



Home Office

Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people



Chapter 5. Tackling crime together

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5.1 Replacing bureaucratic accountability with democratic accountability and strengthening national arrangements will help the police to cut crime. But it is not just the police who cut crime. The whole criminal justice system (CJS) needs to work together effectively to reduce crime – bringing offenders to justice, ensuring fair and proportionate justice, supporting victims and witnesses and preventing offending and re-offending. Even more than this it is not just the state that can cut crime. The role of the public has been clear since Sir Robert Peel stated ‘the police are the public and the public are the police’. Individuals and neighbourhoods with active citizens can help prevent crime and ASB and help the police to keep their area safe. But for too long Government has tried to impose services on communities, stifling local action and activism.

5.2 Public cooperation – not just passive consent - is essential for the police to do their job. We want to restore confidence in policing so more people get involved. More people providing information, ready to act as witnesses and confident that they will be supported when they stand up against ASB will help police cut crime.

5.3 Over the coming years we will have forged a partnership between people and police - on the one hand freeing up the police from the bureaucracy and targets that choke real localism, and on the other hand providing the incentives, training and encouragement for people from all walks of life to help to police their own communities. In partnership with criminal justice partners, we will have implemented radical reforms across the criminal justice system which - as with policing – will be focused more on the needs of local communities rather than on Whitehall. We will enable organisations to work together on rehabilitation to cut re-offending rather than being pulled apart by conflicting national targets and initiatives. We will have helped partners to work together with a focus on outcomes not processes. These reforms will have rebuilt public confidence in the criminal justice system, with people more able and willing to play an active role themselves as part of a Big Society.

5.4 We will achieve this by:

- enabling and encouraging people to get involved and mobilising neighbourhood activists;
- developing and implementing a radical CJS reform strategy;
- stripping away unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy in the partnership landscape.

Enabling and encouraging people to get involved and mobilising neighbourhood activists

5.5 A key part of these reforms is increasing community involvement and promoting greater individual responsibility for keeping neighbourhoods safe.

Many of the services which will be involved in developing this new approach are devolved. We will need to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to see how our plans and theirs can come together.

5.6 Our focus will be on empowering individuals and communities not simply to be able to hold agencies to account, but also to underline that crime prevention is a shared responsibility. Solutions to local problems are often best found within communities, and drawing back the state will allow neighbourhood activists and groups to come forward and play their full role. We will provide greater opportunities for community activism and involvement through:

- Giving communities more power;
- Encouraging people to take an active role in their communities;
- Transferring power from central to local government;
- Supporting co-ops, mutuals and social enterprises; and
- Publishing Government data.

5.7 Doing these things, focusing more on what local people say they want rather than what Whitehall decides, will increase people's confidence in the criminal justice system. And this in turn is important if more people are to get involved and to support positive social norms in their communities. People need to trust the police and have confidence that action will be taken by the courts if they are going to play their part and report crime or give evidence. People need to feel safe in their streets and know that the police, housing associations and local councils will be there for them, if they are to come together as communities to solve problems such as youth crime or ASB.

5.8 Neighbourhoods are the key building block for the Big Society; they are where people engage and where frontline services are delivered. Neighbourhood policing teams have a crucial role to play in mobilising community involvement. Through being available, asking people what their concerns are, resolving them and telling people what they have done, neighbourhood policing has been important in increasing the confidence of their communities. And by being dedicated to neighbourhoods, officers and PCSOs can build the trust of communities so they can come forward and help the police detect and enforce crimes, often very serious ones.

5.9 We will promote the range of ways that citizens can get involved in keeping their neighbourhoods safe and encourage them to do so. A key step will be making it easier to access the police and report crime and ASB. We will look for a cost effective way of establishing the number '101' as a single national police non-emergency number for reporting crime and ASB. Over time, this would enable local partners to join up with the police to provide even more streamlined access and efficient services for the public according to local needs and local priorities.

5.10 Across the country, we want to support more active citizens: taking part in joint patrols with the police, looking out for their neighbours and passing on safety tips as part of Neighbourhood Watch groups or as Community Crime Fighters. More people will be advising the police as members of youth independent advisory groups, coming together as communities to sign

neighbourhood agreements which set out the local commitments of services and communities to tackle crime and ASB, having more of a say in how money is spent (participatory budgeting) and in how offenders make amends (community restorative justice). And people are volunteering more formally across the whole criminal justice and community safety spectrum – as special constables, magistrates, police cadets and victim support volunteers to name but a few.

5.11 By volunteering their free time, special constables and other police volunteers provide a tangible way for citizens to make a difference in their communities. They have a long history within the police. The number peaked at over 67,000 in the 1950s, but fell to around 24,000 in 1974 and 11,000 in 2004, although it has climbed to 15,000 today.

5.12 We want to see more special constables and explore new ideas to help unlock the potential of police volunteers in the workforce, for example as police ‘reservists’. They are a clear manifestation of the Big Society in action, demonstrating the role which individuals and communities have in helping to fight and prevent crime. As well as adding resilience, greater involvement of specials and volunteers will help open up the police service to a more diverse group of people with different skills and life experience.

5.13 We also want to support organisations that can and do make a difference to communities and not just rely on Government as the sole provider. We will work with the Office for Civil Society (in England) to develop a way forward with the voluntary and community sector, including mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises. We will encourage English forces to sign up to local compacts between themselves and the voluntary sector, which set out some key principles about how they work with each other.

5.14 Later this year, we will publish a new crime strategy, which will set out in greater detail how the approach to preventing and reducing crime will be reshaped in the Big Society.

Developing and implementing a radical CJS reform strategy

5.15 The Government is committed to devolving responsibility across the criminal justice partners as a whole. The CJS is currently too remote from communities, lacks transparency, and is not accountable to the public or sufficiently focused on the needs of victims. There is also work needed across the system to reduce waste and free professionals from central guidance and targets so they can focus on cutting crime and rebuilding confidence in the system. We will provide incentives, paying by results and ensuring that value for money and an understanding of the best evidence available underpins everything we do. This will include:

- A new approach to cutting crime, including a new approach to youth crime, tackling ASB – including more active citizenship and voluntary sector involvement - and effectively addressing the link between drugs, alcohol and crime;

- Police reform, as set out in this document, moving from bureaucratic to democratic accountability and passing power and judgement to the local level;
- Sentencing reform to ensure that it is effective in deterring crime, protecting the public, punishing offenders and particularly cutting re-offending;
- Developing a new approach to the rehabilitation of offenders, so that the public are protected, victims receive restitution and offenders are punished whilst being given the opportunity to turn their lives around. We want to create the right incentives for agencies to rehabilitate offenders and stimulate innovation by opening up the market to the private and not-for-profit sectors. Our vision is that all sentences, whether in prison or in the community, should not only punish, but also involve education, hard work and change, so that offenders can integrate into their communities more effectively than when they entered the criminal justice system;
- Reviewing the prison estate's contribution to rehabilitation and reducing reoffending and developing a sustainable and cost effective prison capacity strategy as part of the Spending Review.

5.16 Working closely with criminal justice agencies, we will ensure that the system is more coherent, accessible and transparent to the public. The CJS must reinforce responsibility and ensure that offending always has consequences that are visible to the law-abiding majority.

5.17 This cannot go on being a system where half of the police, the first (and often the only) representatives of the system most people will encounter, say they would speak critically of it. It needs to be a system in which communities and professionals alike take pride, where we are united with a common cause and shared values. We need to make sure we are making the most out of everyone who can help cut crime; with partners across the criminal justice and community safety world working together to focus on local communities and with those local communities playing an important role themselves.

Removing unnecessary central prescription around local partnerships

5.18 The police have a long history of partnership working. A range of statutory and non-statutory partnerships covering community safety and criminal justice which involve the police have developed over the last 13 years. These operate at different geographical levels but have some overlap in roles and remits, causing confusion about respective roles and bureaucracy that restricts their ability to work together effectively.

5.19 Effective partnership working will be particularly important as agencies work to offer a better service within tightening resources. The criminal justice system will be more effective if those that work within it are free to develop their own structures which will enable them to respond to different local circumstances, expectations and priorities.

5.20 CSPs and other local partnerships have played a strong role in preventing crime, and we want them to continue to do so. But we intend to

free local partners up as much as possible. We do not intend to simply re-draw the landscape in a different, yet still prescriptive way, but we will make the most of what works well, and leave as much local freedom as possible. Local people should have more say over the way that services are provided. We want local solutions to local problems. We will strip away unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy by repealing some of the regulations for CSPs, whilst retaining the helpful core statutory duty on those key partners to work together. We want your views on how best to achieve this. The Government has already stripped away the myriad of targets on Local Criminal Justice Boards thereby allowing them to focus on local issues.

5.21 Whilst policing and crime are non-devolved matters, many of the factors that can influence levels of offending and criminality – health, substance misuse, education and housing – are matters for which responsibility in Wales is devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. In addition, three of the six CSP statutory partners – Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and Fire and Rescue – are devolved in Wales. We will work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and partners in Wales to free partners from bureaucracy and enable locally determined partnership arrangements.

Consultations questions:

1. What more can the Government do to support the public to take a more active role in keeping neighbourhoods safe?

2. How can the Government encourage more people to volunteer (including as special constables) and provide necessary incentives to encourage them to stay?

3. What more can central Government do to make the criminal justice system more efficient?

4. What prescriptions from Government get in the way of effective local partnership working?

5. What else needs to be done to simplify and improve community safety and criminal justice work locally?