



Association of
Police and Crime
Commissioners



APCC FINDINGS REPORT: Annex: Towards Better Partnerships: Deep Dives

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Four deep dive case studies of approaches to local partnership working

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Executive summary

This annex includes the four deep-dive case studies carried out as part of the APCC Partnership project. The deep dives were done between September and December 2024 and included a mix of virtual interviews and site visits. A fifth deep dive case study has been carried out in Wales, reflecting the views of all four Welsh Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), and is contained in a separate report.

1: Humberside

“Over time, the partnership landscape has grown more complex. I have challenged my team to come up with innovative ways to balance the workload with the effectiveness of partnerships to ensure we can continue this important multi-agency work as effectively as possible with our limited resources.” – Jonathan Evison, Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner

The Humberside region has several challenges; whilst appearing to have a comparatively simple landscape with only four Local Authority areas, the region is currently in the process of a devolution deal to create two mayors whose boundaries are not fully coterminous with the police force region. The local authority areas vary significantly in identity and demographics, notably between areas on the north bank of the river Humber, and those of the South Bank. The PCC and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) have navigated this landscape successfully however, and it was chosen as a case study area following conversations with members of staff at Humberside OPCC about their success in rationalising and managing their unique partnership landscape.

Background and context

Humberside Police Force Area covers four unitary authorities from two counties: East Riding and Kingston-Upon-Hull in Yorkshire, and North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire in Lincolnshire. Each unitary authority has its own Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), Children and Adult Safeguarding Board, and Youth Crime Board, with a force-wide Safer Roads Partnership. Combating Drugs Partnerships (CDPs) are split along the geographic lines of the river Humber, with a North-side CDP, and a South-side CDP.

The current PCC is Jonathan Evison, elected first in 2021, and re-elected in 2024. He sits as the chair of the Humber CSP Roundtable, which brings together all four CSPs in the region, and chairs the

Humberside Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP), whilst the deputy PCC (DPCC) chairs the Humberside Criminal Justice Board (HCJB).

Several sub-boards and operational delivery groups sit under each of the key partnerships and boards, including a data group under the VPP, and a reducing reoffending board sitting under both the CSP Round Table and HCJB.

Humberside OPCC provided a response to the survey on the partnership landscape, alongside attending focus groups. Two APCC staff members visited the OPCC in January to attend a CSP round table. They also met with the PCC, DPCC, and a number of OPCC staff members including partnership leads.

Approach to Community Safety Partnerships

“I had found myself at a CSP meeting a while back... and a new government item had come out. And the CSP decided on what they always had, to set up a new set of structures, meetings and boards. I have spent most of my life sitting in the same rooms, with the same people, discussing the same thing, under different headings... We can't really influence what the core CSP does in terms of the structures they create. But what we can do is hold up a mirror and say these are kind of the same thing.” – Mike Richmond, Partnerships Manager

Humberside has four Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), with a significant amount of focus being placed on the relationship the OPCC/PCC has with them. In the past there have been difficulties with this relationship, partly reflecting the geographic challenges of Humberside, with significant variance between the different local authorities. This had proved difficult to manage through the previously established funding arrangements and working relationships, with duplication of work being a common occurrence, and limited secretariat functions and engagement from the local authorities.

Seeking to change this relationship, the PCC and OPCC staff re-evaluated their role in the CSP landscape, taking on a much more proactive role in working with the CSPs. The PCC decided to move the base funding provided to CSPs for regular functions from one-year to three-year funding settlements. In return, the CSPs provided a business case covering the PCC's term detailing the activities and plans for the CSP and how it will deliver the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan. The overall funding was not decreased under the three-year settlement, the commitment was instead placed over a longer period. A driving factor behind this was to provide reassurance and consistency to the CSPs and their activities, whilst providing the PCC with greater influence and

accountability. Confirming funding for three years also allowed the CSP to hire and retain staff effectively. While this has increased the PCC/OPCCs financial commitment to CSPs, we were told that this has been offset to a significant degree by a reduction in the resources required to monitor and review the work of CSPs under the previous arrangement. The PCC/OPCC has also placed an increased focus on developing and maintaining productive relationships with CSP partners; regular meetings are undertaken with chiefs and CSP chairs, alongside monthly meetings with senior CSP officers.

Aside from the base funding provided over a three year period, the PCC/OPCC has also developed and provided a Community Safety Fund to fund specific activities, replacing the previous fund that was entirely devolved to CSPs. Providing a pot for organisations to bid into and placing the delivery responsibility of the activities onto the organisations bidding, has helped the PCC/OPCC to cement their role as the enabling force as opposed to a delivery partner for issues around community safety. Whilst still being considered a work in progress by the PCC, this fund has delivered 200 grants totalling £2.4 million in the last three years.

It was noted by the Head of Policy and Partnerships that the current situation with CSPs was not ideal; changing organisational representation and priorities still has an impact on the buy-in to CSPs, and organisational churn was still a detrimental factor for any CSP partnership. Whilst the Humberside PCC/OPCC has changed the funding they provide onto a multi-year settlement; the desire is for other partners to follow suit in providing longer-term financial settlements. This would not only apply to the CSP, but all partnerships, with an increased focus placed on the development of business plans and the PCC/OPCC's role of providing accountability, with formalised evaluation. This would still require support from government to fully implement.

A Humberside CSP roundtable has been developed and implemented by the PCC and OPCC, with APCC staff invited to attend a session as observers during the site visit as part of this case-study. The roundtable included representatives from each of the 4 CSPs, alongside policing representatives. To help alleviate the geographic issue present in Humberside, specifically around the river Humber, policing sends both north-bank and south-bank representatives. The PCC chairs the roundtable, with the OPCC taking ownership of the agenda and management of the meeting, and the deputy PCC also attends.

The roundtable we attended was strongly outcome-focused and contained a number of proposals presented by external organisations for consideration for support and/or funding, giving them an opportunity to engage with all 4 CSPs and other partners at one meeting. One of the items discussed was the development of an educational diversion programme across the four Local Authority regions. This was pitched by the provider, alongside an estimated cost, with the PCC and Local Authority Leads agreeing to fund the programme within the meeting. This partnership was developed to improve coordination across and between CSPs, the OPCC and other partners, while

reducing duplication across CSP meetings. Previously, the OPCC and other organisations had to reach out to each CSP individually. Now all the relevant partners come together to discuss, hear and agree upon proposals in a single quarterly meeting. The OPCC stressed that this was only possible because the right participants with the appropriate seniority and ability to make decisions attended the meeting. The PCC also attached importance to holding the meeting in person at a welcoming venue, with a networking lunch ahead of the discussion to accommodate senior colleagues travelling from across Humberside. This change in approach to meetings, with a focus on bringing partners together as opposed to repeating similar meetings with separate partners has been effective in reducing the demand from multiple meetings on OPCC staff (noting also travel time), with one OPCC staff member saying that they had reduced yearly meetings from 1500 to only 300. Equally, the CSP Forum is dependent on the PCC and OPCC resources for drive, co-ordination and management.

Approach to data

One of the issues is a lack of shared data sets and language. Where data is being shared by partner organisations, there may be difficulties in understanding or using the data presented unless the partnership has the capacity and resource to hire or train data analysts. This was noted to be a significant challenge in partnership working with healthcare partners and organisations.

Humberside has taken what it believes to be a unique approach to this issue. As one of the regions allocated funds to develop Violence Reduction Units, Humberside has been able to develop an in-house data team and wider data analyst network, the Humber Serious Violence Data Analytics Group (HSVDAG). Humberside has been able to fund additional capacity for data analysis using funding it received as a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) area and has also experienced an improved financial situation under the devolution deal proposed in 2023. Along with some mixed-funded posts that are directly helping other partner organisations, this is providing additional experience and technical expertise to improve the analysis and use of data to support partnership working.

The HSVDAG is a group of data analysts in the Humberside region who meet every 2-3 months to discuss their work and any issues that have arisen. This includes partner organisations in education, health and probation services, alongside the policing and OPCC staff members. As well as the increased collaboration and communication this has provided, the HSVDAG is also in the early stages of addressing the issue of a lack of shared data sets and common data language, however this work was said to be still in its infancy.

Another issue discussed was gaining access to data from partners. As described by a member of the Humberside OPCC, it is likely assumed by the public that partners share data in meetings and use this to better inform the work of the partnerships. However, due to resourcing issues and work still

to do to secure full collaboration from partner agencies, the current default in reality was described as closer to not sharing data than sharing.

Multiple members of the Humberside OPCC during the site visit highlighted this issue, with a similar solution being recommended across the meetings: that a further duty, potentially based on existing legislation such as the serious violence duty, should be introduced, requiring service-level data to be shared between partners, including the PCC. This would also support the OPCC in enabling evaluation of partnership activities, with the ability to compare to previous partnership activities and across lengths of time.

Other issues

- While it's important to work with all partners, the different identities and geography of Humberside make it hard to take a one-size-fits-all approach. The PCC is aware of the importance of recognising and respecting the distinctive approaches and cultures across different parts of this diverse region.
- Partner organizations are struggling financially, which limits their ability to participate in partnership activities. This has placed increased pressure on the PCC/OPCC to proactively secure their engagement.
- LCJBs need statutory backing and more significant levers to enable them to deliver improved criminal justice services, etc, such as statutory data sharing requirements, and stronger accountability functions. A review of current partnership legislation was recommended because it is outdated and doesn't account for the creation of PCCs. Updating the legislative framework would help PCCs/OPCCs use their partnership powers more effectively.
- The development of an audit and assurance tool was recommended for partnerships, based on existing commissioning audit frameworks to ensure they are delivering and fit for purpose.
- One final recommendation repeated throughout the site visit and conversations was around the need to effectively manage the whole partnership system across the policing region, including having the confidence to end or restructure partnerships where appropriate and necessary.

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2: Lincolnshire

“Assumptions are made when new guidance comes out... that you don’t need to make new structures. Well actually I do... The pressure the requirements and resourcing of attending all these meetings, and at the seniority required. We are a very small office, so if you want that level of seniority, if its not the PCC or the Chief Executive, its me” – Joanna Davidson, OPCC Director of Strategy and Operations

As the seventh largest police force area in England and Wales, covering 5,921 square kilometres with 70% of the population living in smaller towns and villages, Lincolnshire faces several challenges. The geographic size and travelling distances complicate the landscape from a logistical perspective, with the OPCC being one of the smaller offices limiting the capacity for attending multiple meetings across the large geographic region. If a Mayor is elected for the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority (GLCA) following devolution, the local authority landscape will become even more complex, as the GLCA will also incorporate part of Humberside’s police force area (PFA).

Background and context

The Lincolnshire PFA covers the non-metropolitan county of Lincolnshire, currently made up of a two-tier system with a county council, and seven borough councils. Under the devolution plan, a new Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority will replace this system, incorporating the two unitary authorities of North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire that are part of the Humberside PFA.

A significant number of the key partnership activities are provided county-wide, with the region having one Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), Child and Adult Safeguarding Boards, and youth offending services. The region also has a single Safer Roads Partnership, and whilst the arrangements are in the process of being formalised, in practice it has one single CSP via the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP). The SLP also serves as the functional Combating Drugs Partnership via a sub-board focused on drugs and discharges the Serious Violence Duty via another sub-board.

This merging of the CSPs into a single county-wide partnership is still to be formalised. Under the relevant legislation the PCC, whilst not able to request the merging of CSPs, is the deciding authority for the merger, with the proposal made to the PCC in the form of a business case and the PCC approving or denying the merger. The merger process in Lincolnshire started in 2021 and was proposed by the county council. Alongside the PCC formally approving, all parties need to be

agreed to the process for it to be implemented. The OPCC has worked to reassure local partners and district councils that the formal merger will not prevent local meetings or undermine the local focus that is one of the benefits of district level CSPs. Currently the SLP and the PCC are finalising budgetary areas ahead of the final approval, with all partners agreeing in principle to the formal merger.

One issue is a lack of guidance from government regarding CSP mergers and a lack of clarity about the process, which has slowed this process down and was noted by the OPCC as a challenge in the merging process. However, OPCC staff remained positive in their view of the benefits of merging CSPs where appropriate, as this helps simplify the landscape, providing the merged CSP acts as a strategic-level board, with an operational core priority group below this, influencing at both the regional strategic and local operational levels.

Safer Lincolnshire Partnership:

“Although PCCs are not one of the responsible authorities that make up a Community Safety Partnership, we have found this a helpful vehicle to take a coordinated approach to our partnership working” – Joanne Davidson, OPCC Director of Strategy and Operations.

Lincolnshire is unique in seeking to formally merge their CSPs into one single body in this way. The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) is currently operating as an informal merger, acting as a force-wide CSP and strategic oversight board, whilst still containing local elements through the district councils that make up the core membership and Core Priority Groups, including reducing reoffending, drugs and alcohol, serious violence, crime and disorder, and antisocial behaviour.

Under these arrangements, the individual district councils deliver the priorities of the CSP within their local area. They also retain their statutory duty to undertake a local strategic assessment to inform priority setting and work planning, however this duty is discharged and managed via a single survey, with the results published by the PCC annually, including the data, individual comments and a summary report. This has several benefits, including avoiding the issue of mis-matched data sets, reducing survey-fatigue and reducing the costs of running multiple data-gathering exercises. As a result, there is greater confidence both from the PCC/OPCC and the CSP in setting priorities based on the findings. This data informs the Police and Crime Plan, and reliance on a common data resource helps to ensure strategic alignment between the activities of the SLP and the PCC/OPCC.

Strategic direction for the partnership is provided through the SLP Strategy Board. This Board meets quarterly with membership from the PCC/OPCC, policing, all councils (district, county and city), healthcare, criminal justice partners and other public sector organisations such as the fire service.

Whilst the core priority groups are delivery-focused and thematic focused (such as in the case of the Drugs and Alcohol core priority group, which acts as the CDP), the Strategy Board is focused on oversight and accountability for the core priority groups and providing strategic direction for the SLP.

Road Safety Partnerships:

“Road safety is one area that always comes high on the list of priorities for the public of Lincolnshire. Protecting communities from criminals who use the road network and reducing the number of serious and fatal collisions cannot be achieved by policing alone. That's why I am now chairing the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership, strengthening collaboration to make our roads safer for everyone.” – Marc Jones, Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

Road safety has increasingly been of interest to PCCs/OPCCs, with road safety partnerships being formed in regions across the country. However, despite the public safety element and desire from PCCs/OPCCs to be more involved in this space, our research found that engagement and involvement can still be limited in some areas.

In Lincolnshire, the PCC has recently taken on chairing of the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership (LRSP). During the interview the PCC raised issues with the current model for Road Safety Partnerships; whilst in Lincolnshire membership was agreed, and the system is broadly effective, achieving this had required significant effort to be placed on the development and management of the relationship with the members of LRSP. This is still a barrier to PCC/OPCC involvement in some other regions.

A further challenge is that whilst road safety is a strategic policing requirement, there is no statutory requirement to develop a partnership or ensure partners are working together to tackle this issue. The PCC believes that creating a local partnership to improve road safety would need funding from central government to work well. However, they also noted that better road safety would have strong economic benefits, like fewer road closures and a positive impact on the local economy.

This desire to place Road Safety Partnerships on a statutory footing was highlighted by other respondents to the APCC survey. The issue of limited resourcing across the partnership landscape was also raised in our interviews with members of Lincolnshire OPCC; currently councils have limited funding for road safety activities.

Other issues:

- Lincolnshire PCC had declined invitations to chair meetings of some key boards, instead preferring to sit as vice-chair. This was to avoid partner organisations viewing the role of the PCC/OPCC as a 'cash-cow' or purely as a funding stream.
- Online and virtual meetings were seen as key for managing the challenging geography of Lincolnshire due to the sheer size of the PFA. However, this does limit the ability to build and maintain relationships with the key partners, especially when there is a need for more challenging and/or sensitive conversations.
- Devolution, whilst generally welcome, was also an area of some concern, specifically around the potential boundaries for newly developed mayoralties, with the recommendation that central government keep in mind PFA boundaries when designating Combined Authority Mayoralties. The lack of coterminous boundaries can cause significant challenges, such as the overlap in boundaries between Humberside and Lincolnshire PFAs under the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority.
- One final point was raised by the PCC around local flexibility and the power to convene. The PCC noted that the PCC/OPCC already possess the power to convene partnerships. The PCC would welcome increased powers in requiring partners to engage, but also in being able to stop partnership activities if they are no longer delivering or are unnecessary and duplicative.

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3. Merseyside:

“If I’m honest, the quality of some of the partnerships we’ve got on Merseyside, it’s affected by the relationships that we have ... it’s about the people isn’t it? – for example, we have some excellent relationships with some of the CSP leads and a lot of that is based on person-to-person links. It’s about getting the right personalities involved and working to their strengths.” **Merseyside OPCC officer**

Background and context

Officers from the Merseyside OPCC felt that the local geography was helpful for partnership working, with ‘nowhere too far away’, with the PCC and her office having strong links with the five Merseyside local authorities, and their respective Crime Reduction Partnerships (CSPs).

The picture is complicated by the footprint of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA), which comprises the five Merseyside local authority areas plus Halton in Cheshire. The LCRCA was established in 2014 to work on large scale strategies and developments for the region in areas including transport, housing, economic development, and skills.

Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership

Merseyside was one of 20 areas funded to develop Violence Reduction Units (VRUs). First established in 2019, the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) is a multi-agency team working together to address the causes of violence and to prevent it. Convened by the PCC/OPCC it includes representatives from police, fire and rescue, local government, probation, youth offending services, health, education, VCSE and other community leaders.

Through the MVRP a single, pan-Merseyside Serious Violence Strategy was developed and agreed with partners following a series of workshops to ensure all partners were involved in the co-design of the strategy and with co-production of the objectives, actions and deliverables. In addition, there is scope for CSPs to develop their own local delivery plans, so long as actions fit one or more of the pan-Merseyside deliverables. Partners also came together to conduct an asset mapping exercise, identifying around 800 assets at a strategic, practical and operational level and providing a coordinated overview of all the work going on and the assets available across the system to tackle VAWG.

While Merseyside was already leading work as one of the VRU areas, it was felt that the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty had helped provide further focus and impetus for a review and refresh of existing ways of working and strong buy-in from partners.

Having a single strategy is also helping to improve the consistency and compatibility of data capture and reporting across agencies, with a lot of work led by the OPCC to draw data together for the MVRP. This had enabled the PCC's office to demonstrate value added to partners from sharing data in this way. The SV duty funding has supported a data analyst post, which has been critical to progressing the work. Options are being explored for co-locating analysts from across agencies, which it is anticipated will lead to innovation and further progress in developing and delivering a multi-agency approach to data.

"If you're trying to get buy-in to data sharing – for example – from education showing that by using the data they provide we can then identify hot spot locations and provide resources and investment into specific schools within a hot spot area is important. It's things like that which make a big difference and get the point across about what the benefits are of sharing the data, so they don't feel that it's a one-way exchange of information." **Merseyside OPCC officer**

Merseyside Strategic Policing and Partnership Board

Background

Prior to the creation of the Merseyside Strategic Policing and Partnership Board (MSPPB) there was a Safer Merseyside Partnership, but senior leaders were no longer attending this meeting, and those attending were below Executive Director level, so it was felt there was a need to review and rethink.

The MSPPB launched in 2022. The Board meets quarterly, is chaired by the PCC and brings senior leaders from all the relevant partner organisations together to focus on key policing and community safety issues across Merseyside and to ensure the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan are delivered. It provides oversight for the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership, can help to address blockages to the Serious Violence Strategy and reviews the work of the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board. The Combating Drugs Partnerships are also reporting into the MSPPB. The membership is the PCC/OPCC; Merseyside Police; all five Merseyside Local Authorities; LCRCA; Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership and chairs of the sub-groups

overseen by the SPPB. Other partners can also be invited to attend meetings to support delivery of the MSPPB's priorities.

The MSPPB is playing a key role with respect to the PCC's violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy for example, with work on VAWG being reported there to ensure key partners are engaged. At a recent meeting, the Board reviewed progress against an action plan for Merseyside's response to the 16 days of action on domestic abuse campaign. This also helped partners who were signed up to the action plan to fully engage with it and report against it, and to highlight where updates were missing from the action tracking documents.

Development and challenges

As discussed with Merseyside OPCC officers, the role of the Strategic Partnership Board is developing to include:

- A forum to give senior leaders a whole-system view across Merseyside and to engage with and shape it as system leaders (including through updates, for example.)
- Taking a lead on and driving some key projects (for example Prisoners Building Homes), with a collaborative funding element to this too
- A coordinating role for the partnership system in Merseyside, helping to link up other boards, with a developing role whereby other boards take away actions with accountability back to the MSPPB
- Developing a high-level strategic vision and setting some key system level priorities.

"We've now got some key areas that partners really want to drive forward, things like Prisoners Building Homes with all the agencies getting involved. So, it's starting to find its own way. We have reports in from the Criminal Justice Board, the CSPs, on VAWG, on the Serious Violence Duty, and there are subgroups that are linking and reporting into the SPPB". CEO, Merseyside OPCC

OPCC officers said that some local authority CEOs worried it was primarily an updates meeting, so it had been important to highlight the relevance of the business for them. This was being addressed by highlighting the critical contribution of local authorities and other partners in reducing crime, community safety and criminal justice, and the delivery of Police and Crime Plan priorities.

It was noted that the Merseyside Reducing Reoffending Board had recently been reformed with all the key criminal justice agencies along with the local authorities and was leading an asset-mapping exercise of provisions in place to prevent offending at four stages: prior to offending; at point of

arrest; following charge and following conviction. This helped to show the combination of assets and opportunities across partner organisations with a role in preventing offending.

There can be a tendency for CEOs to delegate attendance to executive directors, and the OPCC has sought to follow up appropriately and supportively with partners to secure appropriate engagement and attendance. Strong one-to-one relationships have an important role, along with a willingness to work flexibly. OPCC officers supported colleagues from other partner organisations with reports - for example, providing templates or occasionally helping to complete reports for key meetings.

Approach to Community Safety Partnerships

The PCC funds all five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Merseyside, maintaining the allocations that were set up by the previous PCC. This provides a focus for regular accountability meetings between the PCC and the CSPs, with the latter required to report bi-annually on how they are spending PCC funding. In addition, the OPCC Commissioning team has strong links with the CSPs.

The CSPs have positive interactions with the MVRP, and are represented on the MVRP Strategic Group, which is chaired by an OPCC officer. This was felt to work well in keeping the CSPs engaged with decisions and contributing effectively to delivery. In addition, the CSPs are involved with the MSPPB. It was commented that it was easier to get the CSPs around the table than in some other areas, due to Merseyside's geography – there are a smaller number of CSPs within a more concentrated geography than in some other PCC areas.

Approach to data sharing

“Everyone says the right things about data sharing at a national and strategic level, but that doesn't always seem to get down to local and officer level.”

“If data is not provided and the meetings are once a quarter, that puts you back three months straight away.” **Merseyside OPCC Officer**

As noted above, the OPCC reported that it had done a lot of work with MoJ and its local partners to improve data sharing, including signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). However, getting access to relevant data can still be problematic. In part, this is because for some agencies the default response can be protective and defensive, with the presumption against sharing data (a common initial response to data requests is ‘why do you need that?’).

Other issues

- The opportunities to avoid duplication in developing local strategies were noted. With five local authorities, there could be a tendency to produce five separate strategies on issues like VAWG or youth work, and then subsequently to bring those into a single Merseyside strategy, creating an additional one. This might mean five different officers developing, drafting, managing, and reporting against the respective local authority strategies – which would tend anyway to significantly overlap - with further work to combine them into a Merseyside-wide one. It was suggested that a better approach could be to bring people together to develop a strategy they all signed up to, before then allowing for local variations as part of delivery and implementation planning.
- It was commented that a lack of understanding of the PCC role could still be a factor when engaging with some partners at officer level, and this can result in them being suspicious or defensive in responding to requests for data and information from the PCC's office and may affect their prioritisation or otherwise of a meeting, paper or report.
- One issue raised was the limitations that national agencies can place on the flexibility required for localism and locally driven partnership activity. For example, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Services (HMCTS) tend to be nationally driven with less room for local decision making, and on occasion this can negatively impact locally driven initiatives that often require a different approach to the national direction. The decision for HMCTS and CPS to support local initiatives is also driven nationally by the organisations themselves, as opposed to responding to requests from local partnerships.

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4. Surrey

“My perception in recent years is that every time there has been a new pot of funding – for example, to tackle serious violence – there’s been new governance set up around it. In the absence of a strategic, senior level community safety focused board, that’s meant you’ve got this plethora of different forums (CDPs, SV partnerships ... the list goes on). The vision in Surrey now is to try and streamline that. The art of it will be to do that in a way that ensures that people are still fully bought into partnership working.” **Alison Bolton, Surrey OPCC CEO and Monitoring Officer**

“We have an excellent working relationship with the PCC’s office. You’ve got all the people who work there who are specialist in the field and people like the partnership lead who’ve been fantastic at advising us – for example, on the Serious Violence Duty and all the work around that. And the PCC’s office has also provided support around things like the streamlining of funding ...” **CSP Lead Officer from District Authority**

Surrey has a complex partnership landscape and a strong track record of the PCC/OPCC leading and managing effective partnership working, with the PCC, DPCC and/or OPCC now involved in over 50 boards, sub-boards and other partnerships. The PCC/OPCC has a critical role in the coordination and management of multi-agency partnerships – for example, in response to consultation on the Police and Crime Plan, we were told partners had commented on how much they value the OPCC’s role, noting that it has retained the same officers, commitment and focus on multi-agency work throughout a period where there had been significant changes across the system.

Surrey is developing plans with local partners for a new county-wide community safety board to provide strategic leadership, direction and accountability for the growing number of partnerships within Surrey, including the recently established Surrey Serious Violence Reduction Partnership and Combating Drugs Partnership, along with their sub-boards.

“It’s a really cluttered landscape. When I came in as PCC it felt like the OPCC had it covered but also oh my god was it complicated! And we’re lucky in Surrey – if you’re, say, in Thames Valley, and you’ve got three counties it’s even more complicated. It’s really tough for PCCs just to understand it.” **Lisa Townsend, Surrey PCC**

“If the PCC was engaged with every strategic board, they’d do nothing else” **Surrey OPCC Officer**

Surrey previously combined its Health and Wellbeing Board with its Community Safety Board, but this is not felt to have worked for community safety. It has, more recently, experimented with a Community Safety Assembly, chaired by the PCC. In addition, there is a Surrey Community Safety Forum, which brings together representatives from the 11 CSPs. The forum was described as ‘more about peer-support,’ and does not have or oversee a strategy or plan.

Background and context

“I feel that we do a lot of work with partners, but we don’t always work in partnership. We have a shared goal – for example, to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents – but that doesn’t necessarily mean that we share responsibility for delivery, share resources and so on.” **Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing, Public Health, Welfare and Towns, Surrey County Council.**

The OPCC provided a list of over 50 boards and sub-boards regularly attended by the PCC, DPCC and/or OPCC officers, including the LCJB and its sub-boards, the Community Safety Forum, the Combating Drugs Partnership and its sub boards and the Serious Violence Reduction Partnership. This is a continually growing and developing landscape, with work currently on-going to develop the PCC’s role for co-ordination of victims services under the Victim and Prisoners Act 2024.

Surrey PCC’s approach is to focus on providing a leadership role for key strategic groups, while drawing on the experience and knowledge of her DPCC and the OPCC team for other partnership meetings. Currently, the PCC chairs the Criminal Justice Board and the Community Safety Assembly (convened bi-annually by the OPCC). In addition, she personally attends the Serious Violence Reduction Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The DPCC leads on a range of partnerships with a particular focus on young people and VAWG, as well as the Partnership Against Rural Crime, the Civilian-Military Partnership and the Road Safety Partnership. OPCC officers – working in areas of specialism - cover and support multiple meetings across the 50 plus partnership groups, including coordinating, managing and supporting the key Surrey partnerships.

Approach to developing a Community Safety Board

“For me, the most useful approach would be to have a single place for strategic leaders to have assurance and to be able to set the direction for those big pieces of partnership work across the system.” ACC Sarah Grahame, Surrey Police.

In 2019-20, the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board merged with the Community Safety Board. The rationale was that the underlying risk factors for offending and victimisation are similar to those for physical and mental health problems (for example poverty, isolation, substance misuse). However, particularly with the onset of the Covid pandemic, this approach has not provided sufficient bandwidth for community safety alongside health, and this has been compounded by the increase in government initiatives on both health and criminal justice.

Conversations with key stakeholders also highlighted the need for a strategic board to help to coordinate and provide direction for the increasing number of partnerships across Surrey, including the 11 CSPs.

A PCC-led Community Safety Assembly has recently been developed, but with a different role and mixed results.

The PCC/OPCC is taking a leading role on work to develop the new county-wide community safety board, an approach which has recently received support from the Chief Constable and the leader of Surrey County Council. This is in response to:

- A perceived need for a high-level, community safety focused board led by the PCC. This board would oversee, coordinate, and streamline the many community safety forums in Surrey. It would work alongside the Surrey LCJB, which focuses on criminal justice.
- A perception that it is delivery and operational groups that are driving work programmes, with the key strategic groups largely focused on updates and information items. One of the senior officers from Surrey Police, and NPCC lead on anti-social behaviour (ASB), commented “for operational groups I think it’s really important for them to have strategic oversight, otherwise they are always treading water while struggling to embed work because they haven’t got the strategic ‘top cover’ from the partnership system.”
- The opportunities to make the system more efficient and coordinated. Many strategies, meetings, and delivery plans in Surrey address the same issues, like serious violence, VAWG, and combatting drugs, but they can work in separate silos. For example, they all talk about

improving data sharing, but they need to connect these discussions into a shared, overarching conversation to better use and share data across the system.

The vision of the new board was that it would provide senior leadership, have well defined priorities with effective tools for problem analysis and performance monitoring.

A 'trickle down' effect was also noted in conversation with OPCC officers, with some feeling that the limited focus on community safety issues at the Health and Wellbeing Board could mean there is less emphasis on community safety across the wider partnership landscape.

Approach to Community Safety Partnerships

"... we have a good relationship with our CSPs ... it's varied how many CSP meetings take place [for example, across Districts] ... there is a lot of information sharing as opposed to decision making, but I don't think that is necessarily a bad thing." Surrey OPCC Officer.

OPCC officers commented on the limited resources available to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), with some CSPs across the 11 Districts not currently meeting. Previously, the OPCC had given each CSP a small fund each year, but had not felt this approach had worked, and instead looked to fund CSPs through proposals for specific projects, while noting that it could be challenging for CSPs to put together applications. Some CSP leads felt the loss of any direct funding was making it more challenging to engage partners.

The OPCC does try to ensure it is represented at all CSP meetings.

When we met with CSP leads they highlighted the place-based focus of CSPs and the challenges of reconciling this with a recent proliferation of thematic groups across the county (for example, on serious violence, Serious Organised Crime (SOC), or county lines). For example, one CSP lead commented "there is a challenge with a plethora of thematic partnerships, where they want us to engage... and we want to participate and be active, but it's not really our element. It's with the strong place-based piece that we can really deliver things using what are essentially place based structures."

Support for partnerships: Resourcing

With the growth in partnership boards in Surrey there is an issue with securing attendance from senior leaders, and this was low for some strategic groups. There was a tendency for these meetings to be delegated to less senior officers who were not able to make commitments 'in the room'. It was commented that there was "a sort of unwritten understanding" that "everyone

needed to go away and talk to someone else”, so things weren’t actually decided in the meeting. A consistent message was that fewer high-level strategic meetings with a tighter focus would enhance the engagement of senior leaders, and a single high-level community safety board was a way of achieving this.

The demands on the OPCC team from partnerships were described as ‘massive’ by the PCC and ‘huge’ by the CEO. It was noted that 10 years ago the equivalent to the proposed community safety board had been run by Surrey County Council with a team of 3-4 people, and that if it’s re-established “the expectation will fall onto the OPCC to support and manage this Board but without any additional resource to do that.”

With much of the onus for supporting partnerships falling on the OPCC in Surrey, the need for a more realistic understanding of the capacities and capabilities needed to support effective partnership working was repeatedly highlighted. It was noted, for example, that funding had been made available to support the development of the Surrey Serious Violence Reduction Partnership – chaired by the OPCC – and this had contributed to its success.

The challenges of covering meetings across 11 districts or boroughs was also a key theme when we met with CSP leads, who noted, for example, that while probation was one of the ‘responsible authorities’ who they could find it hardest to engage, the “probation service has such a tiny staff team ... they just don’t have the people to spread across a two tier system with 11 CPS. It was added that a re-engineering of the system could potentially address this – for example, with probation engagement in part via a county-level board, alongside other measures to ‘modernise CSPs’.

A consistent theme was that the default where government introduces new expectations or requirements around collaboration should be to deliver these through existing boards rather than to impose new structures. So, for both Young Futures Prevention Partnerships and the Duty to Collaborate on victims’ services there was a strong desire to avoid new ‘layers of governance’ and to pick up these responsibilities flexibly within the existing partnership configurations in Surrey wherever possible.

Support for partnerships: Data

It was felt that this was partly a resourcing issue, but equally about a culture in some organisations that could create unnecessary barriers – for example, where GDPR was cited inappropriately as a reason for refusing to share data. Practical blockers were also discussed including incompatible case management and information systems.

The Surrey DPCC referred to the Road Safety Partnership as an example of an effective data-driven collaboration, with data shared and reviewed on a regular basis.

The point was made that while data is important, it is no substitute for and needs to be considered alongside community voice. One officer explained “it’s not just about data, it’s about understanding people’s real experiences ... that’s what captures hearts and minds – and we’re in a unique position to do that,” given the PCC/OPCC links into the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE).

“The thing that frustrates me is that we’ve got all these meetings, but we’re not really sharing data and data is key to unlocking so much of this. Policing, NHS, social services are all dealing with the same cohorts of people ... but none of us are really sharing data ... and that’s a constant issue. That’s real partnership work ... it’s not just periodically sitting around a table.” **Lisa Townsend, Surrey PCC**

Other issues

- Reinforcing a key message from our survey and other work, a need to place the LCJB on a statutory footing in order to address the crisis in the CJ system and to support the duty to collaborate on victims services was strongly expressed.
- The increase in meetings as a result of the switch to online meetings during Covid was noted, contributing to a big increase in meetings; it can also be harder to establish and maintain key relationships if meetings are virtual.
- Not all meetings needed to be delivery or strategy focussed to have value; so-called ‘talking shops’ can have a positive role in Surrey for building connections.
- Staff change and churn (for example, in police and probation) was identified as a challenge, with a need to take this into account in planning staffing in partner organisations and to make provision for effective handover, succession planning, and so on.
- One of the key levers that the PCC and OPCC has to secure multi-agency engagement is the ability to invest in and commission services. How funding is allocated and how it flows through the system locally is an important lever for effective partnership working.
- Inclusive and effective consultation in priority setting was identified as critical for effective partnership engagement when it comes to implementation and delivery.
- The impact of political changes on partnerships was discussed, noting that Surrey had new MPs from the May general election and county council elections. Strong relationships between officers and the institutional memory of the OPCC were seen as important. It's also crucial to

have solid evidence to show new politicians why existing priorities are important. It was noted that strong partnership work at national level plays an important role in incentivising and framing engagement locally. For example, national work across the APCC and NPCC on VAWG, the inter-department work on the From Harm to Hope drug strategy and the National Partnership Agreement on Right Care, Right Person have all provided a strong impetus and drive for local partnerships.

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