

Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime

A review by Louise Casey

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Foreword

It has been a real honour to have spent these last eight months taking an in-depth look at crime, justice and community involvement on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Getting to grips with how we can work together to reduce crime further, reduce the fear of crime and give the public a sense of hope and trust that those working to fight crime are on their side, has been a tough but rewarding task. These are hugely important issues and the contents of this report provide a rare opportunity to listen to – and hear – what the public are saying.

One of the most striking things that I have discovered during this review is that the very bedrock of our Criminal Justice System is the public – whether as jurors, magistrates or witnesses, or as ordinary citizens abiding by the law of the land and setting an example for their children and others around them. But it is the one element that the system at best takes for granted and keeps at arms length, and at worst rides roughshod over. Too often there is a sense that the public can't be trusted to take a view on their policing and Criminal Justice System.

During this review I have tried to redress that balance by putting at its heart the voice of the public. To outline the factors which undermine their faith in the system, lead them to believe the system is not on their side, and want to give up and not be involved in helping their communities become safer.

I have also found many things that give me great heart. The Government deserves great credit for the strides that it has made in crime



and justice. Crime has fallen, and by no small amount. Victims themselves get a better standard of care, there are record numbers of policing officers and new dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Teams in every local area. Nine in ten local authorities have reduced public concerns about anti-social behaviour – the kind of persistent problems that can make people's lives miserable and whole communities suffer.

The Criminal Justice System has been reformed so that more offenders than ever are brought to justice and punished more severely – partly reflected in a doubling of those now locked up in prison and 93% of offenders being made to pay their fines.

But however necessary and laudable these reforms have been, they have not gone far enough yet to win public confidence. Too often the public don't believe that their voice is heard, don't believe wrong-doers face adequate consequences for the crimes they commit, don't believe they are told enough about what happens in the system and, perhaps because of this, they don't believe that crime has fallen when they are told so.

Their concerns about crime are higher than on other issues like health, education or housing – and how they feel about crime detrimentally affects their daily lives and their willingness to help tackle crime.

And, as in so many walks of life – and many of the areas of public policy on which I have had the privilege to work in the past - it is the most deprived communities that suffer most. Above all else, we owe it to those who do not enjoy the advantages of the majority to respond forcefully to these concerns in the poorest neighbourhoods.

The public want the basics right: the maintenance of order, the rule of law, the clear acknowledgement of the difference between right and wrong, and a strong sense that when someone breaks the law they face appropriate consequences. Of course, the public have an appetite for helping children to avoid becoming criminals and giving offenders a second chance to reform themselves.

But too often, the system leaves the public feeling its principal concern is to process the law breaker rather than meet the needs of the victim or the ordinary law-abiding citizen.

This review is not a strategy or statement of government policy. Rather it is an analysis of what I have found by looking at the evidence, talking to the powers that be, the frontline workers and above all, the public. It's a common-sense view on what further changes need to be made to build confidence and trust, and some suggestions on how those changes should happen.

What I have found interesting is that many, many government policy makers have trod this road before, in particular over the last ten years – their ambitions have been right but they have not achieved the full extent of

the changes needed. So the key test is not just identifying what needs to change, but making it happen. That will be difficult. In many cases it means being willing to rethink assumptions and settled ways of doing things which have been in place for decades. But I would urge those who, often for good reason, are cautious about change in areas like justice, to read this review and take stock of what the public demand.

The Government has shown over the last decade that it is willing to push through radical reforms in this area, for example over anti-social behaviour. In my view the time has come for similar boldness again.

Most of all I would urge policy makers, professionals, lobby groups and law makers to take note of one thing – the public are not daft. They know what's wrong, they know what's right, and they know what they want on crime and justice. And it's time action was taken on their terms.



Louise Casey

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1. The public, crime and justice

Crime is tackled most effectively when the law-abiding majority stand together against the minority who commit it. The ability of the law-abiding public to make that stand is dependent on their trust, faith and confidence in the police, local government, the Criminal Justice System and the Government to support them; to act together on their behalf to tackle crimes and deal with criminals effectively – all in a straightforward and transparent manner.

The organisations that exist to tackle crime have their own distinct roles and functions within the Criminal Justice System: preventing and deterring crime, catching, sentencing, punishing, managing and rehabilitating criminals.

But while these organisations play particular roles within the Criminal Justice System, the public want them to engage and work with them on the basis of a clear sense of overall purpose, on the side of the law-abiding citizen.

The public have a vital role to play: laws themselves spring from ordinary people's views on what is right and wrong, from norms about what is acceptable and unacceptable that we all observe and enforce in our everyday actions – as parents, neighbours or citizens. And most crimes that are brought to justice rely on members of the public coming forward to report them and give evidence.

Without public action, support and confidence, the police and other criminal justice agencies cannot make communities safer. But for the public to play their part, the public want first-rate services – services that

tackle crime effectively, give them confidence and back them up.

And the public want one dialogue on crime – they want crime and justice organisations to engage them on the community's concerns and priorities, they don't want to have to take part in multiple conversations about different organisations' concerns and priorities.

This review has looked at what more could be done to improve the ways that crime-fighting agencies and the public work together to reduce crime. During the review, we have heard from over thirteen thousand members of the public – talking directly to around eight hundred people at meetings and major events across the country, conducting surveys to test the opinions of nearly eleven thousand, and receiving written comments from around one-and-a-half thousand individuals. Additionally, we have analysed research evidence and talked to and received written submissions from a wide range of organisations and professionals involved in tackling crime; its causes, its detection and its consequences.

A more detailed explanation of the approaches we took in conducting this review is set out in **Appendix i** to this report. A detailed analysis of 1,502 responses to a public Have Your Say questionnaire conducted by the review is available separately.

What is clear from what we have seen and heard during this review is that crime remains a top public concern. Some members of the public we have spoken to think that crime has reduced in recent years – and they give

credit to the police for that. But the majority do not feel that crime has fallen. Perhaps most critically, regardless of whether people think crime has fallen or risen, virtually all see it as a priority that must be addressed more forcefully.

At first sight, the public's concerns on crime may seem at odds with the evidence on recent trends in crime, policing and justice. Official statistics (including the British Crime Survey – the only measure which has remained consistent over the last 25 years) show, and most professionals in the field (including academics and police chiefs) agree, that overall crime has fallen by more than a third in the last decade. There are more police officers than ever and major reforms have been introduced to make the Criminal Justice System more efficient, with increases in the numbers of crimes brought to justice, longer custodial sentences and measures in place to provide greater protection for victims and witnesses.

Despite this, there is a significant gap between what the public want on crime and justice and what they feel they have received.

Added to this, most of the public do not believe the official statistics on crime – they think the statistics miss some important crimes and that many minor crimes go unreported. They have lost trust in the how figures are relayed to the public – with 'cherry-picking' of figures by the media, politicians of all parties, professionals and single-interest lobby groups. Many feel let down by a lack of meaningful information about crime and what is being done to tackle it in their local area.

The public have noticed the arrival of extra Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) but have not noticed the impact of wider increases in police numbers or other reforms. While some feel let down by the response

they get from the police, most are supportive of them and, rightly or wrongly, blame red tape and over-zealous interpretation of regulations on human rights and health and safety for keeping them away from frontline duties. The public want a police service that delivers to the same standards, that has a familiar 'identity' wherever they live, and to know what they can expect from it – irrespective of their postcode.

Even with criminals more likely to get jail sentences than 10 years ago, average sentence lengths longer and prisoner numbers at an all-time high, the public think sentencing is still too lenient. And they are more likely to think that prison overcrowding results from a failure to build enough prisons than from improvements in efforts to catch more criminals and lock them up for longer.

The public place punishment – a clear set of consequences that are faced by those who choose to break the law (from financial penalties, through loss of personal time working in the community, to complete loss of liberty in time served in prison) – at the heart of the Criminal Justice System. They are more than ready to support preventative and rehabilitative interventions with criminals if they believe these come on top of, rather than instead of, punishment.

But the public have little awareness of what happens to offenders after they have been caught by the police, and believe fundamentally that the law is stacked more in favour of offenders' rights than victims'. As a result the public see the Criminal Justice System as a distant, sealed-off entity, unaccountable and unanswerable to them or to Government.

In part this distance is created by the fact that little information about what happens to those who commit crime is placed in the public domain. The apparent lack of

systematic communication to the public about sentencing decisions means that few are aware of the increases in numbers of criminals brought to justice, and only get to hear about the exceptional cases where seemingly inadequate sentences are passed, or only hear about the early release from custody of a few weeks, and not the overall increase in sentence lengths.

Overall, the public think too much crime and anti-social behaviour goes undeterred, unchallenged and unpunished in society, and that the Criminal Justice System does not put their concerns first. There is a marked absence of a body that represents the public's voice; no-one that challenges the status quo or gives the public the support and information that might help them take a more informed view.

We have looked in some detail at the evidence on what influences people's fears and concerns about crime – and at the consequences of those perceptions. Our analysis is set out in more detail in **Appendix ii**.

In part, people's worries are driven by media coverage of guns, gangs and knives and other high profile incidents of violent crime. But it is not just media presentation or sensationalism of crime that causes public concern. The public are worried by disrespect, disorder and anti-social behaviour which they see outside their own front doors, as much as by what they read in the papers or see on the television.

Often, their concern is for their own safety and their own risk of victimisation. But, just as commonly, they are worried about the impact on their family, friends and neighbours, and even on wider communities across the country which suffer even higher levels of crime than they do. There is a 'secondary victimisation' effect at play – even

if people are not victims themselves, hearing about victimisation of others still affects their behaviour and feelings of safety.

And while people experience these signs of crime around them, they do not see enough visible action being taken to challenge, catch and punish criminals. Too much of this work is invisible. In other words, while the public see high profile 'signal crimes' that create fear and mistrust, they do not see any 'signal justice' to counter those concerns.

It would be wrong to dismiss public concern about crime as nothing more than a gap between perception and reality. That is not the case. The crime, anti-social behaviour and disrespect that the public see and experience themselves, and their perceptions and worries about crime more generally, make communities feel unsafe. And they make ordinary citizens angry, sad and wary.

This is especially so in more deprived areas. As has always been the case in these areas, perceptions and actual levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are much higher, there are huge concerns about coming forward as a victim or witness for fear of reprisal, and communities are not as strong as they could be.

There was a strong view from members of the public during the review that they would no longer intervene if they saw a crime taking place, for fear that they would either be attacked by the perpetrators or be arrested themselves by the police. This may be caused by wider factors but it is symptomatic of reduced public confidence in the crime-fighting agencies leading to a greater reluctance on the part of decent, law-abiding members of the public to play their part in tackling crime.

The Government and all those employed in the Criminal Justice System are right to be very concerned about this. Where people's

fears, experiences and perceptions of crime drive down their confidence and willingness to engage, they become less neighbourly and lose their community spirit. In these circumstances, the police and others face even more of an uphill struggle to keep the public safe – and to stop crime getting a grip that can strangle whole neighbourhoods.

There are some who argue that the Government and the Criminal Justice System must not allow itself to be swayed by public opinion; that pandering to public opinion leads to ‘mob rule’ and an uncivilised society. But, currently, the system is so far away from pandering to public opinion that this seems the remotest of risks and, if anything, there is a greater risk of the public withdrawing even further from the active part they need to play. Radical change is needed to get the public more engaged in tackling crime and to stop the erosion of community spirit.

The Government has been pursuing policies to respond to the concerns identified in this review. We have looked at a number of those policies and come up with a series of common-sense proposals to build on them and help reduce crime further, create safer communities and increase public confidence in the police and other agencies responsible for tackling crime and bringing criminals to justice. Our proposals are based in part on our analysis of research and other evidence, and on what professionals have told us on visits and in meetings.

The strongest influence on our review, however, has been the views expressed by thousands of ordinary members of the public. The public are the most important weapon in tackling crime. As one leading criminologist has put it: “If people always reported what they know to the police, the local criminals could not continue to operate.”

TEN KEY FACTS FROM THE REVIEW

- 55% of the public say crime is the most important issue facing Britain today.
- Only 33% of the public are confident that the Criminal Justice System meets the needs of victims, but 79% agree it respects the rights of offenders.
- 73% of the public say that hearing about someone being a victim of crime in their local area affects their feelings of safety and makes them cautious, angry and sad.
- 91% of the public think the basic approaches and standards of service delivered by the police should be the same wherever they live.
- Better parenting is the top thing (58%) the public say would do most to reduce crime and 58% of the public think that Friday night is the most important time for youth facilities to be available.
- 90% of respondents to the review think the public are not told enough about what happens to those who have committed crime.
- When asked what is the most important issue facing Britain on crime, the top answer from the public (29%) is that sentences are too lenient.
- 90% of the public agree that community punishments for crime should involve some form of payback to the community.
- When asked who they would trust as a source for national statistics on crime, the top answer from the public (48%) was an independent watchdog.
- 75% of the public are prepared to play an active role in tackling crime.

2. Putting victims, witnesses and other law-abiding citizens first

We start this review with the victims and witnesses of crime: those whose lives have been blighted directly by the criminal acts of others. They are at the heart of the issues we have considered but, regrettably, it does not yet feel to the public as if they are at the centre of the Criminal Justice System.

This is incredibly important. A feeling of injustice about the treatment of victims and their families strikes at our sense of fairness and justice. Frequently throughout the review, the public brought up the notion of 'fairness'. This was not raised in terms of the fair treatment of offenders but in relation to the unfairness of the treatment received by those who abide by the law and by the victims of individuals that have chosen to break the law.

The views of the public about the treatment of victims contrasted with the treatment of those accused of offending, make salutary reading for anyone concerned about tackling crime. Only 33% of the public are confident that the Criminal Justice System meets the needs of victims, but 79% think the system respects the rights of those accused of committing crime.

This evidence is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reinforces the notion that the 'system' is there to process and protect the rights of the offenders rather than to 'do justice' for the public at large; that the system protects the guilty, not the innocent, from harm.

"I'm a victim. The offenders get away with the crime they have committed. We have to live in fear, in darkness and silence so that we don't get targeted again and again. Why doesn't the system look after us?" Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire.

"...the Crown Prosecution Service, I think it ought to be renamed 'Criminal Protection Service.'" Attendee, Have Your Say event

Secondly, it is important because what we see, hear and think about the treatment of victims of crime affects our views on society and crime levels more broadly. It is a 'trigger' for wider anxieties about crime being out of control, that there are more victims of crime than there actually are, that while I'm OK to walk round my streets at night, I don't think other people are.

'I'm OK but I worry for others' was an expression often used by the public during the review.

In a survey of the public, conducted as part of the review, we examined the impact of public concerns about crime. This re-affirmed that being a victim of crime affects people's feelings, behaviour and confidence that crime is being tackled effectively. But it also showed that a similar impact occurs where people know a victim, hear about someone in their area being a victim, or read about someone being a victim – it affects their own feelings of safety and makes them worry about the safety of other people in their neighbourhood.

Of those taking part in the survey:

- one in three (33%) had been a victim of crime, or knew someone well who had been, within the last year;
- nearly half (45%) knew of someone in their community who had been a victim in the last year;
- over three quarters (77%) had read or heard in the media about someone being a victim in the last month;
- 73% agreed that hearing about someone being a victim of crime in their local area affected their own feelings of safety; and
- 77% agreed that hearing about someone being a victim of crime in their local area made them worry about the safety of other people in their neighbourhood.

The Government, the police and other agencies responsible for fighting crime and delivering justice need to take action to give greater protection to victims, witnesses and their families and re-double their efforts to convince the wider public that they care about their experiences of crime, will take concerted action against criminals, impose clear consequences and be fully accountable and answerable for their roles in this action.

Concerns about coming forward

If the public lack confidence in the police and others to act on their behalf against crime, a vicious circle can begin, breeding fear, public disengagement and withdrawal, feeding an environment in which crime is allowed to grow.

Only a small minority of people we heard from during the review told us they thought the public did not have any role to play in

tackling or preventing crime. However, a very significant number expressed concerns about coming forward more generally to intervene, report crime or give evidence. Those concerns centred on four main issues:

Fear of intimidation or reprisal: Some members of the public were fearful that if they challenged crime or anti-social behaviour, reported it to the police or gave evidence in court they would be at risk of harm or harassment from offenders or their friends and relatives. These fears were exacerbated by violent incidents reported extensively in the media, particularly in tragic cases where law-abiding citizens were attacked for confronting crime and anti-social behaviour. The fears also reflected a lack of confidence in the police and others to ensure people's safety in coming forward.

"I was a key witness...Myself and others were offered NO witness support. Many said they would never do it again... Because our case was 'civil' no witness protection was offered. I even had to sit next to the persecutors who were threatening me in court in front of the barristers." Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Worry about prosecution: A few people said they would not intervene if they saw crime or anti-social behaviour in progress. They were worried that if they physically tried to stop a person committing a crime or tried to restrain them they might be prosecuted for assault or using excessive force. Their faith in the Criminal Justice System to take their side in such circumstances, rather than to defend the 'human rights' of offenders, had been eroded. High profile incidents reported in the media seemed to be the strongest driver for this concern.

“People think present laws, data protection, human rights, favour the guilty and punish the law abider”
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“I’m all for human rights but what about the people who have been victims?”
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Frustration about inadequate

consequences: There was a sense of hopelessness expressed by many members of the public that the problems they faced could not be solved; that despite the fact that they had complained previously, or somebody else had complained, nothing had been done. No action had been taken. Linked closely to this was the view that it was pointless and a waste of time coming forward because nothing would happen to the offenders, that they would ‘get off and be back on the streets before teatime’ because sentencing would be too lenient.

“I think until we resolve the problem of the Criminal Justice System in this country we will continue to have this problem. The police cannot do their job because it is a waste of time half the time, they know the case is going to be thrown out... They know that nothing is going to happen to them. The police know they cannot do anything. It is the Criminal Justice System that wants a kick up the backside to sort things out.”
Attendee, Have Your Say event

“We work together with the community and the police. People are then arrested and charged, put on bail and it is three months before they come to justice. When they do come to justice people are disappointed when they see what sort of punishment they receive.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

The hassle factor: On top of fears of reprisal or prosecution, some people also said they would be reluctant to come forward and give evidence because of what might be called ‘the hassle factor’. They felt the personal inconvenience of attending police stations and courts to give statements and evidence was likely to be a lengthy process, with a strong likelihood of delays, adjournments and repeat visits, and would represent too great a personal sacrifice of their time.

Case study

My partner went out in 2004 to stop the lad over the road who was 12 years old smashing my car to pieces. He got beaten by 20-odd youths from the area. I was put in the police station for my own protection for 12 hours. When we came back we lived away from home for a week through the fear that it would happen again. Fortunately my partner is a big bloke who managed to get into the house; he had broken toes, a black eye, and was off work for two weeks through the stress of it all. We lived away from home for week with my daughter. I would now think twice about whether I would do this again on my own, without backup from anyone. We had no protection even after this event happened, which is the reason why I would think twice before I would go out and do it. If we were guaranteed protection then I would.
Attendee, Have Your Say event

These fears and frustrations exist despite a number of reforms over the last twenty years to improve the treatment victims and witnesses receive in the Criminal Justice System.

Reforms for victims and witnesses in the Criminal Justice System over the last 20 years

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made it possible for witnesses to give evidence through a live TV link in certain circumstances and for courts to receive written statements from witnesses who are afraid to attend¹.

The report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in 1993 recommended the establishment of improved waiting facilities and witness support schemes.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 made intimidation of witnesses (and jurors) an offence punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment.

Special measures for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, including use of screens and video recorded evidence, were brought in by the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999.²

In 2003, the Audit Commission published a report on support for victims and witnesses which concluded that a failure to improve services for both victims and witnesses was making people reluctant to report crime and more likely to drop out of the Criminal Justice System ahead of or during a trial. The report highlighted the fact that most support services for victims come from the voluntary sector: of the £13 billion spent on the Criminal Justice System each year, only £29 million (0.2%) was going to Victim Support.

The Government published a national strategy, 'A new deal for victims and witnesses' the same year, owned jointly by the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor and Attorney General. The strategy recognised that "too many victims experience the Criminal Justice System as being geared not to their needs, but to the needs of the system itself". The strategy's aim was to give victims and witnesses a better deal – to do everything possible to ensure they are treated with respect and to provide the support and services they need, through the Criminal Justice System and other agencies like health and social services.

Two central changes in the Government's 2003 strategy were put into statute through the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004:

- The introduction of a statutory code of practice, building on the existing victim's charter, putting obligations on criminal justice agencies to deliver improved and consistent support, information, advice and protection for all victims. This has been in force since April 2006.
- The establishment of a commissioner for victims and witnesses, to champion their rights across Government. This has not been acted on to date.

¹ This provision has been replaced by sections 116 and 117 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

² The legislation defines 'vulnerable witnesses' as children and young people under 17 and those suffering from a physical or mental incapacity. 'Intimidated witnesses' are defined as those who are in fear or distress about giving evidence, which may reduce the quality of that evidence, and victims of sexual offences.

Public and victim satisfaction could be improved further

The British Crime Survey looks at victim and witness satisfaction with the police and at public confidence in the Criminal Justice System: victim satisfaction with the police fell from 68% to 58% between 1994 and 2002 but had risen again slightly to 60% in 2006–07, in line with the general trend on public confidence in the police.

The Office for Criminal Justice Reform has introduced a more detailed quarterly Witness and Victim Experience Survey, based on interviews with around 40,000 victims and witnesses. The results are not published but are made available to Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) so that they can assess the performance of the agencies in their areas. It is a shame that this data is not shared more widely because it could help improve wider public understanding of the complexity of the subject.

What more do the public think is needed?

We asked the public what more could be done to encourage people who have witnessed or been a victim of crime to come forward.

The most frequently mentioned responses in answers to the review's Have Your Say questionnaire reflected their concerns:

- protection from intimidation or reprisal;
- better support for victims and witnesses;
- more opportunities for anonymous or confidential reporting;
- more assurance that action will be taken as a result of coming forward; and
- greater demonstration of justice being done (and being seen to be done).

The public believe more action on these concerns would encourage more people to come forward in reporting crime and giving evidence.

“The challenge here is to make sure that the system can help Mr X – an 82-year-old man and Neighbourhood Watch member – who is too terrified to go to court to give evidence against a 14-year-old prolific offender because he is getting fireworks put through his front door. As it stands at the moment the youth court would never let that happen saying the kid is the vulnerable and not the old man – so no chance whatsoever of getting him in there anonymously. It’s unfair and makes our job impossible.”
Police officer on visit.

Our proposals later in this report on community payback and on better communication of the outcomes of key cases taken through the Criminal Justice System should help to give the public greater confidence that justice is done and that there is value in coming forward to report crime and give evidence. We believe that the full implementation of Neighbourhood Policing and its further development will also improve the protection available to victims and witnesses of crime and improve their confidence in working with the police and other criminal justice agencies to stand up to crime.

We have also listened to views and suggestions made during the review by the public, victims and witnesses themselves and their advocates on what more could be done to support victims and witnesses.

Making criminals pay back to their victims

During the review, it has been clear that the public feel strongly that crime should not pay. They want criminals to 'payback' to their victims and the wider community.

The Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004 provided powers to impose a Victims Surcharge. The level of surcharge was subsequently set at £15 and has been payable by anyone who has committed an offence on or after 1 April 2007 and whose sentence included a fine. However, only about £2 million was raised in the first year of the surcharge, which the Office for Criminal Justice Reform attribute to the time lag in processing offences since April 2007. Revenue should increase in 2008-09 and the Ministry of Justice intend to extend the surcharge to other court disposals and to penalty notices for serious and persistent motoring offences which should increase proceeds – and available resources – even further.

Additionally, criminal assets of £125 million had been recovered by March 2007. We believe there is scope to increase the value of seized criminal assets and their redeployment to tackle crime in the future – and that this should be communicated more clearly to reassure the public that the system is trying to ensure that crime does not pay.

The courts can also order offenders to pay compensation to their victim. However, unless the offender has the means to pay the compensation in a lump sum, he or she will normally pay the court in instalments. The victim then receives a monthly payment from the court but this can be a long, drawn-out

process and payments can be suspended or end altogether if the offender fails to pay or, for example, ends up in prison. We heard from victims' representatives during the review that this way of receiving compensation can be distressing because it prolongs the victim's relationship with the offender and can prevent them from moving on from the experience.

Helping victims' families avoid intimidation and harassment

Some progress has been made in creating separate waiting areas in courts so that the victims of crime do not have to wait around in the same place as offenders and offenders' families and friends. An audit by Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) in 2007 showed that all Crown Courts and 96% of Magistrates Courts have some kind of separate waiting area to offer victims and witnesses. This separate area helps reduce feelings of fear and risks of intimidation and harassment and is an important symbol for the wider public that the Criminal Justice System cares about and values victims and witnesses. However, the HMCS Court User Survey for 2006-07 showed that only 61% of all court users were satisfied with waiting areas which keep parties safe and separate, indicating that there remains some way to go in ensuring that suitable facilities are made available to everyone who would benefit from them.

Additionally, in too many courts, arrangements for public viewing of proceedings have not been developed well enough to avoid feelings of intimidation and harassment between families and friends of victims and the accused.

Ensuring that victims and witnesses get the support they deserve

A statutory code of practice for victims of crime was introduced in April 2006 and sets out the minimum standards of service victims can expect from each of the criminal justice agencies. These include a victim's rights to be:

- referred to Victim Support or be given information about the types of support available in their area;
- kept informed of progress on their case at least monthly and be told about major developments such as an arrest being made, the accused being bailed or a charge being withdrawn;
- informed about the outcome of the case including, where an offender is found guilty, information about the sentence given and any appeals.

A Witness Charter has also been developed to offer similar standards of service to witnesses who are not also victims, so-called 'expert witnesses' or police officers. This is being implemented in 10 'Beacon' areas first, with the aim of national roll-out by the end of 2009.

These are welcome developments. However, a number of remaining concerns were drawn to our attention during the review.

Checks on standards of service

Although the Victims' Code is monitored in a number of different ways – by the Criminal Justice System Inspectorates, through the unpublished Witness and Victim Experience Survey and through self-assessment by Local Criminal Justice Boards – there is not a clear, straightforward monitoring process that the public can see or understand.

Tailored support for the most vulnerable victims

Improvements are being made to Victim Support that will enable it to offer a more consistent service across the country. 'Victim Support Plus' will make the service more responsive to victims' immediate practical needs and allow trained volunteers to better assess which victims need more support, such as a one-to-one visit. However, consistency across the country should not be achieved at the expense of a more tailored approach that would ensure that vulnerable victims get the extensive and on-going support they need. In particular, more intensive support services should be available in the most deprived areas where we know that crime is highest and where victims feel more vulnerable to intimidation and reprisal.

Protection for victims and witnesses in civil proceedings

The standards of service set out in both the Victims' Code and the Witness Charter apply to criminal proceedings, defined in the victims' code as where "an allegation of criminal conduct (i.e. a crime which would be recorded under the National Crime Recording Standard) is made". The review was informed that this meant the standards of service do not apply to victims taking part in civil proceedings, even though these may relate to serious issues like domestic violence and anti-social behaviour which can seriously affect individuals' and whole communities' feelings of safety and confidence.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) require evidence to the criminal burden of proof despite being a civil order without any criminal conviction, yet victims and witnesses giving evidence in these cases do so without any right to protection at all.

Case study

I have personal experience of someone breaching their ASBO. In fact, they stalked me for six months. I decided I had had enough and called the police, made two statements, and was informed that I would have to go to court, which I was aware of. I went to court, I had no police there, nobody from the council there – I was on my own. I spent the night worrying myself to death about going to court.

One of the rules of his ASBO was that he should not harass anyone, but he harassed me big time. I got to court, was very nervous. I was first in the witness box, was polite and answered the questions. The youth in particular goes into the witness box, practically lay on the floor, and answered 'yeah', 'no', 'don't know'. I could not believe it, I thought that at any moment the magistrate would say 'sit up; you are in a court of law'. It did not happen. Then the case was adjourned for social reports...I was never told the outcome, and no one ever informed me what had happened to this man. Before I got home from the court he was already back on the estate, and walked past me. It does not give you faith at all...I would not put myself through that again, because I did not have the support. *Attendee, Have Your Say event.*

Another example is in eviction proceedings where neighbours are expected to give evidence in an open court and where, if the eviction is granted, the tenants often have a further period living at the property until the bailiffs can gain access.

We know, however, that the best local authority anti-social behaviour and community

safety teams offer support to victims of anti-social behaviour regardless of the intended application of the statutory code.

In one case we were told about, a family who were witnesses in eviction proceedings suffered intense intimidation, including the firebombing of their home, yet because it was a civil case and not a criminal one, these witnesses were not entitled to statutory support.

Help to navigate the complaints system

For victims who feel that the Criminal Justice System has not treated them as it should, there is a complex process for raising their concerns. In the first instance, they themselves must work out which particular agency they feel has let them down and complain to that agency. There could be up to 10 criminal justice agencies involved with a case but it is up to the victim to work out who has let them down, without recourse to any statutory help to navigate the complaints process. This is in sharp contrast to those accused of crime who, if their case is serious, can often acquire legal aid to pay solicitors throughout the process.

If the victim is not satisfied with the way the agency deals with their complaint, their only other recourse is to ask their local Member of Parliament to refer the matter to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. We understand – but are not surprised – that fewer than 30 cases have been referred to the Parliamentary Ombudsman and that most of these were dismissed because it was judged that the victims had not exhausted the complaints system of the relevant agency.

The complaints process generally focuses on whether the conduct of officials was correct, whether processes were followed properly, and so on. Too often, the real root

of people's complaints and dissatisfaction – a crime or crimes that have not been resolved successfully – gets lost in this. The complaints process for the Criminal Justice System seems to lack the ability to address the overall response and support a member of the public receives – or doesn't receive – as a direct consumer of public services.

The public have real concerns on crime, but no real voice

What has perhaps been most striking in this review is the strength of feeling about crime and justice amongst the members of the public we met and who wrote to us. These concerns extend well beyond victims and witnesses who have had direct experience of crime. Yet there is no strong voice championing their concerns in Government, amongst criminal justice agencies or in public debate. The absence of a public champion or lobby on crime is even more marked if considered against other areas of public interest – like health, education, the environment, children, food or immigration. There are consumer watchdogs for many areas of public concern but none for the subject that is consistently shown to most worry and concern the public.

Politicians would argue that they champion the public – and their constituents in particular – in debates about crime and in the development of criminal justice policy. And the public do hold government ministers, particularly the Home Secretary, responsible for the way crime is tackled. However, it was clear in evidence to the review and looking at wider evidence about public attitudes, that the public are mistrustful of politicians. Interestingly, research suggests that this is not a particularly new or growing phenomenon – trust in politicians and

ministers to tell the truth, while relatively low, has been at broadly the same level over the last 25 years. But the public think politicians have a different agenda to them when they talk about crime – 'spinning' facts to either make the real situation seem better than it is to gain credit for successful government, or to make it seem worse and knock the government of the day.

Criminal justice agencies might be expected to speak up for the public but they can, as we discuss later in this report, be highly critical of each other. They also tend to speak on behalf of their own interests, usually from an individual agency perspective, less frequently as a united Criminal Justice System acting on the public's behalf.

Local community groups perhaps come closest to representing public concerns. But they are not a strong voice in public debate. Victim Support does provide valuable services. However, unlike other areas of public interest, there does not appear to be any national voluntary or community sector organisation that acts as a strong, vocal lobby group, campaigning on the public's behalf on crime.

The national voluntary and community sector agencies with interests in crime and justice that do exist tend to be either relatively silent in public debate or to speak more on behalf of offenders than the public.

With the introduction of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act in 2004, the Government provided for the establishment of a commissioner for victims and witnesses. This provides an opportunity to appoint a strong champion for members of the public most directly affected by crime. However, no decision has yet been taken on the appointment of such an advocate.

A Victims Advisory Panel was established in 2006 as a statutory body to advise ministers. It has nine members who have either been victims of crime or who work with victims of crime, or both, and who join the panel on an entirely voluntary basis, without pay. However, the panel has to date been chaired either by ministers or government officials and has not had any specific proposals accepted by government, although it has been consulted and commented on some policy developments.

The lack of a strong champion for public concerns on crime leaves the public disempowered and feeling that the Criminal Justice System does not listen to, or sees itself as acting above, public opinion. There is a perception in some quarters of the Criminal Justice System that it has to somehow 'rise above' and be independent of public opinion because it acts from a more informed position.

Case study

Mr and Mrs Smith* live on an estate in a deprived area of the north east of England. They began to experience threats and intimidation when their daughter and mixed-race grandchildren moved into their home in 2001. They have suffered terrible racial abuse, their home and car have been vandalised and they have endured many threats of violence.

Mr and Mrs Smith have worked tirelessly with the police and the local authority and stood up to groups of up to fifty youths and serious criminals from their estate. They have recorded all incidents and referred them to the authorities for action and Mr Smith has attended court as a witness in criminal proceedings. Mr and Mrs Smith are also involved with their estate residents' group and carry out walkabouts with other residents' to report any problems to the council.

Despite all their efforts to stand up to the criminals on their estate and to co-operate with the police and the local authority, no one has ever been caught and brought to justice for this campaign of intimidation and harassment. They continue to suffer terrifying attacks – their home was recently petrol-bombed. Community-wide intimidation is so pervasive that other residents don't want to report the offenders, even if they are sympathetic to the Smiths. Mr Smith wrote to us recently saying, "We are known as 'super-grasses' and we are really proud of this. We do report criminal behaviour and anti-social behaviour, but residents on our estate are too afraid to report any criminal activity for fear of reprisals. We have tried to get residents over the past seven years to join a Neighbourhood Watch, but no one wanted to join because they know or have seen the problems we have had over the years. We love our estate and the good decent people who live on it. We are very proud of our estate, but if anything is to change the law must help and support the law-abiding people – and please let's have the criminals looking over their shoulders for a change".

*Name has been changed.

Proposal 1: To address the absence of a strong public voice on crime, the Government should go further than its current stated intention to appoint a commissioner for Victims and Witnesses, by appointing a Public Commissioner on Crime. The Commissioner should have a broad remit to champion the public's concerns about neighbourhood crime and justice within Government. In addition they should have specific responsibilities for driving up the levels of support offered to victims and witnesses.

Proposal 2: Proceeds from the Victims Surcharge should be used to directly support victims and witnesses of crime:

- to finance projects that support victims that currently struggle for funding; and
- to establish a Victims' Compensation Fund, allowing victims to receive compensation ordered by a court in full at the time the court order is made, stopping the current prolonged contact a victim has to have with the offender.

Proposal 3: The provision of automatic eligibility for special measures around anonymity (beyond those that currently exist for children and victims of sex crimes) should be introduced for victims and witnesses who are:

- vulnerable – for example through old age or disability, in the same way that special measures are justified for children; and/or
- in fear of intimidation or reprisal and where wider impact on the community is particularly high (for example in cases of gang, gun and knife crime or persistent anti-social behaviour).

Proposal 4: Her Majesty's Court Service should introduce arrangements to ensure separate seating arrangements for victims' families attending court.

Proposal 5: The Victims' Code and the Witnesses' Charter should be widened to cover civil proceedings where these are linked to defined acts of crime, like domestic violence, or anti-social behaviour.

3. Fighting crime and delivering justice for communities

Giving victims and witnesses the support and protection they need and providing strong advocacy for public concerns on crime should be the first test of a Government's determination to tackle crime. Equal in importance should be the ability of frontline services that fight crime and deliver justice, to do so to the satisfaction of local communities. The next test should be in the production of clear, trustworthy information about crime and justice issues that matter to the public. If these tests can be passed, then it is reasonable to turn to the public and ask them to play their part.

In this section of the report, we set out the review's findings on the main organisations that help to fight crime on the public's behalf. We have not attempted to describe every organisation that operates locally in relation to crime and justice. We are conscious that many critical agencies are not mentioned in any great detail in this review – for example, the health service, the fire service, housing organisations and the voluntary sector, all of which do valuable work in helping to create safe communities.

We have concentrated on what the public have said would make a difference to them, their feelings of safety, their confidence in criminal justice agencies and their willingness to play a part in tackling crime. At every turn during the review, it has been an imperative to understand what matters to the public. The public want a Criminal Justice System that understands their concerns, that acts on their priorities, and that communicates effectively with them.

It is not the job of the public to understand the 'system' but the job of the system to understand the public.

A word about partnerships: although huge progress has been made in recent years in establishing strategic partnerships between organisations there to tackle crime, and that must not be reversed, greater clarity is needed about the roles of those different organisations, within a shared sense of purpose and action.

In the following sections, we look in turn at:

- The police – whose primary role should be to deter crime and catch criminals;
- Local government – whose dual role is to create clean, safe communities, tackling anti-social behaviour and, secondly, preventing crime through social interventions that help to nip problems in the bud;
- Other criminal justice organisations, particularly courts and probation services – and their role in ensuring that justice is delivered fairly and in being more open and systematic in ensuring that the public see, hear and feel that justice has been done; and
- Neighbourhood delivery of co-ordinated crime-fighting services – what the public should expect from the police, local government and the other criminal justice organisations in tackling crime and involving communities.

Nothing short of a revolution is needed in the way that the consumer is served – and by consumer we mean primarily ordinary, law-abiding citizens and victims of crime.

And this revolution should be built on a foundation of straightforward, honest and fair treatment of the public by those who serve them.

3.1. Putting the public first in policing

The public want a police service that is visible, approachable and that responds quickly when needed. Above all, they look to the police to deter criminals and to catch offenders if crime is committed.

“Easily accessible. A visible police force. Even the smallest of anti-social behaviour incidents being tackled. Courteous, friendly.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“To feel listened to. Protected. Respected.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

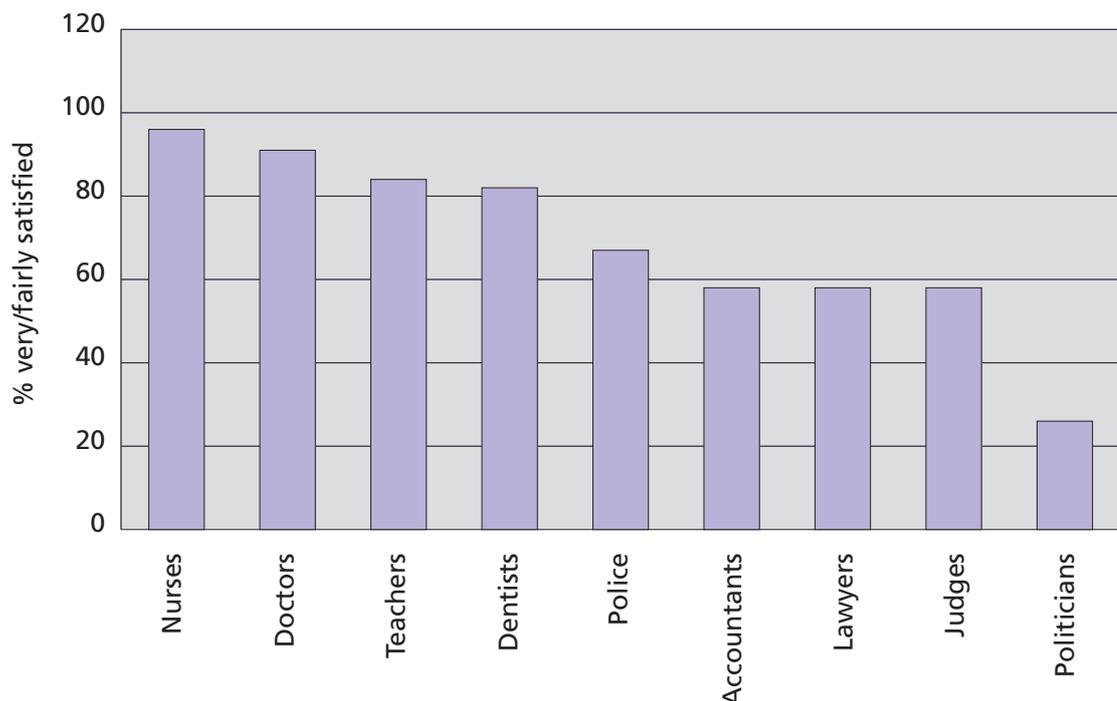
Public confidence in the police

Public confidence in the police, as measured in the British Crime Survey, fell during the 1980s and 1990s. In the last three years confidence has been increasing again, with 51% of the public thinking the police do a

good or excellent job in 2006-07. However, other surveys on satisfaction, illustrated in the chart below, show that while the police are reasonably well rated by the public compared to accountants, lawyers, judges and politicians, they are not as highly rated as nurses, doctors, teachers or dentistsⁱⁱ.

It is worth noting that, over the same period during which public confidence in the police fell, public contact with the police decreased and changed in its nature. Where 25 years ago it was predominantly the public getting in touch with the police fairly informally, contact now tends to be about more formal matters and it is more likely that the police will initiate contact with the public:

- In 1981, 43% of the public had contacted the police, most commonly to ask directions but by 2005-06, public-initiated contact had fallen to 27% and the most common reason for contact was to report crime.



- Meanwhile, the proportion of people who received police-initiated contact increased from 18% in 1981 to 21% in 2005-06.

This suggests that less contact, and less informal contact, may be a factor in lower public confidence in the police.

Nevertheless, and perhaps not surprisingly because of their visibility in the community, the police attract greater public awareness and confidence than any other agencies that make up the Criminal Justice System. In a survey of the public, the police were the most prominent organisation named when the public were asked which organisation sprung to mind when thinking about the Criminal Justice System (54%, ahead of courts, 2nd, on 41%), and when asked which organisations could affect levels of crime (77%, ahead of schools, 2nd, on 13%)ⁱⁱⁱ.

The public are generally sympathetic to and positive about the police. While they hold both the police and the Government of the day responsible for tackling crime, they are more likely to give the police credit for reducing crime and less likely to blame them for increases.

In a survey of 1,808 members of the public for the review, when told crime had decreased and asked who should take the credit, 46% credited the police, 21% said they didn't believe crime had decreased, and only 15% credited the Government.

But when told crime had increased and asked who should take most of the blame, 42% blamed the Government, 32% blamed parents and only 20% blamed the police.

Interestingly, while a significant number of people spontaneously challenged the statement that crime had decreased, none challenged the statement that it had increased. And only 12% blamed criminals for an increase in crime.

Even where the public are unhappy with the police, they often remove responsibility for that failure from the police and blame the government for tying them up in 'red tape'.

"Why can't you just let the police get on with stuff that worries us around here, instead of telling them what to do all the...time?"

"...be available to all of us, not stuck behind desks doing endless paperwork. Civilians could do this and free up the police to do THEIR job."

Until bureaucracy is tackled effectively, there will be a huge barrier to progress in improving service delivery and public confidence. It needs to be dealt with forcefully and relentlessly and we return to it in the final chapter of the review.

Neighbourhood Policing

Recent approaches to policing have been based on closer relationships between the police and the community, referred to since the 1980s as 'community' policing and, since 2005, introduced more formally and universally across the country as 'Neighbourhood Policing'.

In this review, we have looked at what the police are putting in place through Neighbourhood Policing and talked to the public about their expectations. Our aim has been to identify what would make Neighbourhood Policing work for local people in a way that would have a greater impact on crime and fear of crime than previous attempts at public engagement with policing.

Alongside a recent increase in total police numbers to over 140,000 officers – the highest level ever – the 43 police forces in England and Wales had, by April 2008, put in place 3,600 dedicated Neighbourhood Policing Teams, made up of 13,500 police officers and 16,000 Police Community Support Officers.

Putting these teams and approaches in place has been a huge undertaking for the police and a major achievement for both the police and for the Government. It prepares the way for a major shift in the way policing is delivered – but it is only the beginning of the story.

Consensus policing – Background

The idea of close public involvement in policing is far from new. The history of policing in England can be traced back to ancient tribal customs for ensuring order through appointed representatives. Over time these community representatives became Sheriffs, parish constables, local watchmen and Justices of the Peace, the forerunners of our modern Criminal Justice System.

So there is a long tradition of 'consensus' policing in this country - coming from the people, rather than being imposed from above by governments. Early in the 19th Century, the founding philosophy for ethical policing captured this in the principle that *'the police are the public and the public are the police'*.

What happened to make police forces feel more distanced from their communities and led to their renewed focus on community policing styles at the end of the 20th century is debatable. Academics and commentators have cited a number of post-war social and political developments as the cause – including an increasing lack of deference in society; a move away from beat patrols to police cars in response to expanding suburbs and an increase in public use of cars; and police stations being closed down altogether or no longer open 24 hours a day.

Community or neighbourhood policing approaches were introduced in a number of forces in the 1980s and 1990s. A National Reassurance Policing Programme was piloted in eight forces in England between 2003 and 2005 and this had a positive impact on crime, perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour, feelings of safety and public confidence in the police [*An evaluation of the impact of the National Reassurance Policing Programme, Home Office Research Study 296, January 2006*].

The key difference in the more recent national roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing has been the introduction of Police Community Support Officers and the reintroduction of named police officers in discrete geographical areas.

The National Policing Improvement Agency provides the following description for Neighbourhood Policing on its dedicated website:

Neighbourhood Policing is provided by teams of police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), often together with Special Constables, local authority wardens, volunteers and partners.

In some areas, Neighbourhood Policing may be known as Safer Neighbourhoods or another locally decided name.

It aims to provide people who live or work in a neighbourhood with:

- **Access** – to local policing services through a named point of contact;
- **Influence** – over policing priorities in their neighbourhood;
- **Interventions** – joint action with partners & the public; and
- **Answers** – sustainable solutions & feedback on what is being done.

This means that neighbourhood teams:

- publicise how to get in touch with them;
- find out what the local issues are that make people feel unsafe in their neighbourhood and ask them to put them in order of priority;
- decide with partners and local people what should be done to deal with those priorities and work with them to deliver the solutions; and
- let people know what is being done and find out if they are satisfied with the results.

There are Neighbourhood Policing Teams working in areas all over England and Wales.

The way that Neighbourhood Policing is delivered will vary in different areas, as it is designed to be flexible and responsive to local needs and resources.

What the public think Neighbourhood Policing is

From the outset it has to be acknowledged that the public view of 'Neighbourhood Policing' is all the policing they experience in their neighbourhood. This is a very important point and an example of the 'system's' view and the public's being mismatched. What the public mean by 'Neighbourhood Policing' is their experience of policing locally, what they expect no matter where they live and no matter who they are.

We noted that, in response to a newspaper article about the introduction of 24 hour Neighbourhood Policing in a part of West London during the review, a member of the public asked, "Don't we already have

24 hour policing?" This highlighted for us the fact that the public see Neighbourhood Policing as the policing they experience as a whole in their local area. Police forces, on the other hand, tend to see Neighbourhood Policing as a distinct and fairly small piece of their organisation, with most policing covered by other business areas such as so-called 'response' policing (the main activity of responding to crimes in progress and other emergencies). There are some exceptions, however, including the West Midlands force whose Chief Constable seemed closer to the public view in describing Neighbourhood Policing as the 'totality of what we do for the public locally'.

Forces are adopting different approaches to Neighbourhood Policing

The police service in England and Wales is not formally a single organisation and there is no senior police officer in overall charge of the police. Instead, we have 43 operationally independent police forces, each with its own Chief Constable and police authority. Together, these forces and authorities make up a 'tripartite' relationship with the Home Secretary that governs policing.

While all 43 police forces have implemented Neighbourhood Policing, with the principles of access, influence, interventions and answers in mind, they have chosen to do so in different ways. During April 2008, we examined the information about Neighbourhood Policing approaches available to the public on the websites of all 43 forces. This 'snap-shot' survey revealed wide variation in some fairly basic elements of Neighbourhood Policing, including:

- **What Neighbourhood Policing is called locally** – our survey of websites showed that while 'Neighbourhood Policing' is predominant, it is only used by 24 forces (just over half), with 'Safer Neighbourhoods' used by 13 forces (around a third), and five other names (Local Policing, Safer City Wards, Safer Community Teams, Community Action Teams and Safer, Stronger Neighbourhoods) used by the other 6 forces;
- **What forces call the public meetings they hold** to identify local concerns, agree priorities and feed back results – our survey showed that these vary hugely with at least 15 different names in use, like Neighbourhood Action Panels, Community Action Meetings,

Panel Meetings, and PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings. And it is clear from visits undertaken during the review that the format and quality of meetings varies widely too;

- **How local neighbourhoods are identified** – very few forces' websites show how local neighbourhoods are defined, although it appears that a majority have based their teams around electoral wards;
- **How local teams are resourced** – this varies widely, ranging from some neighbourhoods that have just one dedicated PCSO (albeit linked into a bigger team covering a wider area) to others that have teams of a sergeant, two constables and seven PCSOs;
- **Uniforms for PCSOs** – again there is wide variation, for example in colouring of shirts, ties, epaulettes and hat embellishments; and
- **Information on local crime** – 56% of forces publish local crime statistics but these vary from a very basic presentation of the number of offences and detections, up to 200+ page monthly reports and, while some do give figures for areas as small as ward level, many are available only at bigger, more strategic levels.

Some approaches looked more consistent across all forces in our snap-shot survey:

- 79% provide a postcode finder facility to identify the local neighbourhood team and most of these can be located on the force website home page;
- 93% publish some details of their neighbourhood teams, although this varies from a single photograph of one

team member or the inspector in overall charge of many areas and a generic phone number, to others that include photographs of all team members and a number and email address for each team;

- 79% publish local priorities – although the level of detail and information about how these were agreed or how they can be influenced is very patchy; and
- 74% publicise details of local public meetings, although again details are very patchy and variable (and some included details that were months out of date).

While some variation in approaches to reflect local circumstances is desirable, it can also cause confusion for anyone experiencing or engaging with the police in more than one area (for example where they live and where they work), or wanting to compare the service they receive with what is available in another area. Across the country, inconsistent approaches could impede awareness and familiarity for the public and undermine confidence – a point we return to later in this chapter. And it is clear that public awareness of Neighbourhood Policing, while growing, has some way to go yet.

Public awareness is growing but has some way to go

In a survey conducted on behalf of the Home Office in January 2008, 54% of the public in England and Wales said they were aware of Neighbourhood Policing. However, in the same survey 35% of the public in Scotland said they were aware of Neighbourhood Policing despite it not existing there formally, suggesting that some people base their answer on a general awareness of local policing.

In a survey conducted for the review in February 2008, 48% of the public said their area had a Neighbourhood Policing Team (20% said they didn't, 22% didn't know and 9% said they had not heard of Neighbourhood Policing).

In a subsequent Home Office survey of the public in May, following a publicity campaign about the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing in March and April, public awareness had risen to 60%.

During the review, when we discussed Neighbourhood Policing directly with members of the public, we found that while a majority said they were aware of Neighbourhood Policing, they knew relatively little about it, beyond the introduction of Police Community Support Officers.

In general then, the public have noticed the arrival of Police Community Support Officers but, beyond that, see Neighbourhood Policing as a fairly broad – and not particularly new or radically different – concept of police officers who are likely to be allocated to their local area and be more visible. It provides an insight into what is needed in the next phase of Neighbourhood Policing – developing greater public familiarity and trust and securing the public's active participation.

What the public want from their police

Members of the public who attended public events held during the review were told that the Home Secretary's aim for Neighbourhood Policing was for a new relationship between the police service and the public, with every household hearing from and able to contact and influence the priorities of their Neighbourhood Policing Team. This was an approach they welcomed.

“Neighbourhood [Policing] Teams that have a real understanding of their neighbourhood can stop crime before it starts.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“We already have our dedicated police officer. It works very well, as we have our own policeman who we can get to know and trust, as well as the other way round.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“We really feel our community beat manager and PCSOs are committed to our area and residents and actually care about the people they serve.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

We asked the public what they expect from a first-rate local police service:

The top ten policing approaches the public said they want to see are:

- **A service that takes action** – responsive, approachable, coming out quickly when called to incidents, acting on, following up and feeding back on progress to members of the public when they report crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **A visible, uniformed police presence**, with police freed up from unnecessary red tape and health and safety restrictions, fewer constables and PCSOs taken off patrols to perform ‘administrative’ tasks, and there when needed, not just a nine-to-five service.
- **PCSOs who are clearly distinguishable as part of the police service**, with uniforms, equipment and powers that match their role in patrolling communities, supporting local police and tackling anti-social behaviour.
- **Named contacts** and clear information about who is responsible for what locally, and how to contact them in both emergency and non-emergency situations.
- **Face-to-face access** at a police station, a surgery or a street meeting.
- **Continuity in the local policing team**, with officers and PCSOs serving a minimum of two years in the neighbourhood so that they get to know areas and communities well and gain communities’ respect and trust.
- **A better service for victims** of crime, especially repeat victims, returning regularly to check they are alright and to help minimise further victimisation.
- **Sensitivity over reporting** crime and giving evidence, protecting anonymity.
- **Good engagement with the community** to identify their priorities for action and to give feedback on action and outcomes on cases of greatest community concern.
- **Clear leadership from the police on crime** – with the backing of other organisations like the local council, prosecutors, the courts and probation services.

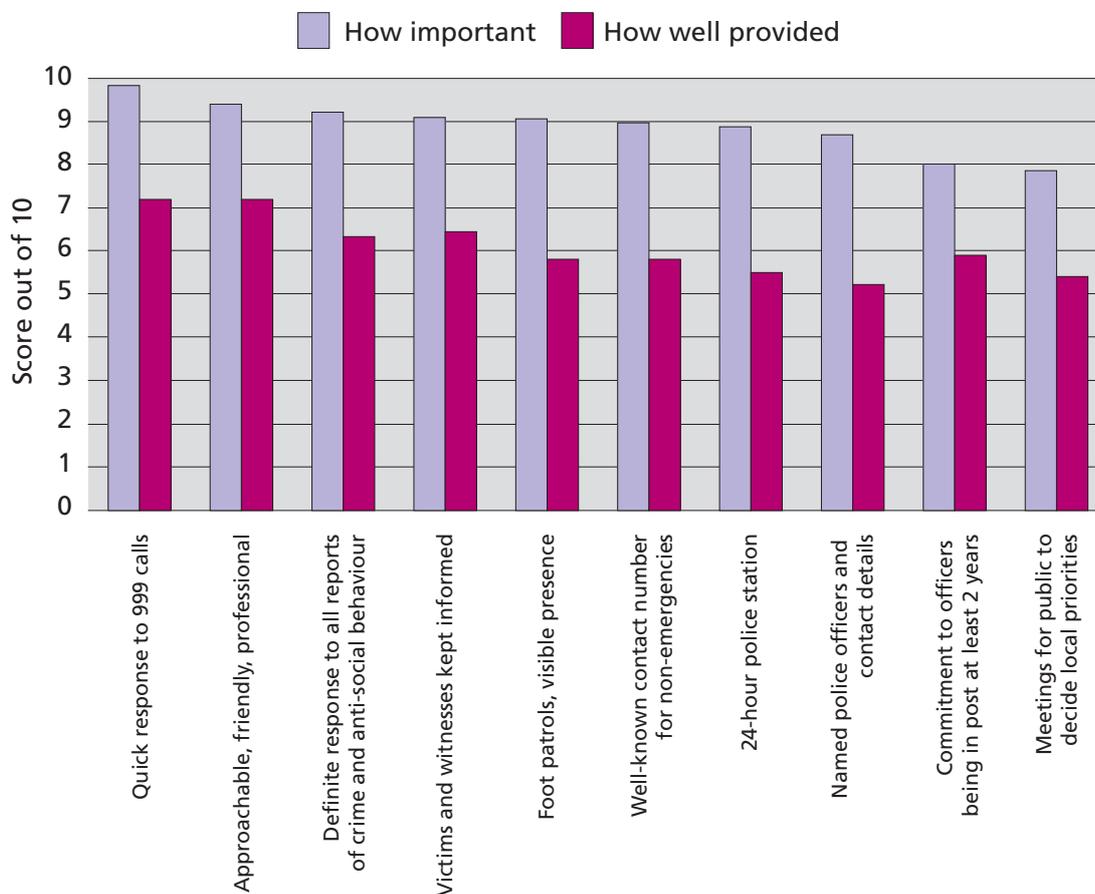
It was apparent in our discussions with the public that they expected these approaches as part of a seamless police service – they did not distinguish between their expectations of Neighbourhood Police Teams and broader policing in their areas.

Giving the public a consistent police service they can have confidence in

Many police forces would argue that they already strive to deliver all of these approaches in the neighbourhoods they serve. Members of the public have also argued that these are pretty basic expectations that don't amount to much more than the police 'doing their job' – a bit like expecting the fire service to attend fires.

In a survey of the public conducted for the review in May 2008, 1,787 members of the public were asked about their attitudes to policing. They were asked to score 10 police approaches in relation to their order of importance to them, and in relation to how well they were provided currently in their area.

The chart below illustrates their scores. The biggest gaps between approaches the public see as most important and their views on how well they are being delivered exist in relation to contact, access, visibility and responsiveness – information about named police officers and how to contact them, police stations that are nearby and open 24 hours, foot patrols and visible presence in the community, well-known contact numbers



for non-emergency crimes and a definite response to all reports of crime and anti-social behaviour were the four approaches which scored least well in delivery compared with the public's rating of their importance.

It does seem to be the case that the depth and quality of delivery of these approaches and, more importantly, the extent to which the public see and feel them, are highly variable – between forces and even between neighbourhoods. If a member of the public looked up the website for their local police force, or spoke to a local officer or PCSO, they would be hard-pressed in the majority of areas to find evidence of all ten of these approaches being in place. And very few – if any – members of the public, if asked, would say they were aware of these approaches in their neighbourhood.

As long as that is the case, there is a real missed opportunity for the police in providing a service that the public clearly want and which should go a long way to improving public confidence and willingness to get involved in helping tackle crime.

Senior police officers we spoke to during the review already recognised this and were keen to develop Neighbourhood Policing (and broader citizen-focused policing) to meet public expectations more fully. But several also spoke about the risks and challenges they foresaw in being able to resource and prioritise Neighbourhood Policing in future years.

The Government has already announced that a new policing 'pledge', to be introduced later this year, will set out a national standard of what people can expect from their police, and that they would consider the findings of this review in considering what those standards should cover.

The need for continuity

There was a very strong call, particularly in public events held during the review, for greater consistency in the posting of police officers to local neighbourhoods. People wanted to see the same officers spending a reasonable amount of time getting to know the area and the community, and providing a chance for the community to get to know them, before being moved off to other posts or duties.

“We have had three different sergeants in 12 months. They come, approach us and introduce themselves, say they are going to put the world right, two months later a new sergeant walks in. The young officers do not know where they are because they have not got anybody they can lean on. Once they move to a place they should stay there for a certain time.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

Why greater consistency matters

While variations in approaches should be agreed to fit the differences between and within local communities, the public expect key public services to be based on a common set of principles and standards wherever they live, work or visit. This is especially true in the world of policing and justice where the public do not have any choice over their service provider. And in a modern age, with a more mobile population, the familiarity of Neighbourhood Policing to the public can no longer rely solely on the presence of known officers on a local beat. Currently, the balance between local diversity and national familiarity is tipped too far towards inconsistency and confusion. The public are looking for consistent standards and a consistent style of policing.

In a survey of 1,787 members of the public for the review during May 2008 on attitudes to policing:

- 91% agreed that the basic approaches and standards of service of the police should be the same wherever you live across the country (76% strongly agreed with this);
- 89% agreed that the 'look and feel' of the police service should be the same wherever you live (71% strongly agreed);
- 77% want police meetings with the community to have the same name across the country, and we return to this point when discussing joined-up delivery later in this report; and
- 90% agreed that the kind of uniforms the police wear, police signs and logos should be the same across all police forces.

Evidence from other sectors suggests that greater improvements in reassurance, familiarity and confidence in a service or organisation can be achieved by standardising key elements that give it a unique identity that people recognise and trust to deliver. For example, members of the public know that if they fall ill, they can call NHS Direct for advice, get an appointment to see their doctor or, in more urgent cases, dial 999 and call for an ambulance or go direct to the Accident & Emergency unit at their local hospital. These universal forms of access to health services are symbolic of a National Health Service that the public know provides help on health matters wherever they live.

This straightforward 'offer' to the public should be replicated in policing. The lack of clarity and certainty about which police

officer does what, what to expect from different officers or indeed different forces, and different methods of engagement from postcode to postcode are in danger of creating confusion – and where there is confusion, confidence is undermined.

A more familiar police service, with a limited set of key standard approaches that are more recognisable across the country, should inspire greater public confidence.

So although there is a huge desire within the police for every force in the country to retain autonomy, to do things in their own way, call themselves different things and offer slightly different services, there is a greater good in meeting clear public demand for doing some things the same way, ensuring equal treatment on crime for any citizen of the country regardless of where they live. This would allow the Government to concentrate on checking whether the basic set of agreed police services to the public has been delivered – leaving local police chiefs and their authorities to agree local priorities with their communities.

We discuss local information, public engagement and accountability in more detail later in this report.

A word about Police Community Support Officers

Views on Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) varied in our discussions with the public. Those who had seen and met PCSOs in their area were very positive about the role they play. Those who had not seen or met them tended to have a less positive view of them, perhaps swayed by media articles portraying them as 'plastic police' without real powers. However, awareness was very high and confidence similar to confidence in

the police as a whole. A survey conducted for the review by during April 2008 showed that:

- 90% had heard of PCSOs and, of these;
- 74% had personally seen PCSOs on patrol in their local area;
- 53% said they were doing a good or excellent job; and
- only 8% felt they were doing a poor or very poor job.

When asked what made people say they were doing a good job, key factors were visibility in the community, acting as a deterrent and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Reassurance, approachability, problem-solving and talking to young people were also mentioned as attributes.

“For years people have been asking for ‘bobbies on the beat’, and PCSOs fit the bill. It’s good to talk face-to-face and it’s often information gathering.”
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“The PCSOs do an absolutely marvellous job in terms of filling in the gap that has existed for a few years around bringing the police into communities, for adults, youths and children alike. They give out their phone numbers. People feel that they can trust them. The next stage is that, when people go to court, their punishment is appropriate. Then, more people in the community will report more crime. They have built up their trust in the police; now, they need to build up their trust with the courts and with Government that this is the way forward.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

For those saying they were not doing a good job, the key factors were their perceived lack of power, ineffectiveness and concerns over their cost.

“Maybe some of you people have good relationships with these people, but they do not have any powers of arrest. On our estate they laugh at them, the young people think they are a joke. We need to go back to having police officers who know the community and know the people.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

A review by the police in 2007 identified a wide variation in the powers Chief Constables had chosen to give PCSOs in their forces. In response to this review, the Home Secretary consulted on and introduced a standard set of powers and duties to apply to all PCSOs across the country from 1 December 2007. These include powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for a number of minor offences (such as cycling on a footpath or littering), to require a person’s name and address where they believe certain offences or acts of anti-social behaviour have been committed, powers to seize alcohol, drugs, tobacco and cars, to enter and search premises and control traffic.

Most forces have now implemented these standard powers, with PCSOs given the necessary training to use them effectively. However, whether or not a number of other powers are given to PCSOs, including issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for disorder, powers to detain and to use reasonable force to do so, remain at the say so of Chief Constables.

There were high levels of public support for PCSOs having stronger powers – including powers to detain and to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for disorder which are currently discretionary – particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour and disorder. 92% of the public surveyed felt it was important for PCSOs to have the power to detain until arrival of a police officer. We also noted during the review that the findings in a Home Office evaluation of a PCSO detention

power pilot carried out between 2003 and 2005 were very positive.

There was strong public demand identified in surveys carried out for this review for PCSOs to be closer to police officers, with 92% saying it is important for PCSOs to have the same standard powers across the country. The public were also strongly behind PCSOs being a visible arm of the police family:

- 91% said it was very or fairly important that PCSOs wear a uniform that shows they are part of the police service; and
- 87% felt it was important that they wear the same uniform across the country.

However, in our survey, the public were split on whether PCSOs should have the same powers of arrest as police officers – 47% said yes, 42% said no. This illustrates that the public do see an important difference between PCSOs and police officers. And it may be because they value the more community-based role PCSOs play.

During the review a number of members of the public, including community activists who were working with the police in their areas to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, called for stronger backing for PCSOs, in addition to stronger powers and training. They rated PCSOs highly but were fed up with the knocking they got in the press and the lack of support they seemed to get from their police colleagues.

During the review there were several high profile cases in the media where PCSOs were targeted for condemnation or ridicule. Whether the facts of these cases warranted this coverage or not, there seemed an absence of a strong voice from senior levels in the police that put the other side or

gave the context of the work of PCSOs. If this coverage continues unchallenged, the investment in, and good work by PCSOs will be undermined severely in the public eye.

“Local PCSOs are good – they can listen to local people more than the normal police. But they need more back up from the hierarchy!” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

It is evident that the public value PCSOs and that the Government’s investment in them has been significant. The police service wanted PCSOs to be in the police family when they were first introduced. But over time, a lack of clarity about their role has crept in and this plays out in the public domain. An example of this is in the reluctance of the police service to give PCSOs a clear set of tough powers – stopping short of arrest – consistent across the country, and the lack of a clear role out on the streets, embedded in and strongly backed by their sworn police officer colleagues. This ambivalence towards PCSOs is also marked in the contrast with Special Constables, who are presented much more firmly as part of the police family with the same powers as sworn officers – but who are volunteers and who in some instances receive less training than PCSOs.

Members of the public we spoke to during the review – and some PCSOs we spoke to on visits – were also concerned about rates of so-called ‘abstraction’; a term used to describe taking PCSOs off foot patrols and diverting them to other tasks such as manning police station reception desks. There does also seem to be a strong case for agreeing maximum abstraction rates as a condition of the ring-fenced funding that the Government allocates to police forces for PCSOs.

Taxpayers are investing extra money to see PCSOs deployed in their communities. They have a right to see them doing what they pay for – being out and about in their local community. And they have a legitimate expectation that the police service will give PCSOs the backing they need, including standing up for them when they are criticised unfairly in the press.

Implementing the following proposals should deliver a police service that is visible, approachable and that acts quickly in response to community concerns on crime. But the public need a better service from local councils and the rest of the Criminal Justice System too if they are to gain the confidence they need to engage more actively in the fight against crime. We turn to these issues in the next section of the report.

Proposal 6: The Government should, together with the 43 police authorities and forces in England and Wales, provide a local police commitment in every neighbourhood, based on the ten approaches identified by the public in this review. This should focus on the delivery of all local police activities, not just on the service provided by the Neighbourhood Policing Team. The commitments should be put in place in each area by the beginning of 2009.

Proposal 7: The Government should ensure on behalf of the public that standardised approaches to Neighbourhood Policing are adopted by all forces by the beginning of 2009 to improve public awareness, familiarity and confidence. From our discussions with the public during the review, we suggest that these should focus on:

- agreeing a single name and identity for Neighbourhood Police Teams where several currently exists – we favour ‘Neighbourhood Policing Teams’;

- using a single name for local public engagement meetings on crime – we favour ‘PACT’ (Police and Communities Together) – in partnership with local government and other criminal justice agencies, and applying approaches that are based on key good practice principles for public engagement; and
- providing monthly, common and comparable local information through Neighbourhood Policing and PACT meetings, including feedback on action taken on crime and neighbourhood problems and what has happened to any criminals convicted for local crimes.

Proposal 8: The Government should ensure that the following action is taken with regard to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs):

- Maximum abstraction rates should be set for PCSOs as a condition of ring-fenced funding allocations to police forces.
- Powers to detain and to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for disorder should be added to the standard set of powers and duties that apply to all PCSOs.
- Standard PCSO uniforms and equipment should be adopted nationally.

3.2. Creating safer communities and preventing crime

Over the years, local government has played an increasing role in keeping communities safe. The public expect their local council services to clean up litter and graffiti, remove abandoned cars, take action against noisy neighbours and other anti-social behaviour, maintain street lighting and the wider local environment, keeping neighbourhoods clean and safe. Council services can also be critical in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, for example by providing support to parents who need help raising their children, or running youth facilities that give young people opportunities to do something safe and constructive with their free time.

Local councils also work together and co-ordinate other key providers and interested parties such as health, housing, regeneration, education and business.

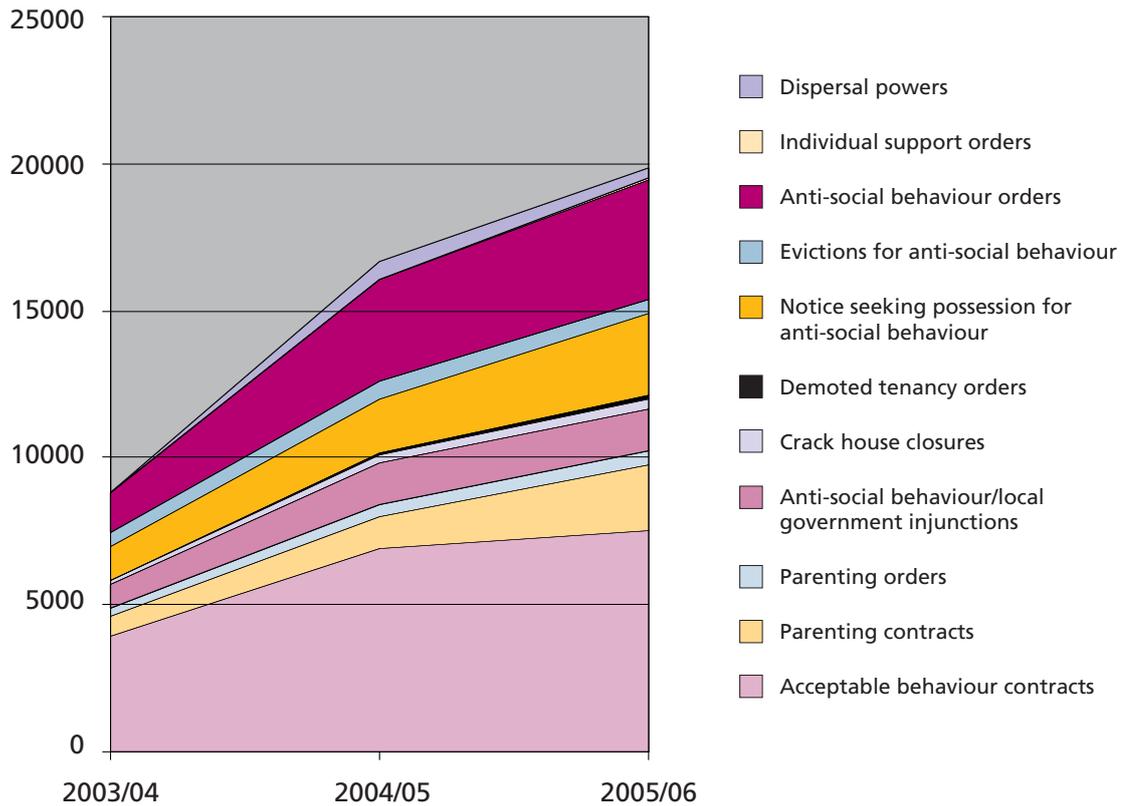
The range of council services that can have a positive impact on crime include planning, enforcement, environmental services, housing, social care, education, youth and children's services. In most areas, councils now have dedicated anti-social behaviour or community safety teams and they play a key

role in Local Strategic Partnerships with the police and other agencies, including Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

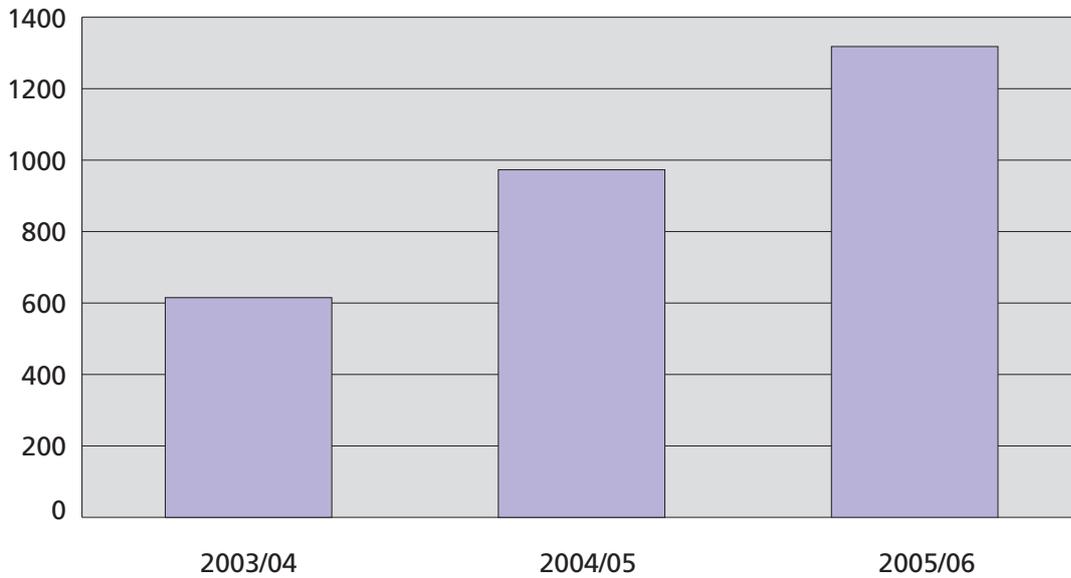
Local Strategic Partnerships have an essential role to play in agreeing new 'local area agreements' that should reflect local priorities and allow communities to hold local authorities and their partners to account for their performance. The extent to which crime is prioritised in these new agreements will be a critical test for this new approach.

Perhaps directly responding to what local people say they want, councils throughout the country and across the political spectrum have given an increasingly high priority to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in recent years and the local cabinet portfolio for crime is seen as hugely important. This increasing emphasis is well exemplified in councils' approaches to anti-social behaviour since the start of the new millennium, with more and more taking greater responsibility for addressing the problems of unacceptable behaviour within their local communities – particularly in more deprived areas.

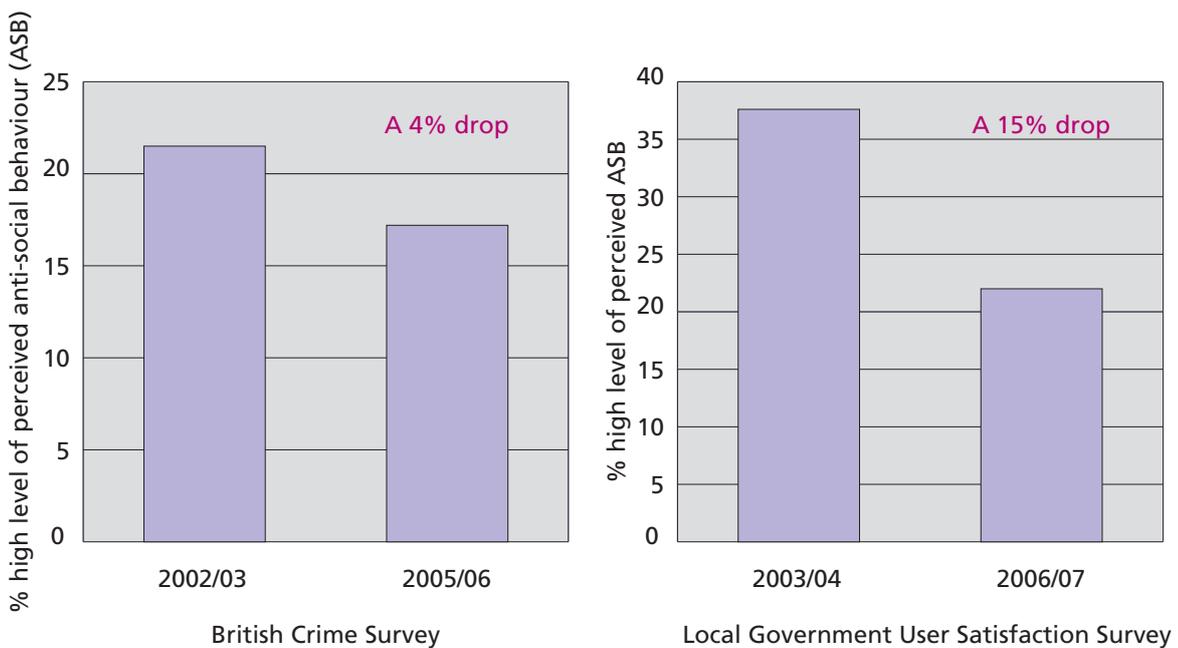
Between 2002 and 2006, a wider range of enforcement and support has been used to tackle anti-social behaviour and its causes. The growth in the use of these tools and powers is illustrated in the chart below, drawn from surveys of councils' Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinators:



Over the same period, the number of staff employed within councils and dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour has more than doubled:



And over broadly the same period, public perceptions of anti-social behaviour have decreased in both the British Crime Survey and in local government surveys:



Largely gone are the days when councils' only role was to offer grants to put extra bars on people's windows after they had been burgled as part of 'target-hardening' exercises. A much more sophisticated approach now exists – with joint policing teams, joint tasking exercises, support to victims and witnesses and joint public meetings in some areas. But the best is not yet the norm.

Putting the 'neighbourhood' into Neighbourhood Policing

The police need local government working alongside them to tackle crime just as much as local government need the police to work with them to ensure that they are creating safe, strong communities. This is an equal partnership with discrete responsibilities that must be co-ordinated to successfully tackle the problems that the public face.

We strongly endorse the recommendation made by Sir Ronnie Flanagan in his Review of Policing that Neighbourhood Policing should be integrated with wider neighbourhood management. But in taking this recommendation forward, there needs to be greater clarity that this integration should be about bringing together local policing with the broad range of local services – provided by councils, housing associations and others, that contribute to community safety by tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. It is not just about merging Neighbourhood Policing with the more specific Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders that have a very specific purpose and have been funded in a selection of areas under the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal programme.

Neighbourhood Policing cannot succeed without the integration of relevant council services, and the help of other organisations

like housing associations, regeneration agencies and health services who work in and with the community. There are plenty of examples around the country where this happens – but again, plenty where it does not. A greater willingness to work together on behalf of the public is required from all sides.

We are concerned that the opportunity presented by the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing to achieve better integration – and through that, improved public engagement and confidence – should not be missed. The public want and deserve a more seamless service; and work to achieve integration needs additional focus and pace.

“The experience for most residents is, we will call the police, they tell us it is not a policing issue, it is a housing issue. You go to housing and they will tell you that you need to go to social services, they will tell you that you need to go to environmental health. The residents have given up hope of having some of these things resolved.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

The public want one response from public services on 'crime' issues, focused on what is wrong, what needs to be fixed and how that will occur, followed up by feedback on what has happened. This was made clear in public meetings held during the review: they do not want to be 'engaged with' by lots of different bodies on what, to them, are the same issues.

In practice this means that if the public give up their time to attend local meetings, those meetings should be able to deal with a range of problems and offer solutions – from lighting, rubbish collection, potholes, lack of youth clubs, to reporting anti-social behaviour and crime problems. They need

all the right agencies to be represented at them to make action and feedback possible. Where this occurs, it is Neighbourhood Policing in action – local government providing the ‘neighbourhood’ and the police providing the ‘policing’, together working with the public. And in these situations, those agencies can reasonably challenge the public to come on board and help them fight crime.

A more active role in crime prevention

At the start of the 19th Century, the basic mission for the police included preventing crime and disorder. Nearly two hundred years later, this remains true to some extent, although our understanding of crime prevention and who prevents crime has changed as significantly as society itself.

When policing started, prevention was mainly achieved by deterrence. The execution of law and order and the presence of officers

of the law have always served to deter some crime simply through their existence and fear of the consequences of being caught. Social policies have, however, evolved down the years to address the underlying causes of crime and criminality. Across the spectrum today, there are a range of reasons given for crime, including family breakdown, poor education and misuse of drugs or alcohol.

Modern approaches to preventing crime extend well beyond the roles of the police, the courts and prison. They recognise that criminal acts are not always just simple choices between right and wrong on the part of offenders but are linked to deeper influences on the behaviour of individuals – often stemming from the circumstances of their up-bringing. There is well-established evidence about the influences or ‘risk factors’ that increase the likelihood of criminality if they are present in young people’s lives, summarised in the table below^{iv}:

Family	Low family income/social isolation Poor parental supervision & discipline Family conflict Parental criminality
School	Lack of commitment to school (truancy/exclusions) Disruptive behaviour (including bullying, aggressive & hyperactive) Low achievement School disorganisation
Individual/Peer	Alienation & lack of social commitment Early involvement in problem behaviour Peer involvement in problem behaviour High proportion of unsupervised time spent with peers
Early adulthood	Lack of skills or qualifications Unemployment or low income Homelessness
Community	Community disorganisation Availability of drugs Opportunity for crime High percentage of children in the community

Experiencing these risk factors, or a combination of them, does not automatically lead to criminal behaviour. Many individuals who suffer these set-backs early in life go on to live decent, happy, law-abiding lives. However, evidence suggests that the greater the number of these risk factors that exist in a person's life, the greater the chances of them becoming an offender.

Throughout this review, whoever we talked to – from members of the public, including victims of crime, to police officers, to judges – all believed action should be taken to prevent crime, and all wanted more to be done. In many cases, when we talked to professionals in criminal justice agencies, we found they were undertaking work to support prevention activities which in some cases went beyond their core roles – which should be applauded.

The most common example of this occurred in area after area that we visited across the country, with police officers actively co-ordinating, promoting and even running youth activities as part of their day-to-day

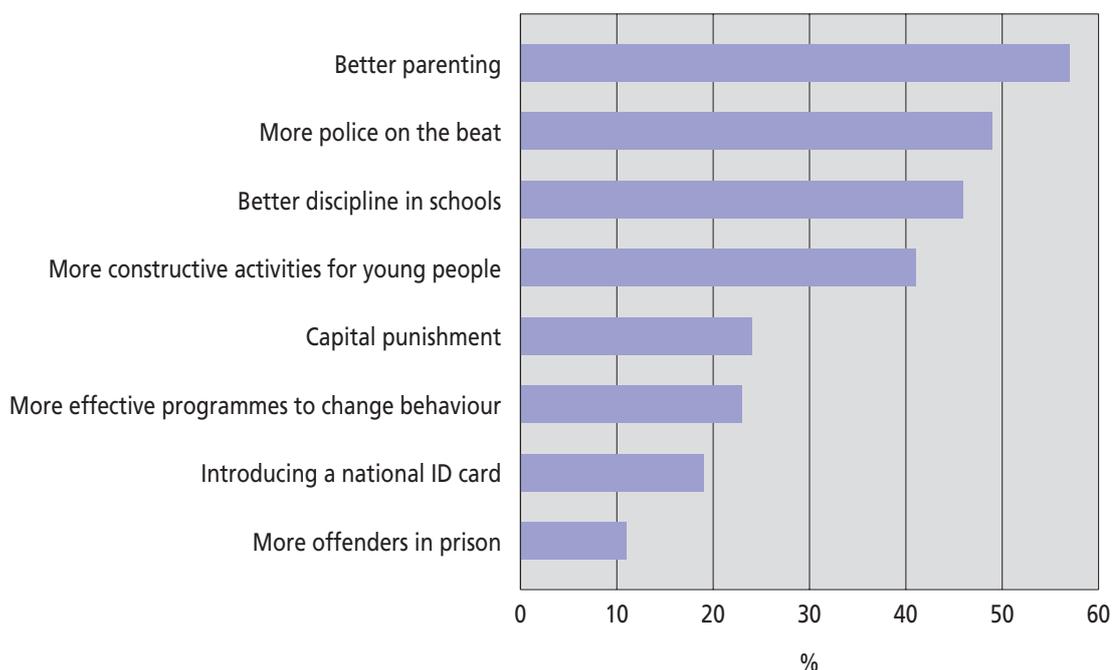
role. Often, this was happening because they felt that unless they did this, nothing would be available.

While there is something positive to be drawn from such a universal recognition of the importance of preventative approaches, it may also be symptomatic of a failure to identify and provide preventative services – and youth services in particular – on a strategic, evidence-led and cost-effective basis.

Surveys referred to later in this report show that, when asked what type of activities the public would give up their spare time for, one-in-four said they would be interested in helping to run youth activities and community or parenting groups.

Other research has also shown that the public believe better parenting and youth activities could have a significant effect in reducing crime – as significant as more police on the beat and better discipline in schools – which emphasises the central role that local council services can play in preventing crime^v:

What will do most to reduce crime?



The public know that parents are the key to making sure every child gets a good start in life and keeping them on the rails if things start to go wrong. They think parents should get a helping hand if they need it – and even if they don't want it.

"I see youths now who have totally lost respect for authority. A slap on the wrist is not good enough. Respect has gone out the window. Parents aren't taking enough responsibility." Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire.

"I think parents should take a bit more responsibility for their children and the children of other families as well and be a bit braver." Attendee, Have Your Say event.

The public know that discipline in school is vital as children grow up and that if a child is either truanting or excluded and hanging around the streets in school hours, there is a problem. They know that the kids who don't go to school regularly are going to be the ones that cause trouble out on the streets. In the same way, they know that if a child is found out on the streets late at night drinking and hanging out with friends it

signals problems. The public need to be given assurance and information so that:

- it is clear who to call if a child is seen truanting, and clear what will happen as a result; and
- it is clear where children can go to play or hang around without being at risk of harm or of getting into trouble.

The public know that these incidents are signs of a fast track into crime and prison and they want that stopped if possible. They have a big appetite to give children and young people a second chance.

Better parenting

Good parenting is really important in influencing children's life chances, acting as a protection against poverty, social exclusion and poor educational attainment, as well as preventing crime and anti-social behaviour.

A survey conducted in October 2006 for the Home Office confirmed that most people think parents should take responsibility for the behaviour of their children and that children should not be on the streets after 8.30pm. And parents themselves were open to accepting help with children's troublesome behaviour.

Results from a survey of 2,048 adults in October 2006 showed:

- 82% agreed that parents should be held responsible for their children's bad behaviour;
- 83% agreed that parents should be made to take help if necessary;
- 92% thought all 10-year-olds or under should be indoors and off the streets by 8.30pm or earlier and in bed by 9.30pm or before on weekday nights. Even on weekends, 80% still thought they should be indoors by 8.30pm; and
- 95% agreed that the police should take home any child under the age of 16 after 9pm if they are involved in anti-social behaviour.

The Government's Children's Plan published in December 2007 announced new funding for parenting programmes, including £34 million for local authorities to employ parenting experts and, for the most challenging families, £13 million for a Family Pathfinders project. Family Intervention Projects are now operating in 50 areas, with key workers balancing support and enforcement action to ensure that families engage.

However, the process by which parents get help remains too dependent on parents asking for help in the right place at the right time, or on young people committing several acts of crime or anti-social behaviour before they are referred for help, by which time it is harder to turn their or their parents' behaviour round. Help needs to be targeted better at the parents who need help most, when they most need it.

Councils are best placed to ensure that there is a straightforward system in place that everyone can understand – the public, those who are struggling with their children, the children and young people who are already getting into trouble or who are at risk of causing problems, as well as those people in the 'system' who take the decisions necessary to direct help. Everyone needs to know where they stand, where they can get help and what will happen if crime and anti-social behaviour is not stopped.

A simple test for this would be the response where a PCSO finds an 11-year-old child out on their own at 9pm at night with a group of others, drinking and smoking, and this happens repeatedly even though they have walked the child home and talked to the parents on previous occasions. What does the system do? What does the child think is going to happen? What can the parents expect to happen to them? How

straightforward is it for the PCSO? Currently there seem to be few available answers.

More constructive activities for young people

Young people feature prominently in what the public (including young members of the public) consider to be local problems:

- In the British Crime Survey, when asked about their perceptions of anti-social behaviour, 33% of the public see teenagers hanging around on the streets as a problem in their area. And younger people are more likely to perceive problems of teenagers hanging around than older people.
- In a survey of the public in 2006, 43% said they worried about personal safety when they saw groups of young people hanging around.
- 69% of people think that youth crime is higher than 10 years ago^{viii}.
- Arrest statistics indicate that around 25% of crime is committed by 10 to 17-year-olds.
- People living in deprived areas, people who have less contact with young people, and people in both the younger or older age ranges are more likely to see youth crime and anti-social behaviour as a problem.

In recent years the debate about young people has become polarised. At one end are those who feel that 'teenagers hanging around' are 'just kids being kids', and that we should be much more positive about young people and tolerant of their behaviour and the media 'negativity' will go away. At the other end are those who feel children and teenagers are out of control and less

respectful than they used to be, who see groups of young people dominating the streets, being violent, intimidating and abusive to the degree that they are afraid to go out at night, and who feel that more drastic action is needed to crack down on these problems.

This is a sterile debate. Both ends of the argument are right to some extent, depending largely on location, and while debate continues, action is stymied. Those experiencing real problems and those simply needing reassurance – all are let down.

What unites both these viewpoints is a common agreement that children and young people need something to do and somewhere to go to keep them out of trouble at night. That is the obvious priority for action.

The public's concerns about young people are balanced by their concerns for young people.

In a survey of the public for the Home Office in October 2006, 27% thought that a cause of anti-social behaviour was that there was 'not enough for young people to do'.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, 40% of the public say that more constructive activities for young people will do most to reduce crime and a significant number of people said they would be willing to give up their own spare time to help run youth activities.

Members of the public who we met during the review often raised the lack of available activities for young people at the time they need them most as a problem in their areas.

“Let us catch the youngsters before they get to the offending stages. Give them something to do. Bring back youth clubs

and stuff like that.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

What is important here are the common sense tests on what it is reasonable for the taxpayer to fund or volunteers to provide. Not everyone needs publicly funded activities, but in every area where they are needed they should be provided – on the night that they are needed most.

In the past, the youth service operated on the same terms and conditions as teachers, meaning that they did not run mainstream activities during school holidays. Over the years this lack of organised activities has led to others filling this gap; community and voluntary organisations and criminal justice agencies like the police or Youth Offending Teams stepped in to run schemes, often with Government funding – for example, through Summer Splash, the Positive Activities Fund and Kickz.

Those in the Youth Service would say they are under-funded, the 'Cinderella service' within local authorities. This must change. However, it is not just a question of resources but of using the existing resources to better effect.

For the public it does not matter which bit of the system funds and runs activity as long as it is there and open at the right time.

It is reasonable to expect parents to play a full part in either funding their children's activities or helping lay some on – a football match in the park, for example. Many families have the time and resources to make sure their children have something to do. For those that don't, activities need to be organised and funded.

In separate surveys, we asked members of the public and community activists which night of the week it was most important for

youth facilities to be available. Of any single night, Friday night was the most popular answer followed by Saturday night, as shown in the chart below:

However, an audit of youth provision across a small sample of areas in 2007 found that provision was often closed on a Friday or Saturday night, just when incidents of anti-social behaviour are highest^x.

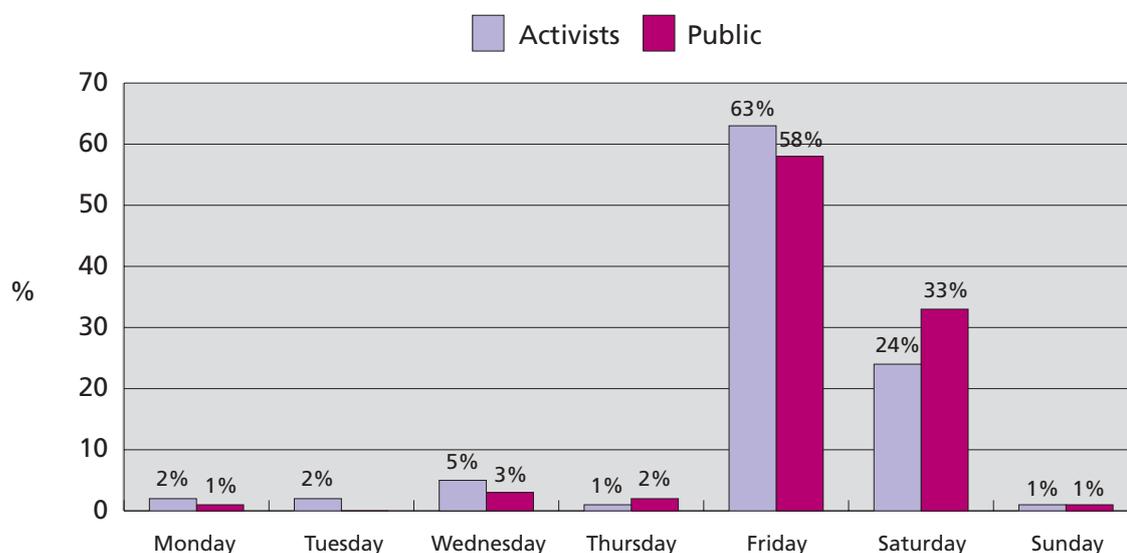
The Government is committed to invest significantly – over £800 million over the next three years – in positive activities and places to go for young people. Its ten-year youth strategy, “*Aiming High for Young People*”, published in July 2007 and its *Children’s Plan* made new commitments to focus investment in deprived areas, where young people are less likely to engage in structured positive activities. It has also recently announced additional capital investment in facilities for young people through a programme called ‘myplace’, administered by the BIG Lottery.

The Youth Taskforce in the Department for Children, Schools and Families will be investing £22.5 million extra in the 50 most

deprived areas to improve facilities but will also be working with those areas to help them identify and publicise what is already available and ensure that activities are open at the times and places when they are most needed.

During a visit by the review team we were shown the local youth centre. It was surrounded by tall spiked fencing and there was no signage to indicate its purpose, the resources that were available, or when it was open. We were shown another facility for young people nearby and told that when faced with closure because of lack of resources for local authority youth services, the local police had decided to provide the funding to keep it open through the school holidays to avoid an increase in anti-social behaviour.

On another visit to a youth club, when asked why activities were not available on Friday night when most anti-social behaviour was reported by the local community, the answer from the youth worker was that “young people like to go drinking on Fridays so we moved the night to Wednesday instead”.



An increase in availability of youth facilities will not prevent all youth crime. But if it is made available in the right places at the right times, and if efforts are made to attract the young people who need to be there, better provision could make some impact in helping to divert more young people into constructive activities and away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

The lack of available activities should be addressed but it must never be accepted as an excuse for criminal or anti-social behaviour. Support must continue to be balanced with proper action taken when rules and laws are broken.

Proposal 9: Local authorities and police forces should consider establishing structures that ensure closer local working of Neighbourhood Policing, wider neighbourhood management and council services and other criminal justice services, by:

- establishing strategic Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Co-ordinators in every Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership area;
- nominating a local authority officer as a Neighbourhood Policing Team liaison person for every team for all joint action and tasking needed to resolve neighbourhood problems and feedback to the public; and
- ensuring that at every Neighbourhood Policing public meeting (PACT – Police and Communities Together), local authority officers are present to ensure that problems raised by the public – from litter to pot holes, to activities for youngsters, to crime – can be resolved in one forum.

Proposal 10: The Government should continue with its interventions where poor parenting is putting children at risk of getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. However, it should go further by ensuring that these arrangements are publicised locally so that everyone in the community knows what action will be taken with parents and children when a child is:

- excluded from school;
- persistently truanting;
- found out on their own late at night;
- found drinking or using drugs;
- found behaving anti-socially or committing crime; or
- where parents themselves are involved in drugs or crime.

These circumstances should trigger a formal response co-ordinated by the local authority that gets help to the family.

Proposal 11: Building on the work that the Department for Children, Schools and Families is already pursuing in 50 local authorities that cover the country's most deprived areas, the government should ensure that, by Summer 2009, there are youth activities available where needed on Friday evenings in those 50 areas and that, more broadly, future capital investment in youth facilities across the country is dependent upon local authorities being able to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to adequate youth provision being available on Friday evenings.

3.3. Creating signal justice for signal crimes

The police and, to a lesser extent, local councils play the most prominent role in tackling crime in the public eye. There are, however, a range of other individuals, offices, bodies, organisations or agencies who work on the public’s behalf to tackle crime and deliver justice.

These include prosecutors, courts, judges and magistrates, prisons, probation and youth offending services. Between them, these individuals and agencies control the prosecution, sentencing, punishment, supervision and rehabilitation of offenders. In addition to protecting the public from harm, people look to them to ensure that justice is done – and to show them that it has been done.

Public confidence in criminal justice agencies is relatively low

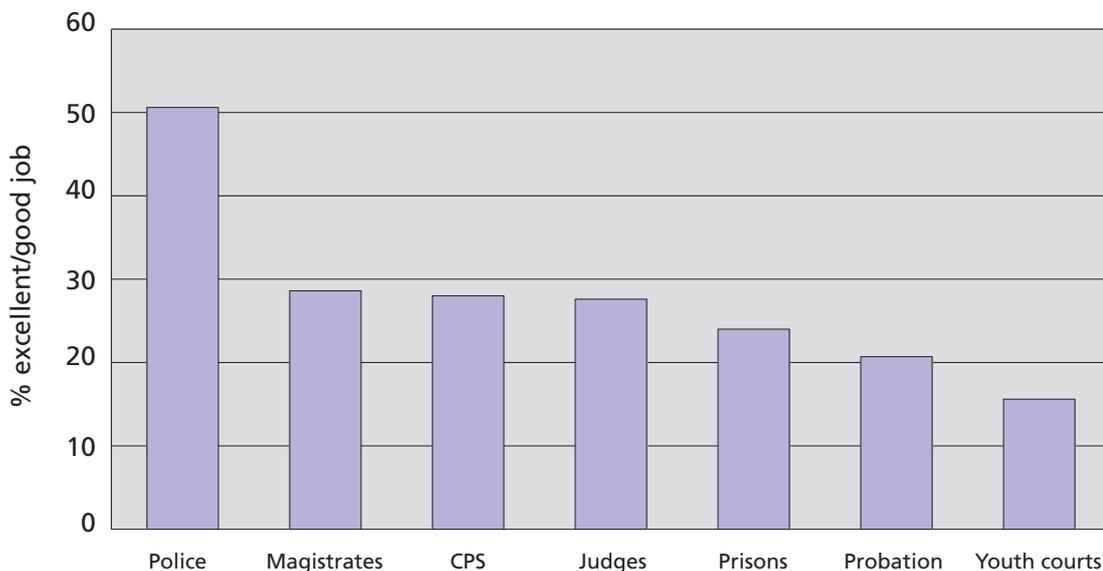
The public do not have a high level of confidence in the criminal justice agencies compared with their confidence in the police (see graph below).

The public don’t think that punishment fits the crime

As discussed earlier in this report, the public overwhelmingly hold the view that the Criminal Justice System is balanced more in favour of the accused than victims and they think that sentencing is too lenient:

- In the British Crime Survey, while 79% of the public are confident that the Criminal Justice System respects the rights of people accused of committing crimes, only 33% are confident that it meets the needs of victims; and

Public confidence in criminal justice agencies
(British Crime Survey, 2006/07)



- In surveys of the public conducted between November 2006 and January 2007, the top concern the public said Britain was facing on crime was that sentences are too lenient^{xi}.

Throughout this review, we got a strong sense that the public look to the Criminal Justice System to ensure above all else that criminals are punished for their crimes. This wasn't borne out of a sense of vengeance or vindictiveness. Rather, it was a common-sense view that criminals should face consequences for breaking the law and would be less likely to commit crime if they knew they would face tough punishment if caught.

The public see tough punishment as one of the most natural and effective means of deterrence. But they feel let down by the system and have the impression that too many crimes go unpunished, or result in punishment that does not fit the crime – the view that “criminals are let off with a slap on the wrist” came up time and time again.

“Punishment should fit the crime. You should get a slap on the wrist only if you have slapped someone else on the wrist, not if you’ve been terrorising the local neighbourhood. It makes me scream inside sometimes to see them smirking at the community after the courts basically let them off.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“We finally see [offenders] in court, only to see them let off with a warning, and back out on the street causing trouble in time for tea”. Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“The Crown Prosecution Service and judicial system need looking into. The police do an excellent job, however

they are fighting a losing battle as these services are letting them down.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“...so-called punishment is a slap on the wrist. Public are fed up of the criminals getting off lightly. Do they care???” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“The courts have got to listen to the victim every time, instead of constantly [being] worried if the offender is being violated”; Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“Stop being on the side of the criminal and start being on the side of the victim.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Perhaps not surprisingly, given these views, the public strongly support the use of prison sentences to punish crime, even with prisons close to their current maximum capacity. In a survey of the public in 2006, when asked about solutions to the problems of prisons being nearly full, 74% opted for building more prisons, whereas only 34% thought fewer people should be sent to prison and 13% felt sentences should be shorter.

The public are less supportive of what the system refers to as ‘non-custodial sentences’ – fines or penalties served in the community – seeing these as a ‘soft option’.

It would be wrong and indeed easy for those in the professions, to characterise the public as wholly hostile or punitive. While they want to see criminals face consequences and be punished, evidence suggests that they want sentencing to achieve wider aims of rehabilitation and acceptance back into society as well:

- A survey of victims of non-violent crime for the Ministry of Justice in October

2007 found that while punishment was seen as the most important part of a criminal's sentence (49%), 'payback' was the second most important (43%) and 'rehabilitation' third (36%)^{xiii}.

- A survey conducted for the review in December 2007 confirmed that 67% of members of the public who were active in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour felt offenders should be welcomed back into the community after serving a sentence.

The public feel let down by criminal justice agencies

In a series of public meetings around the country with around 800 members of the public – many of whom were victims of crime and anti-social behaviour who had worked with the police, councils and others to tackle the problems in their communities – we discussed the roles of the various criminal justice agencies. There was a worrying degree of scepticism and criticism, especially of the agencies beyond the police, who were felt to be isolated, out of touch with the public, and not on their or the police's side in bringing crimes to justice.

Case study

I have been a victim of crime. When I moved into an area, I was placed next to some 'neighbours from hell', who I was never told about. The council moved me and my two children, one of whom has a life-threatening disability. I was never told that I would be living next to this family. I challenged some children, who made my life hell. They did my car over 13 times; they attacked other neighbours; they put bricks through peoples' windows. Finally, after about 18 months of hell, we got them to court, which we were delighted with. The judge passed his sentence and said, 'Your behaviour is unacceptable. You have breached your injunctions. I am not going to tolerate it'.

13 days after this court case, which cost our local council about £300,000, the father of the family wrote to the judge and his sentence was overturned. He is now back in the community and has done more damage. He has assaulted a 13-year-old girl. The family has cost me about £8,000 and destroyed my life. I had to have CCTV installed. I used to go to bed with a knife next to my bed. I could not even go outside to bring my washing in because I was so scared by these people. This was all because I challenged their children not to keep sitting on my car. Nothing was being done about it and it was horrendous. They were evicted and moved half a mile down the road, which means that my children cannot even go to the same school as their children. I cannot go to my local shop in case I bump into them. We are still being abused but even the police and the local council have given up. They say, 'What on earth can we do when we have taken it to court and put it to the judge, and the judge has let them off after 13 days?' *Attendee Have Your Say event, Birmingham*

As one leading academic suggested to us during the review, much of the Criminal Justice System feels and acts as if it is 'hermetically sealed' and unanswerable to the public.

While stories in the media clearly influence public attitudes, criminal justice agencies do not appear to help themselves when it comes to public confidence. They do not speak as one or present a united front to the public. A survey of criminal justice agencies conducted for the Office for Criminal Justice Reform in 2006, showed a high degree of criticism of other parts of the system by the system:

- While around half the staff surveyed said they would speak highly about their own organisation, only one-in-five said they would speak highly about the Criminal Justice System as a whole.
- Nearly a third of all staff said they would be critical when speaking about the Criminal Justice System as a whole, with the police and prisons staff most likely to be critical and Crown Court and Crown Prosecution Service staff most likely to be positive.

They do not convey a sense to the public that they share a common mission to tackle crime.

A number of members of the public we spoke to during the review said that the police blamed other agencies for letting them down – for example, criticising the Crown Prosecution Service for dropping prosecutions because they wanted different evidence, or bemoaning sentences or disposals handed down by the courts.

"I would like to see the CPS being much more open about what they do. We hear the police criticising them. At one of

our meetings we had a magistrate there who was telling us the other side of the story, and criticising the police for not gaining evidence in the right manner. If there are arguments between these two and cases get thrown out of court, the public should know. That is why these arguments should be conducted in the public eye, but I was not even allowed to reproduce the minutes of our [community] meetings on the internet."
Attendee, Have Your Say event

The public want to hear about what happens to people who break the law

It was very clear during the review that members of the public did not feel that they were told enough about what happened to people who have committed crime. Nine out of ten respondents to the review's Have Your Say questionnaire said they were not told enough about the outcomes of arrests.

"When we report an incident, we get no feedback. They do not tell us what has happened. We found out months later that they went to court and the judge set them free, which is very annoying."
Attendee, Have Your Say event

The public want straight, 'non-spun' information about what happens to criminals and why. But within the Criminal Justice System, and in the lobby groups around it, there appear to be strong barriers and resistance to this. In part this seemed to be linked to 'human rights' arguments on behalf of criminals, and a desire to protect them from vigilantism, but it also seemed to be symptomatic of a patronising attitude towards the public within the system – that they are somehow less well informed, less

tolerant, and less able to take an objective view. Even though court decisions and sentences are in the public domain and could be a key to greater public confidence in the justice system, we found a reluctance to actively provide this information to the public.

“Why do criminals suddenly become invisible when they are caught? We have a right to know about what happens to them, but the powers that be all conspire to keep us in the dark!” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

There was an equally strong aversion in most parts of the Criminal Justice System to publicising personal details about offenders, even though these are already in the public domain. Professionals told us there were difficulties with promoting personal information or publishing photographs of convicted criminals and that doing so risked human rights infringements. But the same human rights criteria do not seem to hold the media back in publishing names and photographs of high-profile convicted criminals; nor do they seem to prevent the publication of names and photographs on wanted posters of those who are suspected of offending. A senior judge we spoke to during the review was very clear that this information could and should be in the public domain. But this view was not typical.

“The public are left in a limbo, they need to know what happens to the perpetrators and criminals, not see them hiding behind some ridiculous data protection rubbish.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

So, while the public hear negative stories in the media and, sometimes, from the police themselves about what happened to particular cases, they are not receiving or

aware of any wider information to reassure them that cases are being dealt with or that offenders are being punished appropriately.

“I do believe that if the public are honestly and fully informed of what crime is being committed, but more importantly what the police are doing to prevent and detect the crime, then the police and Criminal Justice System as a whole will gain more respect and members of the public will feel more reassured.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

We considered during the review whether providing information on sentencing might make the public less confident if they felt punishments were not sufficiently harsh. However, evidence suggests that when members of the public are given detailed information about cases and asked to make judgments, as in Her Majesty’s Court Service’s ‘You be the Judge’ events, they are often less harsh than courts have been in dealing with similar cases.

In any case, this is a country whose legal system prides itself in asking citizens to judge other citizens – for example, through trial by jury. We also have a magistracy which is at pains to point out they are simply like every other member of the public – so the institutional reluctance to allow the public to be informed must be challenged if we are to achieve greater confidence in the system itself. Justice must be transparent, clear, understandable and honest and be seen to be so.

“Not enough information about what some orders mean. So for instance, what does a supervision order actually mean... or a suspended sentence...or reparation order?” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Changes in criminal justice

In the same way that public perceptions of crime appear to run counter to evidence on crime trends, public attitudes towards the Criminal Justice System seem at odds with recent developments.

A number of reforms and legislative changes have been introduced in response to public demand for tougher sentencing. These have included measures to ensure longer sentences for certain offenders and offences and new sanctions such as indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection.

While the number of crimes being committed overall fell from the mid-1990s onwards, the number of offenders sentenced in courts increased from 1.354 million in 1995 to 1.421 million in 2006. This suggests an improvement in the number and proportion of offences being brought to justice.

As the total number of offenders caught and given sentences has increased, more people have been sent to prison. The number of offenders given an immediate custodial sentence has risen by 9.5% from 79,538 in 1995 to 101,236 in 2005 (peaking at 111,607 in 2002), while average sentence lengths imposed by crown courts increased by 24% over the same period. Consequently, the number of people in prison has risen from just over 50,000 in 1995 to more than 80,000 now, a 60% increase.

However, prison sentences account for a relatively small proportion of all sentencing (varying between 6% and 8% of all sentences over the last ten years). The vast majority of convictions result in fines and these have remained around 900,000 to 1,000,000 per year over the last decade

– but have fallen as a proportion from 74% of all sentences in 1995 to 69% in 2005.

The most significant change has been in community penalties. These have risen by 57% from 129,922 in 1995 to 204,247 in 2005.

These changes have important consequences. In 1996, 27% of offenders convicted for theft were fined. Ten years later, only 14% of convicted thieves were fined. This group of criminals are now more likely to be given a community sentence (38% in 2006 compared with 31% in 1996) or a custodial sentence (20% in 2006 compared with 15% a decade earlier).

Fines must reflect the means of the offender, so this use of more high level community sentences may relate to a view that the amount the sentencer could impose would not in many cases represent an adequate punishment. It may also be the case that sentencers are reaching for community sentences because they can include rehabilitative elements. But whatever the reasons for this shift, the increase in the number of offenders getting community sentences when they might in the past have been fined has placed a greater strain on the capacity of probation services to manage community orders that punish offenders effectively.

The Criminal Justice System has also been subjected to a number of reforms to improve its efficiency in dealing with cases. For example over 1.4 million offences were brought to justice in the year to June 2007, an increase of 43% since March 2002, and well ahead of target. The action to increase the payment rate of fines to 93% is a remarkable achievement by all concerned

and is ahead of the Government's target. The successful recovery of £125 million criminal assets to March 2007 is another significant achievement, and one that is close to the public's heart in not allowing criminals to profit from their crimes.

It may seem odd then that, despite tougher sentencing and the progress achieved in improving the efficiency of the Criminal Justice System, the public remain convinced that the Criminal Justice System is not on their side but on the offender's, epitomised by the view that sentencing is too lenient.

"There just has to be greater emphasis on what effect crime and anti-social behaviour has on people, rather than the needs & justification of the wrongdoers."
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

What would improve public confidence and engagement?

The Government's criminal justice strategy sets out why public confidence in and engagement with the Criminal Justice System is so important:

The Government's criminal justice strategy says:

The Criminal Justice System belongs to the people it serves. An effective justice system which people trust to protect them, do justice, and reflect their priorities and needs is a basic requirement of a civilised society. If people understand and trust the system, they will feel increasingly free to get on with their lives without fear of crime, secure in the knowledge that there are opportunities for those who play by the rules and consequences for those who do not. But we also rely on public confidence to meet the practical needs of the system. We need the public to engage with the system by reporting crime and being willing to provide evidence as witnesses. And we depend on volunteers to support victims and to serve as magistrates or jurors.

There are, then, real and damaging consequences that result from low public confidence in the Criminal Justice System. The public are deterred from reporting crime and giving evidence if they feel that criminal justice agencies will not take adequate action.

"Yes [people should report crime], except that nowadays the police and the useless courts will just undo it all anyway, so what's the point?" Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

At its simplest level, it may just be that the public expect sentencing that is even tougher and swifter than the levels achieved so far. The lack of systematic communication to the public on sentencing may also mean that few are aware of the increases in offences brought to justice, or have only heard about seemingly inadequate sentencing portrayed in the media.

In meetings held during the review, when discussing the problem of tougher sentencing placing more pressure on prison capacity, some members of the public felt that it would be short-sighted and counter-productive to reduce sentencing. Rather than relieving prison capacity, they suggested that this would reduce the deterrent to commit crime that only comes from tough sentencing and would result in even more offences and more offenders ending up in custody.

While many members of the public have heard about prison capacity problems, they don't necessarily see that as a result of tougher sentencing; they are more likely to think prisons have filled up because crime has increased and not enough prisons have been built and are also likely to strongly support the Government's plans to increase prison capacity. And their awareness of, and confidence in, community penalties (the type of sentence that has grown most significantly over the last ten years) is very low.

“All the criminals regard community service as a joke. As far as they (and the rest of us) are concerned they have got away with it once they hear those words come out of a judge's mouth.”
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

And it is clear that an effective response to crime needs the public to play their part. We touch on this in more detail later in this report.

During the review we asked the public what more they wanted from the justice system to improve their confidence and engagement.

The main requests the public raised are set out below.

Top approaches the public want from the Criminal Justice System:

- **Punishment that fits the crime** – the public want tough sentencing first and foremost to achieve appropriate punishment, reflecting the seriousness of the crime committed and deterring further offending.
- **Payback** – the public want all punishments for crime to involve some recompense to them, either through a fine or tough work in the community.
- **Justice seen to be done** – the public want to see and hear more about arrests, charges, decisions and sentences, and to have visible community punishment, to reassure them that crimes are being brought to justice and to deter potential offenders or re-offenders.
- **A system that is on the side of the public** rather than the offender – with victims and witnesses in particular given better support.

In general, there was a strong demand from the public for more information about what happens to people who have committed a crime. Members of the public wanted more information about punishments and sentences. A significant number felt that there should be more 'naming and shaming' of offenders to act as a stronger deterrent to them and other potential offenders in the community. Others called for more information about what help was given to victims and witnesses, along with information about any payback to the community by offenders.

There was demand for more feedback on Crown Prosecution Service and court decisions, outlining reasons and justifications behind decisions they take on prosecutions and sentences.

Making community orders 'work' for the public

The range of community sentences that used to be available were replaced or consolidated under a single Community Order from April 2005. A Community Order itself, however, can be made up of up to 12 requirements which will differ from case to case. These include:

- carrying out between 40 and 300 hours of compulsory 'unpaid work';
- taking part in activities to improve basic skills (such as reading and writing);
- attending programmes to alter offending behaviour;
- attending programmes that deal with alcohol or drug abuse; and
- other restrictions like observing curfews, or being prohibited from certain areas.

A single requirement of unpaid work is the most common community sentence given out, making up 32% of Community Orders during 2006. However, many Community Orders do not include unpaid work and are more supervisory or rehabilitative in their nature:

- 15% require offenders to meet regularly with a Probation Officer for supervision and to attend a course such as the Drink Impaired Drivers Programme or Think First, which teaches problem solving skills; and

- 13% are stand-alone requirements for supervision by the Probation Service.

The Probation Service is responsible for supervising all offenders subject to a Community Order.

Community Orders do not have the public profile of imprisonment and public awareness of them is generally low. Research^{xv} suggests that increasing the public's understanding of the conditions of community penalties makes them more acceptable to the public. Or, as one member of the public put it in response to the review:

"By advertising community service being carried out in your area, you will encourage and improve public confidence that the sentences given by local courts are being carried out and local criminals are putting something back for their misdeeds." Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

In March 2007, two-thirds of the public surveyed said they had heard of Community Orders, although it seems likely that they were referring to an awareness of community sentences more generally. More critically, however, only one in eight said they were aware of a project in their area that had benefited from unpaid work carried out under a Community Order. Fewer than half said they felt protected from those on Community Orders and only 33% felt that Community Orders were an effective means of punishment.

"Local people who know about a crime eagerly await to see if conviction is suited to the crime. They are often disappointed as community sentences are an easy option." Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Despite lacking awareness of, or confidence in, community penalties, the public agreed with many of their aims and principles when we discussed these with them. In particular, there was a real public appetite for community penalties that provide a visible punishment for offenders where they carry out demanding work to 'payback' to the community. The public also wanted to be given more information about the work carried out and to have a say in what offenders are required to do.

In a survey of the public conducted during April 2008, members of the public were asked about community sentencing:

- 90% agreed that all punishments for crime should involve some payback to the community, either through unpaid work in the community or financial compensation.
- 92% saw work as the most important requirement for a community sentence, and 88% felt it should be demanding. Drug and alcohol treatment were felt to be equally important, where relevant.
- 82% thought that people should be informed about the type of work to be undertaken and 77% agreed that people should be informed about when and where it would be carried out.
- 58% of the public wanted to have a say in the type of work that should be undertaken and, of those, 71% said they would attend a meeting to influence this.
- A strong majority wanted work under community sentencing to be made more visible to the public, either through signs placed where work is being carried out (71%) or by those carrying out the work wearing clothing identifying them as offenders (52%).

In a March 2007 snap-shot self-assessment by probation areas of unpaid work, only 37% of placements were assessed as being visible. And the assessment of visibility may have meant as little as a plaque being placed at the site of work after it had been completed, or an A-board erected while the work was being conducted. Examples we saw of these during the review were not explicit about the work being part of an offender's punishment. Passers by seemed likely to assume that offenders were council workers or contractors, or volunteers, carrying out maintenance or cleansing work.

"These people getting community sentences are not shown as criminals – they work with legitimate workers – how would I know they are not working for the council? How does that make the council workers feel? They need to be shown to the public as having done something wrong, as a deterrent."
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

"The perpetrators should wear clothing that identifies them. Gardening and decorating are not punishments, they are pastimes. They should be shamed."
Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

"We have a great payback system in XXX. However, a professional footballer got community service and they put him in a school at the top of my estate. All we could see was the BMW at the gate. Nobody apart from me knew that footballer was doing his service: not uniform, nothing. I was absolutely disgusted."

Evidence suggests that community penalties can have a slightly positive impact on re-offending rates – data from 2004 showed that 37.9% of offenders sentenced to unpaid

work as part of a community penalty had been reconvicted two years after sentencing, compared with a predicted rate of 43.5%. However, a National Audit Office report on Community Sentences, published in January 2008, concluded that there was little evidence about what actually works in community sentencing and recommended further evaluation to determine the degree to which the twelve Community Order requirements reduce reconvictions and achieve other sentencing aims, such as punishment or payback.

The National Audit Office report also highlighted a number of problems the Probation Service was experiencing in the management of Community Orders:

- Of the 302 Community Order cases studied in five probation areas, there were 23 unpaid work 'stand-downs', where offenders attended but were unable to work because the Probation Service could not provide transport or sufficient supervisors. 18 of these were in London. In only 54% of these 302 cases was the national standard met to arrange the first unpaid work session within 10 days of sentencing.
- During February and March 2008, the Probation Service's trade union, NAPO, asked members to tell them about any restrictions in the past year on the ability of courts to sentence individuals to unpaid work. They received 17 examples where probation officers had been told not to recommend unpaid work in their pre-sentence reports to the courts because there was no capacity to deliver it, or very long waiting lists.
- The National Audit Office found that, although the number of unpaid work and other requirements completed is reported, these volumes are not set

against the number of requirements given by the courts, so the Probation Service is not able to say whether or not the sentences given by the courts have been carried out. This could impact on sentencer and public confidence in community penalties. The Probation Service's Performance Management Unit is developing a sentence outcome measure to fill this gap, which is due to be assessed during 2008 and if deemed successful, will be added to the main performance framework.

While the impact on offenders of Community Orders seems debatable, information about community punishments is either not reaching or not making an impact on public concerns. And in some cases, the presentation of community penalty benefits to the public seems diametrically opposed to what the public are looking for.

They want punishment first, payback second and rehabilitation third but the emphasis of publicity material around community penalties tends to focus most on the rehabilitation of offenders and the payback benefits. This leads to payback schemes that are difficult to distinguish from community projects that law-abiding citizens volunteer for.

The clear picture that emerged from our discussions with the public was that their confidence will only be achieved if they believe offenders see Community Orders as a punishment that demands real effort.

"It is a complete waste of time. I have known two people who were both supposed to do community penalties, neither of them turned up, neither of them got fined, the both got away with doing nothing, and all they did was to boast to all of their mates that it was a waste of time." Attendee, Have Your Say event

We understand that it has been traditional to adjourn cases for a pre-sentence report to assess the suitability of an offender for work under a Community Order. We also understand that 95% of offenders assessed are found to be suitable. In these circumstances, it seems unnecessary and overly bureaucratic to adjourn all cases when only 1 in 20 seems likely to require a different approach. Not only does this appear to waste court time unnecessarily, it may also damage sentencers' and the public's confidence in Community Orders.

We were concerned too about the limitations in the system around breaches of Community Orders. Probation Officers have little discretion to manage offenders who do not turn up to do the work that has been identified as part of their punishment, or who turn up but are uncooperative. Once breaches reach a certain level, offenders are sent back to court where a sentence must be determined for the breach. This may be additional hours or a prison sentence. We believe sentencers and the public would have more confidence in Community Orders if Probation Officers had discretion to operate a more instant means of managing breaches.

"People need to know that if you're sentenced, you jolly well have to turn up, not phone in sick! Can you imagine people phoning in sick for prison?! That's not justice!" Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

"What on earth happens if they don't turn up or complete it? Nothing, I suspect." Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

The Ministry of Justice is providing an additional £13.9 million for Probation

Services to fund six 'intensive alternatives to custody' projects, which typically combine a higher amount of unpaid work and other restrictions like curfews. However, there are no additional elements in these alternatives to custody that are not theoretically available in 'ordinary' Community Orders.

"...can we please stop saying 'unpaid work'? Every Tom, Dick and Harry in this room does unpaid work [fellow volunteers]. We are not criminals and I think we ought to get away from that flaming scenario." Attendee, Have Your Say event

Proposal 12: Her Majesty's Court Service should provide greater information to the public on cases, sentencing decisions and what happens to offenders, on a regular and much more consistent basis.

Proposal 13: Community Justice pilots should be expanded and refocused on the key elements outlined in the justice proposals above and below – especially visible Community Payback and greater feedback to the community, through Neighbourhood Policing, on results of court cases.

Proposal 14: Wherever currently community sentences are being carried out under the title of 'unpaid work' this should be changed to 'Community Payback', the work should be more visible and demanding, not something any member of the public would choose to do themselves, and the local community should receive information about it and who is doing it. A deadline should be set by the Government for this transformation.

Proposal 15: The Government should consider contracting out from the Probation Service the running of Community Payback

and, in future, Community Payback should be delivered to new agreed standards that reflect proposal 14 above so that it is visible, demanding and the public know about it.

Proposal 16: The Government should implement a new Community Punishment that requires offenders to carry out Community Payback as above – visible and demanding – but with increased loss of personal time/liberty through greater intensity and frequency of hours. For example, if an offender is in employment, they would be required to undertake work several nights each week and at weekends or, if out of work, 5 days a week.

Proposal 17: An order to undertake Community Payback should be made at the same time a sentence is given, rather than having to adjourn and wait for a pre-sentence report to assess suitability for work. The assessment should still take place and, in the small minority of cases where the offender is subsequently found to be unsuitable for work, the order should be reviewed.

Proposal 18: Probation Officers should have the power to extend the number of Community Payback hours to be served where breaches occur, without the need to refer back to court. The extra hours added should be double the number missed or not complied with fully. That power and the consequence for non-compliance with an order should be spelled out clearly when the sentence is first imposed.

3.4. Joined-up delivery in neighbourhoods

The police, local authorities and criminal justice agencies all have independent and yet inter-dependent roles in ensuring that the public have confidence in how, together, they tackle crime and handle criminals. Each can work in isolation but to a more limited degree of success. Success comes through acting together, taking action in a concerted way and sharing key information with the public.

The public want clear leadership from the police on crime. They have confidence in the police as a visible, familiar organisation who they see delivering action on the ground, rather than in less visible partnerships who determine strategic priorities and approaches. But they do want other organisations to tackle crime too – for example local councils, prosecutors, the courts and probation services. In taking a public lead for tackling crime by driving Neighbourhood Policing forward, the police need to know they have the support of key agencies and can depend on them to be equally responsive to public concerns that they hold the power and ability to address.

The implementation of Neighbourhood Policing coincides with ambitions on the part of Government to ensure a more joined-up delivery of criminal justice, better engagement of the public to inspire confidence (for example through the roll-out of 'community justice' to all Magistrates Courts), and the provision of meaningful local information on crime.

Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) – of which there are 42 across England and Wales aligning with police force areas – are the lead strategic organisations responsible for joining up local delivery of the Criminal Justice System. The Government expects LCJBs to work closely with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs but called Community Safety Partnerships in Wales) at a more local level to ensure that local partnerships develop a shared understanding of the needs of local areas and work together to engage communities.

However, in too many areas that we visited during the review, and in our discussions with members of the public and criminal justice professionals, we saw and heard about problems in the local delivery of joined up services – agencies blaming each other for failing to engage or respond to problems, multiple public meetings and engagement covering similar issues but saying different and even conflicting things, members of the public left feeling that they were pushed from pillar to post with no agency taking responsibility and no real action resulting in return for the time and effort citizens were taking to raise their concerns.

But we also saw and heard about some areas getting this right – for example through regular Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings where the community felt they had a strong voice, where the police responded to their concerns, took action with the backing of local government and other colleagues, and reported back to the community on outcomes.

Case study

In our area, PACT is simply members of the public, police, fire brigade, PCSOs, local police. It has worked brilliantly. When we first started, for example, there was old ladies being threatened, etc, and we were being threatened with hammers, all sorts, as we got involved. However, we have stuck at it and what you get is the local people come to us because we are the local people. They will come to a monthly PACT meeting. If required, they will phone us. If required – I am just a painter and decorator – I am the chairman, I will go around quietly at any time of day or night to talk to them. I have ladies of 80 and 90 years old who ring me so that I will ring the police. What we are finding is they trust me because I was brought up with them. The police trust me because I have stood shoulder to shoulder with them and I will not be pushed. Due to that, our group has got bigger and bigger and bigger. *Attendee, Have Your Say event*

The evidence we have considered during the review leads us to believe that public confidence and engagement would be improved significantly if the police, local government and other criminal justice agencies took action together and presented a more united and seamless front to local communities on crime.

The police would appear to be the best choice for leading such engagement because the public have greater confidence in them relative to other criminal justice agencies. Giving the police this role, and the necessary support and information from other agencies, could also help to turn the police into vocal advocates, rather than critics, of their criminal justice partners. However, this will require the commitment of leaders in all the criminal justice agencies to make it

work. The police need to be given the right information by their partners. And front-line officers need to be given the support and training necessary to develop the public communication and engagement skills they need for modern Neighbourhood Policing.

But as evidenced in an earlier section of this report, local councils also need to be fully involved in this engagement, not least because of the contribution their services make to community safety and their role in preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, but also because of the democratic role played by councillors.

In a survey of 1,787 members of the public conducted in May for the review, over three-quarters (77%) said they thought police meetings with residents should be given the same name across the country. This would help to reinforce familiarity and confidence in these meetings and we hope the police and other organisations will come together behind a common name and approach for involving local people on local crime and justice matters.

Proposal 19: Neighbourhood Policing Teams should become the 'face' of engagement and communication with local communities on crime and justice as a whole, and should be given the necessary support to achieve this. At local meetings with the police, local authority and public (PACT – Police and Communities Together – meetings) the following should be given priority:

- A discussion of the community's priorities for the police and local authority with feedback on what action has taken place since the previous meeting.
- Feedback to the community on crimes brought to justice including, for example, work completed in the

area as part of Community Payback, information on court cases and the sentences handed down for key crimes that have been of particular concern to the community.

- Opportunities for the public to have a say on the work that should be conducted in the local community under Community Payback.

Proposal 20: Government should consider extending existing duties to co-operate on crime and related areas to all relevant agencies, with the intention that the public receive a seamless service.

Proposal 21: Government should ensure that 'community engagement' activities are rationalised. Police authorities, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates and others should work together to ensure they are not separately asking the same questions of the same community at different times about what they want in relation to crime, policing and justice.

4. Crime Statistics – a new approach

Good quality information and communication are vital in improving public awareness, confidence and perceptions of crime. The better informed the public are, the greater their confidence in the police and other criminal justice agencies. And, as we have discussed earlier in this report, confidence plays a critical part in reducing fear of crime, strengthening community spirit and getting citizens more involved in tackling crime.

With the right information, the public can act in ways that reduce their own risk of becoming a victim of crime, that help to prevent and deter crime, and that help the police and other agencies catch and punish criminals.

Our discussions during the review with the public revealed a number of problems that impede public confidence:

- the public have lost trust in official statistics on crime; and
- they don't feel they are given enough local information about crime.

These problems have a number of negative consequences.

Mistrust of official statistics leads people to believe that crime is worse than the statistics suggest. In turn, this makes them more fearful and concerned about crime, particularly at the national level, and may deter them from playing an active role in the community that could help to prevent crime.

A lack of information about crime reduces awareness and makes it more likely that the public will hold negative views, for example

about the level of crime or the amount of action being taken to tackle it. In turn, this has the same effect of increasing fear and concern about crime and reducing the impact citizens and communities can have in preventing crime.

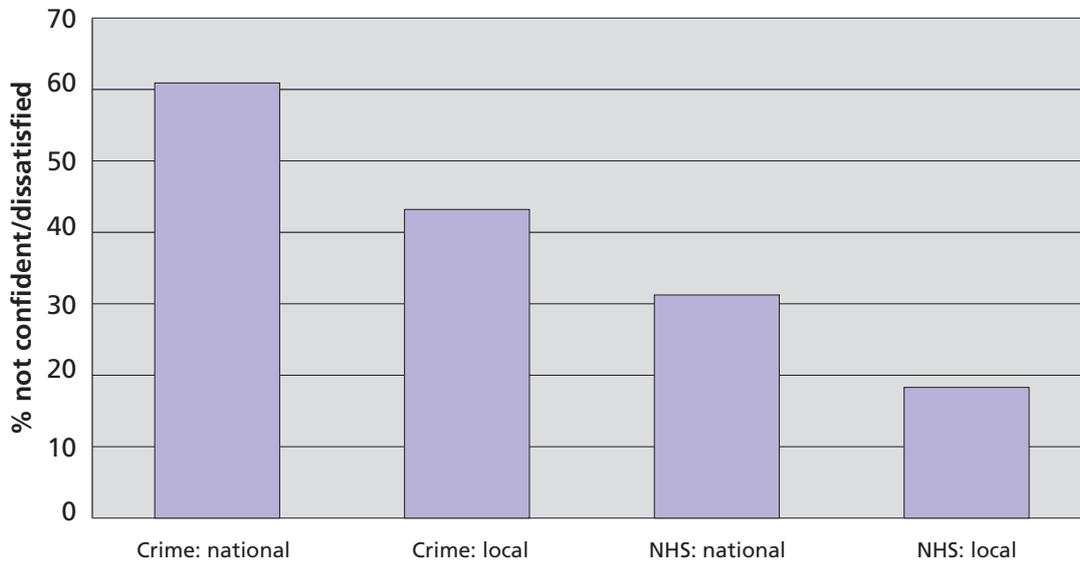
The public have lost trust in crime statistics

During the review we heard forceful views from the public about official statistics on crime. These bore out strongly results of the British Crime Survey which show that, despite the downward trends evident in official statistics (including the British Crime Survey itself), the majority of people think crime is getting worse not better.

“I think crime has really gone up in the past two years, you can't read a newspaper now, or hear the news without someone being shot, or someone being knifed or stabbed, it's just awful.” Member of the public in a discussion during the review

Several people we spoke to during the review – professionals and members of the public – told us this was to be expected in an age of growing cynicism and mistrust in Government and, more generally, where the public showed less deference to authority. To some extent, this seems borne out in other areas of Government or social policy. Research in 2003 found that, when asked about problems and confidence on issues of crime and health services, there is a common trend for public perceptions to be worse nationally than locally^{xvi}.

Public confidence in the way crime is dealt with vs satisfaction with NHS at national and local levels: Negative perceptions



However the negative perceptions on crime are particularly acute and are significant even at the local level. And our feelings about crime matter more because of the impact they can have on the behaviour and quality of life of individual citizens, the strength of communities, and the response to crime and disorder.

When we asked members of the public how they decided whether crime is going up or down, most referred to what they saw or experienced locally or to what they read or saw in the media. Just 3 people out of 1,502 respondents to our Have Your Say questionnaire said that they relied on published statistics as the source for their own views on whether crime was increasing or decreasing. However, a significant number (around 10% of all respondents) made comments about their lack of faith in statistics, typically saying they found them too confusing, thought they were inaccurate, or that they could not trust them.

“There are lies, damn lies and statistics. Does the government think we are fools?” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

There is confusion and lack of agreement

Across the media, police, lobby groups and others there seems to be a sense of hopelessness about the lack of public trust in statistics. Confusion seems to spring from the use of different statistics and also from the dismissal and undermining of the statistics by so many people, including professionals in the Criminal Justice System. It is entirely understandable, then, that the public feel concerned and confused. It may be true that the system needs to improve its recording, its accuracy and include other offences but, importantly, this action never seems to be complete and finished and no one seems to be able to reach agreement on a national picture.

Many people – police officers, professionals in the wider Criminal Justice System and policy makers – were quick to blame the

media and politicians for their misuse of crime statistics. They make easy targets. But those within the system must also see that trusted crime information is critical for the public. Less hopelessness and more determination is necessary to sort this out across the board and reach agreement. Without this, organisations set up to tackle crime will impede their own objectives.

The use of different statistics in different situations is unhelpful. For example, police recorded crime in some instances and results of the British Crime Survey in others. While the Home Office have gone to some lengths to present these two sets of statistics together and explain the differences between them in their detailed statistical publications, their explanations are not used by the media or in other communication.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a victimisation survey that measures the public's experiences of being a victim of crime in relation to household and personal crimes (including crimes not reported to the police) by surveying a large enough number of adults in private households to be representative of the public in England and Wales. It has been carried out in the same way for 25 years.

Police recorded crime captures all crimes that have been reported to and recorded by the police. Unlike the British Crime Survey, the categories that are reported can change.

Views that the statistics are inaccurate stemmed most strongly from a belief that lots of members of the public did not bother to report crime because they felt the police would not have the time or ability to respond meaningfully to it. Very few members of the public we spoke to understood that the British Crime Survey was designed to overcome problems of under-reporting of crime.

The role of the media

The public were aware that some sections of the media appear to go out of their way to sensationalise the statistics or cherry-pick the facts that are most likely to shock.

“Even if you haven't experienced crime, the media can still make you fearful and worried about crime going up!”

Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“People are infected with fear by media and TV news. ‘Crime figures’ mean very little.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

A survey of the public in 2007 revealed the extent of media influence on public perceptions of crime. When members of the public who thought crime was rising were asked what made them think that, the top answers were television (57%) and newspapers (48%). This compared with experiences of people they knew (24%) and personal experience (20%).

Professionals were acutely aware of the media and felt this was an overwhelming challenge.

“A crime is reported 20 times, in 20 slightly different ways, over days and weeks so the public think that the crime has been committed 20 times by 20 different people – it's hopeless.”

Senior Police Officer

In reviewing past research evidence for this review, it was clear that the media are seen to play a part in shaping public impressions of crime, especially in relation to perceptions of crime at a national level and confidence in the Criminal Justice System at large. However, past research has not been able to measure the degree of this effect. Nor was it possible in our review of the literature to

establish whether this effect has grown in more recent times.

During the review, we analysed a week's worth of newspaper coverage in both *The Times* and *The Mirror* for the first week of October 2007 and in the first week of October 1967 in order to make a 'snap-shot' assessment of the extent to which coverage of crime and justice had changed.

The amount of crime and criminal justice coverage was about the same in both periods, accounting for around 8% of all articles.

However, the modern crime articles, as well as including more photographs, were more opinionated, included more sensational language, and adopted a more critical or negative stance. In contrast, the 1967 articles tended to be much more matter-of-fact.

We believe further research in this area is warranted.

The role of politicians, professionals and others

Mistrust of the statistics also seemed to result from the public feeling that they are 'spun' and manipulated by politicians of all sides in an attempt to back up a particular argument or to credit or discredit the efforts of the Government of the day.

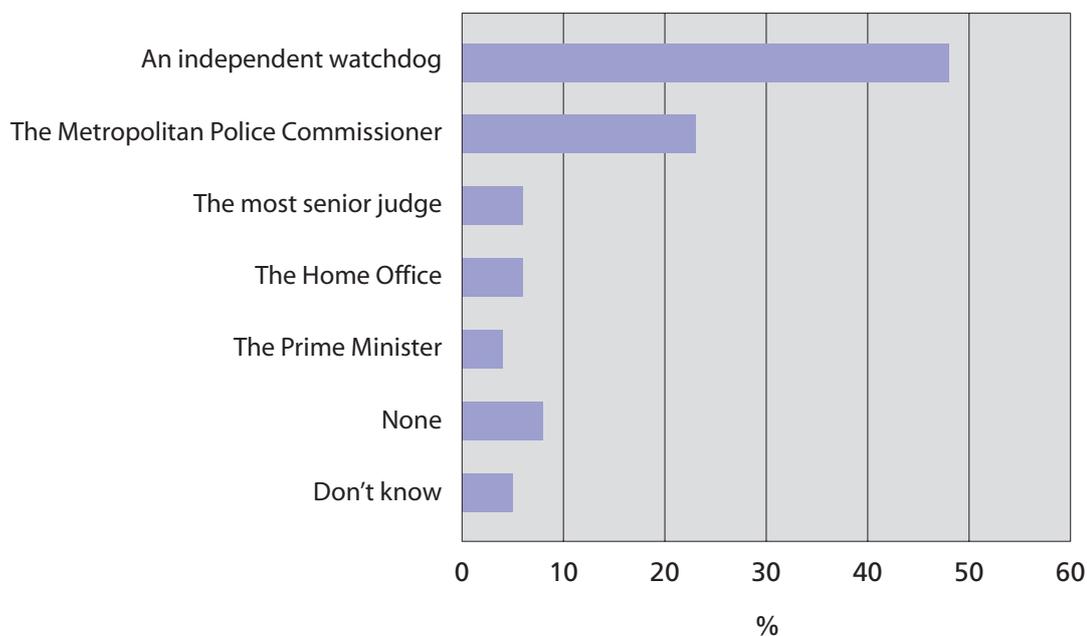
"I just want to know what's actually going on around me. Nowadays, I just switch off when I hear someone get up to talk about crime. I know that all they'll do is twist and select until they're telling you whatever they want to tell you."

Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

But professionals working in the Criminal Justice System were equally guilty of undermining crime statistics, stoking public scepticism. During the review we saw several examples of criticisms being expressed in public by senior police officers and other criminal justice professionals. These tended to be made to argue a particular point about professional practices, rather than to express a rounded view of crime statistics and their reliability as a whole. The over-riding impression was that professionals could not themselves agree on a common approach to crime statistics – so why should the public be expected to?

Who would the public trust?

During the review, in a survey of the public we asked who they would most trust as a source for national statistics on crime. An independent watchdog was the most popular choice:



Some attempts have been made to improve crime statistics

The Government has taken some steps to address these concerns. There have been two major reviews in the last few years which have looked at crime statistics.

A **Statistics Commission** review in 2000 included recommendations that:

- Crime statistics should be compiled at arms length from Home Office policy functions and should be accountable to the statistical service.
- Consideration should be given to moving responsibility for the British Crime Survey to the Office for National Statistics.
- Changes should be made to the presentation of recorded crime figures, including changing definitions of violent crime, and greater distinction between recorded crime and the British Crime Survey.
- Police forces should publish standardised and comparable local recorded crime data.

An independent review carried out by **Professor Adrian Smith** for the Home Secretary in 2006 recommended that:

- The Home Office should continue to publish recorded crime data and the British Crime Survey together.
- The British Crime Survey should be extended to under-16s and those in group residences.
- The Home Office should carry out a bi-annual survey of commercial victimisation and develop an action-plan for crimes not currently covered by the British Crime Survey.
- Statistical releases and statistical commentary should be separated from political judgements or ministerial comments. Reports on crime statistics should have fixed release dates and Ministers should only get 24 hour advance notice of the statistics being published.
- The Home Secretary should put in place a regulatory environment which ensures that there is an actual and perceived separation between those who produce statistical data and commentary on crime (a 'Back Office' function) and those who are responsible for policy advice (the 'Front Office').
- Violent crime should be redefined to only include those crimes involving injury or threat of injury.
- The Home Office needs to have a long-term communications strategy for crime statistics designed to help create public trust.

The Home Office have responded to a number of these recommendations. Improvements are being made to the British Crime Survey and recorded crime statistics to improve accuracy and robustness – including, for example, extending the British Crime Survey to cover people aged under 16 and establishing a 'serious crime' measure within the recorded crime statistics to give a more accurate picture.

In order to make the statistics more independent, legislation has been passed to limit ministerial access to crime statistics – currently to 72 hours – in advance of their publication, and crime statistics, from April 2008, have been produced under the auspices of the newly formed Statistics Authority. This does not affect or delay access to key management information that frontline agencies use to inform their action on the ground.

However, these changes have yet to make any impact on public attitudes towards official crime statistics and are unlikely to do so without further action. In particular, we do not believe that sufficient emphasis has been placed on the importance of independent publication or commentary on crime statistics by a trusted body.

“People need to be informed by an independent body of all crime figures, both nationally and locally, with the inclusion of numbers solved, convictions achieved and the numbers remaining unsolved.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

The public would also like to see more responsible treatment of statistics by those with the greatest tendency to comment on them – politicians, the media, lobby groups pursuing particular agendas and

professionals themselves working in the Criminal Justice System, including judges, probation, prison and police officers.

“I wish I could just open my [local] paper and get some straight facts... black & white, no spin, no story, just facts.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

The public don't feel they get enough local information about crime

National statistics are important for a number of reasons. They enable the public to see how the Government, the police and the Criminal Justice System as a whole are tackling a major issue across the country. They also enable the Government and criminal justice agencies to assess their

strategies and policies for tackling crime and highlight changes in particular types of crime that may require new or different approaches.

However, there is a strong public appetite for more information about crime, not just statistics, and for information that is more meaningful and relevant to where they live.

“I want to know and hear about real issues / experiences, not national strategy, targets, and politics all mixed up together.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

“Crime figures locally, what is being done about them and the outcomes of arrests and cases.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Top approaches to crime information that the public want:

- **Information about action** – they want to know what the police and others are doing to tackle crime, they want feedback on action where they have reported crimes or raised problems, and to see and hear more about what happens to people arrested and convicted of crime, including more visible signs of punishment in the community. ‘What action has been taken and who has been caught and punished’
- **Straight facts** – not just statistics, but reliable, clear, accessible and ‘non-spun’ facts so that they can see not just what problems are occurring but what steps are being taken to tackle them.
- **Practical information** – providing names, photographs, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of local police teams and other agencies, how to report non-emergency incidents and follow other police procedures, where and when to meet them to discuss concerns and priorities and other opportunities to get involved in tackling and preventing crime.
- **Information from a variety of sources** – suggestions included ‘advertorials’ in local newspapers, local newsletters, through Neighbourhood Watch, in public meetings, ‘surgeries’, walk-in centres and street-meetings, direct from chatting to police officers and PCSOs on the beat, and through websites, e-mails, mobile phone texting and messaging networks.
- **Local information** – relevant to the neighbourhood they live in.
- **Regular information** – the strongest preference was for monthly information

In our discussions during the review, in response to our Have Your Say questionnaire, and other surveys we carried out, members of the public identified the following features that they would like to see on crime information:

Research for the Home Office^{xviii} found that participants had low knowledge of who to contact to report less urgent or less serious problems or to share concerns about such problems. They know least about how to get involved to help prevent crime and the things they say would most encourage them to do more to help prevent crime would be ‘more information about how to get involved’, ‘more schemes to get involved in’ and simply ‘being asked or invited to’. In other words, information is a key channel to help get people involved in helping tackle crime.

Research by the Metropolitan Police suggests that people don’t feel informed about what the police are doing^{xix}. This matters because feeling informed is a driver of confidence in the local police. People want to know that the police are there when needed.

“The public like to read: crimes committed, crimes solved, who committed them, what was the sentence.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

The public also expressed concerns during the review about a ‘call centre’ approach to contact with the police. Most want to know that, when they’re contacting the police, they are going to get an adequate response. If they think contact will be a waste of time, they are deterred from reporting crime. That is why, in communicating with the public, information should make clear not just what telephone numbers exist, but also what sort of thing they can be used for, such as reporting non-emergency incidents.

“We are one of the biggest estates in Europe and we have had a new police station built, overnight cells, everything – wonderful, but we do not have any backup. If we ring them we get 20 minutes of classical music before you are put on to someone else. When you have reported something you get a letter through the post with your crime number, and do not see a face.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

“People are fed up of reporting crime and being passed from pillar to post.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire

Reporting can be encouraged by stressing that low level crime and anti-social behaviour can be reported, will be taken seriously and will result in specific action.

The importance to the public of hearing about action was emphasised in a survey of 1,787 members of the public for the review in May this year. They placed information they wanted to receive from the police in the following order of importance:

Priority	Type of information
1st	Progress in tackling priorities agreed with residents.
2nd	Feedback on action taken to tackle crime.
3rd	Sentences and punishments.
4th	Naming and identification of people convicted of crime.
5th	Police performance, e.g. detection rates.
6th	Statistics/information about levels/rates of crime.

And their preference was to receive this information monthly (45%) or quarterly (28%).

Police forces are due to provide standardised local information on crime, starting from Summer 2008, as part of the Government's new crime strategy³. Some are already providing local information but what will be available from the Summer of 2008 is likely to remain highly variable. We hope police forces will draw on the evidence in this review to develop the information they provide over the next year.

In particular, there is strong public demand for consistency in the content and presentation of information about crime across the country and a strong focus on action. In a survey of members of the public for the review we found that:

- 72% of the public said the format of police websites should be the same across all police forces; and
- 87% wanted to see the same format used by all forces for the information they provide.

Beyond this, we believe there is scope for better presentation of comparative information on crime and the performance of

the police and other criminal justice agencies which would be of interest to the public. With advances in mapping technology, there are several examples of crime information available on websites that allow the public to bring up crime information mapped onto a neighbourhood.

Mapping and interactive reporting tools are useful and careful consideration should be given to their development and presentation. We believe some consideration should also be given to standardising the information they provide on crime, based on best practice, so that consistent types of information are presented to the public in a recognisable and user-friendly format.

While the focus of existing sites is local, some consideration should also be given comparisons between areas. An end aim could be to ensure that information is available on a national basis, consistent between areas. This would raise the profile of such information with the public – and a consistent format would make sense to a more mobile population.

There are lessons to be drawn from these websites and from approaches in other fields such as the health service.

NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk allows the public to search for local health providers, compare hospitals and offer feedback on their experience of hospitals which will feed into a scorecard assessment available to others. It offers more in-depth information about health conditions and treatment, and provides tips for healthy living. It also includes a 'behind the headlines' section in which the issues behind media coverage of health issues are examined in an unbiased and evidence-based way.

³ Cutting Crime – A New Partnership 2008-11, Home Office

Proposal 22: The Statistics Authority or another independent organisation should be given full responsibility for producing the national crime statistics and trends. As part of a role in restoring public trust in national crime statistics, the Statistics Authority or another independent body should draw up a public protocol on responsible use of crime statistics and invite politicians of all parties, the media, and interest groups to publicly sign up to it.

Proposal 23: By the beginning of 2009, local monthly crime information should be published to include information about action being taken to tackle crime, contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for local police teams, minimum standards of service the police are committed to delivering in the neighbourhood, how to complain if dissatisfied, opportunities to meet local police teams and influence their priorities, and details of crimes committed, with feedback on what sentences offenders have received.

Proposal 24: The Government and/or the Statistics Authority should consider what more could be done to develop a more dynamic and interactive website that maps local crime information and allows the public to compare levels of crime and the performance of criminal justice services in their area with other like areas, along the lines of web-based services already available for the health service.

5. The citizen role in tackling crime

This was the most difficult chapter in the review to write. The evidence on public confidence in the police and other criminal justice agencies, and the level of concern they have about how crime is being tackled, makes powerful reading. So, while there is a clear and important role for the public to play in tackling crime, it is dependent on the Government and the criminal justice agencies taking action to show clearly that they are on the side of the law-abiding citizen; that they back the victim's rights over the perpetrator's; that they are determined to put the right services in place – especially from the police – to put the public first, increasing their confidence and trust in a united 'family' of crime-fighting agencies.

“The public are sick of the headlines ‘we need the community to help us’ from the police and government, it’s a two-way thing, the police should do their job – and the public need to be treated well and valued. Usually they are not.” Respondent, Have Your Say questionnaire.

Throughout this review, we highlight a number of simple and straightforward challenges which the Government, police, local authorities and the criminal justice system should subject themselves to in order to gauge whether they are delivering for the public:

- Whether the public believe that victims and witnesses get the support and protection they need;

- Whether the Government backs the public on tackling crime;
- Whether there is a strong advocate in place to voice and champion public concerns;
- Whether the public can see, feel and touch front-line services that fight crime – and can influence their priorities and hold them to account;
- Whether the public can see, feel and touch justice being done and believe that criminals are not ‘getting away with it’; and
- Whether the public get regular, trustworthy information on what action is taken locally on crime, including the consequences faced by those who commit crime.

The more the public feel these challenges are being met, the more reasonable it is to turn to citizens and ask them to play a greater part.

The importance of a citizen role in fighting crime

Tackling crime is not a job for the police alone. Nor is it just for the police, local government, the Criminal Justice System or other public services acting together, important as that is. The role of the public is equally if not more important.

The public have always played a vital role in tackling crime. The forerunners of modern-day police officers were volunteer community representatives – parish constables and local

watchmen. On a broader level, the everyday precautions we all take to protect our homes, our cars and our families help to deter crime. And each year well over a million crimes are brought to justice because members of the public come forward to report them and act as witnesses.

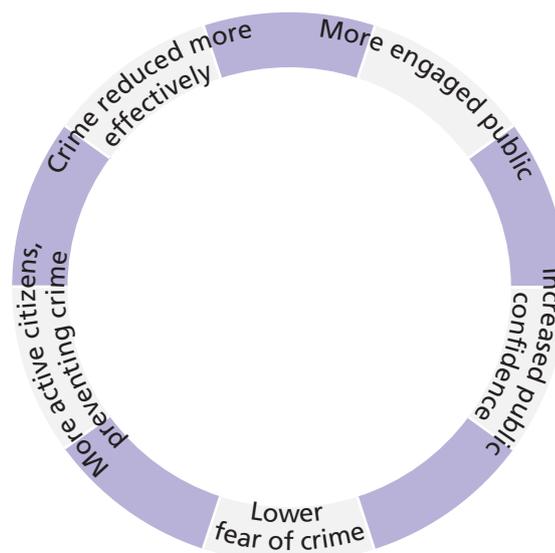
But the citizen role in crime goes much deeper.

Our laws spring from societal norms and values set by the public on behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable. Most of us learn right from wrong first and foremost within the family, from our parents, then from teachers in schools and from role models in our community and society. Arguably, these informal controls have much more of an impact in preventing crime than the whole weight of the Criminal Justice System.

Case study

"I am pleased to say that crime in my area is down quite considerably. I live in a modern, privately owned estate. Beside my house was a pathway leading to a large council-owned park that was a notorious trouble spot. Vandalism and theft had increased over the years. One particular evening, we had guns and knives, cars were shot at, including ours, and our lounge window had been shot at. It was extremely frightening and something that we did not expect to experience in the area where we lived. We decided that enough was enough and wanted to do something about it, so we approached the council, the local police and local residents. I organised a residents' petition and held meetings at my house. We looked at what we could do about the pathway and, 18 months later, the pathway was completely blocked off. Our area is now a much safer and happier place to live. Communities need to come together and to get in touch with the police and their local council, which empowers local people. It really works." *Attendee, Have Your Say event*

The evidence that the public care about other people in society is compelling. We know that being a victim of crime, knowing a victim of crime, and hearing about a victim of crime can have a negative effect on both an individual's and the community's behaviour, feelings of safety and confidence, as well as affecting them emotionally. People look out for each other in their community, they watch to see how other people are treated and they feel angry and more cautious when they hear about victims of crime.



If the proposals set out so far in this report are implemented, a virtuous circle, as depicted above, should be created.

Public appetite for volunteering and participation on tackling crime is strong

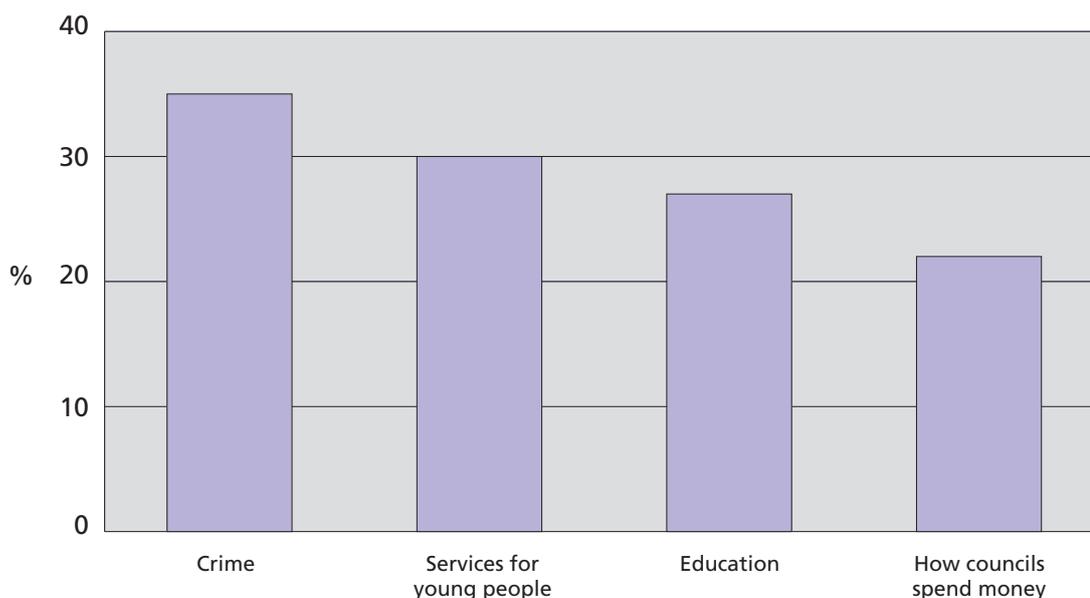
There is a strong tradition of volunteering in this country. In a Government Citizenship survey, in 2007 73% of all adults said they had volunteered (formally or informally) at least once in the last twelve months, with 47% having volunteered at least once a month.

In a survey of the public in 2007, crime, policing and tackling anti-social behaviour were the top concerns expressed by respondents^{xx}. Most people (68%) felt that local government had most responsibility to address local issues, although 36%

believed they and the local community had a responsibility to take action.

And while only 16% felt they could personally help tackle anti-social behaviour, this was the second highest issue (just 1% lower than climate change) on which people believed they could have an impact as individual citizens. The prominence of crime and anti-social behaviour issues was reflected in the groups with which people said they were involved, with Neighbourhood Watch named by one in ten respondents.

A survey of the public has also found crime to be the issue on which most people would like to have greater involvement^{xxi}:



The public appetite for volunteering on crime is also reflected in the parts played by over 14,000 Special Constables, numerous volunteers working for the police in other roles and the 10,000 volunteers who work for Victim Support.

During the review, an overwhelming majority of the public we heard from were positive about the citizen role. Out of nearly 1,500 responses to a Have Your Say questionnaire conducted for the review:

- 66% felt they could play a role in

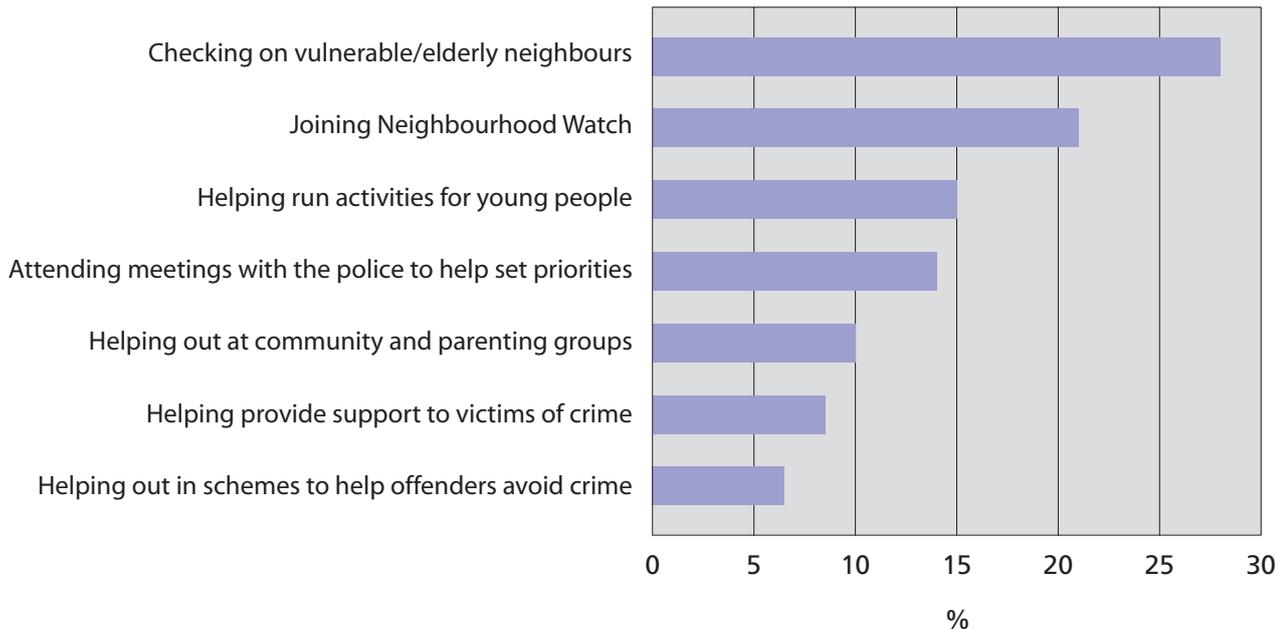
tackling or preventing crime;

- 11% said they could if they had a bit more confidence in the response and outcomes delivered by the police and other criminal justice agencies;
- 11% said they could if given protection from intimidation and reprisals;
- 6% felt they could if they were given positive leadership and greater clarity about the role they were expected to play;
- only 6% felt they could not play that role.

What do the public think they can do?

A survey of the public conducted for the review in April 2008 explored the activities that the public might be willing to

undertake to help tackle crime. Out of 1,852 respondents, three out of four said they would be interested in giving up spare time for the activities shown in the chart below:



Current information on what the citizen can do is limited

While there are a number of sources of advice for the public on what they can do to prevent crime, we found that those provided by 'official' sources (for example the Home Office and the police) focused mainly on home security and personal safety and were not very thorough. These tended to cover so-called 'target-hardening' measures people can take to reduce the risk of personal loss or harm by making it more difficult for criminals – for example, installing intruder alarms and robust locks on doors and windows of houses, remembering to lock car doors and not leave valuables in plain sight, not revealing high value items (jewellery, mobile phones etc) when out in public, and so on.

Some websites do go further in their encouragement to take action. For example, when we looked at Wandsworth Council's website during the review, it described Neighbourhood Watch members' role as being vigilant, without becoming a vigilante:

"You are definitely not required to be a vigilante. However, members are asked to be vigilant and keep their eyes open when walking the dog, collecting children or going about their normal business. Any information about suspicious activities, vehicles or people should be reported."

The BBC programme Crimewatch appeared to be a trusted, nationally recognised and effective source of information to the ordinary public on what they can do to help themselves and their community.

The BBC Crimewatch website offers practical advice on what to do if you witness a crime. This is taken from their website:

- *If it's safe to do so, take a photograph or video on your mobile phone. Remember, however, that the police are likely to need your phone as evidence.*
- *Record details of times, number plates, descriptions and so on. If you don't have a pen with you, leave a voicemail message on your mobile phone or write a draft text message. As soon as you can find a pen and paper, write down the information in as much detail as possible.*
- *Let the police know what you've seen. Don't assume others will come forward. Many crucial witnesses walk away thinking someone else will report it.*

On intervening in anti-social behaviour the Crimewatch website advises:

- *Call the police and explain in detail what has happened.*
- *Ask at your local police station to meet the local community officer or community support officer. The Government has spent millions of pounds on Safer Neighbourhoods teams to tackle these problems.*
- *No one should live in fear in their own home, but think rationally before going hell for leather. If you think the situation could turn violent, let the police tackle it. You may still be able to assist in other ways to help resolve the problem.*

Wider community action on crime

There is a hugely diverse range of community organisations across the country, largely run by volunteers and dependent on the time and energy of active citizens, sometimes with assistance from paid staff. This 'community' sector can be seen as distinct from the 'voluntary' sector which is usually staffed by paid professionals with financial support from charitable funds and service contracts.

At a national level, Crimestoppers and Neighbourhood Watch are also commonly known to the public.

Crimestoppers is a voluntary organisation set up to detect, reduce and prevent crime by the provision of information about crimes provided by anonymous sources and given to the police and others. The public can and do telephone them.

Neighbourhood Watch is a community-based movement with a national presence. There has in recent years been a decline in membership – according to the 2006/07 British Crime Survey, 16% of households currently belong to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme compared with 27% in 2000. This, however, still equates to 3.8 million member households in England and Wales – about one in six homes.

Recent analysis of the British Crime Survey shows that the public do have a desire to join Neighbourhood Watch: three quarters of those surveyed said they would join one if it were available and, although interest in joining increases with affluence, 65% of people living in 'hard pressed' areas said they would join a local scheme if there was one.

While Neighbourhood Watch has had declining numbers, all the indications are that the volume of tenant participation has grown. A review in 2003 concluded that tenant participation had become a mainstream activity.

The Citizenship Survey 2007 estimated that around three-quarters of a million people are involved in a tenants' committee. Other research suggests that there are around 20,000 tenant representatives playing lay governance roles on housing association management committees and tenant management boards^{xxii}. This is a huge and immensely valuable resource to the community especially as many of these tenants' and residents' organisations are operating in the less affluent areas where they are, in some cases, dealing daily with anti-social behaviour and crime.

"I turn out to community meetings because I am passionate about community and close working relationships with the police. I give 30 hours a week free to the Neighbourhood Policing Team as a voice for the community, but we now have Neighbourhood Action [meetings] where it is the Neighbourhood Police, the local people who live within the community who are suffering, our councillors and... the safer neighbourhoods group and everybody has a voice. We work together and our Neighbourhood Policing Team has done so much in our community, we have not had a call for service for 16 weeks." Attendee, Have Your Say event

During the review a number of excellent local projects were brought to our attention for their work in tackling crime and anti-social

behaviour. There are now many examples of effective community based organisations carrying out a range of tasks – supporting victims or witnesses, being a Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, running or helping out at tenant and resident organisations, helping the police deliver Neighbourhood Policing by attending meetings, going out on Community/Resident patrols either to check on the environment or wider crime issues, setting up youth activities for young people, becoming a Street Leader or Community Guardian, helping deliver better services in neighbourhoods, and so on.

Many of these activities are run by volunteers who devote hours of their lives in the service of their communities and we give credit to them all for their hard work and dedication.

Engaging the public and barriers to getting involved

There is clearly an untapped resource in communities.

Three out of four adults in a survey for the review said they would be willing to give up some spare time for activities that would help tackle crime. Even if this were only half true that would be equivalent to an army of over 15 million community volunteers across England and Wales. But unlocking this potential requires a better understanding of the barriers that currently stand in the way of stronger public involvement.

We discussed public concerns and reservations about reporting crime and giving evidence earlier on in the report. The surveys of public opinion reinforced the need for better support but also emphasised the priority which the public place on proper consequences for those breaking the law.

We also found evidence during the review of an understandable lack of knowledge on the part of the general public about how to get involved that may hold them back in taking up a role in tackling crime. Public opinion surveys in April 2008 showed that

citizens have good awareness of precautions they can take and how to report crime as it is occurring, but fewer are confident about reporting non-emergency incidents, challenging unacceptable behaviour in the street or taking a more active role:

% of people saying they know a lot or a fair amount about:



In the same survey for the review, we asked what, if anything, would encourage them to do more to help reduce crime:

- 29% wanted more information on how to get involved;
- 19% wanted more schemes to get involved in;
- 17% simply wanted to be asked;
- 6% said they would do more if there was a financial contribution to the community in return; and
- 5% would be motivated by a personal financial contribution.

Citizens who take a stand need backing

A common feeling that came up in public meetings during the review was that those who came forward felt isolated. They wanted

others in the community to back them and stand with them.

“My committee is a committee of five people. We have been there for five years fighting and we cannot get anybody else to join us.” Attendee, Have Your Say event

Over the last five years, the Government has recognised over 500 individuals who have stepped forward to tackle anti-social behaviour through its Taking A Stand Awards scheme. A number of these award winners have spoken about the sense of isolation they had felt as the only people ready to speak out, to challenge a problem and give evidence when necessary. The Taking A Stand Award has given them access to a network of other like-minded citizens, helping them to feel less alone. And the public recognition conveyed with the award has made them feel they have the Government’s backing.

Case study

I won a Taking a Stand award in 2005. If we reported crime in our area we were targeted, we had bricks thrown through our window on a daily basis, we were attacked in the street, verbally abused, people were moving out that had lived in the area for years, just selling up and going, losing a lot of money on their houses because they wanted to get out. Now we have set up a telephone network of people. So if we do see anything going on we ring each other up, and that way nobody knows who is actually reporting it. We have not had any reprisals as a result, and I find out where things are happening, and what is happening, because people ring me and tell me. If we see it happening we ring each other up. *Attendee, Have Your Say event*

Common sense solutions are needed

We also heard about a number of cases where common sense seemed in short supply, and which put people off getting involved.

Some of these examples were anecdotal. Some were based on possibly selective or partial reporting in the media. Doubtless some were 'urban myths'. But there were too many to ignore as a factor in holding citizens back from the more active role they could play.

It can't be right, for example, that offenders carrying out work as part of a community order should be allowed to paint only the bottom half of a graffiti-laden wall because health and safety concerns stop them using a step-ladder.

It can't be right that a group of pensioners should have to provide insurance to enable offenders to do some clean-up work.

It can't be right that a group of citizens should be prevented from patrolling their own community because general insurance for Neighbourhood Watch schemes – which the Government pays for – doesn't cover the precise circumstances of their activity.

It can't be right, in this age of modern technology, that there is not a simple and quick way for the police to gather photographic evidence from witnesses' mobile phones without needing to deprive witnesses of their phones for prolonged periods of time.

In these types of situations, there needs to be a drive for common sense solutions to prevail, and where there is mythology about 'political correctness' or 'health and safety culture' it should be challenged or such cases will continue to undermine and deter citizen involvement.

"You might find this ironic. I run a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, and we spoke to the local inspector when we started up, because we had a lot of graffiti...and anti-social behaviour. We asked what we could do as residents, and patrols were mentioned – just a high visibility presence, not vigilantism or arrests, just being around. The inspector said he supported it, but that he wanted us in high visibility to do it so that it was classed as prevention. We did it with full support for two years, had no problems at all, and crime went right down. They said 'great', and we won a Taking A Stand Award last year for it. Last week they said because of health and safety – stop." Attendee, Have Your Say event

Getting engagement right

If the barriers and concerns about public engagement described in this chapter can be knocked down, we should start to see a crime-fighting 'family' emerge on a spectrum that ranges from what the ordinary, individual member of the public can do, right up to what those paid to protect us – the police, for example – should do.

It is important that citizens are engaged in ways that are quick, easy and reasonable. The public should not be expected to understand the 'system' – police, local authorities and the Criminal Justice System should be expected to understand the public. In order to achieve this across so many different and disparate organisations, it is reasonable to expect that there are some common and nationally recognisable structures that everyone can understand and use.

Every citizen should be told what Neighbourhood Policing is, what that local service means and what they can expect from their local police and the local authority. Every citizen should be told what PACT (Police and communities together) meetings they can attend to hear about action, discuss concerns and agree priorities. Citizens should be empowered to know what they should expect and to demand it where it is not present.

It should be clear to all what we expect from each other as individuals, as parents and as neighbours – so that crime does not go unreported and that consequences are clear for criminals who break the rules. It should be easier for the public to get involved, with clearer support and structures for active citizens – people who often act as 'community advocates'.

"I have listened to the views and the different stories of neighbourhoods

up and down the country, but I look at the old fashioned view: what can you do in your community, what can the residents do? It boils down to respect for one another, as neighbours and living in the same community, and a sense of responsibility. That is not only families to their children, but to everybody, and that is really where the breakdown has come in society. I feel that if you could get that sense of responsibility back a lot of this would resolve itself." Attendee, Have Your Say event

The citizen role

With the right services in place, the individual citizen can be empowered to play his or her part in tackling crime. Drawing on the views expressed by the public during the review, the five key things that individuals could do would include:

- **Report crime** and be prepared to give evidence;
- **Take personal responsibility** for your own safety and behaviour, showing respect for others;
- **Be good parents**, taking responsibility for the behaviour of your children and knowing where they are, especially after dark;
- **Be neighbourly**, getting to know and look out for each other, supporting vulnerable neighbours and fostering 'community spirit'; and
- **Play an active part in your community**, attending public meetings or joining local community groups that focus on preventing crime or helping to run activities for young people.

The 'activist/advocate role'

One step beyond the active citizen who reports crime, goes to a public meeting or joins a residents' association, is the local activist who is often acting as an informal 'community advocate'. These people are trusted in their communities – people go to them for advice and report things that are happening to them, often in an informal way. Quite often they are on tenants' groups, are Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, are on the police Key Individual Networks (KINs), run environmental or crime patrols, or are volunteers at community or youth groups.

Case study

We were disappointed with the adults, so we decided to have a go with the children. We started a group of children called Newton Eco Youth. We started with seven children, seven years of age upwards, and we put in for a cash grant from Manchester City Council and we planted up 21 flowerbeds and three large greens in 2002. The numbers have spiralled to 57. Those children now start at four years of age, and the eldest is almost 19. It was only a fortnight ago when our car was rammed and finished up in the middle of our road, some of the children knocked on the door and said 'have you seen what they have done to your car?' They said, 'do not worry about it; there are four of us that saw it and are going to witness for you. If you have any problem let us know'. Those children were nine, 11 and 14. God bless the young ones. Attendee, Have Your Say event

This 'army' of people needs to be expanded and should enjoy greater support locally and nationally. They should be provided with training and the tools necessary to perform this role for the community, which could include:

- **Information on services in their neighbourhood** – what they should expect from the police, local criminal justice agencies and local government, including information on the courts, how sentencing works and what to expect from a local council for young people or parents;
- **Information on what should happen when they identify a problem** – what approaches and solutions it is reasonable to ask for in different circumstances, from anti-social behaviour contracts to criminal prosecutions, and how to complain if nothing gets done. This should cover the range of community issues, from litter to crime and its prevention; and
- **Extra support from the police and the Criminal Justice System** – so that if anyone targets them for intimidation or reprisals, they are given the same protection as public sector workers providing a service to the community, backed by a campaign to raise awareness among sentencers that crimes committed against citizens acting for their communities should always be regarded as an 'aggravating factor' that demands tougher sentencing.

Delivering this package effectively would provide a new boost to the community activists and organisations who already work tirelessly to provide a local 'public voice' and make their neighbourhoods better places to live.

Proposal 25: The Government should consider ensuring that every household receives information in a 'Crime Watch' style that outlines their role in tackling crime, what the police and other local agencies should be providing to them, how they can hold those

agencies to account, how particular crime problems can be resolved and where to go if they want to get more involved locally.

Proposal 26: The Government should develop a new and major training programme that can equip community groups and citizens to play a stronger role in tackling crime – a type of ‘Community Crime Fighters’ umbrella organisation – based on successful capacity building programmes to empower tenants and other community groups, like those run at the National Communities Resource Centre.

Proposal 27: Local authorities should consider what financial support they can offer in support of ‘Community Crime Fighters’ that help to tackle crime and neighbourhood problems, including award schemes that offer small grants to groups that Neighbourhood Policing Teams identify for outstanding achievements in reducing crime and the fear of crime.

Proposal 28: In its forthcoming Policing Green Paper and White Paper on Empowerment, the Government should encourage local public funding to be allocated to neighbourhood and community groups to help tackle community safety problems using participatory budgeting and community kitties.

6. More freedoms and greater accountability

The context within which this review has been conducted is an interesting one:

- **Overall crime is down** – we did not meet any paid professional or expert during the review who disagreed with that statement, even if there is some disagreement and argument about how those statistics are recorded and used. And the police, local authorities and Government are on track to meet their commitment to achieve a 15% reduction in overall crime by 2008;
- **The Criminal Justice Systems and processes have improved** – more criminals are being brought to justice and more quickly. There may be arguments between professionals but they do not dispute the evidence that more people are being caught, brought before the courts and sentenced and indeed that magistrates and judges are tougher in the sentences handed out; and
- **Local government is a much better performer** – working with the NHS, police, third sector and other partners, it has a strong record in improving frontline services. Comprehensive Performance Assessment results in February 2007 showed further increases in performance, with 77% of single tier and county councils improving well or strongly (up from 70%) and 79% with 3 or 4 stars (up from 66%). In relation to crime, councils and their partners can take a large slice of credit for the decrease in the public's perception of

anti-social behaviour that occurred in 9 out of 10 local authority areas between 2003-04 and 2006-07.

Despite this record of improvement what our review has demonstrated starkly is that public confidence in how crime is tackled on their behalf is at unacceptably low levels. All partners and players with responsibility for turning this around need to be at the top of their game to do so, because the scale of the social, economic, and environmental challenges we face is striking:

- There are rising customer expectations for better quality services along with demands for more involvement in service planning and delivery. The age of the consumer is here – and with an IT revolution that means more than four out of five adults in the UK have used a computer and more than half of us use the internet regularly^{xxiii}, we can have information on commercial or public services 24 hours a day and news coverage 24/7, especially on the issues of crime;
- Improved outcomes will need to be delivered in a tighter financial climate, which places additional emphasis on finding efficiencies while still delivering what's needed to the public;
- Linked to this, pay pressures mean that all organisations need to continue to strengthen workforce planning and modernisation to achieve greater flexibility; and

- There is a need to understand public attitudes better and address areas of under-performance, where it still persists.

But, as the preceding pages set out, and the recommendations in this review make clear, action can and should be taken to put the public and their interests at the heart of the services responsible for tackling crime and delivering justice. And we know that visible action and better information would go a long way in enabling the public to play a real part themselves in tackling crime.

One of the main barriers to increasing public confidence that their concerns really are at the heart of efforts to tackle crime, is a belief that resources and time are often unnecessarily focused on internal processes, systems, monitoring and paperwork, rather than on frontline action in their neighbourhoods. This chapter recognises that the police and local authorities, as the front-end of the Criminal Justice System, need to be freed from, and free themselves from, the 'red-tape' that causes such concern to the public and to themselves. It also sets such freedoms alongside a need for greater accountability on just how well action locally and nationally on crime is working for the public interest, meeting their priorities. There are two major areas requiring strategic reform:

- Community empowerment; and
- Red tape.

These issues – freeing up the police and local government from paperwork and giving greater accountability to the 'consumer' – are where the crime-fighting 'industry', its regulators and its governors need to be. They are also exactly where public opinion is and the public expect the Government to make sure the 'industry' responds accordingly.

Government needs to ensure good services are delivered for the public

The public will continue to hold Government – and the Home Secretary in particular – responsible for the way crime is being tackled. They expect the Government to be able to exert influence over policing, justice and anti-social behaviour on their behalf. The public see this as part of the mandate they give to Government when they elect them to power. That is not to say that operational or judicial independence should be over-ridden but nor should such independence mean that Secretaries of State can relinquish all influence over the basic standards of service that the public want to see from the police and other criminal justice agencies.

These points were emphasised in a survey of members of the public for the review in May:

- 76% of the public agreed that, nationally, it should be the responsibility of the Home Secretary to hold police to account on behalf of the public (51% strongly agreed with this; only 8% disagreed).
- 88% agreed that it was the Government's responsibility to make sure everyone in the country gets the same level of service from the police (68% strongly agreed with this; only 4% disagreed).

"If we do not like a government's proposals for policing we vote them out of office. I would not like to see police forces making up their mind about what is and what is not a crime." Letter to *The Times*, 4th June 2008

We look first at what can be done to encourage and empower citizens to become more active and to give them more accountability for the action taken on their behalf to tackle crime.

There is further to go to empower local communities on crime

While the 2006/07 Local Government User Satisfaction Survey shows that 70% of residents who agree they can influence local decisions are satisfied with their council, fewer than a third do actually feel able to influence local decisions.

We noted that provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and in the Police and Justice Act 2006, allow for a ‘Councillor Call for Action’, through which councillors can raise community concerns, including issues on crime and anti-social behaviour, but have yet to be brought into effect.

With regard to crime, the general public don’t feel the local community has a particularly strong role in setting local policing priorities, although more active members of the community who have

directly experienced and taken a stand against crime do feel the community has greater influence. This was illustrated in separate surveys conducted during the review of members of the public and a group of community activists (see graph below).

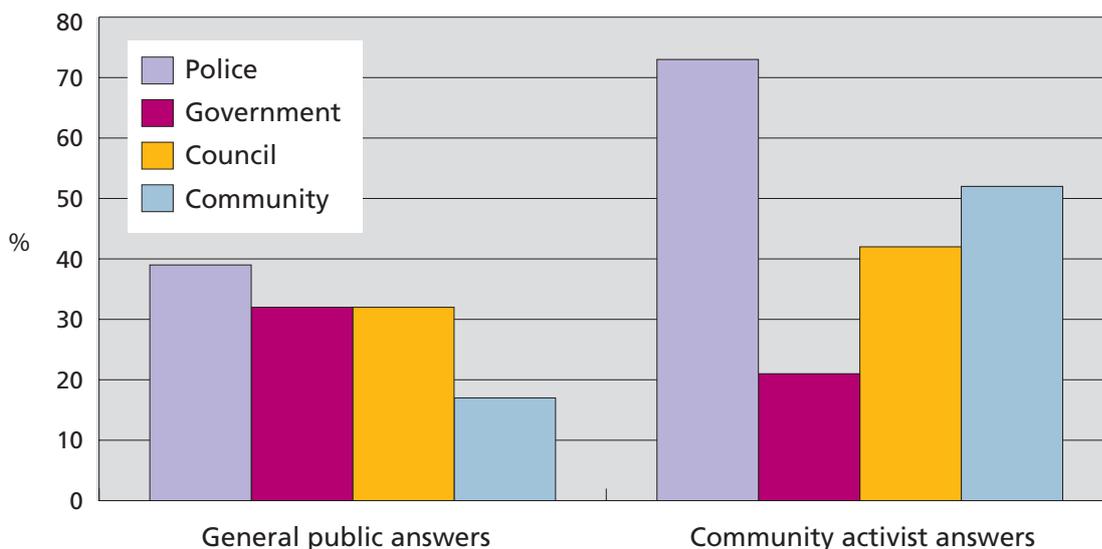
There is also confusion and uncertainty amongst the public when it comes to holding the police to account. In a survey of members of the public for the review in May:

- Two-thirds (67%) of the public said they would not know who to go to with a complaint if they were unhappy about the way their local area was being policed.

It was also clear from these findings that the public think it is difficult to challenge local police on the way they police their area:

- 59% said they would find this difficult or very difficult.

Who is responsible for deciding which problems the police concentrate on in your local area?



The Government's aim is to empower local communities

The Government wants to empower local communities to identify their own priorities and have more influence over the public services they receive. The Communities and Local Government department published, jointly with the Local Government Association, "An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on success" in October 2007. This set out a number of steps being taken across communities and local government activity to:

- widen and deepen empowerment opportunities locally;
- support and enable people to take up empowerment opportunities; and
- strengthen local representative democracy.

Later this year, the Government will publish a White Paper setting out a broader cross-government approach to community empowerment, covering crime and justice as well as other key areas like health.

A central aim should be to give communities much more power to say what matters most to them and to ensure that local agencies focus on delivering the services and improvements their communities want. Power should lie with the people, not with institutions.

In local government surveys, people who say they can influence local decisions are also likely to trust the local council, so empowerment has a clear link to public confidence. For example, council housing tenants who control their housing through Tenant Management Organisations have better levels of service (for example in relation to repairs, re-lets and rent collection) and higher levels of tenant satisfaction.

The Government's policing green paper will set out proposals for increasing local accountability of police forces to the public. We believe these moves will be welcomed by the public.

In a survey of the public carried out for the review in May, just over two-thirds (68%) agreed that, locally, there should be a person elected by local people to hold the police to account on behalf of the community.

Red tape and police performance

There was a time when the police had too much unanswerable discretion – a *'Life on Mars'* approach – where a violent assault might be written off as a 'domestic', where there was not enough focus on reducing crime and where the police had the ability if they so wished to dismiss public concerns and complaints without giving any answers. We've come a long way since then, but there are still improvements to be made. Police chiefs and others must be held accountable by the Government for protecting the public from crime. We need, however, to agree a common vision of policing in 21st Century, a modern approach where the police are responding to, and accountable for, local and national priorities.

In his Review of Policing, Sir Ronnie Flanagan has made a number of wide-ranging recommendations for achieving successful 21st Century policing. The Government has indicated its willingness to see most of those recommendations put into action quickly. From the public perspective which we have considered during this review, we support Sir Ronnie's recommendations and are pleased to see them being taken forward – but think more forceful action will be needed.

"Red tape seems harder to beat than the mafia" The Times, 4 May 2008

The public place particular emphasis on speedy action to tackle red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy to free up more time for police officers to do the visible job of deterring and catching criminals that they want them to do.

Many expressed dissatisfaction at the police response to minor crime, saying the police either failed to respond or seemed uninterested. In many cases, the public themselves said they did not bother to report minor crimes or anti-social behaviour because they felt the police were already too busy and that no action would result from their call. They blamed unnecessary bureaucracy and the diversion of police officers to carry out tasks that could be done more cost-effectively by civilian staff or volunteers.

“Well, a good start might be to untie the police from all the rules and regulations. They do try their best, but it’s difficult to fight with one hand tied behind their back” Attendee, Have Your Say event

Red tape is a key barrier to public confidence in the police and Government’s ability to tackle crime. ‘Red tape’ means different things to different people within the police service but they are all wrapped up in the public’s mind as ‘bad’. They fall into two main areas:

- **Individual officer paperwork:** there is a perception of lots of unnecessary or overly long forms that tie up frontline police officers so they are stuck in police stations rather than being out on the streets, with a common impression that these forms exist to either keep Home Office bureaucrats happy or to protect the human rights of criminals; and
- **Performance management bureaucracy:** there is a sense of

management counting everything, statistics, targets, ‘inspectors with clipboards sent from the Home Office to check up one day, from HMIC the next’, and so on.

There may be those within the ‘system’ that balk at these descriptions and, as Sir Ronnie Flanagan exposed in his review, much of the bureaucracy is generated by the police service themselves. Nevertheless, very clear, decisive and public action will be needed to restore public confidence on both these areas.

On individual officer paperwork – the public need to see clear benefits from efforts to cut red tape. For example, for every reduction in red tape derived from Sir Ronnie’s suggested actions, the savings should be translated into hours gained on the streets or the names of new police officers employed in every area, and this should be made public.

On performance management bureaucracy – the public do not want their local police service to be chasing centrally driven targets, preparing for and responding to assessments and worrying about monitoring at the expense of time and resources that could better be devoted to local issues and to the quality of service. And, as we have seen throughout this review, it is dealing with these local issues that really impacts on the public’s feelings of confidence in how crime is being tackled. Some police forces (West Midlands, for example) already reap the benefits of increased feelings of public safety and confidence through their investment in representative and up-to-date surveys of their residents – taking prompt action in response to its findings.

At a strategic level the Government needs to build on the approach of the July 2007 Crime Strategy (which signalled a move away

from overall crime targets to encourage a greater focus on the most serious crimes and issues of local concern) and go further, drastically streamlining its approach not just to targets, but to monitoring, assessments and intervention.

The main priority in future should be holding the police service to account for whether the public feel confident and safe in their own neighbourhoods or not (a large part of which is always going to reflect how well they are tackling crime).

Proposal 29: A senior police officer, working directly to the Policing Minister, should be given responsibility for reducing the number of police forms in use and for introducing new methods to reduce bureaucracy in all police forces, holding them to account for any bureaucracy that keeps officers away from frontline duties. The Policing Minister should publish progress reports detailing activity and results on a quarterly basis.

Proposal 30: Combined with a dramatic reduction in its approach to targets, monitoring, assessments and intervention,

the Government should ensure that, in its place, an overriding measure of public confidence is used, with performance reported to the public at ward, local authority (Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership), force and national levels.

Proposal 31: In its forthcoming White Paper on community empowerment, the Government should consider what steps can be taken to give the public proper redress where crime and neighbourhood problems are not tackled effectively in their communities and, as part of this, should ensure that the 'Councillor Call for Action' on crime and disorder is introduced forthwith.

Proposal 32: The Government should ensure that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary is sufficiently robust in providing the necessary advice on the performance of local police services to enable the Home Secretary to hold them to account on behalf of the public for reductions in crime and improvements in public confidence.

APPENDIX i

Approaches taken during this review

Review methods

During the course of the Casey Review into Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime, a wide range of evidence gathering methods were employed. In addition to an ongoing process of reviewing existing policy and research evidence, the review team conducted an extensive program of visits across the country and meetings to discuss relevant issues and get a better understanding of what is currently going on and where potential solutions might lie. This was matched by public involvement in shaping the review's conclusions and recommendations through the following methods:

• Surveys with representative samples of the general public	10,969
• A public Have Your Say questionnaire (online and postal)	1,502
• Have Your Say discussion events with community activists	606
• A postal survey of community activists	400
• An online survey of Criminal Justice Service staff	944
• Qualitative group discussions with members of the public	57

Total number of respondents	14,478
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Meetings

During the course of the review, the review team met with victims and witnesses, ministers, government officials, chief constables, charities, lobby groups, professional bodies, think tanks, academics, Members of Parliament, criminal justice staff and judges amongst others.

Visits

The review team conducted many visits across the country including visits with frontline police officers, criminal justice staff, residents groups, victims of crime, young people's groups, local authorities, local councillors, Probation Service staff, Neighbourhood Watch groups and others.

Have Your Say events

Three Have Your Say events took place on the 4th, 7th and 13th of March in Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield. Those invited were people active in their community in addressing crime and anti-social behaviour. In total 606 members of the public attended the events. The events included open discussion of issues relevant to the review, as well as an interactive element whereby the audience were able to provide their views electronically to questions raised by the team. The Have Your Say questionnaire described overleaf was launched at the events.

Have Your Say questionnaire

A public Have Your Say questionnaire on the issues being examined by the review was produced. The questionnaire was available in hard copy and online on the Cabinet Office website and other websites. Copies were also made available at discussion events with community activists run by the review team. The questionnaire was also publicised to audiences such as older people, younger people, criminal justice staff, local government, the third sector, community safety staff, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, business groups etc. through a variety of routes including direct mailing, websites and features in newsletters. The total number of responses received was 1,502. 162 of these indicated that their responses related to their paid employment, and were analysed separately.

The survey produced a large amount of qualitative information. Each question in the questionnaire was read in full as part of the analysis and the first 100 questionnaires were used to develop a coding-frame. In addition to coding, analysts made comments on emerging themes and marked illustrative quotes. Coding specialists FACTS International assisted with coding a proportion of the questionnaires. Checks were made between review analysts and outside coders to ensure intra-coder reliability.

General public surveys

At various points during the course of the review, members of the general public were surveyed face-to-face by placing questions on a series of omnibus surveys⁴ conducted by the market and social research agencies Gfk NOP, Ipsos MORI, and TNS Global. In total, questions were asked on six surveys,

which each time obtained the views of a representative sample of c.1,800 members of the public aged 16+. A total of 10,969 members of the public were surveyed in this way. The results of the surveys informed various aspects of the review.

Other surveys

In addition to surveys with members of the public in England and Wales, at the outset of the review, the review team conducted a postal survey of community activists who, in various ways, had been involved with addressing crime and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, an online survey was disseminated via internal communications to those working for Criminal Justice System agencies including the police, Crown Prosecution Service, Youth Offending Teams, probation, and courts service.

General public discussion groups

In order to understand in more depth public attitudes regarding the themes of the review, Ipsos MORI were commissioned via the Government's Central Office of Information (COI) to conduct qualitative research with members of the public. Eight discussion groups were held with the general public between 18th and 27th of March 2008, in Manchester, Cardiff, Leicester and London. Participants were recruited from a mix of inner city and suburban locations and deprived and more affluent areas, and comprised a mix of ages, parental and working statuses, and ethnic groups reflective of the general population. The results were fully analysed and a summary report was produced.

⁴ Omnibus surveys are multipurpose surveys which can provide quick answers to questions of immediate policy interest. These are regular surveys in which multiple clients share the cost of conducting the research. Subscribers receive the portion of the information that is collected specifically for them, in addition to general demographic information. They survey a representative sample of the population using random sampling points and set quotas based on population characteristics.

People, groups and organisations met with during the review

Anti-social behaviour practitioners from:

Blackburn
 Bournemouth
 Bradford
 Brighton
 Camden
 Coventry
 Hackney
 Haringey
 Harlow
 Metropolitan Police
 Middlesbrough
 Newham
 Nottingham
 Plymouth
 Sussex Police
 Safer Leicester Partnership
 Swindon
 Westminster
 Wirral

Association of Chief Police Officers
 Association of Police Authorities
 Audit Commission
 Balsall Heath Forum
 Birmingham City University – Dr Rob Mawby
 Brookfield Community Justice Centre
 Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
 Chief Constables of the following police forces:

British Transport Police
 Cambridgeshire
 Cheshire
 Devon and Cornwall
 Essex
 Gloucestershire

Hertfordshire
 Leicestershire
 Lancashire
 Merseyside
 Metropolitan
 Northumbria
 South Yorkshire
 Staffordshire
 Surrey
 Sussex
 Thames Valley
 West Midlands
 West Yorkshire

Cobalt Housing

Community Payback projects in:

Thanet
 Haringey
 Darlington

Crime Concern

Durham Probation Service

‘Dreams Come True’ youth project, Preston

Elms Resource Centre, Wolverhampton

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Fairbridge

Her Majesty’s Court Service

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary

Independent Police Complaints Commission

Ipsos MORI

Judiciary representatives – including the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales

Kent Probation Service

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Leicester City Council

Lifting the Burden Taskforce

Local Government Association

London Borough of Newham

London Criminal Justice Board

London Probation Service
London School of Economics and Political Science – Professor Anne Power
Manchester City Council
Metropolitan Police Authority
National Association of Voluntary and Community Action
National Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch Network
National Policing Improvement Agency
NCH, the children’s charity
Neighbourhood Policing / Safer Neighbourhood Teams in:
 Belmont, London
 Brookfield Ward, Preston
 Fryerns, Essex
 Jarrow (Fellgate and Hedworth), Tyne and Wear
 Little Venice, London
 Newham, London
 Saffron Lane, Leicester
 Shepherds Bush Green, London
 South Oxhey, Hertfordshire
 Springfield, Essex
 Watford, Hertfordshire
 Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton
 Woking, Surrey
North Liverpool Community Justice Centre
Office of the Prince of Wales
Oxford University – Professor Julian Roberts, Centre for Criminology
Police Foundation
Residents groups in:
 Carrington Street, The Wirral
 Hedworth, Tyne and Wear
 Hoylake Road, Birkenhead
 Saffron Lane Estate, Leicester
 Sharrow, Sheffield
 Woking
 Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton
 Perry Common, Birmingham
Restorative Solutions
Risk and Regulation Advisory Council
Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
Saffron Lane Neighbourhood Management Board, Leicester
Salford Magistrates Court
Sheffield City Council
Smart Justice
Social Care Institute for Excellence
South Tyneside Council
Southwark Street Leaders
Substance social research company
Surrey County Council
Tenant’s Participation Advisory Service regional meetings:
 South West (Gloucester)
 Midlands (Derby)
 Eastern (Chelmsford)
 London and South East (Euston)
Turning Point
UK Statistics Authority
Urban Forum
Victim Support
Victims Advisory Panel
Wandsworth Neighbourhood Watch
Westminster Council
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Woking Borough Council
Woking High School
Young Foundation
Youth Justice Board

APPENDIX ii

Explaining Public Perceptions of Crime and Criminal Justice

This paper, in support of the Crime and Communities Review is an exploration of the evidence relating to factors that have an impact on public perceptions of crime, as well as their consequences.

Summary

- Attitudes to crime and criminal justice can have consequences for the quality of life of individuals and communities as well as the efficacy of criminal justice operation and policy.
- According to the best available measures crime has fallen over the last decade. Yet when asked, a majority of the public believe that crime has been increasing.
- The public tend to perceive crime to be increasing nationally more than they do locally. Perception gaps are found in other public sectors such as health, but are more pronounced in relation to crime.
- Perceptions of crime-levels and anti-social behaviour locally are related to personal experience and area characteristics, while perceptions nationally are related to general characteristics such as age and newspaper readership.
- Worry about crime is strongly related to age, gender, and ethnicity factors, but also perceived risk and signs of disorder in a local area.
- Public confidence in many aspects of the Criminal Justice System is low, including its ability to address crime. The police are the most positively rated agency but less so than they have been in the past.
- The public have low levels of knowledge about the courts and sentencing, and perceive sentencing to be lenient. Increasing knowledge of community sentences may increase favourability towards them.
- Similarly to other perceptions, confidence in criminal justice is affected at a general level by beliefs and media influences, whereas local confidence is more related to area characteristics and experience.
- People living in deprived areas tend to experience crime more, perceive more crime and anti-social behaviour, and have lower confidence in local criminal justice.
- Better local information about crime and policing as well as positive police-public contact can help to improve confidence in the police. National crime statistics should aspire to clear and independent presentation in order to inform better public understanding of crime.
- Factors influencing perceptions include the media representation of crime and criminal justice, anxiety about security brought about by changes in society, and locally experienced low level 'signal' crimes and disorder.

- The evidence suggests that improving perceptions will require a locally-focused, accessible, visible, and meaningful response to crime that the public understand and feel connected to.

Introduction

For a majority of people in England and Wales in 2008, being a victim of crime is a relatively uncommon event. The British Crime Survey results show that, on average, less than a quarter of us say we have been a victim of crime in the last year.

However, direct personal victimisation is not the only way we are affected by crime. Media images and stories, the experiences of others we know, visible signals in our environment, a personal sense of security, and a host of other possible factors, may influence our perceptions of crime. Furthermore, while it is understandable to talk about a 'national picture' of crime, we do not all experience the same levels of crime. Who we are, where we live, what we see, and what we learn all define our relationship with crime.

Our understanding of people's attitudes to crime is further complicated by the sheer variety of behaviours we call crime (or anti-social behaviour), as well as differences in the amount and types of harm caused⁵. This crowded field of issues and influences makes understanding the relationship between crime and attitudes to crime challenging.

The aim of this paper is to assess the drivers of public attitudes towards crime

and criminal justice. In doing so it hopes to shed light on what have been described as 'perception gaps'⁶ existing between what the public perceive and what measurements show. It also considers the consequences of negative public attitudes and what approaches might have a positive effect. The core aspects of public attitudes discussed are perceptions of crime-levels, fear of crime, and confidence in the criminal justice response⁷.

The potential consequences of perceptions of crime and criminal justice

To what extent does it matter if the public are not satisfied in relation to crime, are worried about it, and think the situation is getting worse? There are several reasons to suggest these attitudes are important for the health of society. The consequences of poor or disproportionate perceptions can operate at different levels including an effect on personal health and behaviour, the capacity of communities to maintain security, and the direction of efforts to tackle crime nationally (see figure 1). Furthermore, perceptions of crime and criminal justice may act in a cyclical way, for example perceptions of crime-levels can affect confidence in criminal justice agencies, which can impact on fear of crime.

The most direct impact of fear or worry is the effect on everyday quality of life, particularly for the most vulnerable. A study by Stafford et al (2007)⁸ found that higher levels of fear of crime were associated with poorer mental

⁵ Crimes also range in visibility, for example corporate crime which may affect the public without their knowledge.

⁶ Ipsos MORI (2008) *Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions* www.ipsos-mori.com

⁷ One way of differentiating them is to view fear of crime as relating to risk of harm to one's self/significant others, while confidence in the police/Criminal Justice System is an estimation of the value of the state in relation to the prevention of such harm, the bolstering of security, and assistance if harmed. Perceptions of crime-levels can be considered to be principally concerned with the climate in which the other two operate, which may be described as the risk of harm generally and comparatively over time. For the purposes of this paper these attitudes are discussed somewhat separately. However it is worth bearing in mind that these attitudes are related. Analysis on the 2006/07 BCS show a weak but significant positive correlation between these measures.

⁸ Stafford, M., Chandola, T., Marmot, M 2007. 'Association between fear of crime and mental health and physical functioning' *American Journal of Public Health*. 97: 2076-2081

health. More broadly, the British Crime Survey shows that over two-thirds (37%) of the public rate fear of crime as having a high or moderate impact on their quality of life.⁹ A survey of the public conducted as part of the review found that hearing about someone else being a victim of crime in the local area can have an effect on people's behaviour, with over one in five people saying that hearing about people being a victim of crime made them and others in their neighbourhood feel angry, sad, more cautious and less safe. The impact on lifestyle may include increased security measures, going out less frequently, avoidance of certain areas, or even moving out of an area. Innes (2005) summarises the potential consequences of fear of crime:

'Such worry erodes quality of life and well-being, restricts movement, motivates costly precautions, encourages 'flight' from deprived areas, and harms social trust, inter-group relations and the capacity of communities to exercise social control.'

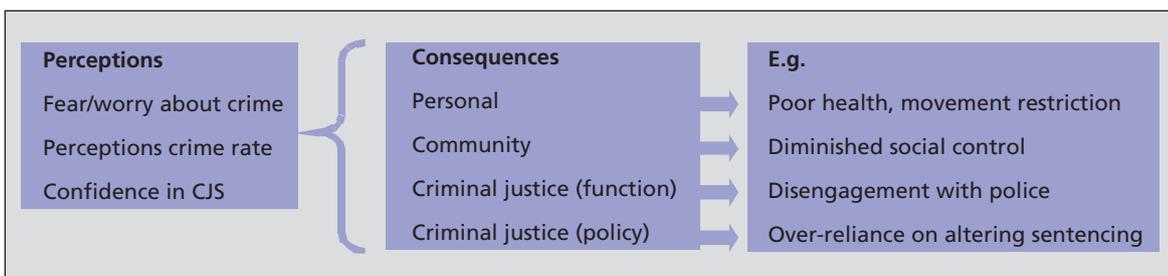
Therefore, as well as affecting personal behaviour, negative perceptions and low confidence are harmful to collective efficacy, by discouraging communities from exercising informal social control. Relinquished social control (e.g. due to fear of reprisal and lack

of support) can create a vacuum that if not filled by adequate formal social control (e.g. policing), may be filled by negative forms of control (e.g. illegal drug markets/gangs).

Perhaps the ultimate expression of perceptions that crime is increasing, worry about crime, and low confidence in criminal justice is the identification of parts of a neighbourhood as 'no go areas' where community control is completely absent. This may fuel high levels of anxiety and low levels of confidence which can lock parts of some deprived communities into a 'spiral of decline'.

Low confidence has the capacity to harm the police-public partnership crucial to tackling crime. The great majority of crimes are brought to the attention of the police by the public. The less the public are confident or willing to engage, the greater the damage to police efficacy and legitimacy. This is particularly acute in areas where there is 'embedded' serious violent crime. Stanko and Hale's (2007)¹⁰ analysis of policing violent places suggests that the 'experts' on local criminal activity tend to be local residents. The willingness of residents to co-operate with policing is founded in part on confidence and satisfaction with the police and failing to engage with such communities leads to an 'inability to develop sustainable solutions to persistent problems'.

Figure 1. Consequences of attitudes to crime and criminal justice



⁹ Home Office (2007) *Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. London: Home Office

¹⁰ Stanko, B. and Hales, G. (2007) *Policing violent places: a strategic approach to reducing the harm of violence in communities*. Metropolitan Police Service: Strategic Research Unit.

More broadly, dissatisfaction with public services is a consequence of low confidence and negative perceptions. In this respect it is important that the public are satisfied with criminal justice in the same way it is important they are satisfied with health services and public transport. Falls in crime-rates, improvements in public health and faster journeys are not on their own reasons to ignore dissatisfaction with services. The Criminal Justice System is however, in some respects unique in that it relies on public confidence to operate effectively. The less it is believed to be fair and effective the less it is able to function.¹¹

Finally, there are potential consequences of negative perceptions that operate on a national level and have ramifications for crime policy. Misperceptions of crime have been shown by Roberts and Hough (2005) to underpin popular punitive opinion¹² which can promote simplistic solutions to crime problems. Misperceptions in this respect are a concern where they guide us towards narrowly conceived responses to crime problems (e.g. relying on altering sentence lengths) at the expense of more effective approaches.

Crime measures

Police recorded crime statistics and the British Crime Survey (BCS) together are the main sources used to assess crime-levels in England and Wales as a whole (See Box 1 for a summary of these measures). Although both measures are subject to challenges in relation to methodology, presentation and interpretation (touched upon later in this paper), they nevertheless currently provide the best available picture

of crime nationally. The BCS is a large-scale, nationally representative victimisation survey of the public¹³ with a robust methodology and is widely respected, used, and cited by researchers, academics and other commentators.

According to the BCS, crime peaked in the mid-1990s before falling steadily and remaining stable in the last few years. Overall, crime measured by the BCS has fallen 42 per cent since 1995, equating to some eight million fewer crimes. Different crime types, including violent crime, vehicle-related theft and domestic burglary have all decreased during this period. Furthermore, BCS figures in the last few years place the risk of being a victim of crime as lower than at any time since the survey began in 1981. Less than two per cent of people say they have been victims of violence¹⁴ in the last year.

On the other hand, crime is not distributed evenly across England and Wales. Urban and deprived areas experience higher levels of crime, and people living in these areas are more likely to be victims of crime. For example, according to the 2006/07 BCS, 29% of those living in the most deprived areas in England were victims once or more in the last year, compared to 22% in the least deprived areas¹⁵.

While some local authority areas experience consistently high levels of recorded crime across different crime types, geographic patterns of crime also vary according to different types of offence. For example some areas in South Wales have high rates of serious wounding but relatively low rates of robbery. Several crimes are heavily skewed

11 Indermaur, D. and Hough, M. 'Strategies for changing public attitudes to punishment', in J.V. Roberts, and M. Hough (eds) *Changing Attitudes to Punishment: public opinion, crime and justice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

12 Roberts, J.V. and Hough, M.J. (2005) *Understanding public attitudes to criminal justice*. Open University Press.

13 Specifically those surveyed are people over the age of sixteen living in private households.

14 This refers to violence with injury. Around half of BCS reported violence and police recorded violence involved no injury to the victim.

15 Home Office (2007) *Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. London: Home Office

towards particular cities. For example, the rate for domestic burglary in Nottingham is more than three times the national average¹⁶, while in 2006/07 more than half (55%) of all firearms offences occurred in the areas London, Manchester and the West Midlands, and just under half (45%) of all robberies occurred in London.

The above points are made in order to stress the importance of place in relation

to people's experience of, and attitudes towards crime. In some places, crime may have fallen in recent times, while remaining comparatively high, so that crime persists as an entrenched 'problem'. On the other hand, reductions in crime appear to have occurred in both deprived and non-deprived areas, prompting questions about why there has not been a resulting improvement in public perceptions, concern and confidence.

Box 1. National measures of crime-levels: the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a victimisation survey that measures the public's experiences of being a victim of crime in relation to household and personal crimes by surveying a large enough number of adults in private households to be representative of the public in England and Wales. Police recorded crime captures all crimes that have been reported to and recorded by the police.

Main differences

The BCS has two main advantages over police recorded crime in providing a measure of the true extent of victimisation and national trends over time. Firstly, it includes crimes not reported to the police and is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting. Secondly it is not affected by the changes in recording practices or operational decisions that affect the crimes the police record.

The BCS does not capture homicides, crimes against businesses, and has just begun to include crimes against those less than sixteen years of age. Also, unlike police recorded crime, BCS figures are only robust at the geographical level of police force areas (roughly equivalent to one or more counties) and above.

Main types of crime

The table below shows that in general the bulk of both the BCS and recorded figures are made up of similar crime categories.

BCS	%	Police recorded crime ¹⁷	%
1. Theft	30%	1. Theft	23%
2. Vandalism ¹⁸	27%	2. Criminal damage	22%
3. Violent crime (incl. Robbery)	22%	3. Violence (incl. Robbery)	22%
4. Vehicle theft	15%	4. Vehicle offences	14%
5. Burglary ¹⁹	6%	5. Burglary	11%

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ In addition to the offence types listed, drugs offences, fraud and forgery, sexual and all other offences account for the remaining c.10%.

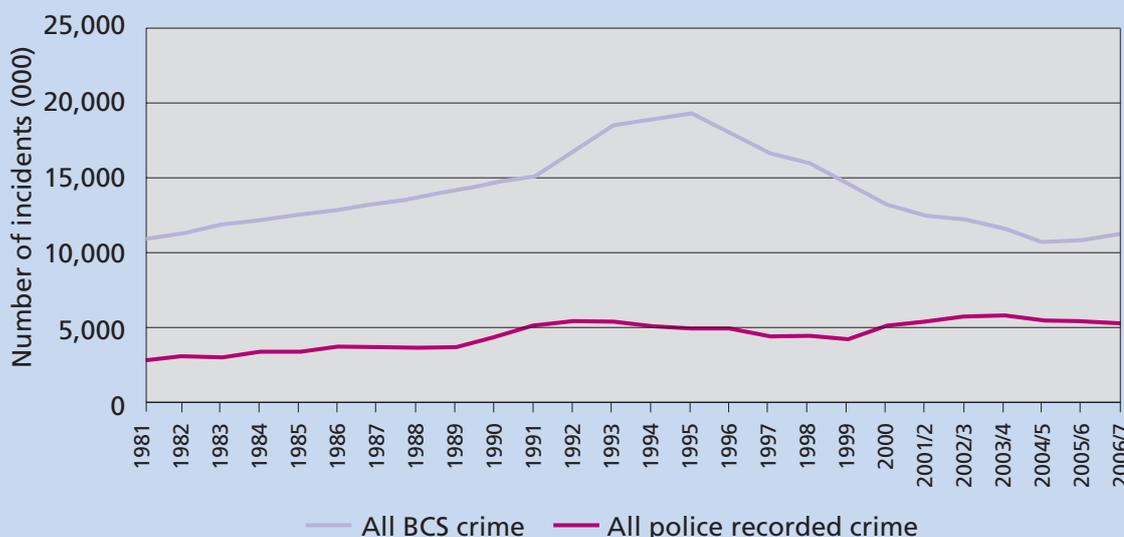
¹⁸ BCS vandalism includes both vehicle and other vandalism

¹⁹ BCS burglary refers to domestic burglary only, while police records include commercial robberies

Box 1. (continued)

Crime trends

The BCS estimates twice as much crime than is recorded by the police. The chart below shows both trends from 1981 when the BCS began. They show a broadly similar pattern of rising crime, peaking in the mid-1990s and then falling. However, changes in recording practices in 1998 and 2000 affected recorded crime while BCS crime continued to fall steadily before levelling off.



Similar trends of an increasing rates from 1981 to a mid-90s peak, and then decreasing are found for several crime types, including vehicle theft, other theft, burglary and violence. For the latest full Home Office report of the figures for 2006/07 see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0607.html>

Public perceptions of crime-levels

The British Crime Survey asks people whether they think there is more or less crime today compared with two years ago. Nationally, most people perceive crime to be rising while official figures show it to have fallen, or in recent years remained stable. The latest BCS figures show that two thirds of people (65%) think crime in the country as a whole has increased in the last two years, with a third (33%) of these saying it has increased 'a lot'. Similarly in an Ipsos MORI survey in 2005 which asked people to say whether a list of

statements were true or false, 83% believed that 'violent crime is rising' and only 20% believed 'crime is falling'.²⁰

This contrasts with fewer people saying they have been victims of crime. In other words, on the one hand, there is evidence that the public do not tend to feel crime is falling while on the other, as measured by the BCS they are less likely than five or ten years ago to say they have been a victim of crime. This perception gap suggests that factors other than victimisation measures and recorded crime have a role in explaining public attitudes.

²⁰ Ipsos MORI (2008) *Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions* www.ipsos-mori.com

There also tends to be a difference between people's perception of crime nationally and their perception locally. People are less likely to perceive crime as increasing in their local area, compared to their view of the country as a whole. Ipsos MORI describe this as a second perception gap. The 2006/07 BCS shows that 41% of adults think crime in their local area has increased while a greater percentage (65%) believe that the crime-rate for the *whole country* has increased²¹.

Furthermore, people's perceptions of whether crime is going up nationally and whether it's going up locally are not related as strongly as might be expected i.e. it doesn't necessarily follow that if someone perceives crime to have worsened in the country as a whole they will perceive things to have worsened in their local area. This implies that the factors influencing our perceptions at these levels may be different, or at least have varying degrees of influence.

A useful starting point is to look at what the empirical data show in relation to perceptions of changes in the crime-rate at the national and local level. Regression analysis (which is a method of assessing how much one factor helps to explain another) is particularly helpful in exploring drivers of perceptions by identifying factors that are independently related to them²². Home Office BCS analyses²³ have shown the following factors to be associated with perceptions:

People who think crime is increasing in the country as a whole are more likely to:

- be older;
- read tabloid newspapers;
- have low qualifications;
- have low confidence that the Criminal Justice System is effective at reducing crime;
- be worried about being attacked by a stranger.

People who think crime is increasing in the local area are more likely to:

- have been a victim in last twelve months;
- live in a deprived area;
- have low qualifications;
- live in London;
- perceive high levels of anti-social behaviour in their area;
- have low confidence that the Criminal Justice System is effective at reducing crime.

The above findings suggest that perception of crime-levels locally reflect personal experiences and circumstances, particularly the area in which one lives. On the other hand perceptions of crime rising nationally are more related to media, attitudinal, and demographic factors such as newspaper

²¹ Findings from the Metropolitan Police Service reveal a within London 'gap' where Londoner's confidence in policing is London is higher than their confidence in local policing. Stanko terms this a 'Scotland Yard effect' whereby Londoner's are more confident in the event/disaster/crisis policing that they see and experience. This shows the difference between influences of directly experienced policing and a positively rated institution.

²² Such analysis is subject to the normal difficulties of determining direction of associated relationships, and the inclusion of only a limited set of measurable factors.

²³ Based on separate analysis of the 2002/03 BCS and 2006/07 BCS. For more information see Nicholas, S. and Walker, A. (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003: Supplementary Volume 2: Crime, disorder and the Criminal Justice System – public attitudes and perceptions*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/04. London: Home Office, and Jansson, K., Budd, S., Lovebakke, J., Moley, S., and Thorpe, K. (2007) *Attitudes, perceptions and risks of crime: Supplementary Volume 1 to Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/07. London: Home Office.

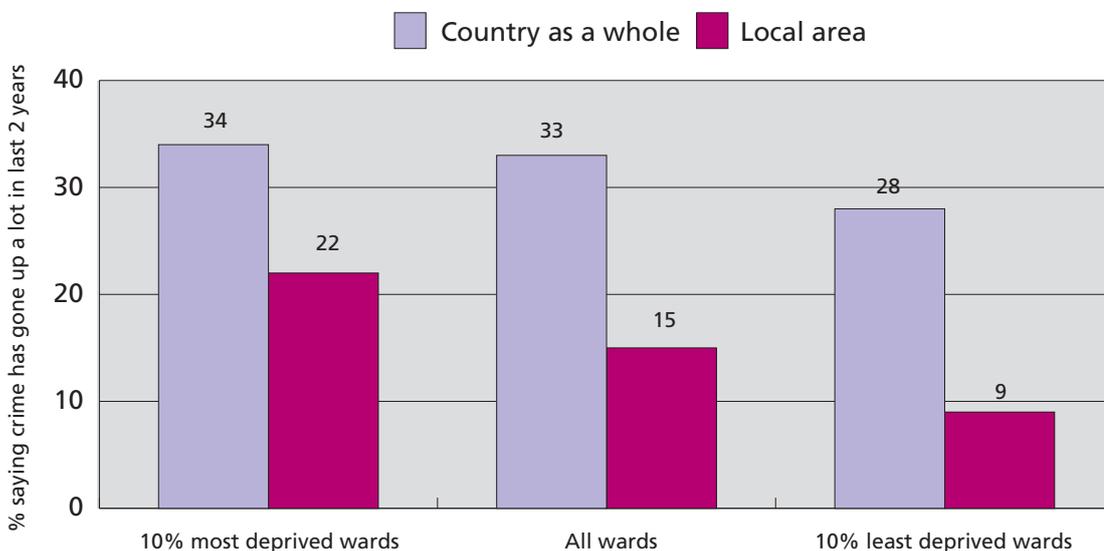
readership, age, confidence and fear. Jansson²⁴ et al, (2007) in their analysis of the BCS measures conclude that:

'Perceptions of increasing crime in the local area appear more strongly associated with personal experience and factors relating to the local area. Some of these factors are also associated with being at risk of victimisation... Perceptions of crime across the country as a whole appear to have a stronger relationship with more general characteristics such as age and newspaper readership rather than those associated with personal experiences.'

The relevance of where people live to perceptions of crime-rates is further illustrated by the chart below based on

2006/07 BCS data. It shows the proportions of people who perceive crime to have increased 'a lot' in the last two years, both nationally and locally. Comparison between responses overall and those living in the most and least deprived wards in England and Wales are revealing.

Those living in the most deprived areas are more likely than others to say that crime has increased in their local area. However, their perceptions of the national situation are similar to people living in less deprived areas. Moreover, those living in the most deprived areas also feel that the situation is worse nationally compared to their local area. The implication is that living in a deprived area is a driver of perceptions of local crime-levels, but has less influence on perceptions of national crime-levels.



²⁴ Jansson, K., Budd, S., Lovebakke, J., Moley, S., and Thorpe, K. *Attitudes, perceptions and risks of crime: supplementary volume 1 to Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. Home Office statistics bulletin 19/07. London: Home Office.

Fear of Crime

Fear of crime is an issue that has attracted a high degree of attention since victimisation surveys first raised the issue.²⁵ At the heart of this attention is recognition that fear of crime, in itself, may have palpable negative consequences above and beyond those of crime. However, measuring fear of crime presents some difficulties, both methodological (such as how it is accurately measured) and conceptual (such as how it is defined), which raise questions about its analytical precision.²⁶

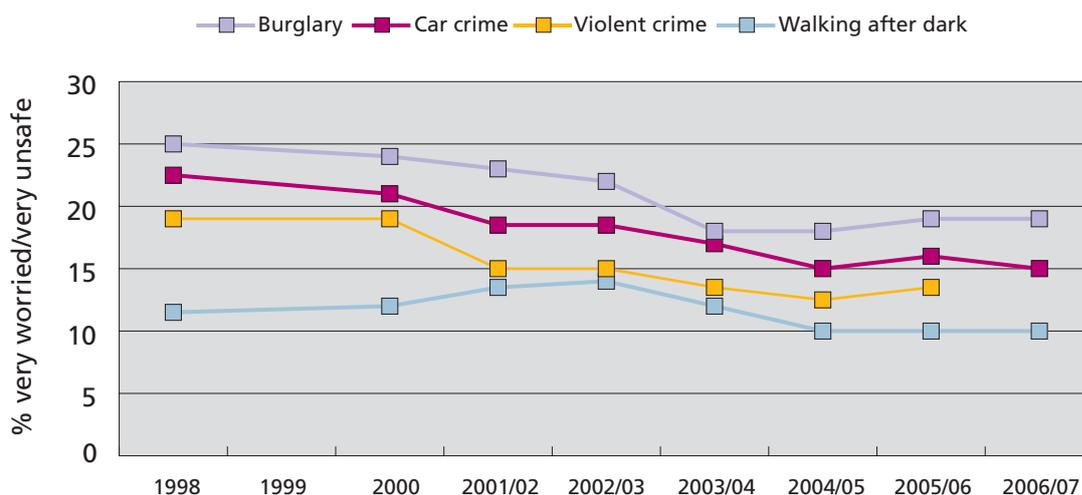
A thorough examination of the fear of crime debate is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, it will focus on what the commonly used measurements of fear of crime can tell us about possible drivers and the relationship with confidence and perceptions.

One measurement of fear of crime is the extent to which people feel safe being out and about in the areas they live in, particularly after dark. Other, more specific

measures ask the public about their worry about certain types of crimes such as violence, burglary, robbery.

Both types of measures are included in the BCS but the trends over time are somewhat different. The proportion of people feeling very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark has generally remained stable (between 10% and 13%) since the survey began in 1981, while worry about burglary, car crime and violence rose during the early 1990s, decreased from 1998 and has been stable in recent years.

The latter measurements relating to specific crimes have generally been considered better indicators of fear of crime, not least because the former potentially refers to feelings of safety generally (rather than crime explicitly)²⁷. Feeling unsafe when walking alone after dark, particularly in an unfamiliar area, may be in part explained by heightened feelings of vulnerability.



25 Zedner (2002) 'Victims' in M. Maguire, R. Morgan, R. Reinter, (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. (3rd Edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

26 Innes, M, and Fielding, N (2002) "From Community to Communicative Policing: 'Signal Crimes' and the Problem of Public Reassurance". *Sociological Research Online* Vol.7, no.2

27 Allen, J. (2006) *Worry about crime in England and Wales: findings from the 2003/04 and 2004/05 British Crime Survey*. Home Office online report 15/06. London: Home Office.

In contrast to perceptions of crime-levels and confidence in criminal justice, fear of certain types of crimes appears to have a positive relationship with crime-levels. In other words, just as crime has decreased and stabilised, so has fear of crime by these measurements. Worry about violence, burglary and robbery have fallen by approximately one third since 1998. Nevertheless, it has been argued that fear of crime has not fallen as fast as crime itself²⁸ and remains disproportionate compared with our risk of being a victim. On the other hand, it is possible that some degree of concern above actual risk may be a natural instinct and sometimes appropriate if it encourages precautionary behaviour. Furthermore, studies have revealed how such measurements of 'worry', capture concern ranging in intensity and frequency²⁹, including both 'diffuse anxiety about risk' as well as specific experiences of fear of crime.

What is clear from the evidence is that powerful determinants of worry/fear are demographic factors, such as age and gender. Furthermore, it has been found that different groups' levels of fear can appear at odds with their risk of victimisation. One commonly cited example is that women are more fearful than men despite lower levels of victimisation. However, what might appear to be 'irrational fears' may not be the case when other factors are considered such as vulnerability to the impact of crime³⁰.

Clearly, demographic factors do play a key role in explaining variation in levels of fear but even so, other factors have been found to be involved that relate more to external factors such as personal experience, area-type, cohesion, and disorder.³¹

Factors associated with worry about crime

BCS analysis in 2003/04 of worry about burglary, car crime and violence has shown several factors to be strongly and independently associated with these measures. These were found to be a mix of demographic characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, and other factors. Factors found to be associated with high levels of worry about all three crime types were:

- Belief they will be victims of this crime in the coming year;
- Perceiving high levels of anti-social behaviour in the local area.

Further analysis in 2006/07 looking at demographic and socio-demographic factors found ethnicity to be associated with worry about all crime types, but victimisation and type of area were also dominant factors.

In other words, worry about crime is not simply determined by who you are, but also what you experience. In addition to the demographic association with fear of crime (e.g. by age, gender or ethnicity) the analyses suggest that fear is also related to people's experiences in terms of where they live and the signs of disorder in a locality. Indeed, work on fear of crime by Farrell et al (2006), while arguing that fear of crime is actually much less frequent than portrayed by common measurements, suggests that where crime is an everyday worry it is closely linked to experience of crime and victimisation³².

28 Home Office Strategy (2008-11) London: Home Office.

29 See for example Gray, E., Jackson, J., and Farrall, S. 'Reassessing Fear of Crime' (in press) *European Journal of Criminology*

30 Zedner (2002) 'Victims' in M. Maguire, R. Morgan, R. Reinter, (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. (3rd Edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

31 (ibid.)

32 Farrall, S., Jackson, J. and Gray, E. (2006). 'Everyday Emotion and the Fear of Crime' Preliminary Findings from Experience and Expression (Working paper No.1) http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/methodologyInstitute/pdf/JonJackson/E&E_working_paper_1.pdf

A note on perceptions of disorder and anti-social behaviour

Regression analyses have highlighted how perception of anti-social behaviour and disorder appears to be a common driver of perceptions of crime at a local level. They are also relevant to a 'signal crimes' perspective discussed later. It is briefly worth considering their measurement here, especially as it might be argued that because perception of anti-social behaviour is another 'perception' measure, it may record 'misperceptions' relating to anti-social behaviour.

This argument is not borne out by the evidence. Perceptions of anti-social behaviour are measured by the BCS using seven questions which taken together make up that measure. These are:

- Abandoned or burnt out cars;
- noisy neighbours or loud parties;
- people being drunk or rowdy in public places;
- people using or dealing drugs;
- teenagers hanging around on the streets;
- rubbish or litter lying around; and
- vandalism, graffiti, and other deliberate damage to property.

Analysis has shown there to be a strong link between experience of anti-social behaviour and perceptions. The majority of people who perceived problems with anti-social behaviour had personally seen or experienced these behaviours³³. Those most likely to experience anti-social behaviour, for example younger people, are also most likely to perceive higher

levels of anti-social behaviour³⁴ where they live.

Some of the measures above are behaviours that directly relate to criminal offences, while others may not be, but become anti-social behaviour if they cause 'harassment, alarm and distress' to people. In other words, anti-social behaviour is sometimes context specific and sometimes simply refers to types of crimes. Furthermore, serious crime may also take place in the context of anti-social behaviour, which sometimes leads to portrayal of one as the other, for example when someone is attacked for challenging someone behaving anti-socially.

Confidence in the criminal justice response to crime

Confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) has been measured in several ways. General attitudes are measured towards the government handling of crime, and people's overall confidence in the CJS. Beyond that attitudes towards different functions of the CJS have been assessed, as have confidence and ratings of different criminal justice agencies, including the police.

The available public opinion data paint a fairly negative picture of public attitudes towards the CJS, its agencies (with the notable exception of the police), and the Government's capacity to tackle crime. Some salient findings in relation to this issue include:

- Ongoing surveys by Ipsos MORI show that, in the last few years, crime has frequently been the top public concern for the country as a whole.³⁵

³³ Upson, A. (2006) *Perceptions and experience of anti-social behaviour: Findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office.

³⁴ (*Ibid*) Indeed, given that 'incidence' of some kinds of anti-social behaviour is hard to separate from the 'impact' of such behaviours e.g. drunk and rowdy behaviour, it might be helpful to understand the perception of anti-social behaviour measures as somewhere between a perception measure and a victimisation measure. In this case it may be considered to be neighbourhood or community (rather than personal) victimisation that is captured.

³⁵ Ipsos MORI Political Monitor www.ipsos-mori.com

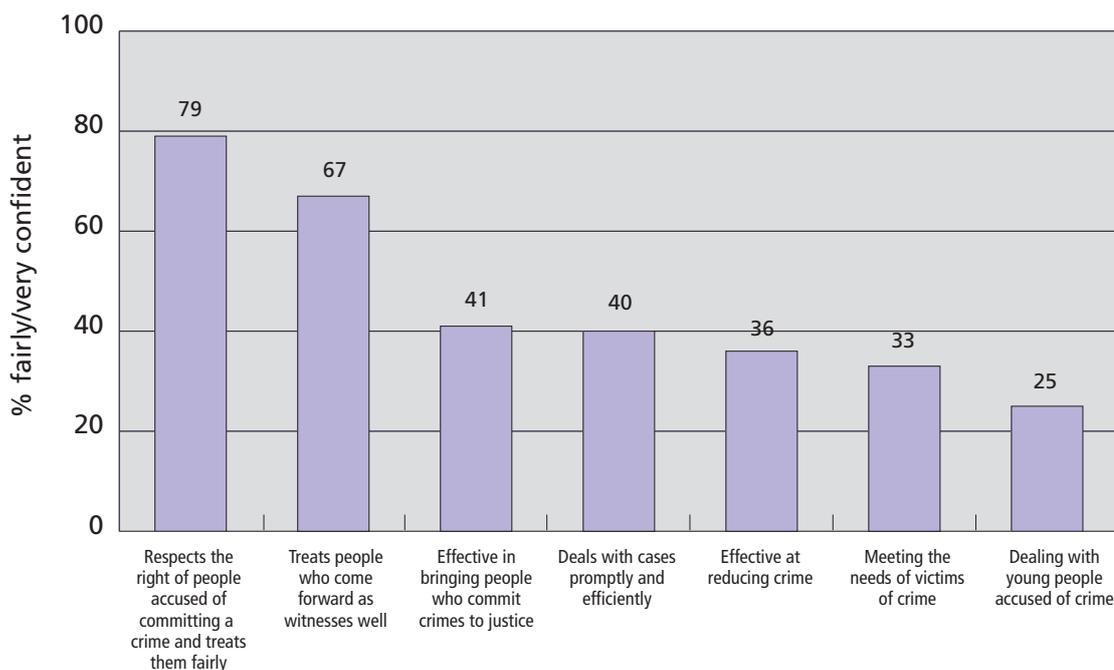
- Only 25% are confident in the government when it comes to ‘cracking down on violence and crime compared to other jurisdictions (e.g. 48% in Germany, 46% in France, 44% in USA.)³⁶
- 61% of the public are ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ confident about the way crime is dealt with in England and Wales.
- The most important issue facing Britain in relation to crime has been identified as ‘punishment is too lenient’ by an Ipsos MORI survey. The BCS also found 79% of people say sentences are too lenient (40% saying much too lenient) and trend data show a consistent increase since 2003 in those who say sentencing is much too lenient.

As with perceptions of crime, Ipsos MORI highlight a local versus national perception gap that exists between people’s confidence about how crime is dealt with nationally (38% confident), compared with the area where they live (56% confident). While MORI

note that such perception gaps exist for other public services, such as the NHS, these gaps tend to be largest for crime, and it is on crime that people tend to have the most negative perceptions of their local area.

Specific functions of the Criminal Justice System

The BCS reports on public confidence in relation to seven different aspects of the Criminal Justice System. As the graph below illustrates³⁷, the public tend to have different levels of confidence in relation to different functions, with the highest levels of confidence in the system’s treatment of those accused of crime, and its treatment of witnesses. Less well-rated are what might be described as its crime control and process functions, namely the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System to bring people to justice and reduce crime, and deal with cases efficiently. Finally, the public have the least confidence in the ability of the system to meet the needs of victims of crime and deal with young people accused of crime.



³⁶ Ipsos MORI (2008) ‘Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions’ www.ipsos-mori.com

³⁷ Home Office (2007) *Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. London: Home Office

Confidence in criminal justice agencies

The 2006/07 BCS shows that when asked to rate the job that various professions are doing in the Criminal Justice System, the police are rated most highly (51% saying they do an excellent or good job), and significantly higher than other branches of the Criminal Justice System who share lower levels of confidence (just over a quarter having confidence in these groups). In line with low confidence in the system to deal with youth crime, youth courts are most poorly rated.

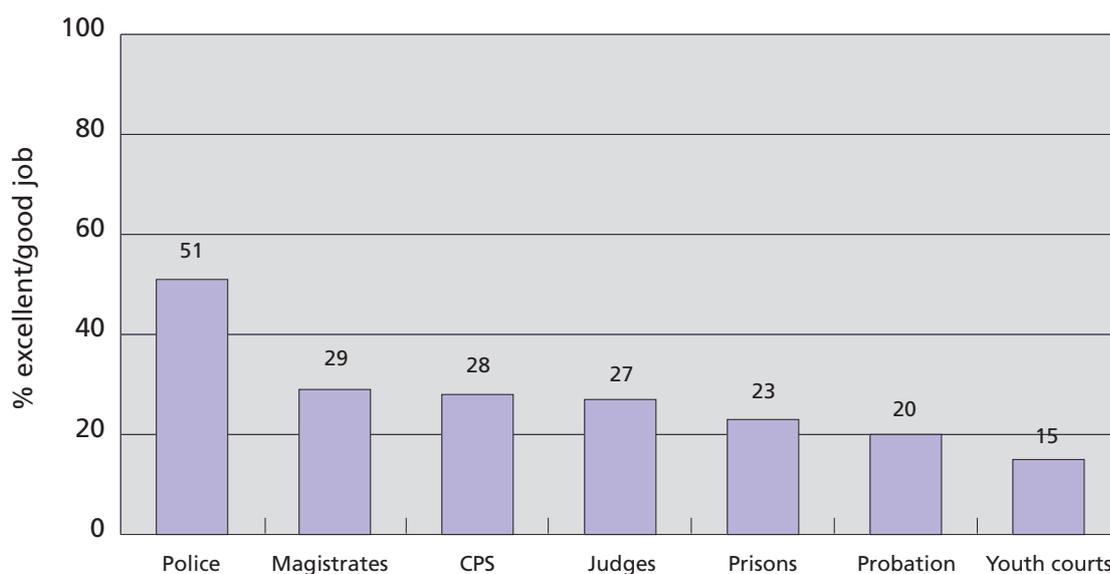
Although the police are by far the most positively rated criminal justice agency, trend data show that public ratings of local police declined through the 1980s and 1990s. As with perceptions of crime, changing levels of confidence in the police do not appear to reflect changes measured in crime-levels.

Perceptions of sentencing

As previously highlighted, perceptions that sentencing is 'too lenient' appear to

dominate negative public attitudes towards criminal justice. However, the research literature shows that public knowledge of the courts, sentencing and punishment is low and the public appear to perceive sentencing to be more lenient than it actually is. For example, the public tend to underestimate the rate of imprisonment for specific offences, as well as the length of prison sentences³⁸. Furthermore, studies that have gauged public opinion on appropriate sentences in hypothetical cases have found public opinion to be at least no harsher than actual court decisions³⁹.

Public awareness of sentencing options beyond imprisonment also tends to be limited. Community penalties do not have a strong public profile, and are frequently equated with leniency. However, there is evidence that favourability towards such penalties increases as their conditions are made more meaningful to the public, particularly where the conditions relate to work in the community or compensation to the victim⁴⁰.



³⁸ Roberts, J.V. and Hough, M.J. (2005) *Understanding public attitudes to criminal justice*. Open University Press.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Factors most strongly associated with confidence

Regression analyses have been used on BCS data to determine factors most strongly associated with confidence measures, after controlling for other factors. Different sets of analysis show respectively that people who are more confident that the Criminal Justice System is effective in bringing people to justice are more likely to⁴¹:

- Be young (under 25);
- Have not been a victim in the last year;
- Think that crime-levels have stayed the same or decreased in last two years;
- Think that the severity of sentencing is about right or too tough.

On the other hand, people who have low confidence in the Criminal Justice System tend to⁴²:

- Be older (particularly 65 and over);
- Be white.

The above factors are mainly perception-based and demographic characteristics, pointing away from personal experience as a driver of confidence. This assertion is not unreasonable considering the difficulty of making an assessment of a system that the public rarely have contact with beyond the police.

On a more general level, Ipsos MORI surveys have looked at factors associated with satisfaction with government handling of crime. While only a small part of the variation in attitudes could be explained by factors analysed, the following groups were more likely to have low levels of satisfaction:

- people who think punishments are too lenient;

- those intending to vote Conservative;
- readers of 'centre-right' newspapers (e.g. *The Daily Mail*).

Again, confidence at this 'top level' appears to have more association with beliefs and media influences than area characteristics. Indeed analysis of the 2006/07 BCS showed that perceptions of sentencing are strongly associated with newspaper readership, with those who read tabloid newspapers being more likely to perceive sentences as being too lenient compared with those who read broadsheets. Once again, these drivers can be contrasted with the confidence in local handling of crime, for which Ipsos MORI found people with low confidence most likely to be:

- living in an area of high deprivation;
- having been a victim in the last 12 months;
- living in Wales.

The dominance of area factors in this case would seem to lend support to the idea that experience and circumstance have greater influence on local perceptions of crime and criminal justice. BCS analysis shows that area type and victimisation are related to thinking local police are doing a poor job. This is supported by findings from the Metropolitan Police Service public attitude survey reported by Stanko⁴³ that found that people's personal experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour (as well as the experiences of friends and family) influenced their confidence in policing in London. Ipsos MORI also looked at how confidence in the Criminal Justice System locally was related to confidence in specific agencies, and found that confidence appeared to be led primarily by confidence in the police, concluding that

41 Allen, J., Edmonds, S., Patterson, A., Smith, D. *Policing and the Criminal Justice System – public confidence and perceptions: findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey*. Home Office online report 07/06

42 Jansson, K., Budd, S., Lovebakke, J., Moley, S., and Thorpe, K. *Attitudes, perceptions and risks of crime: supplementary volume 1 to Crime in England and Wales 2006/07*. Home Office statistics bulletin 19/07. London: Home Office.

43 Stanko, E., Mirrlees Black, C. and Greenwood, E. *Key messages from the MPS 2005/06 Public Attitude Survey*. Metropolitan Police Authority.

perceptions of the police, as the most visible arm of the Criminal Justice System, are important in determining public confidence in criminal justice. Furthermore, recent regression analysis⁴⁴ of confidence in local policing found that greater confidence was strongly associated with perceptions of three factors:

- Whether police are dealing with issues that matter to the community;
- Fair and equal treatment by the police;
- Levels of social disorder/anti-social behaviour.

Police advocacy

A related issue is what might be described as the Criminal Justice System's 'self-confidence'. Given the pivotal role the police appear to have in shaping public perceptions and confidence, the Ipsos MORI finding that the police are not strong advocates for the rest of the CJS is a cause for concern⁴⁵. For most criminal justice agencies, equal numbers of staff (roughly a quarter) say they would speak highly of the CJS overall as those who would speak critically. However, only one in ten (10%) of the police say they would speak highly of the CJS, while around half (49%) say they would speak critically⁴⁶. As the most visible and public-facing part of the CJS, such views are likely to colour public perceptions of the rest of the system.

Familiarity, contact and communication

A further important driver of perceptions and confidence is the extent to which people

are informed about crime and criminal justice. Knowledge in this case encompasses both contact and familiarity with criminal justice agencies, as well as the impact of communication.

On the one hand greater familiarity with criminal justice agencies is associated with more positive ratings of them⁴⁷. It is therefore likely that knowing about what a criminal justice agency does or, perhaps more importantly, the action which it is taking, is a driver of confidence.

On the other hand several studies have shown that the police are more highly rated by those who have not had contact⁴⁸ which is contrary to findings in other public service areas, where more contact tends to mean greater satisfaction. So for example, Ipsos MORI found that 56% of those that have had contact with the police as victims or witnesses were confident in the Criminal Justice System, compared to 67% who have had no dealings.

The fact that the above example refers to *formal* contact provides a clue as to why contact appears to be inversely related to confidence. Formal contact with the police is often a unique kind of public service contact (with an institution that enjoys a unique position of authority). The experience may be unfamiliar, unsettling and disturbing⁴⁹ and in a negative context (especially if as a victim of crime).

More encouragingly, there is evidence that positive police-public encounters, particularly of an informal nature, can improve public confidence. The evaluation

44 Myhill, A. and Beak, K. (In press) *Public Confidence in the police*. London: National Policing Improvement Agency.

45 Ipsos MORI (2008) '*Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions*' www.ipsos-mori.com

46 Prison workers are nearly as critical of the Criminal Justice System as the police.

47 Ipsos MORI (2008) '*Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions*' www.ipsos-mori.com

48 See Bradford, B., Jackson, J. and Stanko, E. (2008) 'Contact and confidence: Revisiting the impact of public encounters with the police' *Policing and Society* (forthcoming), Ipsos MORI (2008) '*Closing the Gaps: crime and public perceptions*' www.ipsos-mori.com, and Allen, J., Edmonds, S., Patterson, A., Smith, D. *Policing and the Criminal Justice System – public confidence and perceptions: findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey*. Home Office online report 07/06

49 Stanko, B. and Hales, G. *Policing violent places: a strategic approach to reducing the harm of violence in communities*. Metropolitan Police Service: Strategic Research Unit.

of the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing shows that contact through community engagement in addition to foot patrols and problem-solving, can have a positive impact on perceptions and public confidence⁵⁰. Bradford et al (2008) in their analysis of policing in London also found that positively received contact can improve public confidence.

Moving from contact to communication, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) public attitude survey found that feeling informed about local policing is a driver of confidence in the local police⁵¹ and that those who feel well-informed are more likely to say that crime (and anti-social behaviour) have improved, be satisfied with local policing and have positive views of the police. Similarly Ipsos MORI have found that feeling informed about how anti-social behaviour is being tackled is strongly related to confidence in the police. Such findings underline the importance of good communication alongside visibility and accessibility in reassuring the public. As Stanko concludes:

'People who feel well informed about what the police are doing locally are also more likely to feel confident in local policing. Furthermore, those who feel well-informed about the local police are more likely to say that crime and anti-social behaviour got better and more likely to have positive views of the police. However, the majority of people say they do not feel informed about what the police are doing.'

Factors explaining attitudes

So far we have looked at some of the measurable factors identified as driving perceptions, fear and confidence. In this

section we look at what might be some of the causes that, in combination, help to explain individual drivers, common misperceptions, and the differences between the local and national outlook.

Media representation of crime

That the media plays a role in shaping impressions of crime is unsurprising, given it is the main channel through which we learn of things beyond our personal sphere of experience. What is of concern is whether the media amplifies and distorts the nature of crime, and whether doing so feeds misperceptions, fears and low confidence. In regard to the former, the evidence is convincing that the media portrayal of crime gives the impression that crime is more widespread and frequent than is the case. The media also concentrates on crimes which tend to be atypical with a particular focus on serious, violent and sensational crime⁵². In relation to criminal justice, media coverage is often focused on perceived system failures, such as controversial sentencing decisions or crimes committed on parole (so called false positives).

A further dimension of media coverage is that it has (perhaps inevitably) become more visually graphic in nature facilitated by an increase in CCTV footage, mobile video technology, and an enthusiasm for reality television programmes. Of course, media representatives might reply that violence, novelty and scandal is simply the kind of content that audiences are interested in, but the question remains of how much influence this portrayal has.

Measuring the degree of media 'effect' or the mechanism by which it influences perceptions is notoriously difficult, but it

⁵⁰ Quinton, P., and Morris, J. *Neighbourhood policing: the impact of piloting and early national implementation*. Home Office online report 01/08. London: Home Office.

⁵¹ Wunsch, D. *The role and information provision to the public*. Metropolitan Police Service: Strategic Research Unit (working draft).

⁵² For an overview of media representation of crime see Reiner (2002) 'Media made criminality: the representation of crime in the mass media' in M. Maguire, R. Morgan, R. Reinter, (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. (3rd Edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

seems clear that there is an effect on public attitudes. Indeed, on a basic level the public themselves acknowledge the role the media plays. In an Ipsos MORI survey that asked those who thought crime is rising generally why they thought so, the most common answers were television (57%), followed by newspapers (48%) ahead of experiences of people they know (24%) and personal experience (20%). This is supported by qualitative studies where people relate media stories about crime and criminal justice to support their view on crime⁵³.

Moreover, as discussed in this paper, factors independently associated with some attitudes suggest a media influence on perceptions (specifically newspaper readership). However, it is notable that these indicators of media influence appear to be largely confined to perceptions of the national situation and confidence in the Criminal Justice System at large⁵⁴.

The presentation and interpretation of crime statistics

An issue linked to media influence is the presentation, interpretation, and media dissemination of crime statistics. Crime is difficult to measure for a variety of reasons including the fact a large proportion goes unreported. Attempts are made by the Home Office to provide the picture of crime in England and Wales combining police-recorded crime figures and self-reported victimisation through the British Crime Survey. However, despite increasingly robust approaches there remain difficulties in providing 'the whole picture' for a variety of

different crimes using different sources, and on occasions there may arise what appear to be conflicting trends. Take, for example recent information on burglary levels⁵⁵:

'BCS burglary remained stable based on interviews to December 2007 compared with the previous year; the apparent five per cent increase was not statistically significant. Police recorded crime figures showed a decrease of five per cent in recorded domestic burglaries in October to December 2007 compared with the same quarter in 2006.'

While such information is perfectly understandable to those with the relevant knowledge, there is a risk that the picture presented is confusing to the media and the public, and can potentially mean the former select their story, which in turn may mean the latter may mistrust and/or dismiss the figures.

While the intention to present BCS and recorded crime as a complementary series greater than the sum of its parts is valid for policy and operational purposes⁵⁶ as information to the public, either directly or through the media, the combined information is arguably of limited value⁵⁷. Any potential of national crime figures to inform public perceptions of crime can be 'lost in translation' due to a combination of factors including a lack of clarity, a lack of perceived independence, and the potential to conflict with people's experiences. One potential solution would be to adopt an information strategy that provides succinct, accessible, timely, and relevant information of different levels aimed at the media

⁵³ CML Research *Perception and Fear of crime* www.cmlresearch.com

⁵⁴ However, such factors may colour our view of crime generally. As Roberts and Hough (2005) assert, most people are thinking of violent crime when asked general questions about crime.

⁵⁵ Crime in England and Wales: quarterly update to December 2007. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 04/08

⁵⁶ A conclusion of the Smith review of statistics <http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/statistics/statistics057.htm>

⁵⁷ The BCS is a better indicator of long-term trends on household and personal crime than police recorded crime. BCS limitations in coverage are areas to improve but are outweighed by the advantages of measuring unreported crime and being immune to changes in recording practices.

and public⁵⁸. Such information, presented simply and preferably independently, would effectively be a 'translation' of the more technical information provided currently.

Late-modern anxiety

The significant changes that have occurred in Western societies have been proposed as a partial explanation for disproportionate perceptions compared to actual risk⁵⁹.

These include, to name but a few, changes in mobility, job security, media presence, the influence of traditional institutions, gender-roles, demographic make-up of neighbourhoods, and family structure. Crawford (2007) describes some such changes to the way we live:

'British neighbourhoods have become more demographically diverse and socially heterogeneous than they were a generation ago. Alongside greater ethnic and cultural diversity, kinship and support structures have also become more varied. Social ties and mutual bonds of obligation have loosened as populations have become more mobile and traditional institutions have declined as forces of social cohesion.'

The argument is that such changes in our 'late-modern society' mean we are more predisposed to be anxious about security, and have developed what Garland (2001)⁶⁰ identifies as a 'late modern crime complex'. Potential consequences of such risk-consciousness are a tendency to think things are 'out of control' and a demand for enhanced controls and security.⁶¹

Closely linked to such anxiety, are the issues of the increasing 'politicisation' of crime, and high crime-rates experienced in the 1980s

and early 1990s. Regarding the former, while crime-rates have decreased steadily over the last ten years, this decrease followed a steep rise in crime that peaked in the mid 1990s. It is possible that these high crime-rates have acted as a sort of tipping-point for our attitudes to crime or that our perceptions to some extent lag behind actual changes in the crime-rate⁶².

Concerning the politicisation of crime it is clear that crime has developed to become a major political issue and that this was not always the case⁶³. Since the 1970s governments have been increasingly held to account for crime and attempting to control crime has become a political imperative⁶⁴. A great deal of legislation has been passed which has attempted to both provide a meaningful response to crime and reflect the concerns of the electorate.

Late-modernity helps to explain the context in which misperception, fear and lack of confidence can take purchase in the public consciousness. It is relevant to our understanding of community cohesion, the reporting of high-profile crimes, changes in informal social control, the demand for greater security (including the often verbalised public demand for more visible policing) and reassurance approaches. If our sense of security is fragile, questions around how informed, engaged, and connected people feel in their communities become of increasing importance.

Signal crimes

Another proposed explanation of why people may not feel reassured despite a downward trend in crime-rates is the concept of 'signal crimes'. These are crimes that act as signals to people about the dangers and risks

58 Indermaur, D. and Hough, M. 'Strategies for changing public attitudes to punishment', in J.V. Roberts, and M. Hough (eds) *Changing Attitudes to Punishment: public opinion, crime and justice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

59 See for example, Innes (2001) 'Control Creep' *Sociological Research Online*, vol.6, no.3

60 Garland, D. (2001) *The Culture of Control; Crime and Social Order in Late Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

61 Innes (2001) 'Control Creep' *Sociological Research Online*, vol.6, no.3

62 Roberts, J.V. and Hough, M.J. (2005) *Understanding public attitudes to criminal justice*. Open University Press.

63 For an overview see Downes (2002) 'The skeletons in the cupboard: the politics of law and order at the turn of the millenium' in M. Maguire, R. Morgan, R. Reinter, (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. (3rd Edition) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

64 Innes (2001) 'Control Creep' *Sociological Research Online*, vol.6, no.3

posed by crime, whether in a local area, or in society more generally. As such, these signals have a potentially disproportionate impact upon people's perceptions and fears of crime⁶⁵.

Innes (2002) argues that such crimes and disorders can be particularly influential in shaping beliefs and do not necessarily equate to what are traditionally defined as serious crimes. Indeed the signal crime perspective highlights the capacity for 'low-level' crime and disorder to have the most impact on community order and quality of life.

A 'signal crime' explanation of perceptions acknowledges the different sources of information about crime, notably the role of the mass media as well as direct experience. Innes makes the distinction between (personally experienced) 'situated signal crimes' and (media channelled) 'disembedded signal crimes'.

The former relate to personally witnessed crime and disorder in a local area (often low-level) that affect people's quality of life and act as signals that there are problems where they live⁶⁶. The latter relate to high-profile cases in the media that signal that something is wrong with society and the situation is getting worse.

This explanation of signal crimes operating at different levels (primarily the national and local) is consistent with the findings from the regression analyses of perceptions, fear and confidence, namely that local perceptions are more 'place-based' while perceptions nationally are more influenced by mass media. The argument is that if these crimes are not given sufficient attention, any fall in the crime-rate generally will not be matched by a fall in perceptions.

Finally, it is worth noting that according to

the signal crime perspective, the signals can have different interpretations in different contexts with different audiences. For example Innes (2002) cites a spate of graffiti in an affluent area as being likely to have more impact as a signal than in an area with more serious regular behaviours where the graffiti would go unnoticed. This is relevant to what we already know about the importance of individual and demographic characteristics in shaping perceptions.

A note on Individual characteristics

This paper has focused on the factors that shape perceptions generally, and as such has not dwelt on individual demographic characteristics. However, it is clear, for example, that a person's age or whether they have been a victim in the last year will act as drivers of perception. What the importance of demographic differences implies is the importance of understanding and acknowledging these differences when reaching out to local communities.

Discussion

The impact of crime on our lives is determined by a combination of many factors. All of these appear to have an influence on our perceptions, in sometimes subtly different ways. The evidence indicates that a distinction can be made between perceptions and confidence nationally and locally.

While national perceptions may be overly distorted through the media lens, importantly local perceptions appear to be driven by personal experiences and circumstances in relation to local concerns, namely the crimes and disorders that affect people's quality of life. While improved perceptions and confidence nationally may hinge on a better

⁶⁵ Innes, M, and Fielding, N (2002) "From Community to Communicative Policing: 'Signal Crimes' and the Problem of Public Reassurance". *Sociological Research Online* Vol.7, no.2

⁶⁶ It is possible that the directly perceived problem is an indicator of wider problems. For example, complaints regarding litter may reflect a deeper problem of over-crowded housing.

informed public, locally, perceptions appear to require a locally focused, accessible, visible and meaningful response.

'It is clear that where people live has a significant impact on their experience and perception of crime. Those living in urban and deprived areas experience higher levels of crime. They are more likely to think the crime-rate has increased in their local area. And perceptions of anti-social behaviour are highest in 'hard pressed'⁶⁷ areas. Some areas have entrenched and serious crime problems regardless of falls in the crime-rate.'

Boosting the confidence of a 'disconnected' public

Although there is little doubt that the public wants an appropriate response to 'serious' incidents, they also want the police to be concerned with and solve everyday low-level problems that they more frequently experience. In signal crime terms, the tendency has been for the police and public to be attuned to different signal crimes⁶⁸. This may be characterised as a 'disconnect' between the public and the police. Qualitative research frequently shows that the public view the police as less accessible, less visible, and less interested in offences that matter to them, than they want them to be⁶⁹. Communicative action is required to respond to signal crimes with signal justice.

The drivers of confidence in policing and low levels of advocacy for the Criminal Justice System amongst the police indicate that a route to improving public perceptions and confidence relating to the Criminal Justice

System as a whole is to work with and through the police as touchstones for the public regarding the state of criminal justice.

Given what we know about the impact of low-level crime and disorder on people's quality of life, a Neighbourhood Policing approach offers some promise. There is encouraging evidence emerging that Neighbourhood Policing can have a positive impact on perception, fear and confidence. In London, Stanko⁷⁰ found that those living in Safer Neighbourhood areas⁷¹ were more satisfied with the way the area was policed, more likely to feel that anti-social behaviour and crime-levels had improved, and more likely to have lower levels of worry about personal and property crime. Similarly the national Neighbourhood Policing evaluation found that:

The National Reassurance Policing Programme delivered, after 12 months of implementation, increased public confidence in the police, reductions in crime victimisation, and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as improved feelings of safety, public perceptions of community engagement, police visibility, and familiarity with the police.

Communication and information play a crucial role in ensuring improvements hit home with local communities. Information and familiarity are strongly related to positive perceptions, highlighting the importance of engagement, consultation and communication. While interest in crime is high, knowledge of it tends to be inaccurate⁷². The public believe sentencing to be lenient because sentencing is portrayed

67 Low-income families, residents in council areas, people living in high-rise, and inner-city estates.

68 Innes, M, and Fielding, N (2002) "From Community to Communicative Policing: 'Signal Crimes' and the Problem of Public Reassurance". *Sociological Research Online* Vol.7, no.2

69 See for example: CML Research *Perception and Fear of crime* www.cmlresearch.com

70 Stanko, E., Wunsch, D., Rehman, U., Norman, J., Murdoch, A. *Safer neighbourhoods: learning from ward-level research*. Metropolitan Police Service: Strategic Research Unit.

71 Safer Neighbourhoods is the term to describe Neighbourhood Policing in London.

72 Roberts, J.V. and Hough, M.J. (2005) *Understanding public attitudes to criminal justice*. Open University Press.

as lenient and the public have low levels of knowledge about sentencing.

Furthermore, some parts of the Criminal Justice System are remote and poorly understood, including parts that operate in the community (e.g. Youth Offending Teams, community sentences). Being a victim of crime may be comparatively rare, but even rarer is direct experience of the CJS beyond the police. Better partnership with policing and more open criminal justice is likely to boost confidence. People take their cues from policing in their area and as such, according to the evidence, a visible and engaging police force, with positive links to the rest of the CJS is a route to improving local confidence and improved perceptions.

The inherent problem of negative perceptions is the implication the public feel disconnected and pessimistic with what is being done to reduce crime. A perception gap is likely to remain as long as positive crime figures are not matched by people's experiences and feelings of security. The 'gap' between public perceptions, confidence, fear on the one hand and improved crime-levels and positive action against crime on the other, is likely to be bridged by efforts to connect the public with the criminal justice response in a way they want, understand, and makes sense to them, particular to the circumstances they live in. We can reasonably conclude from the evidence that being informed and connected will have a positive effect on perceptions of crime and criminal justice.

Conclusions

The evidence relating to perceptions and crime and confidence in criminal justice indicate possible ways to improve perceptions and increase confidence. These include:

- Perceptions and lack of confidence are not just derived from media influence, wider beliefs or personal characteristics. Perceptions of crime are often derived from people's real concerns about their local area. The criminal justice response needs to address the causes of these concerns.
- Certain types of crime, disorder and behaviour that affect people's quality of life drive local perceptions. Tackling issues that matter to local communities is important, and as important is communicating action and providing sufficient opportunities for engagement and contact.
- Higher levels of perceptions and concern and lower levels of confidence are found in the most deprived areas of the country. Differences in these areas around trust in the police, the severity of disorder and crime, and community efficacy are likely to require a focused response.
- The national, and general, picture of crime can be confusing and open to distortion leading to misperceptions. Independent, accurate, and clear information should be available to the public which is sensitive to differences in people's experiences.

- The police are the most public and well-regarded face of the Criminal Justice System, but public confidence has declined. Providing a more visible, accessible and locally-focused response is needed to improve confidence. Positive communication and informal contact are also required to build trust and confidence.
- The public have low knowledge of criminal justice beyond the police, and little confidence in sentencing. Increasing the visibility of, and providing better information about, criminal justice agencies and punishment (particularly that served in the community) is necessary to improve confidence.

APPENDIX iii

Footnote references from main report

- 1 Ipsos MORI (2007) Trust in Professions 2007 <http://www.ipsos-public-affairs.com/trust/truth.shtml>
- ii Ipsos MORI (2004) Opinions of Professions <http://www.ipsos-public-affairs.com/trust/satisfaction-jobs.shtml>
- iii Ipsos MORI (2003) 'Public Confidence in the Criminal Justice System' conducted for the Office of Criminal Justice Reform, Home Office.
- iv From 'Overview of Risk of Offending' at www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/toolkits
- v Ipsos MORI (2004) 'Public attitudes on rethinking crime and punishment' conducted for the Esmée Fairburn Foundation
- vi Ipsos MORI (2006) 'Views on parenting and anti-social behaviour'
- vii *Ibid*
- viii Public attitudes to young people and youth crime in Scotland <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/07/1485403/54066>
- ix Ipsos MORI (2006) 'Views on parenting and anti-social behaviour'
- x Youth Taskforce Action Plan, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008
- xi Ipsos MORI (2008) Political Monitor
- xii Ipsos MORI (2006)
- xiii ICM (2007) Survey of victims of non-violent crime for the Ministry of Justice
- xiv Ipsos MORI (2006) Criminal Justice System Staff Survey
- xv Roberts, J.V. and Hough, M.J. (2005) Understanding public attitudes to criminal justice. Open University Press.
- xvi Ipsos MORI (2006) *The Perception Gap: an International comparison.*
- xvii Ipsos MORI (2008) *Closing the Gaps: Crime and Public Perceptions*
- xviii CML Market Research (2008) on behalf of the Home Office Communication Directorate
- xix Bradford, B., Jackson, J. and Stanko, E. (2008) 'Contact and confidence: Revisiting the impact of public encounters with the police' *Policing and Society* (forthcoming).
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- xxi Ipsos MORI (2008) *Closing the Gaps: Crime and Public Perceptions*
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