



PARTICIPATION IN POLICING



A strategic approach to the Engagement, Involvement and Participation of the Public in Policing in Cheshire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out the operational context for “Participation in Policing” and outlines the contribution different forms of participation can make to reducing demand and increasing public confidence. It defines the way in which the Constabulary will deliver “Participation in Policing”, laying out some basic principles and a basic framework to define and shape the opportunities that we will offer. The paper also offers a basic understanding of the way that we will resource it, but does not seek to outline in detail every aspect of participation that we will develop. The document encompasses:

- a. The historical and operational background.
- b. The Constabulary’s vision for the future.
- c. The style of our delivery.
- d. How we will deliver it.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Public “participation in policing” has long been a cornerstone of UK policing. Robert Peel’s original nine policing principles are full of references to the concept of policing by consent, and participation is explicitly addressed in his seventh principle:

“Police at all times should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence”

As a succinct and simple explanation of the aims and nature of “participation in policing” this seventh principle has stood the test of time. Arguably, the professionalisation of policing that occurred in response to more sophisticated and organised crime allowed some diminution of this principle. However, Neighbourhood policing has led us to place greater importance on understanding communities, their priorities and needs, and then using the knowledge to design police services.

Neighbourhood policing puts participation at the forefront, by emphasising the key requirements of engaging communities in the setting of policing priorities and involving them in the problem solving. Public participation then becomes an effective means to resolving crime and disorder issues that can sap public confidence.

Recent reviews of policing have spoken of the shift from policing by consent to policing by participation. The Coalition Government’s “Big Society” has developed a vision that sees the public becoming more able to participate in public services by increasing their influence on the setting of priorities through increased localism, as well as increasing their involvement in delivery of service through community, voluntary and faith sector organisations.

THE OPERATIONAL BACKGROUND - from Contact Management to Participation

Participation is key to how we engage the public. Interaction between the police and public occurs across in four main ways. The first of these -- Contact Management -- can be ad hoc, but the remainder should be purposeful.

Contact Management is most usually an initial and brief interaction between public and police, telephone call, enquiry counter, face to face contact with police officers or community support officers. To be successful contact needs to be customer orientated, understanding the impact of each contact.

Engagement embraces the next level and is a more sustained and planned interaction usually initiated by the police. It seeks to engage the public to help understand their needs to develop an effective policing response.



Figure 1: The Engagement Cycle

The Engagement Cycle (Figure 1) now agreed by agencies within the Crime and Justice Commission defines the different elements of engagement and their purpose. It is cyclical – provision of information to inform, consultation to ask and understand, involvement to influence and feedback on how services have been shaped.

Involvement is about enabling and empowering people to influence service design. It is a key to the development and direction of specific activities and services, providing a say in key

decisions about how and by whom services are delivered and monitored. Unlike communication and consultation, involvement requires more than a dialogue and is likely to imply a longer-term relationship with people encouraged to play an active role within the decision-making process.

Volunteering is where the public offer their time and skills to help deliver policing or community safety action. Volunteering can be relatively informal, for example where people turn-up on a one off basis in a Community Clean Up. Or it can be related to an interest in a single issue, for example a Parent Teacher Association event aimed at property marking school equipment.

Volunteering is however often seen as more formalised version of involvement because there are opportunities for people to contribute on more than one occasion and on a sustained basis. There is a wide spectrum of volunteering opportunities within the Constabulary, including the Special Constabulary. These roles require investment in selection, training and ongoing support and management, but in turn the volunteer makes a regular commitment of time and energy to the Constabulary.

Such volunteers complement and support employee roles within the Constabulary, but do not replace them. They bring a range of skills and experience into the Constabulary, and at the same time widen our links with communities.

This approach to both forms of volunteering, within a broader context of participation, aligns naturally with the principles of the Big Society.

THE PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATION WITHIN CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY

The Constabulary's primary objective is to make the people of Cheshire Be Safe and Feel Safe. Being Safe is about reducing the severity and volume of incidents and behaviours that threaten public safety, whilst Feeling Safe is about reducing the impact of those things that cause people to feel unsafe.

By encouraging participation in policing, including the delivery of policing services within their local area, we generate the "social capital" that helps reduce demand on those policing services, and provides longer term and more sustainable means to maintain that reduction.

Those who participate in their communities become advocates for those communities. Communities in which people feel capable of participating with public and voluntary services to address the issues that concern them, are communities that develop social capital. Faith groups, residents associations, Community Fire Risk Reduction Advocates, and a whole host of other voluntary groups contribute in this way, as do town and parish councils. Sustaining affordable relationships with these groups -- which we identify as Community Contacts -- builds social capital and generates positive advocacy of our services. In some cases the existence of these groups, for example in the case of Street Pastors, may help reduce the risk of crime, or provide support to reduce the impact of becoming a victim. Both aspects serve to reduce demand for police services.

Our approach to participation in policing supports the Constabulary's Demand Reduction Strategy under the four categories of prevention:

1. **Preventing the Preventable** – for example diversionary activity like the Cadet Scheme in Ellesmere Port that engages young people between 17 and 19 years in positive activities and advocacy of policing.
2. **Responding Effectively** – for example the provision of victim support networks and voluntary advocate schemes of the sort within the domestic abuse arena.
3. **Problem Solving of chronic issues** – for example, Community Speed WATCH or the Citizen Street Patrols that have supported policing in Halton on Mischief Night.
4. **Prevent Reoccurrence** – involves intervention around ingrained criminal/antisocial behaviours, for example through the provision of voluntary peer support to those who misuse drugs and have returned to their community after a period of detoxification in treatment or prison.

OUR APPROACH TO VOLUNTEERING

We define three types of volunteer: **Involved**, **Support** and **Formal** Volunteers.

Involved Volunteers - support a range of different activities as and when they are required. They are likely to need little or no vetting or access to police buildings and information systems. They are unlikely to require training or induction. They are most likely to be recruited through existing community contacts, or by self referral. Whilst this type of volunteer provides some social capacity to support policing services, their contribution rests more with advocacy of our services.

The Constabulary has a large number of these as established Community Contacts. We intend to develop these contacts and identify a bank of volunteer resources that can be used by us or Partners as the need arises. This could include for example assisting in the recovery phase that follows a civil contingency, or more routinely to support local crime reduction initiatives with community based activity such as leafleting.

We manage these volunteers via our Community Contact databases, but envisage a more efficient web based self sign up and information access facility in time linked to the Constabulary's Communication plan. Volunteering functions in this category include Crime Prevention Panels and members (but not coordinators) of the range of WATCH networks that exist.

Support Volunteers - offer their time to support specific activities on a more sustained basis. They may require vetting or selection, or occasional access to police buildings or information systems. They are most likely to be recruited by specific recruitment activities, or by referral from other existing streams of volunteering. They may require some rudimentary training. The quality of this contact and the relationship formed is critical to the continued commitment of this kind of volunteer but this contact will be limited and often virtual. Support Volunteers include WATCH Coordinators, whose role is in managing local networks, and Speed WATCH Coordinators who may require specific training.

The Constabulary will look to work with partners in joint recruitment and training, signposting volunteers to posts appropriate to their skills, the Cadets Scheme in Partnership with Crewe College is an example of this.

Formal Volunteers- these support specific activities on a sustained and relatively intensive basis. The quality of this contact and the relationship formed is critical to the continued commitment of this kind of volunteer and so selection and support should be locally based with Areas and individual units taking direct ownership of these volunteers. Formal volunteers tend to support the organisation over a longer period of time and so investment in their skills and support is cost effective. They usually require vetting or selection and access to police buildings.

They may be recruited by specific recruitment activities, but might be referred from other existing streams of volunteering. They will require training and/or some form of induction. The management of them will require personal contact and supervisory management and support. General examples include Authority Custody Visitors, Victim Support Volunteers, and the Special Constabulary. As a more specific example the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) membership has been particularly helpful in allowing Constabulary services to reflect the needs of minority communities. Currently the Constabulary has over 50 support volunteers in a range of posts to build upon and 400 Special Constables that are considered formal volunteers.

The Constabulary has long recognised the potential that the Special Constabulary and in 2009 committed to the Home Officer target to increase the establishment of Special Constables to 500 by the end of 2012. Focus has been on broad recruitment, but we have identified benefits in developing a stronger 'Employee Support Scheme for Specials and links with the business community and this will have a greater future focus.

Whilst this type of volunteer provides some opportunity to promote the value of our services to the wider community, their main contribution is to augment delivery of services.

OUR STYLE OF PARTICIPATION

Having established where participation fits within our broad vision of policing, a number of key principles have emerged to shape the style of our delivery of it. They are:

1. **Systems Thinking** - Participation allows us to identify those policing services that are of "value" to the public, and those that are not and could be stripped out to create a lean organisation focused on activity of "value". Likewise the public participate because they see value in doing so. It is the public's sense of value, rather than the Constabulary's that should be the focus of our services around participation
2. **Value not cost** - The public participate in those activities that they see of value, and it is this that help drives effective participation programmes. If the public value participation they will join with us to engage in it, allowing much of the infrastructure to support participation to be delivered by volunteers. What sustains this infrastructure is not "cost" to the Constabulary but "value" to the public.

3. **Proportionality** - In line with systems thinking if part of the value that a participant sees in participation is that it is an easy way to contribute (perhaps on an occasional basis, fitted in around other commitments, with no great training or preparation required) – we should keep it easy, and not insist on vetting, training or levels of commitment that make it difficult.
4. **Participation is not just about policing** - Communities have a range of volunteer groups outside policing, all of which contribute to the social capital from which policing can benefit. We should support these groups sharing their calls for support with our volunteers and engage with them.
5. **Sustainable social capacity** - One of the barriers to volunteering is a lack of awareness of opportunities or agencies being unable to signpost skills to the right organisation. Investment nationally is planned for volunteer coordinators, but in the interim the Constabulary will use Volunteers Centres (and facilities for recruitment, training and support) as an umbrella organisation to recruit individuals. In addition we will develop the work started in the Risley Neighbourhood Team that is allowing us, and other agencies, to map out opportunities and gain understanding of existing groups that can support policing. This will form a toolkit for Areas to support local development of the participation strategy.

HOW WE WILL DELIVER PARTICIPATION

There are a myriad of opportunities for participation in policing and we have to be clear about the benefits each brings. In some the benefit is an augmenting of policing services, in others the benefit is more to do with participants influencing the design and delivery of services or becoming advocates of police services in the wider community.

The opportunities for participation that most support policing services are usually those for which there is the greatest organisational cost in terms of recruitment, selection, training, or ongoing support. These benefits and risks can be set against each other to create a matrix that allow different types of participation to be plotted and sensible decisions to be made about the extent of the processes required to enable each role. By plotting roles against the four lines of delivery identified by the Constabulary, we can also get a sense of how far participation reaches across the operational functions of the Constabulary.

The matrix helps us determine where gaps might exist and what type of participation may be best suited to fill it. It also allows us to apply a strategic view to participation, and avoid over investing in areas. The matrix will be developed in more detail over time, but a basic version to enable understanding is attached in the matrix at Appendix 1.

By using systems thinking and understanding the what aspects are of value to the public we can deliver participation at low cost and with the minimum formal infrastructure. The Communities Unit will support the demands in each Area using existing capacity to provide support by:

- a. Mapping and managing the local participation matrix.

- b. Maintaining resource and opportunity databases, including a Volunteer bank, and developing self service contact options
- c. Providing a central point of contact for community & voluntary sector organisations, developing links and establishing local agreements
- d. Supporting and developing local skills to source external funding and be self sustaining
- e. Co-ordinating across other services.
- f. Leading on policy development and coordination.

This approach will be responsive to the needs of Neighbourhood Teams and will require a strong interface between other functions in the Constabulary, other public services, community and voluntary sector organisations, and police volunteers.

SUMMARY

Participation in policing is rooted in the concept of policing by consent. Failure to provide the access that the public needs to play its part in developing effective policing services would create a loss in public confidence in policing. The police service realises this and is making sure that routes to participation are clearly signposted and readily available to local people.

It is the Constabulary's view that participation is about "value" - in that it is driven by the value afforded to it by the public, and that this is its main benefit. This focus on value and its associated potential to deliver positive outcomes at minimal cost, aligns it naturally with the principles of systems thinking. It will also allow us to design a lean and purposeful structure for delivery, and one that harnesses the energy of participants..

The management of participation, although focused on public value, should be within a context of organisational risk and cost, and we need to be clear as to the extent and nature of the participation that we are able to sustain. To gain greatest benefit from our investment, we need to be able to ensure that participation takes place across those areas of business of the Constabulary where it delivers the most value.