

**CITIZEN'S PANEL**

**FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT**

<p><b>Organisation:</b> Northumbria Police</p>	<p><b>Lead Officer/Department:</b>          Nick Spencer, Community Engagement</p>									
<p><b>Consultation Title:</b> Customer Service</p>	<p><b>Aim of focus groups:</b> to help inform the customer service and marketing project.</p>									
<p><b>Number of focus groups:</b> 6 focus groups were held in total (one per area command)</p>	<p><b>Date of focus groups:</b>          30/11/05 - 6/12/05</p>									
<p><b>Attendees:</b> (officers)          Paula Morgan (consultation officer from NPA) attended all of the focus groups.          The following officers from Northumbria Police attended one or more of the groups:          Nick Spencer, Laura Young, Kevin Bray, Rob Stowers, Angela Liddle, Dave Williams, Mick Goodwin.</p>	<p><b>Attendees - Panel members</b></p> <table data-bbox="810 1010 1377 1137"> <tr> <td><b>Gender:</b></td> <td>Male (43)</td> <td>Female (31)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Age:</b></td> <td>33-48 (16)</td> <td>49-64 (34)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>65+ (23)</td> <td>Unknown (1)</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Ethnicity:</b></p>	<b>Gender:</b>	Male (43)	Female (31)	<b>Age:</b>	33-48 (16)	49-64 (34)		65+ (23)	Unknown (1)
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# Customer Service Focus Groups

## Summary

### Introduction

The discussion guide for the first two focus groups (which were held in Gateshead and South Tyneside) concentrated on the following areas:

- perception of Northumbria Police
- previous experience with Northumbria Police and whether expectations were met
- Consultation needs
- Information needs

Following the above groups, it was decided that the remaining 4 groups should focus on more specific issues as follows::

- expectations when making initial contact
- expectations if told there is no police resource to attend
- post initial contact communication
- Consultation needs
- Information needs

Paula Morgan began each session by introducing the officers to the group and explaining the ground rules.

The aim of the focus group was explained at each session by an officer from Northumbria Police: E.g. "Northumbria Police is currently one of the top performing force's in England and Wales and in order to continue to improve we need to find out what your expectations are when you contact us, how you want to be consulted and the kind of information you want to receive from the police."

### Summary of groups 1 and 2 (Gateshead and South Tyneside): main issues raised /suggestions

- More police on the beat
- A lack of consistency with the quality of service received and the attitude of the officers involved: "some are friendly and helpful whilst others don't want to know".
- The majority felt strongly about the lack of respect that youths have for the police/general public.

- Contact numbers for the police - it was felt that more clarity is needed on which number to use in certain circumstances and how to find it: "people ring different numbers for the same things".
- An issue was raised in both groups about the lack of feedback from the police. Some had received feedback (when involving more serious incidents) whereas others stated that they had not (when involving less serious incidents). Some wanted follow-up to the incident if it was personal to them, however, others wanted feedback whether it was personal to them or not: "if people don't get a response to their reports then they will stop reporting things because they don't know what has happened to the information reported".
- The majority did not have a preference for follow-up as long as they received it.
- It was suggested that an advice line should be introduced for non-emergencies. It was also felt by some that numbers should be publicised on public property e.g. phone boxes, bus stations etc.
- The majority felt that the police do a good job but that the criminal justice system lets them down.
- Some mentioned that they hadn't seen their local policing plan and therefore did not know the priorities for their local area.
- Some stated that they would be happy with verbal advice over the telephone if a police officer could not attend.
- Consultation - the majority felt that they wanted to be consulted by Northumbria Police and that they wanted to receive regular newsletters and leaflets with success stories. It was also suggested that information on policing could be provided in the council news document that is sent out on a quarterly basis.

### Summary of groups 3-6 (Northumberland, Newcastle, Sunderland and North Tyneside: main issues raised/suggestions

#### **Expectations when contacting the police/initial comments**

- Procedures and processes - the majority felt it would be helpful to know what to expect when you contact the police and to be told what will happen next/timescales etc.
- Although some had received feedback in the past, many confirmed that they had not and felt that it was necessary (whether the outcome is positive or negative) as it gives "closure" to the experience.

- No response is seen as a lack of courtesy: "all that is required is a telephone call".
- Feedback - some participants only wanted feedback if it affected them personally whereas others felt that they wanted to know that their information had been dealt with/noted.
- Letters should be personalised and not standardised
- A need was expressed for more information on local areas - crime rates, success stories etc.
- Neighbourhood Watch schemes were discussed in most of the groups. Some participants felt very positive about them as they had received information on policing in their local area whereas others were not aware of them/didn't know if they existed or not.
- Some participants were not aware of police community forums
- The majority expressed a need for more information on the police website - crime prevention advice, questions and answers etc.
- Some felt that it would be useful if they had a better understanding of the criminal justice system: "could be explained on the police Website and in a specific brochure.
- A need was expressed for more local information: "we need to know what is happening in our local area e.g. closure of police stations/success stories/crimes in our local area
- The majority felt that a lot of problems are caused by CPS and not the police
- Appointments - the majority felt that knowing when someone is coming is a comfort factor.
- The introduction of a formalised suggestion scheme was mentioned.
- A need was expressed for better communication between officers: "if the officer you have been dealing with is not on duty no-one else can offer you advice."
- A need was also expressed to deal with the same person if the crime/incident is of a sensitive nature
- The majority said that they expect the police to know the local area when they ring 999
- The majority stressed that they want to see more community policeman
- An issue was raised about telephone numbers in some of the groups: the process for contacting the police is unclear - who to ring for specific issues and where to find the numbers.
- Some felt that initial contact over the telephone was not as good as face to face contact with the police

### **Expectations if told no resource to attend**

- A need was expressed for advice on what to do in certain situations or if police cannot attend
- It was raised in most groups that a community person could attend to take details for some incidents or to give feedback rather than the police.
- A need was expressed for more information on what is being addressed locally through a Newsletter and on the police website which may reduce telephone calls to the police.
- Most felt that if police couldn't attend then they would need advice on what to do or what would happen next.
- The merging of forces was raised in the majority of groups and concerns were expressed on the effect of local policing: who will we be speaking to and will they know the local area.
- Some felt that it would be unlikely for an officer to attend if a crime was reported.
- Some felt that the service you receive from the police depends on the area you are from.

### **Perception of Northumbria Police**

- Although the overall perception of the police was very positive, most felt that the communication of how things work and feedback in general needs addressing.

### **Consultation Needs**

- Most had not been consulted by Northumbria Police in the past. The majority felt that focus groups were a good way of consulting with the public but also felt that community policeman should meet with community representatives on a regular basis.
- The majority did not know their community policeman by name or face: "make them part of the community e.g. publicise their photograph in local shops etc."
- It was pointed out by most that the police need to consult with younger people as well as themselves.
- Some pointed out that they were sceptical about the impact of consultation
- Those that had e-mail stated that they were happy to contact the police for non-urgent issues using this method as long as they received a reply.

## **Information Needs**

- What is happening in my local area
- Information in libraries, shops and local papers/the guardian
- Publicise police website: "not many people know about it"
- Not enough publication of local crime statistics
- Your views count - most confirmed that they had not received feedback on priorities for their local area.