

A GUIDE

**FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD
& HOME WATCH AND
RESIDENTS' LEADERS**

**JUSTICE SEEN
JUSTICE DONE**

The Criminal Justice System relies on active, committed individuals and groups who are willing to stand up against crime and anti-social behaviour, or give their free time to make their communities safer.

**JUSTICE SEEN
JUSTICE DONE**

You are the Neighbourhood and Home Watch co-ordinators, tenants' group leaders, those running environmental or crime patrols, the police 'Key Individual Networks', or volunteers at youth and community groups.

You go to meetings, write up the minutes, give up your spare time arranging events; write newsletters, act as informal advocates for the community and are a source of advice and support. The community relies on you and so do the police and other services to find out what is happening, to look out for suspicious activity, to pass on information and to spread the word in the community.

This adds up to invaluable work, which supports the functioning of the Criminal Justice System. However, the system does not always make it easy for the public to work alongside services or to challenge police and criminal justice services when they fall short.

It can be difficult to know what to expect from crime and justice services, to know who decides on priorities on your street, what to do if you are dissatisfied or if you think someone has not got the treatment they deserve.

My review – Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime – looked at the public's view and experiences of crime and the Criminal Justice System, talking to over 10,000 people including members of the public, victims of crime and their families, and also those like you who are active in their community.

The public said they were confused about what standards of service to expect and where to go with problems of crime and anti-social behaviour – much more so than on other public services such as health and schools. And while those who were active in communities were much better informed than the general public on key issues around crime and justice, you frequently said that the system did not work well enough.

Justice Seen, Justice Done

Justice Seen, Justice Done is a cross-government programme to address public concerns about crime and justice, responding directly to many of the issues outlined in my review.

A key part of the programme is about raising the public's awareness and understanding of the services they are entitled to from the police and other agencies, and to ensure that these services are focused on the issues that matter locally.

Central to this is that activists and volunteers who help the system to function have the right information and support to help them help the 'system'.

There have been many changes to services in recent years, designed to respond to what the public said they wanted.

For the first time the Policing Pledge means the public have a set of promises they can expect from the police wherever they live in the country – what nine in ten people we spoke to during my review told us they wanted. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime provides guarantees about what happens if you are a victim – something many people are concerned about when considering whether to report a crime.

However, the public do not always know about these changes.

We also know from research and what people like you have told us, that having the information on what is being done locally to tackle crime is what the public need to have confidence in local services. If people do not have confidence then they will not think it is worthwhile playing their part by picking up the phone to report a crime or going to court to give evidence.

We want people like you to 'test' the system. This means working closely with the police and others, but it also means making demands of your services to get the best for your community. That is why we have produced this pack – which gives information on the standards of services you can expect, suggestions for what to do to make things go right, as well as what to do when things go wrong.

As a Neighbourhood and Home Watch co-ordinator, or a resident or tenant leader, you are at the heart of the response to tackling and preventing crime in your community. You have rights – this guide tells you what they are – please use them.

Louise Casey
Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Adviser

What kind of problems are we talking about?

The kind of problems that people tend to be most concerned about are those on their doorstep, or around the estate or streets where they live. As well as crime such as burglary, vandalism or illegal driving, other problems seriously affect quality of life and undermine people's confidence in their area. Problems such as flytipping, abandoned cars, noise nuisance, graffiti, litter, drunk and disorderly behaviour, threatening behaviour, kerb crawling or intimidating groups hanging around.

These are problems that in the past may have been difficult to solve with no one taking responsibility. Changes and improvements to services that tackle crime and anti-social behaviour mean that you should expect action to be taken by the police or other services, such as the council or your landlord.

The Policing Pledge

Every area now has a Neighbourhood Policing Team who are there to provide a responsive and accessible service to the public, dedicated to working and patrolling in your area and who are your first point of contact for non-emergency matters. In a survey of those active in their community, nearly 70% knew their area had a Neighbourhood Policing Team.

In addition, since the beginning of 2009, every police force has introduced the Policing Pledge.

The Pledge is a set of promises from the police which reflect what the public have said they most want from their policing services.



The Pledge includes commitments to:

- ensure that Neighbourhood Policing Teams are visible in the community and spend at least 80% of their time visibly working on behalf of the public in their neighbourhood
- find out and prioritise the local crime and anti-social behaviour problems in the neighbourhood
- let people know what is being done, and the consequences of action for both the neighbourhood and offenders
- provide monthly local crime information including crime maps and updates on progress
- publicise how to get in touch with the local team and where the public can 'have their say' on crime and anti-social problems in their area
- hold monthly public meetings to discuss your local issues where residents can have their say
- set limits to response times, including within 60 minutes if it is a neighbourhood priority and bookable appointments for non-emergencies
- keep in touch monthly with victims of crime.

Each neighbourhood also has a local Policing Pledge setting out the details of the local Neighbourhood Policing Team and how to contact them, how to meet with them to agree priorities for action, what those priorities are and what progress is being made to deal with local problems. Some of you will be involved in drawing up local Pledges with police in your area. The local Pledge also explains how to complain if things go wrong.

There will be occasions where the public think that the standards in the Pledge have not been delivered.

The Pledge is not about creating extra paperwork for the police or bogging them down in trivial concerns but it is important that the public can hold the police to account where service falls below what has been agreed.

If you feel that the police are not meeting a commitment in the Pledge or wish to lodge a complaint you can do so:

- at public meetings
- direct to your Neighbourhood Policing Team – they will respond within 24 hours
- direct to your police force or Chief Constable
- direct to your police authority.

Some complaints, particularly those which allege more serious conduct by those working in the police service, may be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. They also deal with appeals against the handling of complaints about the Pledge which are about conduct of individuals.

The Government wants to increase public awareness about the Policing Pledge. www.direct.gov.uk/policingpledge is a website where anyone can input their postcode and be taken to the pages of their local policing team, with:

- contact details for the Neighbourhood Policing Team
- when and where the next neighbourhood police meeting where you can have your say is
- the neighbourhood Policing Pledge and locally agreed priorities
- action being taken to address local problems
- crime information and maps for the local area
- what the public can do to help tackle crime.

As part of a current campaign to help let the public know about their rights, information can also be obtained by text. Texting the word 'pledge' and your postcode to 66101 will mean you are texted back with contact details for your Neighbourhood Policing Team and/or your police service's non-emergency contact details.

A full copy of the Policing Pledge is also available in this pack.

Anti-social behaviour

It is not just the police that can help with problems such as graffiti, abandoned cars or intimidating groups hanging around. Your local authority, working with the police and others has a responsibility to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

The local authority and your landlord (if it is a housing association or local authority landlord) have a wide range of powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and you should expect them to take action on your behalf where there are persistent problems. There are powers designed for a whole range of circumstances and those working to tackle anti-social behaviour have received advice and guidance on using these powers – there is no excuse for services not to use these powers to make communities safer.

Every local authority has an anti-social behaviour co-ordinator to whom you can report problems. Find out how to contact them by visiting www.direct.gov.uk. On the front page you will see a list of options, click on the option 'crime, justice and the law', and then follow the links to take you to the section on anti-social behaviour.

Local authority services will vary from place to place. However, you should expect that:

- there is an easy way to report anti-social behaviour – through an action line, directly to an anti-social behaviour team, or perhaps to a housing officer
- on receipt of a complaint the council will let you know how it will be dealt with and in what timescale
- the council, and the police, are making good use of tools and powers available to tackle anti-social behaviour – from early warnings to court action where necessary
- victims and witnesses are kept safe, including an emergency contact for out-of-hours problems
- increasingly, the council is at neighbourhood police meetings and able to talk about what action they are taking, so you get one response to problems that concern both the police and the local authority.

The tools and powers available to tackle anti-social behaviour

Police, local authorities and social landlords (housing association and local authority landlords) have a wide range of powers available, from informal approaches through to injunctions – and even the power to close premises or properties in the most serious cases.

These include:

- **Warning letters** – these should be used at an early stage to nip problem behaviour in the bud.
- **Contracts and agreements** such as acceptable behaviour contracts or parenting contracts. These set out formally what someone should or should not be doing to stop their anti-social behaviour. While not legally binding, failure to comply can be used in court if more serious sanctions are later taken.
- **Injunctions and ASBOs** – these are legal measures that protect the public from further anti-social behaviour by an individual by banning them from behaving in certain ways or in certain areas. Breach of an injunction can lead to a fine and for ASBOs, it is a criminal offence.
- **Dispersal powers** – police can designate any area where there is persistent anti-social behaviour and a problem with groups causing intimidation. In these areas police can disperse groups that are behaving anti-socially.
- **Premises closure orders** – in cases of serious or persistent anti-social behaviour, the local authority or the police can gain a court order to close a property for up to three months. Any property can be subject to a closure order.
- **Demoted tenancies and possession proceedings** – legal measures which apply to tenants in social rented housing who are behaving anti-socially or allowing those who live at the property to do so. Their tenancy can be made less secure and ultimately they can be evicted from the property.

Further information on these and other tools and powers are available at www.direct.gov.uk. Click on 'crime, justice and the law' and follow the links to 'anti-social behaviour'.

By July, you will be able to find out whether your council is using these powers by going to the anti-social behaviour pages on www.direct.gov.uk where you will find a list of all councils and what action they have been taking with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour.

If you are a tenant or leaseholder of a housing association or local authority landlord living in England, your landlord may have signed up to the Respect Housing Management Standard which sets out six commitments showing how they will tackle anti-social behaviour.

These include:

- support for victims and witnesses
- procedures for swift enforcement
- prevention and early intervention
- communicating with residents on their concerns and what is being done about them
- how they are preventing anti-social behaviour and
- working with police and others to provide the best service for residents.

More detail on this standard can be found at www.communities.gov.uk/housing. Click on 'social housing management' and then 'anti-social behaviour and housing'.

Go to your local neighbourhood police meeting if you want to hear about what is happening to tackle anti-social behaviour. If you are not happy with the response you have received, demand action.

To find out how to contact your anti-social behaviour co-ordinator visit:

www.direct.gov.uk

What victims and witnesses of crime can expect

If you, a neighbour or someone else you know experiences a crime, it is really important that it gets reported. If no one reports it, it is as if the crime never happened, and the criminal is free to commit more crime. However, it can sometimes feel like a daunting experience and some people may feel that there is 'no point' because they will not be taken seriously.

The police and other agencies have responsibilities towards victims of crime. These are set out in the Victims of Crime Code of Practice. If you are a victim of crime you should expect:

- to be told whether an investigation will take place and be updated on the progress of your case
- to be offered emotional and practical support
- to be referred to Victim Support for help
- if your case goes to court, to be offered practical help and information from the Witness Care Unit, such as a pre-trial visit to court and keeping you informed about what is happening with your case
- in court, to be seated in a separate waiting area to the defendants
- if you are a vulnerable (for example, elderly or disabled) or intimidated victim, the right to receive an enhanced service, such as being informed more quickly of key decisions.

A copy of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is included in this pack.

Everyone who has been a victim of crime can make a **Victim Personal Statement**. This allows the victim to say in their own words how a crime has affected them – physically, emotionally or in any other way. These are often used in court so the judge or magistrates are able to see the full picture of how the crime has affected the victim.

If you are a witness to crime, the **Witness Charter** provides a set of standards which agencies will be working towards meeting over the next year. The Witness Charter will not be legally binding but will set clear goals, driving improvements to the care provided to witnesses.

The Charter sets out standards of care and the help and support available. They include making an assessment of your needs, how you want to be contacted, and what would help you give evidence in court if the case gets that far. For serious offences you should be kept updated regularly during investigations. If your case is going to court, you should be supported by the Witness Care Unit who should keep you updated of progress, and provide practical support. To find out more about the Witness Charter go to: www.frontline.cjsonline.gov.uk and search 'witness charter'.

Victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime does not apply to victims of anti-social behaviour. However, help and support should be provided by the local authority, police or social landlord.

In addition, civil orders such as injunctions and ASBOs can protect victims through the prohibitions they place on perpetrators (i.e. restrictions on what they are allowed to do and not do). In the case of ASBOs, a breach is a criminal offence.

If you or other residents are a victim of anti-social behaviour, you should expect:

- the council or social landlord's anti-social behaviour service to keep in touch with you and keep you updated on your case
- the council to consider using powers including court orders to provide immediate protection for victims

For more information on the tools and powers available to tackle anti-social behaviour visit:

www.direct.gov.uk

- if your case is going to court, services should provide you with support so you are able to give evidence
- professional evidence may be used in certain cases for those too fearful to give evidence – for example a housing officer or warden may be able to give evidence on your behalf.

What is certain is if the crime or anti-social behaviour is not reported, nothing will be done to tackle it.

Greater information on cases

When a crime has been committed or when your neighbourhood suffers from anti-social behaviour, naturally we all want the people responsible to be caught and to know they will not do it again. Louise Casey's review found a strong public appetite for information on the outcome of cases – 90% of people felt they did not have enough information on what happens after an arrest.

If you have been a victim of crime you are entitled to know the outcome of a case (if it has been investigated). However, your Neighbourhood Policing Team will probably know about the outcome of cases that have happened on their patch – if you want to know about them, ask. This is particularly important if you were asked to keep a lookout or gave information to police or where the incident badly affected the community.

If people report a crime and then do not hear anything, they think that nothing has happened – and that can lead to people thinking that there is no point in reporting incidents and that nothing will be done.

- Ask your Neighbourhood Policing Team about the outcome of cases. For example, what sentence did the criminal get?
- Local crime information should include case outcomes – go to www.direct.gov.uk/policingpledge to find your Neighbourhood Policing Team pages.
- The local authority and police should be reporting back regularly on what action they are taking to tackle anti-social behaviour and this includes the outcome of cases. Ask your anti-social behaviour co-ordinator for feedback.

Community Payback

More than one in ten convictions result in an offender receiving a community order, where the criminal is ordered to undertake one or more of 12 different requirements. One of the most common requirements is to undertake Community Payback when an offender must carry out work which is of benefit to the community as part of their punishment.

In a survey of people active in their community, 81% agreed that people on Community Payback should be identifiable. Since 1 December 2008, offenders undertaking Community Payback as part of their sentence are required to wear high visibility orange jackets so that the public can see that punishments are being carried out on their behalf.

Community Payback can involve cleaning up, removing graffiti and clearing up litter, decorating or basic building maintenance.

Those surveyed also felt that local people should have a say in deciding what sort of work offenders should do. The public can now nominate projects which they think could be done as part of Community Payback. To nominate projects that offenders can work on in your area, go to www.direct.gov.uk/communitypayback. Usually it cannot be work that replaces work that someone would be paid to do and it needs to be of benefit to the community.

To nominate projects that offenders can work on in your area, go to:

www.direct.gov.uk/communitypayback

Supporting the public

Louise Casey's review highlighted the importance of supporting and encouraging volunteers who are active in their communities in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

For information on Neighbourhood & Home Watch go to www.mynhw.co.uk

The Community Crime Fighters programme is providing those who want to do and know more with information and training on what to expect from police and criminal justice services. The purpose is to raise awareness and understanding of what individuals and the wider community are entitled to so that they can challenge services when they do not come up to scratch. For more information contact the Community Crime Fighters Actionline on **0808 000 2030**.

Checklist

Have you got the contact details of your local Neighbourhood Policing Team, and details of the next public meeting where you can have your say? If not find them at www.direct.gov.uk/policingpledge

Does the local Policing Pledge reflect your priorities on crime and anti-social behaviour?

Who is your local anti-social behaviour co-ordinator? Go to www.direct.gov.uk and follow the links under 'crime, justice and the law'.

Find out whether tools and powers are being used to tackle anti-social behaviour in your area by going to www.direct.gov.uk from July 2009.

Find out about cases that have caused upset in the community or which you and others have given information about – ask your local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Is Community Payback happening in your area (you should be able to tell because offenders are wearing orange jackets?). Have your say on projects you want offenders to work on at www.direct.gov.uk/communitypayback

What services are available locally to support victims and witnesses of crime and anti-social behaviour?

Have you told others in your community about the standards they should expect on crime, anti-social behaviour and policing?

**Justice Seen
Justice Done**

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