

Local Policing Summaries 2006

Summary of Focus Groups with Northumbria Police Authority Citizen's Panel

Introduction

The aim of the focus groups was to assess the effectiveness of the local policing summaries and in particular to find out:

- If people had received the document for their area and what they liked about it;
- If they found the document easy to read and understand e.g. performance information, graphs etc;
- What they would like to see improved in future publications; and
- What else they would like to see included in future publications.

Number of focus groups

6 focus groups were held in total in the following locations:

2 were held in Gateshead on 9 November with a total of 18 attendees;

2 were held in Sunderland on 15 November with a total of 17 attendees; and

2 were held in Northumberland, Morpeth with a total of 19 attendees.

Who had received the document? / Suggestions for improving delivery

We asked all attendees if they had received the document through the post prior to us sending them a copy for the focus group. Almost half of all attendees in each focus group confirmed that they had not received it.

Suggestions for improving delivery were as follows:

- "Could advertise that the document is on its way and if you don't get one contact the police authority"
- Some participants felt that it would be useful to put copies of the document in libraries, health centres, supermarkets etc and put information on the internet, however others felt that people would miss out if they didn't get one through their door "not everyone goes to the library or the doctors".
- "Worth sending out with council tax bill or other council documents. Need to explore distribution options".

What did participants like about the document?

The main elements of the document that participants liked were: the layout and look of the document; the photographs used throughout; the contacts pages and the neighbourhood inspectors page.

Individual comments:

- Page 13 (Your Neighbourhood inspectors) - "very positive and proactive"
- "Names of officers are good so people know who to speak to"
- "Very informative to have contacts"
- Contact page - "quite useful"
- Performance p5 - "quite good"
- "Good that there was no jargon, liked the colours, presentation and photos".
- "Good layout - good use of highlighting"
- "Not too many words"
- "Overall look is good"
- "Contents page has good signposting"
- "Yearly round-up is good to allow the community to see what has been achieved"
- Photos were based in the area (Northumberland). In previous council documents, the photos were predominantly of Newcastle.
- "Photos - good local use of images"
- "The document was informative"
- Pages 1 and 2 - liked the left hand column on page 1 (What we aim to do), however the top aim (develop a diverse, effective and flexible workforce) is at the bottom
- The 2 articles on p3 (Policing in Gateshead Area Command and Looking Ahead) are excellent but we want to know how they will do these things.
- 'Reported crime has gone down' - is this true?
- Found it interesting having more softer stories

What could be done better/improved

The main issues raised for improvement were: more local information, rather than just having area command/force information; some participants felt that the area command and force information is confusing; some were dissatisfied with the map on page 13; the majority mentioned the neighbourhood inspectors page and stated that it was very useful knowing their names but also wanted area/direct numbers. It was also felt by some that more explanation was needed for some of the statements made throughout the document.

Individual comments:

- Need more information on 'what the force aims to do'
- More explanation - some things are stated in the document without giving explanations behind them
- Would prefer to have $\frac{3}{4}$ of the document about Gateshead and $\frac{1}{4}$ document about Northumbria
- Need more emphasis on local area in Gateshead
- Difficult to distinguish between pages about specific areas and pages about Northumbria - document needs to be more in sync
- Pages about area and pages about the force as a whole are confusing.
- Map → area commanders colour-coded? With comparative panels? Seems "bitty" - needs more consistent approach
- Does not show boundaries of map (pg 13) used ward map.
- Your views count response - could put number of people that did reply in document
- Want telephone numbers/extension numbers next to officers
- Your Neighbourhood Inspectors (Page 13) "the names on the map don't correspond with names local people call them and the names under the inspectors". "The names are incorrect in terms of the map".
- An issue was raised about the inconsistencies in numbers of Neighbourhood Inspection Teams. There are 14 Neighbourhood Teams. Six regeneration areas and seven inspectors. Maybe this needs explaining further in the document.
- Inspectors - aim to be increasingly accessible, but no telephone numbers are given, only e-mail addresses when not everyone has access to the internet. Also says "for more information, go to www.~~~.com, when, again, not everyone has access to the internet.
- Pages 13 - No numbers
- Inspectors should be on page 4 instead? Or back page (if document is closed on a table, has 50% chance of being noticed)
- "Direction of travel" - one participant felt that all resources should be directed into "investigating crime" - it should not be deteriorating.
- Does not address issues that concern the general public - simply talks about successes. Does not try to put people's minds at rest. Self-congratulatory document. For example, people with ASBOs still go to places they are barred from - why are they allowed? And why do cautions not go on people's criminal records?
- Pages 3 + 4, better if title was more specific and actually stated that it was about alcohol.
- Page 7 + 8, confusion about cannabis statistics - title needs to be more specific

- Page 6 - use people who are local - more personalised, peoples names
- Some participants felt that the drugs statistics were meaningless
- Want to know how many people were sent to jail, for how many years, how much money they recovered etc
- Page 8 - some people didn't know what the figures meant, not very clear
- Confusing 'Northumberland' and 'Northumbria'
- YVC - confusing - can be interpreted differently
- Page 13 - inspectors in Northumberland - map would be useful

What else should be included in the plan?

The main items raised by participants for inclusion in future publications were: more detailed information about what the police do on a day to day basis e.g. 'a day in the life of'..., what they can expect from police officers and PCSOs; more locally based information and good news stories; information on what the police budget is spent on; more detailed information about Northumbria Police Authority - what the authority does, who the members are etc; and more information on how the police are linking in with young people and local schools.

Individual comments:

- What the police are actually doing
- Need more interesting articles
- Some participants also felt that they would like to know more about their neighbourhood inspector e.g. 'a day in the life of.....!'. Feature one or two neighbourhoods
- What a police officer does
- More information about PCSOs
- Duties/expectations of officers
- PCSO funding - will be 671 by next March. Can get where cars can't. Unsure what their powers are → citizen with uniform. Should be information about their powers and what they do, etc, in document. "A Day In The Life Of A PCSO"? However, will that make people less scared of them? (E.g. they have minimal powers, nothing to be scared of)
- More snippets/bullets
- Laws
- More concise
- Some participants stated that they liked 'Neighbourhood policing and you'
- Future priorities - want to know how they will tackle crime etc, their plans
- More contact details and less www.
- Keep it local

- Would like to see more local info
- Need more good news stories specific to the local area.
- Public spend information
- Want to find out where money is spent.
- Budget isn't highlighted - not complicated statistics, but where the money goes
- Is police force like NHS in terms of profits being involved? No! Would more money reduce crime? Maybe funding information should be included in the document
- Want pictures of the whole of the area
- Who is on the police authority?
- How to become a member of the Police Authority
- How to influence the Police Authority
- PA members info - and what is NPA?
- Would like more information on what the authority does - there is not enough information in the document
- Want contact names of members
- Could include information about specialist teams (e.g. dogs, horses, domestic violence, ASBO's, etc).
- Could have a story about the schools/police relationship.
- Include a feature like "You told NPA this, this is what we did about it"
- People are more interested in more emotive issues that are closer to home
- Could have "A Year In Northumbria" summary feature
- "Newspaper" headlines (tabloid) would stand out more
- Brief overview → "if you want more info on this topic, go to www.~~~.com
- Police and community forums. Get stats from there.
- Black police officers → ethnicity issue? Would be nice to have police officers of other ethnicities to deal with people of other ethnic backgrounds better
- Comments slip with freepost envelope
- One participant brought up the issue of sexual offences and naming and shaming people.
- The majority felt that they would like to see more information on what the police are doing with young people in and outside of schools
- Should have a young person's page
- Front cover may not attract younger readers - perhaps include an age range
- Safety advice for young people/schools
 - warrant cards
 - road safety

- stranger danger

- Provide more information for young people e.g. advice and guidance/information on things for them to do.
- "We aren't the people the police should be engaging with. "There is no law and order in schools, no one can walk the streets".
- Not a lot in document for young people.
- The Party's Over poster - visually attractive to young people
- It was also mentioned that it would be useful to know where neighbourhood police teams are based.
- Domestic violence is a large proportion of crime but was not mentioned at all.
- Could include a directory/numbers to call relating to domestic violence.
- Should date issue, for reference.
- Freepost comments slip should be included to get to know what people thought about it.
- Include a reader response slip. This way, you can monitor how many people received documents.
- Could have article about what issues were raised at focus groups and what has been done about them.

Contact numbers

101 was discussed in the majority of focus groups. This was mainly around what should be classed as a non-emergency and the cost involved for making the calls.

Suggestions for improving the contact pages included making the list more local, having a tear off slip for contact numbers and reducing the amount of contact numbers so that it is less confusing for people.

Individual comments:

- All non urgent contact numbers together
- All numbers in same fonts
- Show that all numbers are important
- Let people know that they are welcome to go to police stations - give the address
- Include something on how to find out about police surgeries
- Contacts are most important - put them at the front/very back
- Enhance contact list
- Tear-off card for tel. no's
- Make no's simpler i.e. 08456

- Service directory at the back of document? FAQs (What do I do if "this" happens?) E.g.

• Incident	• Team to call	• Tel. No.
• ~~~~~	• ~~~~~	• ~~~~~
• ~~~~~	• ~~~~~	• ~~~~~

- There was a general discussion around the 101 number with regards to it not being free - "you might not have 20p to make a call in the phone box".
- The issue of cost was also raised for the 0845 number.
- 101 expects the general public to make a judgement on the severity of the incident, which could be time delaying. Costs 10p but 999 is free. 101 calls are also not dealt with properly - the standard response is that someone will call you back within 2 hours.
- 999 has low/med/high risk scale - all should be high risk!
- Include numbers for more localised organisations
- Threatening and abusive behaviour should be taken out of 101 as it could lead to a 999
- Call charges need to be made clearer
- It's very confusing having different phone numbers
- Could we just have one non-emergency number?

Performance

Some felt that the performance pages (arrows etc) were easy to understand, however others felt that it might be best to use bar charts as they can help you to understand performance levels, as they are more proportionate.

The majority confirmed that numbers should be provided as well as percentages. There was also a preference from some participants for performance compared against other areas within Northumberland and Tyne & Wear rather than with the Force. However, others felt that performance should be provided and compared with more local areas within area commands.

There was also a general feeling that some of the statements made about performance did not provide enough background information to back them up or to tell local people what was being done to reduce that particular crime.

Individual comments:

- Show numbers first and then percentages
- No's are important
- Numbers better than percentages - % of what??
- Put results for Gateshead and Force on consecutive pages

- Show comparisons with Gateshead and other areas e.g. Newcastle
- Public are more interested in different areas within Sunderland as opposed to Sunderland as a whole compared with other areas (E.g. Gateshead, Newcastle, etc.) For example, Hetton compared with Southwick rather than Sunderland compared with Gateshead.
- Compare stats to average - easier to digest, more clarity
- Performance is easy to understand; colours highlight performance. Very explicit
- The performance pages are easy to read
- The statistics are fairly clear, relevant and encouraging
- "This page lets you know that the force is doing well and inspires confidence in the police".
- "When you read the performance pages you are encouraged but when you go outside you are discouraged".
- Government keeps changing goalposts for statistics - calls into question the validity of the statistics in the document
- Some participants felt that the colours and arrows used on the performance pages made it very easy to understand. However, one participant did feel that the text underneath the arrows should not say "we will" because this might not be the case. It should say "we aim to". Another participant felt that some crimes e.g. violent crime should be split into the various types of violent crime e.g. domestic violence. "Certain types of violent crime might be going down whilst others might be going up but you won't know this from the information provided".
- "This page lets you know that the force is doing well and inspires confidence in the police".
- "When you read the performance pages you are encouraged but when you go outside you are discouraged".

Page 9 - Did you know? On average 94 out of every 1,000 people living in Northumbria became a victim of crime in 2005/06

- "94 out of 1000 is quite high so it should not say "only"

Page 11 - Did you know? In 2005/06 Northumbria Police answered 258,920 emergency calls responding to 252,314 in under 15 seconds

- "Should say answered rather than responding".
- Page 5 - total crimes 19000, only 12000 mentioned - where are the other 7000?
- Bar charts would have been better and easier for people to handle (more proportionate)
- Arrows did not have the desired effect.

- All ticks and no crosses. If no crosses were needed, then that should have been explained.
- Some statements are a bit sweeping
- Want more background on the performance figures
- Would like to hear about work that's being done to reduce crime
- Does not seem to give full picture - does not address ongoing problems such as boy racers.
- Statistics - do we need to report them?
- No one believes them anymore
- Do people believe figures?
- Pages 5 and 8 are not very clear
- Would find it useful if figures were split by area
- It doesn't reduce the fear of crime
- Confusing 'Northumberland' and 'Northumbria'

Photos

There were mixed feeling about the photographs used throughout the document. Some felt that they were misleading, whilst others liked the photographs used, especially those that included a mix of age groups.

Individual comments:

- Some are reproduced
- Some photos are irrelevant
- Mix of ages in photos is good
- The majority liked the picture at the top of page 2, especially because it included young people. Young people need to know police officers from an early age.
- One participant felt that the picture at the top of page 2 could be seen as racist by not putting pictures of BME groups. "It will appeal to more people if BME people were included.
- Some thought the photos were misleading - you can never find a policeman to talk to
- The photos give an impression that "police are on the beat"
- Some people thought that there were too many photos
- Some thought the photos were misleading - you can never find a policeman to talk to
- Others disagree and think the photos make the document more accessible.

Graphs

There were mixed feelings towards the graphs used throughout the document. Some felt that they were easy to follow whilst others didn't like them. One of the main things mentioned was that the graphs on page 3 and 9 are very similar - participants found this confusing.

Individual comments:

- Easy to follow
- Most people don't like them
- Would be more interesting if they were split by area
- The graphs are the same on page 3 and page 9 - the blocks look identical - this is confusing and a waste of space. They don't need to be repeated.

Page 3

- Some participants did not know what "most similar family group average" meant and felt that a list of the similar area commands should be included as on page 9 where a list of most similar forces is provided.

Pages 9 + 10

- Reassured by graph
- Graphs should be labelled

Crime, Disorder and Reduction Partnerships

Individual comments:

- Not really interested
- Need more details on who they are, who is involved etc
- No one knows about them