

Community Safety Objectives: reducing offending and re-offending

Decisions

- 1. Members are requested to agree that work towards achieving the three 'community safety' objectives: preventing re-offending, reducing youth crime and developing the role of local government as part of the government's police reform proposals, should be progressed as set out in paragraph 22 of this report.**
- 2. That the Board decide on the arrangements they wish to be made for member oversight of this project (paragraph 23).**

Actions Required

- 3. A scoping plan be drawn up to covering all elements of the work identified and submitted to the LGA Executive for approval.**

Action by: SCB Secretariat

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21 March 2005

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Summary

- 1. This report sets out proposals for taking forward the three major community safety objectives agreed by the Board. The central aim of these objectives is to develop the capacity for local government to take a lead in working to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the misuse of drugs. The report concentrates in particular on developing the second stage of the project on reducing re-offending following the successful launch of the LGA report: 'Going Straight' and links these with proposals for the development of the two other community safety key objectives: police reform and reducing youth offending.**

Background

- 2. The Safer Communities Board on 22 November three key objectives on the theme of community safety;**
 - Developing local government's role in preventing re-offending**
 - Police reform and the review of crime and disorder reduction partnerships**
 - Working positively to reduce youth offending**
- 3. In addition the Board is responsible for a three year project aimed at tackling domestic violence which is due to run until December 2006.**
- 4. Work on identifying and developing local government's potential for preventing re-offending has been progressed through the LGA Project 'Working with the Correctional System, which culminated in the publication of the report 'Going Straight'. At its meeting on 22 November the Board agreed a second phase of the project, focusing on promoting the messages in the report to government, local authorities and their partners and seeking to influence thinking about the most effective future arrangements for managing offenders.**
- 5. The LGA's response to the police reform white paper 'Building Communities: Beating Crime' was submitted to the Home Office in early February. The update report being presented to members as Item on this agenda outlines specific work that is being progressed with the Association of Police Authorities in developing proposals for membership of police authorities, the proposed 'trigger mechanism' and scrutiny arrangements. The submission also emphasised the key role that can be played by local government in reducing offending, in particular through the more effective implementation of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (This places on local authorities a duty to have regard in carrying out their functions of the 'likely effect of those functions, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in their area.')**

6. Discussions are currently being held with officers of the Children and Young People team on how to develop the specific objective of reducing re-offending in conjunction with the response to the Youth Green Paper and the key objectives of the CYPB.

Going Straight: Working with the Correctional services to reduce reoffending

7. The LGA set out – roughly a year ago – to examine the issue of re-offending and whether councils could contribute to the reduction of re-offending by working more closely with the correctional services. We also wanted to understand the importance of the issue for councils and the extent of current activity and joint working. The project has included:
 - commissioning a national survey of all member authorities;
 - collected good practice examples of joint activity between councils and local institutions; and;
 - gathering written and verbal perspectives from national stakeholders.
8. The LGA report 'Going Straight- reducing re-offending in local communities' was published at an LGA partners roundtable held at Local Government House on 3 February 2005, and was attended by Paul Goggins MP, Minister for Prisons. The roundtable event was attended by over 30 leading representatives from local government, criminal justice agencies, national partner organisations, and the civil service, and prompted a lively debate on the current and future role of councils in contributing to reducing re-offending. Overall the report has been positively received, and its key messages supported by government and partners.
9. The LGA has also published an accompanying research document with the conclusions of a national survey of local authority activity in dealing with re-offending. Both the report and research document have been distributed to local authorities, national stakeholders, parliamentarians and the Government. They were also the focus of two LGA fringe debates held on 12 February at the Labour Local Government Conference, and on the 5 March at the Liberal Democrat Spring Conference.
10. The report has also formed the basis of LGA reports submitted to the Home Office Prolific and Priority Offending Programme Board, on which the Association is represented by Cllr Chris Clarke. These have outlined how local government can take a lead in preventing both re-offending and initial offending. They have been positively received by the government. A more detailed report that develops these proposals and will examine specific ways in which the government can help to improve local government's capacity to take forward this work will be presented to the PPO Programme Board in May. The outcome of these discussions will form the basis of a paper to the new Central Local Partnership Safer Communities Sub Group that is likely to hold its first meeting in June.
11. The report's recommendations, and in particular the way in which government can support capacity building for local government will also be explored at a

breakfast seminar organised jointly by the John Smith Institute and the LGA to be held on 22 March at 11 Downing Street.

Key recommendations from report

12. With the prison population in England and Wales being the highest in the EU, and with 59% of those released in 1997 re-offending, the report recommends that a whole new approach be adopted needed. The report recommends an approach which:
 - minimises the number of people who embark on a criminal career in the first place - through greater emphasis on prevention. The general profile of offenders and the factors that can help reduce re-offending are now well established. We know that most offenders have experienced a life time of social exclusion;
 - reduces the number of people who are sent to prison by changing sentencing policy so that only those people who really need to be in prison are there; and
 - Provides for more effective treatment in the community – for example a high proportion of offenders have drug and alcohol and mental health problems. This should be provided more cheaply and effectively in the community.
13. The report identifies three key messages:
 - prison may work as a way of dispensing punishment and safeguarding communities whilst offenders are locked up- but it fails to reform behaviour;
 - many of the services that local councils provide such as housing, education and social services have been shown to make a significant contribution to the reduction of re-offending;
 - key to the successful transition of offenders from prison to community, is the introduction of an integrated multi-agency approach drawn from health, police, probation, prisons, the local authority, Job Centre Plus, Housing Associations etc.
14. In order to help reduce re-offending local authorities should be given a properly funded leadership role to coordinate the work of local partners in providing support to offenders returning to their communities. A key element in this would be to replicate the current Youth Offending Team model for adult ex-offenders through which local authorities could provide support for rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

Key issues for LGA

15. Having successfully launched the report and publicised more widely to local authorities, national stakeholders, parliamentarians and the Government, it is an ideal time to decide the best ways of capitalising on the positive responses we have already received on the report from both the Government and national partners. Key issues to consider include:

- using the report to embark on the next phase of the project – to work with Government and partners, in particular the IDeA, to ensure effective reform of the current system and to develop local government’s capacity to work effectively to prevent both offending and re-offending;
- working to increase awareness of our member authorities of the key role local government can play in this area.
- raising awareness of the importance of effectively addressing issues relating to mental health and offending
- using the likely delay of the Management of Offenders and Sentencing Bill as the opportunity to push for a recasting of any new piece of legislation introduced post election; and
- building on the shared concerns and support of national partner organisation of issues we have raised in our report.

Police Reform

16. The LGA submitted its response to the police reform white paper ‘Building Communities: Beating Crime’ in early February. Further work is now being carried out with the APA, initially at a joint workshop to be held on 21 March, on a number of specific proposals: the membership of police authorities, the mechanism to be applied where a police service is judged to be not responding adequately to the needs of the community (the trigger mechanism), and the role of scrutiny. The expectation is that, following the development of joint proposals, there will be further discussion with the government.
17. In addition to these specific issues arising from the police white paper, the LGA response gave great emphasis to the potential of local government to take a lead in preventing crime, anti-social behaviour. These issues correspond almost exactly with those that have been set out in the report ‘Going Straight’ and it is therefore recommended that the progression of this part of the work should be amalgamated with the proposals set out earlier in this report.

Working to reduce youth offending

18. Members have identified that success in this area is critical to the achievement of the objective of bringing about a substantial and sustained reduction in offending. One key piece of work is the LGA ‘Young Peoples’ Project’, which will set a vision for services for young people. It has been agreed that work in this area will be led by both the Safer Communities Board and the Children and Young People Board carried out by the Young Peoples’ Project Member Task Group, on which Cllr Roland Domleo has been appointed to represent the Safer Communities Board. The project is designed to look at how local government supports and develops children and young people in a range of experiences both inside and outside school and at how local services can be steered to improve outcomes (agreed as part of Every Child Matters) of children and young people. The project will focus on the establishment of the new strategic arrangements such as the Children and Young Peoples’ Strategic Partnership, including lobbying for Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) come under the management of the Local Authority and formulating a response to the Youth Green Paper when it is published later this year. One of the key themes of the Youth Green Paper has been identified by the Government as

‘Better and earlier support for vulnerable young people. Looking out for young people demonstrating risk factors associated with poor school attendance and behaviour, youth crime, drugs and substance misuse and teenage pregnancy, and greater access to specialist services where needs go beyond school and pastoral care.’

- 19. The primary aim of the SCB participation in this work, both at member and officer level, will be to ensure that work is effectively coordinated and that the project can deliver the aims of the SCB in reducing youth offending.**
- 20. In addition to this, it is suggested that the Safer Communities Board takes the lead in lobbying for a greater role for local government in preventing youth offending. YOTS were established by the Youth Justice Board to prevent young people from offending. In addition the Youth Justice Board has established a number of diversionary and intervention programmes to deal with young people at risk of offending. Youth Inclusion Programmes have been established for 13 to 16 year-olds who are engaged in crime or are identified as being most at risk of offending, truancy, or social exclusion, whilst Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by 8 to 13-year-olds who are considered to be at high risk of offending. However, despite local authority engagement, these programmes are bound by funding arrangements prescribed by the Youth Justice Board, for example money allocation based on age.**
- 21. The LGA has agreed as one of its key objectives is to reinforce the community leadership role of councils and in particular to young people, it is therefore recommended that the Board develop proposals for integrating YIPs and YISPs (or locally determined alternatives) into children’s and young people’s strategic partnership arrangements using the structures established by Every Child Matters and the Children Act 2004 as a basis for more effective coordination, funding allocation and integration within the local area. On the basis of this key messages and a lobbying strategy would be developed.**

Next Steps

- 22. In taking forward the areas of work outlined in this report the following key areas of focus are suggested:**
 - To work with local authorities and partners to develop a model for Adult Offending Teams as a working example of the leading role local authorities can play in co-ordinating services locally in reducing re-offending.**
 - Collect stronger evidence of the link between co-ordinated local support and the prevention of re-offending.**
 - To specifically look at how the LGA can contribute to finding solutions to managing the issue of mental health and offending.**
 - To set up regional forums/workshops to promote our work on Adult Offending Teams and key messages and recommendations from our ‘Going Straight’ report.**
 - Develop a mini-campaign with activities including lobbying to put the role of local councils and local Communities on the face of future legislation and**

- **get key national partners to sign up to a joint statement or policy stance on an alternative approach to the current system.**
- **Develop proposals and lobby for YIPs and YISPs to be integrated into children's and young people's strategic partnership arrangements.**

In developing this work it will be important to ensure effective recognition of domestic violence issues, and coordination with the Board's domestic violence project.

Member arrangements

- 23. Members agreed initially that the Board would take responsibility for this work. Members may now wish to consider whether it would be more appropriate for a member task group to be set up that would work within the policy framework set by the Board.**

Annual Conference

- 24. As part of this work it is proposed that an Annual Conference for the Safer Communities Board be held in September around the theme of reducing youth offending. This will provide an opportunity to raise the profile of this issue and to encourage the attendance of participants with an interest in community safety and work relating to children and young people.**

Implications for Wales

- 25. The project will take full account of the needs of Welsh member authorities**

Financial/Resource Implications

- 26. The majority of the work outline will be undertaken within the current resources available to the Safer Communities Board. Resourcing will be required for the collection of evidence on the correlation between the provision of coordinated support for ex-offenders and the extent to which re-offending is prevented. This will be quantified as part of the process of scoping the project.**

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