



INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

Written by Andy Boys and
Frank Warburton (Nacro)

working to

reduce crime



Working together to reduce crime

The publication forms part of a range of support services for community safety partnerships, delivered by Crime Concern and Nacro, and funded by the Home Office.

These support services aim to enhance the effectiveness of community safety partnerships by offering:

Free health checks and subsequent support of partnership strategies and action plans. For more information please contact our support advisors:

Richard Backes, Nacro

Tel: 020 7501 0555

Dawn Hart, Crime Concern

Tel: 020 7820 6000

Free briefing papers on a range of community safety issues and subjects including:

Performance Management

Setting Targets

Mainstreaming

Engaging Health Services

Involving the Community

Training Opportunities

The Implications of

The Lawrence Enquiry Report

For copies please contact Amy Reeves, Crime Concern Tel: 01793 863 518

Regional training and development seminars at a subsidised delegate fee of £50

For details about themes, dates and venues, please contact:

Janette Roker, Nacro

Tel: 020 7582 6500



INTRODUCTION

Why should crime and disorder reduction partnerships consult and involve their local communities? There are many good reasons. Some of these reasons are statutory, including:

- As part of their responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local partnerships are required to consult with the public when drawing up their crime and disorder reduction strategies.
- Funding for initiatives such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the New Deal for Communities (NDC) is dependent on community consultation being an integral part of any bid.
- Best Value emphasises accountability to local communities.

Other reasons include:

- It is a good way of making up the 'democratic deficit' in an era of growing public mistrust of politics and the state.
- Giving people a voice takes the guesswork out of the planning of service delivery.
- Community consultation makes local services accountable to the people who use them.
- Community action and volunteering are increasingly seen as significant components in the delivery of public services.

This briefing has been written to help everyone working in the field of community safety with the consultation process. But it is not just a guide to consultation. Stronger communities are safer communities. One of the aims of community safety is to build strong communities – communities that can be fully involved in the planning and implementation of their local crime and disorder reduction strategy. In this guide, therefore, we move beyond consultation to building community capacity for sustained involvement. Encouraging communities to take ownership of the strategy development and implementation process will enhance the impact of partnerships.

The move from consultation to involvement will not happen overnight. Community capacity building takes time. It may require extra work and use of resources at first – stronger communities are not built on just a yearly public meeting – but the benefits will be a safer community.

We have structured this guide to reflect the journey from community consultation to community involvement.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

To date, most community safety partnerships have tended to concentrate on securing and consolidating the participation of professional agencies. If partnerships are to contribute to rebuilding social capital (ie strengthening communities) they must now give community involvement equal priority. This should include:

- developing a clear and shared understanding of what is meant by 'community'
- involving the community at all levels and stages of strategy development and implementation
- accepting that community involvement is a two-way process, in which the wishes and aspirations of the community are properly addressed
- adopting an attitude that says: 'What are the community's issues and how can we address them together?'
- a commitment to sustain and maximise opportunities for the community to shape strategy delivery
- demand-led community safety – as described in the Audit Commission's *Safety in Numbers*

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A systematic approach to community consultation and involvement will follow these six steps:

- 1 Identify which communities need to be consulted and involved, including hard to reach groups.
- 2 Identify and overcome barriers to community consultation and involvement.
- 3 Explore a range of possible methods for community consultation.
- 4 Link with other community consultation/involvement mechanisms
- 5 Sustain community involvement.
- 6 Develop a strategy, set targets and develop evaluation measures for your community involvement strategy.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY WHICH COMMUNITIES NEED TO BE INVOLVED

Home Office guidance to partnerships emphasises the importance of consulting 'hard to reach' groups, particularly those who fear crime most, or are most at risk of being victims or offenders. These include:

- young males
- homeless people
- drug users
- gays and lesbians
- ethnic minorities
- children
- victims of domestic abuse
- the elderly

These groups should be borne in mind when you decide which of the methods of community consultation outlined in Step 3 are most appropriate for your local area.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND OVERCOME BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

If your programme of community consultation and involvement is going to be effective, you will need to:

- Identify why certain people do not want to participate.
- Find ways of overcoming these barriers to participation.

Apathy will often be a reason why people do not become involved, but you may also find that some of the factors outlined below are acting as barriers to participation.

Access

Access means more than just getting to events or into venues. You should also consider:

- **Timing.** Are you excluding those who work during the day, those with children or people who are afraid to go out after dark?
- **Physical access.** Is your venue accessible by public transport? Does it have disabled access? Are there facilities for the visually and hearing-impaired?
- **Printed materials.** Are they easy to understand and available in all community languages, as well as in Braille and on audiotape?
- **The way events are run.** Are they facilitated in an inclusive rather than an exclusive way?

The issues

Some participants may be uncomfortable with the subject matter – crime is a sensitive topic, particularly for victims and/or offenders.

Competing attractions

Participation in community consultation events is voluntary and there will always be competing attractions. To get as many people as possible along, you will have to design events to be as rewarding as possible and market them effectively:

- Identify your unique selling point.
- Identify key opinion formers.
- Decide on how best to get your message across and the best media for communicating to your target audience.

STEP 3: METHODS OF INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

The methods for involving the community examined in this section are:

- public meetings
- community roadshows

- video and TV
- workshops and events
- group exercises
- discussion documents
- surveys and questionnaires
- Planning for Real
- service user panels
- citizens' panels
- focus groups
- stakeholder conferences

Public meetings

A time-honoured and traditional method of involving the community, sometimes public meetings are part of on-going consultation requirements (Police Consultative Groups) but are often a crisis response to immediate community issues, but example a spate of crime, or redevelopment of an estate.

Advantages

- generally well attended when precipitated by public concern
- easy and cheap to organise
- can tease out hidden but relevant issues
- cathartic – may make people feel better in the short term

Disadvantages

- generally poorly attended when initiated by statutory bodies
- agenda can be captured by specific and personal complaints
- meetings lose focus and can be swamped by extraneous issues
- often fail to reach mutually satisfactory outcome
- minority views may not be heard
- can be a threatening environment in which to raise crime and disorder issues
- unrepresentative

Community roadshows

A community roadshow is a travelling exhibition or event, usually designed to promote a particular message or set of messages across a wider geographical area.

Advantages

- can attract numbers if an incentive such as a fun day or prize is offered
- targets a wide audience
- need not be expensive
- can attract media coverage

Disadvantages

- often poorly attended, unless an incentive is offered
- may not attract minority groups
- unrepresentative
- don't encourage exchange of views

Video and TV

This usually takes a 'camcorder' approach. There is enormous potential with the growth of local cable TV for developing comprehensive interactive consultation programming.

Advantages

- novelty value
- people may be more confident in front of a camera than at a public meeting
- with permission, videos can be distributed widely
- can target geographic, interest and/or minority groups
- can feed discussion
- an attractive format for the young

Disadvantages

- cost
- expertise
- equipment
- limited coverage
- may not be representative
- not an end in itself (but can inform other methods)

Workshops and events

These are usually 'one-off' themed functions with an invited audience and facilitators. They are designed to lead to informed discussion on particular issues. They can be used to identify and prioritise issues and solutions, and identify respective roles in delivering those solutions.

Advantages

- can target representative audiences
- encourage dialogue and a problem-solving approach
- highly focused with clear outcomes
- assist with network development

Disadvantages

- can be expensive and resource-intensive
- can target limited numbers only
- usually not an end in themselves – to be used in conjunction with other methods

Group exercises

Group exercises are particularly useful for existing groups, for example tenants or residents associations, and can be used as a run-up to their involvement in wider seminars, workshops or conferences.

Advantages

- can target representative audiences
- encourage dialogue and a problem-solving approach
- highly focused with clear outcomes
- assist with network development
- For individual groups, group exercises can be particularly important in terms of their development and ability to engage in other forms of community involvement.

Disadvantages

- might not be representative
- costly and resource-intensive if widely used

Discussion documents

Partnerships will be most familiar with this form of community involvement, having undertaken consultation on their draft community safety strategies. Interactive consultation is possible via CD-ROMs. Text, video and audio footage can be included on the CD, as well as hyperlinks to websites and email forms for responses. So long as they are given access and training in the technology, 'hard to reach' or disadvantaged groups may find this an attractive and safe format.

Advantages

- clear focus and purpose
- can target wide and specific audiences
- can be used to inform opinion
- can be used to seek opinion (if questionnaires, etc are included)

Disadvantages

- should not be seen as an end in themselves
- can be expensive

- not necessarily representative
- incentives may need to be given to encourage responses
- meaningless without commitment to revise documents or decisions

Questionnaires and surveys

Questionnaires and surveys are recognised by the Home Office as useful in gathering information from the public. They can be linked easily with other survey information such as population data and the British Crime Survey.

Advantages

- can yield rich data
- can reach wide and/or target groups
- capable of integration with other surveys

Disadvantages

- designing and analysing questionnaires and surveys are skills that require specialised training
- cost and resource-intensive
- response rates cannot be guaranteed and may therefore not be representative
- can highlight issues that require other forms of involvement

Planning for Real

Pioneered by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF), Planning for Real is a highly visual approach to community involvement. It usually involves the community building a small-scale 3D model of their neighbourhood, followed by community events at which residents are invited to place ideas for improvements on the model. These are then collated, themed (community safety might be one of these themes) and residents are invited to follow-up events to prioritise the issues. These priorities are then reported to relevant service providers.

Advantages

- particularly suited to a neighbourhood approach
- catalyses community involvement across all ages
- not constrained by agency views, etc
- clear sequence of events from needs identification to prioritisation

Disadvantages

- format (a 3D model) can lead to over-emphasis on 'physical' improvements
- not an end in itself – requires sustained commitment and dialogue with participating community
- can be expensive

Service user panels/service user surveys

These are used by specific service providers to assess user satisfaction with either the service in general or particular aspects of it. They can take the form of either a panel of users (of eg tenants, those in receipt of Social Services care, clients of library services, Crime Prevention Panels, Neighbourhood Watch) or surveys/questionnaires.

Advantages

- targeted
- user panels in particular offer opportunities for a dialogue between users and providers (eg police consultative groups)
- community safety partnerships could usefully link into these methods, for example reaching the elderly via care personnel

Disadvantages

- if badly designed, user satisfaction forms offer little opportunity for comment on service delivery and/or are handled only by personnel engaged in that service
- comment restricted to existing service users

Citizens' panels

British local authorities are increasingly using citizens' panels as a method of involving a representative sample of their community and gaining their views across a range of policy and delivery issues. Consisting typically of 1000+ residents, views are usually elicited in questionnaire formats. The results are intended to inform individual, departmental and corporate policy-making and practice.

Advantages

- wide and targeted
- representative
- can easily accommodate crime and disorder and cross-cutting issues
- now often being used to fulfil Best Value requirement to consult

Disadvantages

- not an end in themselves
- service providers design the questions
- may be considered insufficient if used alone

Focus/small group discussions

Focus groups are often used in market research and opinion polls to assess views on new products, and are recognised as useful in Home Office Guidance. A typical focus group contains six to ten participants and is conducted by an independent facilitator. Focus groups are useful where there is a gap between the decision-makers and those being consulted: either in terms of power, culture or language. Many community safety partnerships have used focus groups to collect the views from particular groups such as the young or gays and lesbians. They can also be used to inform a wider piece of research, such as questionnaire design.

Advantages

- can overcome power, culture, and language differentials through independent facilitation
- can target 'hard to reach' groups
- need not be costly

Disadvantages

- an experienced facilitator is essential to draw out information
- not necessarily representative
- not an end in themselves (but can usefully inform wider research)

Stakeholder conferences

These can either take the form of workshop events and conferences described above or along the lines pioneered by Future Search in America. Briefly, these are events lasting two, three or more days. They involve a representative cross-section (or diagonal slice) of the community – either at authority or neighbourhood levels – together with a similar cross-section across and within service deliverers (at policy and practice levels). The objective is to envision overall strategic direction and to prioritise in order to match services to need.

Advantages

- wide and targeted
- explicitly intended to promote dialogue and change
- excellent for network development
- work best where crime and disorder is seen as part of a wider social agenda
- could be used to test and develop Section 17 compliance

Disadvantages

- cost
- in their purest form they requires an explicit recognition that service providers will re-shape service delivery and enter into significant cultural and organisational change
- resource-intensive, both in planning and employee attendance

STEP 4: LINK WITH OTHER COMMUNITY CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS

Remember that your partnership will not be the only agency working on community consultation and involvement. Aligning your community involvement strategy with other local community safety strategies will save you work, reduce duplication, ensure that limited resources are used in the most effective way and reduce the risk of 'consultation fatigue'.

Other community consultation/involvement mechanisms in your area may include:

- local authority community plans
- Best Value consultations undertaken by local and police authorities
- regeneration programmes (SRB, NDC, etc)
- safer estates agreements
- tenant compacts and other mechanisms used by social landlords
- Neighbourhood Watch
- local crime prevention panels
- police consultative committees

STEP 5: SUSTAINING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Sustained community involvement in the work of the partnership will require a strategy that includes specific measures for:

- community capacity building
- community action
- community leadership

These processes are not in competition with one another; they are overlapping and complementary. A true community involvement strategy should take account of all three.

Unlike Step 3, this section does not describe individual community consultation methods. Rather, it describes the long-term processes that lead to increased community involvement in, and ultimately ownership of, the strategy development and implementation process. You will undoubtedly use the individual methods outlined in Step 3 as you build sustained community involvement; described below are strategic ways of thinking about the whole process that will inform how and why you use the individual methods.

Community capacity building

Capacity building is aimed at supporting groups to play a part in the economic and social regeneration of their communities. It is defined as development work that strengthens activities and the ability of community organisations to build their:

- structures
 - systems
 - people
 - networks
 - competencies
- so that they are better able to:
- define and achieve their objectives

- engage in consultation and planning
- manage community projects
- take part in partnerships and community enterprises

Advantages

- assists in developing representative structure
- increased community confidence – participating more as equals than subordinates
- articulating community needs
- community participation in needs assessment, problem-solving and prioritisation
- developing planned rather than crisis responses

Disadvantages

- cost
- resource-intensive (may need to develop a rolling programme)
- less tried and tested as a measure solely supporting crime and disorder reduction
- more successful when part of a collaborative approach with other service providers

Community action

‘Community development is a planned activity based on clear values. It is about people working together to create a fairer and better society. It is built on an understanding of important themes:

- It fights poverty.
- It aims to include everybody as full and active citizens.
- It challenges discrimination by race, disability, age, religion, gender and sexual orientation.
- It is about people working together for community-led, democratic action.

- It promotes participation in public affairs and gives people more power.
- It works to prevent problems.
- It encourages people to learn skills and knowledge and develop confidence through taking action.
- It supports joint working between government and people.
- It focuses on public policy.
- Action can range from self help to campaigning' (Barr, Hashagen & Purcell (1996) *Measuring Community Development in Northern Ireland*).

Advantages

Community development builds or rebuilds 'social capital' through:

- learning, including the roles, duties, functions and limitations of public services including the criminal justice system
- greater involvement in community activity (fewer opportunities for involvement in crime and disorder)
- raising awareness of civic rights and equality of opportunity (for victims and offenders as well as minority groups)
- encouraging strong local organisations with greater community ownership/influence/control over community assets (eg leisure and recreation facilities)
- developing an influential community that has a strong voice in decisions that affect its interests (including community safety)
- developing a caring community that is aware of the needs of all of its members with good services and support to meet those needs – this assists with long-term integration and opportunities for reparation
- encouraging awareness of environmental issues and responsibilities, including situational crime reduction measures
- fostering a safe community where people do not fear crime, violence or other hazards (including anti-social behaviour)
- creating a good place to live which people do not want to leave – this increases community confidence and strengthens resistance to crime

- sustaining a well established community that is likely to survive
- demonstrating the relevance of all public service provision to crime and disorder reduction

Disadvantages

- cost
- scale – usually requires a degree of neighbourhood/interest prioritisation by agencies
- lack of commitment from within and across a collaboration of agencies
- raising expectations
- not a short-term measure
- can be perceived as a ‘threat’ to more traditional mechanisms

Community leadership

In the present context, ‘community leadership’ encapsulates elements of the Government’s modernising agenda. This can be summarised as follows:

- partnership working (as exemplified in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Best Value
- revised political and administrative structures
- legislative requirements to involve communities and good practice guidance on community involvement

Advantages

- requires ‘consultation’
- encourages and legitimises innovative practice (including participative measures)
- increasingly a condition for funding (eg current rounds of SRB, NDC, Crime Reduction Programme, Housing Investment Programme and potentially the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy)

Disadvantages

- cost
- resource-intensive
- takes time
- can be perceived as a 'threat' to traditional approaches

STEP 6: DEVELOP A STRATEGY, SET TARGETS AND DEVELOP EVALUATION MEASURES

Underpinning the approach outlined in this briefing are some key questions that partnerships need to keep in mind:

- Have you given the community enough information for them to be able to make an informed contribution?
- Does the community have input into difficult decisions?
- Are you giving them adequate feedback?
- Is there a clear path from consultation to what is eventually agreed?

Sustaining community participation into implementation will be facilitated if people know when, how and why they are to be involved. In other words, you need a specific community participation strategy. A **sample strategy for community involvement** is set out on page 19.

Sample strategy for community involvement

Aims

- to maximise community involvement in the district crime and disorder reduction strategy
- to check whether the strategy's aims are 'demand-led' – based on local community concerns
- to ask the community to identify possible ways of meeting targets in the community safety strategy
- to identify the community's role in delivering the strategy

Target outcomes

- xx per cent increase in public satisfaction with local crime reduction activity
- xx community-based preventive initiatives
- xx members of the community participating in community safety initiatives

Target outputs

- a range of informed participation events with xxx groups representing xxx communities and xxx 'hard to reach' groups over the next 12 months
- the inclusion by partner organisations of community safety in their consultation processes; results to be fed into the community safety partnership within two months of the consultation
- a survey of a representative sample of xxx residents
- the circulation of a draft strategic update, showing how the results of the community participation have informed strategy and policy and requesting further input on specific issues
- feedback to 'hard to reach' groups within one month of the event they attended, outlining how their comments have been considered

Note: We have not specified exact percentages and figures as these will vary from area to area and will need to be set according to local circumstances.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Active Community Unit

Home Office
Horseferry House
Dean Ryle Street
London SW1P 2AW
020 7217 8400
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cpg/acu2.htm

Community Development Foundation

Vassalli House
20 Central Road
Leeds LS1 6DE
0113 2460909
www.cdf.org.uk

DETR Free Literature

PO Box 236
Wetherby
West Yorkshire LS23 7NB
0870 1226236

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Homestead
40 Water End
York
North Yorkshire YO30 6WP
01904 629241
www.jrf.org.uk

Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
020 7664 3000
www.lga.gov.uk

Nacro

237 Queenstown Road
London SW8 3NP
020 7501 0555
www.nacro.org.uk

A new edition of Nacro's guide to community consultation on and involvement in community safety, *Putting the community into community safety*, will be published in the middle of 2001.

National Tenants Resource Centre

64 Hamilton Park West
London N5 1AB
020 7955 7374

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

The Poplars
Lightmoor
Telford TF4 3CN
01952 590777
www.nif.co.uk

The Social Exclusion Unit

Cabinet Office
35 Great Smith St
London SW1P 3BQ
020 7276 2055
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

48 The Crescent,
Salford M5 4NY
0161 745 7903

About Nacro and Crime Concern

Nacro and Crime Concern both have extensive experience in working with local partnerships to tackle problems of crime and disorder. They are at the forefront of developing community safety practice and translating new approaches into practical measures. In particular, they:

offer partnerships help, advice and training in auditing, consultation, strategy development and implementation

provide monitoring and evaluation services

promote best practice

manage a range of crime reduction projects, many of which focus on tackling youth offending and youth victimisation through restorative justice, mentoring and youth inclusion approaches

provide implementation support for other major national programmes, including the Home Office Reducing Burglary Initiative.





237 Queenstown Road, Battersea, London SW8 3NP
TEL: 020 7501 0555 FAX: 020 7501 0556

Registered Charity Number: 226171 Registered London Number: 203583



Beaver House, 147-150 Victoria Road, Swindon SN1 3UY
TEL: 01793 863 500 FAX: 01793 514 654

Registered Charity Number: 800735 Registered London Number: 2259016

