



House of Commons
Welsh Affairs Committee

**Police Service, Crime
and Anti-Social
Behaviour in Wales:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Fourth Report of
Session 2004–05**

**Second Special Report of Session
2005–06**

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The Welsh Affairs Committee

The Welsh Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (including relations with the National Assembly for Wales.)

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Second Special Report

The Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2004–2005, *Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales* on 23 March 2005. The response from the Home Office was sent on 24 August 2005 and is published as Appendix 1 to this Report.

Appendix 1

The Government Reply to the fourth Report from the Welsh Affairs Committee: Police Service, Crime and anti-Social Behaviour in Wales: session 2004-5: HC46-1.

This paper responds to the specific conclusions and recommendations made by the Welsh Affairs Committee (WAC) in its report. The conclusions and recommendations are addressed in turn, giving first the recommendation number from the report followed by the actual recommendation shown in bold type.

The Government notes conclusions **1** and **2** that address Welsh Assembly initiatives to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Wales and the constructive relationships that have developed between the four Chief Constables in Wales and the National Assembly for Wales.

The Government response to the remainder of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations is as follows:

Relations between the Home Office and the National Assembly for Wales.

3. We recognise that the Home Office Director is a key role in facilitating communication between Wales and Westminster, and subsequently to the effective delivery of police services in Wales. It is therefore unacceptable that the post remains filled on a temporary basis. We recommend that the Home Office rectify this situation at the earliest opportunity.

An appointment to the post of Home Office Crime Director for Wales has been made and a start date arranged, subject to completion of the usual pre appointment checks.

4. We are concerned that there remains a low level of awareness and insufficient understanding of the nature and impact of the devolution settlement on police service in Wales within the Home Office. We recommend that the Home Office address this shortfall and develop its relations with the National Assembly for Wales in a more structured and systematic way.

The Home Office accepts that the close working relationships it has established with other Government departments across Whitehall has not been sufficiently replicated in its dealings with the National Assembly for Wales. We will work with the Welsh Assembly Government to put in place further guidance and training to raise the level of awareness amongst officials of the impact of the devolution settlement on the development and implementation of community safety policies in Wales and to ensure that there is effective

engagement at official level between the two administrations. The Home Secretary is intending to establish regular bi-lateral meetings with ministers in the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that issues of mutual interest are considered on a more systematic basis and that the Welsh perspective is incorporated into the development of, for example, the ASB agenda.

Further devolution of Powers

5. Opinions over further devolution of powers over the police remain divided. In any future consideration of the devolution of those powers, it will be essential to safeguard the present arrangements for force cooperation at the cross-border, national and international levels.

There are no plans to consider further devolution of powers over the police to the National Assembly for Wales. Wales shares a common legal system with England so the management of the police element to that system properly sits with the Home Secretary.

Funding

6. We agree with the Welsh police forces that the current funding streams are complex and confusing, and represent a hindrance to effective resource planning. We recommend that the Government review those funding streams at the earliest opportunity, with a view to providing long-term simplified and reliable revenue sources for the Welsh police forces.

The report raises three issues:

- Confusion over the equity of distribution of police general grant, between England and Wales
- Difficulties over multiple funding streams
- Lack of long-term funding commitments by government

Confusion over police general grant

Home Office Police Grant is allocated to all police authorities in England and Wales on exactly the same basis – relative need as assessed through a formula applied to all authorities. To the extent that individual police authorities in England and in Wales are similar, they will receive similar Police Grant. However, taken as two groups, the relative needs of English and Welsh police authorities inevitably differ, and over time their respective relative needs change at different rates. There is therefore no reason why the same rate of grant increase should apply to authorities collectively in England and collectively in Wales.

The second main component of police authority funding is Revenue Support Grant and National Non Domestic Rates provided in England by the ODPM and in Wales by the Welsh Assembly Government. Local government is a devolved function, and provision of local government grant between various local government services (including police) is determined separately in Wales and in England. Both administrations apply fundamentally

the same police formula. Both equalise for disparity in local resources, though the approaches differ. Because the resource base of the group of four Welsh police authorities differs from that of the group of 38 English authorities, so does RSG.

Police authorities in England are subject to minimum grant increases – the ‘floor’ uplift. This is paid by varying the payment of RSG between the 38 English police authorities. The Welsh Assembly Government does not provide the same mechanism. Varying payments between four authorities would be impractical. To ensure a minimum standard of service, the Home Office provides a separate specific grant to bring Welsh authorities up to the floor determined for England.

Without wholesale renegotiation of local government funding it is difficult to see how the position can be improved. The Government has no plans to change the constitutional position. Even if it did, the position of any arbitrarily determined group of authorities would still differ from the overall position of the rest.

Difficulties over multiple funding streams

The Government has responded to various demands over the past few years by rolling out specific grants. These have been either to support a particular initiative (say the Crime Fighting Fund) or to support cost pressures that could not satisfactorily be put through general formula grant (eg Rural Policing Fund). The government agrees that the position has become confusing. We are therefore looking at ways in which to make this funding clearer and firmer.

Lack of long-term funding commitments by government

The Government recognizes the limitations of single-year financial settlements and has consulted local government on the implications of three-year arrangements. It is currently envisaged that these would apply to announcement of Home Office Police Grant and specific grants, and of RSG/NNDR in England, beginning with an announcement of provisions for 2006/07 and 2007/08 later this year. We understand that the Welsh Assembly Government intend to consult in the near future on beginning 3 year settlements from 2007/08.

A single Welsh Police Force

7. While we see no case for the amalgamation of the police forces in Wales, we welcome and encourage cross-force collaboration within Wales (and indeed with forces in England), in order to deliver an effective and efficient police service. Furthermore, we welcome the establishment of the Welsh Association of Chief Police Officers, and congratulate the four Welsh Chief Constables on their commitment and innovation in seeking to provide the best service possible to the people of Wales

As the Home Secretary made clear in his speech to the ACPO/APA conference on 19th May, the Government is prepared to contemplate reshaping the national policing landscape. There are a number of strands to this, of which one is the issue of structures, and the question of whether the existing 43 force structure is the right one for our current policing environment.

HMIC's initial assessment of protective services has concluded that our present structure is not fit for purpose in some key respects. The Home Secretary has asked Sir Ronnie Flanagan to advance the work which HMIC have been undertaking and to provide, by July 2005, his professional assessment of where the key weaknesses are and how these should be addressed. The Government will, in parallel, be looking to the police service to advance ways of making force collaboration and cooperation more effective.

The question of whether the existing structure of police forces in Wales is fit for purpose will need to be considered (alongside the other 39 forces) in light of HMIC's findings. However, we do recognise and welcome the review's acknowledgement of the advances the Welsh forces have made in terms of cross force collaboration.

National Policing Plan

8. The National Policing Plans have provided police forces in England and Wales with a clear and focused set of priorities and performance targets for the next three years. However the priorities set out in the first two Plans concentrated on national policies for crime reduction. That gave little opportunity for police forces to address local needs and concerns. The current Plan goes some way to redress that imbalance. We welcome the shift in direction in the National Policing Plan for 2005-08 which offers Welsh police forces a greater opportunity to address local priorities for tackling crime in Wales. We look to the Government to ensure that sufficient funds are provided for the police to address both national and local priorities.

The Committee has recognised the improvements made in the latest National Policing Plan compared to its two predecessors. The National Policing Plan 2005-08 had a strategic focus which allowed room for the identification of local priorities within the national framework. The current PSA 1 sets the tone for this flexibility by requiring a general reduction in crime of 15% overall rather than reductions in specific crime types.

The Committee will know that the police reform white paper, *Building Communities, Beating Crime: A better police service for the 21st century*, proposed that a national community safety strategy would be published in 2005. The Strategy and the National Policing Plan 2006-09 will acknowledge the benefits of flexibility at local level while making clear the national minimum standards for what local people should expect from their police and other services involved in community safety.

Local Targets

9. We welcome the change in target-setting from a percentage reduction in individual crimes to a broader percentage reduction in total crime levels. We believe that this will assist Welsh police forces to better combat problem crime in their force areas and to better reflect their performance against those targets.

The Government has moved considerably to simplify the target regimes as they apply to policing and to provide greater flexibility to the police service on which crimes they choose to target.

The Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets which arose from the Spending Review in 2002 specified individual targets for reductions on burglary, vehicle crime and robbery. There was also a specific policing PSA target which sought to bring about improvements in policing across all forces as well as increases in front-line policing.

The new target arrangements which flow from the Spending Review in 2004 seek to streamline this considerably. Instead of a range of crime-specific targets, we have a set a single all-embracing goal which seeks to secure a 15% reduction in overall crime by 2007-08 and more in high crime areas. This will give forces much greater flexibility in terms of deciding how this is best achieved to reflect local crime reduction priorities. This step has been matched by a considerably slimmed down National Policing Plan with five clear priorities for the police service.

Underpinning these arrangements, the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) will enable forces, authorities, partnerships and the Government to track policing performance. The PPAF will monitor performance on seven crime measures thus enabling all involved to assess relative and comparative strengths and weaknesses and respond accordingly.

National intelligence Model

10. We welcome the introduction of the National Intelligence Model and are pleased to hear of the positive effect that it has had in Wales. We look to the Government to ensure that best practice under the National Intelligence Model is implemented across police forces in Wales.

As planned for in the 2001, Policing a New Century White Paper, the National Intelligence Model has become a cornerstone of policing in England and Wales. A code of practice for the National Intelligence Model (NIM) was issued under the Police Reform Act 2002 in January 2005. The purpose of the code is to:

- set out to chief officers the basic principles and minimum common standards for NIM;
- promote compatibility of procedures and terminology for NIM;
- clarify the responsibilities of chief officers and of police authorities in relation to the application of NIM;
- ensure that observance of these principles, and the standards for implementation, results in a systematic programme of continuous development of police policy, practice and capability with regard to intelligence; and
- help identify and promulgate good practice.

The development and enhancement of the National Intelligence Model is an ongoing process. In addition to the code, the development of intelligence doctrine, of common standards, training and career paths for intelligence officers, continued inspection by HMIC and the marketing of good practice should all contribute to ensuring that the NIM is fully embedded in all police forces.

Data Collection

11. We agree that the measurement of performance is both necessary and desirable to gauge the success, or otherwise, of the police forces in Wales. However, we share the concerns of the Welsh police forces that the collection of data for the wide number of performance regimes represents an onerous burden. We recommend that the Government look closely at that burden and consider a streamlined approach to data collection that would reduce the impact on the police time.

The Government welcomes the Committee's support for performance measurement in policing and agrees that the burden of data collection needs to be minimised. Assessments derived from the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) for forces in England and Wales are to be published for the first time in autumn 2005 and plans are in hand to review performance indicators subsequently.

The Home Office and other government bodies capture many items of data from police forces in England and Wales. It is understood that the submission of data imposes a burden on forces but this is necessary to monitor and analyse data at the centre. The Annual Data Requirement (ADR) process overseen by the Home Office manages existing requirements and new requests for data and challenges these requests to ensure they are necessary and not overly bureaucratic on frontline staff.

The introduction of the National Management Information System (NMIS) for 38 forces in England & Wales by March 2006 is expected to make the electronic submission of data easier and less time consuming for forces. NMIS is a data warehouse which contains information on all aspects of policing plus analysis and reporting tools which should contribute to reducing the burden on forces.

Operation Tarian

12. We welcome the objectives and achievements of Operation Tarian in tackling drugs crime in Wales. We further welcome the joined up approach the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government have taken in tackling both the enforcement and prevention aspects of organised crime in Wales. We recommend that the Home Office commits to the long-term funding of Operation Tarian in Wales.

The government welcomes the committee's recognition of the success of Operation Tarian. However, specific funding for this project from the Home Office was never intended to be long term. The Police Standards Unit provides funding to operationally test out concepts such as Operation Tarian. If successful then it is the responsibility of the police forces and authorities concerned – and in this case the Welsh Assembly Government – to mainstream the project within their existing funding streams. In addition, providing a specific grant for Operation Tarian in the long term would not be consistent with the government's approach to simplify funding arrangements and moving away from multiple funding streams.

Anti-social Behaviour Legislation

13. We welcome the Government's initiative to tackle anti-social behaviour. In particular, we welcome the new legislation which provides the police, local authorities and other statutory agencies with new powers and methods to respond to anti-social behaviour. We agree with the police in Wales that a period of consolidation is now necessary and we look to the Government to ensure that they are given sufficient time to master their new powers.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 provided a framework for tackling anti-social behaviour and gave local agencies the tools they need to tackle anti-social behaviour on the ground. The powers have been commenced gradually to allow agencies to build up effective working practices and we now have evidence that these powers are being widely used.

Further ASB provisions are contained in The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. These provisions are mainly technical in nature and will build on existing legislation and improve practical operation on the ground. Again, provisions will be commenced according to practical and realistic timescales. Furthermore the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 strengthens existing enviro-crime provisions, many of which were initiated by practitioners.

The Government is always willing to consider new measures to improve the response to problems of anti-social behaviour and to protect victims and witnesses.

Definition of Anti-social Behaviour

14. We acknowledge the difficulties that the Government has faced in defining anti-social behaviour. However, we conclude that further clarity on what constitutes anti-social behaviour is an essential requirement for the police and Community Safety Partnerships to devise and deliver successful strategies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Whilst we welcome the emphasis that the Government has placed on the victim in any definition, we recommend that it gives urgent thought to a clear workable definition under which the police forces and their partners can operate. We further recommend that the Government in its development of a definition for anti-social behaviour ensures that there is sufficient scope for local input and flexibility.

We do not agree with the Committee's conclusions. If we were to strictly define anti-social behaviour by certain types of behaviour/actions we run the risk of excluding some types of behaviour that are problematic or including others which may not be. This we believe would restrict action and we want agencies to have the flexibility to tackle anti-social behaviour in the way it manifests itself locally.

We believe that the current definition enables local partnerships to consider the impact and perception of behaviours locally when drawing up their own definition of anti-social behaviour.

The definition was further endorsed by the Home Affairs Select Committee's report into Anti-social Behaviour published on 5 April 2005. In their recommendations, the Home Affairs Select Committee commented (page 21):

“We have listened carefully to criticisms of the current legal definitions of anti-social behaviour as too wide. We are convinced, however, that it would be a mistake to try to make them more specific. This is for three main reasons: first, the definitions work well from an enforcement point of view and no significant practical problems appear to have been encountered; second, exhaustive lists of behaviour considered anti-social by central government would be unworkable and anomalous; third, anti-social behaviour is inherently a local problem and falls to be defined at a local level. It is a major strength of the current statutory definitions of anti-social behaviour that they are flexible enough to accommodate this. We would argue also that the definitions are helpful in backing an approach that stands with the victims of anti-social behaviour rather than narrowly focusing on the behaviour of the perpetrators.”

The Welsh Approach to Anti-social Behaviour

15. We welcome the models of best practice devised by the police forces in Wales to tackle anti-social behaviour. We agree that ASBOs should be issued as a last resort and welcome the Welsh forces’ proportionate and appropriate approach to anti-social behaviour. We further recommend that mechanisms be put in place to ensure that best practices of the Welsh police forces are shared across Wales.

16. We further recommend that the Government consider the approach taken by Wales in addressing anti-social behaviour and, where appropriate, disseminate that best practice across England and Wales.

We do not agree that ASBOs should be used as a last resort. In general ASBOs are used as part of an incremental approach in conjunction with other tools, such as warning letters, mediation or acceptable behaviour contracts. However, they can be used as a first resort in any circumstances where there is a need to protect individuals or communities from serious anti-social behaviour. The Home Affairs Select Committee endorsed this approach by concluding that protecting local communities was of overriding importance and that local ASB strategies should move quickly to introduce preventative measures and sanctions if these could bring quick relief to local people.

The Government is already committed to sharing best practice throughout England and Wales. Existing mechanisms are already in place as part of the Home Office’s Anti-Social Behaviour Unit’s TOGETHER Campaign.

TOGETHER Academy events have been hosted over the last two years, including events in Cardiff. They have brought together ASB practitioners from throughout Wales and England to share best practice, gain knowledge of the latest developments regarding ASB tools, and to network with others from a wide range of local services.

The TOGETHER ActionLine and website provide opportunities for all practitioners, to receive advice and share best practice.

A two day training/network event is being held in Cardiff in September 2005 – this will be jointly hosted by Welsh Assembly and Home Office and will provide input from Expert Practitioners around key aspects of ASB legislation and how it can be used effectively.

Finally, the ASB Unit's implementation team have staff dedicated to working with Action Areas, including Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. They ensure up-to-date good practice is shared not only with the rest of Wales but England as well. This team is currently organising Action Area Cluster meetings and ASB leads in Wales will be invited to participate in joint events for England and Wales. These events will provide an opportunity to highlight and share good practice and enable learning from Action Areas to be disseminated more widely.

Measurement of Anti-social Behaviour

17. Whilst we acknowledge that the number of ASBOs testifies to the success of legislation in the sense that it is being used, we are concerned that in the absence of any other measure, the number of ASBOs issued will be considered a proxy measure of success. Such a measurement would discriminate against Welsh police forces who have implemented successful strategies that have not needed high numbers of ASBOs. We look to the Government to promote a clear message that the number of ASBOs should not, on its own, be regarded as a measure of success of anti-social behaviour strategy, but should be considered alongside other measures for tackling anti-social behaviour.

We do not use ASBOs to measure the level of success in reducing anti-social behaviour. We measure the Perception of ASB through the 7 strands of the British Crime Survey. This is the single measurement used to gauge the success of the Home Office strategy on ASB. Using this measure, the proportion of people estimated to perceive a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area fell from 21% to 16% between 2002/03 and 2003/04.

ASBOs are only one of a number of tools available for tackling anti-social behaviour. A tiered approach to tackling anti-social behaviour should be adopted and other interventions such as warning letters, acceptable behaviour contracts, parenting contracts, injunctions, Fixed Penalty Notices/Penalty Notices for Disorder, dispersal powers may also be used to tackle ASB. It is for local agencies to decide on the most appropriate intervention to tackle ASB in their area. The key here is whether anti-social behaviour is being reduced on the ground, not which measure is used to achieve this. It is not a numbers game.

Legal Guidance for Anti-social Behaviour Orders

18. The multi-stage approach taken to anti-social behaviour in Wales, means that an ASBO is only issued as a last resort. Therefore, the individual is presented with several opportunities to right his or her behaviour. While it may appear unfortunate that a custodial sentence can be given for a breach of an ASBO, we conclude that, in Wales, it is an appropriate punishment.

Those subject to an ASBO know the consequence of breaching their order. For ASBOs to be credible, breaches need to be dealt with seriously. The Government is pleased that the Committee endorses this approach.

Breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence and it is right that criminal penalties apply. Legislation set out the penalties for breach and including custody. Not all ASBO breaches

result in custodial sentences, fines and community penalties may also be imposed. In the youth court the full range of disposals are available. Custody for young people should be considered as a last resort in cases of serious or persistent breach. In all ASBO cases the sentence given should be proportionate and reflect the impact of the anti-social behaviour.

19. We welcome the developments in South Wales to bring together all the agencies involved in the application for Anti-social Behaviour Orders and the creation of the ASBO Legal Group. We recommend that similar groups be established throughout Wales, and that a national forum be established to allow for the dissemination of best practice across Wales.

We encourage the establishment of multi-agency fora at a local level to discuss activity to tackle anti-social behaviour. We know that these fora can be valuable in breaking down barriers and delays; and also in ensuring all agencies understand the impact that anti-social behaviour can have on communities. Whilst we warmly encourage this approach, we would not want to be too prescriptive about precisely what local arrangements should be in place. There are already a number of mechanisms in place in order for good practice to be shared at a national level (see response to recommendations 15 and 16) but if practitioners in Wales felt it would be useful to establish a national forum, then the Home Office and the Department for Constitutional Affairs would support this.

20. The Welsh forces have developed effective policies to combat anti-social behaviour in Wales, which include the use of Anti-social Behaviour Orders as a sanction of last resort. Therefore, it would be unfortunate should an Order not be granted in Wales for lack of guidance. We recommend that the Anti-social Behaviour Unit redouble its efforts with the Department of Constitutional Affairs to provide guidance and training to raise awareness of the new legislation amongst magistrates and the judiciary. (Paragraph 155)

The latest statistics available for Wales show that the courts have granted 166 applications for anti-social behaviour orders up to 31 December 2004.

It would be unfortunate if magistrates felt unable to grant ASBOs due to a lack of guidance. Specific guidance for magistrates on sentencing for breaches of ASBOs is contained in the Magistrates' Court Sentencing Guidelines, published in January 2004. In addition, the Justices' Clerks' Society has published a Good Practice Guide to ASBOs which provides additional guidance on law and procedure in the magistrates' court. The Department for Constitutional Affairs is currently working with the Judicial Studies Board to provide up-to-date guidance on current ASB legislation and caselaw with the support of the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales. This guidance will be issued shortly to all courts in England and Wales and will be kept under regular review.

A key part of the work of the Anti-social Behaviour Response Courts, which have been set up and now cover the whole of Wales, includes work to ensure that magistrates are effectively trained and aware of the concerns of the local community. It is extremely encouraging that all areas of Wales have now signed up to this approach.

Recently one of our Academy events was held in Cardiff and the workshop on Collecting Evidence and getting the Right Outcome in Court received very positive feedback. The CPS expert prosecutor in Wales will also take part in the two day training event to be jointly

hosted by the Home Office and Welsh Assembly in September this year (see response to recommendation 16).

Community Safety Partnerships

21. We conclude that the new Public Service Agreement Target at an overall crime reduction figure of 15%, allows sufficient scope for local priorities and target setting within the Community Safety Partnerships. However, we remain concerned that a significant part of the Community Safety Partnerships' work on crime prevention and delivering the reassurance agenda is not being taken into account. We recommend that the Government devise a means of more adequately measuring those core aspects of the work of Community Safety Partnerships in Wales and that they be reflected in the targets of the individual partners.

We recognise that CSPs do much other valuable work, but the Home Office Public Service Agreement 1 target (to reduce crime by 15% and more in high crime areas, by 2007/08) will remain the key measurement of their performance for the time being. We are however looking at ways of improving the local visibility and accountability of Community Safety Partnerships (and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) in England) as part of the review of the partnership provisions of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act announced in the Police Reform White Paper, "Building Communities, Beating Crime", published in November 2004. This could very well lead to changes which make it easier for partnerships to report the full range of their activities.

22. We welcome the Government's proposals for closer working between the Police Standards Unit and the Partnership Performance Unit. However, the Government will need to actively promote close working for it to be a success, and we look to the Home Office to take an active lead in promoting that close working. We ask that the Government ensure that the development of two separate performance regimes for both the police and Community Safety Partnerships does not hinder the role of the police in Community Safety Partnerships in any way.

At present, the Home Office has two separate performance frameworks for engaging with the police and Community Safety Partnerships on performance and high crime issues: through the Police Standards Unit's work with target forces, and through the Partnership Assessment and Delivery System (PADS), with partnerships.

However, work is currently being taken forward to ensure that the Home Office looks at police (at BCU level) and partnership performance in the round for precisely the reason the Committee gives. There remains a case for separate policing and partnership performance frameworks to tackle force and BCU-specific or partnership-specific performance issues.

23. We welcome the proposals for further integration between Community Safety Strategies and Local Policing Plans. We look to the Government, the police authorities, police forces and Community Safety Partnerships to place a greater importance on coordinating their strategies and in particular, in coordinating the timing of the publication of their relevant documents.

The Home Office in its Police Reform White Paper proposes that “a duty will be placed on police authorities to take into account local policing priorities identified at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) [CSP in Wales] level when publishing force policing plans and strategies.” We are also looking at the scope for aligning more closely the processes by which national priorities are set for the police service and partnerships.

24. At present, we do not consider it necessary to strengthen sanctions in order to force agencies to fully participate in Community Safety Partnerships. However, we look to the Government, in close co-operation with the Welsh Assembly Government, to actively encourage statutory agencies to fully participate in Community Safety Partnerships in Wales.

We welcome the Committee’s conclusion that it does not consider it necessary to strengthen sanctions to force agencies to participate in Community Safety Partnerships: the essence of partnership is co-operation rather than compulsion. However, the Government fully endorses the view of the Committee that statutory agencies should be actively encouraged to participate fully. This was one of the themes of the Home Office’s review of the Crime and Disorder Act mentioned above, which extended to Wales and to which the Government will be responding shortly.

Funding for Community Safety Partnerships

25. The disparate funding streams for Community Safety Partnerships in Wales represents a significant hindrance to their effective organisation and planning strategies. While similar funding problems in England appear to have been resolved, that is not the case in Wales. We recommend that the UK Government, in cooperation with the National Assembly for Wales, consider the establishment of a single, long-term funding stream for Community Safety Partnerships in Wales.

We accept the recommendation, and have already opened discussions with the acting Home Office Regional Director for Wales.

Data-Sharing Protocols

26. We welcome the groundbreaking work carried out in many Community Safety Partnerships in launching new initiatives and developing protocols which facilitate the sharing of information amongst partner agencies. To assist that work we recommend that the Government actively seek to raise awareness of the provision for information sharing under the Data Protection Act, and to promote and facilitate the development of protocols and dissemination of best practice in this area.

We agree that robust information sharing protocols are critical to enable agencies to share information relevant to crime reduction and community safety effectively. Section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA) acts as a gateway for data exchange and provides a power for anyone to share information with named agencies for the purposes of any provision of the Act. The Home Office review of the partnership provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act specifically examined Section 115 and considered how best to encourage better data and information sharing between agencies. The findings of the review are

currently under consideration and we will be announcing our proposals for change later in the year.

Co-Location of Agencies

27. We consider the co-location of the agencies involved in Community Safety Partnerships a demonstration of the clear commitment to joint working by the statutory agencies involved in Community Safety Partnerships in Wales. We are convinced of the benefits of housing representatives of those agencies under one roof and look to the Rhondda Cynon Taff facility being used as an example of good practice that could be replicated across Wales.

The facility at Rhondda Cynon Taff is an example of good practice and provides a useful model that could indeed be replicated elsewhere. However, decisions here are largely a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government to pursue with individual partnerships.

All Wales Crime and Disorder Forum

28. The All Wales Crime and Disorder Forum has the potential to provide a much needed forum at which best-practice and innovation could be disseminated across Wales. We look to the UK Government, in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government to provide the necessary support to give the All Wales Crime and Disorder Forum a long-term future.

We agree that the All Wales Crime and Disorder Forum has the potential to improve the practice and delivery of Community Safety Partnerships. Work is in hand to establish a new Community Safety Forum with discussions having taken place with key stakeholders and a conference planned for in September 2005. Resources from both the Home Office and the Assembly have been committed to support the development of the Forum. The new Home Office Crime Director for Wales will liaise with the Welsh Assembly Government to explore how best to provide ongoing support to the Forum for the future.

Reassurance Policing

29. We welcome the innovative approach to policing as exemplified in the National Reassurance Policing Programme, and encourage the speedy national rollout of that programme.

The Government welcomes the Committee's endorsement of innovative, local policing, such as the National Reassurance Policing Programme. We are now looking to build on this further by rolling out dedicated, accessible and responsive Neighbourhood Policing to all areas across Wales by 2008. This will mainstream and draw upon the learning from several innovative neighbourhood policing programmes, (including the National Reassurance Policing Programme, Policing Priority Areas and the Community Cohesion Programme) and will include targeted and intelligence-led problem solving, community engagement in setting priorities, and joint working between the extended police family and other partners to tackle local priorities, all informed by a robust research programme.

We have set out our vision for revitalised neighbourhood policing for the modern world in the booklet *Neighbourhood Policing: Your Police, Your Community, Our Commitment* – intelligence led policing which is capable of dealing with 21st century challenges of crime and disorder, in genuine partnership with local communities. The Government will work with the police and other partners at national and local level to ensure that by 2008:

- every area in Wales will benefit from dedicated, visible, accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing teams;
- there are record police resources on the frontline – with hundreds of officers being freed up from back-office work;
- there will be 24,000 Community Support Officers across England and Wales (over four times as many as now), providing up to 36 million hours a year out in communities to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and reassure the public;
- people will know who their local police officers are and how to contact them;
- people will have a real say in local policing issues and setting local priorities; and
- people will know how well their police are doing locally in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

Neighbourhood policing remains absolutely at the heart of the Government’s forward agenda, as the Home Secretary made clear in his speech to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Association of Police Authorities (APA) at their conference on 19th May. In that speech, as well as reinforcing the overall direction of travel of the White Paper, the Home Secretary set out four key priorities, of which neighbourhood policing was one - not as an end in itself but as a means of reducing crime, delivering far higher levels of reassurance and building stronger and more secure communities. Working with local communities, we can provide a culture of decency and an environment where there is confidence in policing and respect for the individual and the community. We can ensure that the police and partners do not just provide a service to the community but are a respected and integral part of it.

30. We welcome the breadth and depth of initiatives in Wales to engage with the community and solicit their views.

The Government welcomes the committee’s recognition that effective engagement with local communities is vital both to driving a citizen focused culture within the police service, and to delivering neighbourhood policing successfully across all forces. The development of robust engagement strategies, supported by effective delivery processes on the ground, will allow all sections of the community to influence the policing priorities for their area, to work in partnership with the police service to tackle local problems, and to receive ongoing feedback about how successfully the police are responding to their concerns.

The Government shares the committee’s view that such an approach can only be successful if community engagement becomes core to the delivery of all police business, rather than a separate specialism. And there can be no “one size fits all” approach to community engagement; local forces will need to tailor their engagement to the needs, priorities and preferred approaches of the communities they serve.

There is already much effective engagement underway throughout England and Wales, as highlighted by the examples in the committee's report. The Home Office recognises the need to share these and other examples of "what works" across the policing environment, so that colleagues can learn from ideas and approaches which have already been tested on the ground. We have worked with the National Practitioner Panel for Engagement in Policing to support the development of an online Guide to Community Engagement, which contains a range of practical help including tools, templates and background information for anyone with an interest in promoting and delivering community engagement. The Guide can be accessed at www.communityengagement.police.uk It is supported by a database of effective practice examples – some of which are from Wales – which highlight successful work in progress. We would encourage the police service in Wales to make full use of the online Guide, and to continue to use the database as a means of sharing their learning and successes more widely with their policing peers.

31. We welcome the introduction of police community safety officers, and the positive impact they are having on public reassurance and the quality of life in communities throughout Wales. However, we share the concerns expressed by our witnesses that the current funding regime for PCSOs has the potential to undermine their effectiveness. We look to the Government to give a clear commitment to the longterm funding of PCSOs in Wales.

As set out in our booklet "Neighbourhood Policing: your police: your community; our commitment", we will provide funding to support an increase in the numbers of CSOs to 24,000 in England and Wales. Funding under the Neighbourhood Police Fund (NPF) is being made available over the next three years of £37m, £88m and £340m so that police forces and local authorities can deliver what is required to bring the total of CSOs to 24,000 in 2008. In addition to NPF there remains continuation funding at 50% of cost for earlier funding rounds of CSOs. We are currently discussing with stakeholders the best way to allocate funding for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and will confirm with police forces and authorities the details of their allocation as soon as possible. In the longer term we will put this money into general police funding. This should give police authorities a sense of security for the future.

32. We further recommend that the Government not extend the powers of PCSOs, so that they can continue to be used effectively as a high visibility response to low level crime and public disorder.

There is no intention by the Government that Community Support Officers (CSOs) should be anything other than visible on the streets and the powers provided for them in legislation are targeted on the sort of issues they routinely come across when out on patrol. We are currently considering proposals for a minimum set of powers that all Community Support Officers need in order to ensure their maximum effectiveness in dealing with issues of low level crime and anti-social behaviour and to allow them to play a full role in neighbourhood policing. We are consulting with stakeholders as we develop these proposals. This was set out in para 4.29 of our White paper, Building Communities, Beating Crime.