

Executive Summary

Safer Communities Board for Wales, September 2026

The September meeting focused on the development of VERVE, an integrated, single-access drug and alcohol support service operating across Swansea, Neath, and Port Talbot; the proposed National Crime Prevention Agency for Wales, implementation of the Sentencing Act, risks arising from police governance reform, and community cohesion. Across the discussion, members emphasised the value of coordinated prevention, sustainable funding, evidence-based advocacy and strong partnership working across Wales.

VERVE: integrated substance use support

Angharad Metcalfe, Substance Use Transformation Programme Manager outlined the [VERVE](#) alliance, jointly commissioned by public-sector partners and third-sector providers to replace fragmented substance-use provision with an integrated, accessible and outcomes-focused service across Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot.

The service replaces a fragmented system of contracts and eligibility criteria with an alliance model involving local authorities, the Health Board, the Police and Crime Commissioner, HM Prison and Probation Service, Fire and Rescue Service, and third sector partners Barod, The Wallich, Kaleidoscope and Adferiad.

The model is person-centred and outcome-focused, with co-production embedded in service design, commissioning, governance and branding. Its key features include assertive outreach, mobile provision, multiple access routes, a no-wrong-door approach, and integrated support for adults, young people, families, criminal justice populations and people experiencing homelessness. Members welcomed the scale of partnership working behind the programme and its emphasis on harm reduction, trauma-informed practice, reducing stigma and long-term service stability.

Early indications since the service began operating in June suggest improved accessibility and clearer pathways, although formal outcome data is not yet available. An outcomes framework is being developed, and the Board requested a future update on impact and the effectiveness of the alliance model. Members also noted risks to sustainability if future policing and partner funding is reduced.

National policy and criminal justice reform

Welsh Government outlined its manifesto commitment to establish a National Crime Prevention Agency for Wales. Current engagement is mapping existing prevention activity and considering how the proposed organisation could improve coordination and strengthen the collection, analysis and use of data. Governance, funding, legislation and organisational structure remain under consideration, and members were encouraged to contribute evidence and views.

The Board also received an update on the Sentencing Act and forthcoming early release arrangements. Members welcomed the expansion of offences exempt from early release

provisions, while noting continuing concerns about pressures on probation, policing, health, voluntary services and public confidence. A new Criminal Justice Reform Committee will consider the cumulative impact of reforms across Wales.

Community Safety Partnerships and governance reform

The Wales Safer Communities Network presented evidence from Community Safety Partnerships on risks associated with proposed police governance changes. Concerns included uncertainty over future funding and governance, possible loss of staff capacity, reduced investment in prevention, increased pressure on local authorities and voluntary organisations, and wider disruption to established partnership arrangements.

Members agreed that the evidence should inform discussions with government and policy makers. The Board supported anonymising the report and submitting it to the Home Office, with the findings also shared with Welsh Government Ministers. The potential effect of future funding changes on the sustainability of the Network itself was also acknowledged.

Community cohesion

Members discussed continuing tensions linked to migration, asylum dispersal, hate crime and international events. The importance of strong local cohesion arrangements, early identification of risk and regular intelligence sharing was reaffirmed. The WLGA highlighted ongoing work with Welsh Government, faith communities and other partners to provide reassurance, challenge prejudice and ensure communities are protected and supported. Community cohesion will remain a standing agenda item.

Key actions and next steps

- The Safer Communities Network to collate views from Board members and contribute evidence to support the development of the proposed National Crime Prevention Agency.
- Following further engagement, anonymised Community Safety Partnership evidence on governance and funding risks to be submitted to the Home Office and shared with Welsh Government Ministers.
- Monitor implementation of the Sentencing Act and the wider effect of criminal justice reforms in Wales.
- Receive a future update on VERVE, including outcomes and evidence of the alliance model's impact.
- Maintain oversight of community cohesion risks and continue intelligence sharing between meetings.
- Explore sustainable arrangements for the Wales Safer Communities Network and wider partnership support.