



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for October 2009 (England and Wales) – Local government tackling crime

Background

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) were created under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop and implement strategies in each local authority to reduce crime and disorder. They exist to ensure that a range of agencies work together to agree and deliver safer communities in each locality. The agencies included in each CDRP are the relevant local authority, the local police force, the local police authority, the fire and rescue authority and the local primary care trust. Under the Police and Justice Act 2006, each local authority must now (since April 2009) give regard to the effectiveness of the local CDRP in its overview and scrutiny function.

In 2001, the Local Government Association conducted a survey of its members about local authority community safety work. This year it has decided to undertake a similar inquiry in order to assess progress, especially since the onset of the recession and the introduction of new scrutiny powers for local authorities over CDRP work. It began this work in May 2009 by contacting the local authority contact in each of the 366 CDRPs in England and Wales. By the end of the survey in July, 171 local authorities had responded, a response rate of 47%, the highest being among London boroughs (61%) and the lowest among Metropolitan districts (35%).

Results

The survey found that burglary is on the rise in half of all areas that responded – and one in three authorities has seen an increase in vehicle crime and domestic violence. The LGA study also found that antisocial behaviour and alcohol misuse were also going up. More than three quarters of respondents blamed the recession for the increases. Anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, alcohol and drug misuse, were each identified by respondents as one of their top three priorities – followed by domestic violence.

Councils were asked to identify who chairs the CDRP in their area. Results were split fairly evenly between the community safety cabinet portfolio holder (reported by 27 per cent of respondents), local police commander (21 per cent) and chief executive (26 per cent). Half of the “other” responses (26 respondents) gave a local authority director as the chair. Other responses included rotating chairs between the key organisations involved, other councillors, and fire officers.

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Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement “The recession has impacted on our local authority’s ability to meet the Local Area Agreement targets on crime and disorder”. Nearly two fifths of respondents (39 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and just over two fifths of respondents (42 per cent) reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Respondents were asked if the recession had caused any financial pressures that meant their local authority has had to cut back on programmes related to community safety. Two thirds (66 per cent) of respondents felt that it had not caused cut backs.

Best practice identified

A key objective of the survey was to identify best practice among local authorities engaged in partnership working through their CDRPs. Examples submitted included:

- The council and police in Warrington Borough Council set up a town centre neighbouring policing unit to keep track of trouble-makers in the town centre. Since the scheme began, violent crime has fallen by 30%.
- In Gorton South ward, Manchester City Council, a partnership between the police, council and members of the local community has reduced crime overall by 28%, antisocial behaviour by 18% and criminal damage by 17%.
- The London Borough of Havering identified the potential risk of a rise in property crime resulting from the recession. A dedicated action group – ‘Safe and Sound’ – was established to focus on commercial robbery, residential burglary and vehicle crime.
- Anti-social behaviour incidents in an area of Milton Keynes Borough Council have fallen after a programme was set up to tackle concerns about large gatherings of youths and under-age drinking.

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