

## Community Safety and Crime Reduction A London Overview

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### What is Community Safety?

Community safety is a term defined by the Home Office as:

*“an aspect of ‘quality of life’ in which people, individually and collectively, are protected as far as possible from hazards or threats that result from the criminal or anti-social behaviour of others, and are equipped or helped to cope with those they do experience”*

*“It should enable them to pursue, and obtain fullest benefits from, their social and economic lives without fear or hindrance from crime and disorder”*

The Northern Ireland Community Safety Unit website states that:

*“Community safety means preventing, reducing or containing the social, environmental and intimidatory factors which affect people’s right to live without fear of crime and which impact upon their quality of life. It includes preventative measures that contribute to crime reduction and tackle anti-social behaviour”*

### What is Crime Reduction?

Unlike community safety which covers a range of issues, the term crime reduction focuses on specific techniques for preventing offences from happening. It:

*“encompasses efforts by individuals and organisations to prevent and reduce levels of criminal behaviour in their neighbourhood and further a field. Solutions may also involve tackling quality of life issues and the underlying causes of crime.”*

There are two common approaches to crime reduction these are:

**Situational** - Changing the physical environment to make it harder to commit crime.

**Social** - working with those at risk of committing crime, improving quality of life, reducing fear of crime, supporting vulnerable groups working to reduce the causes of crime.

It was the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that introduced multi-agency partnerships like Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), thus making community safety and crime reduction core issues for many agencies to whom they had previously been peripheral.

### Who is responsible for Community Safety?

#### Central Government

Central Government and, in particular the Home Office, play a roll in setting overall policy and making legislation for community safety, as well as putting resources into many of the agencies that work within CDRPs.

The Home Office’s objectives are to:

- help people feel safer in their homes and local communities

- support visible, responsive and accountable policing
- protect the public from terrorist attack
- cut crime, especially violent, drug and alcohol-related crime
- strengthen our borders, fast track asylum decisions, ensure and enforce compliance with our immigration laws, and boost Britain's economy
- safeguard people's identity and the privileges of citizenship
- work with our partners to build an efficient, effective and proportionate criminal justice system

The Home Office has recently been reformed handing over some of its previous responsibilities to the newly created Ministry of Justice.

The **Ministry of Justice** has taken on responsibility for criminal law and sentencing, for reducing re-offending, including prisons and probation, plus all the current responsibilities of the Department for Constitutional Affairs.

In 2005 a community safety strategy, known as the **National Community Safety Plan 2006-2009** was produced. It had three aims:

1. to give a clear view of Central Government community safety priorities;
2. act as tool for driving delivery of a shared community safety agenda, and as a starting point from which to develop new ways of working across central government; and
3. underline central government's expectations of key delivery agencies.

The plan recognised that community safety cannot be successfully delivered by the police alone and pointed to the necessity of building broad based partnerships. It aimed to put strong and active communities at the heart of the plan, recognising the vital contribution that voluntary and community groups make to community safety.

### **Government Office for London (GOL)**

Central Government manages its affairs through its 9 regional government offices. The role of Government Offices is to actively support and improve the way government works in the regions, so that the needs of local communities are met more effectively.

Government Office for London represents central government across the capital, delivering policies and programmes for eleven central government departments and making London's case in Whitehall.

GOL 5 key priority areas for 2006/07 reflect the 5 areas of the LAA process:

- Making London more healthy
- Making London safer
- Making London more sustainable (including greener & cleaner)
- Investing in London's children
- Developing London's economy

GOL manages its work in the Local Authorities through Public Service Agreements (PSAs). These set out its aim, objectives and key outcome-based targets and form an integral part of its spending plans. The PSAs that relate to Community Safety are:

**PSA1** - to reduce overall crime by 15%

**PSA2** - to reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, and building confidence on the criminal justice system without compromising fairness

**PSA3** - to bring 1.25 million offences to justice in 2007/08

**PSA4** - to reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs including substantially increasing the number of drug misusing offenders entering treatment through the Criminal Justice System

**PSA6** - to increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion.

### **Community Safety at the Local Level**

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act requires all statutory partners to consider crime and disorder reduction while exercising their duties. The Act made it the joint responsibility of the local authority and the police to plan and carry out a crime and disorder audit and publishing a strategy for tackling crime and disorder.

This Act brought Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships into existence. (See CSAS Fact sheet on CDRPs). However at the heart of this legislation is the notion that crime and disorder can only be tackled through partnership and that therefore communities themselves have a part to play.

### **London Community Safety Partnership**

The London Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) was set up in 2006 to help to co-ordinate the development of community safety strategy, policy and practice in London.

It is made up of agencies including the Metropolitan Police Service and British Transport Police, pan-London agencies including London Councils, the Greater London Authority, the Metropolitan Police Authority and the Government Office for London, local authority representation, regional partners such as the Fire Brigade, NHS London and Transport for London, criminal justice bodies such as London Probation, National Offender Management Service and Youth Justice Board and the Home Office.

For 2006/7 it has selected three issues upon which to focus on a regular basis. The selected themes are:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Robbery
- Youth crime and victimisation

The Partnership generally meets every two months but it also seeks the support and involvement of a range of boards, forums and networks throughout London.

### **The Role of the Voluntary Sector**

The Voluntary Sector has been involved in community safety issues for many years (though not all voluntary sector organisations would define their activities in this way). Voluntary groups are often involved in the activities listed below which would all be seen as impacting on community safety.

- Improving the environment
- Looking after vulnerable groups e.g. children and the elderly
- Working with offenders
- Working to reduce hate crime, racism and prejudice
- Working to reduce school exclusion
- Working with young people to divert them away from crime

## Community Safety & Crime Reduction Legislation

### Government Legislation

Legislation / Policy	Details
<b>Crime and Disorder Act 1998</b>	<p>Introduced multi-agency partnerships - Crime &amp; Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)</p> <p>3 Key principals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The purpose of the youth justice system is to cut off offending with a focus on prevention.</li> <li>2. The Police, Local authority and community must work in partnership to cut crime.</li> <li>3. Local authorities and other public bodies must consider the crime and disorder implications of all their decisions (for example in planning).</li> </ol> <p>Each CDRP required to undertake a crime and disorder audit and strategy every 3 years</p>
<b>Police Reform Act 2002</b>	<p>This act enlarged the group of partners required to work on community safety, adding, Police Authorities, Fire Authorities and Primary Care Trusts</p> <p>It also required CDRPs to include substance misuse in their work and allowed mergers with DAATS (Drugs and Alcohol Action Teams)</p>
<b>Clean Neighbourhood &amp; Environment Act 2005</b>	<p>The Act requires CDRPs and DAATs to consider anti-social behaviour and the local environment within their audits and strategies.</p>
<b>Police and Justice Act 2006</b>	<p>Aims to ensure that local policing reflects local needs and is accountable to its communities.</p>

### Other legislation that incorporates Community Safety

Legislation / Policy	Details
<b>Housing Act 1996</b>	<p>Provides social landlords with powers to tackle anti-social behaviour</p>
<b>Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999</b>	<p>Encourages Youth Courts to identify the reasons for youth offending, and trigger appropriate action. Also Provides help for vulnerable witnesses.</p>
<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003</b>	<p>Introduced the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of fixed penalty notices</li> <li>• Schools, Local authorities and YOTs can offer packages of support and sanctions to parents</li> <li>• Police powers to close crack houses</li> <li>• Restrictions on the use of air rifles and replica guns</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offence to sell spray cans to under 16s</li> <li>• Local authorities stronger powers against fly tipping, graffiti and fly posting</li> <li>• Environmental health officers more power to shut down noisy clubs</li> <li>• Improve the operation of ASBOs</li> <li>• Powers for the police to disperse groups behaving in an anti-social way</li> </ul>
Children Act 2004	<p>Gives effect to the reforms of Children's Services envisaged by "Every Child Matters" which aims for "every child whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be healthy</li> <li>• Stay safe</li> <li>• Enjoy and achieve</li> <li>• Make a positive contribution</li> <li>• Achieve economic well being</li> </ul>

#### Further Information and Resources

##### Home Office

Central government department with particular responsibility for community safety

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

##### Ministry of Justice

A new formed department that has responsibility for criminal law and sentencing, and for reducing re-offending including prisons and probation

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/>

##### Government Office for London

One of nine regional offices in England and Wales. Represents central government in London.

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/gol/>

##### National Community Safety Plan 2006-2009

Further information including FAQ's about the plan and links to download it and the 2006 update

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/communitysafety02.htm>

##### London Community Safety Partnership

Information and updates on the work of the Partnership from GOL

[http://www.gos.gov.uk/gol/Community\\_safety/LCSP/](http://www.gos.gov.uk/gol/Community_safety/LCSP/)

##### An Introduction to Community Safety

This Introduction to Community Safety from the National Community Safety Network aims to provide those new to community safety with an induction to this field of work.

[www.community-safety.net/Downloads/Pack/NCSNIntro%20to%20CS%20May%2007%20final\\_web.pdf](http://www.community-safety.net/Downloads/Pack/NCSNIntro%20to%20CS%20May%2007%20final_web.pdf)

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