

## Local Government Association

### Submission to the Home Office Review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

1. Some key issues have emerged to us during the review process. These are listed below. This response then details, according to the template offered by the Home Office, our views on the governance, structures and delivery of Crime and Disorder Reduction partnerships (CDRPs).
  - Disparity between Home Office agenda and targets set for Police forces from Police Standards Unit
  - Failure to include an analysis of the relationship between resources and performance into the review of CDRPs
  - Variety exists in set-up and performance of CDRPs and extent to which they are given priority. This is true also of other partnerships and delivery mechanisms existing at a local level. Variety is reflected in the varied extent to which structures have been developed to join up CDRPs with these other partnerships.
  - Lack of understanding of full criminal justice system amongst partners
  - Effective local authority leadership on this issue is not consistently recognised in practice.
  - Many examples of good practice in partnership working – joint appointments/secondments, shared inspections etc
  - Feeling that if there can be clarity at central and local level about what it is that partnerships are trying to achieve, appropriate structures will naturally follow. The notion that one size does not fit all, and that there should be diversity at a local level, remains crucial.
  - Involvement of local councillors is negatively perceived, despite the support for this role indicated through Government activity, e.g. the Police Reform white paper.

## Governance

2. We continue to support CDRPs as the best vehicle for determining strategic priorities for community safety and delivering on them.
3. In discussions about the accountability of CDRPs, it should not be forgotten that local councils are unique amongst CDRP partners in that they are democratically elected. We believe that this existing accountability should be preserved. It would be useful to build upon this, rather than establish an entirely separate mode of accountability that would both compromise democratic accountability to local communities and give rise to further duplication.

4. The LGA view is that CDRPs should remain as partnerships in the true sense. Whilst we fully support the notion that the community safety agenda is best delivered in partnership, we wish to see partner organisations retaining their individual identities whilst working in a joined-up manner.
5. Local authorities and other partner organisations are already subject to extensive inspection. We would not want to see this review further extending existing over-bearing inspection regimes. However, we recognise that inspection can be useful and give onus to the community safety and partnership agenda. We would wish to see current inspection mechanisms taken into account, and the inspection bodies responsible for partner organisations working together to ensure a joined-up approach to partnership performance. The Audit Commission would therefore be fully engaged in any developments in inspection impacting on local authorities. There are already some good examples of joint inspections of current review mechanisms (e.g. Best Value) within partner agencies. If a new inspection regime were to be introduced, the Home Office would need to consider the resourcing of partnerships. Demands are already high, and inspection would place a significant additional pull on already stretched resources. Inspection should also be proportionate to the size of the partnership. It is questionable whether a small District should experience the same weight of inspection as a large unitary authority.
6. We fully support the drive for improved community engagement. This is an objective already shaping local authority activity. Again, the LGA would like to see existing processes and delivery mechanisms taken into account, and partnerships building on these rather than setting up an additional scheme.
7. Whilst we agree that the public should have ready access to community safety related information, we would suggest that the visibility of the partnership is not the key issue here. Rather, it is of most importance that processes are joined-up behind the scenes, ensuring a smooth and efficient flow of information and service delivery to the public.
8. We note the improvement in partner engagement over the lifetime of CDRPs. In our view, effective engagement depends on partners prioritising this agenda. Prioritisation will be impacted upon by many competing agendas, which is why it is crucial to ensure a joined-up message from across central Government and any inspection or performance management regimes. In addition, whilst supportive partners are clearly significant to the effective performance of a partnership, we recognise that the role played by partners may differ according to local circumstances, and this should not be regulated against.

## **Structures**

9. In the view of the LGA, it is imperative that the independence of the Districts, as separate and democratically elected bodies, is preserved within this review of CDRPs. Whilst County Councils clearly have a valuable and distinct role to play in coordination, and there are merits in working together across Districts and Councils, we would not

support any move to diminish the status of District CDRPs. It has been suggested already that separate guidance for District and County councils would be helpful for new initiatives.

10. It is our firm belief that there should be no compulsion for District CDRPs to merge with other Districts. Whilst this is a useful option and we support the availability of this choice, we would argue that such mechanisms are most effective where it is the decision of the Districts in question, and measures should not be implemented which do not compliment the recognised need for local flexibilities.
11. *Boundaries – check manifesto*
12. It has been suggested that structures will naturally emerge once clear processes are in place and partnerships begin to work effectively. We would not, therefore, recommend a prescribed structure as the answer to the complex relationships between CDRPs and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Youth Offending teams (YOTs), Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) and the wider criminal justice system. However, many local authorities have found it useful for the CRDP to be established as a sub-partnership to the local strategic partnership. This ensures that planning and implementation processes are joined up, and crime and disorder reduction agendas are aligned. The presence of representatives of many of the same partners on both partnerships may also support improvements in partner engagement and joined-up working. We recognise that the issue of structures will become only more complex with the launch of Children's partnerships, and believe that this development should be integrated into this discussion.

## **Delivery**

13. There are many pressures on local authorities and other public bodies to mainstream key concerns, such as community safety. It is this task which forms the essence of section 17. The visibility of the community safety agenda within and between organisations will be crucial. Clarity in presentation and easy access to straight-forward information about ways of working at national and local levels will be useful in achieving this. It will be useful also for examples of good practice to be readily available to public sector professionals outside of community safety. Through the efforts of bodies like that LGA, we have gone some way to achieving this already. Disparity in approaches between the Government departments and inspection agencies that partners and services report to again continue to act as a barrier to effective mainstreaming and prioritisation of the community safety agenda in this way.
14. Local authorities and their partners are already subject to many levers and incentives. As a minimum, any new measures must not be in conflict with existing measures that are set to continue. Where local authorities are concerned, this will require the Home Office to work in collaboration with the ODPM and Audit Commission.

15. Integration between CDRPs and Drug (and Alcohol) Action teams (DAATS) has provided a further useful option for partners to consider. Again, we would not want to see any enforcement of this delivery mechanism.
16. In many instances, stability and time are key to resolving barriers in service delivery. However, we recognise that issues such as disparity in boundaries, difficulties in information sharing, and competing priorities do pose real difficulties. One answer to this difficulty is to ensure local agencies have the freedom to respond together in whatever way they see fit for the benefit of local service delivery.
17. The TOGETHER campaign was a useful mechanism in raising the profile of anti-social behaviour and the beginning of a less tolerant approach from Government. The training and workshops for practitioners did prove useful for practitioners. Due to the many demands on local authority resources, the support offered through such means is welcome. We also welcome community engagement through campaigns such as TOGETHER, though only where this is effectively joined-up with other local programmes. However, the approach taken circumvented the role of local CDRPs in agreeing the most appropriate approaches and delivery mechanisms at a local level. There was not sufficient focus on rehabilitation and prevention, which increase the range in the value this could offer to local areas.

The LGA supports the alcohol enforcement campaign as a useful initiative in combating the problem of underage alcohol sales. The initiative proved that there is a national will to progress this agenda, and the provision of central funding and clear objectives were crucial to its success. However, the rapid implementation and poor communication in advance of the initiative are seen to have excluded CDRPs. This is clearly negative for the role and visibility of CDRPs, and for the relationship between community safety work and regulatory services. The lack of communication also left the way open for duplication of existing work programmes between agencies.

18. The Priority and Prolific Offenders Strategy was launched by Government with little consultation, and provide local authorities with little time to prepare and no additional resources to support an ambitious new agenda. The LGA views this as bad practice on the part of Government, and in contradiction to a broader community safety agenda which emphasises the role of local partners in strategic planning as well as in delivery. In light of the sudden introduction of this programme, the detailed guidance was found to be useful. However, the undue pressure this has placed on local resources remains.
19. Finally, it should be noted that whilst our member authorities broadly welcome this review, a general feeling exists that the benefits of partnership working have increased as partners have become accustomed to this way of working and developed local planning and delivery mechanisms. A radical overhaul of the system could threaten these improvements. Significant change may prove untimely.

