

Have you got what it takes?

Working with other PCCs and forces

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Important facts

Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) have a legal duty to collaborate (work together) where it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own or another police force.

Working together in this way is an important tool, allowing police forces to achieve savings and to deal more effectively with crimes that go beyond a single force's borders.

Collaboration agreements between police forces can also include other public sector organisations as well as the private sector.

PCCs will need to collaborate to meet their responsibilities under the strategic policing requirement.

An order that would make PCCs and their forces collaborate in providing air support has been laid before Parliament.

Collaborative working has increased over the last few years and all police forces now collaborate to tackle terrorism (through regional counter terrorism units and counter terrorism intelligence units) and organised crime (through regional organised crime units). But there are still opportunities to use collaboration to bring about further improvements.

Background

Collaboration is an important tool for the police service to achieve cost savings while maintaining or improving services, and for making specialist services more effective by bringing them together. Collaboration is also necessary for the police to be able to deal effectively with the areas of crime that go beyond a single force's borders or are better served by specialist teams, for example, counter-terrorism and organised crime.

The structure of policing in England and Wales is based on independently run police forces with a clear set of local responsibilities. When there are unusual demands, police force boundaries do not stand in the way. But if forces want to set up longer-term joint working arrangements with each other, those arrangements need to be agreed and recorded properly in terms of:

- **the business arrangements;**
- **how forces will be held to account; and**
- **any necessary changes to responsibilities that arise.**

This is where collaboration agreements come in.

Legal changes

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 placed new duties on PCCs and chief constables to keep opportunities to collaborate under review and to collaborate if it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own or another police force.

The 2011 Act also introduced measures to simplify the process for making collaboration agreements and to remove obstacles to effective collaboration. It did this by:

- **replacing the requirement for two different sorts of collaboration agreement with a single agreement which both the PCC and the chief constable can make, and which can include others such as local authorities;**
- **removing the requirement to tell the Home Secretary about plans to set up large-scale collaborations;**
- **allowing specially designated police staff, such as custody officers and investigating officers, to work in another force area under a collaboration agreement, and removing inconsistencies relating to the health and safety responsibilities of chief constables; and**
- **introducing a new power for the Home Secretary to specify, by order, particular policing functions on which all forces must collaborate. This allows a more planned approach to collaboration on functions which support important national priorities and on which a more consistent approach is needed.**

More information

Types of collaboration

Collaboration can be about one or more of the following.

- **Carrying out the policing functions (force collaboration). This type of collaboration focuses on operational services (for example, firearms or investigations) or operational support (for example, dog training or forensics).**
- **The support by one policing body for another policing body (policing body collaboration).**
- **The support by a policing body for a police force maintained by another policing body (policing body and force collaboration).**

These last two types of collaboration focus on support functions such as premises and equipment.

Collaborations can include non-police organisations. This allows forces to take advantage of the opportunities available for collaborating with others in the public and private sector.

There is no single 'one size fits all' model of collaboration that can be applied to every policing function in every part of the country. PCCs and chief officers will need to consider all possible models and decide on the most effective and most suitable for their circumstances.

Governance

PCCs must hold their chief officers to account for the collaborations their force is involved in. They must also make arrangements for doing so jointly with the PCCs for the other forces involved. How this is done will be for the PCCs to decide, taking into account:

- **the particular circumstances of the collaboration;**
- **the different resources provided by each force;**
- **where the services will be based; and**
- **which chief officer will have direction and control over officers and staff.**

Further help

We have published guidance to help police forces and policing bodies to collaborate more easily and effectively. Further support is available through the Policing OnLine Knowledge Area (POLKA), which allows practitioners (specialists) to share experiences and learning on all kinds of organisational change.

How does the duty to collaborate fit with local priorities?

Decisions around collaboration are mainly local decisions. However, the duty to collaborate is set out with the needs of all the potential participants in mind. If collaboration would provide the best outcome for a group of forces, an individual force should still pursue it, even if they do not expect to benefit directly. This makes sure that collaboration takes place wherever it is in the wider public's best interest.

What if a PCC does not want to take part in collaboration?

PCCs have a duty to collaborate if it will bring about improvements to the service or will save money. Wherever possible, decisions about collaboration should be made locally. But if there is a strong case that forces are failing to make the best use of their resources and should be collaborating in particular ways, or where there is a need for greater consistency and co-ordination in delivering particular functions at the national level, the Home Secretary can direct them to do so.