Best Practice Guide for Public Crime Mapping

Pitney Bowes MapInfo has published a first best practice guide to UK public crime mapping: Crime in Focus. In response to the Home Secretary's pledge in July this year for interactive maps to be put in place by every police force in the land by the end of year, which allow neighbourhoods in England and Wales to access local crime information, the issue of crime mapping has moved to the top of the agenda for police and policy makers alike.

The case for publishing crime maps is keeping the public accurately informed about crime in their immediate environs goes a long way in tackling the public’s perception of crime whilst facilitating the sharing, analysis and visualisation of crime across local government stakeholders. It also presents a valuable opportunity to improve the engagement between police and the public, at the same time spotlighting often unsung successes in neighbourhood policing.

In order to support the effective introduction of crime mapping initiatives in the UK and continental Europe, Pitney Bowes MapInfo has drawn up an incisive guide for police forces, highlighting the possible pitfalls of ‘crime online’ and recommending key principles which will fulfil the needs of the community and related stakeholders.

Commenting on the guide, Duncan Stokes, Senior Analytical Coordinator, Greater Manchester Police said: "Such a complex subject requires a commonsense approach. Identifying the possible pitfalls of public crime mapping is by no means an obstacle to pushing ahead with this important directive, quite the opposite; it's a helpful guideline to maximising the opportunities of building a robust community intelligence service from the ground up."

"We've worked with Pitney Bowes MapInfo for some considerable time on integrating location intelligence technologies across the force and are confident in the benefits such technologies provide."

Unveiled at the seventh National Analyst Conference in Blackpool (UK) last month, Crime in Focus presents an easily digestible guide to avoiding likely pitfalls in implementing a public facing crime map. Consultation rates highly in developing an effective ‘needs requirement’ framework, from local authorities to community groups and members of the public. Other key elements outlined of critical consideration include data quality and origin, definition of ‘location’, relevance of time of day, definition of neighbourhood boundaries, presentation of statistics, inclusion of non-crime data (e.g. drug usage), impact of operational activity (like crackdowns), effects of seasonality and avoidance in informing the criminal element.

"This guide illustrates that a simple, but widely considered approach is key to a truly effective crime mapping strategy and it is possible to implement an affordable solution introduced in stages, developed over time," said Ian Broadbent, Strategic Industry Manager, Policing and Crime Analysis, Pitney Bowes MapInfo.

"We are working with some of the most progressive police forces and local authorities in the UK, who are harnessing the value of location-based intelligence across their operations - both internal and public facing. Crime Mapping presents both a huge challenge and significant opportunity for police, policy makers and all community stakeholders to establish a solid platform for engaging the public, tackling crime and addressing the fear of crime."