**Practitioner Fellowships**

No Cold Calling Zones

**Brian Smith** Brian Smith, Angus Council Trading Standards  
  
**Introduction:**

Doorstep crime is an increasingly prevalent issue within neighbourhoods around the UK (Doorstoppers, 2009). There were 12,612 cases of distraction theft in 2005, but crimes committed by cold callers are hard to quantify because 9 out of 10 go unreported due to the intimidation and embarrassment associated with being the victim of a doorstep fraud (Croall, 2009).

Angus trading standards and the police introduced no cold calling zones (henceforth NCCZs) in 2007 as a way of combating increasing numbers of cold callers. These zones aim to give power to the residents that live within them to say 'no' to cold callers, police their communities and report suspicious persons. However, the introduction of NCCZs has also raised questions about the changes to rural policing, perceptions of vulnerability, governance of crime and the broader community safety agenda - particularly because NCCZs in Angus were introduced using the existing neighbourhood watch framework. Using a qualitative methodology, primarily focus groups and questionnaires, this project investigated the impact and implications of NCCZs on two communities in Angus.

**Key Findings of the Research:**

* NCCZs are spatially ambiguous, with different agencies and communities constructing 'cold calling' in different ways. This means that the agencies and communities involved in enforcing NCCZs have different expectations and standards in relation to who should or should not cold call
* The spatially ambiguous nature of NCCZs is particularly apparent in relation to charities calling door-to-door, with residents split on whether they should or should not be allowed to cold call. The police and trading standards also provided different opinions on whether charities should cold call or not
* NCCZs have been successful at deterring cold callers
* NCCZs appear to reduce the vulnerability experienced by the residents, yet by increasing their awareness of the serious nature of some cold calling, the police and trading standards inadvertently increase resident's fear of crime
* NCCZs did appear to increase the empowerment felt by those living within them
* NCCZs helped increase the multiagency interaction between the police, trading standards and other allied health professionals
* Many legitimate doorstep sellers believe NCCZs deter legitimate business

**Impact:**

* In addition to thinking about different ways of communicating with residents of NCCZs, trading standards have revisited all neighbourhood watch executives to inform them of the position on charities cold calling
* In an attempt to reduce fear of crime trading standards and community police officers have spoken to all neighbourhood watch executives in order to emphasise the relative safety of Angus
* This research has highlighted the need to consider other ways of introducing NCCZs into neighbourhoods which do not have a neighbourhood watch, as these are the neighbourhoods which are often most vulnerable to cold calling
* SIPR has provided an opportunity to facilitate knowledge transfer between Dundee University, Angus trading standards, Tayside police and Angus neighbourhood watches. SIPR and Dundee University benefited from the opportunity to apply a rigorous academic process of investigation to a policy relevant situation
* Angus trading standards benefited from having academically rigorous research applied to their project, research which otherwise would not have occurred because of a lack of knowledge, resources and time. Although a statistical analysis of questionnaire responses had been undertaken as part of the evaluation process by trading standards it was beyond their ability to undertake an evaluation using qualitative research techniques.
* The results being independently generated added integrity and authority to the evidence.
* This collaborative approach has therefore been able to influence the development of policy and practice within this developing area of community safety.

**Publication:**  
  
[**Research Summary: Policing vulnerability? The impacts and implications of no cold calling zones in angus**](https://web.archive.org/web/20171119030417/http:/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Research_Summaries/Research_Summary_5.pdf) Andrew Wooff, University of Dundee & Brian Smith, Senior Trading Standards Officer, Angus Council [Entered, February 2011]