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

Michelle Charlton, Sarah Morton and Ipsos MORI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contents

Keywords

Policing

Community policing

Confidence in the police

Police Community Support Officers

British Crime Survey

Home Office

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

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

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

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Context

The main tool for measuring public perceptions of the police is the British Crime Survey (BCS). A question to measure confidence in the effectiveness of the police in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) was introduced into the BCS in October 2007. Analysis of the first 12 months of data collection found that 46 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement "the police and local councils were dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter locally" and this increased to 50 per cent in the year to September 2009. A large proportion of respondents indicated 'no opinion' as their response (29 per cent in both the year to September 2008 and the year to September 2009).

While previous research has identified some behaviours and attitudes that can increase confidence in the police, it is by no means exhaustive. There is also a lack of evidence on how to build confidence in the way local councils address crime and ASB. To expand the evidence base, this study was commissioned to explore in-depth reasons underpinning responses to the new BCS confidence question and the public's views on initiatives (in place at the time of the research) that sought to improve confidence.

Approach

Discussion groups were held in ten police force areas in England and Wales between 18 January and 3 February 2010. These forces were chosen to represent varying levels of confidence, built environments and geographic coverage. Participants were recruited to be representative of the ethnic make-up of the local population and to provide a mix of ages (between 18 and 59), gender and social class. They were also chosen to reflect a range of confidence levels. Two types of discussion group were used.

1. **Ten action planning group discussions with 13-17 participants in each.** The purpose of these groups was to create an environment conducive to debate on new initiatives and public priorities.

2. **Eight mini-group discussions with three to eight participants in each.** The purpose of the mini-groups was to gain an understanding of what influences confidence from as wide a range of audiences as possible, particularly from those who might be classified as 'seldom heard'. These were held with the elderly (60- to 80-year-olds), Muslim women, Muslim men, people from the Afro-Caribbean community, unemployed, young male adults (16- to 19-year-olds), young female adults (16- to 19-year-olds) and those that strongly disagree that the police and local council are doing a good job.

Topics covered in the group discussions included:

- perceptions and experience of the local police and council and how they deal with ASB and crime;
- perceptions and experience of: partnership working, Neighbourhood Policing, and the Policing Pledge,[1] and how they could improve confidence;
- participants' own ideas for raising confidence;
- reasons for positive, negative and indifferent responses to the BCS confidence question and what could change participants' own response.

Participants were given a questionnaire to complete at the beginning and end of the discussion. Both questionnaires included the confidence question used in the BCS and initial responses were used to prompt discussion during the course of the groups. Before each discussion group, two telephone interviews were held with a key contact

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1   The Policing Pledge was a national set of minimum standards that all forces were expected to achieve. The Pledge is no longer government policy in line with commitments to minimise targets and allow forces more discretion in setting local policing agendas.

Home Office

This report was commissioned in autumn 2009

from each of the local police and local council to help gain further insight into the current local initiatives being used in each area. The initiatives were then included as a theme in the discussion.

Results

Levels of confidence were found to be influenced by both personal experience and information . Word-of-mouth and media stories were the most influential in shaping participants' perceptions of the police, while perceptions of the local council were largely driven by its perceived efficiency in 'getting things done', particularly in dealing with traditional services such as housing and waste collection, rather than ASB and crime.

Partnership working
Participants' awareness of partnership working between the police, local councils and other local agencies was low, but there was general support for the concept. Participants tended to be less interested in the mechanics of how a partnership would work and more interested in the outcomes.

Participants felt uninformed about which council teams or departments were supposed to deal with ASB and crime, making it difficult to raise concerns or report incidents. Participants said they would like more information on: the council's role in dealing with crime and ASB; the activities being undertaken to address these issues; the impact of community consultation on the council's ASB policy; and a clear guide on who was best placed to report issues to in the council.

A popular partnership-working initiative was a single non-emergency telephone number to report minor crime and ASB incidents. While this was seen as a way of making reporting easier, participants felt that clear action would need to be taken by the police and council (and feedback provided to the individual concerned) for it to have the potential to raise public confidence.

Neighbourhood Policing
Participants' awareness of Neighbourhood Policing was generally low; not all participants were aware of it operating in their local area. However, when asked to describe their preferred style of policing, most participants described something which bore the hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing. There were mixed views of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs); while many had heard of them there was confusion about

their role. Participants who had experienced contact with PCSOs tended to speak of them more highly than those who had not.

Participants suggested a number of awareness-raising and engagement initiatives that could help bolster public confidence in the police and local councils in tackling crime and ASB. These included: meeting with the public (e.g. 'meet and greet' sessions, door-knocking); increased communication with the public (e.g. radio and television appearances); and helping the public to give feedback (e.g. mobile police diary room).

Local agreements of expected standards of service
Participants were generally unaware of a national agreement on minimum standards from the police in place at the time of the research (the Policing Pledge). Participants expressed concern that the Pledge was simply Public Relations (PR) or spin and they did not believe that the level of services 'pledged' was actually provided. Some participants, however, viewed it more positively, perceiving that it could help them hold the police to account.

Three themes emerged as important to participants when making a local agreement with the public about the standards of service expected from the police.

- **Credibility** – the public must perceive the agreement to be firm, realistic and achievable.

- **Accountability** – the public must know how to use the agreement to hold their local police to account when service standards are not met.

- **Clarity** – the agreement must be clear and succinct to make it accessible to all members of the local community.

Understanding perceptions of those with 'no opinion'
Participants reported three main reasons for giving a 'neither/no response' to the BCS confidence question. First, some participants felt unqualified to give an opinion, particularly where they had no direct experience of the police or council; they simply lacked sufficient knowledge to form an answer. Secondly, some participants selected this response to reflect the balance of positive and negative experiences of the police and council. Thirdly, some participants experienced difficulty in comprehending the question due to what they saw as ambiguous wording, and therefore gave a 'neither agree nor disagree response'.

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1   Context

Introduction

Public confidence is important for an effective criminal justice system (CJS) because it can increase the chances of the public both co-operating to prevent crime and disorder and being responsible citizens. Research has found that co-operation with the police is linked to perceptions of police legitimacy (i.e. confidence that the police act fairly and should be obeyed) (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Jackson & Bradford, 2009). Moore and Braga (2003) also suggest that confidence is important because if the public do not trust police motives or capabilities, they may withhold their support (e.g. not reporting crimes or anti-social behaviour (ASB), not providing local intelligence, and not acting as witnesses).

The key tool for measuring public perceptions of the police is the British Crime Survey (BCS). A series of questions measuring public perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of the police has been included in the BCS since October 2004.[2] A new question to measure confidence in the effectiveness of the police and local councils in tackling crime and ASB was introduced into the BCS in October 2007. The exact wording of the question is as follows:

"It is the responsibility of the police and local council working in partnership to deal with anti-social behaviour and crime in your local area. How much would you agree OR disagree that the police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area?" [Strongly agree; tend to agree; neither agree or disagree; tend to disagree; and strongly disagree.]

The question was developed to emphasise the importance of partnership working in effectively tackling crime and ASB. Although it does not refer explicitly to agencies other than the police or local councils, feedback from the pilot of the original question suggests it is a good proxy for measuring the views of wider agencies. Analysis of the first 12 months of data collection found that 46 per cent of respondents agreed that the police and local councils were dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter locally. This increased by four percentage points to 50 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing in the year to September 2009 (Home Office, 2010a). Conversely, the number of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement fell from 25 per cent in the year to September 2008 to 20 per cent in the year to September 2009. A large proportion of respondents have indicated 'no opinion' as their response (29 per cent in both the year to September 2008 and the year to September 2009).

This study

The purpose of this study is to build the evidence base on public confidence in the effectiveness of police and their local partners to tackle crime and ASB. It does this by examining in depth the reasons underpinning responses to the new BCS confidence question, and what types of actions different demographic groups believe could

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2   These questions include the following:
   1) How much would you agree or disagree that the police in this area a) can be relied on to be there when you need them; b) would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason; c) treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are; d) can be relied on to deal with minor crimes; e) understand the issues that affect this community; f) are dealing with the things that matter to people in this community?
   2) Taking everything into account I have confidence in the police in this area; and 3) taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?

increase their confidence. It also explores the public's views on local and national initiatives in place at the time of the research which sought to improve confidence.

The research findings from this study aim to aid forces and their partners in tailoring their approaches for improving confidence.

Background

Previous research on confidence in the police has identified some behaviours and attitudes that can increase public confidence. For example, a recent review of the published literature (Rix *et al.*, 2009) identified four main interventions where research evidence indicated that they could be successful in improving public confidence.

- Concentrating on fully embedding all three elements of Neighbourhood Policing (targeted foot patrol; identifying community priorities for action; and effective problem-solving).

- Increasing the *quality* of community engagement (e.g. making contact with residents/businesses whilst out on foot patrol; and being polite and respectful).

- Using local level newsletters on aspects of policing and ensuring that these are area-specific; give detail of what is being delivered, including agency responses to problems; provide information on actions that are planned; and include contact details of how to access services.

- Using restorative justice: face-to-face meetings between offenders and victims that are independently mediated.

Additionally, in developing the new questions for the British Crime Survey, focus groups were held with the public to identify the key dimensions of public confidence in the police, and what the police can do that raises, and conversely reduces, confidence. The study identified the following key themes.

- Engagement (how approachable the police were and how familiar they were felt to be.

- Fairness (how honest the police were, how accountable they were and whether they treated different groups equally).

- Availability (police visibility and how easy it was to find a police officer when needed)

- Providing good service (response times, respect, trust and communication) and

- Neighbourhood control (striking the right balance of authority and being effective) (Stone *et al.*, 2005).

Similar to findings from the qualitative research above, multivariate regression analysis of the BCS data has also identified the following factors as significant predictors of positive responses to the new confidence question:

- perceiving that the local police can be relied upon to deal with minor crime;

- perceiving that the police deal with people fairly and/ or with respect;

- confidence that the criminal justice system as a whole is effective (Walker *et al.*, 2009).

While the evidence to date has identified some interventions, police behaviours and public attitudes that are associated with higher confidence, it is not exhaustive. For instance, it is probable that there are other ways to improve confidence other than those identified through existing research.

There is less research evidence on how to build public confidence in local authorities. One study involving focus groups with the public found that service provision was a key influence on residents' satisfaction with local government. For most people, 'local authority service provision' meant, above all, refuse collection and recycling, followed by leisure, sporting and recreational facilities, parks and keeping the streets clean (Taylor and Williams, 2006). Awareness of the range of services provided by councils tended to be low, and when shown a list of the council's services, most respondents expressed surprise at the range of services provided. This research did not specifically cover confidence in the local council's role in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

2   Approach

Method

A qualitative methodology was selected to a) explore in-depth perceptions of different groups; and b) encourage interaction to allow participants to refine their thoughts and ideas after listening to the accounts and opinions of others. Discussion groups were held with a range of residents across different demographic groups including gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Two types of discussion group were held between 18 January and 3 February 2010:

1) **Ten action planning group discussions with 13-17 participants in each.** The purpose of these groups was to create an environment conducive to debate on new initiatives and public priorities. These were therefore designed to be larger than the traditional focus group discussion and have more of a 'workshop' feel, to allow for general discussions as well as deliberation on new concepts and initiatives. They do not require participant groups to be homogenous, and therefore local residents from a range of age groups, genders and ethnicities were included in the same groups– and, if necessary, split out into sub-groups on the day.

2) **Eight mini-group discussions with three to eight participants in each.** The purpose of the mini-groups was to gain an understanding of what influences confidence from as wide a range of audiences as possible, particularly those groups which might be considered as 'seldom heard'. For these audiences it was important that their views were heard in a 'safe' environment as otherwise they might have been drowned out (e.g. those who do not speak English confidently, or whose culture or age might not allow them to feel comfortable in a broader discussion) or been overly influential (e.g. the vocally dissatisfied). The mini-groups were held with the elderly (60- to 80-year-olds), Muslim women, Muslim men, people from the Afro-Caribbean community, unemployed, young male adults (16 to 19 year olds), young female adults (16- to 19-year-olds) and those that 'strongly disagree' that the police and local council are doing a good job.

Selecting areas to hold the groups

The discussion groups were held in ten different police forces across England and Wales. These forces were chosen to represent varying confidence levels. Police force areas were divided into three categories – high confidence, medium confidence and low confidence – based on the results from the BCS confidence question from the year to September 2008.[3] Within these police force areas, three metropolitan, three rural and four urban areas were selected. Areas were also selected to provide a geographical spread across England and Wales. Table 1 shows the areas selected to hold the groups.

Table 1   Areas where focus groups were held

	High confidence	Medium confidence	Low confidence
Metropolitan	Merseyside (Liverpool)	London Met (Southwark)	South Wales (Cardiff)
Urban	Surrey (Guildford)	Cambs (Cambridge) & Notts (Nottingham)	Humberside (Beverley)
Rural	Devon & Cornwall (Tiverton)	North Wales (Llanddaniel)	Warwicks (Southam)

Recruiting participants

Participants were recruited using a free find technique, meaning they could be approached and invited to attend on the street (rather than working from lists of people who have registered their interest in participating in such research). This method was chosen because it helps to access the views of participants who are 'fresh' to the research process rather than those that are often called upon to participate in research studies. Participants were recruited to be representative of the ethnic make-up of the local area, and to provide a mix of ages (between 18 and 59), gender and social class (see Appendix for the number and demographic profile of participants that attended each group). To ensure that participants would reflect a range of views about public confidence, potential participants were asked the BCS question at the recruitment stage with quotas set to ensure a range of responses in each of the workshops. However, the workshops excluded those who stated that they 'strongly disagreed' with the BCS question. It was felt that participants who stated that they 'strongly disagreed' with the BCS question might be particularly vocal within the groups and unduly influence the views of others. They were, however, included in a separate mini group.

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3   More recent BCS data (the 12 months to September 2009) show that confidence levels in Humberside, London and South Wales all significantly increased, whereas confidence levels in Devon and Cornwall significantly decreased since the areas were first selected.

Developing topic guides

Topic guides were developed for both the action planning groups and the mini-groups. The guides included unprompted sections to explore people's perceptions. They used findings from the analysis of BCS data on what drives confidence (Walker *et al.*, 2009) and findings from a Home Office-commissioned literature review (Rix *et al.*, 2009) on what interventions can improve confidence to probe in-depth public perceptions of these interventions. The topics included:

- what the local area is like as a place to live;

- perceptions and experience of the local police and how they deal with ASB and crime;

- perceptions and experience of the local council and how it deals with ASB and crime;

- perceptions and experience of partnership-working between the police and council and how it could improve confidence;

- creation of participants' own initiatives that they think could improve confidence;

- reasons for positive, negative and indifferent responses to the BCS confidence question and what could change participants' own response.

Before each discussion group, two telephone interviews were held with a key contact from the local police and the local council. This helped gain further insight into the current local initiatives being used in each area, and the police and council's perspective on both the success of these initiatives and more generally, the confidence levels in the local area. The initiatives were then included as a theme in the topic guide to understand if participants were aware of them, and if people in other areas felt that these initiatives, or aspects of them, would increase their confidence.

In both types of discussion groups, participants were given a questionnaire to complete at the start and end of the group discussion which included the confidence question used in the BCS (see Appendix for pre- and post-questionnaires). Responses to the initial questions were then used to prompt discussion during the course of the groups.

Data analysis and presentation

The analysis was conducted in an iterative way. The first stage was a discussion of the emerging findings and key themes with all moderators and note-takers. This formed the basis of a key themes framework on which the transcripts were coded using the XSight qualitative software package.

Text was allocated to thematic frameworks, which followed the structure of the topic guides, and to key demographics. This created a core database of verbatim comments, ideas and interpretations which were then sorted and filtered according to variables of interest. The analysis framework was then explored by characteristics (e.g. to examine sub-group differences). The research team then met to discuss how emerging hypotheses at the discussion stage performed when checked against the data.

Discourse analysis of the focus group and workshop transcripts was also undertaken. Discourse analysis considers the design of talk and provides a structure to deconstruct language through analysis of certain features of talk (e.g. discourses, identities, roles, relations, categories) used to present specific beliefs or actions as legitimate. While the main qualitative analysis intended to identify *what* people are saying, the discourse analysis focused on the *how* of respondents' talk.

In the presentation of findings, quotes from individuals have been chosen to illustrate the range of viewpoints. Any name used throughout this report has been changed to protect the anonymity of the individual concerned.

Limitations

Qualitative research is used to shed light on *why* people have particular views, rather than *how many* hold those views. Such research is illustrative rather than statistically reliable and therefore, does not permit conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which something is happening.

The views stated here are not facts and not necessarily true; rather they are participants' perceptions. Moreover, what people say in a focus group may not necessarily translate into action in the 'real world'.

This study did not look at the issue of placement of this question within the BCS, but at the question in isolation. Therefore the findings in this report are not directly comparable to how people would have responded in the BCS context.

3 Factors affecting given levels of confidence in the police and local councils

This chapter begins by exploring the perceptions underpinning participants' confidence levels in the police and local council in tackling crime and ASB. It then examines the ways in which confidence might be improved, taking into consideration any variation between demographic groups. The remaining sections of this chapter then explore other ways in which confidence might be improved through local and national initiatives including partnership working, Neighbourhood Policing, and local agreements. Finally the chapter reports on the perceptions of people who offered no opinion in response to the BCS confidence question.

To understand what affects confidence in the police and council in tackling crime and ASB, participants were asked to discuss the reasons for their given level of confidence, recorded by their initial answer to the BCS question. The discussions suggested that levels of confidence were influenced by both personal experience and information from a range of sources. Since many participants stated that they did not have direct experience of dealing with either the police or council in tackling crime and ASB, it appears that their perceptions of both organisations' effectiveness principally stemmed from anecdotal evidence and/or media coverage. Many participants recounted stories of friends and family who had experience of contact with police, or mentioned reports of specific crimes in the local or national media as factors which affected their opinion.

Some participants felt that being kept informed of council activities helped raise their confidence; they valued finding out what was going on and being done in their local area. However, some felt that council communications were skewed to present the council in a good light, with a number seeing it as overly detailed and too complex for residents with busy lives. In these circumstances the materials often went unread. Some participants in the groups mentioned receiving newsletters from the police, and many participants were very familiar with direct communication from local councils, particularly newsletters and council bulletins.[4]

In April when you get your council tax, just before April, your renewal form or whatever it is, they do give [information], *what the police do, what the council do but it's like a 1500 page essay and you can't be bothered to read it. Mine gets filed away in case I need a phone number.*

(Female, Beverley)

Analysis of BCS data in the 12 months to October 2008 had found that confidence levels were lower in Wales than in England. However, no factors underpinning confidence levels specific to Wales were identified in this research.[5]

What influences wider perceptions of the police?

Perceptions of the police were mixed. Regardless of area or participant background, participants perceived that the police were under constraints in carrying out their day-to-day responsibilities. As a result, a range of sympathetic and neutral associations were voiced including: 'demoralised', 'stretched', 'hands are tied,' 'law enforcers', and 'impossible position'. The local police also generated some strong negative responses, such as: 'too reactive and not proactive', 'poor people skills', and 'not visible.' Other participants had more positive perceptions of the police, describing them as 'professional' and 'friendly'.

Some older people upbeat about local police

One group of older people (aged 60 or more) had very positive views of their local police. While stressing a wish for a more visible police presence at night (particularly at the weekend), they thought that the police worked very hard and were doing a good job under difficult circumstances.

This group also talked about the specific challenges they thought the police faced in going about their day-to-day work. They were more inclined to see problems as a result of these constraints or a lack of effective partnership from other elements of the criminal justice system, such as the courts or local council.

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4   Other research has shown that direct communication from police and local councils (e.g. newsletters) influences confidence levels (e.g. Wünsch and Hohl, 2009).

5   This may be because the sampling method excluded individuals who responded 'strongly disagreed' when asked the BCS question at the recruitment stage. Moreover, the methodology and accompanying sample size may have been insufficient to identify such differences, or because public confidence in Wales had significantly improved by the time this research was conducted (as observed in BCS data for the 12 months of October 2009).

Their perceptions of police were also less influenced by negative media reporting. In fact, many were quite critical of media representations of police, and felt that the media did not always present police in a fair or reasonable light.

Word-of-mouth and media stories about the police were the most influential in shaping local residents' perceptions of the police. Whilst individual experiences were also cited as having an effect, participants rarely reported hearing about the local police through direct contact or communication and their opinion being shaped as a result.

The media had a strong influence on how the police were perceived. Messages conveyed by the media about the police recalled by participants were negative, focusing heavily on the lower visibility of front-line staff and their growing administrative burden, as learnt through media sources.

I've read a lot in the papers recently about the police sort of taking things too far, with matters where they could have used their discretion and common sense. Sort of a lot [of effort on] crimes for ridiculous things and you know your stops and your searches.

(Female, Beverley)

Participants' concerns about local policing tended to reflect anxieties about police inefficiency. Some participants perceived a lack of front-line officers, and believed that police officers were overburdened with paperwork, leaving them with insufficient time to do 'actual policing'. Participants assumed that budget cuts had directly reduced funding for 'bobbies on the beat' and believed that the police were too bureaucratic.

There were also some demographic differences in perceptions. Some young men across the groups described having a more fractious relationship with the police, as they felt they were unfairly targeted or profiled by the police and were therefore more frequently stopped, searched or questioned, by the police.

Likewise, different geographical and social factors were associated with varying perceptions of the police. Some participants felt that deprived areas were policed differently while participants who resided in areas with lower crime rates generally felt that the police were not visible enough. Participants in rural areas generally considered the police to be largely invisible and inadequate in dealing with local issues. They complained of slow responses, little or no follow-up to complaints and police being poorly equipped to deal with vandalism and ASB.

Implications for how to build confidence
Participants' accounts suggest that increased and improved communications with the public may be important in improving confidence. Tailoring the method of communication to the intended audience, and improving the relevance of information provided, could improve the public's understanding of the work being undertaken by the police and council. Creating a more effective channel of 'official' information may help to offset potentially negative anecdotal evidence and allow the public to make a more informed opinion of the work being undertaken by the police and council in tackling crime and ASB.

What influences perceptions of the local council?

Perceptions of the local council were largely shaped by how efficient it is seen to 'get things done' and, in particular, dealing with very traditional services, such as housing, waste collection and council tax (rather than its ability to deal with ASB and crime).

Perceptions of councils in this research were somewhat negative. Like the police, councils were generally described as 'bureaucratic' and 'poor communicators'. Other negative terms used to describe councils included: 'inefficient', 'remote and distant', 'money wasters', 'excessively complicated', and 'you don't see them until you need them'.

A key influence on perceptions was the extent to which the local council was seen to be listening to local communities and being attentive to their needs and priorities. Typically, participants expressed frustration where it was felt council responses to a particular issue, such as vandalism, graffiti or even issues surrounding parking, were inadequate. Similarly, having an unsatisfactory response (not necessarily outcome) from the council often coloured residents' views. As with the police, some participants spoke of a perceived 'postcode lottery' with respect to services they received from their council. Those living in more affluent areas were often believed to be receiving a much higher level of service, particularly in terms of response times and the satisfactory handling and resolution of issues or complaints.

If my sister had made a complaint in her area - she's in West Bridgford - and I made the same complaint coming from The Meadows, [only hers] would get   dealt with. In places like [hers] that are a bit more affluent, their problems get dealt with… She goes, 'Why don't you just ring up the local council and tell them?' And I was like, 'Are you having a laugh?'

(Male, Nottingham)

Participants tended to welcome the suggestion of the police and local council working in partnership to deal with ASB and crime, although they expressed uncertainty around what the council's current responsibility was in this area. However, they were more likely to feel that the council (rather than the police) was directly accountable to them (through the payment of the council tax). Participants in the workshops held in areas where people felt their local council had made efforts to engage with the public were more likely to say that the partnership between the council and the police could become a positive one (for example, some participants said that they read the local council newsletters and would like to see local police news reported in these).

> ### Implications for how to build confidence
> The findings suggest that improved engagement between the public and local council, and raising awareness of the role the council has in tackling crime and ASB, could help to build confidence.

4   How can partnership working influence confidence?

> ### Summary
>
> - Participants' awareness of partnership working between the police, local councils and other local agencies was low.
>
> - The groups were generally supportive of the concept of partnership working and would welcome it. They were less interested in the mechanics of how it would work and more interested in how it might improve outcomes.

> - A popular initiative was a local non-emergency telephone number to report minor crime and ASB incidents. This was seen as a way of making reporting easier.
>
> - Participants felt that any confidence-raising activity could be undermined if the partnership did not result in clearly observed positive outcomes.

This section explores awareness of and attitudes towards partnership working before outlining ways in which people think the police should be working in partnership with other local agencies, and how these could affect confidence.

Awareness of and attitudes to partnership working
Partnership working between local police forces, local councils and other local agencies was an abstract concept for some participants, and not one which they found easy to discuss. This was in part due to a lack of knowledge and experience, but also because the police and the council were seen as two separate bodies with different sets of aims. When participants were initially asked who was responsible for dealing with ASB, their instinctive response was to identify a clear demarcation of responsibility with the police responsible for *preventing* ASB and the council in *dealing with the consequences*. Graffiti was a typical example; participants saw the natural role of the police to be preventing it, acting either as a deterrent by being present and patrolling the streets or by catching offenders in the act. The council, on the other hand, was seen as being responsible for cleaning up the graffiti. However, participants' responses were less clear-cut when discussing the long-term approach to ASB. The council was then also seen as playing a key role in prevention (for example by providing young people with structured activities and a space for them to meet and socialise off the streets).

In general, participants found it difficult to provide examples of the police and council working together, or to think of innovative ways in which they could co-operate. The participants who were able to talk about partnership working with conviction were those who experienced it directly in their jobs. For example, one participant who worked with homeless people in his town praised the way that the council and police worked together to address this issue.

Overall, participants tended to be less interested in the mechanics of partnership working. This was felt to be something that the police and relevant bodies should

work out between themselves. They felt that the public should be made aware of how service delivery would be affected by partnership (for example, how it might change their point of contact within the police or the council, and what the public could expect in terms of response times and efficiency).

As discussions progressed, however, participants talked more positively about the benefits of partnership working. They thought that partnership working was something that should be happening and made suggestions about the sorts of partnership working they thought were important and would be useful. These are discussed in the next section.

Ways to work together

Participants felt uninformed about which council teams or departments were supposed to deal with ASB and crime. This, in turn, they claimed, made it very hard for people to contact the council to report ASB or crime, especially on behalf of the wider community (for example, reporting fly-tipping in a public area).

Participants said they would like more information on the following.

- The council's role in dealing with crime and ASB, and how the council and police are working in partnership to do this.

- The activities and initiatives being undertaken by the council to address ASB, and the effect of these on the incidence of ASB.

- The impact of community consultation on the council's ASB policy, particularly with reference to targeting specific demographic groups, such as young people.

- A clear guide on who to contact in the council for specific issues, and what response, and response times, could be expected from the council. A few suggested that this could take the form of an agreement of service standards, available for all local residents to access.

While participants found it difficult to articulate the intricacies of how partnerships should work, they were able to make suggestions about the broad ways in which different local agencies could work together to tackle crime and ASB at different stages. For example, in the case of illegal drug use, participants perceived that local councils can help to reduce drug use amongst young people by

providing them with recreational facilities. The police and the courts come into play at the stage of law enforcement when they arrest and prosecute people for taking or dealing illegal drugs, and local primary care trusts can help to deal with the repercussions of drug use by caring for people with substance abuse problems.

Participants were also positive about the suggested idea of a single phone number to report minor crime or ASB incidents which would then be dealt with by the relevant agency. Participants said that if they had an issue they needed dealing with, they would phone the single number and ask to be directed to the appropriate agency or department rather than have to contact several different agencies prior to finding the right one. Some mentioned that they would be happy for their personal details to be taken and passed between agencies if it resulted in their concern being dealt with more promptly.[6]

About the Cardiff pilot [non-emergency number] *scheme, the reason that would work for me is a lot of people would like to speak to the police and may have a complaint but they don't deem it important enough to dial 999 so they won't ring because they think "I am wasting their time", but if there was a dedicated number for lesser complaints I think that would be quite realistic, people would use it.*

(Female, Beverley)

Participants felt that a single non-emergency number would also be likely to increase their confidence in the police and local council, as it would make them feel that their issues were being dealt with more efficiently and promptly than they are at present. The initiative appears customer-orientated which appeals to people's sense that the police and other local agencies should be serving the public. If working effectively, it would increase the ease of reporting a crime and ASB, which could help to improve confidence that a report or complaint would be resolved satisfactorily.

Noisy neighbours

A recurring theme throughout the groups was one of noisy 'neighbours.

Clive from Cambridge has called the police to report noisy neighbours numerous times. He is always told that noise pollution is something that the council deals with rather than the police and that he will have to call

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6   The Government has committed to look for a cost-effective way of establishing the number '101' as a single national police non-emergency number for reporting crime and ASB (Policing in the 21st century: reconnecting police and the people).

them. But when he calls the council, they advise him to call environmental health. This leaves him feeling frustrated and 'passed from pillar to post'. This feeling is exacerbated when the noise occurs late at night when the council is closed and so there is no-one available to deal with the problem at the time it is happening. As he said "I was told that they [the police] couldn't do anything, they're not to deal with this issue and I had to phone the council, but this was two o'clock in the morning and, of course, nobody was there."

Implications for how to build confidence
Participants generally supported the concept of partnership working, but were less aware of how this might improve services. Filling this knowledge gap through awareness building and communications could help to increase confidence levels.

Confidence levels of participants were felt to be linked to the evidence of effective joint working rather than the concept of partnership itself. Effective implementation of partnership working, such as reducing the need for people to chase an issue between different organisations, may, therefore, have the potential to raise confidence.

While a single number for reporting ASB and other non-emergency incidents might have the potential to increase confidence, it has to result in some action being taken. Experiencing ineffective implementation of partnership working with no tangible benefits can significantly undermine an individual's level of confidence.

5   How can Neighbourhood Policing influence confidence?

Summary

- Participants' awareness of Neighbourhood Policing was generally low; not all participants were aware of it operating in their local area.

- However, when asked to describe their preferred style of policing, most participants described something which bore the hallmarks of Neighbourhood Policing.

- Views of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were mixed. While many participants had heard of them, there was confusion about their role.

- Participants identified several awareness-raising and engagement models which they thought might help to raise public confidence in the police tackling crime and ASB. These include: meeting with the public (e.g. 'meet and greet' sessions, door-knocking), communicating with the public (e.g. radio and television appearances), and helping the public to give feedback (e.g. mobile police diary room).

This section explores current awareness of Neighbourhood Policing, followed by a discussion of potential ways that awareness and engagement can be increased. Specific examples and case studies have been included to illustrate key points.

Awareness of and attitudes to Neighbourhood Policing
Participants' awareness of Neighbourhood Policing in their local areas was low. Few people reported knowing that there are dedicated Neighbourhood Policing teams working solely in their local area, or that these teams are involving residents in deciding local police priorities. In general, participants had not seen, or could not remember, seeing the same police officers or PCSOs in their neighbourhood on a regular basis.

If I saw the police, I would know it was the police because of their uniform but I wouldn't recognise anyone's face.
(Female, Southam)

Despite low awareness of Neighbourhood Policing, participants embraced the idea once it had been explained because it matched the model of local policing they wanted to see. Moreover, some people spontaneously described this approach as the way they would like local policing to operate, prior to it being discussed in the workshop. The aspects of Neighbourhood Policing that people were particularly enthusiastic about included: local police officers, who the community know by name; being visible on the streets; and effectively tackling ASB. This clearly reflects the Neighbourhood Policing model.[7]

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7   These findings echo those of polling research conducted in September 2009 which showed high public approval for Neighbourhood Policing (92% of respondents thought it was a good idea and 52% thought it should be the top priority for any new officers). However, there was low awareness of Neighbourhood Policing. Only 53 per cent of respondents polled had heard of it and only 23 per cent thought that they knew a great deal or fair amount about it (Charlton, 2009).

Views of PCSOs

Views on PCSOs were mixed and their role was generally poorly understood. Some of the participants described PCSOs as a "waste of time" due to their lack of powers of arrest. These views tended to be based on second-hand information (e.g. media coverage) rather than direct experience. Other participants thought that PCSOs were able to develop closer ties with a community because of their limited powers. Those who had experienced contact with PCSOs tended to speak of them more highly than those who had not, as the following case study illustrates.

The case of Annie, the PCSO

In one rural community, everyone knew Annie, the village PCSO, by name. However there was a marked contrast in the way that the adults and the young people of the village regarded her.

Adults thought she had no authority over the young people because she had no powers of arrest. Their perceptions of her were fuelled by hearsay and negative media coverage about the role of PCSOs. Crucially none of them had actually spoken to Annie, and as a result, they did not know what sort of activities she had engaged in.

Young people, on the other hand, respected Annie and had a good relationship with her. They admitted that they modified their behaviour, for example, tempered their noise levels or moved on when she asked them to.

While Annie targeted the right people in the right way, news of her work was not reaching the adults in the village, leading to the perception that she was not effective. If her impact was more effectively communicated to the adults, she might be perceived differently and adults in the community might better understand her role as a PCSO.

Neighbourhood Policing and engagement

Participants wanted to have more engagement with their local police. Activities suggested by participants generally involved encouraging neighbourhood teams to meet and get to know their local residents more. The most popular and feasible initiatives which were suggested include the following.

- **'Meet and greet' sessions** for Neighbourhood Policing teams and the local community, enabling local residents to meet their Neighbourhood Policing

teams in person. These sessions could take the form of drop-in sessions or informal meetings held in community centres or street surgeries. Participants welcomed the possibility of interacting with 'officials' in a more informal setting and felt that this would help them feel more confident in approaching their neighbourhood officers in the future. As one participant said:

You don't know people from looking at a photo on a bit of paper, you actually have to meet them in person, shake them by the hand.

(Male, Tiverton)

- **Regular patrols** by the same police officers and PCSOs so that people see their Neighbourhood Policing officers 'on the job' and know where to find them at any given time. Participants said that if they frequently saw the same police officers and PCSOs they would feel more comfortable approaching them and would feel reassured that their area was being looked after.

- **Door knocking** with prominent members of the community. Some participants stated that they would like local police officers to knock on every door in an area, introducing themselves and updating residents on local police activities. After considering the feasibility of this in terms of manpower, time and funding, they conceded that it might be more practical for the police to be selective about who they approach, prioritising well-connected members of the community who could then pass information on to others in the area.

Every time he's [Neighbourhood Policing team member] *on patrol, he doesn't knock on the same door, so by the time a month goes by he's personally introduced himself to everyone on his patch, so it's better than a mail-shot and better than relying on me to go to the internet.*

(Male, Cambridge)

Other participants felt however, that too great a police presence could intimidate or antagonise some members of the community.

If they [Neighbourhood Policing team] *knocked on my mum's door after about half past 5, 6 o'clock in the evening she'd think who is knocking on my door at this time of night.*

(Male, Cambridge)

- **Normalising the police presence**. Participants wanted the police presence to become more normalised, helping police officers appear more approachable. They advocated trying to do this from a young age, with police officers and PCSOs interacting with children in schools and in the community, so that young people grow up with a more positive perception of the police. Participants also suggested attendance of the police at local events, such as fairs and fêtes, in a friendly and informal way to build rapport with the community. Seeing a more 'human' side to the police could help people feel more confident about approaching the police.

- **Clarifying the role of PCSOs**. Participants felt that it would be useful to explain the roles of PCSOs more clearly. Communicating their role through door-to-door campaigns or leafleting could help raise awareness of the work undertaken by local PCSOs, and build a more positive image of them.

I think if most of the information about PCSOs was available to people, so that they could actually see what they actually do, because I think a lot of people believe they don't have the power to do a lot and that's why a lot of people don't have faith in them. I think if it was widely known what they actually do people will maybe be a bit more positive.

(Female, Beverley)

- **Radio and television appearances**. Participants said that they appreciated their local police officers making radio and television appearances because it allowed them to passively receive information about what the police are doing without having to seek it out themselves. They recognised that radio and television advertising could be costly and suggested some lower-cost options that they felt could be effective in building confidence (such as question and answer sessions or 'phone-in' shows with a police officer on a local radio station).

- **Mobile police diary room**. Participants were asked their opinions on a mobile police 'diary room'[8] initiative being implemented in Liverpool. Participants in Liverpool were aware of this initiative and were positive about having a chance to connect with the

local police and express their views in an informal setting. However, they emphasised the importance of this being a sustained initiative rather than a 'one-off gimmick'. They recommended that the diary room should visit the same place more than once, to allow people to feel more comfortable in using the service.

- **Regular and consistent provision of information**. Participants felt that information provided to the public should be regular and consistent for people to engage with it. They were asked for their views on E-Cops[9] – an email bulletin scheme designed to keep residents up to date with community safety issues and help them get in touch with the police. Participants who were using this service were positive about it but recognised that it would not be suitable for all members of the community (for example, the elderly, who are less likely to use the internet).

- **Prompt feedback**. Participants wanted prompt feedback from the police on the outcomes of cases to reassure them that action was being taken. This could be provided by email if too costly to do face to face.

> *Implications for how to build confidence*
> The current model of Neighbourhood Policing fits well with what participants said they wanted from their local police force. However, participants were generally unaware of Neighbourhood Policing teams. Neighbourhood Policing may have more potential to raise the public's confidence if the public's awareness of it is increased.
>
> There are several ways in which local Neighbourhood Policing teams can better engage with their communities. The key initiatives appear to be:
>
> - **meeting with the public** via informal 'meet and greet' sessions or door knocking with prominent members of the community;
>
> - **communicating with the public** through local radio and television appearances;
>
> - **helping the public** to give feedback to the police through initiatives such as the mobile police diary room.

8   The mobile police van is equipped with a 'Big Brother' style diary room and travels around Merseyside, particularly to local schools and community events. Residents are invited to sit in front of a video screen in the diary room and air their thoughts about the local police and key policing priorities, typically in 30-second entries. Often a large screen is erected outside the diary room, allowing people in the surrounding area to see previous diary entries.

9   This is a scheme being implemented by Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Residents can sign up to receive email alerts about issues including burglaries, security advice, details of crime incidents, and current police activity to address problems in particular neighbourhoods.

Other broader initiatives such as normalising the presence of police officers, particularly amongst young people, and clarifying the role of PCSOs could also have a positive effect.

6 How can agreements of expected standards between the public and local services influence confidence?

Summary

- Participants' awareness of a national agreement on minimum standards from the police in place at the time of the research (the Policing Pledge) was low. Participants generally expressed concern that the Pledge was simply PR or spin and they did not believe that the level of services 'pledged' were provided in actuality. Some participants, however, viewed it more positively, perceiving that it could help them hold the police to account.

- Three principles were identified as important in the development of any local agreement with the public about the standards of service expected from the police. These were as follows.
  1. Credibility – the public must perceive the agreement to be firm, realistic and achievable.
  2. Accountability – the public must know how to use the agreement to hold their local police to account when service standards are not met.
  3. Clarity – the agreement must be clear and succinct to make it accessible to all members of the local community.

This section begins by exploring participant views of a national agreement of police service standards in place at the time of the research (the Policing Pledge)[10] and its perceived effectiveness as a confidence-building tool.

The Policing Pledge was discontinued in July 2010. The remainder of the section examines the lessons learned and discusses how any local agreements between the public and police might be developed in the future.[11]

Awareness of and attitudes to the Policing Pledge
Participants generally lacked awareness of the Policing Pledge and did not recollect having used, or being referred to, the Pledge when dealing with the police. Those who mentioned some awareness typically recalled television advertisements or more local communications such as bus stop posters or leaflets that had come through their door. However, these people were unsure of the detailed content of the Pledge.

Participants were generally cynical about the Pledge and were not familiar with the concept of a pledge in the context of public services. There was a sense that the tone was somewhat prescriptive and imposed from above, and that it inadequately reflected the priorities of local communities and police forces.

> It only shows what the person at the top is thinking though doesn't it? I mean the Chief Constables sit down and write it all, or even higher than that, it's a national [initiative]… It's a decree from on high.
>
> (Male, Cambridge)

Some participants recognised that a strong commitment by the police to consistently deliver high standards of response and service was a positive thing. The value of being able to hold a force to account was looked upon favourably, particularly for those who did not know how to do so.

> I mean if you do have an issue you can say, "Well, is the police living up to what they pledge? No, they're not, therefore I need to take this further." It's good to have something factual to refer to, so from that respect it's good.
>
> (Male, Beverley)

However, there was a general feeling that the Pledge was simply 'just words' and lacked credibility. One reason for this view was the way in which it was worded. For instance, the pledge stated "we will **aim** to be with you within 60 minutes", whereas participants felt this should be worded as, "we **will** get to you within 60 minutes".

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10 The Policing Pledge was a national set of minimum standards that all forces were expected to achieve. The Pledge is no longer government policy in line with commitments to minimise targets and allow forces more discretion in setting local policing agendas.

11 These lessons should be particularly relevant to the Neighbourhood Agreements pathfinders being trialled in ten areas. Neighbourhood Agreements are a local voluntary agreement agreed between residents and local service providers (including the police) that aim to involve and empower the community to improve the focus and quality of service provision in the local area.

They say that the police will pledge to do this: "We will do our best to do it but we might not." Where is the guarantee?
(Female, Cambridge)

Three key principles emerged from a discussion around how any future agreement of service standards could be improved. These are outlined below:

1) Credibility

Any agreement needed to be credible with the public. It had to convey reasonable commitments in clear language, in a way which would resonate with personal experiences. Participants emphasised the importance of using unambiguous wording within an agreement and felt that subjective terms such as 'reasonableness', 'fairness' or 'an emergency' should be clearly defined. Participants also thought that the users of an agreement needed to perceive the standards as achievable for the agreement to have credibility. One of the suggestions offered by participants was forming a local agreement in which the key points are negotiated between police and the local community, taking into account local needs and police capabilities.

2) Accountability

Participants felt that in order for an agreement to be credible, the police must also be accountable to the commitments that they make. In turn they expected some form of independent monitoring, and ideally enforcement, to ensure accountability. Some participants felt that the police themselves cannot be trusted with ensuring service standards are met. They said they would like more information on where they can go to complain, who they should complain to, and how the complaint process would be handled.

3) Clarity

Participants felt that an agreement of service standards should be presented clearly and concisely and distinguish between statements relevant to individuals, and those that target entire communities.

> #### *Lessons learned*
>
> If forces opt for local agreements, they should be mindful of delivering messages in a way which could help increase confidence which builds on the principles of credibility, accountability and clarity. The research findings suggest that this could be done in the following ways.
>
> - **Ensure the local community is aware of the agreement.** Awareness of the service standards agreed between the public and police might help to reduce the gap between people's expectations and the level of service that can actually be provided by the police given limited resources.

> - **Use firm wording.** Using phrasing such as "We will…" rather than "We will aim to…" would signal a clear intention to follow through on the commitments made in a local agreement. Setting these service standards locally, in the context of actual experience and current capabilities, could help to ensure the targets are realistic for each force. Seeing officers following through on firm promises could have a positive impact on people's confidence in their local police.
>
> - **Explain to the public how to hold the local police to account.** Clear and specific instructions on how to make a complaint if service standards are not met, as well as information on who would be responsible for following up a complaint, would make an agreement 'usable' and could raise confidence in the local police.
>
> - **Develop an agreement that is readable and user-friendly.** The more readable and relevant a local agreement is, the more likely people are to refer to it and, in turn, feel confident using it in their dealings with the local police.
>
> - **Ensure the local agreement is realistic and can be delivered.** Any agreement made with the public on standards of service should be supported by concrete action – that local people are made aware of – to help bolster levels of confidence in the police.

7   Understanding the perceptions of those with 'no opinion'

> ### Summary
>
> - There were three main reasons for participants giving a 'neither agree nor disagree' response to the confidence question: they felt unqualified to give an opinion; they were trying to reflect the balance of different experiences; and they had difficulty in precisely comprehending the question.
>
> - Raising awareness of the work that the police and council are undertaking to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour locally could help individuals with no direct experience to form an opinion.

- Better communicating the role of the council in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour could also help to clarify the standards against which the council should be assessed. This could make it easier for people to form a judgement when answering the BCS question.

- Ensuring a consistent standard of service is important in countering the 'neither agree nor disagree' response being given as a 'balance' of positive and negative experiences.

In the year to September 2009, 29 per cent of BCS respondents indicated that they had no opinion (responding 'neither agree nor disagree' to the BCS confidence question).

To explore the reasons for this, participants were given a pre- and post-discussion questionnaire which included the BCS question. During the discussions, people were asked why they had answered in the way that they had, and what could enable those who gave a 'neither agree nor disagree' response to give a firm answer either way.[12] This section reports on this discussion.

Feeling unqualified to give an opinion

Some participants questioned whether they were qualified to give an opinion. This was particularly true where they had no personal experience of contact with the police or council. Personal experience appeared to be a crucial factor in shaping how an individual assessed the extent to which the local council and police were dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Well if you haven't had any dealings with the council or the police, you've got no opinions on it. If you don't know anyone else who's, you know, sort of near to you that's had a problem, then you don't know, because you haven't been in that position.

(Female, Beverley)

Perceptions of current levels of crime in an area also appear to be influenced by how participants responded to the question. For instance, in areas like Llanddaniel, Beverley or Southam, participants felt that their area was relatively crime-free, and therefore participants were unsure of how to answer the question and tended to be more likely to choose the 'neither agree nor disagree' response.

Information on how crime and anti-social behaviour are being dealt with in the local area was also seen as an important constraint on how people answered this question. For some, the question was seen as being a test of their knowledge of the police and council's efforts to deal with issues, and they articulated their perceived lack of knowledge by choosing the 'neither agree nor disagree' response. Some residents were also unsure of the role the local council specifically should be playing in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

I think it makes it harder to answer the question because you do not, on the face of it day to day, you do not see an obvious piece of evidence to say that they work together in particular.

(Male, Liverpool)

These findings support recent research by Ipsos MORI, which found that the most popular reason for giving a 'neither agree nor disagree' response was a lack of information.[13] This research concluded that a 'neither agree nor disagree' response is more likely to reflect a perception among the general public that their knowledge is too limited to give a view.

Reflecting the balance of different experiences

For some participants who had experienced contact with the police and council, the 'neither agree nor disagree' response was sometimes chosen to reflect the balance of two or more experiences. For instance, if one of the experiences was positive and the other negative, the response was seen as being an accurate reflection of a participant's overall impression.

I woke up hearing somebody smashing … into a neighbour's house across the field from me, and within five minutes of me phoning … there was a helicopter overhead with a search light and everything, it was really impressive… But then on another occasion when … the alarm went off, I couldn't get the Police to come out and in the end they said: 'Can you just shut the door because we can't get there for a couple of hours' … I was very unimpressed.

(Male, Cardiff)

Interpretation of the question

Some participants found it difficult to form a firm response to the BCS question because of uncertainty in

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12 This study did not look at the issue of placement of the question within the BCS but at the question in isolation. Therefore, it might be expected that people may have different responses and different reasons for their response under the standard BCS conditions.

13 The Ipsos MORI Capibus survey was conducted from 4 to 10 December. The top five reasons for giving a 'neither agree nor disagree' response were: lack of information/no experience (27%); no problems/trouble in my area (9%); not enough being done/ problems not sorted (8%); police not visible (8%); police do not act/ slow to respond (5%).

how the question should be interpreted. For example, the expression 'dealing with' was interpreted by some as a visible presence and by others as observed improvements to crime or ASB levels. Given that participants were often unaware of the interventions of the police or the council in their local area, they were unsure if 'dealing with' meant that crime and anti-social behaviour had actually decreased.

Similarly, some people were unaware of what the 'key issues' in their local area were, and if these were issues that other residents would also think were important. Words like 'crime' and 'anti-social behaviour' appeared to have different meanings for different people. There was some debate as to whether certain forms of anti-social behaviour also qualified as criminal behaviour, and what the council's role should be in such instances.

I was confused when we were informed the local council and police [were] dealing with anti-social behaviour because my first thoughts were, what are the council doing? What are they to do about it because it is a police problem?

(Female, Cambridge)

Where a participant could interpret the BCS question in several ways, and was unsure of the 'correct' interpretation on which to base his/her response, a 'neither agree nor disagree' response was therefore sometimes selected.

Interpretation of the question was not a problem for all participants. Some people tended to select the parts of the question that they understood and/or were more comfortable with, and based their answer on those elements only (for example, assessing how well the police deal with crime and ASB but ignoring the council).

8   Conclusions

This study was designed to explore perceptions of confidence in the police and the local council, to understand the reasons for given confidence levels and actions that could be taken to improve confidence levels. The main implications for practice are as follows.

Building public awareness and knowledge

- Increasing awareness of the role and work undertaken by the police and council in tackling crime and ASB is perceived to be key to improving public confidence, particularly with respect to the following areas:
  - awareness of Neighbourhood Policing;
  - understanding of the council's role in dealing with crime and ASB.

- Passive communication, using a communication channel that people are already engaged with e.g. television, radio, is perceived to be effective in building awareness of the work being undertaken by the police and local councils.

Ensuring community engagement and communications are made as easy as possible for the public

- Engagement with the police and council should be made as straightforward as possible. Many people do not proactively seek a dialogue with the police and local council, nor do they have any contact with the police. Engagement activities need to be taken to them in environments that are comfortable to them or via events that are already in place.

- Prompt feedback on the outcomes of cases should be provided to the people involved. This will help give reassurance that action is being taken.

- A local agreement of service standards between the public and police is likely to be most effective if it is underpinned by the three principles of:
  - credibility
  - accountability
  - clarity

- Community engagement is more likely to be respected if there is genuine interest and engagement with the community. This is particularly salient when engaging with hard-to-reach communities, such as young people.

Clarifying and promoting the role of the council in dealing with ASB and crime

- Participants did not fully understand the council's role in dealing with crime and ASB, and wanted more information on the following.
  - Its role in dealing with crime and ASB.
  - The activities and initiatives being undertaken by the council to address ASB, and the effect of these on the incidence of ASB.
  - The impact of community consultation on the council's ASB policy, particularly with reference to targeting specific demographic groups such as young people.
  - The demarcation of responsibilities between the police and local council.
  - A clear guide on who to contact in the council for specific issues, and what response, and response times, could be expected from the council. A few suggested that this could take the form of a local agreement with the council.

- The local council could also play a role in facilitating more dialogue between residents and the police. Participants appeared to be engaging with the council through meetings, newsletters and other forums, and these means could be used to provide feedback on crime and ASB issues.

Continuing to embed and improve delivery of Neighbourhood Policing

- Neighbourhood Policing appeared to equate to the style of policing wanted by participants. Increasing the awareness of Neighbourhood Policing has the potential to raise confidence.

- Building up a stronger relationship between the police and communities appears to be a way of improving how messages on Neighbourhood Policing are conveyed. Participants said they would welcome the opportunity to meet their Neighbourhood Policing Teams in person in informal settings as well as to have a greater involvement in local priority setting.

Delivering effective initiatives in partnership

- Participants were unconcerned with the mechanics of local partnerships and were more interested in the outcomes. One of the most popular initiatives discussed was the single non-emergency number. While this was perceived to ease the reporting of issues, participants felt that clear follow-up action would need to be taken for this initiative to have any confidence-raising potential.

Reasons underpinning the 'neither agree nor disagree' response are complicated

- Providing a consistently high standard of service may help to counter the 'neither agree nor disagree' response being given as a 'balance' of positive and negative experiences. 'Neither agree nor disagree' responses can also be addressed through:
  - raising awareness of the work that the police and council are undertaking to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour;
  - better communicating the role of the council in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour to clarify the standards against which the council should be assessed.

The conclusions build on the findings from previous research. For instance, the Home Office literature review (Rix *et al.*, 2009) also found that good quality community engagement, sharing local knowledge (newsletters) and delivering all elements of Neighbourhood Policing could help increase public confidence.

This study has provided further in-depth detail of what the public believe would improve their confidence in the police and local council. It is hoped that these findings will be useful to local practitioners in their delivery of services for the public.

Appendix

Numbers and demographic profile of participants attending workshops

Location of workshop	Number of participants	Demographic make-up of participants*
Liverpool	14	9 x males, 5 x females 9 x 18-29, 5 x 30-59 5 x A/B, 7 x C1/C2, 2 x D/E
Beverley	15	5 x males, 10 x females 8 x 18-29, 7 x 30-59 5 x A/B, 8 x C1/C2, 2 x D/E
Cambridge	17	9 x males, 8 x females 5 x 18-29, 12 x 30-59 4 x A/B, 9 x C1/C2, 4 x D/E
Nottingham	17	10 x males, 7 x females 5 x 18-29, 12 x 30-59 4 x A/B, 10 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
Cardiff	14	8 x males, 6 x females 7 x 18-29, 6 x 30-59, 1 x 60+ 2 x A/B, 6 x C1/C2, 6 x D/E
London	16	8 x males, 8 x females 3 x 18-29, 13 x 30-59 6 x A/B, 6 x C1/C2, 4 x D/E
Guildford	14	7 x males, 7 x females 5 x 18-29, 9 x 30-59 7 x A/B, 4 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
Southam	13	7 x males, 6 x females 1 x 18-29, 11 x 30-59, 1 x 60+ 2 x A/B, 8 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
Tiverton	15	7 x males, 8 x females 4 x 18-29, 9 x 30-59, 2 x 60+ 3 x A/B, 9 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
Llanddaniel	13	5 x males, 8 x females 2 x 18-29, 10 x 30-59, 1 x 60+ 3 x A/B, 3 x C1/C2, 7 x D/E

* Social grading of participants has been undertaken using the established method derived from the British National Readership Survey.
  Social grade A: High managerial, administrative or professional (4% of population)
  Social grade B: Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional (23% of population)
  Social grade C1: Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional (29% of population)
  Social grade C2: Skilled manual workers (21% of population)
  Social Grade D: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (15% population)
  Social grade E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only (8% of population).

Numbers and demographic profile of participants attending mini-groups

Location of mini-group	Type of mini-group	Number of participants	Demographic make-up of participants
Liverpool	Unemployed people	3	2 x males, 1 x females
			3 x 30-59
			3 x D/E
Beverley	Particularly dissatisfied people	5	4 x males, 1 x females
			2 x 18-29, 3 x 30-59
			1 x A/B, 1 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
Cambridge	Afro-Caribbean people	6	4 x males, 2 x females
			1 x 18-29, 4 x 30-59, 1 x 60+
			4 x C1/C2, 2 x D/E
Nottingham	Muslim males	6	6 x males
			3 x 18-29, 3 x 30-59,
			Social grade: no quota/not recorded
Cardiff	Young males	8	8 x males
			8 x 16-19
			5 x C1/C2, 3 x D/E
London	Muslim females	6	6 x females
			3 x 18-29, 3 x 30-59
			2 x A/B, 2 x C1/C2, 2 x D/E
Guildford	Elderly people	5	2 x males, 3 x females
			5 x 60+
			Social grade: no quota/ not recorded
Southam	Young females	8	8 x females
			8 x 16-19,
			2 x A/B, 4 x C1/C2, 2 x D/E

Pre-discussion questionnaire

Start of workshop questionnaire
Before the event begins, we would like you to answer a few very simple questions.

Please could you answer the questions by ticking the box that best describes you or writing in the information requested. **Then hand to a member of staff. Thank you!**

To ensure personal information about you is secure, all of your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be stored securely. It will only be seen by Ipsos MORI staff and not be passed on to anyone else.

Your name_____

Q1   **Are you male or female?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Male	❏
Female	❏

Q2   **How old are you?**

	TICK ONE BOX
18 to 25	❏
26 to 30	❏
31 to 40	❏
41 to 50	❏
50 to 59	❏
60 or over	❏

Q3 **It is the responsibility of the police and local council working in partnership to deal with anti-social behaviour and crime in your local area. Can I ask how far you agree or disagree with each of these statements?**

	TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE				
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
The **police and local council** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The **police** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The **local council** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Q4 **In the last year, have you come into contact with the police in relation to anti-social behaviour and/or crime?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Yes	❏
No	❏
Don't know/Can't remember	❏

Q5 **Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with that contact with the police?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Very satisfied	❏
Fairly satisfied	❏
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	❏
Fairly dissatisfied	❏
Very dissatisfied	❏
Don't know	❏

Q6   **In the last year, have you come into contact with the local council in relation to anti-social behaviour and/or crime?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Yes	❏
No	❏
Don't know/Can't remember	❏

Q7   **Overall, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with that contact with the local council?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Very satisfied	❏
Fairly satisfied	❏
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	❏
Fairly dissatisfied	❏
Very dissatisfied	❏
Don't know	❏

Thank you very much!

Post-discussion questionnaire

End of workshop questionnaire
Just a few more questions…

Please could you answer the questions by ticking the box that best describes you or writing in the information requested. **Then hand to a member of staff. Thank you!**

Remember, to ensure personal information about you is secure, all of your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be stored securely. It will only be seen by Ipsos MORI staff and not be passed on to anyone else.

Your name_____

Q1 **It is the responsibility of the police and local council working in partnership to deal with anti-social behaviour and crime in your local area. Can I ask how far you agree or disagree with each of these statements?**

	TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE				
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
The **police and local council** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The **police** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The **local council** are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in this area.	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Q2 **Has your response to these questions changed since the beginning of the workshop? If yes, why do you think it has changed? What have you heard or what have you thought about that has made your answer change?**

Q3 **Using the responses below, how would you rate the local council and police in terms of how they work together in partnership?**

	TICK ONE BOX
Very good	❏
Fairly good	❏
Neither good nor disgood	❏
Fairly disgood	❏
Very disgood	❏
Don't know	❏

Q4 **What can the police and local council do to make you more confident in the way in which ASB and crime is dealt with in your local area. What one key message would you like us to send to the local council and police to help them improve their service to you?**

Q5 **Is there anything else you would like to add that you have not had the chance to discuss as part of the workshop?**

Thank you very much!

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