

Analysis

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Understanding analysis

The role of analysis

Analysis identifies patterns and inconsistencies in information. It enables the analyst to draw inferences from them so that operational decisions can be made on actions to take.

This might include:

- enforcement activity
- additional information gathering
- a crime and disorder reduction strategy

It supports strategic decision making and the tactical deployment of resources to prevent, reduce and detect crime and disorder. It also identifies effective practice and lessons learnt through a review of tactical and strategic activity.

Analysis provides an insight into what is happening and why. It clarifies and details:

- what has happened
- why this is important
- context around the bigger picture
- what could happen next

An important part of the analyst's role is to move beyond simply describing what has happened and to add value through providing a richer interpretation of intelligence.

The analyst's role

Analysts are deployed across a range of functions in law enforcement agencies. They provide support in:

- major crime investigations
- problem solving (for example, volume crime)
- intelligence development
- investigations into complex and serious organised crime and vulnerability across local, regional and national levels
- developing strategic insight for senior leaders
- live-time tactical situations during crimes in action

An analyst should inform, rather than wait to be tasked. Analysts should be proactive and look for opportunities to inform colleagues by identifying the problem, completing the analysis and negotiating with a customer who should own the response.

Analysts must be competent to plan and manage their own workload, and also be able to:

- discuss and develop terms of reference (TOR) for an intelligence analysis product
- obtain and evaluate information for intelligence analysis
- apply analytical techniques to interpret information for intelligence analysis
- use inference development to make judgements based on intelligence analysis methods
- develop recommendations based on the results of the intelligence analysis methods
- create an intelligence analysis product to support decision making
- disseminate the intelligence analysis product
- review the effectiveness of the intelligence analysis product

Every analyst should seek to become an accredited intelligence professional through completion and ongoing maintenance of their competency record.

For further information see [Role profiles](#).

The researcher's role

The researcher is responsible for:

- searching and retrieving information

- synthesising intelligence and other material
- establishing facts
- compiling reports and presenting their findings

It is not always possible or necessary to employ an analyst and a researcher together. Although research in itself can be a specialist skill, researchers can provide significant support to the analyst function. While an analyst is able to undertake their own research, a researcher cannot undertake analysis.

Researchers must be competent to plan and manage their own workload. In addition, an intelligence researcher must be able to:

- obtain and evaluate information for intelligence analysis
- disseminate the intelligence analysis product
- research, prepare and supply information

Every researcher should seek to become an accredited intelligence professional through completion and ongoing maintenance of their competency record.

Crime theories and approaches

Academic study of crime and criminology seeks to identify factors that influence offending behaviour. This study considers how various factors, including biology, psychology, sociology and economics, affect different crime types and patterns of crime. A better understanding of criminal behaviour helps to identify and prevent offending.

There are a number of relevant theories and approaches – some are outlined below. Analysts and researchers need to be aware of these alongside other key concepts such as the analytical tools and techniques detailed in this guidance.

Rational choice theory

This approach explains an offender's preference to carry out a crime which is easy, rewarding and safe. A number of decisions are made by a potential offender as they weigh up the costs and benefits of committing a criminal act. This may be the value of a particular commodity against the likelihood of being caught. ([Cornish and Clarke, 1987](#)).

A common acronym used to describe the desirability of items is CRAVED:

- Concealable.
- Removable.
- Available.
- Valuable.
- Enjoyable.
- Disposable.

This acronym helps to understand why one type of item may be stolen frequently or is more vulnerable than another.

Routine activity theory

Routine activity theory falls into the family of 'opportunity theories'. It generally relates to acquisitive crime. ([Cohen and Felson, 1979](#)).

This theory suggests that a person may choose to offend (out of choice rather than need) if they have:

- the motivation to attack a target
- the right kind of target to attack
- a potential target without adequate protection

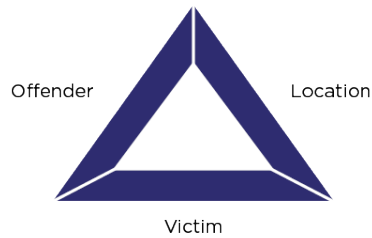
Crime types explained by this theory include stalking and harassment, employee theft and corporate crime.

By identifying and understanding these three elements of an offence or series of offences, it is possible to determine options for reducing crime either by providing protection or removing the motivation and/or target.

Problem analysis triangle

For a crime or incident to occur, an offender and a suitable target must come together in a specific location without an effective deterrent. The figure below shows how these three elements – victim, offender and location – form the problem analysis triangle.

Diagram – problem analysis triangle



Analysis should consider each of the elements of the triangle when developing a description/understanding of a particular crime or disorder problem or individual.

When developing solutions to that problem, the three elements should again be considered as focus for activity. Various approaches to this tool can be viewed online, including a more developed approach that includes consideration of a 'guardian' for the target/victim, a 'manager' for the place and a 'handler' for the offender.

This model is used to support problem-solving policing. The scanning, analysis, response and assessment model (SARA) ([Eck and Spelman, 1987](#)), can be used to manage all problems, including crime, disorder and substance misuse.

The four stages of SARA are:

- scanning – identifying issues or problem areas using basic data
- analysis – identifying the nature of the problem, including identifying trends and series of crimes and disorder, and problematic locations, and further, suggesting the potential causes
- response – developing a solution for the problem, with partners and the community
- assessment – reviewing the success of the solution and identifying learning.

See also: [Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines \(2018\), Delivering Neighbourhood Policing](#).

Tags

Intelligence management