieffy – it would likely give them grief'.

What appetite is there for training among those at whom it might be directed, and how does this vary across groups?

Here too, it is hard to generalise.

Dfuse have sometimes found it difficult to get members of the public to attend advertised courses even when the course is free and supported by and publicised by local services – perhaps because of the considerable time commitment these courses involve, perhaps because people are very unsure what the course will offer. But the feedback from course organisers is that this is a familiar problem that would affect most day-long courses and does not necessarily reflect public wariness of first aid approaches.

The public response to the *Woolwich Model* paper and the media interest around it has been varied:

*The public response to the Woolwich Model paper and the media interest around it has been varied*

16. 'Roundtable': 'Roundtable, 20th May 2012'

A **post** on Mumsnet elicited very little by way of response;<sup>17</sup>

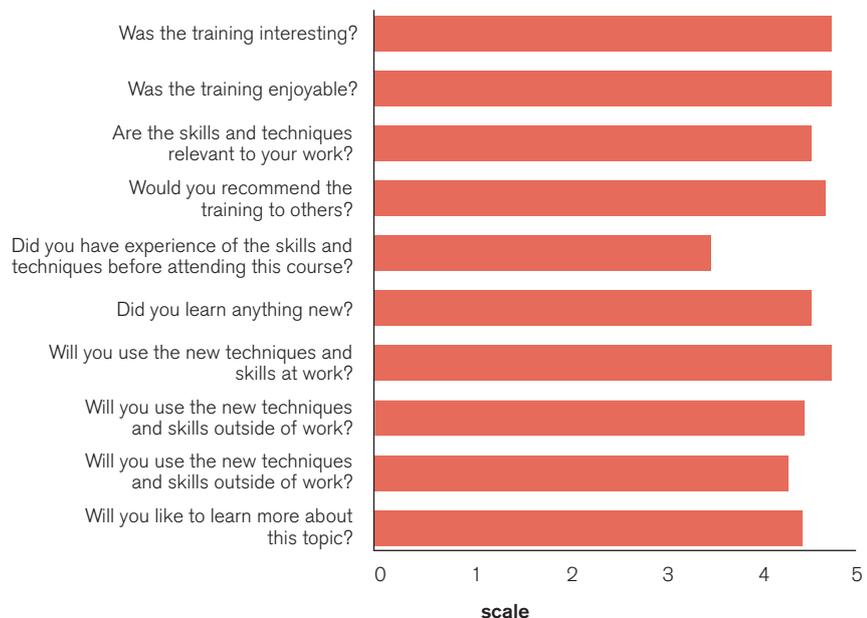
- Response from callers to around 10 radio phone-ins where the Woolwich Model was discussed immediately after its launch was mixed, with some defending the idea on the ground that we all have a duty to look after our communities, and others attacking it on the grounds that ‘with young people out of control’ only the police can safely intervene.<sup>18</sup>
- When the First Aid approach was presented to a workshop of local community activists and citizens in Peterborough (as part of RSA’s Citizen Power project) the reception was very warm, with participants affirming that they strongly welcome training, and asking council officers and police to work together to provide it.<sup>19</sup>

*Feedback from participants has largely been very positive*

### What has been feedback from training and how effective is it?

Feedback from participants has largely been very positive. The table below captures feedback from 63 participants who took part in five Dfuse organized training sessions across 2010. It suggests a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the course. Indeed, asked to rate the training on a scale of 1 to 5, against 10 criteria, the courses scored an average of more than 4 on every criteria apart from one. But this one, ‘Did you have [prior] experience of the skills and techniques [taught on the course]’ is the only one where a low score was a positive rather than a negative result. The lower the score, the fewer the participants reporting that they had already had experience of the skills and techniques taught.

**Table 1: Dfuse feedback**



17. A Proposal for tackling anti-social behaviour, give us your views’ 4 February 2011’ [www.mumsnet.com/Talk/mumsnet\\_campaigns/1142342-Proposal-for-tackling-anti-social-behaviour-please-give-us-your-views/AllOnOnePage](http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/mumsnet_campaigns/1142342-Proposal-for-tackling-anti-social-behaviour-please-give-us-your-views/AllOnOnePage)

18. The author spent about 3 hours taking part in BBC phone-ins with regional radio stations.

19. 26 Jan 2011

The Citizens' University reports that feedback from members of the public who took place in their initial sessions at which they trialed their 'Give and take' course was positive. Comments included:

"Things like this really make you stop and think."

**23 year old male, Northumberland**

"Sometimes I'm too quick to tell my neighbours I have a problem with them, when I should really let it go."

**65 year old female, Northumberland**

"I get in fights a lot. It's easier to just hit someone. But if you can talk instead it's better for everyone. And I don't want my kids fighting, you know?"

**21 year old female, South London**

"It was really fun. We did something about fighting in school and it was just talking. I think a lot of people my age would like this. But not if it's [delivered] in school."

**16 year old male, South London**

"Normally I would be too afraid to talk to a neighbour [who was having a noisy party] and I would just call the Police. But it really isn't so hard to talk to them about it."

**60 year old woman, South London<sup>20</sup>**

There has been no evaluation of longer-term impacts or outcomes of the training provided by Dfuse or, as far as I can ascertain, of other providers.

Positive feedback from participants suggests there is likely to be some positive effect on confidence and lessening in concern about crime. But we are not able to say anything at this stage about impact of training on people's behaviour, their disposition to intervene, or the effectiveness of any interventions that they make.

### **How can skills be best disseminated?**

Although it seems reasonable to expect that professional, face-to-face training has greatest impact, it is expensive and quite time intensive. There is a strong case for exploring alternative ways of providing the training. These fall under two broad categories.

#### **1. 'Lay Trainers'**

There might well be benefits in training ordinary 'lay people' or 'civilians' – that is people who have not had police or other security training – to provide the training. One model might be National Child Birth Trust, whose classes are run not by midwives but experienced mothers, albeit mothers who have taken a course in training and gained accreditation. First aid provides another, perhaps more relevant model. While some first aid training is provided by professional doctors and nurses, much of it is provided by people with fairly minimal qualifications.

20. Feedback quoted in e-mail from Megan Dragony, to the author, 18 January 2012.

In fact, the Citizens' University and Dfuse are both beginning to experiment with just this approach. The Citizens' University model, as already said, rests on training being provided by volunteers who are not necessarily expert in the subjects on which they teach. Dfuse are working with Victim Support to develop and pilot a day-long course, in which Dfuse trainers will train victim support staff in teaching defusing skills. Victim Support Staff will then teach these skills to volunteers who will in turn pass them on to victims.

There could also be benefits in exploring a model half-way between the professional and lay-centred model. This would involve equipping ordinary community police officers to teach defusing skills. Short training sessions could liven up poorly attended police beat meetings and be a route through which police engage school children, young people and other members of the public.

## **2. Print and on-line training**

Print and online media could have a helpful role in disseminating public safety skills and messages. Here again there are strong parallels with first aid, for which a manual, complete with illustrations, was issued within a year of the first course being taught. These manuals have been an important means of disseminating first aid skills ever since. Nowadays you can also learn about first aid through on-line audio-visual training. Indeed, The British Red Cross offers a first aid app for mobile phones which 'features simple, easy advice on 18 everyday first aid scenarios, as well as tips on how to prepare for emergencies, from severe winter weather to road traffic accidents'.<sup>21</sup>

### **What should the next steps be for this emerging area of practice?**

First aid approaches to community safety are new and relatively undeveloped. It might be tempting, in light of this, to try to mount an ambitious pilot, evaluating in particular the costs and longer term benefits.

Against this, and as we have also seen, practitioners are still feeling their way, experimenting with different approaches – for example professional versus lay training and short courses versus long. Engaging the public is challenging. We need to explore possibly more engaging and cost-effective approaches including training lay trainers and developing print and audio-visual training materials. It is probably more sensible, at this stage, to invest resources in continuing to promote innovation and experimentation – deferring rigorous evaluation until practitioners feel they have developed approaches that 'feel' efficient and effective, while also continuing to involve police and others in these experiments.

There are currently a number of organisations promoting or testing first aid approaches, including three national centres of social innovation the RSA, Nesta and the Young Foundation and Dfuse. The International Institute for Restorative Practice, based in Newcastle, also has an interest, though first aid approaches are less central to its day-to-day practice. Above and beyond this, there is a very wide range of groups and supporters with a potential interest in these approaches. These include: the police, local councils, Housing Associations, Victim Support, Home Office, and the Restorative Justice Council.

21. [www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Mobile-app](http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Mobile-app)

*There is a strong argument for convening a workshop, or series of workshops, that would bring together key leaders with potential beneficiaries and supporters of first aid approaches*

Given the range of organisations working in this field, the many different avenues of experiment that remain open, and the numerous links to other practices, there is little benefit in trying to forge a formal leadership or partnership arrangement. By the same token, there is a strong argument for convening a workshop, or series of workshops, that would bring together key leaders with potential beneficiaries and supporters of first aid approaches. These workshops would allow those interested in this field to take stock of where practice has got to, how it might be built upon, and ensure that informal networks are oiled and maintained.

The opportunities to widen the circle of those involved in first aid practices and build them more strategically into community safety policy seem real. If ordinary police officers were significantly and systematically involved in offering training to the public in how to address anti-social behaviour and deal with aggression and conflict, this might have a significant impact on how citizens see their role in supporting good public safety outcomes. The potential of such a development is, as far as I am aware, completely unexplored and it would be worth testing the appetite for this among police services, police authorities, and government. Even if policy makers did not want to go so far in engaging the general public, more could be done to promote the civic value of the training and skills of large numbers of professionals who are currently trained in managing conflict – including of course police officers and other security workers, but also public sector workers and others – but who are neither supported nor encouraged to use their skills in their local neighbourhoods. Given the relatively little emphasis to date on co-producing community safety at a time of austerity, there might be benefits of situating this in a broader inquiry into what co-production and ‘social productivity’ means for policing today.

# Afterword

**Paul Buddery, Partner, 2020 Public Services Hub at the RSA**

**Mark Griffiths, Senior Programme Manager, Nesta**

In July 2010, the RSA published a report by Ben Rogers that proposed training members of the public in how to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour. The model from which it drew inspiration was first aid training, pioneered in Woolwich, South East London. Two years on, this update paper acknowledges a changed scene, in which the approaches it described are potentially more highly charged, but potentially more necessary than when they were first set out. As the paper makes clear, riots in the summer of 2011 – including in Woolwich – laid bare both the risks and strengths of self-organised citizen defense. A number of communities showed strong civic spirit by mobilising to face-down disorder where the police appeared to be too stretched to intervene. However, solidarity was often ethnically defined and in the confrontations that followed lives were lost. In February of this year, in Sandford Florida, Trayvon Martin was shot dead by a neighbourhood watch volunteer, sparking nationwide protests. Although the legal and cultural contexts in the UK and US are significantly different, the story has resonated here too, and is a cautionary tale, indicating what can go wrong with civilian patrolling.

If such high-profile incidents have made the development of policy in this area more difficult – or at least underlined the importance of developing it inclusively – other pressures too are beginning to disrupt the status quo. Most importantly, cuts of 20 percent to police budgets in the course of this parliament will inevitably drive change. Controversially, we already see the range of partners and providers involved in policing being adapted and extended. The public safety supply-side is evolving rapidly.

Radical innovation is on the table at the same time as new policy players are arriving with mandates for reform. Directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners will soon be setting local policing priorities in consultation with communities and holding chief constables to account. Their critics worry that they will usher in populism of the worst kind. However, their ability to press at least some of the more popular policing buttons will be constrained by austerity. Frequent uniformed patrolling, for example, is highly resource intensive. Given policing's straitened circumstances, strategies that draw on citizens' capabilities, rather than a shrinking budget, will begin to look increasingly attractive. In other words, the new policing arrangements may indeed see more playing to the crowd, but they may also see more engagement with communities, and a greater recognition of communities as social partners.

Communities of many different kinds appear increasingly willing to self-organise to supplement traditional policing. Government is supportive of this, and has asked the Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network to act as a conduit for the development of civilian patrols, with ACPO's blessing. Current groups range from Street Pastors and Street Angels to Street Watch. But although there has been some academic research on

their impacts and risks,<sup>22</sup> there has been very little attention to date on the skills and training that these groups of citizens either possess or need – the kind of ‘first aid’ skills discussed in this paper. With the real prospect of traditional police patrolling being scaled back, now is surely the time to focus seriously on agreeing the core skills that active citizens need – individually or acting collectively – if they are to step up to the mark. Just as importantly, we need a better understanding of how these skills can be promulgated.

This paper has started to explore how some of these skills are being taught today. It has looked at how, with very little resource, a loose network of like-minded organisations has begun to gather a valuable body of expert insights which might be the basis for replicable practice on a larger scale. But the ‘core curriculum’ of simple skills and training procedures that could be rolled out with confidence is still some way away. While austerity and new mechanisms for local accountability might provide the spur and the opportunity for accelerated change, Ben Rogers wisely cautions against precipitous haste. Trying to expand and systematize too quickly risks replacing bottom-up innovation with top-down prescription. We need an approach that is ambitious, resourced, and that goes with the grain of local capability.

If Police and Crime Commissioners grab at this agenda and press it into service too quickly – ahead of the evidence, and ahead of broad-based local consent – the first aid approach is likely to be little more than a sticking plaster applied to a chronic wound. More positively, if the new Commissioners take up this agenda rigorously as part of inclusive strategies for building long term civic capability, the first aid approach could play a significant role in helping to heal our anxious communities.

22. D. Sharp, S. Atherton and K. Williams (2008) ‘Civilian policing, legitimacy and vigilantism: findings from three case studies in England and Wales’, *Policing and Society* 18: 3, 245–7.

# Nesta...

---

1 Plough Place,  
London EC4A 1DE  
+44 (0)20 7438 2500  
Registered as a charity  
in England and Wales  
no. 1144091

[www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)

---

The 2020 Public Services Hub is a research and policy development hub created from the legacy of the 2020 Public Services Trust in early 2011. It specialises in developing practice-based research on social productivity in public services. Based at the RSA, the Hub works collaboratively with local public service organisations, national sector leaders and other national partners to develop social value and social productivity thinking into local and national practice.

Nesta is an independent charity with a mission to help people and organisations bring great ideas to life. We do this by providing investments and grants and mobilising research, networks and skills. Nesta doesn't work alone. We rely on the strength of the partnerships we form with other innovators, community organisations, educators and investors too. Our Public Service Innovation Lab is working with others to identify, test and demonstrate innovative solutions to tackle some of the most demanding challenges faced by the UK's public services.

2020  
Public Services Hub  
*at the* **RSA**

---

8 John Adam Street,  
London WC2N 6EZ  
+44 (0)20 7930 5115

Registered as a charity  
in England and Wales  
no. 212424

Copyright © RSA 2012

[www.2020psh.org](http://www.2020psh.org)

---