

Rhwydwaith  
**CYMUNEDAU MWY DIOGEL CYMRU**  
WALES **SAFER COMMUNITIES**  
Network

# POLICING IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

UNDERSTANDING THE PROFILE IN WALES

JULY 2021

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Leadership in Community Safety is the joint responsibility of Local Government and Policing, working with other local partners, which is why the Safer Communities Board for Wales was established jointly by Policing in Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association to carry forward the renewal of Community Safety in Wales. The role played by the Police and Local Government is therefore central to the development of the Wales Safer Communities Network, which aims to become the strategic voice for community safety in Wales, working collaboratively with its members to champion and support community safety partnership working and to influence both the shaping and development of national policy and local delivery. In April 2021 the Network team produced a workforce report for the Wales Safer Communities Board based on a survey and views of community safety leads based in Local Authorities. Board members asked for a complementary picture of the current involvement of police leads in local community safety partnership working. To take this forward, the team invited police involved in community safety partnerships to an information session explaining more about its work and a focus group.

## AIMS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

- Understand the current involvement of Police within community safety and community safety partnerships at a Local Authority level.
- Improve the overall understanding of what the community safety workforce within Wales looks like.
- Identify variations in what is currently understood as community safety across Wales.
- Assist in developing a Wales wide understanding to enable, empower and raise the profile of community safety at local, regional and national levels.
- Help identify opportunities for multi-agency training and development.
- Support the development of programmes to assist the community safety workforce to continue their good work in the future public service environment.

## METHOD

An online focus group was convened in June 2021 by the Wales Safer Communities Network Team. The session was facilitated by the Head of the Network, using a combination of an online survey tool, open discussion questions and chat function. Participants were provided with the purposes of the research, next steps and data protection information. All responses have been treated anonymously, and any commentary included does not identify individuals nor their forces. Respondents were aware that the findings and any recommendations would be shared with the Safer Communities Board and Policing in Wales. A copy of the focus group questions are included in appendix 1.

## PARTICIPANTS

The focus group included 18 participants, the majority of whom were Chief Inspector rank. All four police forces in Wales were represented. When asked to introduce their role and responsibility, half of the participants (9 out of 18) referenced 'partnerships', with five stating 'problem solving', five stating 'community safety', four stating 'neighbourhood policing' and two 'prevention'. Eight participants used more than one descriptor.

## LIMITATIONS

The focus group was limited to local policing involvement in community safety delivery. To include a wider view from Policing in Wales, initial findings have been shared with Police and Crime Commissioner Offices for additional comments and a view has been included on behalf of Policing in Wales (see page 7). Finally, it is noted that only 12 out of the 18 participants contributed to the online survey element of the focus group.

# FINDINGS

## CONSIDERING THE POLICE WORKFORCE WITHIN COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

### LOCAL AUTHORITIES COVERAGE AND SIZE OF TEAMS

Participants cover on average 2.5 Local Authority areas, which means they are likely to cover at least two Community Safety Partnership meetings. On average they have responsibility for 9 Police Constables and 30 PCSOs. Other comparisons were difficult to calculate but teams include a range of other roles, such as, Police Sergeants, civilian staff, Schools Officers, Special Constables, Police Support Volunteers and Police Youth Volunteers/Cadets, Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY TEAMS

Participants were asked which local authority departments they regularly engage with. Out of the 12 responses, the top five departments most commonly engaged with, were:

1. Housing (All 12 participants/100%)
2. Community Safety (11/ 92%)
3. Youth Offending Team/Youth Service (11/ 92%)
4. Environmental Health (10/ 83%)
5. Joint fifth - Education & Schools, Children & Family, Trading Standards, Social Care & Health (8/ 67%)

Police most commonly engage with Local Authorities teams in Housing, Community Safety & Youth Services





## ACCESS TO DATA ANALYSIS SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

Participants were asked whether they have access to data analyst support for community safety. Out of the 12 responses, the majority of participants (8 /67%) do have access to such support.

## THE ROLE OF POLICING IN COMMUNITY SAFETY/ COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

### Themes drawn from the focus group discussion

#### Relationships with Local Authorities differ

Varied relationships exist between police and different Local Authority areas which impacts on community safety partnerships. Relationships range from 'excellent' and 'improving' to sometimes 'challenging'. This was recognised as a challenge operationally where teams work across Local Authorities, but there was an acceptance and understanding around the different local needs within different local authority footprints. Some forces have sought regional consistency. It was noted there is a role for the Network here.

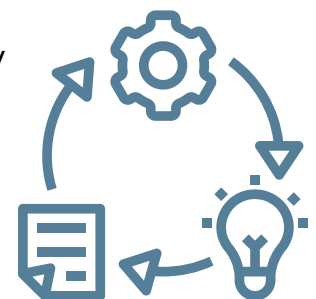


#### Police as integral to community safety delivery

It was clear that participants see the role of policing is integral to community safety. It was felt that police are often the lead partner for enforcement. A large amount of problem-solving work is carried out by the police which impacts on demand and resourcing. Participants felt there is a focus on the duties of the Police as the lead agency, when often they are not the statutory duty holders and there are others who may be better placed to assist.

#### Resourcing as a common issue

Participants describe difficulties achieving funding for community safety. This acts as a barrier but there have also been opportunities both external (Safer Streets) and internal (Police) commitment to increase resourcing (staff) into community safety.



#### Problem solving as a strength

The police relationship with community safety is evolving. There is seen to be a renewed focus and direction towards preventative work. For example, working closely within neighbourhood teams with a focus on problem solving and partnership working. When supporting individuals, working with Local Authorities is good, but taking forward other steps there can be barriers in place. The Police feel there is often an expectation they will take the lead in resolving issues and therefore end up acting as advisers when working with partner organisations.

# OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP WORKING

## PRIORITY AREAS FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Participants were asked for their top five priority areas within current community safety partnership working. Out of 12 responses, the priority areas are:

- Top priority area – Anti-Social Behaviour (all 12 participants)
- Joint second – Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV), Hate Crime, Community Cohesion (7 participants each)
- Jointly third – Serious Violence & Organised Crime, Substance Misuse (6 participants each)

**PRIORITY AREAS FOR MULTI-AGENCY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Anti-Social Behaviour & the Community Trigger	Designing out crime
Violence Prevention	Problem solving approaches
CONTEST (including Prevent)	

**“ “** PARTICIPANT COMMENTS – OPPORTUNITIES

“I would like to see”:

“Sharing [of] best practice, embedding a preventative culture across the policing and partnership landscape.”

“A funding document so we know where to turn/ criteria to prevent the scramble to find funds.”

## EXPLORING BARRIERS/ OPPORTUNITIES TO THE DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY

Majority of participants  
(15 out of 17) would like to  
be part of a Community  
Safety Network group  
(2 were unsure)



Three thematic areas emerged from the discussion around barriers and opportunities.

### Information Sharing

It was acknowledged that many partnerships have WASPi in place for information sharing and some Local Authorities also have access to police systems. However, some participants expressed a desire to have all systems speaking to each other or a platform arrangement where all relevant information can be shared easily.

### Measuring Prevention

There was a consensus that the success of prevention can be difficult to measure and there is a lack of focus on outcomes. Similarly, when considering problem solving, it was considered there are different perceptions of a positive outcome, such as improved public confidence and views, savings made or crime recorded. This is a both barrier and an opportunity for community safety partnerships to consider. It was highlighted that the voluntary sector have more experience of measuring the success of their interventions and could have learning for community safety.

### Safer Streets

There was a consensus that the Safer Streets fund is a good opportunity for community safety but the applications and implementation are resource intensive and not always appropriate nor available for all areas. However, the implementation of Safer Streets has improved local partnership relationships and joint working and given motivation for the next round of funding.



### PARTICIPANT COMMENTS - OPPORTUNITIES

“I think the [community safety] tool kit or guidance for what each of the authorities’ responsibilities/ expectations are, will be useful.”

“[I would like to see] funding opportunities and encouraging less red tape and unnecessary meetings.”

# STRATEGIC POLICING CONSIDERATIONS

## VIEWS FROM A POLICING IN WALES PERSPECTIVE

Some initial thoughts on the findings have been provided from a Policing in Wales perspective and it is noted that as well as the renewed emphasis on Community Safety by Chief Constables and Police & Crime Commissioners in Wales, there is also a strong commitment to maintaining and strengthening Neighbourhood Policing. This has been greatly assisted by the provision of 500 additional PCSOs, funded by Welsh Government, to be enhanced by a further 100 over the coming year. It is suggested that the relationship between the two strands of work needs to be better articulated within policing in order to assist the Police and the Local Authority to develop and renew local delivery of their joint responsibility for leading Community Safety while engaging other partners agencies as well as the Voluntary Sector and communities.

The initial findings show that Community Safety is not always seen as a joint strategic responsibility of the local authority and the police working together but work that is seen by officers as necessary locally - with links between local policing and different local government departments often seen as necessary rather than as part of the shared community safety approach that was required by the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. This is probably an inevitable effect of the loss of resources due to Austerity over the past decade leading to a loss of community safety resources in Policing and Local Government alike. The inconsistency of access to analytic capacity is a long-standing concern which was addressed during the Welsh Government work on refreshing Community Safety through a strand of work led by Commissioner Dafydd Llewelyn.

The impending increase in PCSO numbers and increasing clarity about their responsibilities is relevant to Community Safety. The role is primarily about communication (both to the local community and in listening to the local community), local problem solving (working with the local community to address issues identified locally) and enabling the local community to address their own issues.

Policing during the pandemic saw policing respond to a new and challenging environment in innovative ways, with an emphasis in Wales on partnership working. The development of Joint Enforcement Teams (JETs) has been a success story in many local authority areas and there is an appetite in many areas to build on this work for the future, with an emphasis on prevention and response to community concerns rather than purely on enforcement.

Our police forces are engaged in a number of other areas of work which while not falling within the structures of community safety are directly relevant to successful outcomes. Police officers are seconded into the local Youth Offending Team (Youth Justice Service) while the Wales Police Schools Programme is jointly funded by the Police and by Welsh Government to provide a universal service in schools across Wales. Discussions are under way to seek ways of the police contributing greater engagement with children and young people in Pupil Referral Units and during school holidays.

## VIEWS FROM A POLICING IN WALES PERSPECTIVE CONTINUED

The findings also note the feeling within the police that officers are expecting to take on roles that should sometimes fall to other agencies or which other professions are better suited to address.

There is a need for discussion about how such issues can be addressed within the local community safety partnership model whether, within policing, they are regarded as part of community safety or of neighbourhood policing.

The findings also hint at a need to examine how problem solving is approached within community safety models across Wales and whether lessons can be learned through looking at problem solving approached within policing, local government and other agencies. The Network looks to help with these considerations. These are initial thoughts for discussion within Policing in Wales as well as with the Safer Communities Board and through the Network.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

When considering the focus group findings, the subsequent comments from the Policing in Wales perspective and also the earlier Local Authority report completed in April 2021 by the Wales Safer Communities Network (Understanding the profile of community safety in Wales: A workforce survey of Local Authorities), the following observations can be drawn:

1. Participant views emphasised the distinctive roles of Local Authorities and Police within Community Safety, rather than truly reflecting a joint endeavour. Close working relationships exist, but within a division of local community safety responsibilities.
2. Common issues are evident across both Local Authorities and Police, including a lack of resources, particularly for developing community safety activities. Local Authority participants emphasised the impact of lack of funding on staffing the work of community safety. The police participants were less vocal on this issue but did recognise the stretch in covering multiple Community Safety Partnerships. There is an opportunity to explore further how additional roles, such as PCSOs, can support the work of the partnership.
3. It was encouraging that both Local Authorities and Police highlighted similar priority areas for working – Anti Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Community Cohesion. This could be due to the increased challenges and the joint work within these areas since the start of the pandemic. However, there was a divergence, where Local Authority leads highlight a priority area around Contest, recognising their role within the Prevent Agenda. Whilst the Police saw VAWDASV and Serious Violence and Organised Crime as higher priorities.
4. The use of and access to analysts has been previously discussed within the Welsh Government's Working Together for Safer Communities Review 2017. There is a lack of partnership analysts and reliance on police analysts, who are more available. This acts as a barrier to evidence-based working and preparing convincing funding bids.



## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION CONTINUED

5. The barriers and opportunities highlighted by the Police include – additional opportunity for information sharing, improved ways to measure prevention and learning from ‘Safer Streets’ projects. Whereas for the Local Authority leads, it was recognised there has been a shift across local government where traditional community safety work can sit across different departments, including safeguarding and housing. This is reflected in the Police description of Local Authority engagement and can work as an opportunity in relation to partnership working. One participant noting that “community safety runs through many departments” and it appears that this is also reflected within policing structures, whether they be ‘partnerships’, ‘neighbourhood policing’ or ‘problem solving’.

It is acknowledged that changes are under way within community safety, with an emphasis by Policing in Wales on adding fresh energy. The experience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic – particularly the effectiveness of partnership work through Joint Enforcement Teams have led to local discussions between police and local government about future joint prevention work in partnership. It is hoped that this report, taken together with the Local Authority report, will provide a basis for the Safer Communities Board to develop its thinking about the future pattern of Community Safety in Wales.

### Recommendations

It is suggested that the recommendations of the Local Authority report remain relevant. These have been slightly updated (recommendation 3) and include:

1. That this report is acknowledged as received by the Wales Safer Communities Board.
2. The Board champion the work of the Wales Safer Communities Network to help raise the profile of Community Safety across Wales – locally, regionally and nationally.
3. The Board promote the work of Wales Data & Analysis Innovation & Improvement Network to support a culture change of data sharing across the public sector (in line with the Welsh Government digital strategy for Wales).
4. Safer Communities Board Members consider reviewing the resourcing their organisations provide to community safety activity.
5. The Wales Safer Communities Network conduct a wider baseline survey (to be repeated annually) to capture the views and data from all agencies involved in Community Safety Partnerships on a wider range of topics, including role and responsibilities, and resourcing to undertake community safety activities locally.

A further recommendation –

6. Wales Safer Communities Network scopes the opportunity to establish a Joint Community Safety leads group, which brings together Local Authority, Policing, with other key partners to work together on learning and practice development.

## APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Please introduce yourself in the chat bar and state how you currently link into Community Safety.

What is the role of policing in community safety/community safety partnerships?

How many Local Authorities do you cover and roughly, how many officers within neighbourhood policing/partnerships do you have in your teams?

Which local authority departments do you regularly engage with ?

Do you have access to data analyst support for community safety?

What are your top 5 priority areas within community safety partnership working ?

Please indicate any priority areas for multi-agency learning and development.

We have been told there are some barriers to the delivery of community safety. Such as, lack of resourcing (funding & staff) & governance. But there is also an opportunity to focus more on prevention. What do you think barriers are? What do you think the opportunities are?

Many Local Authority Community Safety leads are a member of a practitioner support group called the Wales Association of Community Safety Officers (WACSO). Is this something you would be interested in?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

THE WALES SAFER COMMUNITIES NETWORK WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION BY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY.

For circulation details – see page 2  
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