

Building Safer Communities Programme: Learning Network Event 8 October 2013

The Building Safer Communities Programme is one of the Scottish Government's four Justice Change Programmes. It aims to reduce crime and improve community safety and resilience in Scotland and has now entered its delivery phase.

This Learning Network Event was the first covering the full remit of this programme. It built on previous Learning Network Events focusing on Local Scrutiny and Engagement in policy and fire reform. Over 100 people attended – a mix of officers, elected members and Board members across police, fire and wider community safety networks.

PART ONE: DELIVERING CHANGE

The Building Safer Communities Programme

Paul Johnston, Director of Safer Communities at the Scottish Government, set the context for the work of the Building Safer Communities Programme. He highlighted that crime and offences had been reducing in recent years. In 2012/13, recorded crime was at its lowest level for 39 years. In other parts of Europe these same trends are not being seen, so there is something different happening in Scotland and the UK. Paul congratulated the event attendees:

“We have much to be very, very proud of in Scotland.”

Paul explored why recorded crime levels were falling, and highlighted some key concerns and trends in relation to tackling inequality of experience of crime.

- **Inequality** – While crime has fallen across most of Scotland, there has been very little decrease in the 15% most deprived areas. This means that there is an increased concentration of crime in Scotland's most deprived areas. Almost half (44%) of all crime is now concentrated in the 15% most deprived areas.
- **Alcohol** – There is a very close correlation between alcohol sales and crime rates. There is a particularly strong correlation between alcohol sales and violent crime.
- **Education** – There has been a significant reduction in exclusions from schools, coupled with an increase in positive destinations for school leavers. At the same time, there has been a reduction in court convictions for people aged under 17. However, there has been a significant increase in youth unemployment, particularly in deprived areas, which is a concern.

Paul set out what this meant for the Building Safer Communities Programme. The Programme should be very clear about what it is aiming to achieve. Paul suggested that the aim for the Programme should be very specific, and agreed in dialogue with partners. It should stretch people, and encourage joint working like never before – in order to see and sustain real transformation.

Police Scotland Update

DCC Rose Fitzpatrick of Police Scotland provided an update on police reform. She reminded us of the challenges faced in realigning into a national service, while keeping local policing and making financial savings – all with the key aim of keeping people safe. Rose focused on the value of partnership working around both enforcement and prevention.

Rose highlighted that there were now 14 divisions and 72 area commands working with 32 local authorities. Local scrutiny arrangements are bedding in. Each of the 353 multi member wards now has its own policing plan. Police Scotland is also now consulting on plans for 2014/15, and is aiming to double the number of people involved and consulted on its plans from 19,500 to almost 40,000.

Rose emphasised the need for local policing to continue to be evidence based, particularly given the financial constraints faced by public sector organisations. She highlighted the value of an asset based approach to working with communities, which can result in multiple benefits – including reductions in crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour through communities working jointly with the police service.

DCC Fitzpatrick highlighted that while there was a trend for reducing crime, which has continued since the formation of Police Scotland, there was a need to understand why certain types of crime such as sexual offences, drugs, alcohol, weapons and roads related crimes were increasing. In many cases she explained that this was due to an increased focus and more proactive policing in these areas.

For the future, Rose explained that Police Scotland will maintain a focus on strengthening its national approach – such as a single non-emergency number and access to national and specialist services – while continuing to develop and maintain its local policing approach. It will work to reduce crime and violent crime, particularly through working in partnership with other organisations. While Police Scotland can detect, suppress and (to a degree) prevent crime, it needs to work with others to address issues like alcohol supply, anger management, health and other factors. It wants to be an effective partner with other agencies at a local and national level.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Update

Ross Haggard (Head of Prevention and Protection, SFRS) provided an update on the SFRS' aspirations of the Building Safer Communities Programme; achievements in the first six months of operation; and local service delivery matters.

Ross explained that a single SFRS allows an approach focused on local service delivery, with access to capacity and specialist resources at a national level. He explained that SFRS was keen to be involved in the Building Safer Communities Programme – particularly as it was not possible to separate issues around fire, crime and antisocial behaviour. SFRS is keen to see improved data sharing between agencies.

“Victims of fire are often known to other agencies.”

Ross explained that the SFRS was currently working on breaking down its 32 local plans into more local areas, based around a fire station or groupings of fire stations. It was also producing performance information at a ward level. It has 17 Local Senior Officers in place (the equivalent of Local Commanders within Police Scotland) and is undertaking ongoing work on staffing structures.

The SFRS Board is keen that there are local connections, with a fundamental commitment to local service delivery. It has put in place processes for Board members to engage locally, for example through attending community planning partnership meetings; scrutiny forums; and meeting with chief executives and leaders. It is developing guidance for Local Senior Officers, and has placed a strong emphasis on partnership working at both local and national level.

Question and Answer Session

The three presenters were joined by Douglas Yates (SPA) and Grant Thoms (SFRS Board). The audience was invited to ask questions.

Q Tim Kendrick, Fife Council: *DCC Fitzpatrick mentioned the importance for consistency in line with local needs. Is there also a need for flexibility? For example should staffing, such as for Partnership Analysts, take into account existing partnership arrangements?*

DCC Fitzpatrick explained that she did believe there was a need to look at each existing local arrangement. Consistency is desired – but the aim is to bring the areas not doing as much to a level Police Scotland and others are content with. There is a need to build on what is there. There are constraints – Police Scotland needs to make appropriate savings. There is an internal review of analyst arrangements and a review of partnership arrangements ongoing, to see what analytical staff are there, what the arrangements are and what can be built on for the future.

Douglas Yates explained that Local Policing Plans were intended to fit with communities. There are many great examples of partnership working.

Q Jacqui Doig, Scottish Community Safety Network: *What are Boards and services planning to do in relation to performance monitoring, so that there are statistics and evidence to use at local level?*

Ross Haggart said that performance monitoring was evolving. The Fire and Rescue Framework focuses on high level national indicators. Local performance data is just as important – to influence planning and resources. There are monthly comprehensive ward level reports to Local Senior Officers, who report on to others and react to any emerging trends.

Grant Thoms explained that statistics can be of little value without analysis. There is a need for a combination of qualitative and quantitative information – with trends and comparisons. There is also a need to engage to find out about the type of performance information people want to see.

Rose Fitzpatrick reported that Police Scotland was developing divisional level reporting, combining narrative and numbers. The challenge is how to relate this to community planning and Single Outcome Agreements – which needs done jointly.

Douglas Yates stated that the aim is to empower local authority level scrutiny. And Paul Johnston highlighted that developing an overall performance framework is a priority – within two years in line with Audit Scotland recommendations on performance monitoring within merged organisations.

Q Jackie Brook, Children in Scotland: *What is going right to have brought about positive change in crime and offences? And what must we continue to tackle – particularly in relation to tackling inequality?*

Grant Thoms said that there was a need to map hotspots through joint work across police, fire and other services – to see the overlap in place and people. Ross Haggart also highlighted the need to share information and work together. Douglas Yates felt that better joint working, alongside better trained police officers, would help to tackle inequalities – with more understanding of issues such as Looked After Children and hate crime for example. Rose Fitzpatrick felt that a lot of what has been achieved already couldn't have happened without a robust strategy, for example in tackling knife crime. She felt there was a need to build a focus on the families coming to the notice of all services – with more data sharing. Paul Johnston felt that there was a need to learn more about asset focused approaches.

Q Archie Drummond, Clackmannanshire Council: *Can SPA encourage Police Scotland to stop doing things for the sake of being seen to do things – such as stop and search?*

Douglas Yates indicated that SPA was concerned about getting the balance right. There have been Board discussions about stop and search, and it is the first area that the Board is doing a 'deep dive' review to ensure that the approach is proportionate, effective and best value. Rose Fitzpatrick said that Police Scotland welcome this scrutiny, and that stop and search needed to be used properly, based on local intelligence, in a respectful way and meeting local needs – with the aim of keeping people safe.

PART TWO: CASE STUDIES

Evidence Based Community Plan

Alasdair Mathers (Midlothian Council) presented on the approach in Midlothian to using evidence to inform the community plan. He explained that they collated information around each of the five community planning themes – and tested this with a Research and Information group to ensure it was accurate. Thematic groups used a PESTEL approach to reviewing the context and produced a statement of intended priorities; and also produced a risk assessment.

Douglas Scott (Scottish Borders Council) explained the approach to using evidence in Scottish Borders. Here, the community planning partners assessed the evidence they held in relation to the national outcomes within the Scottish Government's

National Performance Framework, and this evidence informed the vision for the Single Outcome Agreement.

Q Lorna Ascroft, Scottish Government: *How did you find the process of getting data from the partners, and the quality of data you received?*

Douglas Scott explained that data was a very mixed picture. The Council works very closely with the NHS in the Scottish Borders, and both organisations have the same boundaries. The NHS is very process driven, and there is a real tension between a national focus on processes and a local focus on outcomes. In the Borders they are also working to bring together the indicators used by police and fire services.

Alistair Mathers explained that they took an approach of using data as 'indicators' rather than requiring it to be exactly the same. He said it was used to give an impression – as an art not a science. This impression is then checked with real life experience, so that communities can provide feedback. The data is used to inform conversations, rather than becoming overly focused on the accuracy of datasets.

Q Rhonda Geekies, West Dunbartonshire Council: *One of the SOA priorities in Scottish Borders was to reduce inequalities – how will this be measured?*

Douglas explained that the Scottish Borders approach was to focus on the two most deprived areas, using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. They are in the process of developing a measurement framework, for the next three years.

Multi-Agency Tasking and Commanding

Neil Carnegie (Aberdeen City Council) explained how Aberdeen City Council and its partners use daily tactical reporting. In Aberdeen there is a community safety hub, with around 40 officers from different services working in the same location. There are also strong links with the third sector. There are multi-agency meetings every day, with a strong focus on recurring problems - locations, victims and offenders. The meetings are very action focused, and have resulted in a 32% reduction in neighbour complaints, a 28% reduction in youth annoyance – and many other benefits.

DI Deborah Barton (Police Scotland) explained how a multi agency approach to tackling domestic abuse had helped to tackle serial offenders and those at risk of causing serious harm. Information sharing was at the heart of the process, alongside quick actions, creativity and ownership of the approach. The approach, piloted in Glasgow, is now being rolled out across Scotland. In Glasgow, it resulted in significantly reduced re-offending rates – in real terms around 100 fewer victims. Serious repeat offenders were also charged due to improvements in information sharing.

Q: Martin Togneri, SFRB: *It appears that there is a strong case for making it as easy as possible to share data automatically, rather than ad-hoc systems depending on the motivation of the individual?*

Neil Carnegie said that sharing data as part of a daily process is very important, and that more could be done to make this part of the daily routine.

Q: Sid Paton, SFRS: *Is budget pooling working? And are there any business interests in these multi-agency groups?*

Neil explained that resource pooling was at early stages, and was small scale – with more to be done. The Business Improvement District gave money to this approach, and the partners work closely with businesses in the city centre.

Q: Barry McEwan, Police Scotland: *It is obvious the multi agency structure for tackling domestic abuse works. And the case studies also demonstrated good practice around evidence gathering. How will the Building Safer Communities programme share practice across Scotland?*

Duncan Beamish (Scottish Government) explained that the programme aims to produce guidance, support and case studies to help to share practice.

Q: Gary Lary, SFRS: *Daily tasking and multi agency work is resource intensive and doesn't necessarily fit with existing structures. How was this dealt with?*

Deborah Barton explained that anyone who is interested is invited to see how it works and be part of it. The door is always open, and seeing it in practice helps people to consider how it fits with their priorities.

Neil said that the outcomes from their approach are compelling. Local staff really bring it to life when they see the approach working. This approach is very much helping with the shift to preventative work – and fire safety has been one of the real benefits.

PART THREE: WORKSHOPS

Participants took part in one of two workshops:

- **Asset Focused Approaches:** Andrew Magowan of Inspiring Scotland and CI Tony Bone and Neil Illingworth of Police Scotland presented on their asset focused approaches to working with local communities.
- **Scrutiny Training:** Jessica Crowe of the Centre for Public Scrutiny ran a training session on scrutiny arrangements and approaches.

Copies of the presentations used in the workshops, and for all other presentations, are available at www.buildingsafercommunities.co.uk/network

Closing Remarks

Tom McMahon, Head of the Community Safety Unit, thanked all of the participants for attending and encouraged people to continue to engage with the Building Safer Communities Programme online at www.buildingsafercommunities.co.uk