

# How to guide:

Reorganisation of Police Stations

## **What is the J4A ‘How to’ series?**

The guide is part of a series of products developed by J4A to communicate lessons learned from projects and pilots, to provide stakeholders with guidance on how to adapt and replicate the initiative in their own context.

## **Who is this ‘How to’ guide for?**

Influencers and decision makers in the justice sector (police, prisons, judiciary and civil society).

## **Reference tools**

Accompanying reference tools are available at [www.j4a-nigeria.org](http://www.j4a-nigeria.org) or by request from [info@j4a-nigeria.org](mailto:info@j4a-nigeria.org)

## The problem

- The available space within the Police Station is not being utilised efficiently.
- The Charge Room Office (public reception area) is not citizen friendly.
- Both the victim of a crime and the alleged suspect are often processed together in the reception area.
- Lack of training on basic policing skills on first contact with citizens when they enter a station.
- Lack of citizens' confidence in how the police deal with their report/request.
- Under investment of the police estate at a local Divisional level resulting in

## Background

Police Stations throughout Nigeria vary in shape and size often with different facilities, levels of space and accommodation. However, how the available space is used is a crucial factor in ensuring the effective delivery of policing services. It is recognised that substantial under investment in the police estate at local Divisional level will impact and place limitations on what is possible when considering any structural changes or additions.

One of the major concerns of citizens is a feeling of insecurity (and sometimes fear) when entering the public areas of a police station to report a crime or seek police assistance. While the Charge Room Office (public reception area) is an area for particular review and appropriate attention, the first point of contact a citizen encounters when entering a police station is the Station Guard. Appropriate training for these officers on how they deal with members of the public who enter the station is recommended.

## What you can do

The Police Station should be reorganised to ensure that the Charge Room Office (public reception area) presents a quiet and welcoming environment where those visiting the police station for whatever reason can feel confident in the services being offered and where they will be treated with respect.

All available space within the Police Station must be utilised efficiently to support operational and service delivery. The Charge Room Office (public reception area) should be customer friendly with properly trained staff, and processes that ensure visitors are received and dealt with respectfully and efficiently.

A hostile or unwelcoming environment may well deter people from entering to report crime, seek assistance or provide information to the police. Other available office

space should be subject of critical review to ensure it is being used to maximum advantage as it may provide a suitable location for a separate Interview room.

## What you can achieve

Citizens' confidence in the police will be enhanced if they enter into an area, which is free of unnecessary noise and staff and where they are dealt with courteously and with respect and indeed where they feel safe. This will be further enhanced if there are facilities for members of the public to speak privately and in confidence to an officer if they so wish.

An enhanced and properly managed environment will aid effective service and operational delivery.

## Reorganisation of Police Stations: Steps for Implementation

1. In consultation with the DPO, and with his approval, review, map and draw up plans for alternative usage of available office space. Some examples are:
  - Supervisors/post holders who have traditionally had their own office, sharing with others
  - Departments with small numbers of officers, especially if they work at different times of the day, sharing offices
  - Office space that has been used for storing large quantities of unnecessary equipment or documents should be tidied or put to other use
  - Consideration of partitioning larger offices to provide two, or more, smaller working areas
  - Assistance being sought from the local PCRC or other community organisations to support and sponsor additional office facilities
2. Perform a detailed review of the Charge Room Office processes and the officers deployed (i.e. Charge Room Officer and Station Writers 1 and 2).
3. Remove any police radio from the Charge Room Office.
4. It is a common practice that a television is situated in the Charge Room Office. This should be removed.
5. The Charge Room Office should be cleaned and as best as possible made to be environmentally friendly, all unnecessary items removed.
6. The identification of an office adjoining the Charge Room Office to be predominately, but not exclusively used by the Charge Room Officer for:
  - The documentation of suspects, separating them from the victim
  - The taking of reports of crimes and for confidential discussions between citizens and police officers when required or requested
  - For medical examinations and receiving legal advice
7. Effective supervision of the Charge Room Office to ensure that only staff whose function it is to be there, for example Charge Room Officers and Station Writers, are present. Other officers should be actively discouraged from being in this area without valid reason.
8. Ensure that all necessary diaries and registers are kept in the Charge Room Office and that they are properly maintained.
9. Ensure that all Charge Room Officers and Station Writers are trained on any new intervention and the new methodology and ethos of 'doing business' is embedded.
10. If budget allows, provide some equipment for the Charge Room Office (e.g. desk, chairs, cabinets and secure storage for suspects property).
11. Rights of Suspects Detained' poster prominently displayed in the Charge Room Office. *An example is available for reference.*
12. DPO Principles' poster prominently displayed in the Charge Room Office. *An example is available for reference.*
13. Prominently displayed posters, which explain to community members and visitors to the police station the concept what changes can be expected and how it will benefit individuals and the community.
14. Leaflets, which replicate the posters, available in the public areas and in a variety of local languages and which reflect community diversity. Some examples are below:

<h3>Public Counters / Charge Room Office</h3>	<h3>Treatment of Victims / Witnesses</h3>	<h3>Confidentiality</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens are free to come into the station at any time of the day and should be well attended to and treated with respect</li> <li>• They should be able to speak to Police Officers about sensitive matters without details being overheard by others</li> <li>• Citizens should be aware of their rights when entering the police station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victims and witnesses should be treated sensitively and with respect</li> <li>• All allegations of crime or statements should be properly recorded</li> <li>• The complainant should be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the case</li> <li>• In the event of an accident, no matter the severity, the vehicles involved should be released to the owners immediately such vehicles have been inspected by the Vehicle Inspection Officer and without any payment to the police</li> <li>• If money is recovered in a case under investigation, all the money recovered should be released to the rightful owner as soon as possible and without the police retaining any percentage of this amount</li> </ul>	<p>The identity of victims and any witnesses will be treated with desired confidentiality</p>
<h3>Complaints Against the Police</h3>		<h3>Police Community Consultation</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens can complain about police actions or the standard of service they receive</li> <li>• Any complaint will be taken seriously and properly investigated</li> <li>• Victims or complainants are not expected to pay before their complaints are accepted at the station</li> <li>• Complainants will not be victimised and they will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint</li> </ul>		<p>The police are consulting communities more widely over the type of police services they want and to be more responsive to community needs. This will be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police Community Relations Committees</li> <li>• Open Public meetings</li> <li>• The local Policing Plan</li> <li>• The development of a Community Safety Partnership</li> <li>• Consultation and cooperation with specific groups about crime prevention and victim support</li> <li>• Public attitude surveys</li> </ul>

15. If facilities allow it and/or there is an appropriate budget, a dedicated facility (away from the main police station if possible) for a Family Support Unit (JWC) where individuals can report and be supported in the reporting of sexual and gender based violence and offences against children. Should this not be possible, consideration should be given to the use of the already identified office adjoining the Charge Room Office.

## Lessons Learned

### Lesson 1:

There are limitations as to what you can do in relation to the physical reorganisation of the station. Every station is structurally different.

### Lesson 2:

Crucial to any reorganisation of the station is the approval of the DPO and their 'buy in'. Therefore, stakeholder management and relationship building is paramount.

### Lesson 3:

The transferring of staff to other duties/divisions is commonplace within NPF. Therefore, there will be a requirement to update and train new staff as and when the need arises.

### Lesson 4:

There are cost implications associated with the reorganisation of police stations, such as the production of leaflets and/or structural changes, etc.

### Lesson 5:

Do not forget about the Station Guard. This person is the first contact any citizen has when entering the station. The perception of whether the station is a place of safety or not begins with what sort of reception they get from the SG, who, by the way, is always armed.

### Lesson 6:

You will have difficulty getting the TV out of the Charge Room Office. However, persistent emphasis on having it removed will pay dividends, although it might reappear from time to time.

### Lesson 7:

Ninety per cent of what you are trying to achieve is about changing the existing 'we've always done it this way' attitude. It is important to highlight that the 'new way' protects NPF officers from any allegation of wrong doing, while also protecting and enhancing citizen's rights.

## Evaluation

A number of tools have been developed to assist the NPF to evaluate success, including household surveys to ascertain public satisfaction as well as exit surveys for those citizens who have cause to come to the police station. Ultimately, it is the community, which will decide if there has been change and if their rights and expectations have been met.

## Appendix 1 & 2

### Rights of Suspect Detained

- Whilst in the police station, a suspect will be treated in accordance with the law and without use of excessive force
- A suspect has the right to legal advice whilst in the police station
- Any statements made by a suspect must be voluntary
- All property belonging to a suspect shall be recorded and kept secure
- A suspect has the right to medical treatment whilst detained but can only take prescribed drugs
- Bail is free

### DPO's Leadership Principles

- Oppose corrupt practices within my Division
- Treat arrested persons fairly and in accordance with their Human Rights
- Be proactive in reducing incidents of crime and disorder in my Division
- Support Community Policing and Partnerships to maximise public involvement in the fight against crime
- Maximise the potential of my staff by training, deployment, delegation and monitoring performance
- Communicate with the public and my staff on a regular basis and with honest intent to maximize commitment
- Ensure my staff take special care when dealing with complaints of abuse, domestic and sexual violence especially from vulnerable members of society
- Positively address complaints made by the public about the conduct of my Police Officers
- Ensure a clean environment, improving facilities as finance becomes available



## Contact

The Justice for All (J4A) Programme is funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by the British Council.

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