

# Neighbourhood Policing

**For some it's the Holy Grail: Police who know the neighbourhood they work in, the problems, the people, the priorities, police who listen to what the community wants done and work with a range of partners to make sure it happens. This briefing looks at the national Neighbourhood Policing Strategy, what's behind it and how it's being developed in the West Midlands.**

## **What is Neighbourhood Policing?**

According to ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) it's about putting 'the right people, in the right places, in the right numbers in order to create neighbourhoods that are safe and feel safe', and it aims to put communities at the heart of local policing.

It's part of the wider agenda to improve all public services by focusing at the neighbourhood level. (See b:cen's Neighbourhood Management Briefing)

'Neighbourhood Policing - your police, your community, our commitment' published by the Home Office in May 2005, stated "Neighbourhood Policing today is about having dedicated resources for local areas, with mixed teams of officers, special constables, community support officers, wardens and others... And is about developing a new relationship between the police and the public"

The Government promised that by 2008: police forces across England and Wales would have 'Neighbourhood Teams'; 24,000 community support officers would be recruited; we'd know our local police officers, and how to contact them and that ordinary people would have a real say in local policing issues and setting local priorities.

**'Building Communities, Beating Crime'** a White Paper published in November 2004 outlined the Government's commitment to foster a new relationship between the police and the public.

**For more information about Neighbourhood Policing**

**National website**  
[www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk)

## **'Signal Crimes'**

Work has been done to help the police see problems through the eyes of the citizen. *Signal crimes* have been identified as disorderly and criminal incidents interpreted by people as warning signals about the level of safety and security in a neighbourhood.

Graffiti, vandalism, 'rowdy' behaviour and so on have a disproportionate effect on peoples' perceptions of their safety, yet in traditional policing were viewed as trivial. But Neighbourhood Teams, working with local people, should identify what really matters to the community. Through tackling these problems it's hoped that people will feel their neighbourhoods are safer and more secure.

## **What's happening here?**

The whole focus is changing. West Midlands Police have established 330 new neighbourhoods to replace old policing areas. They are committed to provide dedicated Neighbourhood Policing teams in each one, which will use information from the community to focus on problems that the public say matter most .

The Government set a target for establishing neighbourhood teams by 2008. West Midlands Police had 'structures, systems and process' for Neighbourhood Teams in place by Autumn 2006 - ahead of schedule. Chief Inspector Greg Oakley leads Neighbourhood Policing for the West Midlands Force, he says they've been 'peddling fast' to get to this point, and '...there's some way to go', but already 1700 officers are part of Neighbourhood Teams, along with 514 Police Community Support Officers. A recruitment campaign will raise the total of PCSO's to 745 by Spring 2007.

## **Neighbourhood Teams and Partnership working**

These neighbourhood teams are made up of more than just police staff. They combine police officers, special constables, police community support officers and volunteers. All work with staff from other partner agencies and are based in the heart of the community they serve.

## **What is a Neighbourhood**

For the purposes of Neighbourhood Policing, a neighbourhood is defined through local agreement between communities and public service organisations (local authorities, police and other partners).

## **Police Community Support Officers**

Uniformed members of the police team who provide a high visibility presence in communities. Their role is different from police officers, but they have a range of powers to deal with problems of anti social behaviour and disorder.

## **Special Constables**

Special constabularies are a force of volunteers who receive training from their local police force to work with and offer support to regular police officers. Special constables give at least 4 hours a week and provide a vital link between the regular (full-time) police and the local community.

## **Neighbourhood Wardens**

Neighbourhood Wardens provide a highly visible, uniformed, semi-official presence in residential and public areas, town centres and high-crime areas. Their overall purpose is to improve quality of life and contribute to the regeneration of an area. The wardens have a number of roles depending on local needs.

Chief Inspector Oakley says 'Police, public and partnerships are the three ingredients to successful neighbourhood policing... We need to put new mechanisms in place that give people access to us. Transport problems, language, elderly people who can't get out and about to meetings - can all be barriers.' It's here partners make a difference. For example, it's hoped that a collaboration between 'Meals on Wheels' and West Midlands Police will give clients who may not get to public meetings or be 'on-line' the chance to have their say.

### **In the Community**

On the ground, officers are convinced of the approach of working alongside the community.

PC Bernie Flynn is seconded to Quinzone, a project working with young people and families in Quinton in Birmingham. He's based in the community and links back to the local Neighbourhood Policing Teams. People know who he is and where they can find him. He says "there is nothing better than people coming *to you* to talk about concerns" He believes that by working together and sharing information much more gets done.

Police Community Support Officer Joanne Reeves says, 'Listening to them, (the local community) working with them, really works... I feel part of the neighbourhood as well as part of the police.'

Although Quinzone is a teaching and learning community, Keith Slater, the Director, says that with the police at the centre of a project it becomes easier to get other agencies on board and work together. "No one agency can achieve on their own – it's not rocket science, but making partnerships work together is the key, and West Midlands Police have been a driving force in getting that to happen."

### **Does it work?**

Individuals may be enthusiastic, but is there any proof that Neighbourhood Policing works?

The National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP) tried out a form of Neighbourhood Policing across 16 sites in England between 2003-5. It involved local communities in identifying crime and disorder issues in their neighbourhoods, and tackling them with

### **The Police Promise to the Community (ACPO)**

- **Access** - to policing or community safety services through a named point of contact
- **Influence** - over community safety priorities in their neighbourhood
- **Interventions** - joint action with communities and partners to solve problems
- **Answers** - sustainable solutions to problems and feedback on results

### **Quinzone Teaching and Learning Community**

Quinzone started life as an Education Action Zone in 2001, but now embraces a variety of different initiatives, delivered in partnership with other agencies and individuals, such as the police..

[www.quinzone.bham.org.uk](http://www.quinzone.bham.org.uk)

the police and other public service providers and partners.

The evaluation of the NRPP, (published January 2006), found the results to be consistently positive. Improvements in levels of crime, perceptions of anti-social behaviour, feelings of safety after dark and public confidence in the police were directly attributed to the NRPP approach.

The three critical elements for successful Neighbourhood Policing were found to be: visible, accessible and locally known authority figures; community involvement to identify priorities; targeted police action to tackle crimes and disorder that matter most to local people.

So both first hand experience and research findings indicate that Neighbourhood Policing can work, but it's clear that the more people from the community have their say, the more effective everyone believes it will be.

Chief Inspector Oakley is positive that by responding to each individual neighbourhood, dealing with its specific problems, Neighbourhood Policing can be effective. He says that dedicating officers to Neighbourhood Policing teams instead of traditional enforcement roles (i.e. responding to crimes after they're committed) makes sense because "there's a sell by date on enforcement alone. It's not cost effective, the causes of crime need to be addressed. With successful Neighbourhood Policing, the demand for enforcement should reduce."

## **National Reassurance Policing Programme**

The full evaluation of the impact of the NRPP can be found at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pubsintro1](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pubsintro1)

## **What's happening in my area?**

To find out what's happening in your area contact your local police on 0845 113 5000 or visit [www.west-midlands.police.uk/neighbourhoodpolicing](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/neighbourhoodpolicing) and click on 'Your Neighbourhood'

## **How do I find out who my neighbourhood officer is?**

Contact your local police station on 0845 113 5000 or visit the West Midlands Police website as above.



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138 Digbeth  
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B5 6DR

Tel: 0121 678 8892/8893

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