

## Practitioners' perceptions of the role of Neighbourhood Crime and Justice co-ordinators

Michelle Charlton, Jane Lawrence and Sarah Morton

### Context

In November 2008 the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice set up 60 Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinators to respond to public concerns identified in *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A review by Louise Casey* (Cabinet Office, 2008). These NCJ co-ordinators were practitioners who operated at local authority level and aimed to respond to these concerns by working with criminal justice partners.<sup>1</sup>

This research aimed to identify what perceived benefits the NCJ co-ordinators delivered, as well as to capture good practice to inform any implementation of similar roles in the future. The report presents findings from 56 semi-structured interviews (9 with NCJ co-ordinators and 47 with their key community safety, crime and justice partners) across 9 areas purposively sampled for the research.

<sup>1</sup> The NCJ co-ordinators were set up through the Justice Seen Justice Done programme. As part of this programme Community Crime Fighters, who were members of the public who volunteered to be trained to tackle crime, were also established.

### Key findings

#### The role of the co-ordinators

The activities undertaken by NCJ co-ordinators fell into two categories: those that were public-facing; and those that were partner-focused. The precise nature and scope of the work varied across areas and was partly influenced by the seniority, location and experience of the post-holder.

Public-facing activities encompassed raising public awareness of community safety, crime and criminal justice agencies' work, and encouraging the public to engage with them. This was achieved by: acting as a single point of contact for the public; specifically focusing on improving engagement with young people; increasing the capacity of partners to support victims; and involving the public in decision-making (especially community payback schemes).

The partner-focused work predominantly aimed to strengthen the links between partners, co-ordinate joined-up action, and provide additional capacity and support to deliver projects.

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Neighbourhood Crime and Justice co-ordinators  
Partners  
Community Safety Partnerships  
Community  
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## Practitioners' perceptions of the co-ordinators

In several areas co-ordinators were described positively by practitioners as having had an effect on: developing links and relationships between partners; increasing the capacity to support victims and engagement with young people; as well as increasing community awareness, reassurance and engagement on crime and justice issues through generating new ideas for working with the public.

A positive view of what the co-ordinators had achieved was not universally held, with some partners suggesting that the role had limited impact. This view was mainly held by those who felt that aspects of the co-ordinator role were already being undertaken by their own organisation, or by the community safety partnership.

## Challenges of the role

A number of common challenges faced by NCJ co-ordinators and their partners were identified, these included:

- perceptions in some areas that the role was driven by one agency rather than working across partners;
- duplication of remits between the co-ordinator role and the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and, in one area, crossover into existing roles;
- the role initially being too prescriptive, rather than locally driven;
- working across areas without coterminous boundaries between partner agencies; and
- tension between community payback managers and co-ordinators in a couple of cases, where co-ordinators were criticised for suggesting ideas that were not within the remit of payback, and payback managers faced criticism for not being responsive enough.

## The future of the role

At the time of the interviews the majority of areas did not plan to continue with a dedicated NCJ co-ordinator post following the end of the funding period. Instead three areas were looking at ways to incorporate the role, or aspects of it, into either mainstream practice or existing roles.

## Perceived implications for not maintaining the role

Some practitioners felt that discontinuing the role could impact by reducing the capacity for community engagement and community awareness projects, whilst some felt there would be less momentum for delivery of

some projects (e.g. community crime fighters) and less linking-up between partners. Other partners, however, disagreed and felt that discontinuing the role would have limited or no impact (although there were no instances where this opinion was held universally by all partners across an area). This view was mainly held when a partner perceived that the role had made little impact so far, or in areas where plans had been made to incorporate the work of the co-ordinator (or aspects of it) into other roles.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The research has provided evidence on how NCJ co-ordinators have been operating and the perceived benefits of the role. In general, the research has suggested that the role was perceived as having a positive effect, though this was not a universal view. Whilst central funding for the role is no longer available, some partners suggested that the most useful aspects of the role could continue by being absorbed into other posts. The following recommendations have emerged from the study, which may help to inform local areas and Police and Crime Commissioners on how best to set up an NCJ co-ordinator or a similar role to maximise its effectiveness.

- The objectives, parameters and focus of the role should be clearly defined, in consultation with partners, and tailored to the local area. This will minimise frustration and subsequent de-motivation of the post-holder, reduce potential duplication of co-ordinator activity with existing partnership work, and ensure the resource and financial constraints faced by some partners are considered.
- The post-holder should be at an appropriate grade to deliver the role objectives, e.g. a senior grade may be necessary (or at least senior support will be needed) if the post is required to direct resources and influence strategic decisions. The role-holder should also be proactive, dynamic, empathetic, and a good communicator; have previous partnership working experience; and be either based in co-located premises, or flexibly located.
- Targeting activity on specific locations in the community identified as of concern may prevent co-ordinator resources being spread too thinly and allow for more intensive work to be conducted.
- Co-ordinators should ensure engagement with all partners rather than the role being driven by one agency; and consider how to work across areas where a lack of coterminous boundaries between partner agencies exists.

## Practitioners' perceptions of the role of Neighbourhood Crime and Justice co-ordinators

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### I. Introduction

In November 2008, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice set up 60 Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinators to respond to public concerns identified in *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A review by Louise Casey* (Cabinet Office, 2008), which included:

- crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) remain major public concerns;
- the public feels its voice is not heard;
- the public feels that wrong-doers do not face adequate consequences for the crimes they commit; and
- the public feels it is not told enough about what happens in the system.

The NCJ co-ordinators were practitioners who operated at local authority level and aimed to respond to these concerns by working with criminal justice partners, such as the police, prisons, probation, the Courts Service and local authorities<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, they were intended to:

- be a dedicated resource acting on behalf of the public;
- ensure that the public are aware of what level of service they can expect from their local police;
- ensure that community payback is visible and tough;
- support the victims of crime; and
- ensure that the public are aware of the consequences for criminals.

The 60 local authorities selected to host co-ordinator posts were assessed to have high problems of crime, deprivation, and willingness of local people to engage with the criminal justice system. Each co-ordinator post received up to £50,000 per annum (to cover salary costs)

<sup>2</sup> This study relates to an initiative set up by the previous government. The NCJ co-ordinators were set up through the Justice Seen Justice Done programme. As part of this programme Community Crime Fighters, who were members of the public who volunteered to be trained to tackle crime, were also established.

from the Home Office for three years (2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11). Following the change in the Government in May 2010 there was a shift in the focus of the role, with priorities for NCJ co-ordinators being more locally driven and agreed, rather than centrally guided.

### This study

The main aim of this study was to identify what benefits the NCJ co-ordinators have delivered and to capture good practice. The specific research objectives were to:

- examine the main roles and activities of the NCJ co-ordinators and how they have been operating;
- identify the perceived benefits of NCJ co-ordinators (for local partners, the public and productivity) and any negative impacts;
- identify what worked well and what the challenges were; and
- identify lessons learnt to inform future developments.

Findings from this study will help to inform local areas and future Police and Crime Commissioners on the value of having an NCJ co-ordinator locally, and how best to set up this role to maximise its effectiveness.

### Existing research on local crime co-ordinator roles

There is little existing research that explores the benefits and challenges of dedicated co-ordinator roles working within a community safety or crime and justice context. One qualitative study of community safety officers in Wales (Edwards et al., 2007) found a consensus by respondents on the broad priorities, scope and purpose of their work, but reported contrasting job specifications and difficulties in balancing strategic and operational work. It also identified that the seniority of this role varied from the extremes of a senior manager to junior officers who did not have the authority to commit resources. Variability in resources available was reported across the post-holders, with some

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working in relatively well-resourced teams whilst others had minimal staff support and limited budgets.

A review of the role of domestic abuse co-ordinators in Wales (KM Research and Consultancy Ltd, 2010) reported that although these roles had a common central function, they were very much developed at the local level with varying job descriptions and objectives. No duplication of tasks was reported between these co-ordinators and other roles working in this area, such as independent domestic violence advocates. The level of seniority of these posts was felt to be appropriate, but it was recommended that these co-ordinators should not personally provide services but be working towards identifying gaps in service provision and getting partner agencies to address these gaps.

Liddle and Gelsthorpe's (1994) study of the local delivery of crime prevention focused primarily upon the relationships between agencies prior to the introduction of community safety partnerships. This found that the role played by a crime prevention co-ordinator (where these were in place) or by the chair of the relevant multi-agency group was crucial in generating productive inter-agency relations.

An important aspect of the role of the NCJ co-ordinators involved working with partners. Previous research has identified that partnership working can be effective at tackling crime and disorder (Rosenbaum, 2002; Berry et al., 2011), with several mechanisms associated with stronger partnership working. For example, a recent rapid evidence assessment (Berry et al., 2011), which included nine robust<sup>3</sup> US studies, identified five contributing factors to effective partnership working in a crime and disorder context:

- strong leadership;
- data sharing and a problem focus;
- regular communication and co-location;
- clear structures; and
- experience.

## Methodology

A qualitative methodology was adopted to explore the perceptions of NCJ co-ordinators and their key community safety, crime and justice partners across nine areas in England and Wales. Interview sites were purposively sampled to include areas across the range

of community safety partnership 'most similar groups'<sup>4</sup> and to capture a geographic spread across England and Wales. However, area decisions to participate in the research were entirely voluntary. Each NCJ co-ordinator and their community safety, crime and justice partners<sup>5</sup> in the sampled areas were invited to participate in an interview.

Fieldwork was carried out between December 2010 and March 2011. In total, 56 interviews (9 with NCJ co-ordinators and 47 with partners) were undertaken, either by telephone or face to face, using an interview tool to ensure consistency in approach across the 5 interviewers. Probing and further follow-up questions were also used to gather more in-depth information where necessary. Interviews ranged from around 20 minutes to 1 hour in length and either were recorded<sup>6</sup> and then transcribed verbatim (for 10 interviews), or notes were made by the interviewer (for 46 interviews).

Raw data from each of the interview transcripts or notes were summarised and charted by two interviewers into a matrix based on the interview tool. Systematic analysis was then conducted both within and between individual cases, allowing views and experiences to be mapped and key themes that appeared to be influencing perceptions identified. Similarities and differences between cases and possible explanations for these were then explored. Case study examples and quotes are included throughout the report to give a flavour of the language that participants used during the interviews. However, quotes were only available from the recorded interviews.

In some research sites there had been more than one NCJ co-ordinator in post since the role was implemented; therefore these co-ordinators were less familiar with the early aspects of the work than those who had been in post since the start. Additionally, there were some instances where staff turnover in partner agencies meant some interviewees were unfamiliar with parts of the NCJ co-ordinator role.

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4 As only 60 NCJ co-ordinators were set up they were only located in community safety partnership areas in 8 of the 13 most similar groups, therefore it was not possible to include an area from each of these groups.

5 NCJ co-ordinators were asked to provide contact details for the following community safety, crime and justice partners: local authority ASB/community safety manager; police chief inspector for neighbourhoods; the police Borough Command Unit (BCU) commander; probation community payback manager; victim support manager; Her Majesty's Court Service witness champion; Local Criminal Justice Board programme lead; community safety partnership programme lead; and the NCJ co-ordinator's line manager.

6 Permission was sought with the interviewee prior to the recording of each of these interviews.

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3 Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods, level 4 or above. For more information on the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods see Sherman et al. (1998) <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/171676.PDF>.

## 2. The role of NCJ co-ordinators

The role of the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinators was broad and varied across the nine areas. However, there was agreement on the central tenets of the role: to raise public awareness of the work of community safety, crime and justice agencies; and to encourage public engagement with these agencies. Strengthening the links between partners was seen as fundamental to achieving this.

The wide range of activities undertaken by co-ordinators, which emerged from the interviews, could be broadly split into those that were public-facing (e.g. providing information to the public on the work of agencies;

attending residents' meetings to identify concerns) and those that were partner-focused (e.g. co-ordinating between partners; sharing good practice). More discussion on the specific activities undertaken by co-ordinators is included in chapters 3 and 4.

There was noticeable variation between co-ordinators in the emphasis placed on different aspects of the role and the breadth of work undertaken. In some areas, the NCJ co-ordinators were very proactive and dynamic, generating new ways of working and engaging extensively with the public. In other areas, greater emphasis was placed on the co-ordination role between partners. Table 1 provides an overview of the main role of each NCJ co-ordinator across the nine areas.

**Table 1: Main role of NCJ co-ordinators across the areas**

Main role as described by NCJ co-ordinators	
Area A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging partners to work together to deliver services.</li> <li>Linking into the community through residents associations, voluntary organisations and public meetings to identify issues.</li> <li>Publicising sentencing outcomes.</li> <li>Developing diversionary activities for young people (e.g. junior wardens).</li> <li>Recruiting volunteers to victim support.</li> <li>Adopted a focused approach on specific areas.</li> </ul>
Area B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting as a conduit between local criminal justice partners.</li> <li>Co-ordinating approach to raising community awareness of crime and justice.</li> <li>Engaging with the community and training partners to do so.</li> <li>Promoting community payback and linking in with other projects.</li> </ul>
Area C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting and publicising to the public the work undertaken on crime and justice.</li> <li>Acting as a single point of contact to both the public and partner agencies.</li> <li>Increasing capacity to support victims through use of NCJ co-ordinator funding.</li> </ul>
Area D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting community payback (and initially the policing pledge).</li> <li>Promoting community engagement.</li> <li>Work around anti-social behaviour, including identifying areas of weak practice and performance.</li> </ul>
Area E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working closely with a range of partner areas and the victim's champion.</li> <li>Developing community payback.</li> <li>Informing community groups about ongoing work.</li> <li>Developing community crime fighters.</li> <li>Publicising sentencing outcomes online.</li> <li>Providing weekly press briefings around ongoing work.</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Main role of NCJ co-ordinators across the areas continued**

Main role as described by NCJ co-ordinators	
Area F	Being involved in community payback. Working with partners and the police around public confidence and anti-social behaviour. Improving support for victims and witnesses of ASB (e.g. commissioning the witness service to provide support before court).
Area G	Co-ordinating community payback. Promoting multi-agency working through the set up of area-based problem-solving groups. Engaging with the community (e.g. setting up a quarterly newsletter and a community messaging service). Increasing support for victims of ASB through using the NCJ co-ordinator grant to fund an ASB support worker to visit victims and provide crime prevention advice.
Area H	Role before April 2010 was around community payback, the policing pledge, community crime fighters and working with victims of anti-social behaviour. Post-April 2010 role changed to focusing on neighbourhood agreements and increasing local services engagement with the public.
Area I	Linking in with the public and with partners. Linking in with victim support through working with the victim's champion around ASB. Publicising sentencing outcomes online. Developing women's conditional cautioning. Involvement in community payback.

### Factors affecting the scope and nature of the role

A number of issues were perceived to influence the scope and nature of work undertaken by the co-ordinators. First, the seniority of the post-holder was claimed, by some co-ordinators and partners, to affect the degree to which they could operate strategically. Since the grant that funded the co-ordinators did not vary with regional pay differences, the seniority of grade that could be 'bought' with the grant varied across areas, for e.g.:

"... outside of London that buys you a higher grade generally. I think in some places that's been really helpful because it meant that there's a strategic way behind it ... whoever that person is has been able to have a much bigger influence in terms of driving stuff."

(NCJ co-ordinator)

Second, the location and experience of the post-holder was perceived by some partners to shape the co-ordinator's activity. Some partners perceived that the organisation within which the co-ordinator was located influenced the focus of the role, which is unsurprising given that the co-ordinator was often line-managed from within the organisation where they were located. Consequently, in a small number of areas some partners felt that the activities undertaken were driven by the agency where the co-ordinator was located, rather than by all partners.

## Challenges with the role

A key challenge identified by some line managers of the NCJ co-ordinators was the broad remit of the co-ordinator's role, given the limited authority of the grade at which many of the post-holders sat.

"I think that's probably one of the negatives really, the fact that its remit was so wide that at times it was hard to understand what it [the post-holder] should or shouldn't be doing."

(Community Safety Manager)

In areas where the co-ordinator was of a senior grade (e.g. a Chief Inspector or Community Safety Manager), it was felt that the co-ordinator had the authority to direct resources and make decisions in meetings with other partners. However, there were some partners who felt that it was more important for the co-ordinator to be of a lower grade, with more time to dedicate to the role and engage with the public.

The role of the Home Office in setting the agenda of the NCJ co-ordinators was perceived by some to restrict their effectiveness. Some co-ordinators commented on the role being initially prescriptive with partners perceiving the role as separate from the partnership and not fully embedded. Following the change in the Government in May 2010 and the move towards less central direction, there was a general view that the NCJ co-ordinator role had become more locally driven, tailored to meet challenges specific to each area.

"[The NCJ co-ordinator narrowed her scope down a lot, and you're seeing her actually getting a much more focused approach ... it's more focused on one specific area. And it's actually had a lot more impact."

(Community Safety Manager)

### 3. Working with the community

A key aspect of the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinator role was working with the community. Overall the co-ordinators' activities could be split into

those that informed the community and those that encouraged the community to become more engaged.

Table 2 summarises the main tasks, which are described in fuller detail below.

**Table 2: Main tasks, perceived benefits and challenges in working with the community**

	Nature of tasks	Benefits	Challenges
<b>Informing the community</b>			
Raising public awareness of local criminal justice system (CJS) agencies	Organising neighbourhood events (e.g. crime awareness days); and promoting local services (especially local courts).	Improving public understanding of the CJS (especially the courts).	Influencing the content of publicity material.
Raising awareness of local crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents; and how to get involved in tackling these	Newsletters; organising door-knocking patrols; publicising outcomes; and working with Community Crime Fighters.	Improving public knowledge of crime/ASB and awareness of how to prevent incidents.	
<b>Engaging the community</b>			
Single point of contact for the public	Gathering information on local resident concerns; and providing feedback to partners.	Building rapport with the public; providing reassurance; and identifying concerns of residents.	Community involvement, especially those who do not normally engage. Some difficulties in generating community payback ideas from the public.
Encouraging young people to engage with CJS organisations	Arranging diversionary activities and a programme of classes for school children.	Improving engagement.	
Extending victim support service	Providing additional capacity/funding.	Improving reporting of crimes and support for vulnerable people.	
Involving local people in decision-making	Encouraging attendance at Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and suggestions for community payback projects.	Giving the public more of a say; and helping to empower local communities.	



## Informing the community

The co-ordinators described a key element of the role as communicating with the public to raise awareness of the work being undertaken by partners in the local area and informing the public about local crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues.

One element of this included organising neighbourhood events in public spaces. For example, in one area the co-ordinator organised a Crime Awareness Day in a shopping centre, enabling members of the public to meet different agencies.

“We had the police there, we had the fire brigade there, we had the [Young Men’s Christian Association] YMCA with youth work. We had a climbing wall there for the children. Victim Support came down as well because that’s all part of working within the priorities. And it was really, really good. It was really good feedback and it was definitely worth doing.”

(NCJ co-ordinator)

Co-ordinators also created opportunities to provide information to local communities on the Courts Service (perceived to be less commonly understood). Examples were given where the co-ordinators had brought local magistrates into the community to explain how the court system works and sentencing options. This was generally perceived by partners to have worked well, helping to “demystify” the system.

As well as providing information about local services, the co-ordinators described playing a role in informing the public about local crime and ASB incidents, and providing advice. This tended to be through newsletters or face to face, via meetings and door-knocking patrols. Some co-ordinators also described setting up systems to allow residents to sign up to receive updates about local crime and disorder.

Co-ordinators also informed communities about the impact of the work of partner agencies, some of which centred on publicising sentencing outcomes. For example, in one area the co-ordinator spoke about securing a number of articles in the local press to highlight the conviction of offenders as a result of drugs busts by the police. These contained photos of the offenders, details of their convictions and the length of sentences given. In another area the co-ordinator described helping to implement an initiative that published Crown Court

and magistrates’ court results online, including photos of the offenders.

Publicising information and events was a challenge across some areas. Some co-ordinators felt they had little influence over the information included in wider publicity material produced centrally by the council and police forces. This was sometimes not locally relevant or timely, and the co-ordinators would have preferred to have greater oversight on messages communicated to the public.

## Engaging the community

Co-ordinators focused much of their energy on trying to make engagement as easy as possible to stimulate interaction between the public and local criminal justice services. Integral to this were four main elements:

- providing a single point of contact for the public;
- encouraging young people to engage with CJS organisations;
- linking-up with victims of crime; and
- involving local people in decision-making.

### Providing a single point of contact for the public

Some partners felt that a key element of the co-ordinator role was to be a single point of contact for the public on crime and community safety issues. Many of the co-ordinators said that they regularly attended residents’ meetings and door-knocking patrols to listen to residents’ concerns, and provided feedback to partners about any problems or issues raised. This was perceived to help to build a rapport with the community and to encourage people to come forward with intelligence and/or to report an incident, as well as to provide reassurance to local residents that agencies were listening to their concerns.

### Encouraging young people to engage with CJS organisations

NCJ co-ordinators were viewed by partners as playing a role in encouraging engagement among those who would not normally interact with agencies. Much of this work focused on developing diversionary activities for young people (e.g. securing access to local facilities to allow them to play sport).

## Junior Warden Scheme

In one area the co-ordinator worked with the Chief Inspector for Neighbourhoods to trial an 11-week programme of classes for schoolchildren and field trips covering a broad range of themes, including:

- personal safety;
- effects of ASB;
- fire safety;
- working together as a community; and
- environmental issues.

The project was perceived to have raised the children's awareness of these issues and the co-ordinator perceived that an extended benefit had been the spread of information from the children to their families.

"She has managed to kick start the junior wardens, where we've tried to do that time and time again, and it's just died a death. But with her determination, we've actually got that up and running now, which is really good."

(Community Safety Manager)

## Linking-up with victims of crime

There was a general consensus amongst both the NCJ co-ordinators and partners that the emphasis on victims had increased through the additional capacity to support victims as a result of the NCJ co-ordinator role. In some cases this was simply due to funding – either allocated to the NCJ co-ordinator post or secured by the NJC co-ordinator – being used to extend capacity in the victim support service. In others, partners attributed this to the co-ordinator working proactively in conjunction with partners.

Additional funding was used to extend the hours of victim support workers, and to employ Victims' Champions. This was perceived to have improved engagement with potentially vulnerable people, such as those with a disability, victims of hate crime and ASB, or those less likely to report crimes and access support services.

"They would go in and they'd speak to those people, go to community meetings, identify other victims or witnesses who needed support, and that's actually been really useful ... of all the things I think it's the thing that I'm most pleased about, because I know that it's had a very specific impact locally."

(NCJ co-ordinator)

## Involving local people in decision-making

Some co-ordinator activities were designed to increase involvement of local people in decision-making. While there were examples of the co-ordinator getting involved with Partnership and Communities Together (PACT) where local people could help to select their policing priorities, the main focus of public involvement in decision-making facilitated by the co-ordinator tended to be through community payback<sup>7</sup>.

In some areas, the NCJ co-ordinator was viewed as actively encouraging community involvement in suggesting community payback projects (e.g. by including coupons in local newspapers) and in voting for preferred schemes. Some partners felt that this had given the public more of a say and had empowered the community. For instance, one co-ordinator explained how she was able to task a community payback team quickly in response to a problem raised in a residents' meeting:

<sup>7</sup> Community payback is a scheme whereby offenders undertake unpaid work on local projects, e.g. removing graffiti, picking up litter and cleaning up local areas, such as parks, as part of their community sentence. Community members can nominate suitable projects through their local probation service. More information on community payback can be viewed at: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/ThePolice/DG\\_182080](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/ThePolice/DG_182080).

“And it's working with the residents' associations, that's how we got the shrubs and stuff cleared over at [area name removed] for the elderly residents. Outside the bungalows the shrubs had grown quite high, and obviously at this time of year when it's dark there's quite a lot of concern for the elderly residents ... So, working with the Environmental Warden we got onto [community] payback and they cleared it last week.”

(NCJ co-ordinator)

Some of the co-ordinators found it more difficult to generate ideas from the public. Moreover, in a couple of cases, the perceptions of community payback managers ran counter to the views of the co-ordinators. This tension centred on the remit of community payback: co-ordinators were criticised for suggesting ideas that did not meet the payback project criteria (benefiting the wider community; being visible; offering substantial and demanding work); and payback managers faced criticism for not being responsive enough. Some co-ordinators perceived that this could undermine the confidence of local residents suggesting out-of-scope ideas but seeing no action being taken.

Getting the community to attend consultation and decision-making events was another main challenge faced by co-ordinators. Some partners identified that where the invited audience had been targeted (by inviting particular members of the community, such as community leaders or local councillors) a far greater turnout was achieved than those where general invitations had been sent out.

## 4. Working with partners

The second key aspect of the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinator's role involved working in partnership. Overall the activities could be split into the following:

- those that built links between partner agencies;

- those that co-ordinated and focused partnership working; and
- those that involved delivering partnership projects and supporting partner agencies.

Table 3 summarises some of the main tasks, which are described in more detail below.

**Table 3: Main tasks, perceived benefits and challenges in working with partners**

	Nature of tasks	Benefits	Challenges
<b>Building links between partners</b>			
Building and developing links between partners	Attending and facilitating meetings to increase dialogue and to co-ordinate engagement between partners.	Breaking down existing barriers; enabling partners to see the perspective of others; raising awareness of ongoing work; and improving partner relationships.	Friction between partners where NCJ co-ordinators activities were perceived to be focused on, or driven by, only one agency.
<b>Co-ordination and focus of partnership working</b>			
Co-ordinating community payback between partners	Working with partners to generate more community payback opportunities and referrals; and filtering applications to influence the nature of referrals.	Increasing the number of applications from partners; and ensuring more appropriate referrals (where co-ordinators were knowledgeable about what community payback could deliver).	Unsuitable suggestions for community payback. Stretched probation resources.
Co-ordinating organisational change	Consolidating meetings; setting up problem-solving groups; and aligning partners' targets.	Enabling partners to deliver joined-up action through implementing and changing partnership processes.	Duplication of remit and tasks between co-ordinators, existing roles and Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs).
Focusing partnership activity	Acting as a single point of contact to partners on community concerns; and ensuring partnership activity was targeted on areas of concern.	Ensuring community concerns were fed into appropriate agencies; and targeting areas to prevent resources being spread too thinly across a larger area.	Lack of coterminous boundaries between community safety and crime and justice organisations in some areas.

**Table 3 (continued): Main tasks, perceived benefits and challenges in working with partners**

	Nature of tasks	Benefits	Challenges
<b>Delivering partnership projects and supporting partners</b>			
Developing and delivering partnership projects and initiatives	Providing dedicated resource and additional capacity through ring-fenced time; and securing additional funding.	Capacity enabled delivery of projects; and funding ensured delivery of specific elements of the role (e.g. publicising work such as community payback) and quicker action.	Co-ordinators lacking capacity to deliver on some elements of the role (e.g. accessing and managing information on sentencing outcomes from the Courts Service).
Supporting partner agencies	Providing hands-on support to deliver projects; sharing good practice from other areas; providing training; and disseminating intelligence.	Partners able to achieve more of the work they were already undertaking than was previously possible.	

### Building links between partners

Partners and co-ordinators perceived that a main activity of the NCJ co-ordinator role was building the links between community safety and crime and justice agencies, and a number of activities were undertaken by the co-ordinator to develop these links. These included attending meetings of partner organisations and the community safety partnership, and proactively facilitating meetings and dialogue between partners.

"I think it was the fact that she did get elements of different organisations actually talking to each other and meeting, and there was information-sharing going on."

(Community Safety Partnership)

The co-ordinators' oversight of partners' work in crime and justice, and their involvement in the community, often led them to identify areas for joined-up working. For example, in one area the co-ordinator helped the Witness Service, provided by the courts, to link up with community safety partners so that information-sharing on any issues within cases could take place with relevant agencies. In another area, the co-ordinator encouraged magistrates to attend Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, facilitated by Neighbourhood Policing Teams, to ensure that they are linked into the community.

Many partners interviewed felt that the links between partner agencies had been developed or strengthened following the introduction of the role, which had encouraged more regular dialogue between partners. In one area the NCJ co-ordinator was credited with building the relationship between the probation service and the local authority to progress the community payback initiative, something described as the "greatest achievement" of the role.

"But I think it's certainly strengthened some relationships with certainly some partners, it's just pulled us together a little bit more."

(Community Safety Partnership)

There were a number of suggestions (made by both partners and the co-ordinators themselves) as to how this benefited partners:

- it broke down existing barriers between agencies;
- it enabled them to see the perspectives of other partners;
- it made agencies aware and informed on what other partners were doing; and
- it showed partners what they could contribute to the agenda.

“We always sort of get a them and us, because they sort of deal with the ... prosecution legal process ... we’re trying to deal with the problems on the ground, and they do see themselves as being removed from us; whereas I think they did start to see some links.”

(Community Safety Partnership)

However, some partners offered a different perspective. For example, in one area a majority of interviewees spoke of good relationships already existing between partners before this role was introduced, but while some partners attributed the co-ordinator with strengthening these existing relationships, not all partners agreed that the role had actually affected them.

“I’m, sort of, hesitating because actually in my experience we’ve always had really good inter-agency relationships in this particular local justice area, so I couldn’t say that anything had improved dramatically because, you know, it’s a smallish area, we all tend to know each other anyway.”

(Courts Service)

Partners across some areas attributed the personality, previous experience and location of the NCJ co-ordinator as factors influencing the development of relationships between agencies. Being very personable and a good communicator were thought to be important in this respect. Prior involvement with partners through a previous role was found to be useful for progressing joint working and in unblocking problems. Co-location was often viewed positively by the co-ordinators and the organisation within which they sat as it was thought to promote the development of good relationships between the NCJ co-ordinator and that particular organisation.

A challenge to building relationships was apparent where partners perceived NCJ co-ordinator activities to be focused on, and driven by, only one agency rather than all criminal justice partners. When this occurred, activities were usually perceived to be led by the agency where the co-ordinator was located. In such instances friction between agencies was acknowledged by a range of partners.

## Co-ordination and focus of partnership working

NCJ co-ordinators also undertook activities to co-ordinate and focus partnership working, in particular with community payback. In addition to publicising the scheme

to the community, interviewees described co-ordinators as working with partners, such as neighbourhood policing teams, to generate more community payback opportunities and referrals. Partners perceived that this led to more community payback applications from partners. In one area the co-ordinator suggested that the post directly resulted in community payback being delivered on five days of the week rather than two.

Some co-ordinators were also perceived by partners to have ensured more suitable community payback applications. In one area this involved sifting through applications to ensure that only appropriate ones filtered through to the probation community payback team. This was not universal, however, and in some areas community payback managers thought more understanding around the remit of community payback and its constraints was still needed.

In a handful of areas NCJ co-ordinators were perceived to help implement and change partnership processes to deliver more joined-up action. For example, in one area a range of partners described how the co-ordinator had consolidated meetings and set up four area-based multi-agency problem-solving groups. This co-ordinator also set up a confidence tracker survey and data were used at meetings to inform decision-making, to help police to target problems in their infancy, and to persuade partners to take collective action. Other examples included aligning partner agencies’ targets and introducing more regular meetings between the police and the community safety partnership.

“He set up a meeting whereby we discuss things with the police on a sort of more regular basis about how they’re doing and what we can bring to the agenda; so that’s created a lot more confidence, I think.”

(Community Safety Partnership)

Partners also felt that some co-ordinators had focused partnership activity by feeding concerns from the community into partner agencies. These co-ordinators were viewed as providing a single point of contact to partner agencies on community concerns and were felt to be well placed to monitor and ensure that appropriate action was targeted to where it was most required.

In focusing partnership working one approach adopted by some co-ordinators was to ensure that activity was focused on areas in the community that were identified as of concern. Partners described a variety of approaches

trialled across different areas, which included identifying areas that had low confidence or were hotspots for anti-social behaviour (ASB). Where a targeted approach on a small area was adopted it was viewed positively, as it was perceived to allow more intensive work to be conducted and prevent resources being spread too thinly across a larger area.

One challenge to the role was the potential duplication of tasks between co-ordinators and other partner agencies. In two areas, the Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) felt that the remit of the co-ordinator role was similar to their remit. This caused initial tension and frustration, which one area overcame through close working between the NCJ co-ordinator and the LCJB. Another area suggested that this role crossed over into existing roles that other people were already undertaking. To overcome this challenge the area redrew the boundaries of the post to ensure different strands of work were joined up.

“I don't think rein in would be the right word, because maybe it was just a case of we had to redraw [or draw] the boundaries, but also make sure that if things were happening and the right people were being involved, so we were making sure they were dovetailing properly without one thing happening over here and one thing happening over there.”

(Community Safety Partnership)

A further challenge was the lack of coterminous boundaries between community safety and crime and justice organisations in some areas. This was felt to restrict what the co-ordinator could achieve, with difficulties working in partnership where such disparity existed.

## Delivering partnership projects and supporting partners

NCJ co-ordinators described their involvement in developing and delivering a wide variety of, sometimes innovative, partnership projects. Some of these projects have already been discussed. Briefly, their focus varied with some designed to promote justice being done, such as making community payback more visible and the development of a website publicising sentencing outcomes, whilst others were designed to tackle crime, such as recruiting and setting up Community Crime Fighters. Some partners felt that without the dedicated resource and additional capacity through the co-ordinators' ring-fenced time, these projects may not have happened, may have

been delivered but taken much longer, or may have only been delivered in a diluted form.

NCJ co-ordinators helped to deliver existing projects through hands-on support and sharing good practice from other areas, providing training on issues such as engaging with the community, and gathering and disseminating intelligence. Partners perceived that this allowed them to deliver more than was previously possible. For example, in one area they were able to increase the scope of their work with victims.

NCJ co-ordinators also reported they had access to funding, or were able to source and secure additional funding, which was helpful in delivering projects and viewed positively by partners. For example, one area secured funding for a witness support service, which was felt by one partner as a main achievement of the NCJ co-ordinator role.

One of the aims of the co-ordinators was to ensure that the public is aware of the consequences for criminals. Some co-ordinators felt that they did not have sufficient capacity to make information on sentencing outcomes from the Courts Service available to the public.

“But nobody seems to want to take ownership or responsibility of getting the information and putting it out. We also felt that it possibly would need a full-time person to get the information and to be putting it out. It's not something that someone could do alongside their day-to-day role, because it is quite in-depth.”

(NCJ co-ordinator)

## 5. The future of the role

This section describes the views held by Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinators and their partners on the future of the co-ordinator role. It highlights what aspects of the role are likely to be maintained and what the perceived impact of not maintaining the role will be for community safety, crime and justice organisations and the public.

### Mainstreaming the NCJ co-ordinator's role

Central government funding for the NCJ co-ordinators ceased in March 2011, and the majority of areas were not going to continue to fund a specific NCJ co-ordinator post. Instead several areas planned to incorporate the role or aspects of it into mainstream practice or into existing roles. One area had taken the decision to continue with a dedicated role.

"I think parts of what [the co-ordinator] has done will continue; you know, we're looking at how we can sort of mainstream some of the initiatives that he sort of ... like particularly the victim support sitting on the main agenda. But, you know, obviously people have to take that on as additional responsibilities in the new structure; so, yes, parts of the work that [the co-ordinator] started will be addressed in ... the new regime."

(Community Safety Partnership)

At the time of the interviews, the extent to which areas were planning to mainstream the role varied. One area indicated they were looking to mainstream just key initiatives, such as the work with community payback. A second area suggested they would be continuing work to improve reporting and engagement within the partnership, but that they would not have the resources to continue the public-facing element. In a third area, they thought that all existing NCJ co-ordinator work was going to be distributed across various existing posts. This approach was felt to pose a risk, because this work may not actually get delivered if it was simply added to people's existing workloads.

### Impact of not maintaining the role

A range of possible implications were described by NCJ co-ordinators and their partners when asked what would be the impact of the role not being maintained. Broadly, a discontinuation of the role was perceived to impact on three main areas:

- community engagement and raising community awareness;
- the delivery of projects; and
- partnership working.

Some partners, however, felt that discontinuing the role would have limited or no impact.

#### Community engagement and raising community awareness

Some co-ordinators and their partners felt that engaging with the community would be more difficult without a co-ordinator in post. Partners perceived that they would lose their 'gateway' into the community, particularly their point of contact for initiatives such as community payback. It was perceived that the impetus on getting better engagement may be diminished because of the loss of capacity to engage with the public.

#### Delivery of projects

Risks to the delivery of specific projects were recognised by some partners. This included Community Crime Fighters (CCF) – the co-ordinators in some areas were viewed as actively maintaining momentum and supporting CCFs in their work – and community payback, since an absence of a co-ordinator could lead to a lack of co-ordination of applications and a lack of proactive identification of projects. The co-ordinator was also able to set up and drive forward new innovative projects and initiatives, and without the post it was suggested that this would no longer be possible.

#### Partnership working

In the absence of an NCJ co-ordinator, some partners felt that there might be a loss of cohesion and that partners could retreat into 'silos', reverting to working on their own aspect of the crime and justice agenda.



“But I have to say that without a co-ordinator ... it would be even more difficult because people then tended to, sort of, pull their heads back into their shells really and just get on with, you know, what their own part of it is. I think that it becomes even more important to have somebody in that role when times are hard, because at least you've got somebody who's got an overview of what's happening.”

(Courts Service)

### **Limited or no impact**

Partners within some areas thought that disbanding the co-ordinator role would have limited or no impact on their area, although there were no instances where this opinion was held universally by all partners across an area. Partners who felt that the NCJ co-ordinator had not impacted on their organisation tended to believe that aspects of the co-ordinator role were already undertaken by their agency or the community safety partnership. For example, in one area a criminal justice partner felt that the role had limited impact because they already undertook engagement events with the public.

Other partners who felt that disbanding the role would have limited impact were often in areas where plans had been made to continue the work of the NCJ co-ordinator (or aspects of it) without the post. Consequently they perceived that any impact would be limited because the co-ordinator's work would be continued regardless.

## 6. Conclusion

This research has provided evidence on how Neighbourhood Crime and Justice (NCJ) co-ordinators have been operating and the perceived benefits and challenges of the role. Several implications have emerged from the study, which may help to inform local areas and Police and Crime Commissioners on the value of having an NCJ co-ordinator locally and how best to set up this role to maximise its effectiveness.

### The value of having a co-ordinator: is the role worthwhile?

The impact made by NCJ co-ordinators is difficult to quantify, but the research suggests that the role was perceived as having a positive effect on developing links and relationships between partners, day-to-day working and capacity, as well as community awareness, reassurance and engagement on crime and justice issues. However this view was not universally held, with some partners suggesting that the role had limited impact. Where this view was held it was usually by a partner who felt that aspects of the co-ordinator role were already being undertaken by their organisation or the community safety partnership.

Specifically, the NCJ co-ordinator had the potential to:

- act as an independent link to the community, making it easier for the public to put their views on crime and justice across;
- increase the capacity to support victims and engage with young people;
- co-ordinate community payback between partners, increasing the number of applications and ensuring more appropriate referrals;
- facilitate joined-up action between community safety, crime and justice partners; and
- generate new ideas, initiatives and ways of working, and attract additional sources of funding.

### Maximising the role's effectiveness

The research identified a number of factors that were perceived as influencing the effectiveness of the role. A number of these findings are generally in line with those identified in the few existing research studies that are similar.

If agencies are considering setting up future NCJ co-ordinators, they may wish to consider the following to help to maximise the effectiveness of the role.

- 1) The objectives, parameters and focus of the role should be clearly defined, in consultation with community safety, crime and justice partners, and tailored to the local area to:
  - minimise frustration and subsequent demotivation of the post-holder;
  - minimise the potential duplication of co-ordinator activity with existing partners' work; and
  - ensure consideration of the resource and financial constraints faced by some partners.
- 2) NCJ co-ordinators are likely to be more effective where the post-holder:
  - is appointed at a grade of the appropriate level to deliver the objectives of the role – this will ensure there is congruence between the remit and the authority bestowed, e.g. a more senior grade may be necessary (or at least senior support will be needed) if the post is required to direct resources and influence strategic decisions;
  - is proactive, dynamic, empathetic and a good communicator;
  - has previous experience of partnership working; and
  - is based in co-located premises, or flexibly located.
- 3) The NCJ co-ordinator role may be more useful to partners when activity is targeted on specific areas in the community identified as of concern, to allow for more intensive work to be conducted and thus preventing resources being spread too thinly across a larger area.

The research also revealed some common challenges faced by co-ordinators and their partners. To address such challenges and to help co-ordinators operate and work more effectively with partners and communities, areas should:

- ensure publicised information is locally relevant, timely and able to be delivered within budget;
- consider how best to get the local community involved, especially those who would not normally engage;
- ensure co-ordinator activities are focused on working with and across all community safety, crime and criminal justice partners, rather than driven by one agency;
- consider how co-ordinators can best work across areas where a lack of coterminous boundaries between partner agencies exists; and
- consider how best to overcome the issue of out-of-scope suggestions for community payback projects being proposed. This will prevent the potential for the confidence of local residents to be undermined when out-of-scope issues are suggested but no action is seen to be taken.

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