



Report of the Chief Community Safety Officer

Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 18th October 2007

Subject: West Yorkshire Police Community Contact Points

Electoral Wards Affected: All <input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	Specific Implications For: Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/> Community Cohesion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/>	
Council Function <input type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function available for Call In <input type="checkbox"/>	Delegated Executive Function not available for Call In Details set out in the report <input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

The report provides information on West Yorkshire Police's current community contact points and summarises good practice. It asks the Area Committee to suggest further potential contact points, and to support the use of council premises, if these are so identified.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members about West Yorkshire Police's community contact points, to seek Area Committee input into selecting further contact points (based on an evaluation of good practice) and to support the use of any council premises so identified.

2.0 Background Information

In line with local government reform, the police are seeking to improve the ways in which they can be contacted by and engage with the public. One aspect of this is the use of "contact points" based in communities rather than traditional police stations. (N.B. this is different to police attendance at forums).

3.0 Issues for the Area Committee

3.1 Appendix 1 is an extract from an internal West Yorkshire Police (county-wide) review of its contact points. The summary indicates best practice. The most important point is the first one – the contact points should be located where people will go anyway.

The arrangements range from the simple to the sophisticated – joint arrangements for sharing premises with other agencies. Some examples include joint surgeries with ward Members.

- 3.2 Appendix 2 provides information on current arrangements (note that these were correct at the time of writing but the most up-to-date versions can be found on the relevant Neighbourhood Policing Team webpage – see <http://www.wypnpt.org/>). Specific information on dates has not been included here; the purpose of the list is not to give the full details of contact points but to start a consideration of locations that may improve on these).
- 3.3 Through their local knowledge, Members may be able to propose other potential contact points or indeed be interested in developing further joint arrangements. Any suggestions from the Area Committee should be passed to the local Neighbourhood Policing Team, and the Committee is asked to endorse the use of those locations as contact points (especially where these are council premises) if the police follow through on its suggestion. Note that the police's capacity to service further, rather than different points might be an issue.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

There are no implications for policy or governance.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

There are no legal and resource implications unless council premises are identified and resources requested to enable their use as contact points. In such cases the implications will be an issue for the relevant service and asset management. This report is not seeking funding for contact points from the Area Committee.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The use of contact points by the police is part of both the neighbourhood policing and the localisation agendas.
- 6.2 West Yorkshire Police have identified good practice as to operating contact points.
- 6.3 Members may be able to identify opportunities for further good contact points within their wards.

7.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to:-

- a) consider this report;
- b) identify any further suitable contact points to the relevant Neighbourhood Policing Team; and
- c) support the use of identified premises for this purpose.

Appendix 1

Community Contact Points – Examples of Good Practice (Extract)

A key aspect for Neighbourhood Policing Teams is the opportunity for face-to-face contact with the public to discuss local problems, many of which are suitable for NPT intervention on a problem-solving basis. Community contact points have a vital role to play in this process.

A survey of existing contact points around the force area in March 2006 revealed some inconsistency around the force, in that some NPTs had fixed regular contact points, whereas others had regular or non regular flexible points. At the Quality of Service Commitments Project Board on 21st June 2006, DCC Hodson agreed that as a general principle, all NPTs should have at least one fixed regular contact point per month, to provide some consistency and clarity for members of the community.

Summary of Good Practice

- “Watering Holes” – arrange contact points where people would congregate naturally, in areas that are a focal point for the community and that are likely to be visited for other purposes. E.g. regular coffee mornings, supermarkets, libraries. Using supermarkets etc for contact points has often resulted in issues being raised that are not of a local nature, due to visitors not always living in the locality. However, from a public reassurance point of view, it does give the member of the public the satisfaction of having been able to speak to somebody about his or her issue.

Divisions also need to be aware that the positioning of a contact point could preclude certain members of the community from attending, e.g. using church rooms may put off people not of that faith from attending. In Thornton (Bradford North), they have also experienced that where a contact point was based in church rooms, the church was against having computers installed in the premises.

- Joint initiatives - contact points that are jointly run with other partnerships tend to be more effective, in terms of being able to suggest and offer solutions to problems raised at the time.
- If residents won't come to you, go to them - e.g. a Reassurance Mapping Project on the Rivers Estate at Airedale/Ferry Fryston, Castleford. This is a previous mining community where the residents historically have tended not to engage with the police. The police turned the tables around by knocking on doors and speaking to residents to find out what local problems existed. This was followed up by a proper action plan and an initiative to deal with the problems. Without this the trust gained by the police would have gone.
- Flexibility with opening times - most contact points are only open during office hours, but feedback suggests that this excludes many people in employment with regular hours. Some divisions are currently experimenting with opening some contact points in evenings. However the concern is that these hours may then preclude the elderly from attending. Possibly the solution could be to alternate day time opening and evening opening of some individual contact points. The disadvantage of this is that premises that

open in the evenings are harder to find when looking for accommodation to host community contact points.

- Creativity with staffing - in most Divisions, contact points are staffed using primarily PCSOs, to leave Police Officers free to deal with core business. In Bradford Community Safety area and especially in Keighley Division, Inspector Tony Walker set up community contact points staffed by Police Volunteers. The Volunteers receive training on routing enquiries and complaints and so far have fielded many complaints and enquiries, which previously would have gone to Help Desks. A further advantage of staffing the contact points with volunteers rather than PCSOs was that it left the PCSOs free to do proactive community work.
- Publicity – contact points need to be well publicised, particularly those that are not at a fixed point and not held regularly. Different methods of publicising have been used, such as advertising in local papers, force web site, through Neighbourhood Watch schemes etc.

Accommodation - Often the acquisition or leasing of non-police accommodation, or leasing of police accommodation to other partners is involved in the setting up or continuance of any contact points.

Conclusions

The findings of the research to date identify that the organisation does not have a corporate response to the running of Community Contact Points, particularly in relation to maintaining records of visitors to contact points, information obtained and resulting actions.

Community Contact Points are a form of engagement activity. The force has a Community Engagement Policy and work to date has identified that there are varying degrees of engagement activity taking place. What is apparent is that as an organisation, we do not have systems and processes that allow us to capture our engagement and operational activity. We need to be able to audit that activity and to capture 'who, what, why, where, when and how' it takes place. Proposals have been suggested around the development of an information hub to address this problem, linked to recording key individual networks.

Inspector Penny Abson – HQ Community Safety 5/3/07

Appendix 2

Current North West Inner NPT Contact Points

Swathmore Centre – Wednesdays, 12 to 1pm

St Andrew's Church, West Park – once a month, 10am to 12pm

UNIPOL, Woodhouse Lane – Mondays, 10 to 11am

Children's Centre, Little London – once a month, 10 to 11am

St Chad's Parish Hall

Becketts Park, Carnegie Campus

Boots, Headingley

Hawksworth Community Centre - 1st Wednesday each month, 10am

Haddon Road - once per month

Meanwood Community Centre - once per month

St Mathias - once per month (next 1st November)

Cockcroft - once per month

St Andrew's Church, Lynton Croft and West Park Centre - Thursdays 10am to 12pm

For further information on any of these sessions please contact:

north.west.leeds.npt.belle.vue@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

For more urgent matters please contact 0845 6060606, or in an emergency call 999.