

## North Wales Regional Committee

### Community Safety in North Wales

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 The North Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees. It covers Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham and the area of Gwynedd made up of the former districts of Arfon and Dwyfor.

1.2 The role of the regional committees, as defined by Standing Order 10.2, is to advise the National Assembly on matters affecting their regions, the effect of Assembly policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there.

1.3 At its meeting on 2 July 2004, the Committee sought to raise awareness and to hear the opinions of the people of North Wales about community safety. The points raised by the public are summarised in this report.

#### 2. Presentations

At the meeting the Committee heard short presentations from the various speakers. Copies of these, where available, are reproduced in the annexes.

Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales Police, outlined their programme "Dyna Ddigon" – Challenging Anti-Social Behaviour Across North Wales. He described its aims to eliminate the yob culture, and crime and anti-social behaviour, and to generate civic pride and reclaim public areas for the people. He outlined the various initiatives that went into it.

Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, spoke of the North Wales Fire Authority's first published integrated risk management plan. This had identified 8 main risks, strategies for reducing them and an action plan to implement those strategies.

Carol Moore, Chief Officer of the North Wales Probation Area, spoke of the work the Probation Service was doing to reduce re-offending by convicted offenders. She said that nationally the Probation Service was working to reduce the re-offending rate by 5%, from a 1997 baseline, and that the North Wales Service was on track to meet this.

Aneurin Owen, Director of CAIS, spoke of the work his organisation was doing to deliver and plan services to reduce alcohol and drug abuse in North Wales. He emphasised the need for services to be effective, integrated and comprehensive. He said that CAIS sought to target services it provided in response to the needs of individuals and where it was possible to achieve most success.

### **3. Views presented by the public in the discussion**

In the discussion, members of the public made a number of points.

County Councillor Chris Hughes welcomed the "Dyna Ddigon" campaign and said that the local authority had introduced additional street cleaning in support of it. However, he considered that it was not working and had failed to reduce the perception of crime in the area. In his view, there was a need for a zero tolerance approach to policing in Colwyn Bay. Responding, Richard Brunstrom said that the campaign had only just started in the Colwyn Bay area and so it was too soon for it to be seen to work effectively. He said that the campaign did include an element of zero tolerance and confirmed that the police were very serious about resolving the problems referred to.

Glyn Jones, Elected Member of Conwy Council welcomed the Chief Constable's identification of the real concerns of residents. He felt there was a need for a greater emphasis on preventative work and that the police would have more impact if they were seen in their traditional uniforms rather than in yellow jackets. Richard Brunstrom agreed about the importance of the police being visible and commented that the police uniform should be redesigned to meet the current needs of both the Police and the public.

Abdul Khan, Councillor for Glyn Ward welcomed the approach of "Dyna Ddigon" and urged the Chief Constable to do more to promote and publicise the work they were doing so that people were more aware of it. Too many people thought that the police concentrated only on speeding motorists.

County Councillor Bob Barton from Denbighshire stressed the importance of making children aware of fire safety and the valuable role performed by Fireman Sam. He also expressed concerns about road safety and the contribution that the poor state of the roads in Denbighshire contributed to accidents.

Jean Davies from Deganwy emphasised the importance of public bodies being able to share health and other information about individuals who are likely to be the subject of anti-social behaviour orders. She also asked whether the Fire Service would respond to remove a potential fire hazard, such as piles of brushwood or dry tinder, if these were reported to them. On the first of these, Richard Brunstrom said that they did have some access to others' data but there were restrictions, often for good reasons, on the amount that could be shared by health agencies. On the second point, Simon Smith said that they did have powers in extreme cases to close a building or part of a building if they felt there was a serious fire risk. However, their powers were very limited and they were unable, for example, to remove brushwood.

Councillors Edwards, Conwy County Council said that in order to police a community it was important

to put more resources into manpower and fewer into equipment. Acknowledging the concern about manpower, Richard Brunstrom said they hoped to meet the target of one community beat officer per ward in about 18 months.

Susheela Lourie, Chair of the North Wales Race Equality Network asked about the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to race equality in North Wales and their understanding of rural racism.

Edward Morris-Jones, Cwm Cadnant Community Council, Ynys Môn stressed the importance of partnership between the Police and local people and local authorities. He was concerned about the level of policing in rural areas, particularly over the weekend.

Geraint Roberts of Bangor City Council expressed concern about what happened to children when they were expelled from school. He felt that only limited help was received from the Probation Service and that there was a need for better collaboration in this respect from the agencies in the area. Responding, Carol Moore said that the Probation Service's function was to deal with adult offenders from the age of 18. While they worked with youth offending team partnerships, they did not work directly with juvenile offenders in the school system.

Subsequently, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration responded:

I would like to respond to Mr Roberts' concerns about excluded pupils. In January 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government issued Circular 1/2004 'Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units'. This comprehensive guidance addresses both the processes that need to be followed when excluding pupils, and the subsequent education and support that should be available for excluded pupils.

The guidance acknowledges that part-time provision of education for these pupils is often inadequate to meet their educational needs, and also leaves some of these children unsupervised for significant periods of a normal school day. That is why, from September 2002, LEAs should ensure that all pupils receive full-time education 15 days after being excluded, either at another school or, where necessary, at a Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative provision.

'Full-time' means that the amount of supervised education should mirror that provided by mainstream schools, where an average school week might amount to some 25 hours. However the Assembly does recognise that in some cases pupils may need to be phased into full-time education, particularly where pupils have become deeply disengaged from education. For these pupils the plans for their future education should specifically cover how the move to full-time education is to be achieved.

When considering future education arrangements for any excluded child, the guidance encourages LEAs to work in collaboration with other agencies within the area. This might include the education social work service, Social services, educational psychologists, admissions and SEN policy staff and head teachers/teachers in charge of Pupil Referral Units. Other agencies such as the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service should be invited to join where appropriate.

The relevant YOT is expected to work with the LEA, training providers, 14-19 networks, YPPs and other relevant agencies as appropriate to support a suitably differentiated programme of learning and support. This will assist each individual young person in the Criminal Justice System to access their basic universal entitlement to services as set out in "Extending Entitlement".

Malcolm Roberts, the Wales Co-ordinator for Substance Misuse drew attention to the fact that there were no prisons in the North Wales area.

Subsequently, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration responded:

The lack of prison accommodation in North Wales is something which concerns the Welsh Assembly Government and I have made representations to the Home Office about this; ultimately decisions about the Prison Service Estate are for the Home Office.

Steve Barrett from the Commission for Racial Equality Office North Wales welcomed the improvement in the speed with which racist graffiti was now being removed. He stressed the importance of partnership between public sector bodies but said that sometimes this became an excuse for lack of speedy action. While some good work had already been done, there were some areas where racist graffiti had remained for over a year.

Subsequently, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration responded:

The clear advice from the Police is that anyone aware of racist graffiti should make a formal complaint to them. Graffiti blights all our communities, reduces local pride and increases people's fear of crime. Recognising this, graffiti is covered in the recent Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 which introduced on – the – spot fines as punishment for those thought responsible for minor graffiti.

Graffiti that is racist in nature cannot be tolerated and it is right that such anti-social behaviour attracts more serious penalties. Section 43 (2 of) the 2003 Act makes clear that when graffiti is more serious or considered to amount to racially aggravated criminal damage (as defined under Section 30 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) then any such offence has to be investigated thoroughly and the 1998 Act sets minimum sentences for those found guilty.

#### **4. Written Comments and Questions**

Gordon Millichamp, Acrefair: What is the Assembly's and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's opinion/thoughts on the recent call for the installation of sprinklers in hotels, which would help more than smoke detectors?

Subsequently Simon Smith responded:

North Wales Fire & Rescue Service has long held the view that sprinklers are a positive and important

life saving measure. They are automatic. They don't rely on an individual's ability to detect and action an alarm and at the very least they will control a developing fire, usually completely extinguishing it.

In October 2001 "Wired for Safety" was published. It was the final report of the community fire safety working group which was set up between the three Welsh Fire Services and the Welsh Assembly Government. The groups aim was to reduce the number of deaths and fire related injuries and to protect domestic and public property in Wales by ensuring that both public and private sectors worked together.

The recommendations of "Wired for Safety" recognised how important active fire fighting measures, specifically in the form of residential sprinklers, were rather than just relying on the warning of a smoke alarm.

The reports recommendations acknowledged the effective part that sprinklers would play in achieving the groups overall reduction goal.

In relation to sprinklers the report recommended that:

- The National Assembly amends its Development Quality Requirements, so that from March 2002, all new social housing in Wales has domestic sprinkler systems installed during construction.
- The National Assembly provides funding to assist with the cost of the provision of sprinkler systems in houses in multiple occupation; and
- The National Assembly looks to enforce a requirement for sprinklers in new schools, student halls of residence, nurses' homes and residential homes.

These and the other recommendations related to fire safety have all been adopted by the Assembly in there entirety. These recommendations target the particular types of property that tend to cause Fire & Rescue Service's the most concern.

The call for sprinklers in hotels, although welcomed, is tempered with the knowledge that hotels in Wales, and the rest of the UK, are well regulated and have a very good safety record in respect of fires. North Wales Fire & Rescue Service continues to have a proactive inspection programme which assists hoteliers to maintain safety standards.

When considering the cost, especially to the smaller hotel business, a balance needs to be struck between risk reduction and benefit. Many small hotels in North Wales have all the necessary preventative measures in place to ensure the safety of their guests without the requirement for sprinklers. North Wales Fire & Rescue Service would therefore welcome a risk based approach to the provision of sprinklers in hotels in North Wales.

Councillor Meurig Bowen-Hughes, Llangefni Town Council: In his presentation the Chief Constable said that in a survey in Colwyn Bay the majority of people were concerned with litter problems (70%+)

whilst drugs was 61%. I asked the Welsh Assembly clerk handling my application to attend for an update on the drug situation in North Wales – in particular Gwynedd and Ynys Môn. What is the position regarding "CRACK COCAINE"? The Sunday Observer (last Sunday in June) expressed concern on the harmful effect of this drug. I would welcome comments on what steps are taking place to tackle the problem. I am also a non-executive director of the North West Wales NHS Trust.

Subsequently, Aneurin Owen responded: A conference was arranged on this issue by the North West Wales NHS Trust Drug and Alcohol Service in May this year. A copy of the conference report is available from the Service Manager, Mr Dave Able Roberts: Tel: 01248 718030.

Subsequently, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration responded:

The conference report referred to by Aneurin Owen on the 2 July was full and addresses the physical, psychological, biological, social and criminal effects of cocaine. Treatment was covered in depth along with the current situation in the North West of Wales. The only addition is that the six Substance Misuse Action Teams (SMATs) have commissioned a street survey which will give a more detailed picture of the level of use across the region. I urge people to look at this.

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Shelley Webber, Queensferry: Recognition for the Police. - Richard Brunstrom – I am a county councillor for Sealand in Deeside. I have been working very closely with our CBO and her colleagues, also Dave Jolly, who have worked tirelessly helping the Sealand Manor area, mostly the children. The Deeside Station has been a credit to the force and it does need a pat on the back, not only negative vibes.

B Roberts, Victim Support, Ty'r Binwydden, Clayton Road, Mold, CH7 1ST: The support of victims following crime appears to be falling off agendas and yet is vital to reduce the fear of crime and reduce the amount of resource needed by the NHS/LHB primary care dealing with the adverse effects that the stress of having been a victim creates. Does the Panel not agree that the organisation plays a key role in reducing the fear of crime? The national organisation does have research that can demonstrate the benefits. Crime will never be erased and we need to ensure there are support mechanisms to give adequate support. In whose agenda does the organisation fall – Health, Local Authority, Police? The organisation cannot exist without funding and yet none of the statutory agencies see the organisation fitting directly into their funding streams. Alternative view – High profile campaigns often raise fear of crime working with a person who has been a victim – means they understand some of the issues, have answers to some of the questions – Immediately the fear of crime looms with the individual and in turn the community. The ripple effect can work in either way. Working with a victim can be a very valuable tool in doing that. Does the NAW not believe that as David Blunkett stated "Community does not work if the community is not involved then it doesn't work". Therefore should the third principle not apply for community safety. In Flintshire the voluntary sector has run for a second year a conference on

community safety – each year with a different theme for individuals and organisations from the community and yet the same observations emerged:-

- the community does not know what the "partnerships" are about;
- the community does not have any ownership of the initiatives due to not being involved;
- lack of consultation on the needs of the community;
- the feeling that it is a top down approach to meet the agendas of the statutory agency rather than the bottom up approach.

The unanimous resolution coming from the last conference, which was attended by 70 people from the community, was "The third principle should be in operation at the very highest level of the partnership board, the voluntary sector/community involved in the strategy group."

### **Subsequently, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration responded:**

People's chances of being a victim of crime are at the lowest level since 1981. The Welsh Assembly Government greatly values the work of Victim Support and its financial support for the organisation's first office for Wales is proof of this. The Assembly agrees that Community Safety Partnerships must be close to communities and reflect the communities' needs in their project planning.

G M Jones, Holywell: Excellent session with good, strong addresses by all speakers but especially R Brunstrom. Noticeable that all considered the media to be a 'bête noire'. Assembly Members were an audience as we were and their participation was low key but in fairness their attendance provided this opportunity for a good, positive meeting – if only the messages could be broadcast to the North Wales community generally.

Linda Hughes, Colwyn Bay: I should just like to ask why is the Police station closed in Colwyn Bay (Rhiw Road) so early in the day? Also, on an occasion a few weeks ago when I tried phoning the local number for the Police and had no reply I dialled 999 only to be berated for doing so! I rang CIS. I felt an incident where 13, 14 year-olds were drinking and taking drugs, running out in the street, was in need of Police attendance! Even so, no Police Officer attended.

Councillor Christine Gilligan, Deganwy: The public has the perception that the Probationary Service is on the side of the victim. Why not publicise weekly in the local press projects which have been covered by people undertaking community service? We see litter everywhere – elderly people's gardens, dog walking etc need to be done. Why not tell us what these community service offenders do as a punishment for their anti-social behaviour?

## **5. Action**

After the meeting, the speakers and the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, as appropriate, were invited to comment on these issues. Their and their comments are included as shown. Copies will

also be made available to the Social Justice and Regeneration Crespective committees.

A copy of this report is available on the National Assembly website [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) If you would like a hard copy, please email [NWales.regcomm@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NWales.regcomm@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or contact Paul Davies on 029 2089 8429.

**Carl Sargeant AM**  
**Committee Chair**

## **ANNEXES**

A) - Community Safety – Richard Brunstrom Chief Constable

B) Probation Service Presentation - The probation service contribution to community safety in North Wales

C) CAIS Ltd