Key implications

Exploring public confidence in the police and local councils in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

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This report provides findings from discussion groups held with local residents across England and Wales on the reasons underpinning responses to a question in the British Crime Survey (BCS) that measures public confidence in the police and local council to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Eighteen groups took place between 18 January and 3 February 2010. Participants were given a questionnaire to complete at the beginning and end of each discussion group which included the BCS question; responses were then used to prompt discussion during the course of the groups. The main implications for how to improve public confidence are as follows.

- Increasing awareness of the role and work undertaken by the police and council in tackling crime and ASB is perceived to be key to improving public confidence. This is particularly important with respect to Neighbourhood Policing and understanding the role of the local council. Passive communication, using a channel that people are already engaged with, e.g. radio, is perceived to be effective in building this awareness.

- Engaging the public with the police and council should be made as straightforward as possible to encourage community involvement. Engagement activities need to be taken to residents in environments in which they are comfortable or through existing channels.

- Providing prompt feedback on the outcomes of cases was seen as an important means of providing reassurance that action is being taken.

- Any local agreement setting out public standards of service should: be concise and user-friendly; be firm in its promises, therefore underlying the intention to fulfil them; provide guidance on how to hold the police and/or council to account.

- More information could be provided on: the council's role in dealing with crime and ASB; the activities being undertaken to address these issues; the impact of community consultation on the council's ASB policy; and a clear guide on who to contact in the council and expected response times.

Contents

Keywords

Policing

Community policing

Confidence in the police

Police Community Support Officers

British Crime Survey

Home Office

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- Local councils can play a role in facilitating greater dialogue between residents and the police. People appear to be engaging with the council through meetings, newsletters and other forums, and these means can be used to provide feedback on crime and ASB issues.

- Neighbourhood Policing appears to fit the public's desired model of policing but awareness needs to be improved if Neighbourhood Policing is to be effective in raising confidence. Participants said they would welcome the opportunity to meet their Neighbourhood Policing Teams in person, in informal settings, as well as to have a greater involvement in local priority setting.

- Participants were unconcerned with the mechanics of local partnerships; they were more interested in the outcomes. One of the most popular initiatives appeared to be a single non-emergency number. While this was felt to simplify the reporting of issues, it needed to result in clear action being taken for it to have the potential to raise confidence.