Understanding the profile of community safety in Wales:

A workforce survey of Local Authorities

APRIL 2021

Introduction

The Wales Safer Communities Network ('the Network') came into existence in January 2021. It 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 influence the shaping and development of national policy and local delivery.

As part of developing the Network priorities and understanding the profile of its members, it was identified that much of the focus of community safety, and particularly the work of the Community Safety Partnerships, sits with the Local Authorities. Early stakeholder engagement identified differences in the role of community safety leads and 'teams' within local government; therefore, a survey was carried out to achieve a clearer understanding of the existing workforce and arrangements.

It was envisaged that the learning from the survey will help support the Wales Safer Communities Network to develop and deliver its work plan by:

- Understanding the current general landscape of community safety within Local Authorities (LAs)
- Ensuring a Wales wide view of what the community safety workforce within LAs currently looks like
- Identifying variations in what is defined as community safety activity across Wales
- Assisting in developing a Wales wide understanding to enable, empower and raise the profile of community safety at local, regional and national levels
- Supporting the early development of seminars and programmes to develop the community safety workforce to continue their good work in the future public service environment

Furthermore, whilst there are previous sources of information (see Discussion, page 9) which referred to resourcing challenges and complexities within the community safety landscape, an updated picture through fact-finding by the Network team, helps to set the mandate for the Network development.

*Participant views are included throughout the repor*t

"I welcome some light being shone on the Community Safety Partnerships in Wales; they have been drummed down over a number of years, and they are a statutory partnership. "

"Community Safety has been a forgotten service, therefore it's good to see that Community Safety is now having more of a spotlight on it."

Introduction

Method

The bilingual survey was launched via a meeting of the Wales Association of Community Safety Officers (WACSO) at the beginning of March 2021 and was open for just over three weeks. It was sent for completion to the identified community safety lead in each of the Local Authorities and shared with the Chief Executives for information. Participants were provided with the purposes of the survey, next steps and data protection information. All responses are treated anonymously and commentary included which does not identify individuals or individual LA's. Respondents were aware that the findings would be shared with the Safer Communities Board, Cabinet Members Network, WACSO, Local Authority Chief Executives, and Leaders. A copy of the survey questions are included in appendix 1.

Limitations

The survey focused solely on community safety delivery within local government. It did not set out to be a detailed research study but to help evidence stakeholder conversations and set a direction for the Network's early priorities. A wider qualitative view, including from senior managers and elected members, will have most certainly gathered additional insights. Furthermore, it is recognised that Police and other partners also have a key role and provide resourcing for community safety. With this in mind, a wider annual baseline survey will capture the views, opinions and data from across Policing and the wider partnership on a wider range of topics will take place early this financial year.

Most common areas of responsibility for community safety teams

Hate Crime - Crime Prevention - Community Cohesion - ASB - CONTEST

Least common areas of responsibility for community safety teams

Armed Forces Covenant - Fire Safety - Rehabilitation - Neighbourhood Watch

Key findings

A total of 15 responses were received and collated covering 17 Local Authority Areas (77.3%). Two responses were on behalf of joint community safety arrangements. Whilst a full return would have been advantageous, the responses were equally spread across the police force and geographical areas. Furthermore, the analysis and discussion of findings is informed by supporting conversations across all Local Authorities and Welsh Local Government Association between January and April 2021.

Staffing of community safety activity

80% of respondents said they had a dedicated Community Safety Team. Those who used the 'other' option explained there was just one person and no team, or there was a dual role, or they were part of a different team that was not identified as Community Safety.

There was an average of 3.36 full time staff working in Community Safety Teams. Responses to numbers of full-time staff per team were varied; with the highest being nine and lowest being one. Two identified no full-time staff.
From eleven responses, the average number of part time staff working in Community Safety Teams was 1.55.

The total number of staff involved in community safety (both full and part-time) from 14 responses was 64 (one response was unsure).

Just under 50% of respondents (7) confirmed that staff only worked within Community Safety. Seven of the responses identified that staff had duties outside of Community Safety as part of their roles, one respondent was unsure.

Where staff have responsibilities outside community safety, the majority were part-time (5 out of 7 teams).

"I feel all community safety teams should be appropriately resourced with a big emphasis on prevention. At the moment across authorities, there will be one manager for responsibility for a number of high profile categories i.e. counter terrorism, serious violence, modern day slavery etc and no staff to assist. The staff within teams are predominantly dealing with the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) agenda and are therefore ASB officers and not community safety officers. We are just fire fighting at the moment and not able to make a massive difference."
Participant view

Key Findings continued

Specialist Data Analyst for Community Safety

*12 of the 15 responses said they did not have a specialist data analyst for community safety. Two responses said they did, and the third identified access to partnership analysts. Of those without a data analyst, **two-thirds (8 out of 12) said that they did not have enough access to analyst capacity to complete their strategic needs assessment and/or local problem solving.***

Areas of responsibility under Community Safety

A question was asked about a range of community safety responsibilities and what was covered within the Community Safety Team within each Local Authority area. All 15 respondents answered, however **there was not one theme that was covered by all 15**. The top responsibilities were - Hate Crime, Crime Prevention, Community Cohesion, Anti-Social Behaviour & CONTEST. The least common responsibilities included Armed Forces Covenant, Fire Safety, Rehabilitation of Offenders and Neighbourhood Watch schemes (see the full range of answers in appendix 2).

Around two thirds of respondents selected VAWDASV or Substance Misuse – with other teams picking this activity up. The shift of community safety activity to others is considered later (page 6).

Regarding 'other' areas of responsibility, one commented **'this is not straight forward'**, arguably demonstrating the complexity of the role. Responses included Domestic Homicide Reviews, Road Safety and Serious Violence and Organised Crime.

"[There is a] move towards safeguarding seen in CONTEST at operational level and VAWDASV but the CSP still has these as priorities and has role to play in strategic oversight - also ASB in terms of no longer involved in co-ordinating operational response but key regarding [Community] Trigger."
Participant view

Findings - The shift of community safety activity

Areas of responsibility transferred from Community Safety staff remit

We were made aware during stakeholder engagement that some areas that have traditionally sat under community safety have now moved into other parts of Local Authorities. We asked which areas have now moved from community safety to which department and how they are staffed. It seemed to be a difficult question to respond to, with responses ranging from 'not being clear', or work not even being done. We were unable to determine numbers of staff. Comments included:

- "Some of the above [areas] now just not done. Some done by other partners (not LA)."
- "I am not aware of where some of these sit – if at all! Some like Neighbourhood Watch are Police led etc."
- "It is spread across several departments, housing, social services, education, security, performance"
- "[Work has moved to] Social services and unsure of staff numbers but approx. 10."
- "Used to have ASB Co-ordinator in my team but that role is now undertaken by Housing."

Several responses referred to work being delivered regionally – particularly regarding substance misuse and domestic abuse. One respondent felt this was problematic: "there are some issues around the APB and VAWDASV work/teams being separate as the local element of the work has been lost."

There was further concerns around the lack of prevention capacity and alignment, described in this comment:

"I feel the whole prevention agenda should sit under community safety. There are prevention teams in the youth offending service and the youth engagement participation service all with similar aims and objectives. I feel community safety teams in general are dealing with issues too late. There should be prevention teams aligned to community safety and not in separate departments."

There are many other individuals who contribute to community safety within the Local Authority. It was difficult to determine exactly who they are and what they cover, however many respondents described various teams involved in the broader community safety work (see wordcloud below). Summed up in this comment:

"Community Safety runs through many other departments, Housing, Supporting People, Visible Services, Civil Contingencies etc. We have excellent links across the authority."

Findings - the question of sustainable funding

There are a range of issues around funding of posts for community safety. These include short term funding, and posts being funded to do a range of activities not just community safety. A free text question was included in the survey, to allow respondents to make any comment that they wanted regarding funding. 11 participants provided a response; key themes include -

Access to sustainable, sufficient funding
- Reliance on Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) grant funding; challenges around access to PCC funding (such as, it has to be in line with PCC priorities) and where PCC funding is received, the lack of a long-term sustainable approach
- Lack of sustainable and consistent funding for Community Safety posts. High level of temporary or part time contracts due to short term funding
- Posts are funded from a number of different funding pots which adds complexity to arrangements
- Lack of consistent approach to funding for community safety across local authority areas

Impact of funding deficits on statutory responsibilities
- Specific lack of funding for Community Safety Partnership activities or preventative initiatives
- Lack of funding problematic around ensuring compliance with Statutory Duties. For example, the lack of funding for specialist training
- Concerns regarding funding for new duties (Serious Violence Duty / Protect Duty)

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"Every year it feels we have to fight for the funding to maintain our staff and the projects we fund to reduce crime and prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system. More needs to be done strategically to support the funding of community safety staff across Wales."

"A commitment to long term funding would allow us to commission services properly and run more early intervention and prevention schemes rather than being reactive to problems."

"Every year [staff] worry about their contracts being extended...it is really difficult to cope with the volume of work and the expectations of the service."

"Having no available funding specifically for CSP's has really affected our ability to prevent and react to issues as a partnership. The team is so small and the volume of work is so big that I feel we are not doing everything we want to because we just don't have the capacity. Not having a dedicated partnership budget makes being creative impossible as we are relying on goodwill which is quite difficult in these times and limits what we can do."

Discussion and Conclusion

This short workforce survey set out to gather a clearer understanding of the existing workforce with a community safety remit within Local Authorities and to understand what activities were being covered within that remit. Relatedly, we sought to clarify if activities had been moved or being carried out by different teams within Local Authorities. Analyst capacity was specifically queried, in line with the responsibility for strategic assessments and local problem solving. Given the focus on the resourcing of community safety, we also asked for feedback around funding for community safety.

Overall, the findings are consistent with the early stakeholder engagement between the developing Network team and links across Wales. The findings are also consistent with previous reviews (such as the Working Together for Safer Communities review, Welsh Government, 2017) and Welsh academic research that has sought to understand the role and responsibilities of community safety. Indeed, key findings from almost fifteen years ago remain the case*, namely:

- the 'significant discrepancies' in the roles of lead officers working in diversely organised partnerships
- the 'uneven profile' of community safety work and the role of the lead officer, where some work in relatively well-resourced teams, others have minimal staff support and limited budgets
- the challenge of balancing strategic planning (such as, responding to emerging duties and developing prevention work) and responding to various operational demands (for many currently, this is Anti-Social Behaviour)

*Adam Edwards & Gordon Hughes, 2007, The Role of the Community Safety Officer in Wales, Cardiff University

Discussion and Conclusion continued

Despite some of the core role and resourcing challenges, there are modern differences which reflect the current changing landscape. This is particularly in relation to the areas of local focus for the community safety leads and has been influenced by regionalisation (less involvement in substance misuse and VAWDASV) but also growing legal requirements (CONTEST/Prevent, ASB) and national priorities (hate crime, community cohesion). Furthermore, the complexity and reactive nature of the role are further constrained by funding, which limits abilities to increase focus on early intervention and prevention.

The squeeze on community safety has increased the focus on statutory responsibilities, which was evident in responses to a supplementary survey question around seminar topic requests. There are many experienced professionals working within community safety, including many on part-time or temporary contracts. Therefore, there will be a challenge for the Network team in developing a learning and development programme for a relatively small group of professionals with different requirements and focus.

Furthermore, the lack of data analyst capacity in the year when the Strategic Assessments are due to take place is of particular concern. The Strategic Assessments should identify the current issues and provide direction for prevention and intervention across Community Safety both now and over the coming years. There was strong interest from respondents to a seminar on data analysis, which could assist with local problem solving. However, it is suggested that community safety leads should play a supportive rather than lead role in producing the Strategic Assessments. A lack of data analyst resource will likely affect the quality and effectiveness of the Strategic Assessments and subsequently, the associated delivery plans.

The Wales Safer Communities Network is now providing support for the rebooted Wales Data and Analysis Innovation and Improvement Network (WDAIIN). It is hoped that WDAIIN will support the development of business cases for multi-agency investment in partnership analysis, as well as supporting Strategic Assessments. WDAIIN has set out intentions to promote intelligence product commissioning and development that are mainstreamed and are continuous processes. As well as being appropriately aligned with other LA plans and assessments (for example, well-being assessments).

Discussion and Conclusion continued

It is clear from the information gathered that the role of Community Safety is seen differently across Local Authorities, and that just as Safeguarding cuts across multiple areas within Local Authorities so does Community Safety. There appears to be some frustration about the lack of co-ordination and funding for Community Safety. With the possibility that not all Local Authorities have the capacity to meet all expected requirements or any upcoming duties which may put very small Community Safety Teams under additional pressure. It may be that other partners could provide further support and help build capacity.

There are opportunities for the Wales Safer Communities Board to help partners understand and improve the place of community safety within the programme of strategic partnerships. This will help raise the profile of community safety and promote integration across all relevant policy areas and partnerships. However, whilst community safety is a thread, like safeguarding, intertwined throughout operational delivery, a core strategic understanding and commitment is required to inform and improve practice and demonstrate legal compliance.

Recommendations

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 Wales Safer Communities Network, working in partnership with WDAIIN (including key members, such as the Violence Prevention Unit, Data Cymru and WLGA) will look at opportunities to support the development of the Strategic Assessments across Wales.
4. Safer Communities Board Members consider whether the resourcing their organisations provide to community safety activity is sufficient to meet the local demand and legal requirements, as well as providing staff with the opportunity to develop professionally and develop their services (particularly in relation to prevention).
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.

Appendix 1

List of survey questions

Do you have a dedicated Community Safety Team?

How many staff work in the Community Safety Team PART time?

How many staff work in the Community Safety Team FULL time?

Do any of the Community Safety Team staff have duties outside of Community Safety?

If yes, how many have duties outside of Community Safety PART time?

If yes, how many have duties outside of Community Safety FULL time?

Do you have a specialist Data Analyst for Community Safety? If yes, F/T, P/T

If no, do you consider that you have enough access to a data analyst to ensure you can complete your strategic needs assessment, and/or your local problem solving?

We have been made aware that some areas that have traditionally sat under community safety have now moved into other parts of Local Authorities. Which of the following areas currently sit under the Community Safety remit in your LA?

Are there any of these that no longer sit within Community Safety in your LA?

Approximately how many staff does that involve and which directorate/ section of the LA do they now sit under?

Are there any other workers who you consider contribute to community safety who are now based in other teams. If so, how many and what do they cover?

We have been told there are a range of issues around funding of posts for community safety. These include short term funding, and posts being funded to do a range of activities not just community safety. If you would like to provide any detail, please include in the box below. Your comments will be anonymised in the report.

The Wales Safer Communities Network will be developing a detailed Learning and Development programme later in 2021/22. We will consult on that nearer the time. However, we are planning some early learning and development sessions ahead of the full programme being developed. Please indicate below if any of these topics would be of interest to you and/or other members of staff.

If there are other areas of learning and development you would like to be considered in the initial programme, please list below.

We have asked you lots of questions. Please use the box below to provide any additional comments you may have.

Appendix 2

Table: Responses to thematic areas of responsibility

Theme	Within Team	Outside of Team	Not identified
ASB	12	3	0
VAWDASV	9	4	2
Substance misuse (including drug paraphernalia)	10	4	1
Fire safety education support	2	4	9
Armed forces covenant (esp around inclusion)	1	5	9
Rehabilitation & integration of prison-leavers	3	3	9
Neighbourhood watch (or similar)	4	5	6
CCTV	5	5	5
Crime prevention	13	2	0
Counter Terrorism & Prevent	12	1	2
Fire prevention support	2	3	10
Modern Slavery (incl County Lines & cuckooing) and Exploitation (incl sexual)	11	1	3
Victim/vulnerable people support	9	2	4
Farm watch/rural watch	5	4	6
Youth education (eg coordinating 'Crucial Crew' or similar)	5	5	5
Hate crime	14	0	1
Community cohesion	13	1	1
Early intervention (eg Trauma informed practice)	5	3	7
Other	3	2	N/A

The Wales Safer Communities Network would like to thank all participants for their contribution by taking part in the survey.

"[We] are looking forward to working more with the Network."
Participant feedback
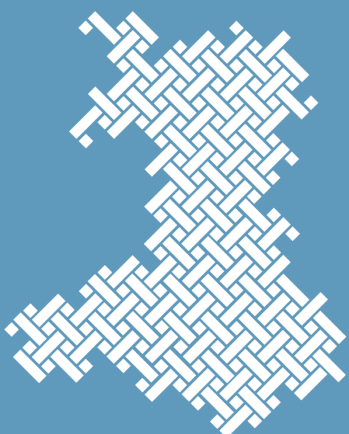
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