

Have you got what it takes?

Community Safety



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Important Facts

As well as their main policing role, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are responsible for cutting crime. They are supported in this work by legislation, including the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The police cannot cut crime on their own. Effective partnership working is essential.

As central partners, PCCs need to work with other local leaders to improve outcomes for communities and make sure that local resources are used efficiently and effectively.

There are legal requirements that apply to community safety working, usually taken forward through community safety partnerships (CSPs) working at district or unitary authority level. (However, in some areas a number of CSPs have merged to form larger partnerships.)

Where partnerships work well, they prevent duplication of activity, reduce costs and tackle issues through joined-up problem-solving approaches. The best community safety partnerships draw significantly on the resources of the responsible authorities involved (see facing column).

PCCs are under a duty to cooperate with their community safety partners. CSPs are under a duty to assess local community safety issues and draw up a partnership plan setting out their priorities and planned responses. PCCs and CSPs will be under a duty to take each other's priorities into account.

Community Safety Partnerships

There are existing legal requirements that apply to community safety partnerships. CSPs usually work at district or unitary authority level. They are an important feature of the network of partnerships that help to tackle crime.

Five 'responsible authorities' on each CSP must, by law, work together:

- Police
- Local authority
- Fire and rescue authority
- Probation provider (including the National Probation Service)
- Health (Clinical Commissioning Groups in England and local health boards in Wales)

The responsible authorities are under a statutory duty to work together to:

- Reduce reoffending;
- tackle crime and disorder;
- tackle anti-social behaviour;

- tackle alcohol and substance misuse; and
- tackle any other behaviour which has a negative effect on the local environment.

CSPs are free to work with any other local partners they want to. Many include representatives from the business, or the voluntary, community and social-enterprise sectors. Each organisation brings its own expertise, resources and understanding of the issues that affect the local community. Working in partnership allows for initiatives that tackle both the causes and effects of crime and anti-social behaviour. It also reduces duplication of effort and the risk of agencies taking conflicting actions.

CSPs are part of a complex system of partnerships, in which some areas have 10 or more overlapping partnerships or boards that contribute to community safety and public protection. We have encouraged those involved in local partnerships to consider developing fewer, better partnerships, in light of reducing public sector funding.

Duties to co-operate

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 created a flexible framework for partnership working. This includes two inter-related duties to co-operate which set out a clear aim for partnership working across partners

involved in community safety and criminal justice. The community safety duty specifies that a PCC and the responsible authorities on a CSP must co-operate and take account of one another's priorities.

These duties do not apply to devolved areas of responsibility in Wales, although PCCs and local partners still need to consider how they can match up their priorities and activities.

These duties are deliberately broad and flexible, to allow working arrangements to develop in a way that is most meaningful locally, and to leave room for new ideas. They are aimed at helping PCCs and their partners to make decisions on priorities and funding with a full understanding of the implications for partners.

PCC Powers

In England, PCCs can approve applications for combination (merger) agreements between CSPs from the responsible authorities. They also have the power to ask for a report from a CSP on issues of concern.

Regulations also give the PCC a power to call together representatives from CSPs across the police force area to discuss issues which are a concern across the force.

More Information

Who oversees the work of CSPs?

The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committees. These local authority committees examine the work of the partnership as a whole, not that of the individual organisations.

How many CSPs are there?

CSPs usually correspond to district and unitary authority areas, although some have merged to form larger partnerships. There are currently around 265 CSPs in England and 22 in Wales.