

Neighbourhood Policing

Driver – Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal

Related Drivers – Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Mental Health, Reducing Bureaucracy, Anti-Social Behaviour, Increasing Accountability, Conservative Party Policing Reform, Public Perceptions of Crime, Public Perceptions of the Police, Mobile Technology, Police Powers, Police Mergers, Victims and Witnesses

Background

Neighbourhood Policing is one of the key areas in the current policing reform agenda aimed at making a more visible, accountable, responsive and productive police service across England and Wales. Papers such as *Answering to You*¹, *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime* (known as the Casey Review)², *Policing Green Paper*³, *Sir Ronnie Flanagan's Review of Policing*⁴ and the Home Affairs Committee report, *Policing in the 21st Century*,⁵ place an emphasis on neighbourhood policing as one of the ways to engage the community in fighting crime by helping police set local targets and be accountable to the communities they serve.

Political Context

The '**Policing Pledge**' has already been rolled out across England & Wales (December 2008) and sets out clear national service standards for the police and meets recommendations raised in the Casey Review. The Pledge makes clear what the public can expect from the police, by providing easy access to the neighbourhood teams, the ways the public can get involved and a commitment to local priorities. Additionally it commits the police to sharing information through crime maps and sharing information on what happened to people brought to justice. Additionally the pledge focuses on such subjects as **customer service, contact management** and services to **victims and witnesses**.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published a review in June 2009 that evaluates the Policing Pledge since its introduction. Inspectors found that there were a number of improvements needed, including:

- More work on communicating the Pledge to the public
- A better system to handle public dissatisfaction with police services in local areas
- Assessing and assuring the amount of visibility time that policing teams spend in neighbourhoods

- Ensuring better contact with victims before an alleged suspect is charged (although higher levels of service were provided post-charge)
- Developing better ways to spread good practice.⁶

The Home Office has moved to a single top down target for forces. This new target focuses every force on whether they have the public's confidence that they are identifying and addressing the crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues that matter most to their communities.^{7,8} In March 2009 a national public confidence target was announced by the Home Office which means that by 2012, 60 percent of people will be confident that the police and local council are dealing with their concerns at a local level.⁹ The Home Office released figures showing that confidence levels in the police vary across the country, with the latest national average at 46%. Police forces and authorities have also been set a level of confidence that they should reach by March 2011. Both this, and their 2012 target, will be measured by the British Crime Survey.¹⁰ Effective neighbourhood policing is likely to play a key role in enabling police forces to meet this target.

Sergeants play a pivotal role in delivering front line policing and in turn neighbourhood policing. A HMIC review looked into the **supervision and leadership of police sergeants**. The report found evidence of a gap in terms of the skills and experience needed to effectively lead and supervise frontline activity. It recommended:

- A review of the promotion process to ensure leadership potential is tested alongside technical skills
- The establishment of an accreditation scheme and a set of national standards for frontline supervisors to help define their role
- A review of preparatory processes for aspiring sergeants to ensure they have sufficient experience to effectively supervise others
- A review of training processes to ensure newly promoted sergeants have the practical skills necessary for the role.¹¹

Another HMIC thematic report, '*Serving Neighbourhoods and Individuals*', found that while all forces have done well to implement neighbourhood policing across the country, some forces have not yet fully implemented all three delivery mechanisms (particularly problem-solving).¹² The report also highlighted that progress varies considerably between different police forces, particularly in terms of how forces are engaging with the local community and the type of problem-solving approaches being used.

An evaluation of the second year of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme (NPP) found there were no statistically significant changes to outcomes measures at Basic Command Unit (BCU) or Police Force Area (PFA) level.¹³ Given the discrepancies raised in the HMIC inspection, the evaluators argued that it was not unsurprising that the results from the evaluation have not shown consistent, positive changes. Both HMIC and the Home Office cite that when community policing (a variant of neighbourhood policing) was adopted in Chicago, it took over eight years for the benefits to be fully realised; even after ten years it was acknowledged that “all police departments find solving problems difficult because it necessitates high levels of training, supervision, analysis, and organisation-wide commitment”.¹⁴

The Home Office evaluation recommends that “police forces continue to focus on embedding and delivering neighbourhood policing, addressing any problems identified by HMIC (again, particularly problem-solving) and integrating the good practice highlighted in *‘Serving Neighbourhoods and Individuals’*.”¹³

Economic Context

In the Policing Green Paper, the Government continued its commitment to Neighbourhood Policing with continued support and investment for the next three years. All forces have committed to maintaining the investment in Neighbourhood Policing in policing plans as of 2008-09. HMIC noted that in five forces, sustainability of neighbourhood policing is potentially challenging given competing financial demands or estate and resource issues.¹²

The funding for PCSOs is often carried out annually and agreed between joint partners. With public sector budget cuts looming in the future, these posts could be affected, in turn impacting the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing teams.

Social Context

In his independent review, Sir Ronnie Flanagan endorsed the view that people want a greater say over their policing. The Casey Review showed that 67% of people would not know who to complain if they weren't happy with the way their local area was being policed and 7% of people understood the process by which policing is held to account.

The Policing Pledge, neighbourhood policing and governmental reform agenda provides the means to counteract these perceptions by laying out what the public can expect from the

police, providing the ways to get involved and access information, with targets focusing on public confidence.

It is important to note that although **Customer service** is an essential part of successful neighbourhood policing it is important across policing as whole. The Casey Review stated that it was apparent during discussions with the public that they expected both neighbourhood and wider police roles as part of a seamless police service – they did not distinguish between their expectations of Neighbourhood Police Teams and broader policing in their areas. Customer service throughout the force as well as neighbourhood policing is essential to meet the overall public confidence target.

Additionally there is general support by the public for Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) but views on the powers that should be given to them have been mixed. At present some forces designate PCSOs with all powers while others adopt a more restrictive approach to their powers. This in turn leads to confusion by the public over the role due to this variation. Additionally some powers such as detaining a suspect until a PC arrives, the ability to disperse troublemakers and impose a fine for graffiti have been requested. The addition of these powers is currently under review.

Technology Context

In 2007-08 the Government made available a further £50m to support the rollout of mobile data devices as part of the Mobile Information Programme.^{3,8} Through the *Policing Green Paper* the Government announced a further £25m over the next two years to expand this opportunity to more offices and more forces. By March 2010, these two programmes will deliver a total of 30,000 extra devices for front line officers.

'*Serving Neighbourhoods and Individuals*' notes investment in websites, mobile phones and, in six forces, personal digital assistants or mobile data specific to Neighbourhood Policing teams (NPTs). These devices ensure that the public can readily make contact with their neighbourhood team. Additionally, technology systems are being developed to support more efficient deployment, freeing up time and therefore increasing capacity for effective Neighbourhood Policing.

Legal Context

The Policing Green Paper³ (published July 2008) has paved the way for further legislation through the Policing & Crime Reduction Bill¹⁵ in the 2008/09 Draft Legislative Programme.

One of the main provisions in the Bill is protection of the public by facilitating and strengthening collaborative working of police forces at all levels from neighbourhood policing through to regional and national levels. Part one of the Bill includes a number of measures on police reform including collaboration, accountability and effectiveness. For example it would introduce a new duty for police authorities to have regard to the public's views on policing in their area. As of beginning of June 2009 the Bill is due to have its second reading in the House of Lords.

Potential Skills Needs

Customer service skills – ensure a consistent high quality service

Communication skills – to engage with the local community and communicate to all staff at all levels and to create confidence in the community

Community intelligence skills – aligning skills and experience of police officers and staff to neighbourhoods to support engagement and tackle crime

Community policing skills – to discuss and set local priorities and encourage more people to become involved in crime reduction alongside operational policing tasks

Contact management skills – ensure a consistent high quality service especially with victims and witnesses at all stages of the criminal justice process

Equality and diversity skills – to treat people appropriately and sensitively as well as better understand the cultural issues of the communities they serve

Financial awareness skills – managing police budgets in time of cuts to ensure continuation of neighbourhood policing

Data management skills – able to provide information in an easily accessible format

Information sharing skills – to provide effective information to partner agencies

Inter-agency working skills – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

IT skills – use of mobile data technology

Joint problem-solving skills – establish effective and appropriate solutions to problems through joint working

Management and leadership skills – ensure accountability at all levels of the service and deliver successful neighbourhood policing

Media management skills – communicating the policing pledge to the public

Multi-agency working skills – to provide strategic and local management of issues

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

People management skills- to empower and develop staff

Relationship building skills - to engage with the community maintain public confidence

'Soft' skills – personal qualities and interpersonal skills necessary to effectively deal with the public

Strategic leadership skills - to provide a clear vision and sense of purpose

Supervision skills – in particular for sergeants

Technical skills - maximise the use of different types of technology becoming available

Victim and witness care skills – to make appropriate arrangements and treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

¹ [Local Government Association \(2008\) *Answering to you: Policing in the 21st century*. London: Local Government Association.](#)

² [Casey, Louise \(2008\) *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A review by Louise Casey*. London: Cabinet Office.](#)

³ [Home Office \(2008\) *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together*. Cm 7448, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

⁴ [Flanagan, Sir Ronnie \(2008\) *The Review of Policing: Final Report*. London: Home Office.](#)

⁵ [House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee \(2008\) *Policing in the 21st Century*. Seventh Report of the 2007-08 Session. HC 364-I, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

⁶ [HMIC \(2009\) *'Delivering the Policing Pledge: Early Findings'*. London: Home Office.](#)

⁷ [Home Secretary Statement, 8 December 2008, *'Home Secretary's Strategic Policing Priorities for 2009-2010'*.](#)

⁸ [Home Office \(2008\) *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together – Summary of Green Paper consultation responses and next steps*. London: Home Office.](#)

⁹ [Home Office, Policing Policy e-Bulletin \(March 2009\), Issue124.](#)

¹⁰ [Home Office \(2009\) *New single confidence target for police: Table of force level targets for 2011 and 2012*.](#)

¹¹ [HMIC \(2008\) *Leading from the Frontline: Thematic inspection of frontline supervision and leadership at the rank of sergeant in the Police Service of England & Wales*. London: Home Office.](#)

¹² [HMIC \(2008\) *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary – serving neighbourhoods and individuals: A thematic report on Neighbourhood Policing and Developing Citizen Focused Policing*. London: Central Office of Information.](#)

¹³ [Mason, Mark. \(2009\) *Findings from the second year of the National Neighbourhood Policing Programme evaluation*. Home Office Research Report 14, London: Home Office.](#)

¹⁴ [Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research \(2004\) *10 Years of Community Policing, Chicago Style. Most recent CAPS report grades four key areas*. Fall 2004, Volume 26, Number 2. Northwestern University.](#)

¹⁵ [Policing and Crime Reduction Bill \(England & Wales\)](#)