



**Bedfordshire Police Authority
and Bedfordshire Police
Community Engagement
Strategy 2010-13**

Introduction

Bedfordshire Police and Police Authority continually seek to improve engagement activity as they strive to build safe and confident communities, where well-informed citizens are at the heart of shaping a responsive, accountable and value for money police service. The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework for the development of engagement activity over the next three years. It outlines the areas we will jointly target for improvement, and the key themes will form the basis of a separate action plan.

We recognise that community engagement is vital if the police and their partners are to deliver increased public confidence. To that end, we will ensure that this strategy addresses the diverse needs of individuals and communities, and complements existing strategies to deliver Equality of service, effective Partnerships and targeted Communications.

Definitions

The ideas of community and engagement are understood differently by different people. For the purposes of this strategy we have defined them as below:

Community – a group of people who hold something in common such as a geographic location, experience, interest, identity or purpose.

Engagement – the building of a two-way relationship with citizens that encourages active participation in identifying local issues and acting together to implement solutions. In practice, this will often happen through front-line officers, staff and volunteers, including neighbourhood policing teams.

Individual Needs – Whilst it is recognised that communities are served by Bedfordshire Police and Police Authority, there is a recognition that communities are made up of individuals who have different needs and requirements. It is therefore critical that engagement is at an individual level.

Shared Vision

Bedfordshire Police and Authority share a joint vision:

To be an organisation that inspires trust and confidence, that listens, responds and meets the needs of individuals and communities.

To achieve this overall aim, the Police Authority has set a number of strategic priorities which are intended to focus the Authority's work and ensure that success can be measured.

Our strategic priorities are:

- To ensure people experience an accessible policing presence in their neighbourhoods and are able to influence the local policing service.
- To ensure that our services are viewed from the individual's perspective, and that our staff respond to our different communities' expectations, when dealing with crime and incidents.
- To ensure we have in place the right processes that identify the most serious threats to the public and the capacity and capability to respond appropriately to deal with the risks.
- To ensure we have in place the right workforce make-up and the right combination of skills, technology, equipment, people and flexibility to tackle our responsibilities as a Police Service.

- To ensure people see us working with partners within Bedfordshire and with other Police Forces, making the best use of public money and improving services together.
- To ensure people see us using people, budgets and all other resources wisely to deliver a value for money service.

Aims of the Strategy

To develop and build relationships between police, local communities and partners to enable the people of Bedfordshire to understand and influence the policing decisions and policies that affect them with the intention of achieving the outcomes set by the Chief Constable:

- People are safer
- People feel safer
- People are more satisfied with the service they receive from Bedfordshire Police
- People have more confidence in Bedfordshire Police

Objectives of the Strategy

- To continually seek to improve and be innovative in the ways in which Bedfordshire Police and Police Authority understand and engage with the diverse communities of Bedfordshire.
- To ensure that mechanisms exist that enable the views of the public to contribute towards priority setting, corporate planning and use of resources.
- To work with partners to ensure that, where possible, engagement mechanisms are aligned to deliver sustainable solutions to crime, anti social behaviour and other local issues.
- To effectively communicate to communities local outcomes and illustrate how we have listened and how their involvement has influenced the decision making process.

Challenges

Rural / Urban Communities - The police service in Bedfordshire is delivered to a wide diversity of communities. Different mechanisms are required to both engage and deliver services to meet the needs of different communities and the demands they face e.g. urban and rural communities.

Efficient Engagement across Partnerships - Bedfordshire Police and Police Authority work with a range of partners and this can result in both overlaps and gaps in engagement. In the tighter public sector funding arena the service and authority need to work with partners to minimise duplication and maximise opportunities for engagement.

The Economy and Police Funding - With the likelihood of tighter Government funding across the whole public sector, there will be fewer financial resources available.

Population and Housing Growth - Bedfordshire has a population of nearly 620,000 and lies within one of the Government's national growth areas. Despite the current economic conditions, both housing and population look likely to rise significantly. Effective mechanisms will be required to engage with new and emerging communities.

Increasing Community Diversity - There is a wide diversity of communities, particularly in Luton and Bedford, with Luton having a proportionally high number of black and minority ethnic (BME) residents. Housing growth and immigration can be expected to further increase this diversity. More effective engagement mechanisms will be required to be fully inclusive of the diversity of the communities served.

Commerce and Business – The County is a transport hub with major road, rail and air connections. London Luton International Airport handles 120,000 flights a year catering for the needs of 10 million passengers. The redevelopment of Bedford town centre in the medium term will require the replacement of Greyfriars Police Station.

Leisure - Major developments planned for the near future include a new Centre Parcs Village and the NIRAH (National Institute for Research into Aquatic Habitats) research and tourism centre. Both of these carry the risk of public protest. The 2012 London Olympics will also present significant policing challenges for the county.

New Unitary Authorities - A new local government structure came into place in Bedfordshire in April 2009 with the county now covered by three unitary authorities, two of which have been newly created.

First Year Focus

In the first year, Bedfordshire Police will improve engagement mechanisms through enhanced training to staff and the introduction of a new IT System that will improve the manner in which individual staff are able to profile and engage with the community. In addition, 2010/11 will see an upgraded Safer Neighbourhood section on the force website which will enable the public to view details of their local Team and what they have been doing to address their concerns. It will also provide details of all engagement opportunities that will enable the public to influence local policing priorities.

The Police Authority's 2010/11 Business Plan outlines how the Authority will focus on improving our understanding of local communities. This will enhance the Authority's ability to conduct strategic planning, scrutinise in committee and target community engagement activity. Within this broader approach the Police Authority will focus on engaging with young people and with rural communities.

The Authority has chosen youth as an area to target engagement as this has been highlighted by our Strategic Working Group as a component of taking a generation approach to reducing crime in Bedfordshire. Demographically we expect the proportion of young people in our community to increase and the Authority does not currently reflect this group among its membership. The Authority's focus on rural communities seeks to meet a need identified by Parish Councils. This will include engagement and partnership working with Parish Councils, in part to deliver more effective communication with people living in rural parts of the county. Outcomes should include comprehensive Parish Council information held by the Authority and alignment with Parish Council newsletters and websites.

Measuring Success

The key indicators of success in implementing this strategy will be the following:

- Increasing overall public confidence in Bedfordshire Police and its partners as measured by the British Crime Survey.

- Increasing public satisfaction with the policing service provided, with a particular focus on ensuring satisfaction amongst Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) communities, as measured by survey data.
- Increasing the level of involvement and sense of ownership over the policing in Bedfordshire, as measured through local confidence survey results.
- Establishing a work culture which routinely recognises, understands and takes account of the needs, expectations, experience and perspectives of the community, as measured through increased public satisfaction, the Policing Pledge and Staff Survey results.
- As well as looking at the above-mentioned quantitative data, the new SNT IT System will be used to measure the quality of the engagement activity taking place.

The key indicators for the Police Authority will include the following:

A priority for the Police Authority is to increase the levels of community engagement activity undertaken to provide a strengthened community voice in directly shaping the nature of policing. Engagement with young people and rural communities will look for opportunities to encourage ownership by these groups increasing our capacity for future engagement.

- To compile a list of one named contact with each Parish Council
- To demonstrate at least one interaction or communication with each Parish Council
- To demonstrate a relationship with at least one group of young people / youth group

It has also been suggested that the Youth Issues Group may wish to hear directly from young people, but this idea is yet to be developed.

- To use a 'Value for Money' indicator

Money spent divided by

(Number of people engaged X hard to reach score X depth of engagement score)

- To increase the number of hits on the Police Authority's website by 15% per quarter

Governance and Oversight

The Police Authority's Community Engagement Committee has responsibility for overseeing the engagement activity of both the Force and the Authority itself, receiving quarterly progress reports. Their role includes holding Bedfordshire Police to account for community engagement that continuously improves and is fully integrated and mainstreamed throughout the service. The Committee will monitor the implementation of this strategy through an accompanying action plan.

Risk Management

The assessment of risk is an integral part of the governance arrangements for the Authority and the Force. Each business area or function considers what risks arise in relation to their community engagement activity. Primarily this strategy seeks to mitigate risks arising from any potential failure to meet the strategic priorities listed above. It is particularly relevant for neighbourhood policing, understanding individual perspectives, visible partnership working and value for money.

Conclusion

This strategy is intended to improve the approach to community engagement over the next three years. Once the initial work, set out in the accompanying action plan, is complete this strategy will need to be reviewed annually, in line with the production of the Annual Policing Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose.