



CPS

**Crown Prosecution Service
Wessex Community Involvement Panel
(Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Dorset and Wiltshire)**

Annual Report 2009 - 2010

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Introduction from Nick Hawkins, Panel Chair



Firstly I would like to thank our Panel members for giving of their time and expertise to help us in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Wessex.

The report contains details of our activities over the last year. In Wessex we have tried to use our Panel members to best advantage and there have been three particular firsts in our Group. David Singh-Roath was the first Panel member to speak at a national CPS event in July 2009, and we believe we are the first Group to invite Panel members to attend our monthly Strategic Board meetings. The third “first” was our joint event in November with our three Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels (HCSP) looking at victim issues.

We have acted on the advice of the Panel on a number of issues; both to do with business processes and specifically on how to engage with communities, and our changes have resulted in better performance on behalf of our communities.

Perhaps the thing that is of the greatest value to us is that the Panel acts as a “moral compass” helping us navigate through choppy waters when faced with difficult choices. We aim to do “the right thing” for the communities we serve in our Region and the Panel helps us stay focussed on this. We cannot thank them enough for fulfilling this important role.

Introduction by the Panel - A Future in Safe Hands

By Colin Harding on behalf of the Panel

It feels appropriate to congratulate Nick Hawkins and the CPS for introducing the concept of a local Community Involvement Panel (CIP) in the first instance a few years ago. Their ceaseless encouragement for this work has engendered a sense of pride in Panel members, whose individual participation is what makes this the success it still is today.

Being one of the first CIPs nationally, not only is it innovative, more importantly it is also effective in its efforts to approach and deal with sometimes difficult issues which are raised by the individuals from the diverse community it represents.

The Panel is made up of members from all walks of life and covers a wide range of the strands of equality and diversity including: age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and religion, to name but a few.

Bringing these strands together is no simple task, when you consider for instance that being gay or lesbian may conflict with the beliefs of certain religions. However, the group chair (usually Nick Hawkins) manages this task effortlessly. He does so by valuing each individual member and their input and encourages members to value each other.

Panel members (known as critical friends) become involved in all manner of tasks. This year for example, individual members have been invited to Strategic Board meetings and given feedback to the Panel of their visits. All members could be requested to do something as simple as give feedback on new leaflets to being asked for honest feedback/criticism of policy, both are on the agenda. The action list sometimes seems endless.

This report reflects on the work undertaken throughout this year and highlights a number of areas of focus, including victim and witness issues and equality and diversity.

Being a critical friend takes effort as the work outlined in this report shows. However, the effort involved is outweighed by the reward for the community in having an open, honest and accountable CPS and a safer future for all.

Panel Member's' Reflections

I value the opportunity to be part of a panel with such a diverse membership which represents a wide range of community relationships. I have been very impressed by the commitment to meaningful consultation with Panel members who have knowledge and experience of being part of, or working with sometimes vulnerable or marginalised groups and individuals. What has heartened me the most is that I feel that this is a genuine partnership, based on trust and mutual respect which can, and does, work actively to initiate positive change in service delivery.

Jennifer Bigmore

What is the CPS?

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was set up in 1986 to prosecute criminal cases investigated by the police in England and Wales. The CPS is a department of central government which acts independently from the Government in accordance with statute.

The head of the CPS is the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who has overall responsibility for the Service and its prosecutions. The Chief Executive, who is responsible for the administration of the CPS, assists the DPP. The DPP is superintended by the Attorney General who is accountable to Parliament for the CPS.

The CPS is organised across 42 Areas in England and Wales matching police force boundaries. Each Area is headed by a Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP) who is responsible for the delivery of a prosecution service to his or her local community. Each CCP is supported by an Area Business Manager (ABM) and their respective roles mirror, at a local level, the division of responsibilities between the DPP and Chief Executive. Since 2008 the 42 Areas have been arranged into 13 regions plus London - these are the CPS Groups.

As the principal prosecuting authority in England and Wales, we are responsible for:

- Charging offenders in all but the most minor offences.
- Providing advice on cases submitted by the police.
- Where the decision is to prosecute, determine the charge in all but minor cases.
- Preparing cases for court.
- Presentation of cases at court.

The CPS works to prosecute cases firmly, fairly and effectively, where there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and when it is in the public interest to do so. This is done by reviewing each case against the Code for Crown Prosecutors (the Code). The Code gives guidance on the principles to be applied when making decisions about prosecutions. It is designed to make transparent the principles applied when prosecuting crimes.

Although the CPS works closely with the police, we are independent of them. The independence of Crown Prosecutors is of fundamental constitutional importance. Casework decisions taken with fairness, impartiality and integrity help deliver justice for victims, witnesses, defendants and the public.

The Code is a public document and is available in community languages and alternative formats.

More information about the CPS including The Code can be found on our website: www.cps.gov.uk.

Background to the Community Involvement Panel (CIP)

The decision to establish CIPs follows the successful pilot of a CIP in West Yorkshire which was set up as part of a wider programme of community engagement during 2006 and 2007.

Closer and deeper engagement with communities is at the heart of the CPS agenda for the future. To build a world class prosecution service we need to gain the confidence of the people we serve. To gain public confidence we need to open ourselves up to community involvement and ongoing dialogue. We also need to take action following the challenges and proposals that will emerge as a consequence of this engagement activity.

CIPs offer an effective means of channelling engagement through a strategic forum at Group level.

CIPs provide a means of bringing people into the CPS on a regular co-ordinated basis, to discuss and comment on all aspects of CPS business. The types of subjects that the Panel might deal with include:

- Victim and witness issues
- Higher level performance data
- Sampling and scrutinising case correspondence with victims for quality
- Draft business plans for Areas (are we setting the right priorities?)
- Ideas for further and deeper community engagement – arranged jointly with Panel members
- Equality and diversity issues.

Where We Are a Year On

In our Annual Report last year (2008-2009 - available on our website www.cps.gov.uk/wessex) we undertook to recruit more members given the Panel consisted of nine community members and it was felt that this was not fully representative of the community.

In the last year we have had two more members of the community join the Panel, Sister Tama and Majid Yasin, both from Bournemouth Islamic Centre. This has assisted in increasing representation from Dorset. However, we still want to broaden the diversity of the Panel.

In addition, it was felt that the Panel needed to develop and become more integrated in business planning, strategy development etc. In particular in relation to victim and witness issues and community engagement.

In developing the remit of the Panel we held a Group conference in November 2009 bringing, for the first time, members of the three HCSPs together with the CIPs to share good practice and debate issues such as victim and witness care, hate crime and domestic violence. As a result the Wessex Group Business Plan for 2010-2011 actions the Panel to take forward the results of the conference in relation to identifying and proposing changes to fill any gaps in service provision.

What We Have Achieved

National CPS Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel and Community Involvement Panel Conference

David Singh-Roath represented the CIP at the first CPS national conference for community Panels on 9 July 2009 attended by the Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions. David spoke at the conference about the work of, and his experience being a member of, the Wessex CIP.

National CPS Good Practice Guide

Launched at the above event was a national good practice guide with examples drawn from a number of Panels including Wessex. The guide detailed how two of our Area Business Managers had shadowed Colin, one of our Panel members in his agency. Colin is a manager of a sexual health service in Portsmouth and provided our managers with an insight into the training they run on sexual health and the opportunity to speak to staff about issues faced by the community.

Panel Members attending Group Strategy Board

In October 2009 David Singh-Roath attended our Group Strategy Board meeting, which Dale Simon head of the CPS Equality and Diversity Unit attended. David challenged us and Dale on how we were going to ensure that community engagement, in particular the Schools' Project, was sustainable.

Wessex Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels and Community Involvement Panel Conference

Following the national HCSP and CIP conference, the Panel felt that it would be beneficial to hold a Wessex HCSP and CIP conference to share best practice and come together to discuss issues of mutual interest. It was decided (by the CIP) that the conference would focus on victim and witness issues, in particular domestic violence as it cuts across all communities. The conference took place in November 2009 bringing together around 80 community members and staff. Following the conference the CIP evaluated the success of the event and over the next year will be taking forward some of the outcomes from the day.

Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Member attending Panel

Following the national CPS conference in July the Independent Facilitator of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight HCSP attended the July CIP meeting to observe the meeting and report back to the HCSP of the work of the CIP and how the two Panels complement each other.

Delivering the National Schools' Project in Bournemouth Islamic Centre

Carrie Sanderson and Laurel Dibden (both CPS staff) visited the Saturday School hosted by Bournemouth Islamic Centre in March and delivered the CPS National Schools' Project lessons to around 40 pupils.

In lesson one, students learn about the CPS and its role within the criminal justice system (CJS), what happens in court, and the special measures available in the courtroom to support them should they ever be a victim or witness of crime.

In lesson two, students take on the role of a CPS prosecutor. They are given a full case file and have to make a decision on whether or not to take the case to court based on the available evidence.

Wessex Website

The Panel has advised us on the format of the website, specifically regarding:

- the CIP having a page containing details of Panel members and summaries of meetings, giving the public opportunity to feedback
- a regional map, which people can click on to go to their Area
- having a personal local feel rather than information available on the national website.

The Way Forward

By Nick Hawkins - Chair

We now live in an era of austerity under a new administration. Our challenge will be to continue to provide a high quality prosecution service with less money, and in all likelihood less staff. We will have to make difficult choices about our priorities and to look at new ways of dealing with crime, particularly the more minor offences that nonetheless affect the quality of life of our communities. I have no doubt that the Panel as a whole and as individuals will help us to do that, by challenging us, by suggesting ideas and by representing the views of their communities. We are well placed to deal with whatever challenges we face, assisted by a strong and committed Panel.

Focus on information provided to victims and witnesses

Following the Wessex conference last year, in evaluating the event the CIP agreed to dedicate some time to looking at information provided to victims and witnesses and how we can improve it. This has been detailed in the Wessex Group Business Plan.

Wessex Website

The Panel will be instrumental in continuing to advise CPS on what the Wessex website should contain and how it should look, in particular with regard to victim and witness information linking in to the above piece of work.

Annual Wessex Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels and Community Involvement Panel Conference

Following the success of last year's conference the CIP has decided that the conference should be an annual event, with the next one planned for 5 November 2010. The CIP will be instrumental in designing the programme for the day.

Panel Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Wessex Group CIP is to:

- Engage with communities at Group level on an on-going basis.

Provide an opportunity for community participants to be consulted and engaged with in relation to:

- Group strategy and planning
- Area Business planning and service delivery
- Victim and Witness issues
- Community Engagement methods and practices
- The local implementation of the Single Equality Scheme
- High level performance outcomes.

Objectives

Act as a consultative forum in relation to the drawing up and delivery of Group and Area:

- Strategy
- Business Plans
- Equality and diversity plans
- Community Engagement plans
- Victim and witness issues
- Other key local Area initiatives.

Provide a platform for community members to raise strategic issues in relation to CPS business at the Group level and with Area senior management.

Contribute to the planning and delivery of CPS community engagement activities.

Lead on the dissemination of information about the CPS to diverse communities within the Group.

Panel Biographies

Anas Al-korj, DTE Consultancy, Hampshire

Anas was the Public Relations and Community Development Manager of the Muslim Council of Southampton (MCS) when he joined the Panel. MCS is an umbrella organisation representing the Muslim communities in Southampton, including the six main mosques and six other Muslim organisations, in which, Anas is still an active member.

He was the Muslim Chaplain at HMP Winchester and HMP Erlestoke from 2004, where he had direct experience with CJS. Although Anas left HMP Winchester in July 2009, he continues to work with and support HM Prison Service in other ways.

Anas has been an active member of Southampton Council of Faiths since 2004; a charity which promotes understanding between faiths in the city. It represents the faith community in dialogue with public bodies. Seven faiths are represented on the council which meets about eight times a year. Each faith (Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) nominates up to five representatives to the council.

He is also a member of SACRE and has been a school governor since 2004 in two schools. He is a founder, or an active member, in a dozen of other community groups. Soon after joining the Panel Anas moved job. He left the MCS and became Senior Consultant at DTE Consultancy Ltd. His role includes offering Imam Services, Bespoke Training on Islam and British Muslims, and advanced courses on Understanding and Preventing Violent Extremism.

Anas's most recent project is with Fitrah SIPS (Southampton Islamic Primary School) Trust, setting up the first Islamic school in the South Coast.

Colin Harding, Solent Healthcare - Inscape Sexual Health and Sexuality Service, Hampshire

Colin is the manager of a sexual health service for the whole community with a specific remit to work with the minority lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Inscape provide a wide range of services to the LGBT community including: outreach services in commercial venues and in Public Sex Environments (PSEs), counselling service for males, specific group work for men with learning difficulties and for females, drop-in services at youth groups, Haslar Detention Centre and at Inscape, face-to-face work with individuals seeking support and training both for service users and professionals, including Hampshire Constabulary.

Trevor Hazelgrove, Wessex Community Action, Wiltshire

Trevor is the Chief Executive of Wessex Community Action which provides a range of infrastructure support services, including managing a transport service, sexual health services including an LGBT drop-in centre in Devizes, a social club for people with learning disabilities, and is chair of the Black South West Network.

David Singh-Roath, Connexions, Hampshire

David currently works as a Personal Development Advisor, in Basingstoke for Connexions, offering a wide range of Information, advice and guidance, to young people who are vulnerable and at risk.

David lives in Southampton and is well connected within the multi-faith communities, not only in Southampton, but also across Hampshire. He has over 20 years' community development experience, enabling and empowering communities, working with the settled and the incoming communities. He has been instrumental in creating, developing and facilitating the Multi-Cultural Awareness Days for the Wheatsheaf Trust, a local charity based in Southampton.

The programme promotes understanding and racial harmony, in which people from across the world of work can gain an insight into culture, religion, faith and looking at the challenges and priorities communities face in accessing, employment, housing, public services, identifying stakeholder attitudes towards training and diversity in the workplace, encouraging organisations to engage in a more diverse workforce.

Angie, Samaritans, Dorset

Angie works for the Samaritans. The Samaritans provide non-judgmental emotional support 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

Lt Col Chris Brannigan, Armed Forces, Dorset

Chris is the Commanding Officer of an Army Regiment at Bovington in Dorset. He is responsible for the education, training and professional development of young soldiers and junior commanders within the Royal Armoured Corps. Chris also works in conjunction with regional civil agencies in local emergency and incident planning. Bovington Camp is a significant local employer.

Sylvia Zukowska, Polka, Wiltshire

Sylvia is a Director in her organisation, where she is a consultant offering help and advice on any Polish migrant workers issues, for which she has done for over eight years.

Jennifer Bigmore, Bournemouth University, Dorset

Jennifer is a Childcare Lecturer and Programme Leader for the BA Hons/Grad Dip Children and Family Studies. Her particular area of interest is working in communities with marginalised groups.

Mr Majid Yasin, Director of Bournemouth Islamic centre and Mosque

Mr Yasin was appointed Imam of the Bournemouth Islamic Centre and Mosque in July 1989. His role is a leader in the Mosque in prayers and community liaison. He works in a wide range of community work including inter-faith projects and bringing communities together.

Sister Tama Athy

Appointed teacher in 1997 at the Bournemouth Islamic Centre and Mosque teaching Islamic Studies, Quran and Arabic language. Since September 2009 she has been the head of school. She educates the Islamic faith to main stream schools in Dorset, sits on the SACRE Panels in Poole and Bournemouth.

Sister Tama is the Liaison Officer to Dorset Police and the Muslim Community - Domestic violence and hate crime. She sits on the Muslim Advisory Panel for Dorset Police and other government organisations. She runs a women's all faith swimming session in Poole. She also sits on the Muslim and Christian group of Bournemouth and educates Dorset Police and other government organisations Islamic awareness.

For more information, to enquire about joining the Panel, or to request this report in an alternative language or format, please contact:

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