

# CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIPS: ROUND ONE PROGRESS

## Briefing Note

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*The views expressed in this briefing note are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy).*

### Background to the research

Sections 5 and 6 of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) place an obligation on local authorities and the police, in partnership with other agencies, to complete a specific cycle of activities every three years. The first stages of this cycle involve:

- Producing an audit of local crime and disorder problems
- Consulting locally on the basis of the audit
- Determining priorities among the issues identified, and
- Formulating a strategy for tackling these

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit has undertaken an in-depth study of partnership working at three sites, focusing on the processes involved in these activities. The aim has been to describe how the partnerships have approached these tasks, difficulties encountered and how these have been addressed. The fieldwork, undertaken in 1999-2000, involved a review of documentation, observation of a range of meetings and in-depth interviews with partnership representatives. The report will be useful to partnerships as it contains examples of good practice and specific recommendations, which should assist those involved in the second round of partnership working in combating the difficulties encountered in the first. In addition, it will be of use to those in central and regional government involved in developing policy and providing support to partnerships, as it explores in depth partnerships' achievements to date and the challenges that remain.

### Partnership structures and working

- **Structures** – multi-agency groups existed in all three sites prior to the CDA. Additional groups were established in two of the sites to meet the statutory duties it imposed.
- **Representation** – no agency was perceived to be dominating the partnerships; in two sites, the police and local authority were regarded as the lead

agencies. Participation by business appeared to be limited and the health sector had little involvement. There was some tension between statutory representatives and non-statutory organisations regarding power differentials in the partnership.

- **Partnership working** – Relations between agencies were regarded positively; partnerships were seen to have built links between agencies who had previously not worked together. Community safety officers played a significant role in all three partnerships with assistance from police-local authority liaison officers in two of the sites. While there was considerable support for the partnership approach, heavy workloads and competing priorities were cited as obstacles to action-orientated partnerships.

### Auditing crime and disorder

All three partnerships invested considerable time, effort and resources in the production of the audit. While most representatives were satisfied with their work, there was recognition of the difficulties encountered and how these could be addressed. Resources, contracting, data and information sharing presented problems:

- **Resources** – the timescale imposed by the CDA meant that the audits were carried out in a rush; this problem was exacerbated by the lack of extra funding available to support partnerships in conducting audits. All three partnerships opted to contract external consultants to undertake their audits.
- **Contracting** – The use of external consultants caused a number of problems – they had less local knowledge and experienced difficulties accessing data from partner agencies.
- **Data** – the data available for the audits presented problems as it was sometimes inaccurate, incomplete, inaccessible or not co-terminus with other data.
- **Information sharing** – despite having protocols for information exchange, all three partnerships experienced problems in this area. However, the

partnership process was regarded as having facilitated information exchange and there were signs that this would continue to improve (one partnership had established an audit group with a remit to look at information disclosure while, in another, voluntary information sharing protocols between agencies were being established).

## Consultation

- **Process** – the responsibility for planning and facilitating consultation was devolved to the community safety officers in all three sites. The nature of the consultation undertaken, in terms of timing and methods, differed markedly. The public were encouraged to respond to the audit through newsletters in all three sites; the use of other methods was more limited.
- **Consultation with hard to reach groups** – each partnership experienced difficulties in this area. A number of opportunities to use existing consultative fora were missed
- **Consultation responses** – these tended to reflect the issues presented in the audits.
- **Future ideas** – all three partnerships were developing contacts with hard to reach groups and were interested in using the Internet for future consultation.

## Strategy development

In all three sites, the process of strategy development was found to be problematic in some regards.

- **Establishing priorities** – in addition to the findings of the audit and consultation, the emphasis placed by the government on certain crime types and the concerns of outside consultants influenced the selection of priorities for the strategy.
- **Target setting** – all three strategies contained long and short-term targets but many of these were not SMART.
- **External constraints** – problems of time pressure were exacerbated during the strategy development phase as the other phases had taken longer than anticipated. It was not possible at the time to establish how all the activities in the strategy would be funded.
- **Partnership dynamics** – in each site, the police and local authority were in charge of drafting the strategy. The process of strategy development indicated a lack of integration among partners. All three partnerships developed 'umbrella' strategies, which sought to incorporate individual agencies' pre-existing strategies.

- **Problem solving approach** – there was little evidence that the strategies adopted a problem solving approach; contents were often determined on the basis of representatives' past experience and existing knowledge.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The three partnerships approached the tasks of audit production, consultation and strategy development in a constructive manner and attempted to learn from difficulties encountered. A number of major issues emerged during the research regarding the first stages of partnership working:

- **Commitment** – all three partnerships met their statutory obligations. There was almost unanimous support for the idea that partnerships are the way forward.
- **Resources** – limited resources (time pressures, a skills deficit and funding shortages) hindered various aspects of the partnerships' work.
- **Pressures of partnership** – the very nature of partnership working brought its own problems. An element of cynicism regarding the unequal contribution made by various partners affected all stages of the process.

### Key recommendations

- To address the problem of health sector involvement, partnerships should consider including representatives from Primary Care Groups on their strategic bodies. These comprise general practitioners who are more knowledgeable about local service provision than health authority staff who have a more strategic role.
- To address the problem of limited time and resources, partnerships should consider how various partnership groups could co-ordinate their activities (for example by holding joint meetings of the main partnership body and YOT to address shared issues of concern).
- Neighbouring partnerships should consider co-ordinating their audits to combat difficulties with data exchange. This could involve drawing up data plans to co-ordinate requests for information from agencies incorporating different partnerships.
- When undertaking consultation, partnerships need to ensure co-ordination with other consultation exercises such as those for Best Value and policing plans. This could prevent duplication and encourage the use of a wider range of consultation methods. They could consider establishing an annual round of focus group research, to complement an annual public attitude survey.

## Related PRC publications

Newburn, T. and Jones, T. (2002) *Consultation by Crime and Disorder Partnerships*. Police Research Series Paper 148. London: Home Office.

Phillips, C., Considine, M. and Lewis R. (2000) *A review of audits and strategies produced by Crime and Disorder Partnerships in 1999*. Briefing Note 8/00. London: Home Office.

The Partnership Working toolkit on the Crime Reduction website [www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits.p00.htm](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits.p00.htm) provides detailed guidance on audit production, consultation and strategy development.

*Papers in the Police Research, Reducing Crime, Special Interest Series and other PRC ad hoc publications are available free of charge from: Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Communications Development Unit, Room 275, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. Facsimile no 020 7222 0211*