

SC 28

Ymateb gan: Plismona yng Nghymru

Response from: Policing in Wales



Jenny Rathbone

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Welsh Parliament

Dear Jenny

Re: The Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into Social Cohesion in Wales.

Thank you for your letter dated 21ST January 2025, regarding the Equality and Social Justice Committee launching an inquiry into Social Cohesion in Wales and calling for written evidence to inform this work. Contact was made with all Police and Crime Commissioners for the four police forces in Wales, to ask:

1. Your policy and approach to strengthening social cohesion in your area.
2. What work your police force has taken to strengthen social cohesion in your area/Wales?
3. How you are working in collaboration with:
 - Other police forces,
 - Local authorities,
 - The third sector,
 - The Welsh Government, and
 - The UK Government.
4. Whether there are any particular factors that impact cohesion in your area/Wales and how you or others are working to tackle these issues?
5. Whether you encounter any barriers which prevent you dealing with issues/concerns that could impact on the cohesiveness of communities in your area?
6. Whether there are any examples of good practice in your area that you would like to highlight?

Given that your correspondence was issued to all Police and Crime Commissioners, it was agreed that a collective response from Policing in Wales would be appropriate.

1. Your policy and approach to strengthening social cohesion in your area.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) fully understand the principles that create strong communities, and the collective benefits that result when communities are united. During the development of the Police and Crime Justice Plans (2025-29), PCCs will have given considerable

thought and reflection on how to undertake meaningful, inclusive consultation to best understand the concerns and issues relating to criminal justice and policing that are important to local people and communities.

Forces acknowledge the importance for communities to feel heard and understood by those in leadership positions, so they are less likely to feel ignored or unjustly treated which in turn can lead to tensions within communities. Although forces do not have a dedicated policy for strengthening social cohesion, they do adhere to the College of Policing guidelines for delivering neighbourhood policing by engaging communities, solving problems through targeted activity.

Neighbourhood policing is supported by promoting the right culture, building analytical capability, and developing officers, staff, and volunteers. Problem-solving policing, also known as problem-oriented policing, is an approach to tackling crime and disorder that involves, identification of a specific problem, thorough analysis to understand the problem, development of a tailored response, and assessment of the effects of the response. The approach assumes that identifying and understanding the root cause of a problem, or conditions that allow it to continue, leads to an effective solution.

Police engagement with communities is crucial, forces hold in person and virtual surgeries, conduct meet the street events, hold street briefings and problem-solving groups with communities and partners. There is a requirement for local neighbourhood policing teams to have levels of engagement with their communities so that they can identify who exactly they are serving and what the needs of the community are. This engagement should allow the neighbourhood teams to identify any issues around social cohesion and look to create local priorities to address these.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) undertake frequent community engagements, where they meet with community representatives, commissioned services, and the local community groups, to understand local needs and concerns. The PCC also attend key events in the calendar including Pride, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, Ramadan related events (breaking fast and Eid). These are all events with national importance, but equally the PCC attends and ensures to support smaller local events that bring different communities and people together.

2. What work your police force has taken to strengthen social cohesion in your area/Wales?

Best practice is to understand what is important to communities and enhance trust and confidence, which is a critical element of strong communities. To ensure the priorities within the PCCs Police, Crime and Justice Plan reflected the needs and views of local people, victims, and communities, PCCs launched comprehensive consultation to actively seek wider feedback and further test priorities as part of the approach to developing the plan.

In addition, as part of renewed focus on prevention and collaboration, Neighbourhood Policing Teams have been re branded reflecting the commitment to prevention and collaboration as core values. Further development of new Key Performance Indicators to ensure we deliver a service to our communities by making the teams accountable. Neighbourhood policing teams are involved in the 4P plans (Prepare, Protect, Prevent and Pursue), in managing the impact and addressing issues caused by Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) in the community. Forces have INTACT PCSOs, who are an early intervention and prevention team, collaborating with partners to tackle Serious Violence and Organised Crime, who will engage with children, young persons and vulnerable adults who have been identified at risk either by police or partner agencies.

Forces continuously review and update all strategies, policies, and procedures ensure they remain current. Updated Prevention Strategies aim to adapt to the evolving complexities of community needs. By emphasising preventative actions, we empower ourselves and our partners to swiftly address emerging issues. This strategy shifts reliance from frontline officers to encouraging partners to take ownership of relevant issues, promoting a collaborative, whole-system approach to prevention.

Renewed Community Engagement Plans recognise that achieving prevention goals requires community involvement, fostering ongoing, two-way communication with the public, enhancing our understanding of community needs, risks, and threats.

To support strategies forces have implemented an Abstraction policy ensuring that frontline officers can effectively fulfil their duties. This policy aims to enhance public confidence, clarify the nature of abstractions, outline expectations for officers' time in their area, and provide a management process for abstractions.

Community Cohesion officers continually monitor tensions in the community, and forces are represented at all Community Safety Partnerships. Forces are required at times to rapidly respond to community tensions which again effects cohesion. Neighbourhood teams proactively work to monitor community tensions during daily interactions. Where required Community Impact Assessments and/or Community Tensions Assessments can be created and supervised.

Since the announcement to withdraw Welsh Government funding effective from 31st March 2024 for the Wales Police School Programme, police were left with a collapsing time frame in which to conduct relevant stakeholder consultation to better understand the impact to schools and what kind of service was possible to be supplied by police alone. Forces have adopted bespoke solutions, and an all-Wales response to an ask from the Chair of the Petitions Committee is due to be submitted on this topic.

3. How you are working in collaboration with:

- Other police forces,**

All forces, including BTP, participate in numerous cross border operations, for example, targeting drug supply.

- Local authorities,**

Forces work with a cross section of partners to tackle crime/Anti-Social behaviour, OCGs, Domestic Abuse via the Serious Violence and Organised Crime and Contest Boards, Youth Justice Board, Homelessness Forum, Community Safety Partnerships and Public Service Boards.

- The third sector,**

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioners (OPCC) host an annual Third Sector Conference, in addition the prevalence of applications for funding from third sector organisations allows for close working relationships.

- The Welsh Government,**

The Future Generations and Wellbeing Act is the driver for Public Service Board activity and focus. Policing in Wales works closely with Welsh Government and partners through the Policing Partnership Board for Wales and the Criminal Justice Board for Wales.

- The UK Government.**

Home Office Policy and direction, and funding streams support neighbourhood activity and social cohesion.

4. Whether there are any particular factors that impact cohesion in your area/Wales and how you or others are working to tackle these issues?

Social media plays a significant role in negatively impacting social cohesion. The speed of travel of Mis and dis-information, and all forces have examples and experience of managing this. There is a need for more accountability on social media platforms.

Effective partnerships between the Police and stakeholders are essential, but can sometimes face challenges, particularly when commitment varies among partners. Given the nature of police resources and the evolving landscape of public safety, a collaborative approach is essential to ensuring that responsibilities are shared appropriately across agencies, rather than relying solely on police forces.

Key issues include a lack of resources to support communities to work together to find solutions to community tension, a failure to address legacy of community tensions, a lack of trust and confidence in public services and criminal justice agencies, and a lack of opportunities due to social and structural inequalities.

5. Whether you encounter any barriers which prevent you dealing with issues/concerns that could impact on the cohesiveness of communities in your area?

The rurality of Wales and placement of communities in relation to accessibility of services, transport networks, resources etc can have an impact on community cohesion. Inaction and inconsistencies across partner agencies, different departments, and organisations, with some inconsistencies internally between policing departments at times can also cause barriers. There is a prevalence of 'hostile' freedom of information requests to respond to, where resources are committed to events that promote social cohesion.

6. Whether there are any examples of good practice in your area that you would like to highlight?

Dyfed Powys:

Dyfed Powys has dealt with two major incidents in recent years of Social Cohesion relating to Stradey Park Hotel and Penally Army camp being used to house refugees. The fact that these communities have recovered from the significant challenges reflects the positive relationship between policing representatives, local organisations and community members.

The Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) Programme aims to give young people between the ages of 13 and 17 years the opportunity to develop their qualities and skills through a structured programme and to enhance the relationship between the public and police. Cadets come from all our diverse communities, irrespective of their background or financial circumstances, and includes those vulnerable to crime and social exclusion. The VPC consists of 6 Units which currently engage with 88 young people in weekly 2-hour sessions across the force.

Neighbourhood Policing and Prevention Teams in Carmarthenshire using a 4P approach to support and safeguard victims of domestic abuse. This was launched across the force in November 2024. It has drawn national attention as best practice from the Domestic Abuse Commissioners office in London, who published a Criminal Justice report 'Shifting the Scales' on January 22nd.

In 2023-24, the PCC provided funding to the Centre of African Entrepreneurship to open a centre in Llanelli that aims to provide age appropriate, racially, and culturally sensitive services to

communities with multifaceted and complex needs and have been historically marginalised. The Centre empowers and supports ethnically diverse communities, specifically migrants, through providing a bespoke and person-centred service that meets their individual needs.

Welsh OPCCs and Police Forces are one of Race Council Cymru's sponsors, who organise community events that aim to strengthen relationships within communities. As sponsors, we are invited to attend these events to learn more about our diverse communities.

North Wales Police:

A new and innovative youth engagement project in Wrexham focusing on addressing the root cause of youth anti-social behaviour (ASB). The project is part of a wider Safer Streets initiative for Wrexham, and is being delivered by Groundwork North Wales, who are working with Wrexham County Borough Council and North Wales Police to deliver the initiative. Since the pandemic there had been a notable rise in ASB among young people in schools and in the wider community, alongside a rise in young people noting that they are suffering from low mental health. This innovative project is actively seeking to address the root cause of youth ASB through partnership collaborating with local schools and organisations.

Each identified school has been allocated two days per week of engagement where the youth team at groundwork North Wales will provide support, opportunities, and in-depth discussion around the topic of ASB in a school setting as well as identifying current issues and problems highlighted in their communities. Groups will also have the opportunity to learn new skills and qualifications through participating in the activities.

The programme further teaches crime prevention and how to keep safe, as well as the impact of ASB in the community. To date the project has had a range of positive impact on those taking part, with young participants having actively engaged in group discussion in relation to ASB, leading on enhancing community spaces and support community activities.

South Wales Police:

Activities for Children and Young People to be heard:

Young Voices Conversation - In 2022, the Police & Crime Commissioner and South Wales Police, launched a joint engagement initiative for young people - Young Voices Conversation. Young Voices aims to provide a mechanism to proactively engage and seek feedback from young people between the ages of 11 and 25 about issues relating to policing, crime, and community safety. To date, over 2,000 young people have engaged in Young Voices Conversation. Young Voices Conversation is structured via three-tiered approach:

1. **Local Youth Conversations** – Throughout the year, PCSOs and Police Engagement Officers are responsible for utilising networks within their communities, such as youth groups/forums and organisations to facilitate regular informal conversations with young people. These local conversations provide an opportunity to explore matters that young people are concerned about or experiencing, and for us to understand a young person's perspective on.
2. **Young Voices Forum** – A group of young people representing different areas of South Wales, who have been involved in local conversations are invited to attend our Young Voices Forum. The aim of the Young Voices Forum is to provide a platform to empower young people to have the opportunity to share their feedback, experiences, and

suggestions with senior members of policing. This forum is held in Police Headquarters on an annual basis. As part of the forum, young people can visit a range of policing departments, as a means of improving relationships with the police, and building their understanding of the various roles and responsibilities within the force.

3. **Feedback Session** - Following the Young Voices forum, we invite young people back to a feedback session to receive updates on how the issues they have raised have been considered and progressed. This session is also held in Police Headquarters, and a range of inputs are provided from various departments. An overview of the updates provided are also summarised in a 'You said, We did' document, so that PCSOs and Officers who have conducted local engagement, have a means of sharing these updates with the contacts they have engaged with.

This initiative not only creates a mechanism for frontline policing to improve their engagement with young people but also enables senior decision makers in policing to hear directly from young people about the issues and concerns affecting them, so that they are able to promote a better understanding of the needs and realities of young people in South Wales. In response to the feedback from our public consultation, and the appetite of young people to be involved in informing and shaping local policing initiatives, the PCC has committed to publishing a specific Young Person's Police, Crime and Justice Plan for South Wales, later in 2025. As a result of the views and insights of the public the PCC has re-iterated their commitment to further developing and strengthening the community engagement and participation model, as articulated within the Police, Crime and Justice Plan (2025-2029).

Yours Sincerely

PCC Dafydd Llywelyn
Chair, Policing in Wales