

EX POST PAPER

The role for police officers in multi-agency working and information sharing

Introduction

Police do not have all the information and police cannot do it alone. (...) Police shouldn't spend resources on a task better done by someone else. Both strong messages from RAN POL.

As one of the key partners in multi-agency working and information sharing, the benefits for police are twofold. Police can receive information from partners and through multi-agency arrangement make others pick up responsibilities and do work that is not police work.

Throughout Europe, police are involved in different types of multi-agency approaches to prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. Sometimes successful, sometimes promising and sometimes challenging. In this paper, based on outcomes of the RAN POL working group meeting that took place on 21 December 2016 in Utrecht, the need for and benefits of multi-agency for police will be described, followed by some of these promising projects. The paper will conclude with lessons learnt and tips being shared.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessary reflect the views of the RAN Centre of Excellence, the European Commission or any other institution, or participant of the RAN POL working group.

The need for and benefits of multi-agency for police

'Multi-agency working' is almost like a mantra within the RAN community of practitioners, in which RAN POL is key actor. Multi-agency is part of our RAN DNA. But why is it so important? And why for police? Building the case for multi-agency working and information sharing is an easy task. For police it starts with radicalisation being a process that is largely pre-criminal, so other actors than police do need to intervene. In some or a lot of cases the police might stay in the background. Police interventions don't always help and sometime even make situations worse. Another need for multi-agency lies in the nature of the radicalisation *process* and the subsequent necessity of assessment of changes in behaviour in a person of concern. Such an assessment can only be done with information from different domains, as well as tapping into the expertise of other professionals to assess the gathered information.

"Police do not have all the information and police cannot do it alone. (...) Police shouldn't spend resources on a task better done by someone else"

Benefits of multi-agency working

1. More accurate assessment of risk and needs;
2. More thorough and driven management of cases;
3. Better understanding between professionals;
4. Greater efficiencies in processes and resources

(source: UK Hubs report)

In the United Kingdom there is a lot of experience in setting up multi-agency cooperation, for instance in Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs. In July 2014 the Home Office presented a report 'to better

understand multi-agency information sharing models', based on the experiences in the many local *hubs*¹

And it can be done: Some promising approaches and what we can learn from them

As described above, building the case for multi-agency is not difficult however making it work is sometimes. But it is doable and RAN POL is learning how. That's why RAN POL assembled a series of projects where police was in some kind of multi-agency cooperation with others.

Anchor model (Finland): multi-professional working.

Inspired by the Danish multi-agency exit teams, Finland started with *Ankurru (Anchor) teams*. A mixed team of professionals at local level is trying 'to be the anchor for young people who drift away'. One of the characteristics of the Anchor teams is that professionals are working together as a team on a daily basis. Behind the walls of a police station police team up with social workers, and in some teams youth workers or psychiatric nurses. They are working for the same cause, from a shared workspace. This is what they call multi-professional working. Whereas in multi-agency cooperations people are working for their own organisation and now and then arrive at a joint table. The psychology, dynamics and opportunities are different in both set-ups.

Besides the close cooperation between different professionals, one of the other success elements in the Anchor model is that is institutionalised. It is part of the official

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-working-and-information-sharing-project>

national action plan and made possible in legislation. That results in commitment and support from all relevant levels. In the Anchor model there is understanding, acceptance, permission, trust and support arranged from three important levels: 1. Top level leaders, like the police chief and major. 2. Middle management leaders, steering group: they give advice and show the way. 3. Grass root or work floor level: players who operate like real team players. This trust and support from all relevant levels, was in the RAN POL discussions recognised as an important pre-condition for successful multi-agency working. You can read more about the Finnish National Action Plan for the Prevention of Radicalisation and Extremism² and on the so called Ankurru (Anchor) teams³. As mentioned before, the Finnish Anchor teams are inspired by the Danish **SSP model where schools, social services and police** work together. In the Utrecht meeting of RAN POL, the SSP model was once again presented, because it is one of *the* models for multi-agency working with a key role for police. For that reason, the SSP model is described in the RAN Collection⁴. Being a generic crime prevention approach with a forty year track record, the decision was made not to build a new multi-agency, but incorporate the vulnerability to radicalisation into the tested and evolved multi-agency cooperation. That's another lesson: very often it is wise to build multi-agency for prevention of radicalisation or de-radicalisation upon the existing multi-agency networks for for example crime prevention, bullying or for instance sexual exploitation.

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https://www.intermin.fi/download/67992_julkaisu_172016.pdf?385cc67a36a7d388

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http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland_looking_to_develop_re-integration_programme_for_syria_war_returnees/7545454

⁴https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/node/7488_en

The Estonian project **Dare to be yourself**⁵ is an example of police organising a joint preventative approach with partners like amongst others schools, probation services, parents and youth workers. In North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany) the existing **round tables at local level** turn out to be helpful. Twice a year police, youth welfare, foreigner authorities of the district⁶ and teachers and headmasters of school exchange information. These meetings were already organised on right wing extremism, and are now also also include violent jihadism. Besides this broadening of an existing approach, there is now also a new multi-agency facility **Wegweiser** (Guide). This central help facility, set up by the Constitutional Protection Unit, and is referring people to the partners in the Wegweiser project like police, job centre, family advice centre and authorities.

Building on existing cooperation is also the strategy in the Netherlands where there is a successful multi-agency arranged in the so called **safety houses**⁷. This is a model deployed in all Dutch regions, not only for prevention of radicalisation but also other tailor made approaches in crime prevention of a more complex nature. In most regions this is where the case management for prevention and deradicalisation takes place.

Why are we cooperating? It's about the person, a shared interest

In the UK a very interesting project with three **Mental Health Hub** pilots started in spring

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http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/986/Report%202014%20ENG%20FIN_.pdf

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⁶ Responsible for all matters relating foreigners

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo1ffn4qVQ>

2016⁸. Mental health staff (psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health nurses) was added to regional counter terrorism police units. They work from the police offices, and they work in tandems with police. The mental health staffers bring in their own health computer that can only be operated by them.

The mixed police-health tandems operate in the pre-criminal phase of people with a concern about vulnerability for radicalisation. From a safeguarding perspective, Mental Health professionals will conduct direct or indirect assessments to identify whether individuals have unmet mental health needs and link them up with appropriate services at an early stage - such as their GP or urgent mental health care providers. It is estimated that almost half of the referred persons had mental health vulnerabilities. Before the hubs were established, signals of mental illness were often missed by police. In the new situation people are being helped much quicker, which speeds up the treatment and will bring down the vulnerability. The mental health staff is also appreciated by the police for their expertise and advice. Police and mental health are positioned as equal partners and every one does what he or she is best at and what is his or her responsibility. An example are the visits of clients at home, where the medical nurse is leading, and police is there only for safety reasons.

The importance of "WHY?"

Make sure everyone understands *why* there is a *reason and urgency to cooperate*.

Put energy into explaining *why* you ask for *certain information*

Take the other serious by explaining *why* you can not share or do something.

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<http://www.npcc.police.uk/NPCCBusinessAreas/TAM/MentalHealthPilotHubs.aspx>

Working in tandems, make the partners understand each other better and improves communication. Sharing information is not a discussion. Not sharing means not helping the individual and not being a good colleague.

Invest in shared goals, culture and a perceived, shared responsibility and outcome

The culture of team work and sharing can also be promoted by joint training, where the different actors not only gain expertise, but also get used to the language, expertise, expectations and procedures of the desired partners in the multi-agency cooperation.

A promising and interesting project in this perspective is the **Austrian joint training programme** pilot, initiated by the Police Academy. Within this pilot police will be trained with the Vienna Board of Education and Youth Welfare. In the RAN Train the Trainer five trainers from each of these three groups will all receive the same training and will then in mixed groups of three trainers train people. An approach like this can help finding a shared language and promote an approach that might overcome cultural and institutional differences.

Information sharing, legislation and contracts

In some countries, Finland and Denmark for instance, information sharing is easier because it is made possible in legislation. The famous Aarhus or Danish model is built upon supportive legislation. In other countries there is space for optimisation. The police and key partners need to be creative to establish effective information sharing.

The **I2O** project in the Netherlands is a project starting from the growing unease that the police are missing too much information if a person is solely assessed on police information. Another problem was that if the police assessment led to the conclusion that

this was not a case for police, there wasn't a follow up by other partners. In the new approach the gathering of information, the assessments and the subsequent decisions are a joint responsibility. This way less people of concern will fall off the radar.

Top 10 tips for multi-agency working

This all results in the following top tips for how to make multi-agency working work:

1. Work on trust, this takes time);
2. Take care of information sharing legislation, arrange a proper privacy protocol and make sure everyone understands the legislation;
3. Define what you are doing: make sure everyone understand the steps, the work processes, responsibilities and contributions;
4. Get support from all levels and arrange sufficient resources and man power;
5. Start at local level, between professionals;
6. Start with a small cooperation: professionals form the key organisations;
7. Organise joint training programs;
8. Organise additional expertise that can help the multi-agency cooperation fill in the expertise gaps;
9. Put energy in explaining why you need the information of cooperation;
10. Be humble as police, all partners are equal. If you want something from partners, approach them for their qualities and contribution and give them credit for these.