



Cardiff School of Social Sciences

Paper 104:

The role of the Community Safety Officer within Wales: Challenges and Opportunities



**A Research Report Commissioned
by the Wales Association of
Community Safety Officers**



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1. Executive Summary

Background

1.1. The Home Office Reform Programme for community safety partnerships (CSPs) in Wales, represents a major overhaul of the policy environment in which community safety officers work, with important implications for the various roles they will be expected to undertake. A particular focus of the Reform Programme is the introduction of national minimum standards for the work of partnerships in six main areas:

- (i) empowered and effective leadership;
- (ii) intelligence-led business processes;
- (iii) effective and responsive delivery structures;
- (iv) engaged communities;
- (v) visible and constructive accountability; and
- (vi) appropriate skills and knowledge.

In anticipation of this, the Wales Association of Community Safety Officers (WACSO) commissioned research into the capacity of officers to meet the challenges arising out of the programme (paras. 2.1-2.5).

1.2. To the authors' knowledge this is the first comprehensive research into the work of lead community safety officers in Wales [see Appendix 1 on the methodology and scope of the project] (para.2.6).

Roles performed by community safety officers

1.3. Findings identify significant discrepancies in this capacity related to the plurality of roles that 'lead' officers¹ working in diversely organised and resourced partnerships are required to perform (paras.3.1)

1.4. Statutory community safety partnerships (CSPs) in Wales have been in place for over eight years and a consensus amongst lead officers exists over the broad priorities, scope and purpose of their work (paras. 3.2-4).

1.5. The uneven profile of community safety work and the role of the lead officer is captured dramatically in the contrasting job specifications of what we term the 'minimal' and 'maximal' examples. Whereas some work in relatively well-resourced teams, others have minimal staff support and limited budgets (paras. 3.5-8).

1.6. Across all lead officers, the difficulty of balancing strategic planning and operational 'fire-fighting' was noted (para.3.9).

1.7. It is a misnomer to speak in the singular of *the* role of the community safety officer in Wales. Roles range from the extremes of a senior manager (equivalent of a local authority service director) to junior officer with no scope for committing resources (paras. 3.10-11)

¹ There are different names given to the lead community safety officers across the localities and CSPs of Wales. This reflects in part the differing roles and expectations associated with this work. In this report we will refer to these workers as 'lead officers'.

- 1.8. No consensus exists among officers regarding the possibility of a uniform job description (paras.3.12-13).
- 1.9. The pool of lead officers in Wales is highly qualified with a large majority holding undergraduate or postgraduate degrees (para. 3.14).
- 1.10. The changing demography of lead officers was identified as a major challenge for renewing the capacity for community safety work. In order to meet the challenges of the reform programme, officers supported the development of a national set of occupational standards and a recognised professional association. However, there was a 'split vote' regarding the merit of a national curriculum to establish professional qualifications (para. 3.15).

Capacities for community safety work

- 1.11. Discrepancies in capacity were also related to the economies of scale confronting partnerships in different localities across Wales. This unevenness provokes a number of challenges for the idea of national minimum standards [NMS] (paras.4.1-2).
- 1.12. Clarifying the capacity for meeting NMS is complicated by the following difficulties in auditing the allocation for community safety work: (i) double-counting the core budgets of responsible authorities; (ii) double-counting the job descriptions of community safety workers; and (iii) the contribution of other grant-aid programmes such as *Communities First* and initiatives such as *Local Service Boards* (para. 4.3).
- 1.13. Such auditing problems acquire greater significance given the relatively crude, quantitative, comparative data used to assess the outcomes of community safety work. In turn interviews with officers reveal concerns over limited resources and their impact on the quantity and quality of the problem they are asked to address (para.4.4-5).
- 1.14. The nature of funding together with meeting national targets from the Home Office (e.g. volume crime reduction) and Welsh Assembly Government (e.g. substance misuse) remain the most commonly expressed concerns regarding capacity. Universal dissatisfaction was expressed about the Home Office's *Building Safer Communities* funding allocation. Much of the uneven capacity for community safety work is also accounted for by the Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF) from the Welsh Assembly Government. Despite the recognition of the importance of substance misuse as a driver of volume crime, it was felt that other local issues (such as 'youth annoyance') may be marginalised due to this national priority. In turn this problem is exacerbated by the volume crime targets of the Home Office. There was also support for needs-based criteria particularly with regard to the Assembly's *Safer Communities Fund*. Finally concerns were expressed over the disbursement of the Home Office's BCU partnership budget and the uncertainty as to whether it was a CSP rather than just a police fund (paras.4.6-12).

1.15. There is a geographical dimension to this uneven capacity but whilst noting this, different choices regarding community safety as a local priority area for local investment in staff and core funding have been made across the 22 localities (paras. 4.14-15)

Responses to the Home Office reform programme

1.16. In this section the responses to the six thematic hallmarks of the reform programme are taken in turn ending with some general conclusions. Both local officers and national government representatives expressed broad support for NMS but also noted their 'lack of teeth' (paras. 5.1-4).

1.17. With regard to *Effective and empowered leadership*, the key points raised were:

- leadership was viewed as a chief or senior officer responsibility rather than an elected member issue; in turn CSPs remain 'officer-owned';
- the uneven contribution of local authority and non-local authority partners was noted; CSPs remain at best duopolies of the local authority and the police;
- the view of the role of elected members varied from being seen as 'tame' and supportive of the CSP to that of being parochial and unaware of the bigger picture (paras.5.5.1-8).

1.18. With regard to *Intelligence-led business processes*, the key points raised were:

- a widespread reliance on police intelligence which is compounded by resistance to sharing information between key partners;
- the need for partnerships to develop multi-agency or 'partnership intelligence' if this standard aims to stimulate genuine strategic problem-solving, including substantive knowledge of the causes of the multi-faceted problems confronting CSPs (paras. 5.6.1-6).

1.19. With regard to *Effective and responsive delivery structures*, the key points raised were:

- a tension between the CSP and local authority role of the lead officer, including operational and strategic work;
- the notion of community safety as a 'dumping ground' or 'bin' for generic problems within local authorities and other partners was noted (paras.5.7.1-3).

1.20. With regard to *Community engagement*, the key issues raised were:

- the concern that community engagement, as envisaged in the NMS, is merely rhetorical in character;
- most officers accepted (pragmatically) that community engagement would largely be police-driven and linked to the neighbourhood policing forums such as *Partners And Communities Together* (Pacts);
- according to some officers, such forums as Pacts were viewed as likely to generate conflicts especially between the police and the local authority;

- a more sophisticated way forward was articulated by some officers based on a multi-agency neighbourhood management model, linked to the promotion of ‘partnership intelligence’ (paras. 5. 8.1-4).

1.21. With regard to *Visible and constructive accountability*, the key point raised was:

- that accountability, as currently constituted in community safety work, is widely and tellingly viewed in financial terms, as relating to the auditing requirements of national funding bodies, rather than in political terms as an issue of local democratic debate, scrutiny and oversight (paras. 5.9.1-2).

1.22. With regard to *Appropriate knowledge and skills* , the key points raised were:

- the direction provided in the NMS was too vague and unspecified, reflecting a more profound uncertainty about the identify of community safety work as a specialist service or cross-cutting exercise in adding value to public services by better ‘joining them up’ for the purposes of solving specific problems in particular localities;
- support for training and education in what may be termed ‘strategic problem-solving’ and for the development of clear career pathways for younger community safety workers (paras. 5.10.1-3).

1.23. With regard to the broad conclusions offered about NMS, the following issues were raised:

- the ‘cost-neutral’ nature of the changes required to fulfil NMS in a serious manner was questioned;
- the ambition to develop a strategic manager role for lead officers was not shared by the national representatives interviewed. Instead the national governments’ position suggested that the role of the officer was a coordinating rather than strategic role, with the latter being a function of the local authority chief executive and other senior leaders in the partnership;
- the tension between popular democratic and rational bureaucratic drivers of community safety work is likely to remain central in forthcoming years, particularly with regard to the two imperatives of ‘community engagement’ and ‘intelligence-led business processes’ in the new annual strategic assessments;
- finally the issues of funding and questions of long-term sustainability remain at the core of officer concerns, not least given the precarious conditions of employment of many staff (paras. 5.11.1-7).

Options for change

1.24. Whilst this research represents the first all-Wales survey of community safety work, it remains an initial scoping exercise. Community safety is a relatively new area of public service characterised by a limited knowledge base (para. 6.1).

1.25. The options for reforming the work of community safety officers may be conceived in terms of two basic themes:

- the *economies of scale* confronting officers in fulfilling the duties associated with a post as strategic manager;
- the *strategic and operational split* in problem-solving (para. 6.2).

1.26. *Economies of scale*. Community safety work remains a relatively new area of service delivery and it competes with other services for policy prioritisation and scarce resources. In this context, the unevenness in the economies of scale provokes a number of options for change:

- Option (i): retain the existing 22 CSPs in Wales, allocating additional resources to each CSP to meet the NMS. This would also entail the development of more sophisticated resource allocation criteria which recognises the different contexts in which CSPs operate;
- Option (ii): retain the existing 22 CSPs but lower the threshold of what constitutes a minimum standard, whilst accepting the quality of community safety work will be of superior quality in those localities with more favourable economies of scale;
- Option (iii): reform the boundaries of CSPs, amalgamating those in smaller local authority areas, to take advantage of better economies of scale in producing strategic assessments, assessing the performance of partnerships and allocating staff to manage community engagement and democratic scrutiny and oversight. (para. 6.3.1.).

1.27. Each option for change entails certain dilemmas which cannot be avoided by the key stakeholders:

- Option (i) requires greater investment if all existing 22 CSPs are to meet national minimum standards set above the current lowest common denominator.
- Option (ii) is the least costly option, both in terms of funding and political implications, but it effectively undermines any commitment to a universal quality of public protection from threats to safety;
- Option (iii) has the advantage of a more efficient use of existing levels of funding and other resources but threatens often fierce notions of political identity associated with particular local authorities within Wales (para. 6.3.2).

1.28. *Problem-solving for safer communities – the strategic operational split*. A sea-change is needed in national and local government attitudes towards community safety given its importance as a policy priority for local citizens. One key aspect of this sea-change relates to the distinction between strategic and operational ways of working for CSPs. It is suggested that there needs to be a community safety manager for every CSP with strategic problem-solving skills (para. 6.4.1).

1.29. Strategic problem-solving for community safety involves two principles which necessitate specialisation:

- detailed knowledge of received ‘scientific’ wisdom in the field;
- time and space for the strategic manager to plan sustainable reductions over the medium term employing ‘partnership intelligence’ (paras. 6.4.2-3).

- 1.30. If intelligence-led business processes are to be put into practice, a dedicated post for 'engineering' partnership work is needed. Notwithstanding the importance of senior political and officer 'buy-in', the post of community safety strategic manager – if standardised across all CSPs- would provide the missing link between leadership and front-line workers (para. 6.4.4).
- 1.31. In turn the creation of a strategic manager post would also clarify the nature of the 'appropriate skills and knowledge' associated with the range of tasks, from operational to strategic, required of community safety workers (para. 6.4.5).
- 1.32. In the medium term, the community safety manager should be located in the local authority, involving key work around mainstreaming community safety in the council in accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act as well as leading and coordinating the work of other agencies in the CSP. Difficulties will remain with these twin track roles. A radical alternative for national governments to consider would be to separate the role/person as lead local authority officer and CSP manager [with the latter centrally funded by the Home Office and Welsh Assembly Government] (para. 6.4.6).
- 1.33. There are distinct roles associated with the local authority community safety team. It is estimated that there are potentially about 100 such officers in Wales. The future development of this emerging division of labour necessitates a serious debate regarding career pathways and the professionalisation of community safety work across the too often divided worlds of policy and practice, and education and research (paras. 6.4.7-8).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on all district-level local authorities in England and Wales to establish partnerships with other responsible authorities to conduct three-yearly audits of crime and disorder and implement strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder informed by these audits. The performance of these partnerships was reviewed by the Home Office in 2005 after the second tri-annual cycle of audits and strategies. As a consequence of this review the Home Office has produced a programme of reform for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) in England and the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Wales (see the latest information on CDRP reform and national minimal standards on the Home Office web site: crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk). The reform programme proposes alterations to the statutory duty and the introduction of national minimum standards for work undertaken by these partnerships. The six hallmarks of the national minimal standards are:

- (i) empowered and effective leadership;
- (ii) intelligence-led business processes;
- (iii) effective and responsive delivery structures;
- (iv) engaged communities;
- (v) visible and constructive accountability; and
- (vi) appropriate skills and knowledge.

(Home Office, 2007, *Delivering Community Safety: A Guide to Effective Partnership Working*).

2.2. The reform programme has three main elements to it:

- alterations to the statutory duties placed on partnerships;
- the introduction of national minimum standards for work undertaken by partnerships in meeting these duties, including the Assessments of Policing and Community Safety (APACS);
- new performance targets established by the 2008/9 – 2010/11 Crime Strategy and related Public Service Agreements (PSA) on Safer Communities and the Criminal Justice System.

2.3 The key milestones of the reform programme are:

- The Police and Justice Act 2006: which removes the statutory duty to conduct three-yearly audits and strategies, replacing these with a duty to report annual strategic assessments, widens the scope of s. 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to include anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and behaviour that adversely affects the environment as considerations for all responsible authorities across the breadth of the services they deliver, imposes a duty on these authorities and probation committees to share de-personalised information, provides for the introduction of overview and scrutiny committees (OSC) for crime and disorder matters and for the Community Call for Action (CCA), which is a means by which local

citizens can require responsible authorities to take action on particular issues of crime and disorder;

- Summer 2007: definition of national minimum standards and announcement of the new crime strategy and related PSAs;
- April 2008: conduct of the first strategic assessment, full implementation of the CCA, establishment of overview and scrutiny committees² and commencement of APACS;
- April 2009: first APACS reports.

2.4 The Wales Association of Community Safety Officers (WACSO), commissioned this research to investigate the prospective impact of this reform programme on the roles performed by its members given lessons learnt from the management of community safety work since the establishment of CSPs in Wales. The key objectives of the research were to:

- Identify the roles performed by WACSO members in undertaking community safety work;
- Survey WACSO members about their capacity to perform these roles;
- Interview WACSO members and elected members with a portfolio for community safety about the expectations of the Home Office reform programme, the Welsh Assembly Government's interests in community safety and the challenges of responding to the concerns of local citizens;
- Interview other key players at the national level of policy-making (including the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Home Office Regional Office and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA));
- Identify any options for change in reforming the work of community safety officers implied by the reform programme.

2.5 The research comprised an assessment of the capacity of community safety managers in Wales to implement the new national minimum standards proposed

² Subsequently the Home Office have postponed implementation of the CCA and OSC beyond April 2008 in order to take into consideration any implications of Sir Ronnie Flanagan's independent review of policing for the local accountability of CDRPs and CSPs. At the time of writing, no deadline for the full implementation of CCA and OSC had been announced. Implementation of SAs and the commencement of APACS remains scheduled for April 2008.

for community safety work (see Appendix 1 for a discussion of the methodology and scope of the project).

- 2.6 As noted above, lead community safety officers from each of the 22 local authority districts and CSP areas in Wales participated in the research. To the authors' knowledge this is the first comprehensive research into the work of lead community safety officers in Wales. The central finding of the research is the substantial *variation* in the roles performed by these officers. In turn this reflects significant differences in the definition of community safety work and capacities for undertaking this work in the variegated local contexts inhabited by CSPs.
- 2.7 An understanding of this variation would be incomplete without reference to the impact of devolution on community safety work within Wales. Although the Welsh Assembly Government does not currently possess decision-making powers over policing and criminal justice, it does have powers over areas of social policy that are of central importance to community safety work. Specifically, the Assembly Government formulates policy on substance misuse and youth inclusion, both of which were identified as strategic priorities for the government of Wales in 2003³. As a consequence, the Assembly Government established the Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF), which according to the survey of lead community safety officers conducted for this research accounts for between 60-80% of all community safety grant-aid received by community safety partnerships in Wales. It also established the Safer Communities Fund (SCF), which priorities work with young people at risk of crime and disorder. Both funds are allocated by the Community Safety Division of the Assembly Government's Department of Social Justice and Local Government.
- 2.8 Responsibility for community safety work in Wales is consequently split between this Department of the Welsh Assembly Government, the regional Home Office in Wales and the responsible authorities for each of the 22 community safety partnerships. This partially devolved context for community safety work in Wales is an important dimension of the uneven economies of scale that confront local partnerships and lead officers in reconciling the aims and objectives of the

³ Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *Wales: A Better Country*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Assembly Government and local citizens with the Home Office's Reform Programme (see sections 4 and 5, below).

3. Roles performed by community safety officers

- 3.1 This section of the report focuses on the plurality of roles occupied by lead officers across the twenty-two localities in Wales. Throughout this discussion the significance of the different economies of scale across CSPs in Wales for undertaking sustained multi-agency community safety work will be noted although full discussion of the question of capacity follows in section 4 .
- 3.2 Documentary analysis of published community safety strategies, interviews with, and questionnaire responses from, the lead officers suggest there is a consensus of opinion regarding the targeted priorities of local community safety policy, the kind of knowledge required for undertaking community safety work and the values underpinning this work (see Table 1).

Table 1: Shared knowledge bases and values

In interview, community safety lead officers argued that they sought to balance both local and national imperatives regarding their work. When asked in the questionnaire survey to prioritise seven types of *knowledge* which underpin their own work, the following were the four top-ranked in descending order of importance:

- (1) Knowledge of the broader policy context of community safety work;
- (2) Knowledge of the organisational culture and behaviour of partnerships;
- (3) Knowledge of the causes and effective prevention of crime and disorder;
- (4) Knowledge of performance management and methods for evaluating the formulation, implementation and outcomes of community safety strategies.

The following three types of knowledge were ranked much more lowly, again in descending order of importance:

- (5) Knowledge of empowering local communities to participate in community safety work;
- (6) Knowledge of strategies for communicating with the general public and through the mass media;
- (7) Knowledge of the methods for conducting and analysing research on patterns of crime and disorder.

When asked in the questionnaire survey to prioritise the key *values* which underpin their own work, the following were top ranked in descending order of importance:

- (1) The purpose of community safety work is to promote social justice and regeneration;
- (2) The purpose of community safety work is to achieve the Welsh Assembly Government's objectives to prevent youth crime and reduce substance misuse;
- (3) The purpose of community safety work is to tackle anti-social behaviour in accordance with the Home Office Respect Agenda;

- (4) The purpose of community safety work is to achieve the objectives of the Home Office Public service Agreements (PSAs) on crime reduction;
- (5) The purpose of community safety work is to rebuild trust between citizens and public authorities.

The above responses indicate a mixture of compliance and pragmatism with regard to meeting national government targets alongside a commitment to a broad vision of social justice and social inclusion. Again these questionnaire responses corresponded closely to the views expressed by officers in the interviews undertaken.

(See Appendix 2, for a more detailed breakdown of the responses to questions 12 and 13 of the questionnaire).

- 3.3 Across the CSPs, the two highest priority areas for policy identified by lead community safety officers in both the questionnaire responses and in in-depth interviews were *Anti-social Behaviour* and *Substance Misuse*. *Fear of Crime* and *Violence* were the next top-ranked priorities (see Figure 1 on the questionnaire responses). Significantly, burglary and theft from vehicles, as well as hate crime, appeared to be less commonly shared as priorities, notwithstanding the priority that has been accorded to these areas of community safety work in recent Home Office programmes for crime and disorder reduction.
- 3.4 In terms of those areas of crime and disorder ranked least influential *Serious Organised Crime* and *Terrorism* were viewed universally as the two least important areas for local community safety work (see Figure 2 on the questionnaire responses), again, notwithstanding the priority accorded to these in the police National Intelligence Model (NIM), the establishment of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and in recent proposals for the amalgamation of constabularies in England and Wales This suggests the need for a debate over the role of CSPs in addressing the supply of substances misuse at the local level and, more generally, the contribution of partnerships to issues of public protection and organised criminality identified by levels 2 and 3 of the NIM..

Figure 1: Top ranked priorities

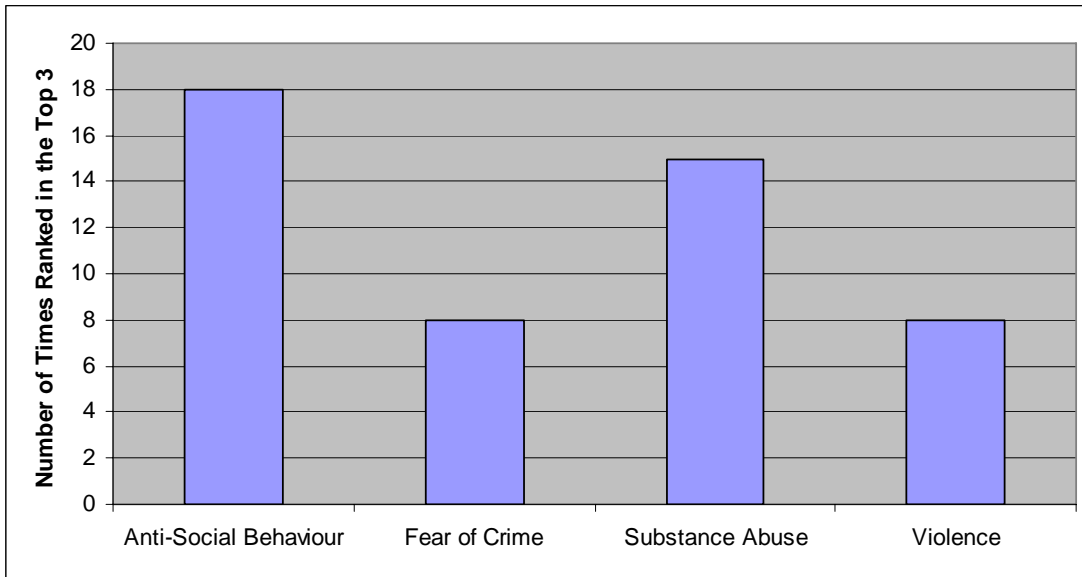
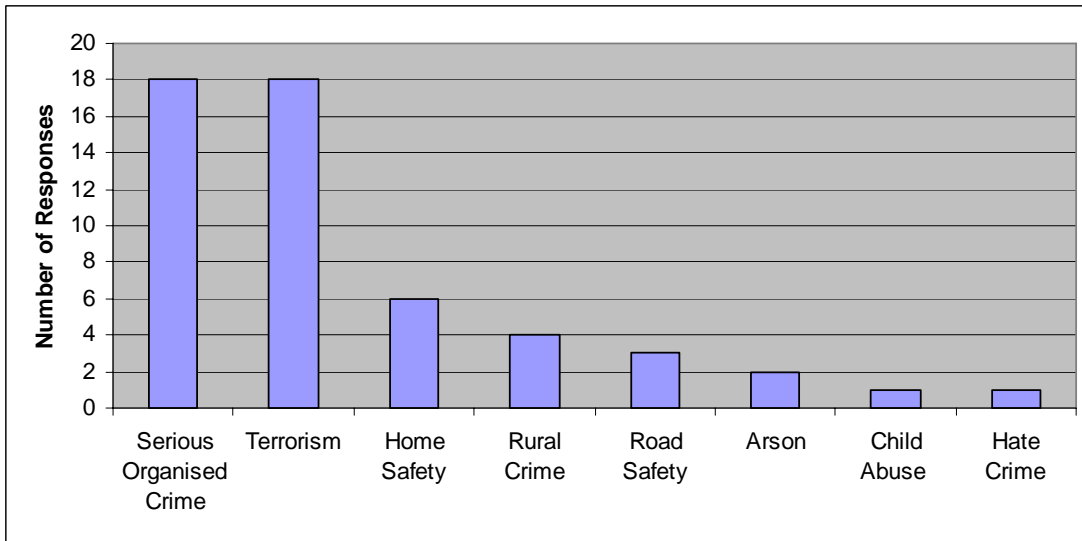


Figure 2: Lowest ranked priorities



3.2. Despite this broad consensus regarding both local priorities and underlying knowledge and values, the in-depth interviews with lead community safety officers highlighted and confirmed the uneven profile of community safety work across Wales. This uneven profile is also evident from the job descriptions database held by WACSO (see Appendix 3 for four examples of the most varying posts and job descriptions, which we term the two ‘minimal’ and two ‘maximal’ cases, associated with local authority community safety work). It is instructive to condense these detailed job specifications

of both the ‘maximal’ and ‘minimal’ cases into two starkly contrasting models of the lead officer role (strategic ‘manager’ in the maximal case and operational ‘officer’ in the minimal case). Table 2 sets out some of the key contrasts between the two contrasting cases in diagrammatic form as reflected in the formal specification of the job purpose of the post holders.

Table 2 Minimal and maximal ‘role’ specifications

<p>Minimal Case 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To take <i>operational</i> responsibility for the Council’s Community Safety work in developing partnerships with other agencies and organisations, promote a community safety culture throughout the Council’s services and engaging in other work that <i>assists</i> in progressing X’s Community Safety Strategy through the Community Safety Partnership to <i>assist</i> in reducing crime and disorder.
<p>Minimal Case 2⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To <i>develop, implement and monitor</i> the Council’s Strategic Partnerships framework and to ensure through performance management systems that all Partnerships are achieving defined objectives. To <i>assist</i> Directorates in developing service planning frameworks that support emerging Strategic Partnerships. To <i>assist</i> the Principal Partnerships Officer Unit with specific policy development and improvement functions when required within the area of Partnerships.
<p>Maximal Case 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To <i>lead, manage, drive and promote</i> the Council’s <i>strategic vision</i> with regard to community safety, by <i>co-ordinating, developing and reviewing</i>, across different Directorates, agencies and communities practical and innovative approaches to community safety, and thereby to bring about a reduction in disorder, crime and the fear of crime.
<p>Maximal Case 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Provide leadership, collaborative and innovative management</i> to achieve the aims of the Community Safety Partnership. <i>Ensure</i> effective development and delivery of community safety activities across Z to reduce crime and disorder, substance misuse and increase feelings of safety. Be <i>responsible</i> for a continual improvement in performance against national and local performance indicators related to the reduction of crime and disorder. <i>Manage strategic work</i> and undertake the <i>role of lead officer</i> on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership, stimulate partnership working, and support responsible authorities to meet statutory requirements to promote community

⁴ Note in the case of this job specification, ‘community safety’ was not explicitly mentioned. Rather the post was designated as ‘Policy Development Officer- Partnerships’.

<p>safety and to meet crime reduction targets for Z.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Initiate, proactively develop and manage strategic work</i> in relation to community safety matters for the Local Community Safety Strategic Partnership.
<p>(Italics added. For full job specifications regarding these contrasting roles see Appendix 3)</p>

3.3. It is evident from the formal requirements of the two types of role envisaged in the minimal and maximal cases that there are very different expectations associated with the ‘lead’ officers in these four examples. In the case of the two minimal examples, the role of community safety worker is that of coordinating and assisting other more senior players and undertaking what in the maximal cases would be an operational role associated with a community safety officer in the team headed by a senior community safety manager.

3.4. By way of dramatic contrast, the maximal cases explicitly envisage a strategic, leadership role for the head/manager of community safety both in the Council and the CSP. These are striking contrasts in the possible roles to be institutionalised for community safety practitioners which in these cases are neither explicable in terms of the size of the authority nor in the case of case 1 in terms of the gravity and complexity of the problems faced in the locality.

3.5. Looking across all the 22 localities, it is evident that some districts are serviced by teams of officers in excess of 6-10 members with relatively elaborate divisions of labour between those assuming responsibility for major areas of work, either substantive priorities (such as anti-social behaviour, substance misuse or domestic abuse) or thematic ones (such as data analysis, performance and financial management or commissioning). In these larger teams, the lead community safety officer was in effect a manager, whose role was described by one respondent as ‘*knitting the team together*’ as well as formulating the community safety strategy for the leadership group of the CSP. Other districts had much smaller numbers of officers, including two with only one officer for both the local authority and the CSP. In this situation community safety officers had to assume a very broad range of both managerial and operational roles.

- 3.6. Even in the relatively well-supported teams, however, senior officers expressed concern over the difficulties of strategic planning whilst managing day-to-day operations and fire-fighting emerging issues, as illustrated in the following interview extract from a community safety manager in one of the better resourced teams:

It's like forgetting to drain the swamp while you are up to your arse in alligators. It's the problem of trying to treat strategies seriously when you are constantly being dragged back into operational details. To be a general you do not need to be able to fire a gun particularly well.

Another community safety officer in one of least well resourced teams argued that, in the absence of effective leadership from both national funding bodies and the responsible authorities on the local partnership, 'fire-fighting' tended to trump broader strategic planning:

In the absence of any leadership, national, local, otherwise, community safety managers tread water and strategies atrophy into fire fighting specific problems rather than planning reductions. ...Do we ever get up to speed? It's akin to balancing plates but there's no one to pass the plates on to.

- 3.7. It is evident that it is somewhat of a misnomer to talk in the singular of *the* role of the community safety officer within Wales. In addition to the breadth of managerial, strategic and operational duties assumed by different officers, there were also significant discrepancies in the relationship to CSPs. Some officers were local authority employees with responsibility for ensuring local authorities meet their statutory duties on community safety, particularly the mainstreaming of crime and disorder reduction required by s. 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. Others were local authority employees who, in addition to this role, were also charged with managing the CSP and co-ordinating the input of other responsible authorities on the partnership. Yet others, exceptionally and uniquely, were directly employed by the partnership for this purpose or contracted-in from the voluntary sector to perform this role.

3.8. A further discrepancy was in the grade at which different local authority employees were appointed. Exceptionally some community safety officers were appointed at a level commensurate with the directors of local authority services and had a comparable influence on the senior management and political leadership of their authorities (see, for example, the two ‘maximal’ cases discussed above). In interview, these officers felt this level of seniority equipped them with the capacity to make firm commitments about the local authority’s contribution to the CSP and, in return, secure commitments on action from other responsible authorities. By contrast, officers employed at lower grades and with limited access to senior management in their own local authority struggled to commit resources from key services within the local authority and ran the risk of becoming marginalised within the CSP (see the two ‘minimal’ cases, discussed above).

3.9. Some members of WACSO expressed an interest in a uniform job description for all community safety officers within Wales, precisely as a protection against this kind of marginalisation of their work and as a means of enhancing the necessary influence that officers need to bring to bear within local authorities if they are to secure the confidence of other responsible authorities and effectively deliver the co-ordinated action required of successful partnerships against crime and disorder. The way to deliver this uniform job description was linked to various training options, ranging from level four of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) for community safety through to the ‘gold standard’ of a degree at undergraduate or masters level based at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.10. It should be noted however, that a number of respondents were highly sceptical about the relevance of higher educational qualifications for undertaking community safety work and were critical of some of the criminology degrees taken by themselves or their colleagues. Some officers were less convinced that community safety work could be clearly delineated and ‘nailed down’, as the following statement from a very experienced community safety manager attests:

A lot of it is more transferable skills. I came into community safety by default...The transferable skills are about multi-agency working, lateral thinking but also being able to understand complex information and problem solving. I’m not precious about community safety. Next year if the next big thing was some other policy area or some other work area, I would say a lot of the skills would

translate...But it's helpful to have specialist roles in the team. In the end inter-agency stuff has to be a major strand going through it. It's only then that you get the really exciting stuff.

This suggests the need for greater dialogue between HEIs and community safety practitioners about the development of curricula for equipping practitioners with the necessary skills to fulfil this rapidly evolving area of public administration.

- 3.11 It is evident from the questionnaire survey and interviews with lead officers that the pool of lead community safety officers in Wales is highly qualified in academic terms, with the overwhelming majority having either an undergraduate or postgraduate degree or diploma (see Figure 3). The majority do not have a qualification relating specifically to community safety although most of the 'new generation' officers did refer to having an undergraduate background in criminology and social sciences. All officers surveyed had received some training in community safety or crime prevention from a range of providers to which the almost universal satisfaction rating was 'quite satisfied' (see Appendix 2, results from questions 6-10).
- 3.12 In response to a question in the survey exploring support for the professionalisation of the officers' work, there was a very clear consensus on both the importance of establishing a 'national set of occupational standards' and that 'there should be a formally recognised professional association for community safety officers'. However there was a 'split vote' on the issue of whether a 'national curriculum for professional qualifications should be developed' (see Figure 4). Such views were expressed in interview also, confirming the uneven support for the full and formal professionalisation of the work and career routes of such officers. This is again suggestive of an ambiguity about specifying the knowledge-and skills-base of community safety work in a manner akin to discipline-based professions such as social workers, teachers, lawyers and probation officers.

Figure 3: Level of educational achievement

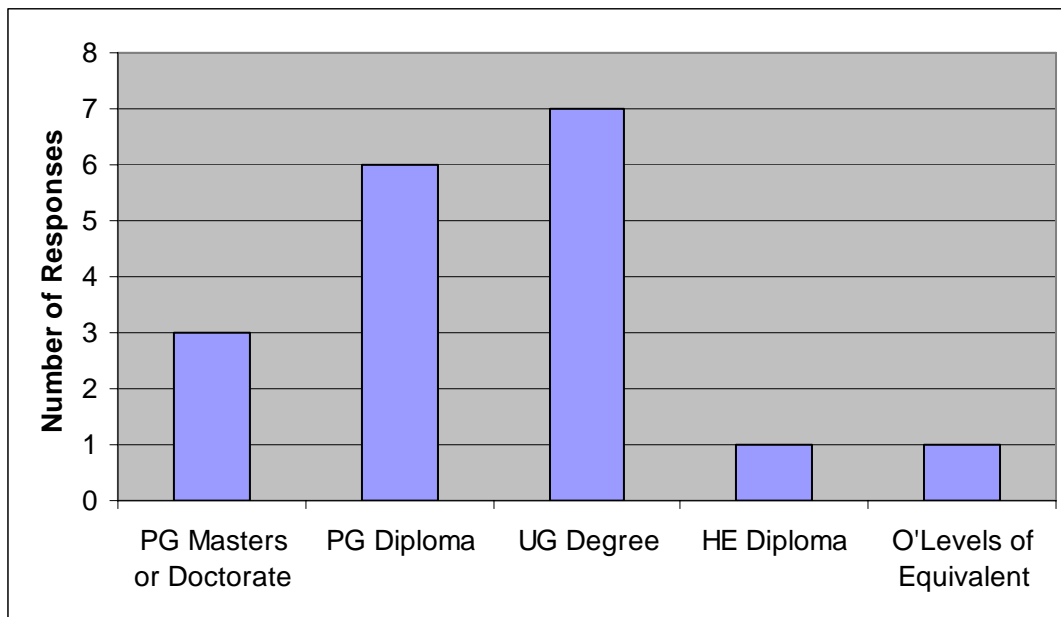


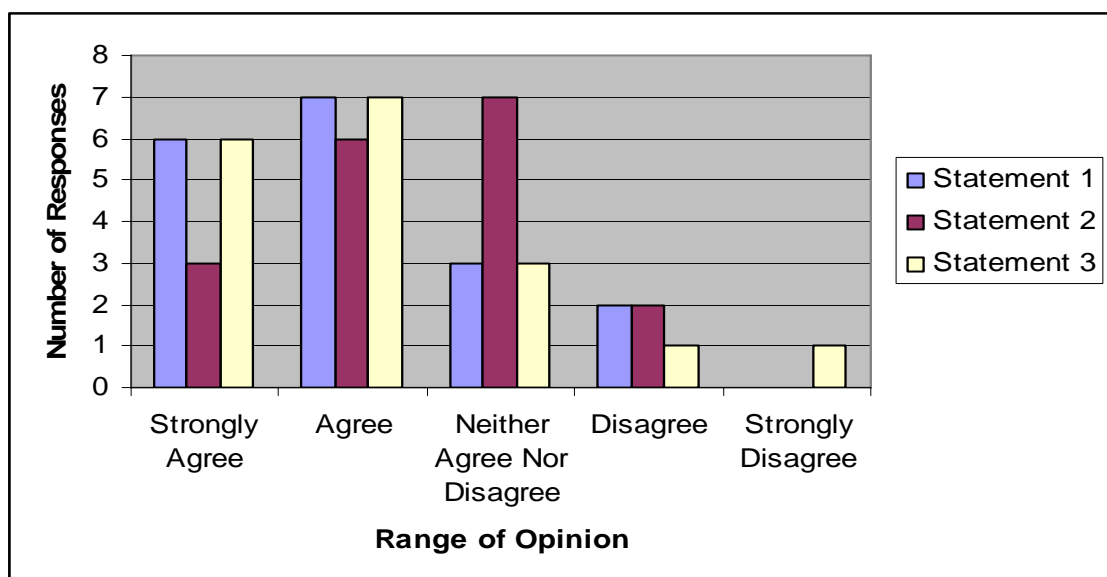
Figure 4: Responses to professionalisation

Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about community safety work:

Statement 1: there should be a national set of occupational standards;

Statement 2: there should be a national curriculum for professional qualifications;

Statement 3: there should be a formally recognised professional association for community safety officers.



4. Capacities for community safety work

- 4.1 The plurality of roles undertaken by community safety officers must also be understood in terms of the highly uneven capacities for undertaking community safety work in different Welsh localities. Findings from the research suggest that partnerships are confronted with markedly divergent economies of scale, in terms of the allocation of resources, the quality as well as quantity of community safety problems and the priority they are accorded relative to other demands on the work of partners in these localities.
- 4.2 This unevenness provokes a series of challenges for the idea of national minimum standards. A pragmatic solution would be to set minimum standards to the existing ‘lowest common denominator’ of partnership performance, although this would run counter to the very problems identified in the review of the partnership provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act and the spirit of the subsequent Home Office Reform Programme. Alternatively, using national minimum standards to raise performance above that of the existing lowest common denominator presumes the identification of benchmarks to which under-performing partnerships should aspire. There was significant ambiguity amongst respondents about the definition of such benchmarks, some suggesting they had been defined so loosely that it was not clear whether they represented any dramatic alteration to the existing practice of partnerships. In so far as the minimum standards introduce innovations, such as the annual strategic assessments and provisions for community engagement, respondents expressed concern at the decision of the Home Office to view these as ‘cost-neutral’ for which no additional resources would be provided. It was felt this decision would either produce opportunity costs of investing in strategic assessment, regular (monthly or bi-monthly) public meetings and so forth, rather than in front-line services for reducing crime and disorder, or else such innovations would simply be a re-branding of existing practices.
- 4.3 Clarifying the capacity for meeting national minimum standards, so defined, is however complicated by rudimentary difficulties in auditing the allocation of resources for community safety work. Beyond the identification of annual aggregate funding

allocations to partnerships through dedicated community safety grant programmes⁵, three basic auditing problems can be identified:

- (i) **Double-counting the core budgets of responsible authorities.** For example, the designation of existing local authority services as ‘community safety’. It should be noted, of course, that local authorities are statutorily obligated by section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to mainstream the reduction of crime and disorder across the breadth of their service provision. From an auditing point of view, however, this becomes problematic as community safety becomes synonymous with local government *per se* and, in turn, this obfuscates the resources available to partnerships to undertake work that *adds value* to this service provision. Once the double-counting of core-funded services provided by the other responsible authorities, in particular constabularies and local health boards, is taken into consideration, identifying the actual annual resources available to a partnership, its capacity, becomes a highly arbitrary, fluid and subjective problem. For example, is funding provided by a local authority for youth work *qua* youth work also community safety work? If so and if this is recognised by the local partnership and used to complement their projects for reducing offending behaviour, adding value to the partnership’s work, then such a partnership will have a greater capacity than comparable CSPs whose local authority partners choose not to invest in this discretionary area of public services.
- (ii) **Double-counting the job descriptions of community safety workers.** As noted in the discussion of the roles of community safety officers (see section 3, above), community safety work can be defined as but one element of a local authority employee’s occupation and not necessarily the principal component. In addition, and reflecting the broader challenge of auditing the consequences of compliance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, it is in principle possible to identify most local authority employees as contributing to community safety through their employment in posts that may not be obviously related to such work. Further, the contribution of such employees to the work of

⁵ There are four dedicated community safety grant programmes for Welsh community safety partnerships: Home Office Building Safer Communities fund (BSC), Home Office Basic Command Unit fund (BCU), the Welsh Assembly Government Safer Communities Fund (SCF) and the Welsh Assembly Government Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF).

community safety partnerships may also be hidden by their secondment out of their principal posts and into partnership work and back again for brief periods within the financial year. Again, the problem of identifying and then costing the actual deployment of community safety workers on partnership work that adds value to the existing service provision of the responsible authorities becomes difficult without the use of onerous (and costly) internal accounting mechanisms. This complexity is further increased when the contribution to the added value of partnership work of commercial and voluntary sector workers, not funded by dedicated community safety grant programmes, is considered. The deployment of personnel on community safety work is a major factor in the uneven economies of scale encountered by different partnerships in Wales, with some serviced by teams of officers, in which there are elaborate divisions of labour between, for example, intelligence analysts, commissioning officers, Anti-Social Behaviour Order co-ordinators etc., whilst at the other extreme there is only one community safety officer post or even a fraction of a post entailing other responsibilities to other local authority services.

- (iii) **The contribution of other grant-aid programmes.** In addition to the core funding of statutory, commercial and voluntary sector organisations, the capacity for community safety work in any particular locality can be affected by the contribution of other grant-aid programmes. These, such as the Communities First programme of the Welsh Assembly Government, which may not be specifically concerned with community safety but their impact has consequences for the acknowledged causes of crime and disorder. The challenge of auditing capacities for community safety work is further complicated by the establishment of Local Service Boards (LSBs), with a remit akin to the Local Strategic Partnerships in England of ‘joining-up’ statutory, commercial and voluntary service provision to better govern multi-faceted problems. Clearly, the advent of LSBs has significant implications for community safety work, itself regarded as a ‘wicked issue’ entailing intervention in those patterns of social and economic change thought to cause problems of crime and disorder as well as more palliative action on the immediate opportunities for offending behaviour and victimisation. Although philosophically compelling, LSBs, and the Local Service Agreements that underpin them, present further problems in auditing the

resources that have been dedicated to the added value of partnership work in community safety.

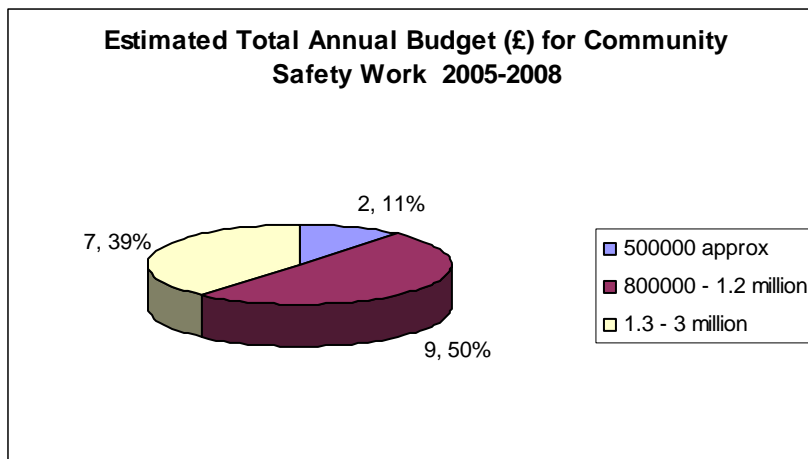
- 4.4 These problems of auditing the capacity for community safety acquire added importance given the use of comparative data on reductions in crime, such as the British Crime Survey comparator for ‘families’ of partnerships, to assess the outcomes of community safety work. The science of evaluating crime and disorder reduction is beset by problems in isolating the added value of partnership work funded out of dedicated community safety grant programmes relative to the ‘null hypothesis’ (that such reductions, or increases, would have happened anyway), or to the impact of other grant programmes and/or the provision of core-funded services.
- 4.5 Given the difficulties of measuring the real capacity of different partnerships to meet national minimum standards set above the lowest common denominator of existing performance, simple correlations between the amounts of funding received through dedicated community safety grant programmes and levels of recorded crime lack plausibility as a fair measure of partnership performance. In the absence of more sophisticated measures of the social and policy context in which community safety work is undertaken, quantitative data on the capacity for this work must be treated with caution. Even so, findings from the qualitative interviews conducted with lead community safety officers revealed widespread concerns over the economies of scale for community safety work, specifically the limited resources they felt they had relative to the quantity and quality of problems they were being asked to address in their particular locality. These are reported at length in Section 5, on the responses to the Home Office Reform Programme, but here a number of generic concerns can be noted.
- 4.6 Of all the issues raised about capacity, funding was the most common concern among officers (see Figure 5 for a summary of budget levels for 18 of the 22 CSPs). In particular the perceived short-term, and ‘last minute’ nature of the allocation of Home Office funding via the Building Safer Communities annual grant programme generated universal concern. This was contrasted with support for the Welsh Assembly Government’s three-year rolling allocation of financial support through its Safer Communities Fund and Substance Misuse Action Fund. The following quotation was typical of the concerns expressed by community safety officers:

This year on year funding is a nightmare. This year we are in May, with no indication of the current arrangements for financial allocations for the year. How can you organise, how can partnerships, how can strategies be developed on that basis. It's a joke and you've got politicians banging the tables saying 'you will do this on POPOS [Prolific and Other Priority Offenders], you will reduce your crime on negotiated targets by 19% in [locality X] by 2008'. Yes we see the sense in doing that but enable us to do it, not inhibit us, in doing it by funding and resourcing us appropriately.

Another respondent's preference was radical given the rhythms of funding associated with, and dictated by, both national and local electoral cycles:

You need minimum five years to achieve anything. Three years is not enough. The first year is developmental, second year is bedding in, third year you're getting results and what happens, you run out of funds... Ideally you want a ten year strategy... Year on year is no good for man or beast. The Assembly again is a model of good practice with the SCF [Safer Communities Fund] and the three year indicative allocation and the SMAF [Substance Misuse Action Fund]. If the Assembly can do it why can't the Home Office?

Figure 5 Estimated Total Annual Budgets



4.7. As Figure 5 illustrates, the allocation of funding from annual community safety grant programmes varies considerably with partnerships at the higher-end receiving up to six times the funding of those at the lower-end receiving £0.5m per annum. This, in turn, raises the question of the criteria for funding allocation and how it may relate to the definition and accomplishment of national minimum standards. These aggregate figures are composed of income from the four main funding programmes (see note 3, above).

4.8. The Welsh Assembly Government allocated total budgets of £4, 291, 166 in 2005/6, £4, 291, 166 in 2006/7, and £4, 591, 166 in 2007/8 for its Safer Communities Fund (SCF) amongst the 22 CSPs in Wales according to the following criteria:

- 30% divided equally between the Partnerships;
- 40% based on the Partnership's share of the youth population;
- 30% on levels of overall recorded crime.

The Assembly Government noted that:

Whilst this formula is based on the figures initially used in 2003, the percentages have never been updated to reflect the changes in population and crime etc. This is because when we tried to use the current figures to update the allocations, it meant that some CSP's would receive a significant cut in funding. On top of that in 2007-08 an additional £300k was made available. This was distributed equally amongst the CSP's providing an approximate additional 7% increase. Therefore from 2003-07 the formula

as above was based on the statistics used in 2003. For 2007-09, again the formula was used as above, also based on the stats used in 2003 but with an additional increase of approximately 7% on top.

4.9. In contrast to this per capita youth population and levels of overall recorded crime criteria, the Assembly Government allocates the Substance Misuse Action Fund according to a *needs-based* formula:

- The age-sex weighted distribution of the non-student population, weighted in accordance with the illegal substance population;
- The age-sex weighted distribution in accordance with alcohol misuse prevalence;
- The population distribution weighted by the local concentration measure of multiple deprivation;
- The population distribution weighted by the educational achievement indicator; and
- The population distribution weighted by the chosen sparsity measure.

Two further criteria have been proposed:

- The numbers of prisoners released into each locality;
- The prevalence of drug and alcohol-related crime.

The SMAF accounts for the predominant proportion of dedicated community safety funding received by CSPs in Wales. In the 2007-08 financial year, the total budget for this fund was £13,700,999, just under four times the total budget of the Assembly Government's Safer Communities Fund. The SMAF budget increased from £10,147,675 in 2006-07 and from £9,251,679 in 2005-06. This reflects the decision of the Assembly Government to make action on drug-related crime one of the top ten priorities of its strategic agenda for governing Wales announced in 2003⁶.

4.10. The proportion of CSP's budgets accounted for by the SMAF accounts for a considerable amount of the uneven capacity for community safety work across Wales. Whilst lead officers acknowledged the importance of substance misuse as a driver of volume crime, a

⁶ Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *Wales: A Better Country*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

number questioned the extent to which the priority accorded to reducing substance misuse was skewing the focus of community safety work away from the priorities identified through community engagement measures, such as the Partnerships and Communities Together Scheme (PACTS). Such public meetings routinely identify ‘youth annoyance’ as a priority, implying a broad portfolio of projects to divert young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour rather than a specific focus on drug-related crime and, within this, the treatment and rehabilitation of existing addicts. Lead officers acknowledged the Safer Communities Fund is meant to support such a broad portfolio of interventions for ‘youth inclusion’. However, a number argued the relatively limited scale of resources provided through this budget and its allocation on per capita/level of crime criteria, rather than more sophisticated needs-based criteria including indices of multiple deprivation, compromised the capacity of less well-resourced partnerships to address local priorities for community safety.

4.11. Concern over the capacity to address local priorities was also expressed by some lead officers in relation to the funding criteria and allied performance management attached to the Home Office BSC grant programme. In contrast to the annual increases in total budgets for both of the Welsh Assembly Government funds, a 13% cut in the BSC programme was announced for 2007-08. As a number of lead officers depended on this budget to employ staff, this cut was expected to have a significant and damaging impact on the maintenance of community safety teams. In addition to concern over the annual disbursement of funds from this programme, lead officers identified the focus on reducing those volume crimes identified by the British Crime Survey, for example criminal damage and household burglary, as further skewing the focus of community safety work away from locally-identified problems, such as youth annoyance. Lead officers also noted the effect of performance management through the British Crime Survey comparator ‘families’⁷. Some officers, working in partnerships judged on these criteria to be performing well, expressed concern that they were still restricted in their capacity to address the fears and priorities of local communities. These were related less to criminal activity as defined by the categories of the British Crime Survey and more to issues of

⁷ Partnerships are grouped into comparable families on the basis of population levels and crime levels for those crimes identified by the British Crime Survey. Their performance is then measured in relation to crime reduction targets, the Public Service Agreement 1 targets, and in relation to the record of comparable partnerships in reducing those types of crime identified in the British Crime Survey.

incivility, anti-social behaviour and, more generally, a breakdown in inter-generational relations amongst the local population. As one lead officer commented:

The majority of people here, in this place alone ... I'll tell you what they're affected by – kids on bikes, off-road biking, and the environmental damage they cause ...pain in the arse. Setting fire to the trees, hanging around, throwing stones, making a general nuisance of themselves, taking booze, drugs and stuff, those quality of life things...they're not incidental. They are disorder crimes and yet in terms of what we get measured by ... we never get acknowledged about that. But people who get involved in those crimes gradually gravitate to higher levels of crime that government then picks up on like criminal damage, like violence. I'm not saying it's a zero-tolerance approach but going back to that concept ... the causes of crime and where you start to pick that up and start to address that. It's a hinterland between education and trying ... and get the kids to understand and appreciate their place in society and what it is like to be responsible ... and before they become a branded criminal. It's how we need to be getting into that gap.

4.12. Some lead officers also expressed concern over the disbursement of the Home Office Basic Command Unit budget and the tensions this had, in certain partnerships, created between constabularies accustomed to controlling the allocation of BCU funds and other responsible authorities. It was felt the Home Office needed to provide greater clarity over the status over the BCU fund as a partnership not just police fund. The extent to which BCU funding can address the deficits in the capacity for community safety work left by reductions in BSC funding, the relatively limited funds allocated through the Assembly Government's SCF budget and the restrictions placed on the use of SMAF funding remains a moot point.

4.13. The allocation criteria and performance management regimes associated with the disbursement of dedicated community safety grant programmes present a series of challenges to the capacity of community safety workers to meet national minimum standards. This will be especially the case where, as predicted on the basis of current experience, local priorities identified through minimum standards of community engagement, visible and constructive accountability and effective and responsive delivery of services are in tension with performance criteria that privileges the priorities of national

funding bodies. In Wales this conundrum is further complicated by the process of devolution of powers to the Assembly Government and its commitment to developing 'citizen-centred' public services⁸.

4.14. There is also a geographical dimension to the uneven capacity for community safety work in Wales. Officers in smaller authorities at the heads of the valleys in south-Wales and in the more demographically dispersed and rural districts of north, west and mid-Wales reported the considerable difficulties these authorities had in meeting statutory duties across the breadth of their service directorates. This simply left no additional capacity for supplementing grant-aid from the Home Office and WAG to match the appointment of large community safety teams made by larger authorities in south-Wales.

4.15. Even here, however, certain authorities had elected not to make community safety a priority area for investment in staffing or core funding. This clearly raises broader issues for the reform of community safety work in Wales in establishing minimum standards that do not represent substantial opportunity costs for the delivery of other public services but successfully promote the capacity of partnerships to add value to the contribution that core-funded public services and other grant programmes may make to safer communities. As one lead officer remarked, the capacity for community safety work in many localities remains:

brittle and vulnerable to collapse and stagnation as community safety managers move on, fall ill etc.

In the words of another lead officer:

Very poor is the overall picture. The picture in [locality X], and you may find this elsewhere, the key players in the partnership do not see themselves as the partnership. They think in terms of council first and partnership second, police first and partnership second. So they still see the partnership as some separate

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (2006) *Making the Connections – Delivering Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Public Services in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government; Welsh Assembly Government (2007) *One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

entity rather than as themselves. 'You know you are the partnership' is something I have to keep reminding people of.

5 Responses to the Home Office reform programme

- 5.1. Anticipation of the reform programme has been mixed among lead officers. Support for performance measures to improve the quality and protect the integrity of community safety work is qualified by concerns over the need for discretion to tailor bespoke responses to locally-specific problems alongside the issues relating to plurality of roles and capacity highlighted in Sections 3 and 4.

- 5.2. The problem of the uneven commitment of responsible authorities to the work of CSPs in Wales and CDRPs in England was a key finding of the review of the Crime and Disorder Act conducted in 2005. It is one of the main considerations of the Home Office Reform Programme, as illustrated particularly by the specification of the first national minimal standard (NMS) for 'empowered and effective leadership'. Interviews conducted with lead officers considered the likely impact of this standard, alongside that of the other five

thematic areas for minimum standards (i.e. ‘intelligence-led business processes’, ‘effective and responsive delivery structures’, ‘engaged communities’, ‘visible and constructive accountability’, and ‘appropriate skills and knowledge’), on the prospective challenges for the work of community safety officers in Wales.

- 5.3. On the basis of the interviews with both lead CSP officers and national respondents from the Assembly, Home Office and Welsh Local Government Association, there is broad support for establishing NMS in this still relatively new field of expertise and practice⁹. At the same time as broad support for NMS was evident, there is evidence of concerns shared again across local and national government levels in Wales over the lack of ‘teeth’ behind the new proposed standards. According to one of the lead officers, the NMS:

Still leaves it far too open to interpretation with LAs [local authorities] with how they’ll define a community safety officer. And this is why what influence this important work [this research and report] will have in the 22 unitary authorities is going to be questionable.

- 5.4. In this section the responses to the six thematic areas of the NMS are outlined. The section concludes with a broad overview of the challenges and opportunities opened up by the NMS in the Welsh context of CSPs.

5.5 Effective and empowered leadership

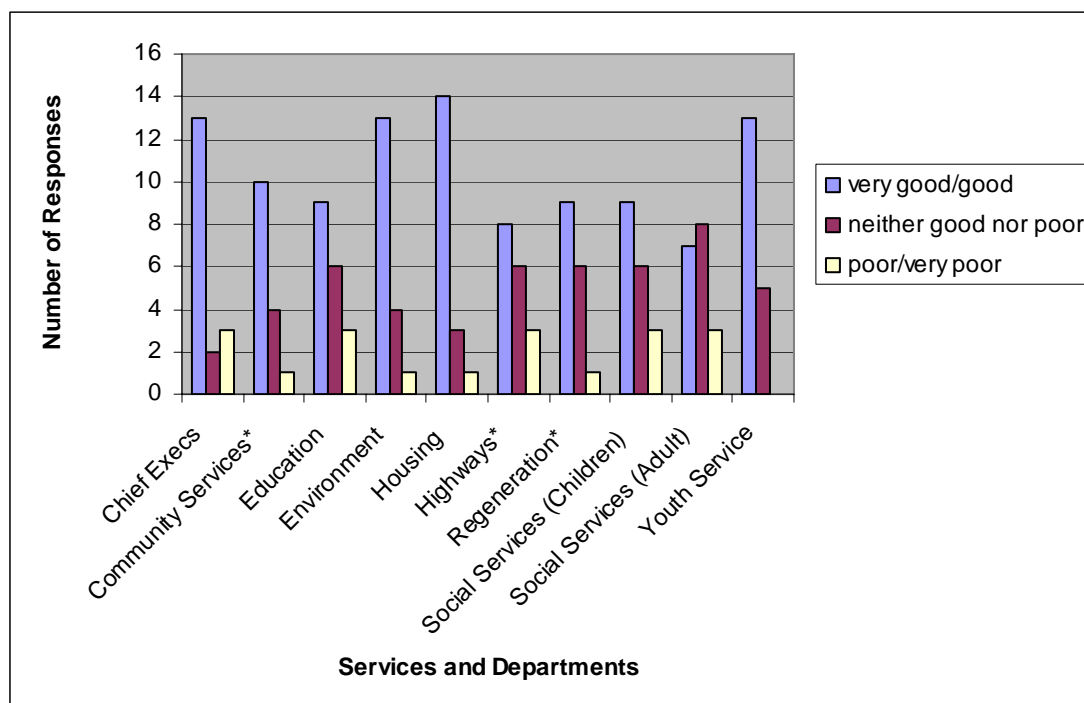
- 5.5.1** Tellingly the notion of effective and empowered leadership was regarded by the majority of community safety officers as being synonymous with the commitment of senior officers within the responsible authorities of the CSPs, rather than involving any strategic leadership from democratically elected members. This reflects the limited character of both the perceived and actual role of councillors in CSPs, a view that in turn was shared by the elected members that were interviewed. In particular, most lead officers placed a great deal of importance on leadership from the chief executive of the local authority (alongside the senior police commander) or, failing this, commitment

⁹ Note elected council members with a portfolio including community safety interviewed in this research project did not for the most part show any knowledge about the new proposed standards.

from one of the main service directors of the local authority to ‘champion’ community safety across the breadth of the authority’s service areas.

5.5.2 Community safety strategies in Wales (as in England) remain, as they have since the Home Office-sponsored Morgan Report into *Safer Communities* published in 1991, overwhelmingly ‘officer-driven’ and ‘officer-owned’. The widespread view among our respondents was that having close connections between the CSP and the chief executive of the local authority would improve and help secure both the commitment of resources and the more intangible goal of cultural change within local authority departments and services. This was summarised by one lead officer as ‘*putting community safety on the political agenda of other services*’. It does not of course imply any such sea-change in the leadership role of other, non-local authority-based, responsible authorities.

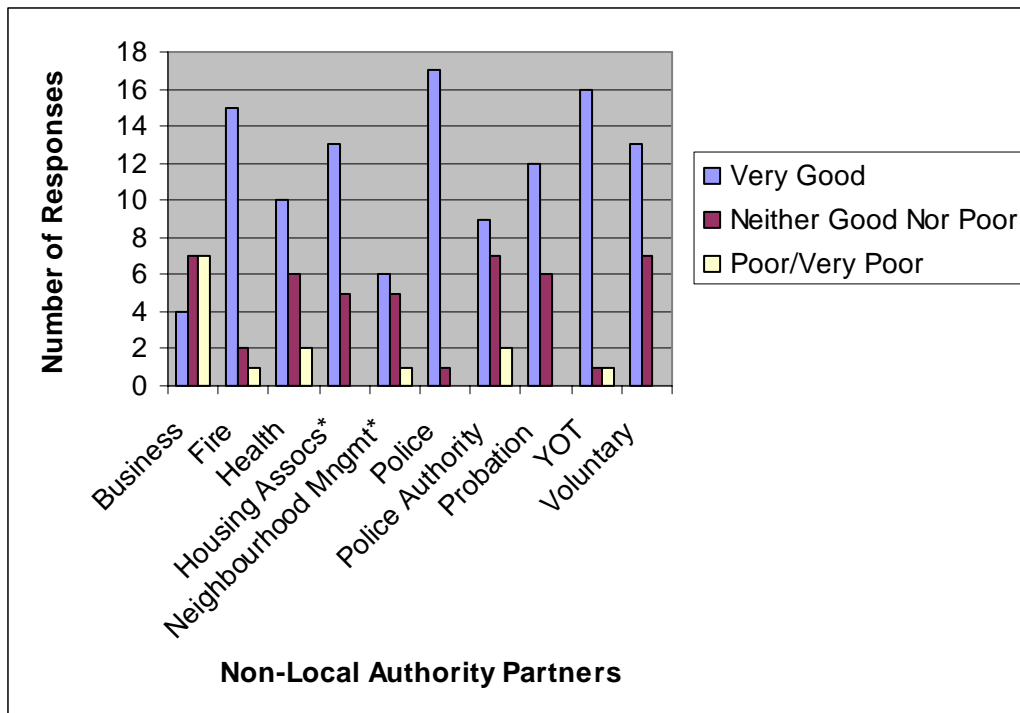
Figure 6: Engagement of local authority service areas with CSPs



5.5.3 Responses to the questionnaire survey and more strikingly in the interviews with lead officers identify an uneven commitment from both local authority departments and services as well as across the other responsible authorities and possible partners (see

Figures 6 and 7 on questionnaire responses to, respectively, the engagement of local authority service areas with CSPs and the engagement of non-local authority partners with CSPs). For the most part CSPs operate as duopolies of the local authority and the police constabulary. In turn, the priorities of the partnerships are influenced primarily by the main national funding bodies for community safety work alongside the local authority and local constabulary: namely the Regional Home Office in Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government (see Figure 8 on the consistently high ranked and most influential organisations on the work of CSPs from the questionnaire data).

Figure 7: Engagement of non-local authority partners with CSPs



5.5.4 Other responsible authorities, such as Fire, Health, Police Authority and Probation were perceived by officers as varying in the level of commitment. According to one officer, reflecting on the experience of partnership working with health agencies:

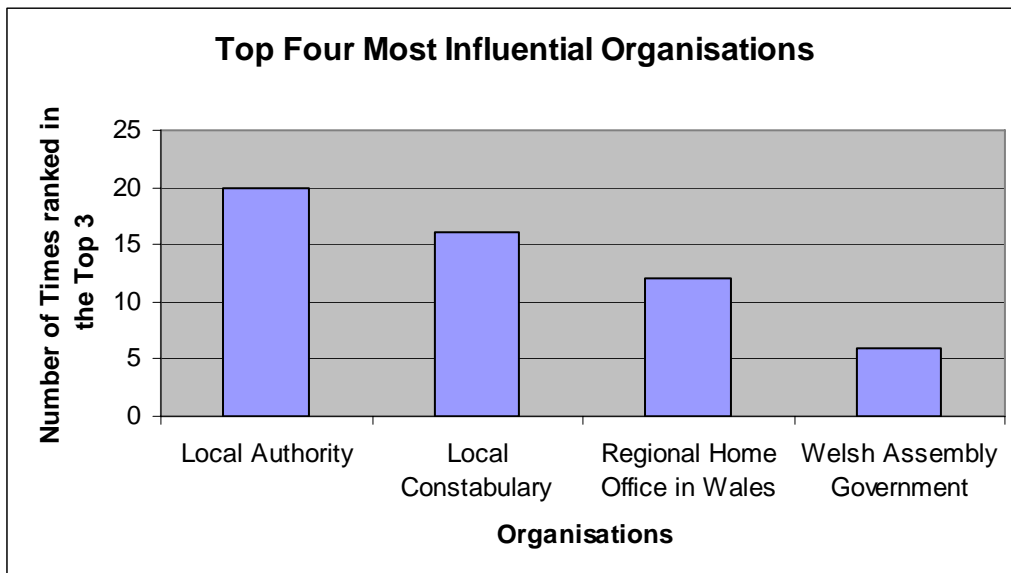
It hasn't really kicked into mainstream health...It's very telling that in the first leadership group meeting of the partnership all the health people were sat there, waited 'til substance misuse had gone and then got up and walked out. It was a

physical statement that we're only here cos of that particular agenda. And even there, their interest in that part of the agenda [substance misuse] is marginal.

According to the same manager, the partnership may be viewed as:

almost like a gentleman's club with a dish of the day where we get together and discuss what is today's community safety dish. There's no organisational change that happens as a result of the CSP. As I said in terms of officer buy-in, that's because there isn't any or very little.

Figure 8: Most influential organisations on the work of community safety officers



5.5.5. 'Real' organisational and cultural change is widely regarded as vital to mainstreaming the preventive approach to crime and disorder reduction associated with community safety. In 1991 the influential Morgan Report argued that '[a]t present crime prevention is a peripheral concern for all agencies involved and a truly core activity for none of them' (Home Office, 1991: 3). Today such a conclusion would have to be tempered in the light of the significant developments over the last decade; and yet it is a viewpoint that may still ring true for many of those agencies beyond the local authority community safety teams and the local police. There thus remains urgent work to be done in advancing the community safety agenda within other partners.

5.5.6. Any strategic leadership role for elected members appears limited and for the most part non-existent, both in the eyes of those officers and elected members interviewed.

Although the questionnaire responses on the role of elected members tended to suggest they made a ‘good’ contribution to the working of the CSP (see Appendix 2, question 3), interview findings suggest a largely passive role for the lead elected member on the CSP.

5.5.7. Elected members interviewed saw their key role as that of being supportive of the work of the lead officer in particular and whatever the officers on the CSP developed as its strategy. In turn, according to both lead officers and the sample of councillors interviewed, the Scrutiny Committee meetings made up of elected councillors and intended to make lead officers and local authority departments democratically accountable were viewed as of marginal importance to the work of the CSP. The following comment from one of the most active and experienced elected members captures the strictly limited strategic role for councillors in community safety work:

I'm not sure as elected members we play much part in the strategy –it's something we're presented with. And we get on with it. There was consultation but it's like 'ticks in the box' consultation as far as I remember it. It wasn't a full debate around a table 'cos if I think we had had that debate now – full and honest- about the priorities in X it would be clear to me what the priorities should be and not necessarily the same as I've already said [referring to the Home Office crime reduction targets and what the funding bodies want as against local concerns over anti-social behaviour and quality of life issues.]

5.5.8 Any role for elected members beyond that of the largely ‘tame’ and supportive portfolio holder was viewed by most officers with a mixture of concern about the inability of members to see the bigger picture, due to a combination of such factors such as limited capacity, very broad and changing portfolios, lack of professionalism and of course the short-term political dictates of the electoral cycle. As one lead officer commented:

What's coming out of members' mouths are ward issues ... They can't help it [the bigger community safety picture]. They're not prepared. I don't think it's really sunk in what partnership working is all about.

5.6 Intelligence-led business processes

5.6.1. There is a consensus across most lead officers that, in the short-to-medium-term, the evidential base informing the identification and prioritisation of problems for CSPs will be driven by police intelligence systems, such as IQUANTA and the National Intelligence Model (NIM). This is unsurprising given the investment that constabularies have put into intelligence-led policing over the past decade and the accumulated expertise in intelligence analysis available to their Basic Command Units. In addition to the relatively under-developed and under-conceptualised character of shared intelligence for the work of CSPs, local partnerships continue to encounter a range of ethically and politically complex challenges for sharing data within as well as between responsible authorities.

5.6.2. Particular challenges have arisen over sharing data between such agencies as health and social services, education, youth offending teams and the police about individuals, groups and neighbourhoods variously defined as a threat or as vulnerable, in need of enforcement or welfare etc.. Again, it is unsurprising that such ethical challenges arise in relation to information sharing as the kind of knowledge produced through intelligence-led processes reflects competing definitions of what causes threats to community safety.

5.6.3. Even so, it was widely acknowledged by lead officers that the information and intelligence required by CSPs should be partnership-wide and focussed preventively on what one officer termed '*the social, economic and environmental drivers*' of crime and disorder trends. At the same time there was a commonly held pragmatic attitude that progress toward the production of such intelligence was a long way off. Few CSPs had their own dedicated intelligence analysts and most instead relied on those employed by the police. The predominant view of lead officers was that, despite a recognition that community safety was not reducible to crime reduction but also encompassed the broader remit of '*reassuring people, rebuilding communities*', police-driven intelligence-led processes focused on short-term situational and reactive responses are likely to prevail.

5.6.4. An acid test for this thematic 'hallmark' of a succeeding CSP will be the production of the first annual strategic assessments in Spring 2008. It was thought likely that the Home Office guidance on the suggested content for a partnership assessment document will be

met in the short-term through reference to a relatively narrow dependence on admixtures of police intelligence and observations made at public meetings, such as the Partnerships and Communities Together schemes (PACTs).

5.6.5. However, a number of lead officers identified the importance of aspiring toward the production of partnership intelligence as a pre-requisite of genuine problem-solving for safer communities. Such intelligence would draw upon the enormous volume and breadth of social, demographic and geographical data that is being made available through the digital storage of information by statutory, commercial and voluntary sector organisations. The revolution in digital technologies for the collection, storage, retrieval and analysis of data about social trends amongst populations as small as those covered by the 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOA's) of the census (about 2,000 households per LSOA), presents hitherto unimagined opportunities for intelligence on patterns of crime and victimisation and their interrelationship with other patterns of social change. One officer discussed these possibilities at length, emphasising their importance for diagnosing the problems of community safety:

..since 1998, the majority of CDRPs/CSPs have neglected the 'causes of crime' in their analysis, relying too heavily on police and criminal intelligence data and not enough on social, economic and environmental factors that drive crime and disorder. The bullet points under 'Minimum Standards' should emphasise the need to analyse and tackle the causes, not just repeatedly rely on short-term situational responses...that's not problem-solving!!...I have always thought that there's nothing essentially wrong with NIM, except that what you get out of it (by way of intelligence-led responses) is only as good as what you put into it. Feed it only with the usual data streams and NIM will provide you with the usual short-term police-dominated responses...

Without going into exhaustive lists, there is certainly a huge amount of geo-demographic data that can be shared at postcode, street and ward levels – available from local authorities and other government sources (Welsh Assembly Government, COI, etc.).

These include, for example, the Index of Multiple Deprivation, information about numbers and types of benefit claimants (including housing, disability, sickness etc.), information about housing types, tenure and housing quality, information about employment, employers, training, educational attainment, literacy, numeracy and levels not just of exclusion from school but also truancy, special educational needs, mental and emotional health of pupils, involvement of educational welfare officers (how many cases per school?). How about the numbers of young people attending youth groups or out-of-school activities or

engaging with detached youth workers in any given location within a CDRP/CSP area?

Other categories of useful problem-solving information collected by local authorities include all aspects of licensing (including hot food, take-aways, taxis etc.), environmental (void properties, land usage, street furniture, street-lighting levels, adopted/unadopted highways, paths, alleys, gullies, land ownership, pollution levels) leisure, libraries and parks (numbers, types and times of users). Social services can provide information about numbers of looked after children, children on the at risk register, vulnerable adults and a whole raft of social care information that assist in building up a meaningful picture to assist multi-agency problem-solving.

Other obvious information types should include anything relating to the data gathered by substance misuse (including alcohol) treatment and intervention providers, whether statutory or voluntary sector. The information will certainly be available to the service commissioners.

These are just a few examples off the top of my head as a starter for 10. I suspect there are statistical experts who could come up with a more comprehensive list of information categories.

5.6.6. In these terms, the call for partnership intelligence entails the compelling argument that CSPs cannot expect to adequately solve the problems of safer communities without a *substantive* knowledge of the causes of these problems. In turn, such causal analysis will be enabled and shaped by the breadth and quality of intelligence collected by partnerships. Innovations in intelligence gathering about local populations that have occurred as a consequence of current concerns over actual levels of migration in the UK, also have implications for community safety. Scepticism about the veracity and quality of the 2001 census returns for gaining rudimentary intelligence on the size and composition of local populations has led authorities to seek other sources of data, such as registers of school pupils, patients of general practitioners, labour force surveys and so forth. Understanding the profile of local populations is a pre-requisite of developing partnership intelligence into the interaction of various social trends with patterns of crime and victimisation in these populations.

5.7 Effective and responsive delivery structures

5.7.1 The issue of how to improve delivery structures returns us to a recurrent question raised throughout this research: namely how to balance both the lead Local Authority officer role and that of the lead CSP manager. Currently most lead officers are occupying both roles. It is also understandable why local authorities

want to see the lead community safety officer as ‘their’ person rather than belonging to the often ‘virtual’ multi-agency CSP given their effective underpinning of the community safety strategy in each locality. As one CSM manager notes with regard to the resourcing of CSPs by responsible authorities, ‘*Local Authorities are making a contribution but who else? Zilch!*’

5.7.2. In terms of the lived experiences of lead officers the division between the strategic and operational is not hard and fast. Several explicitly described community safety as being viewed as ‘*dumping ground*’ or ‘*bin*’ in which issues which did not fit anywhere else easily in the local authority were passed onto the community safety team. There was also a concern expressed widely that the expectations by from within and without the CSP were too great, a tension linked to the very broad remit in part opened up by the use of the term ‘community safety’ in preference often to ‘crime and disorder reduction’ or ‘crime prevention’. That said, most officers did draw attention to the progress being made in recent years in terms of developing leaner and more focused group work at the operational level.

5.7.3. It is evident that we remain ‘light years’ away from genuinely pooled budgets for partnership working and perhaps one radical option would be to have direct Treasury funding of CSPs – as a new multi-agency service with ‘central contracts’ for partnership coordinators and CSPs themselves. Perhaps this would constitute what one local manager termed a genuine ‘*revolution against silos*’ but it departs so radically from current political and organisational realities as to be utopian.

5.8 Community engagement

5.8.1. According to most lead officers, community engagement was a complex issue which the NMS did not seriously address other than tokenistically and rhetorically. In turn, most adopted a pragmatic approach to the prospect of delivering this minimal standard, with a majority accepting that the rolling out of neighbourhood policing panels (termed Partnerships and Communities Together [PACTs] in much of Wales) would provide the most convenient, if by no means unproblematic, means of meeting this requirement.

5.8.2. This pragmatic acceptance of what is effectively a ‘police model’ of community engagement was in part due to the problems of capacity on both the local authority’s and the CSP’s part rather than necessarily any lack of commitment in principle. For some lead officers the police led model would also be supplemented by the local authority’s own citizen focus groups, community forums, and requirements around scrutiny and overview by elected members etc.

5.8.3. It was also felt that inter-organisational conflicts, as well as limited resources and capacities, would constrain innovative and effective community engagement. In turn, there were concerns raised that the outcomes of the police-driven PACT forums could be counterproductive in building up unrealistic expectations among citizens of engagement and responsiveness raised by the PACTs, resulting in frustration and further disillusionment. According to some lead officers, PACTs were seen as both ‘*heavily police-driven*’ and simplistic with regard to the nature of the community consultation and local democratic accountability more broadly (see 5.7). One manager, mimicking the police approach to such consultation exercises, suggested that the rationale for PACTs appeared to be the following:

Give us your top of the pops [of local concerns] and we undertake to take action by the next meeting.

According to another lead officer:

To the police, PACT is the be all and end all of community engagement. We know they’ve had problems with it from the start in that it is that classic, who turns up at the public meeting and it’s all the usual suspects. People who are reasonably empowered, feel comfortable attending a public meeting, feel comfortable standing up and speaking, so it’s not your people for whom English is not a first language, BME people, gay and lesbian people, young, elderly frail who don’t feel able to get out of their house. So all of a sudden you’re getting your priority, your policing policy, community safety partnership priority for that PACT area skewed ‘cos you’re taking one particular viewpoint and not all the viewpoints of that community.

5.8.4. According to a small number of lead officers the most productive way forward for PACTs, budgeted tellingly as ‘partners and communities together’ rather than ‘police

and communities together’ was for such forums to become just one element of a broader and multi-agency neighbourhood management model of consultation and engagement and element in what one officer termed ‘*partnership intelligence*’ (see also 5.6 above). Such an option for change would appear to fit more easily with the ambition of community engagement in this field not being driven by a police agenda on crime and its control but rather with community safety viewed and understood more generically, multi-dimensionally and joined-up in character.

5.9 Visible and constructive accountability

5.9.1 The issue of accountability is largely and tellingly interpreted by most lead officers as relating to meeting the auditing requirements of the national funding bodies. In other words, most of the issues associated with accountability are viewed as being financial and concern meeting performance management targets rather than being political in the sense of local democratic accountability. CSPs would thus appear to remain largely untouched by issues of local democratic accountability.

5.9.2 Even at the level of financial accountability respondents noted that there are problems in making a non-legal entity such as a CSP accountable for its actions. Again, it was accepted pragmatically by lead officers that most of the accounting processes associated with the CSP ended with the local authority and themselves as lead officers. Any accountability to the communities in the CSP locality was generally seen as tokenistic and rhetorical (as evidenced also in views on community engagement above 5.8) and as the following statement from an elected member makes clear:

Accountability: I'm not sure that the wider public understand the CSP. We could do a lot better , there's lots of issues we are not hitting There is an awful lot of work to do on that, making it clear how we are accountable to the people we are serving , despite Beecham's citizen led service delivery [major WAG report promoting citizen-focussed public services in Wales]

5.10 Appropriate knowledge and skills

5.10.1 The discussion of the nature of the core knowledge and skills required to undertake successful community safety work in Home Office statements on NMS is vague and

unspecified. This may be due to the wider uncertainty about whether community safety work should be seen as a discrete activity undertaken by experts or something which defies specialisation and instead needs to be understood as a way of thinking and practice which infuses both all partnership work and public agency practices.

5.10.2. The lack of ‘teeth’ with regard to what are the minimal skills and knowledge required for successful CSP work is also linked to the lack of any extra resources to bring about the reform programme more generally. In the questionnaires, one-to-one interviews and the focus group with lead officers, the nature of the core skills and knowledge bases associated with both their role, and where applicable, those of other members of the team were explored. The interviews and the focus group interview also explored how these skills might be best acquired alongside the key issue of career routes for members of community safety teams. There was no consensus across the lead officers as to how community safety knowledge and skills should be acquired although there was broad agreement as to what the knowledge base and values should be (see Table 1 in Section 3). In order to meet the challenges of the reform programme, the discussion which emerged in the focus group suggested that officers require further education and training in the ‘strategic problem-solving’ entailed in ‘best practice’ and sustainable community safety work. Arising out of this focus group discussion, ‘strategic problem-solving’ was thus identified as key if still often aspirational feature of the future role of the community safety ‘manager’. We return in depth to this key issue in the final section of the report on ‘Options for Change’.

5.10.3 The changing demography of these lead officers was also identified by the focus group as a major challenge for renewing the capacity for community safety work, with long-term public servants being replaced by younger, less-experienced, officers. In the course of the focus group interview with WACSO members, the issue of career routes, individual aspirations and more broadly the inter-generational challenges for the future capacity of community safety officers emerged as a key concern. Both older/more experienced and younger/newer participants expressed a concern that entering the community safety world in local authorities was a ‘*closed circle*’ and the career ambitions of younger staff was akin in some ways to waiting to fill ‘*dead men’s shoes*’. This collective

discussion indicates that a renewed debate on the professionalisation of the work of community safety staff is urgently required across all levels of government in Wales.

5.11 Conclusions on the reform programme

5.11.1 Concerns over existing capacities to deliver community safety strategies were central to all lead officers' responses to these core elements of the Home Office reform programme. Respondents uniformly expressed surprise at the Home Office's view that strategic assessments and APACS, along with community engagement, would be 'cost-neutral', rather than requiring a commensurately greater investment of funding for CSPs.

5.11.2 As expressed by a minority of managers in the larger community safety teams, the shift from what may be termed police-driven intelligence to that of genuinely 'partnership intelligence' with its own 'data warehouse' speaks to an ambitious new project which might offer the exciting prospect of providing genuinely joined-up solutions to multi-dimensional problems. The development of partnership intelligence offers the prospect of appropriate solutions to what are complex, multi-faceted problems across departmental silos, but such work would also uncover the very real barriers embedded in existing institutional arrangements, as the following comment from a community safety manager notes:

We'll be looking for real partnership responses. That's where we are going to hit the barriers. It might be very apparent that what we need are youth outreach workers and some social work or something. But if as a local authority we don't have the capacity or we've sent the troops elsewhere to meet a different agenda, then that's where we need the leadership buy-in. By creating the system it will highlight all of the weaknesses and flaws and makes it a lot harder to ignore.

5.11.3. As noted above, many officers pointed to the limited capacity of both themselves, their teams (where applicable) and the CSP partners more broadly to meet the NMS. The position which emerged from interviews with senior Welsh Assembly Government and Home Office representatives in Wales was both pragmatic about the actual rigour of these standards and how they could be minimally met but also

challenging of the community safety lead officer consensus about their own strategic and axial role. The key logic of the position emanating from these national bodies was one which emphasised collective ownership and thus collective responsibility for meeting NMS across the most senior members of responsible authorities together with a circumscribed role for the local community coordinator employed by the Local Authority. This position is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: ‘The view from above’: meeting NMS via the sharing responsibility and pooling the resources of the partnership leadership group

The position taken by both the Assembly and Home Office representatives assumes that all responsible authorities (RAs) need to bring and share their resources around the partnership table, particularly with regard to the new local strategic assessments to be put in place by CSPs by 2008. In passing this is also a view shared in large measure by those lead officers struggling to be heard in their local authorities. According to the Home Office and Assembly representatives interviewed, there is a key role for ‘senior managers’ rather than ‘community safety partnership coordinators’ who ‘*do not bring anything to the table, in the main that’s the chief executive and strategic directors*’. Questioning the appeal to ever more training, one of the national level policy makers noted:

At the end of the day you can only train people so far, at the end of the day they have to have a bit of nous and a wider view and you need the support and supervision of senior management if it’s going to go well. ..So you could run umpteen training courses for the officer leads but if they’re not getting the buy-in and drive and commitment from elsewhere, it’s not going to happen...Because they [community safety officers] don’t bring the authority to the table in terms of being able to deliver. In terms of the local authorities it’s usually the Chief Exec that can actually make things happen.

With regard to the forthcoming production of local strategic assessments, the same policy maker argued for extending responsibility for delivering NMSs to the CSP as a whole rather than upgrading the role and status of what she termed ‘community safety coordinators’:

I don't see why partnerships are saying they haven't got the level of expertise. Resources exist within the wider partnership rather than dedicated officers. They don't need to exist within the dedicated policy officers...It's about how the officers can get this information from other parts of the partnership...the police have got a lot of this expertise...the health board has data at its finger tips. The partnership is not the one or two CSP officers.

The role envisaged for the community safety coordinator is thus circumscribed and non-strategic in nature:

The best they can hope to achieve is to get the partners to meet regularly, have proper paper work, look how to take decisions, bring that forward rather than being in a position to drive it.

In a similar fashion the other national-level policy maker/advisor argued that we must distinguish aspiration and reality with regard to the ambitions for community safety and the professionalisation of community safety practitioners:

As facilitators of the CSP they hold the reins for the leadership group; galvanise others into action; translate into action the aspirations from the vision...Strategic leadership groups then need to go back and champion.

5.11.4. The arguments presented in Table 3 provide a powerful case for both greater responsibility and ownership by the most senior managers both within the local authority and across all legally responsible authorities. It assumes that Chief Executives in local authorities and their equivalents in other service areas will be the strategic movers and shakers. In this scenario, the role of the lead community safety officers is understandably that of a crucial but more humble 'coordinator' of the pooled expertise rather than a strategic manager in their own right. We return to this debate in the final section of the report and question the viability of this interpretation of how CSPs and their attendant strategies both are currently and might be in the future be developed and implemented.

5.11.5. Despite national government assumptions about the 'cost-neutral' nature of the reform programme, local community safety officers felt that smaller authorities would struggle to produce much beyond rudimentary strategic assessments premised on police data in the absence of increased support and resourcing,

whether through the dedicated funding streams for community safety work and/or an element in the local authority Standard Spending Assessment (SSA).

5.11.6. More broadly, a tension was identified in the proposed national minimum standards between, on the one hand, an emphasis on rational-bureaucratic methods identifying the priorities of community safety work through strategic assessments and ‘intelligence-led business processes’ and, on the other hand, popular-democratic methods enabling local citizens to identify short-term, often parochial, issues associated with the call for ‘community engagement’. It is likely that this tension will be a recurrent theme throughout the imminent development of strategic assessments in forthcoming years.

5.11.7. The precariousness and unpredictability of CSP funding was identified as the core issue underpinning current problems of partnership working. Some officers felt that if the national minimum standards are to be met, community safety needs to be reformed as a discrete professionalized local authority service, analogous to social services, education or health. There was, however, significant disagreement over this idea as other officers maintained that community safety could not become a professional service without compromising its original vision and defining attribute as a problem-solving exercise in joining-up existing public services to better tackle the complex and multi-faceted qualities of crime and disorder.

5.11.8. Even so, if community safety is to retain its core mission of problem-solving through joined-up action, it still requires more stable funding to plan and sustain reductions in crime and disorder, central to which is the recruitment, retention and development of multi-skilled and motivated staff. Regrettably, in many of the localities visited in this research, officers reported a high level of demoralisation and disenchantment amongst staff predominantly employed on short-term, unpredictable and casualised employment contracts which many vacate as soon as more stable and rewarding jobs become available.

5.11.9. It should be noted again that the national minimum standards were broadly welcomed as a means of consolidating and promoting the valuable work

undertaken by CSPs. However, without provisos on a more stable funding regime, it was felt these standards are unlikely to be met. In particular it was felt that minimum standards for staff development, equipping officers with the level of advanced skills entailed in strategic assessment, APACs and community engagement, are unlikely to be achieved amongst staff who are rewarded for their work with some of the most precarious employment conditions in the public sector.

6 Options for change

6.1. Our understanding is that this research project represents the first all-Wales survey of community safety work, albeit focussed on the views of the lead community safety officers in each of the 22 local partnerships in the country. In these terms it should be viewed as an initial scoping exercise of the capacities which these officers have to undertake the duties presented to them in the variegated institutional and social contexts in which they work. Although the research was not intended as an evaluation of community safety partnerships, nor could it be without a broader representation of the views of workers from other partner agencies and a more complex set of case studies of the processes and outcomes of their work over a meaningful period of time, the day-to-day work of most of the lead officers is so bound-up with that of the partnerships that an understanding of their past, current and prospective work cannot be easily demarcated from the operation of the particular partnerships they service. Hence, the centrality of the Home Office Reform Programme to an understanding of these roles.

6.2. It follows that any debate about options for reforming the roles of community safety officers, to address the barriers to effective practice identified in their responses to this research, also implies a debate about the reform of partnership working. In this concluding section, the options for reforming the work of community safety officers that emerged out of the interviews and the focus group discussion of this research are considered in terms of two basic themes: the economies of scale confronting officers in fulfilment of the duties that can be assigned to the post of strategic manager and the strategic/operational split in problem-solving for safer communities.

6.3. Economies of scale

6.3.1. It was recognised rightly by many respondents in the research that community safety is still a relatively new area of public service, which competes with more established and equally needy services in the struggle over policy priorities and scarce resources. In this context a number of options – in effect alternative organisational models- for changing community safety work in support of the Home Office reform programme may be identified from the discussions engendered by this research:

- Option (i): retain the existing 22 CSPs, allocating additional resources to each of these partnerships to meet the new statutory duties and minimum standards envisaged in the

reform programme. This would also entail the development of more sophisticated resource allocation criteria which recognises the different contexts in which CSPs operate and on the related basis of need, not just per-capita, using indices of multiple deprivation and such like;

- Option (ii): retain the existing 22 CSPs but lower the threshold of what constitutes a minimum standard, whilst accepting the quality of community safety work will be of superior quality in those localities with economies of scale that enable significant investment in staff and expertise for intelligence-led community safety work;
- Option (iii): reform the boundaries of CSPs, amalgamating those in smaller local authority areas, to take advantage of better economies of scale in producing strategic assessments, assessing the performance of partnerships and allocating staff to manage community engagement and democratic scrutiny and oversight.

6.3.2. Each option for change entails certain dilemmas which cannot be avoided by the key stakeholders:

- Option (i) requires greater investment if all existing 22 CSPs are to meet national minimum standards set above the current lowest common denominator.
- Option (ii) is the least costly option, both in terms of funding and political implications, but it effectively undermines any commitment to a universal quality of public protection from threats to community safety.
- Option (iii) has the advantage of a more efficient use of existing levels of funding and other resources (for example, shared intelligence gathering and analysis for strategic assessments, shared use of expertise in evaluating community safety work and so forth) but threatens often fierce notions of political identity associated with particular local authorities within Wales. The political fall-out from the third option is also likely to be significant if it is accepted that partnership work requires verisimilitude between the boundaries of local authorities, police basic command units, health boards and other relevant partners

6.4. Problem-solving for safer communities: the strategic/operational split

- 6.4.1. It is repeatedly pointed out in policy statements by both national and local government that questions of community safety and local crime and disorder reduction are at the top of citizens' concerns regarding their quality of life. Surely then community safety expertise requires a sea-change in both national and local government attitudes towards its consolidation, growth and future ambition. A distinction needs to be made between the strategic problem-solving of the community safety manager and the operational focus of other members of the community safety team and other practitioner networks associated with local partnerships. This, of course, presumes the existence of a dedicated strategic manager post as a standard appointment for every partnership and, if this post is to remain dedicated to strategic management, the further appointment of community safety officers with responsibility for the day-to-day operational wing of partnership work. Given the alleged priority accorded to community safety, this relatively modest investment supports the appointment of managers that will, in our estimation, provide the key mechanism for translating partnership rhetoric about safer communities into sustainable practice.
- 6.4.2. Despite the position on the role of the lead officer articulated by national policy officials discussed in Table 3, above, it is questionable whether senior service directors of local government, never mind hard-pressed generalists such as local authority chief executives, will be able to deliver the problem-specific strategies required of, and associated with, the medium-term sustainability of safer communities. This is because strategic problem-solving entails two basic principles which necessitate specialisation. Firstly, a detailed knowledge of the received wisdom, in both scientific and practitioner circles, about problems of safety is required if their causes and, *a fortiori*, their possible solutions are to be appropriately diagnosed. For example, it will be recalled that most of the respondents to the survey question on priorities for community safety identified substance misuse as a principle concern but, organised crime (which is primarily implicated in the supply of illegal substances) was consistently rated as a negligible priority. That is to say, substance misuse, but not supply, is a concern for community safety in contradiction of, amongst other government advice, the interrelationship of levels 1, 2 and 3 of the police National Intelligence Model. A specialist strategic community safety manager would be expected to be qualified to a level of scientific understanding about problems of crime and disorder that would enable them to make the connections

between these levels in diagnosing patterns of offending and victimisation as a precursor to tailoring local strategies aimed at reducing these patterns.

- 6.4.3. Secondly, a strategic manager needs to be given the time and space to plan sustainable reductions over the medium-term. This is simply not feasible if the same officers are being required to manage day-to-day operations against specific targets. The notion of planning is implied by the very term strategy, but a constant refrain of many lead officers was the negligible time they were given to regularly step-back from operational management in order to marshal their resources in such a way as to sustain reductions they had achieved much less anticipate emergent problems. Many officers felt locked-into a reactive-tactical method of working. If released from this method, community safety managers could plan for safer communities employing innovations in environmental criminology and epidemiological social science to establish patterns of crime and disorder amongst the entire local population covered by their partnerships and over the medium-term. Not only is the scientific methodology available for such strategic assessment, the onset of digital technologies has made the collection and analysis of such data on population trends possible. The principal challenges to such strategic assessment are not technical; rather they pertain to problems of information exchange, even amongst the responsible authorities of a partnership. Again, a key justification of the strategic manager post would be to negotiate access to this kind of information, making the case to responsible authorities for why the collation and exchange of 'partnership intelligence' is ultimately helpful rather than burdensome and tangential to their work.
- 6.4.4. If intelligence-led business processes are to become a national minimum standard and if the adage that information exchange is the engine of partnership working is to be translated into practice, there needs to be a dedicated post responsible for engineering partnership work. Sixteen years on from the publication of the Morgan Report into *Safer Communities: The Local Delivery of Crime Prevention Through the Partnership Approach*, which identified many of the barriers to partnership working reiterated by the respondents to this research, it is no longer feasible to regard partnership as something that can happen spontaneously. Insofar as 'effective leadership' is identified as a national minimum standard, however, it has been discussed in the relatively nebulous terms of representatives of responsible authorities and the role of

local councillors backing rhetoric with meaningful commitments. Notwithstanding the importance of senior political and officer ‘buy-in’ to partnerships and accepting the responsibility of these representatives for setting the overall agenda for local community safety work, the appointment of a strategic manager has been the critical absence in much partnership work from the Morgan Report to the current Home Office Reform Programme. In practice, many partnerships have been bifurcated into rarefied senior officer and political leadership groups on the one hand, and community safety officers involved in day-to-day operational work, on the other. The post of strategic manager would, if standardised throughout all partnerships, provide the missing link between the leadership and front line workers. It would also attenuate the persistent tendency of community safety ‘strategies’ to fester into short-term, episodic, tangentially-related projects, and enable the planned, sustainable, reduction in patterns of crime and disorder across entire localities making ‘safer communities’ a meaningful concept.

6.4.5. Recognising the strategic/operational split also gives shape and direction to the call for national minimum standards in ‘appropriate skills and knowledge’ for community safety work. If the proposed model of a strategic manager post is accepted, this implies education and training in a scientific understanding of crime and disorder reduction, the ‘problems’ of community safety to be ‘solved’, equipping managers with the capacity to interpret the intelligence provided to them by analysts, translate this for the consumption of elected members, the senior management of the responsible authorities and other generalists. Defined in this way, strategic managers would not be expected to develop detailed financial accounting skills, training in commissioning project work, the operation of CCTV surveillance systems or any other operational tasks. These would be provided to designated officers in community safety teams servicing the partnership and under the line-management of the strategic manager.

6.4.6. For the medium term it is likely that such strategic community safety managers will be located in the local authority and have a key role in delivering more joined up policy and practice in the council under section 17 of the CDA 1998, whilst also coordinating the work of other agencies in the CSP over which they have no formal mandate. Clearly difficulties will remain in balancing these twin-track roles. A

radical alternative to this compromise which national governments may wish to consider would be for the lead local authority community safety officer (possibly head of community safety as a cross-cutting directorate?) to be made a quite distinct and separate person and role from the lead CSP coordinator or manager, employed by Home Office/WAG and funded by pooled funding.

- 6.4.7. The make up of the local authority community safety team would be constituted by the following roles: community safety manager, community safety officer(s) including multi-agency partnership data analyst, performance and finance officer, community engagement and communications officer, and specialist community safety officers associated with substance misuse, domestic abuse, and anti-social behaviour etc. As noted throughout this report, such developments would also necessitate a serious debate on the types of knowledge, skills and career routes required for these new professionals across the too often divided worlds of policy, practice, and education and research.
- 6.4.8. The size of the population of community safety workers in Wales is difficult to pin down. On some calculations for England and Wales it has been estimated in the tens of thousands when all the actors involved in delivering services ‘tagged’ – or ‘plagiarised’ - as community safety are calculated as well as covering all the responsible authorities with a S17 mandate from the Crime and Disorder Act 1998¹⁰. The odds on any sustained investment in training from any part of national or local government with regard to such an army of variegated actors, ranging from strategic generals to operational foot soldiers, appear very small indeed. Rather, to improve the capacity and calibre of community safety work in the short to medium term it is perhaps more sensible to begin by focusing on those individuals designated as members of community safety teams and to bring their skills and knowledge base up to a minimal professional standard. In the Welsh context, we estimate we are dealing with a conservative total of about 100 officers in local authority community safety teams. One option supported by some WACSO members would be to insist that all officers minimally meet the NVQ Level 4 provided that this basic threshold is

¹⁰ We would exclude front-line service deliverers such as youth outreach workers, neighbourhood wardens, anti-graffiti and CCTV teams from our calculation. These may be best placed in the direct service delivery wings of local authority and other responsible authorities. If not, there is the danger of creating a potentially bottomless pit as to who gets ‘tagged’ as community safety staff.

supplemented by a 'gold standard' higher level educational qualifications at undergraduate and Masters level, perhaps even up to doctorate level in the future. It is evident that further discussion between the key trainers and higher educational institutions is overdue. In the absence of the now defunct Crime Prevention College which the Home Office used to fund, there has been a tendency centrally to develop web-based 'toolkits' and 'best practice' exemplars which do not inspire the lead officers interviewed in this study. In the words of one member of the focus group, toolkits are akin to *'putting something together from IKEA'*. The unique aspect of community safety work expressed again in the focus group interview was that these lead officers were engaged in *'being 'problem-solving trouble shooters for joined up government', 'we are not bunker workers', 'strategic process managers drawing together other knowledges - unlike other council officers who "manage the system"'* and to do this *'you cannot be politically naïve'*. The negative aspect of this role in the new local governance was that other services and departments were still part of the establishment and as a consequence *'we are bouncing around outside the building, looking in the windows but we can't get in'*.

References

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Hughes, G (2007) *The Politics of Crime and Community*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Palgrave.

Appendixes

- (1) Methodology of the Project
- (2) Summary of Questionnaire Results
- (3) A Selection of Community Safety Lead Officer Job Specifications