

EAST AYRSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM - 6 DECEMBER 2000

“THREADS OF SUCCESS” A STUDY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS IN SCOTLAND

Report by the Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Forum of the findings and recommendations contained within the Threads of Success study, which was published by the Scottish Executive and COSLA in November 2000.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The overall aim of the study was “to assess the current status of the partnerships, review progress and realign future direction towards achieving an integrated preventive community safety strategy that achieves maximum local impact”. The pathfinder study team was composed of Janice Meikle Hewitt, now Director with Apex Scotland; Scott Ballantyne, a Research Associate with the Institute for Public Policy Research and Gordon Cryle, now Divisional Community Safety Inspector with Tayside Police in Forfar.
- 2.2 The pathfinder study group studied five community safety partnerships in detail, viz; Angus, City of Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, Fife and South Ayrshire. The group undertook three fieldwork visits to each partnership over a period of seven months beginning in February 2000. Appendix 1 of the study provides detailed information on each of the pathfinder areas.
- 2.3 The study recognised that the main challenge facing community safety working in Scotland is how to build and sustain local partnerships which are able to realise the potential to:
 - (i) prevent and reduce risks to community safety rather than controlling or managing present levels of crime, fear of crime and community risks,
 - (ii) work together to define and solve local community safety problems rather than responding to them once they have built up,
 - (iii) build partners’ capacity to deliver on community safety and to communicate effectively community safety tasks and responsibilities within and between partners,
 - (iv) invest resources to build and support partnership working and to deliver a planned community safety programme,
 - (v) mainstream work on community safety into all aspects of community planning, corporate planning and service planning development and delivery,
 - (vi) connect community safety to other major public sector developments, particularly community planning, “empowering

- communities”, community initiative, best value and modernising public services,
- (vii) achieve and demonstrate sustained impact and improvements in local communities.

2.4 The study set the following objectives, viz:-

- To review, in detail, partnership arrangements and developments.
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships.
- To suggest steps required to build and sustain effective community safety working.
- To identify national and local recommendations to improve the impact of community safety.
- To share lessons learned across Scotland.

2.5 In the course of the study it became apparent that each partnership was at a different stage of development and needed to address various “strands” of their approach to maximise the potential impact of the partnership process. This realisation led to the title of the study, which identifies individual elements of the process where difficulties are being encountered and offers solutions for all similar partnerships.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Main Findings – The study team identified five main findings in community safety partnership working:-

- (i) Community safety partnership structures are emerging across Scotland but their form, stage of development, potential and effectiveness vary.
- (ii) Partnerships are struggling at 2 stages;
 - Into effective existence
 - From reactive project work into planned, programmed preventative work.
- (iii) An upsurge in project-based community safety activity in Scotland is evident but in most instances is not yet:
 - Built on joint local audit or joint local planned action
 - Connected to mainstream service delivery
 - Accessing regular, recurring resources
- (iv) Under-investment in establishing and sustaining a local platform for partnership, particularly in the following areas;
 - Partnership building
 - Information sharing
 - Joint auditing and planning
 - Communication within or between partners at all levels
 - Core development funding
 - Monitoring and evaluating performance and impact

- (v) Pathfinder partnerships are currently setting mechanisms in place and are aspiring to better structural organisation. Priority is also being given to partner commitment and involvement, securing funding, integration into mainstream decision-making and measurable service delivery across partners.

3.2 Key Local Issues – The interviews and partnership discussions revealed that, in order to address the main findings, action was required at both local and national levels. During the study it became apparent that there were five key local issues to be addressed immediately:

- (i) Build a platform for partnership by investing time and energy in building the capabilities and competencies of the partnership, and securing resources to provide staff and financial support for community safety.
- (ii) Plan preventative community safety by conducting a community safety audit and jointly planning community safety priorities.
- (iii) Communicate the community safety message within and between partners by joint training and setting up local operational networks.
- (iv) Mainstream community safety by integrating it into community planning, best value, service planning and service delivery for all partners.
- (v) Evaluate the partnership's work by applying the Audit Scotland (Safe and Sound, 2000) Balanced Scorecard and measuring performance and impact.

3.3 Key National Issues – It became apparent to the study group that, in order to achieve maximum local impact there was a role for the national organisations, namely the Scottish Executive, COSLA and the Association of Chief Police Officers for Scotland (ACPOS) to lend their support in the following areas:

- (i) Reinforce community safety as a national priority, strengthen the Scotland wide strategy for community safety partnerships and undertake an annual scrutiny process.
- (ii) Share success, encourage innovation and build partnership quality by managing the development of information-sharing protocols, providing a national data base of credible practice, building a Scottish training knowledge and skills base and supporting innovation and partnership through a review of the community safety challenge funds.
- (iii) Mainstream community safety in the Scottish Executive, COSLA and ACPOS by ensuring relevant departments and agencies maximise their community safety impact, and by reviewing financial incentives to support a preventative community safety agenda.

3.4 Future Action – Threads of Success – through discussions with the five pathfinder partnerships it became clear that there were a number of

recommendations they would like to see developed as a direct result of the emerging local and national actions. These comprise 8 local recommendations and 6 national ones:

Local Recommendations

- (i) Building a platform for partnership
- (ii) Securing resources
- (iii) Mainstream funding
- (iv) Auditing, joint planning and forward thinking
- (v) Communicating the message
- (vi) Community safety connections
- (vii) Service planning
- (viii) Evaluating performance

National Recommendations

- (i) Scrutiny in line with Community Planning, Community Initiative and Best Value
- (ii) Information sharing
- (iii) Credible practice
- (iv) Training
- (v) Funding
- (vi) Mainstreaming

3.5 Study conclusions

Community Safety in Scotland is currently at a crossroads. It is recognised that much energy is being expended nationally and locally, but local communities have yet to see demonstrable, sustained benefits. There is a risk of local efforts being diluted before the necessary structures and resources are in place. The challenge is how to build and support community safety partnerships which harness the energies and resources of partners and which can move beyond reacting to local problems after the event to working together to reduce the likelihood that they will happen in the first instance. To achieve this partners must learn new ways of working together rather than simply adding a partnership task onto existing workloads.

3.6 The study concludes that the potential benefits are significant for everyone:

- For communities – a sustained improvement in local safety
- For public services – an opportunity to shift ever decreasing resources from reactive to preventive responses
- For business – a safer trading environment and an improved local economy
- For the Scottish Executive, COSLA and ACPOS – an opportunity to direct efforts, energies and resources to maximise impact upon the issue which is consistently uppermost in public concerns – community safety.

4. FINANCIAL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Nil.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The study recognises that most partnerships in Scotland are stuck at the earliest stages of partnership development; some are struggling into existence, finding it difficult to move beyond discussion and harness the most meagre resources for community safety development. The challenge for these partnerships is basic – how to raise themselves to a position where they can start to plan and deliver effectively.
- 5.2 The Community Safety Partnership in East Ayrshire currently is at an early stage of the development path described in the study. However, initiatives are taking place in line with the recommendations of “Threads of Success” and the “Safe and Sound” study published earlier in the year by Audit Scotland.
- 5.3 The decision by Senior Staff at the meeting on 14 August to establish a strategic level partnership group sets in place the recommended three tier partnership structure detailed in chapter 3 of the study report. This strategic group will finalise the community safety strategy, which is the subject of a report to be considered by the Council’s Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 30 November, and set strategic aims and targets for the existing, second tier, Community Safety Forum. The third tier will comprise task groups to deliver on key priorities.
- 5.4 The strategic level partners should commit management into the process, establish clear accountability and responsibility for community safety partnership work within their own organisations and ensure that those tasked with those responsibilities have the time and resources to deliver. This group will also be expected further to strengthen the partnership by determining how to ensure long term, strategic resource issues; assessing methods of undertaking a reasonable, reliable and robust analysis of local community safety problems; information sharing; mainstreaming community safety and establishing an effective performance management framework.
- 5.5 The Council has in place a dedicated Community Safety Officer who reports to the Principal Officer – Licensing and Community Safety. The role of that officer should be redefined in terms of the partnership structure and the resulting strategic objectives.
- 5.6 East Ayrshire’s community safety partnership, although in the early stages of development, has evolved in light of guidance received from Audit Scotland and the Scottish Executive and is now well placed to proceed along the lines recommended by the “Threads of Success”.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Forum members:

- (i) note the content of this report.

William Stafford

Director of Community Services

AJS/cs2/Forum12.2000/Threadsofsuccess

23 November 2000

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. "Threads of Success" A Study of Community Safety Partnerships in Scotland published by the Scottish Executive and COSLA, November 2000.

Any person wishing to inspect the background paper detailed above should telephone 01563 554391 and ask for Miss Alison J Smith, Principal Officer – Licensing and Community Safety.

AGENDA