

Delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership

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This report describes the nature of neighbourhood policing partnerships in six local areas which were identified as having a strongly embedded partnership approach. Case studies of the six areas were conducted between January and August 2010.

There were a range of benefits identified by partners and residents from working in partnership. Local residents reported feeling more empowered through working with local partners and felt that there had been reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB). Practitioners perceived that neighbourhood policing partnerships had the potential to deliver efficiencies through better coordination of resources and opportunities to reduce duplication. Practitioners also felt that working in partnership was more effective for problem solving and increased staff job satisfaction.

To help work in partnership, each site had appointed a Neighbourhood Manager responsible for overseeing and coordinating delivery of initiatives. These roles were either

dedicated posts, or were carried out by existing police or Community Safety Partnership staff alongside their other commitments.

Carrying out the role alongside other commitments was not seen as inherently inferior to full-time dedicated posts. It was more important that the role was perceived to act independently and represent community interests to engender trust from partner agencies.

Successful partnerships at the local level were also underpinned by strong leadership and engaged staff; shared aims and objectives; and effective communication and information sharing between partner organisations.

Stable funding and co-location were perceived as helpful in facilitating partnership working (though this was not essential). However, co-location was not always seen as advantageous, for instance some felt that it risked disengaging residents from all agencies if public trust in one of the co-located partners was low.

Some challenges that partnerships had to overcome included ensuring a wide range of the community were engaged; managing community priorities which did not match up with those evident from local crime and ASB statistics; and staff discontinuity.

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I. Introduction

Neighbourhood policing is an approach that seeks to increase contact between the police and local communities. Evidence of the impact of the National Reassurance Policing Programme on public confidence, victimisation and anti-social behaviour (ASB) rates (Tuffin et al., 2006) helped lead to the introduction of neighbourhood policing to all neighbourhoods in England and Wales over 2005–08. Neighbourhood policing emphasises a local approach to policing that is accessible to the public and responsive to the needs and priorities of neighbourhoods. Its key elements can be summarised as:

- the presence of visible, accessible and locally known figures in neighbourhoods, in particular police constables and police community support officers (PCSOs);
- community engagement in both identifying priorities and taking action to tackle them; and
- the application of targeted policing and problem solving to tackle public concerns in neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood management has also become increasingly common as a mechanism for local authorities to tackle wider quality of life issues in the community. The focus of neighbourhood management is to improve the way key services are delivered by tailoring them to the needs and priorities in a defined neighbourhood. Working with a nominated Neighbourhood Manager and team, neighbourhood management requires effective participation by local residents and organisations (IPEG, 2010), and commitment from local service providers to work in partnership at both the strategic and neighbourhood level.

The interim and final reports from the Flanagan Review of Policing (2007, 2008) argued that neighbourhood policing needed to be more closely integrated with neighbourhood management, and that the future of neighbourhood policing depended on it being part of a wider process

of collaboration and joint working. The key principles of neighbourhood management were identified in the Review as being:

- strong Community Safety Partnership (CSP) leadership and priority setting;
- understanding local neighbourhoods through information sharing, mapping and resource allocation;
- strong community engagement;
- dedicated, multi-agency teams with a Neighbourhood Manager, accommodated in the same place where possible;
- joint tasking arrangements;
- better information to the public;
- joint performance measures, monitoring and improvement processes; and
- financial planning and pooling of budgets to support outcomes.

In essence, the Flanagan Review recommended the application of a partnership approach to policing and community safety at a local (that is, neighbourhood) level.

In response to the Flanagan Review's call for more joining up at the neighbourhood level, there has been an increased emphasis on bringing together neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management in a way which embraces more formal partnership working.

This study relates to an initiative set up by the previous government. The National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) awarded 12 areas across England and Wales 'exemplar' status from April 2009 to March 2010¹. Being awarded 'exemplar' status required good partnership working between local neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management teams and

¹ Sites were initially nominated by forces via a self-assessment document. The final 12 were determined following site visits to 21 short-listed areas to assess partnership delivery and a commitment to assist other areas in improving integrated service delivery.

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effective ways of engaging the local community and addressing local priorities.

This report describes the lessons learned from a review of this approach. It describes the nature of the neighbourhood policing partnerships between neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs), partner agencies and residents in local areas awarded 'exemplar' status. The report also sets out the perceived benefits of delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership and offers some advice to practitioners on how to work effectively in partnership, and how to overcome key barriers. The findings may also be informative for Police and Crime Commissioners in thinking about how local policing can best be delivered.

Practitioner guidance on good practice for delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership is available on the Neighbourhood Partnership page on the NPIA website:
<http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/1521.aspx>

Aims and methodology

The principal aims of the study were to:

- understand the processes surrounding implementation, operation and governance of the exemplar sites;
- identify key facilitators and barriers to successful joining up between neighbourhood management and neighbourhood policing and suggest approaches that could be adopted in other areas; and
- examine the perceived impact of the neighbourhood policing partnership approach on partners and residents, particularly in terms of productivity, efficiency and confidence in partner agencies.

Case studies of six of the 12 exemplar areas were conducted between January and August 2010. The following methods of data collection were used at each location:

- ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from partner agencies working at the sites (e.g. local council, housing associations, the fire service, elected members, third sector organisations, and residents in their capacity as partners);
- two focus groups with the site's NPT, one with police constables and the other with PCSOs²;
- one focus group with local residents who attended meetings with partner agencies; and
- up to four observations of meetings involving partner agencies, including those attended by residents³.

In addition, seven telephone interviews were carried out with 'external partners' who had made contact with an 'exemplar' site to learn lessons and exchange ideas.

To supplement the qualitative findings, secondary data sources such as monitoring and management information, crime and ASB statistics, minutes from partnership and Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, and local surveys were reviewed and analysed.

2 The interviews and group discussions lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. The telephone interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Data were analysed using FrameWork (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

3 Meetings were observed by the research team, where handwritten notes were taken on a pro forma. The meeting observations were invaluable in enhancing understanding of the exemplar sites, developing specific areas of questioning during subsequent research interviews, and providing some primary data.

2. Overview of the exemplar sites

The sites awarded 'exemplar' status were chosen to cover a cross-section of neighbourhoods in England and Wales. The six areas that were the focus of this research study covered urban, suburban and semi-rural areas as well as a town centre with a thriving night time economy. Sites tended to be characterised by deprivation and resident populations with low educational attainment, high unemployment and poor health, although some sites had pockets of affluence. Given these differences, the focus of sites' partnership activities varied considerably. Priorities ranged from reducing crime and disorder more generally, to reducing specific types of crime in the area. Aims less related to crime and disorder included economic and environmental regeneration (with partner activity in some of the sites, for example, focusing on lighting and street cleanliness). Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the six exemplar sites which featured in the study.

As exemplars of partnership approaches to neighbourhood policing, the sites' partnership arrangements had been established for a number of years. The shift to working in this way had been gradual, and influenced by a range of factors. In all sites, partnership working had been facilitated by the deployment of Neighbourhood Managers to lead and coordinate local partner activity (for instance, the police and local authority). Across the sites, the funding arrangements and location of partners varied and also influenced partnership mechanisms. Each of these influential factors is discussed in more detail below.

The role of the Neighbourhood Manager

Each site had a Neighbourhood Manager although the nature of the role varied. Some sites had employed a dedicated full-time Neighbourhood Manager. The Neighbourhood Manager was responsible for overseeing the implementation and delivery of services on a day-to-day basis and importantly, had ring-fenced time in order to do so. Tasks included being a central point of contact for, and acting as an intermediary between, members of the community and partner agencies. Partners identified a key advantage of this arrangement to be the Neighbourhood Manager's perceived independence from other partner agencies. This independence engendered trust from partners as they saw the Neighbourhood Manager as representing the community per se, as opposed to working to a specific organisational agenda.

In other sites, the position of Neighbourhood Manager

was assumed by existing local authority or NPT staff. This was seen as advantageous in terms of sustainability, but it did mean that the role was taken on alongside an existing workload. Furthermore, in these areas the role was not formalised, to the extent that some partners were not clear who had taken on the role. Whilst partners and residents did not identify this as a problem, it is important to ensure roles are formalised to help residents and other agencies hold partners to account.

Carrying out the Neighbourhood Manager role alongside other commitments was not seen as inherently inferior to dedicated full-time posts. There were instances where a great deal of partner and resident commitment, engagement and motivation was evident in sites with an informal lead in place.

Funding

There were three different models by which the local partnerships were funded across the six areas. The funding profile in each area had implications for how neighbourhood partnership working was delivered in each of the sites, and also the extent to which partners felt they could develop and achieve longer-term, strategic goals.

Substantial, long-term funding from central government: Two sites had been in receipt of substantial New Deal for Communities (NDC) funding. Whilst this funding had largely been used for regeneration projects, at the same time it had impacted on operational capacity. Sites had been able to employ site-specific staff, including a dedicated Neighbourhood Manager who had ring-fenced time to lead and coordinate services and was the key contact for partners and members of the community alike.

Core CSP funding supplemented by one-off funding: Three sites utilised mainstream funding from their CSP to fund activities related to partnership working at the neighbourhood level, including projects set up to engage local residents and raise awareness of partnership working. This was further supplemented by one-off donations from partner agencies or funding that had to be applied for (e.g. a Home Office grant awarded to particularly deprived neighbourhoods). It was this funding that had an impact on operational capacity in the sites by funding staff, staff overtime, additional police constables or fundraisers.

Short-term funding from the third sector: One site had received third sector funding and used this to fund a dedicated Neighbourhood Manager as well as subsidise projects aimed at engaging and educating local residents.

Table 1: Characteristics of the six exemplar sites featured in the study

Site	Unit of geography	Site description/ overarching focus	Nature of funding received	Role of Neighbourhood Manager	Co-location
Site A	Area within a ward	Small town centre with active night time economy Alcohol-related crime/ASB and retail crime	Mainstream CSP funding	Informal, role assumed by existing staff	Partial co-location Not public facing ⁴
Site B	Area incorporating a number of wards	Urban area, mix of deprivation and relative affluence Acquisitive crime	Substantial, long- term funding	Formalised role, full-time	No co-location
Site C	Ward	Deprived area General crime/ASB	Mainstream CSP funding	Informal, role assumed by existing staff	Embedded co- location Public facing
Site D	Area within a ward	Small neighbourhood estate Youth-related crime/ASB	Mainstream CSP funding	Informal, role assumed by existing staff	No co-location
Site E	Area incorporating a number of wards	Deprived town centre General crime/ASB	Substantial, long- term funding	Formalised role, full-time	Embedded co- location Public facing
Site F	Ward	Small, semi-rural town Regeneration and environmental issues	Short-term funding from third sector	Formalised role, full-time	No co-location

⁴ Public facing co-location was where local residents could access different agencies at the same location; not public-facing co-location was where different agencies were located together, but not at public access points.

Partner location

Table 1 illustrates the different approaches to co-locating partner agencies. Some sites exhibited extensive co-location, such as a bespoke facility that housed all key partner agencies (the NPT, Neighbourhood Manager, ASB team and other site-specific partners such as a Victim Support Worker, Environmental Coordinator and administrative staff). In another site, the local authority shared offices with a housing association, and also housed a satellite station which the NPT could use.

Co-location was perceived to be helpful for partners as it enhanced communication by encouraging effective face-to-face contact. This in turn was felt to have improved understanding of partner roles; helped establish positive working relationships; assisted the sharing of data and intelligence; and allowed more efficient working practices as problems were solved and residents were responded to more quickly.

In other sites agencies were not co-located. However, in these locations partners did not see co-location as essential to working in partnership, providing partners ensured they maintained a positive working relationship through shared objectives and regular face-to-face contact. Moreover, some practitioners perceived disadvantages to co-location. For example, some partners perceived that where residents' trust in the police was low, co-locating the NPT with other partners risked disengaging residents in contact with those other agencies.

3. Joining up neighbourhood management and neighbourhood policing at the local level

Although the precise way in which individual sites sought to integrate neighbourhood management and neighbourhood policing approaches at the local level varied, four overarching themes were evident.

Partnership working arrangements: First, most sites had adopted broad partnership working arrangements to deliver at the local level. While the NPT and relevant parts of the local authority were invariably core to the partnership, neighbourhood partnership arrangements tended to involve more partners than these critical players, such as education providers, Registered Social Landlords and local charities.

Moreover, individual partners tended to be those best placed to tackle problems identified as priorities in each location. The range of partners involved in the six sites ranged from formal statutory partners, non-statutory public sector bodies, third sector and in a handful of areas, private sector organisations.

Information sharing: Information sharing between partner agencies – seen as an important mechanism within effective partnership working (e.g. Berry et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 2002) – was also widely reported in the exemplar sites and happened formally and informally. Formal sharing of information took place at partnership tasking meetings and problem solving groups and covered a wide range of information types (on crime and ASB trends and hotspots as well as information on specific perpetrators and victims). The existence of formal data-sharing protocols (between statutory partners at the CSP level) and established partner relations were both identified as assisting the flow of information between partners.

Problem solving: Problem solving approaches to tackling crime have been identified as key to the effective delivery of neighbourhood policing approaches (Tuffin et al., 2006) and more generally have been found to be effective at reducing crime (see Weisburd et al., 2010). Such approaches were generally in evidence across all sites. Members of the NPTs had largely been trained in problem solving tools such as SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment). Other partners also believed that they

were applying problem solving approaches although did not necessarily apply, or acknowledge using, formal tools like SARA.

Some challenges with problem solving were reported. In some sites, SARA documentation held by the police was not shared on grounds of confidentiality. Some participants were also concerned at the level of documentation that was necessary for applying SARA to small-scale or unusual problems.

Engaging with members of the local community:

The fourth and final theme was working with local residents. The nature and extent of community participation varied within and between the exemplar sites. This ranged from simply getting information out to help inform communities (on partnership activities and progress in relation to problem solving); consulting residents on their local concerns; and higher levels of engagement such as involvement (e.g. membership of partnership boards), and collaboration (e.g. active role in local decision making).

Consulting with communities, principally to help identify residents' key concerns – a critical part of neighbourhood policing – took a variety of forms. Consultation methods included monthly or quarterly PACT meetings. These could be open (all residents welcome to raise and establish priorities), partially open (all residents can raise priorities but only elected residents set them) or exclusive (key partners and elected residents use information from consultation activities to set priorities). Attendance ranged from six to 15 residents (exclusive meetings) to 15 to 85 (open meetings). Consultation also took other forms; some sites had set up Key Individual Networks made up of residents who had volunteered to assume the role of the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood.

There were also sites which sought even greater involvement from local residents. For example, some residents had more direct involvement through membership of partnership or management boards. In the strongest example of collaboration in one site, residents were designated the lead partner through the setting up of a partnership group comprising residents' associations and other partners.

4. Facilitators for delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership

A range of factors were identified by practitioners as being important enablers in delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership⁵. Most of these have been identified in the wider literature on partnership working as being mechanisms or characteristics which are present in effective partnerships (see Berry et al., 2011).

Strong leadership and engaged staff: Having enthusiastic and committed people involved across the neighbourhood partnership was identified as being an important ingredient for success. Both partners and residents felt that lead partners in particular needed to display these character traits, as well as possessing skills to bring people together. Having extensive knowledge and understanding of the local area, the problems facing it, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the well-being of the residents living there were also deemed important. In some cases, an individual's enthusiasm and belief in the potential for partnership working to positively change the lives of residents were described as contagious, and could themselves lead to better ways of working. Awareness that more strategic staff were committed to integrated service delivery also reinforced operational partners' engagement.

Shared aims and objectives between partners:

A second facilitator was the existence of a shared vision and shared goals across different partner bodies. This provided an incentive for organisations and individuals to work together and coordinate actions. Agreeing shared objectives was in part facilitated by establishing formal strategic protocols at the CSP level. However, it was pointed out that the existence of formal protocols did not necessarily guarantee adherence from staff at an operational level. To this end, the personality of lead partners was also perceived to be important.

⁵ For further practitioner guidance on good practice for delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership see the Neighbourhood Partnership page on the NPIA website <http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/1521.aspx>

Effective communication between partner bodies:

Strong cross-partner communication was also identified as being important in allowing neighbourhood partnerships to work effectively. This was perceived to have improved understanding of partner roles and organisational priorities; assisted the sharing of data and intelligence; and enhanced efficiency as problems were solved and residents responded to more quickly. These outcomes all contributed to developing and maintaining positive working relationships between partners. Where possible, co-location was perceived to further enhance communication between partners, mainly due to the regular face-to-face contact that it enabled.

5. Barriers to delivering effective neighbourhood policing in partnership

Interviews with practitioners identified a range of perceived barriers to delivering effective neighbourhood policing in partnership. The following list highlights the principal barriers and lists ways in which these might be overcome.

Supporting a dedicated Neighbourhood Manager in an age of austerity:

At the time of the research (January to August 2010), some partners raised concerns about the sustainability of full-time dedicated Neighbourhood Managers given the tighter financial climate. Some participants suggested that one way to address this challenge was to support a relatively short-term appointment to act as a catalyst for joining-up both partners and residents. After this initial burst of professionally stimulated activity, partners and residents would, ideally, be able to maintain the momentum of neighbourhood partnership working themselves. This seems reasonable given that some of the research sites had successfully allocated the role to existing staff to manage alongside other commitments.

Partners also anticipated that public expenditure cuts would reduce the extent of services which could be delivered (e.g. in one site a local authority had decided to reduce neighbourhood wardens), and that this would be challenging in light of residents' raised service delivery expectations. However, some partners reasoned that it should be possible to work in partnership at relatively low cost, given that it should ideally be a more productive and efficient way of working, particularly in relation to problem solving. The extent to which partnership at the neighbourhood level can act as a catalyst for more efficient (e.g. through less duplication of effort and better targeting), rather than just more effective, working is clearly relevant in the current economic climate.

Engaging with too narrow a part of the community:

Partners expressed concerns that their attempts to involve some resident populations (e.g. some Minority Ethnic groups, more affluent residents and young people) were unsuccessful. They recognised that community attendance at PACT meetings was not representative and instead generally comprised residents who were already involved in other residents' groups, or residents who felt particularly strongly about a specific issue facing them personally.

To help overcome this, partners had employed a range of approaches which sought to make engagement as inclusive as possible. These encompassed:

- **Environmental visual audits (EVAs):** Here members of the NPT, sometimes accompanied by staff from other partner agencies, walked through a particular neighbourhood in order to observe a specific problem or issue that had come to their attention. Residents in that neighbourhood would then be consulted during the audit.
- **Door-to-door engagement:** Speaking to residents door to door to gather their thoughts in relation to issues currently facing the community. This took the form of a structured survey carried out at regular intervals or occurred on a more ad-hoc, informal basis.
- **PACT postcards:** Issuing PACT postcards and corresponding letterboxes for residents to use to raise issues of importance. These could be placed at focal points such as libraries, post offices and local authority premises.

Community priorities not matching those evident from crime and ASB data: Analysis of each area's crime and ASB statistics revealed that some resident priorities did not reflect crime and ASB trends in their area (although unreported incidents might have influenced residents' views of priorities). Some partners made assumptions about the priorities they anticipated residents to set, and sometimes complained that community priorities (e.g. low-level environmental issues) did not align with operational and strategic priorities.

Given the potential value of community involvement in tackling local crime and ASB, exemplar partners emphasised the need to provide residents with feedback as to progress made in relation to their priorities. Partners were mindful that residents would hold them to account if they did not deal with the issues they considered important.

Lack of staff continuity: Turnover of staff in lead roles such as the Neighbourhood Manager or an NPT Inspector was identified as a risk to successful partnership working, particularly if new members of staff were not as committed to working collaboratively. Loss of key staff could also mean that relationship building had to start from scratch which could impact on, for example, exchanging information on the basis of reciprocity. Both partners and residents also felt that lack of continuity risked having a negative impact on resident engagement and the level of confidence felt in partner agencies.

6. The perceived benefits of partnership working for local residents

Participants identified a range of benefits for residents.

Increased empowerment: Residents who were more directly involved in service delivery in their communities tended to feel that the process of working with local partners had increased their sense of empowerment. This was most apparent in one site where the partnership arrangement was described as ‘resident-led’. Residents from that site talked about feeling able to ‘get things done’ in their area. Residents in other areas who were regularly consulted by partners or who participated in local groups or boards similarly felt more empowered. There were also opportunities for training and qualifications for those residents who were more directly active – residents in one site received training in landscaping and open space maintenance in collaboration with a local college, while residents at another were able to acquire their NVQ in advocacy as a result of taking minutes at board meetings.

Perceived reductions in areas’ crime and ASB: Residents attributed perceptions of reduced crime and ASB to the feedback they received in meetings with partners on the actions taken to address local priorities. This in turn led to increased feelings of confidence in partners. Across the sites partners and residents felt there had been reductions in the types of offences that caused most concern e.g. retail crime, prostitution, drug-related offences and youth ASB.

Improved perceptions of safety: Participants in the partner interviews and resident focus groups reported improved perceptions of safety. Residents attributed this to the increased visibility and accessibility of partners, particularly neighbourhood patrols. Other benefits were attributed to improved perceptions of safety. The first of these was improvements to the local economy. Participants from local businesses in one site felt their town centre NPT and other local surveillance initiatives had increased activity and therefore profit in the area. The second was residents’ perceptions of their neighbourhood and quality of life.

7. The perceived benefits of partnership working for partners

Participants identified a range of benefits for partners.

Improved efficiencies: Some partner agencies believed that joint neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood management approaches had the potential to result in more efficient delivery of services. This was attributed to the role of the Neighbourhood Manager. In their partner liaison position they were able to: coordinate activity by tasking partners and avoiding duplication of effort; direct residents and partners to the most appropriate contacts to help them solve their problems; and act as an important first stop for residents and partners.

More effective problem solving: When issues were dealt with collaboratively by more than one agency, partner representatives and residents felt they were resolved more effectively. Residents therefore felt that joint problem solving increased their confidence in partners to deal with their problems. As a result of their increased confidence they were more likely to further engage with partner organisations by reporting problems and providing information. This in turn, cyclically, facilitated more effective problem solving.

Personal fulfilment: Representatives from partner agencies interviewed at the sites reported a sense of personal fulfilment when they saw results being achieved in their areas. This was enhanced when partners developed strong and productive personal working relationships which enabled greater communication through organisational barriers.

The positive working relationships formed at the sites also developed stronger ties between the agencies and also the residents. Practitioners reported that they would then be more inclined to ‘go the extra mile’ to achieve results. Greater personal fulfilment was also perceived to make sites more likely to retain committed and dedicated staff.

8. Conclusion

The findings summarised in this report build on the findings from previous research on working in partnership. For instance, a Home Office literature review (Berry et al., 2011) also found that leadership, good communication and information sharing between partners all facilitated effective delivery.

This study has found that delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership is viewed positively by partners and local residents with one of the potential benefits including perceived opportunities to deliver more efficiently. It is hoped that the key facilitators and barriers to delivering neighbourhood policing in partnership set out in this report will be useful to practitioners in delivering local community safety services.

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