



INFORMATION SHEET 5

**Safer Neighbourhoods Panels -
Community Engagement Programme**

Guide for Neighbourhood Panels

What are Safer Neighbourhoods Panels?

The **Safer Neighbourhoods Panel** will decide the priorities for the area by examining the results of community consultation and research by police and partners. This will include taking account of results from public events, street briefings and meetings where the community have voiced concerns, as well as an overview of crime statistics for that neighbourhood. In addition to priority setting the neighbourhood panel should be fully involved in deciding what type of action should be taken on their concerns and have an involvement, where possible, in a problem solving approach.

Who should be the members of a Neighbourhood Panel?

The panel should be made up of local people who: live and/or work in the area; are involved in charitable work or business; and, have a close connection with the area. These people could be identified through consultation activities carried out on the ward i.e. public meetings, 'have a say events', street briefings or questionnaires. A panel should include a wide range of people to ensure that the group is representative of the community, both geographically and demographically i.e. different ethnic origins, faith groups, sexual orientation and young people, and be drawn from all parts of the neighbourhood to prevent focus on one area at the exclusion of others. Representation should be sought from different socio-economic sectors i.e. both those living in private dwellings and people from social housing. Each team must also make plans to involve people with disabilities and ensure that the panel is accessible to this section of the community. The make up of your neighbourhood in terms of the above categories will be reflected in the neighbourhood profile (stage one of seven stage model **Appendix A**) which your SNT sergeant will have access to.

Nominations might be made at public meetings/events to avoid any impression that the panel has been imposed or selected by the police. Word of mouth referrals may also prove a useful method to identify neighbourhood panel members. This will ensure that the widest range of people identified are able to take part in prioritising and resolving local issues. An ideal size for the panel would be between 10-12 people; too many could make it hard to reach agreement.

The panel chair and members should be those who have the respect of the community and are trusted to voice their concerns. The panel members need to understand community concerns from a variety of perspectives and be able to feedback the results of

police/partner activity and the reasons for priorities being set, hence why the panel needs to be as representative as possible.

If there are insufficient panel members new members can be generated by an advert in local publications, housing association newsletters or supermarket notice boards. In the event of the panel being under represented consider actively seeking individuals from the underrepresented groups. This can be achieved by actively identifying meeting places or other venues where communities meet, attending the venues to explain the role of the panels and encourage participation. You may even want to consider an open invitation to specific groups or random invitations made in person at other community events, street briefings, public meetings or venues. Your SNT should always consider recruiting panel members through their everyday contact in the community.

What are Neighbourhood Panel responsibilities?

The responsibilities of the neighbourhood panel are to:

- meet regularly - about every six - eight weeks, the regularity of the meetings will be dependent on the needs of the ward – so in some wards meeting every 2 months may be adequate but in others monthly meetings may be required.
- assess the information collected by police and other sources including crime statistics and consider how to prioritise the community concerns.
- agree on a maximum of three priorities
- ask for feedback on progress at the next meeting and review existing priorities.
- agree a realistic and achievable course of action to address the issues raised by the community.
- maintain records of meeting minutes including actions. (**Appendix B**)

A communication strategy will be required to keep the whole community informed of the priorities and the outcome of problem solving work. Police and partners should ensure that the top priorities are achievable within available resources, and set a timescale for achievement or feedback to the community.

The panel will review priorities agreed at previous meetings and monitor progress. When a priority has been resolved, to the satisfaction of the neighbourhood panel members, a new priority will be agreed. The panel should adopt a problem solving approach and encourage local action and multi agency work. Problem solving training can be given to panel members at a local level to help them understand how the community can become involved in solving problems.

How will the panel decide on priorities?

The community should set the priorities for the Safer Neighbourhoods Team with limited police influence. In order to ensure that panels make an 'informed decision' it is always useful for panel members to be presented with local crime statistics as well as the concerns of the communities that have been identified through engagement within the neighbourhood. Once this information is presented to the panel members they will need to decide the top three priorities, and consider how the Safer Neighbourhoods Team, and other partners, will be best able to deal with the priorities chosen. The work of the panel

will be made easier if the issues and concerns of the community are presented to them with some analysis. This may be as simple as a map showing the occurrences of a problem, or a ranking of the frequency of issues being raised. The neighbourhood panel should not identify their own priorities but must ensure that their Safer Neighbourhoods Teams have identified local concerns, for their consideration, through their community engagement (stage two & three of seven stage model at **Appendix A**)

The Safer Neighbourhoods/partnership analyst has a key role to play in this process by presenting analysis on the community issues that were identified during consultation. Decisions may follow a simple process of discussion to reach consensus. If agreement is not reached then a vote may be taken or an extra priority agreed.

Neighbourhood Panels working with partners and other agencies

Boroughs will have a variety of terms used for the group that brings together partners at borough level to co-ordinate tasking of neighbourhood problems to the most appropriate agency, partnership or policing unit. These may be called a **Joint Agency Group (JAG)**, **Partnership Operational Group** or may work as a borough level **Problem Solving Forum**. In each case the group brings together community safety partners such as the local authority, street wardens, housing managers and others who have a role to play in community safety. The Safer Neighbourhoods team will refer issues to this group for assistance and problem solving activity from partners.

In some boroughs JAG/problem solving/partnership operational group operate at a level covering two or more wards. These smaller groups may take a problem solving approach involving local people, including businesses or housing providers/landlords who can assist to resolve problems. This will enable work to be carried out at a very local level with partners, who have a specific responsibility or take the lead for the local authority on a geographic basis, for instance a housing district or estate.

Practicalities for Neighbourhood Panels – some guidance

As with many community groups some members will request a formal arrangement, others will prefer a less structured approach. Whatever the system chosen for the panel meetings the participants must agree on how decisions will be made to prevent bias or personal opinions influencing the priorities selected by the group. Setting ground rules will be an essential part of the first meeting and must be shared with new members. A sample constitution is attached at **appendix C**.

Record keeping should include minutes of the meeting with sufficient notes of the priorities agreed and the reasons for decisions (**Record keeping see appendix B**). It should be clear to the community who the neighbourhood panel members are and how long they will be asked to serve the community. To ensure consistency on the neighbourhood panel members should aim to be involved for a minimum of a year with an agreed maximum tenure of 2/3 years. A record should be kept of panel membership, including changes of panel members. After establishing the panel it must be clear to members, and the community, how changes to panel membership will be made.

The chair of the group should be a community member with the Safer Neighbourhoods sergeant in attendance at all meetings. As well as local people, a local authority representative or other significant partner (youth worker or housing provider) may be involved as an observer to bring local knowledge and useful contacts to the panel. The neighbourhood panel may also benefit from the involvement of the local ward councillor who can observe the process and contribute their local knowledge of problems, as well as to assist with the procuring of resources or facilities through the local authority. The panel must decide if the councillor should have voting rights when the panel are deciding the priorities, as their involvement may politicise the outcome.

Information Sharing

As part of the process of involving communities in priority setting the panel may be given access to data and information. This information will be de-personalised and usually relate to broad crime types or information such as police call data or council services requests. This sharing of this information does not require any protocol or agreement with panel members, as long as the information does not identify any person as a victim, offender, and witness or contain private details about any person.

Members of the community will not normally be covered by exchange of information protocols; this means that police officers and staff will not share personal information that would identify a person with the community. If information sharing is required, advice should be sought from the local borough police Senior Management Team, to assist in developing a process for new information sharing protocols.

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7 Steps to Community Engagement – The Role of the Neighbourhood Panel

Safer Neighbourhoods 7 Steps	Role for Neighbourhood Panel
1. Research	Contribute any local knowledge or information about the community, such as contact details or organisations that may wish to be involved
2. Engage	Neighbourhood panel members can assist with meetings or activities by arranging them or helping with communication and publicity
3. Public Preferences	As above panel members can take an active role in gathering information on the issues that concern local people
4. Investigational and Analysis	Panel members can take part in visual audits of the neighbourhood and collate information from environmental surveys. At this stage the different community concerns are assessed and analysed by police and partners.
5. Public Choices	This is the key role for the neighbourhood panel. The panel assess the different concerns raised by community at public meetings or other consultation and decide which should be priorities. These should be choices that are informed by research and analysis from step 4
6. Plan and action	Panel may be involved in some of activity. Non-enforcement activity, such as communication with the community may be carried out by the panel to help publicise what is happening
7. Review	The panel should be part of the review process and agree when a priority has been completed or requires further work

This is cyclic process, return to step 1 after the first round of activity

Appendix B

Sample Agenda and Record Keeping

- Welcome and introductions
- Attendance and apologies for absence
- Record of attendees (including organisation they represent if applicable)
- Set time limit for the meeting and business to be discussed
- Agree minutes of last meeting & update on priorities agreed at last meeting
- Discuss current community safety issues requiring attention
- Agree which issues will be the next set of priorities. Record reason for choice, action to be taken and reason for the priorities being selected
- Any other business
- Agree time and date of next meeting

Please see information sheet titled 'Chair Meeting Skills'

Appendix C

Sample Constitution

- Purpose of the Panel
- Terms of reference
 1. To be community representatives and to identify issues of local concern which have an impact on fear of crime or the quality of life in an area. Anything sub-judice or relating solely to an individual case will not be considered
 2. Assist police in community engagement
 3. Assist in problem solving and crime prevention activity
 4. Assist in environmental audits
 5. Review priorities at regular intervals
 6. Provide information to the community on progress of priorities

- Membership and attendance requirement
- Review of membership
- Meetings (frequency, location and record keeping)
- Nominations and elections for chair (process and timescales for holding the role)
- Members responsibilities (voluntary participation, promote inclusion and equality of opportunities)

The constitution may be signed and should be reviewed annually.

Please see suggested constitution below for guidance

Ward / Neighbourhood Panel Constitution-DRAFT

Adopted on the day of 2007

The Name of the Ward / Neighbourhood Panel is:

Administration

Subject to the matters set out below the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel for XXXXX shall be administered and managed in accordance with this constitution.

Purpose of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel

To be representative of the local community in managing partnership activity with a view to improving the quality of life to those who live, work or visit the ward. This to be underpinned by the use of regular Public Consultations.

Terms of reference

- To enable effective demographically representative community engagement in order to establish the wards priorities.
- To decide what the priorities will be for that Neighbourhood and to prioritise them as appropriate after listening to the results of public engagement and analysis that has taken place.
- To be the overseers of the public priorities particularly in relation to problem solving activity.
- To be responsible for specific tasking and co-ordination against agreed public priorities.
- To be responsible for the ongoing review of activity to ensure effective response and outcomes.
- To be the final arbiter on closure of problem solving activity.
- To ensure continual review of closed initiatives in order to check that resolutions are long term and sustainable.
- To ensure that information is shared with a view to delivering effective results.
- To ensure that the wider Ward community knows and understands what is happening and why.

Membership

The Ward/Neighbourhood Panel should aim to be representative of the entire ward taking into account minority groups as well as those who are hard to reach.

The maximum number of members should not exceed 25 and should aim to include only those who are representatives of the local community or responsible to the local community. The following is not an exhaustive list but an indication:

- Residents Associations
- Police
- Young People
- Registered Social Landlords
- Business Community
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender community
- Black Minority Ethnic Communities
- Faith
- Disability
- Elderly
- Voluntary and community sectors
- Councillors
- Local Authority

The membership should include a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary for the conduct of business.

For new members who are interested in joining the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel they should be nominated by another member of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel and then seconded by a further member. A vote would then be held whereby the majority would secure inclusion.

The Ward/Neighbourhood Panel may for good reason terminate the membership of any individual: provided that the individual is informed the reason for termination by the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel Chair and that the vote represents two thirds of the members present. There is no right of appeal for this process.

If any member fails to attend meetings for a full year the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel may review their membership.

The Ward/Neighbourhood Panel may authorise the attendance of any individual or representative of any agency or organisation at meetings if their attendance would assist in the conduct of business.

Meetings

The Ward/Neighbourhood Panel will meet xxxxxx Annual General Meeting of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel should be held xxxx. At this meeting the business shall

include the election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary and the transaction of other matters as may be necessary.

Voting

Each member of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel shall have ¹one vote. In the case of any equality of votes the Chair of the meeting shall have the casting vote to ensure a majority vote is reached.

Chairperson, Vice Chairperson & Secretary

At the Annual General Meeting the group shall elect the Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and Secretary.

Each individual who is interested in the position should be nominated by another member of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel and then seconded by a further member.

On there being multiple applicants there will be a vote by all Ward/Neighbourhood Panel members present and the person with the most votes will be elected.

The election of a member should only take place if the person is present at the Annual General Meeting or send apologies to the meeting, expressing a wish to be nominated, in writing to the existing Chairperson before the meeting.

The Chairperson, Vice-chairperson and Secretary shall hold office until the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel next after their election and they shall be eligible for re-election.

Alterations to the constitution

This Constitution's 'Terms of Reference' may be altered at any meeting of the Ward/Neighbourhood Panel if two thirds or more of those attending agree to amend it.

Signed On Behalf of Ward/Neighbourhood Panel

Before a constitution can be adopted there are necessary requisite actions that have to be undertaken. These are as follows:

- The initial setting up of the group will be co-ordinated by the Police Service who will draw together known contacts for each ward.
 - Subsequent members will be brought on in line with the Constitution instructions.
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- The police will chair the initial meeting where the purpose of the group will be outlined.
- The constitution will be a formal Agenda item for the second meeting, as will arrangements for formal Chairperson.