Community policing in Ireland
No. 7, 2012

Contents

Editorial 1
Executive summary 2
What is community policing? 2
Community policing: International perspectives 4
Community policing in Ireland 7
Measuring the effects of community policing in Ireland 13
Feedback on policing and the community 14
Current and future developments 16

Editorial

Community policing is a commitment in the 2009 National Model on Community Policing of An Garda Síochána. However there is confusion about what community policing actually means, how it fits into the broader strategies of policing and crime control in Ireland, and how it is understood in light of the changes underway within An Garda Síochána.

This Spotlight clarifies the existing position on community policing in Ireland. It examines relevant legislative and policy developments and the initiatives and schemes which have been put in place. Irish developments are put in context by looking at how community policing has developed in other countries, in particular the UK (England and Wales), Sweden and New Zealand. This Spotlight looks at the latest crime statistics published by the Central Statistics Office and discusses current and future policy developments in anti-crime and community policing in Ireland.

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Executive summary

Community policing is widely regarded as one of the most significant developments in policing around the world. However, it is difficult to define and is understood in different ways. Most definitions emphasise police working in the community and in partnership with communities to identify and solve problems.

Community policing initiatives are introduced for a number of reasons. They can be expected to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour or to reduce the fear that citizens have of crime or anti-social behaviour. Community policing schemes are also promoted as a means of increasing community engagement and developing public trust in the police.

Whole of organisation change of the police is not usually seen and specific 'programmes' or 'initiatives' are the usual manifestation of community policing. Community policing initiatives include visible foot patrol, public meetings and liaison with citizens, partnership within communities, local police hubs or drop-in points, neighbourhood watch coordination and youth outreach initiatives.

The formal position of An Garda Síochána in relation to community policing can be found in the National Model on Community Policing 2009 (National Model) and in An Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2012. Community policing in the National Model is defined as ‘a partnership based, pro-active, community-orientated style of policing’ and is ‘focused on crime prevention, problem-solving and law enforcement, with a view to building trust and enhancing the quality of life of the entire community’.

Community policing initiatives in Ireland include established schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert and the more recent Joint Policing Committees introduced by the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The deployment of Community Gardaí and the development of a variety of other strategies and schemes on community safety, youth, older people and diversity are aimed at achieving community policing goals.

Community policing is widely accepted as a positive way of doing policing in Ireland, and enjoys wide support amongst stakeholders, although it is difficult to measure its effects on crime rates, fear of crime or on public satisfaction with the Gardaí or public engagement.

The absence of evaluation of community policing programmes and practices, at national and international level, and within police forces, makes it difficult to assess the impact of community policing initiatives and community policing as a strategy on crime rates or on the fear of crime.1

What is community policing?

Defining community policing
While the term community policing is seen regularly in public and political debates in Ireland, its meaning is ambiguous and the term is used in multiple ways. This is reflected also in international practice and international literature where there is no single definition. Community policing is sometimes described as the underlying philosophy of how policing is done or as being the ethos of a police force. However, so too is it used to describe partnership measures and other initiatives designed to allow community input into policing priorities and practices. Others see community policing as the role of specific members of a police force working with, or on behalf of a community. Taking the broadest interpretation, almost any non-reactive policing strategy is said to be a community policing initiative.

Why community policing?
Community policing measures are put forward by national and regional police forces as a means of reducing crime or diminishing fear or perception of crime. This can involve police

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working within communities and maintaining a visible but approachable presence. Part of the strategy involves adapting policing priorities and practices to localised crime and social issues including anti-social behaviour, drugs and other low-level criminal activity. ²

What are the elements of community policing?
At the centre of community policing are community-based problem-solving schemes, localised solutions and partnerships between the police and other agencies. Community policing usually involves the introduction of some degree of organisational change in the policing structure, alongside the development of a variety of programmes and initiatives designed to increase interaction between police and communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Common elements of community policing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Problem-solving of issues such as low-level criminal activities, drug problems or other anti-social issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partnerships between police and public</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Power-sharing between community and police over decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>• New forms of accountability and more transparency within the police</td>
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Community policing v ‘Traditional Policing’
Traditional policing methods are thought to centre upon crime control and punishment and maintaining law and order in a state. When traditional ways of dealing with crime were thought to be neither effective in reducing crime nor in reducing the fear or perception of crime, community policing was put forward as a better way of dealing with crime and social disorder issues within local communities.³ While traditional police approaches deal primarily with the symptoms of crime, community policing aims to treat the cause of crime and seeks to prevent problems emerging. The reactive nature of traditional policing contrasts with the proactive nature of community policing in identifying issues of concern and potential problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Policing</th>
<th>Community Policing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialist function based primarily on crime fighting</td>
<td>Broader function addressing fear of crime and order maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One way communication with citizens</td>
<td>Two-way communication with citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing detached from citizens</td>
<td>Working together with citizens and setting priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposing authority</td>
<td>Creatively addressing a range of problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing every situation and neighbourhood in the same way</td>
<td>Recognising that each community has own set of problems and expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The need to work for, and with communities as well as tackling crime and keeping order highlights the challenges that exist for policing organisations today. There are expectations to respond to complex challenges such as drugs, people trafficking and internet crime while at the same time dealing effectively with low level crime and anti-social behaviour. While the former relies upon centralisation and national coordination, the latter has flexibility, localisation and targeted strategies at its core.

What is the community in community policing?
The term ‘community’ can be problematic in itself, and this in part explains the confusion that surrounds the idea of community policing. Community might be used to describe either a particular geographical region or ‘place’, that is, those that are living or working within a particular neighbourhood. Community might also refer to the social interactions and relationships within that ‘place’. Community can also be used to refer to a specific group of people, such as Travellers, minority ethnic groups, young people, and gay and lesbian people. In any of these interpretations, a ‘sense of community’, or the absence thereof, might be pointed to.

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Community policing methods might never meet the needs of all members of a community. Many means of engagement, both formal and informal, can only reach a part of the community. This can lead to problems with particular people or groups ‘speaking for’ the community or taking on a leadership or representative role without having been mandated by others.

What is community policing expected to do?

With the introduction of community policing initiatives, many promises are made about their capacity to bring change. They can be expected to reduce crime and the fear of crime, as well as increasing community engagement and public trust in the police. Community policing schemes are also promoted as a means of satisfying local communities, bringing legitimacy to the police forces and instilling public confidence. A further benefit is thought to be changing police officers’ levels of engagement with and satisfaction with the job.

Box 2: Does community policing…

...reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour?
In some studies community policing measures are recognised as reducing both crime and disorder, although there is stronger evidence for their effectiveness in reducing disorder than crime. Especially important in preventing crime or disorder are thought to be foot patrol and long-term problem-solving which seeks to address the roots of crime.

...decrease fear of crime?
Studies differ as to whether community policing contributes to reductions in the fear of crime, and increases feelings of safety. Some show strong evidence of the fear-reducing capacities of community policing for all the community, while others note the ‘reassuring’ presence that community policing offers. Some studies showed that the majority of residents do not know enough about community policing in their neighbourhood to benefit from this reassurance.

...increase community engagement?
Community policing initiatives seek to allow communities to gain ‘ownership’ over policing priorities, and to do this through both informal contact and more formal community partnerships. Having a number of strategies for engagement has been found to be most effective. However, studies have shown that community policing initiatives tended to have little effect on citizens taking on increased voluntary roles in their community.

...increase public trust and confidence in the police?
Community policing has been popular with the public and is seen as important for police-community relations as registered in opinion polls and in police attitudes surveys carried out in many countries.

...improve police officers’ levels of engagement with the job?
It is thought that with the right implementation there is confidence in and support for community policing within police forces. It is generally supported by community officers, but sometimes less supported by the rest of the force. Some would argue that community policing should be implemented by way of ‘whole organisation’ change rather than specialist units.

Source: MacKenzie & Henry (2009), Community Policing: a Review of the Evidence. This study draws together international literature on community policing.

Criticism of community policing

Some commentators are sceptical about the broader ideals that community policing sets out to achieve as well as being unconvinced about the capacity of measures to bring change. It is sometimes criticised as being a ‘buzz-word’ that fails to change organisational practice or the practice of the rank and file of policing organisations.

Community policing: International perspectives

Community policing is a concept that ‘travels’ well and is used in countries throughout the world. From the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), Singapore and Japan to

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countries experiencing conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, community policing initiatives have been developed. Community policing is thought to have Anglo-American roots, but different aspects have been imported or adapted to local contexts. Though there are commonalities across countries, the concept is utilised in a variety of different ways and is rooted in national or regional contexts and systems of policing.

The roots of community policing

From the 1970s onwards in the US and from the 1980s in the UK community policing was promoted as a central part of policing.

In the 1970s in the US as anti-war protestors, civil rights activists, and other groups were demonstrating, police became targets of hostility. This led police leaders to analyse the role of the police, to question the police’s inability to handle unrest and re-examine police practices. Community Oriented Policing in the US was initially funded by individual States, but in time was supported through federal funds and promoted through the Department of Justice. The ‘race riots’ in the UK in the 1980s are thought by many to have accelerated the development of community policing and more targeted police responses in particular neighbourhoods. It developed over time from tactics to repair police and minority relations after the riots to becoming a central pillar of policing efforts for the wider population.

Community policing: policies, practices, and variants

The term community policing has most commonly been used as an overarching term in describing new community-oriented methods of policing, but a number of different versions of community policing including reassurance policing, neighbourhood policing and proximity policing have been developed.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 3: Variants of community policing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reassurance policing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reassurance policing has the aim of alleviating public anxieties of crime and reassuring the public of the ability of the police to tackle crime in the community. It was promoted in England and Wales in the National Reassurance Policing Programme (2003-2005) and endorsed in the Netherlands and Belgium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighbourhood policing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood policing is focused upon particular geographical locations and aimed at the collective security interests of co-residents. In the UK (England and Wales), this involves neighbourhood policing teams made up of police officers, special constables, community support officers, volunteers, and neighbourhood wardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity policing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Scandinavian countries as there was no direct translation for the term community, reference was instead made to proximity policing or local policing. Proximity policing is also seen in France, though it is different to other countries as partnerships between police and citizens are not promoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intelligence-led policing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing are often linked to and are part of community policing approaches. Problem-oriented policing involves analysing the nature of the problem from the root rather than responding to the issue as it occurs. Intelligence-led policing involves the collection and analysis of intelligence for efficient management and effective co-ordination of resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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8 Skogan, Wesley & Hartnett, Susan (1997), Community Policing, Chicago Style, Oxford University Press.
11 Easton, Marleen, Moor, Lodewijk Gunther, Hoogenboom, Ponsaers, Paul & van Stokkom (Eds.) (2008), Reflections on Reassurance Policing in the Low Countries, Eleven International Publishing.
12 See http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/.
Whole-organisation change of policing systems is not usually seen and specific 'programmes' or 'initiatives' are the usual manifestation of community policing. Similar initiatives have become associated with community policing and are seen across the world, including:
- visible foot patrol
- public meetings and liaison
- multi-agency coordination within communities
- partnership with communities
- local police hubs or drop-in points
- neighbourhood watch coordination
- youth outreach and juvenile programmes

The UK, Sweden, and New Zealand
This section examines three countries’ approach to community policing in more detail. The UK (England and Wales) is useful given that it has one of the most developed schemes on community policing. Sweden is chosen as it has adopted and adapted many of the UK and US ideas of community policing, and has developed an innovative way of reforming the place of the police station in policing. New Zealand has a comparable population size to Ireland and urban/rural population dispersal. The information that follows does not provide a comprehensive overview of community policing measures in these countries, but rather draws attention to some policy provisions and initiatives undertaken.

Stats: United Kingdom (England and Wales)

| 134,101 Police Officers in 43 autonomous police forces in England and Wales |
| 14,393 Police Community Support Officers |
| 1,469 Police stations |

Home Office, 2012\(^{15}\)

258.4 Police per 100,000 of the population

Eurostat, 2008\(^{16}\)

In England and Wales the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 created a statutory requirement for police-community partnership, mandated community consultation for local authorities, and also introduced anti-social behaviour orders. The Police Reform Act 2002 created the role of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO).

All 43 police forces have Neighbourhood Policing Teams with approximately 3,600 teams established across the UK. These ‘Safer Neighbourhoods’ teams are made up of police officers, PCSOs and special constables, working closely with local council staff and volunteers. Neighbourhood Policing Teams are also part of Local Strategic Partnerships established in every borough. They are non-statutory bodies which bring together at a local level different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors.

The position of Police Community Support Officer (PCSOs) is paid and usually full-time. PCSOs work at the frontline of the local force and are meant to be a visible and reassuring presence on the streets or tackling anti-social behaviour.\(^{17}\)

Stats: Sweden

20,544 Police Officers in 21 county police authorities

(Also 8,078 civil servants in specialist roles)

Swedish Police, 2011\(^{18}\)

199.5 Police officers per 100,000 of the population

Eurostat, 2008\(^{19}\)

The ‘Proximity Police Reform’ (Närpolisreformen) in 1994 brought in the role of local police.\(^{20}\) Local police make up about half of police officers. They patrol the city and rural areas and deal with theft, assault, vandalism and disorder.


\(^{17}\) See http://policerecruitment.homeoffice.gov.uk/police-comm-support-officer/


In Sweden, each county has a police authority responsible for the operations within the county and they are responsible for crime prevention, investigation and services, and for the way in which local police are deployed. A Local Crime Prevention Council is made up of local police who form a liaison with municipal institutions, associations and the local business community and meets regularly.

Joint Consultative Committees are established in police districts, and serve as a complement to Local Crime Prevention Councils. They offer joint planning between senior police officers, local municipalities and other social organisations with a view to developing the work on strategic crime prevention.

Neighbourhood Police Stations have been described as a ‘simpler form of police station’ with limited opening hours and 4-6 police officers who have a visible presence in the residential area in which they operate. There are also mobile police stations to increase the visibility and accessibility of the police to the public.

Starting in 2011, a mobile investigation support was put into place. The main part of the investigation can now be completed at the crime scene instead of the police station. This makes it possible to perform searches of registers and to use information from other systems. When all information has been submitted, the investigation is sent electronically to an inquiry leader who forwards it to the public prosecution authority’s system after inspection.

Community policing is said to be at the ‘heart of all police activity in New Zealand’ and is a ‘policing style which means we believe the people who live in a community’ are best able to deal with concerns about crime and order.’

The New Zealand Police Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015 sets out a vision of ‘Safer Communities Together’ and has a mission of working in partnerships with communities to prevent crime and traffic accidents, as well as enhancing public safety and maintaining public order.

Community policing staff are located around the country and usually focus on either a geographical area or a crime problem.

They include:
- Rural engagement officers
- Officers based in malls, community centres, prisons, universities and schools
- Graffiti liaison officers
- Problem-solving teams.

In 2012 a Strategy ‘Prevention First’ was initiated which aims to ‘have the right people in the right place at the right time to stop crime happening in the first place’.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams were set up in 32 priority locations across the country where citizens are more likely to be the victim of crime, and focus on families, youth, alcohol, road policing and organised crime and drugs.

New mobile technology was introduced to enable police to spend more time on the streets and to deal with crimes away from police stations.

Stats: New Zealand
8,703 Police Officers in 12 districts
Approximately 1,000 community policing staff
Over 400 police stations
(Eurostat, 2009; New Zealand Police)

Community policing in Ireland

This section provides an outline of the Irish legislative and policy provisions governing community policing. It also gives an overview of the strategies of An Garda Síochána and the initiatives and programmes that are said to contribute to community policing goals.

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Crime and policing in Ireland

Crime control and prevention has been prominent on the political agenda in Ireland since the 1990s. There have been calls for tighter crime control and to reform the criminal justice system and policing structures.

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<th>Box 4: An Garda Síochána Numbers</th>
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<tr>
<td>13,567 Gardaí in 28 divisions, which includes 1,132 Community Police Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,012 Garda Reserve Members (166 in training) June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>327.4 police per 100,000 of the population Eurostat, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>665 Garda stations (39 closures) August 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There also has been a rise in the public’s fear of crime. A number of polls during the 1980s and 1990s showed a dramatic rise in the emphasis being given to crime and law and order by the Irish public. As in many other countries there is no neat relationship between public anxiety and actual crime rates and when crime rates fall as they did in the 1980s and 1990s, fear of crime can rise.

While there was an emphasis on regaining control through methods of ‘zero tolerance’ policing from the late 1990s, it was recognised that there were many different types of crime, and different ways to approach the control and prevention of crime. There were gradual shifts towards community policing, from the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System in 1985, the Interdepartmental Group on Urban Crime and Disorder in 1992 and the

Department of Justice discussion paper ‘Tackling Crime’ published in 1997. In these reports there was a growing recognition of the limits of a ‘fire-brigade’ model of policing, which meant acting reactively rather than proactively. These reports also highlighted links between crime, deprivation, and distrustful relationships between the Gardaí and communities. They also promoted sustained multi-agency partnership approaches to crime prevention issues.

The issue of community policing has regularly been discussed in parliamentary debates and by Oireachtas committees. In 2005 a detailed report on community policing was published by the Joint Committee following a significant consultation process. It was also discussed following the launch of the National Model on Community Policing in 2009 and again before the Joint Committee for Justice, Equality and Women’s Rights in December 2011. The current Programme for Government 2011-2016 calls to “build on the existing community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí” and says that “it is Government policy that a higher priority be attached to community policing and that, within available resources, there is a higher Garda visibility in the local neighbourhoods worst affected”.

Legislation and community policing

The most significant piece of legislation to impact upon the way in which policing is done in Ireland is the Garda Síochána Act 2005. Changes included performance targets, annual policing plans, multi-annual strategy statements, new accountability arrangements, the

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29 See http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/0818/breaking1.html
34 Such recommendations were repeated in a number of subsequent reports, for example Tackling the Underlying Causes of Crime: A Partnership Approach (2002) and A Crime Prevention Strategy for Ireland: Tackling the Concerns of Local Communities (2003) from the National Crime Council.
35 Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights (2005) Report on Community Policing. Dublin: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Joint Committee hearings were held on the Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th March and on Tuesday 22nd, Wednesday 23rd and Thursday 24th March.
36 Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, 'Policing Issues: Discussion with Garda Síochána.
37 Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality Debate, Community Policing: Discussion with An Garda Síochána, 1 December 2011.
establishment of the Garda Inspectorate and the power of the Minister for Justice to issue directives. The Act also provided for various mechanisms of police-public consultation. Statutory status was given to Joint Policing Committees and the mandate of local authorities was widened significantly. It also provided for a Garda Reserve, a voluntary part-time force to support the work of An Garda Síochána.

Local authorities

Local authorities were given a key role in community partnership under the Garda Síochána Act 2005. In relation to the governance of crime and security section 37 (1) of the Act provides that: ‘A local authority shall, in performing its functions, have regard to the importance of taking steps to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within its area of responsibility’. This extended the role of local authorities which, through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997, had been given authority to issue ‘exclusion against ‘illegal occupiers’ and tenants engaged in illegal or anti-social behaviour.

The impetus for extending the role of local authorities had arisen from persistent problems with crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in local authority estates, much of which was drug-related (McAuliffe and Fahey 1999). Indeed a number of legislative provisions are thought to be related to the ways in which low-level crime and social disorder is regulated. Here one can point to the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBOs) as legislated for in the Criminal Justice Act 2006 and co-ordinated and multi-agency intervention in juvenile crime in the form of the Juvenile Diversion Programme regulated in the Children’s Act 2001.

Joint Policing Committees

With the establishment of Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) under section 36 of the 2005 Act, the principle of public empowerment was placed on a statutory basis. There were a number of developments that led to this point. In 1999 the Dublin North Inner City Community Policing Forum (CPF) was launched to coordinate a common strategy between the local community, the Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council in response to drug dealing. This approach was evaluated favourably. The former National Crime Council recommended the setting up of a partnership model to allow for the development of a more holistic approach to crime and crime prevention in which expertise, knowledge and resources could be shared.

Box 5: Joint Policing Committees (JPCs)

The 2005 Act provides that the JPCs should:

- serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the local authority’s administrative area
- keep under review levels of crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour, as well as the factors underlying and contributing to levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour
- organise and host public meetings to discuss problems.

The first JPCs were established on a pilot basis in 2006 across 29 local authority areas including Dublin City Council. Following an internal review of the pilot phase, guidelines were issued in 2008 to all local authorities enabling the establishment of JPCs in all 114 local authority areas.

There is provision under Section 36 (2) (d) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 for the establishment, where appropriate, of Local Policing Fora at neighbourhood level. These are intended to operate in a more informal way than the Joint Policing Committees and aim to deepen the engagement between the Gardaí, the local authority and neighbourhood communities. The establishment of Local Policing Fora commenced in August 2009 in the 6 local authority areas where Local Drug Task Forces operate, i.e. Cork City Council, Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council and Bray Town Council.


39 Connolly, Johnny (2002), Community Policing and Drugs in Dublin – The North Inner City Community Policing Forum, Norther Inner City Drugs Task Force.
An Garda Síochána policy
The formal position of An Garda Síochána in relation to community policing can be found in both the Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2012 and the National Model on Community Policing 2009. The National Model was said to be informed by a collective understanding between An Garda Síochána, statutory agencies and communities. Community policing in the National Model is defined as ‘a partnership based, pro-active, community-orientated style of policing’ and is ‘focused on crime prevention, problem-solving and law enforcement, with a view to building trust and enhancing the quality of life of the entire community’.

The model is built around ten core components or ‘pillars’ which serve to inform everything Gardaí do in their interaction with the community. The ten “pillars” are partnership, enforcement, problem-solving, crime prevention and reduction, accountability, visibility, accessibility, collaborative engagement, empowerment and improved response.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6: An Garda Síochána National Model of Community Policing (2009) Strategic Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- To provide a dedicated, accessible and visible Garda service to communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To establish effective engagement processes to meet the needs of local communities and provide feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To use problem-solving initiatives, devised in partnership with communities and local agencies, to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, through targeted enforcement and crime prevention and reduction initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To engage in a community-focused approach to provide solutions that reduce the fear of crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To engage meaningfully with young people to develop and foster positive relationships with the goal of promoting personal and community safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To develop a participative management style and an organisational structure that rewards excellence in service, management and problem-solving</td>
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Organisational change in An Garda Síochána
A National Community Policing Office and a National Joint Policing Committee Monitoring Office were established which are based in the Community Relations and Community Policing Section in Garda Headquarters. The Deputy Garda Commissioner in charge of strategy and change management is designated as the Community Policing Champion to ensure that the culture and ethos of community policing is led from a high level in the organisation.

Over 1,100 Community Police Officers have been deployed to ‘provide the people in an area with their own dedicated Garda, someone with whom they can discuss everyday occurrences and build up a strong and supportive personal relationship’. Since the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 which provided for the establishment of a Garda Reserve, there are 1,012 Garda Reserve Members and 166 in training. The voluntary unpaid members are drawn from the community to assist at times when extra personnel are required. The principal role of the Reserve consists of local patrols and crime reduction initiatives, targeted at specific local urban or rural problem areas.

Community policing initiatives in Ireland
While the National Model of 2009 sets out a vision and values for community policing for the first time, a number of official documents and speeches have stated that community policing has been central to how policing is done in Ireland since the foundation of An Garda Síochána in 1922.

Community policing measures were however expressly promoted from the 1980s onwards through several initiatives.


**Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch**

Some of the earliest initiatives were Community Alert in rural areas and Neighbourhood Watch in urban areas. Senior Gardaí visited the US to examine how similar schemes had been implemented there in the mid-1960s as a community-based crime prevention initiative. In 1982 Thomastown and Claremorris Garda districts were selected for the purpose of establishing a new form of rural community policing, which became Community Alert. The first Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Ireland was piloted in the Finglas area of Dublin during 1984.

Following a number of attacks in rural areas an Oireachtas Select Committee on Crime, Lawlessness and Vandalism was established in March 1984. This committee recommended ‘an early introduction of Neighbourhood Watch on a nation-wide basis’ which was endorsed by then Minister for Justice, Michael Noonan, 1984. In his address to the Dáil at that time, the Minister also emphasised the importance of getting the community ‘more closely involved with the police’ through measures such as more Gardaí on the beat.

Following the success of the pilot programmes Community Policing and Neighbourhood Watch were extended throughout the country.

**Box 7: Neighbourhood Watch - Community Alert**

There are now 2,300 Neighbourhood Watch schemes and 1,342 Community Alert schemes.

- **Neighbourhood Watch** is a crime prevention and community safety programme for urban areas aiming to improve community safety, to prevent crime, to develop Garda and community links, to increase public confidence in the Gardaí and to reduce anti-social behaviour.

- **Community Alert** is a community safety programme for rural areas with an emphasis on older and vulnerable people. It operates as a partnership between the community, An Garda Síochána and Muintir na Tíre and works on the principle of shared responsibility for crime prevention and reduction.

The Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2012 sets out the strategic goals ‘Ensuring a Peaceful Community’ and ‘Working with Communities’ and draws attention to a number of programmes and strategies have been developed and promoted by An Garda Síochána to implement their community policing priorities, some of which are outlined in the table below.

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<th>Table 1: Community oriented measures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Safer Communities Campaign, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garda Diversity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2009-2012</td>
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<td>An Garda Síochána Older People Strategy 2010-2012</td>
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Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality, Community Policing: Discussion with An Garda Síochána, 1 December 2011.

Safe Communities Campaign

The ‘Safe Communities’ campaign, for example, has run for over a decade and has the objective of engaging with, and raising awareness within communities of initiatives aimed at preventing crime, reducing the fear of crime and promoting community safety. During 2012, the national ‘Garda Supporting Safer Communities Campaign’ highlights key issues for citizen and community safety, in particular burglary prevention.

The Garda Síochána Policing Plan for 2012 also includes as key actions measures to reduce public disorder and criminal damage including the identification of anti-social behaviour ‘hot spots’ and the continued use of behaviour warnings and good behaviour contracts as provided for in the Criminal Justice Act 2006. The Act provides for incremental measures for those involved in anti-social behaviour from a Garda warning, to a good behaviour contract, to referral to the Garda Juvenile Diversion programme, to finally making a behaviour order in the Children’s Court. 50

Rural-Urban Needs

Community policing is tailored to each district by the district officer or Superintendent. A community policing team has been established in every Garda district and that team is led by a Sergeant.

To assist the operational implementation of the model in rural and urban districts, four district category templates have been developed to provide orientation and assistance to the people charged with community policing. These are said to be models to orient senior managers in terms of what might be expected in providing a structured community policing model in their respective areas. In addition, the Garda Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Model introduces the concept of proactive ‘Neighbourhood Profiling’. 51 This is meant to be proactive knowledge tool for all Community Gardaí. It focuses on ‘Customer Profiling’ and assists in identifying members of the community and targeting them with appropriate resources. To build, record and update ‘Neighbourhood Profiles’ and to provide targeted responses the Garda PULSE system and the Garda Síochána Analysis Service will be used.

Multi-agency approach

Community policing initiatives place emphasis on the partnership and multi-agency approach. The multi-agency approach means that An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice foster collaboration with the criminal justice services, drugs rehabilitation and educational services among others. 52 As outlined above, local and city authorities have a significant role to play in partnership through the Joint Policing Committees and other roles in estate management. Further partnership is seen with County and City Development Boards responsible for long-term planning in the community, where An Garda Síochána works alongside VECs, the Health Service Executive and FÁS among others. There has been a long-standing commitment to working with those running Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert schemes. Given the commitment to improve services for the victims of crime, the Garda Victim Liaison Officer works with criminal justice organisations and and other advocacy groups.

Measuring the effects of community policing in Ireland

It is difficult to measure the effects of community policing on crime rates, fear of crime, public satisfaction with the police or the extent and depth of community engagement with community policing objectives. Few Irish studies have measured the effects of community policing.

Here a variety of national data sources are drawn upon. They cannot point to successes of community policing measures and rather are used as starting points for further debate on the possible effects of community policing measures.

Reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour

The most recent crime statistics released by the Central Statistics Office (Sept 2012) record falling crime rates in a number of crime categories, including homicide and drug related offences. While there was an overall increase in the number of burglaries recorded in the 12 months up to June 2012, there was a 25% reduction in the last three months of that period. Minister Shatter attributes this fall to an increased focus on combating this type of crime. Garda Operation Fiacla was established in early 2012 to specifically target the increased rate in burglaries since the recession began.

The number of public order offences recorded also fell by 13% in the 12 month period up to June 2012. It is difficult without further analysis to measure the exact effects, if any, community policing has had in relation to these falling crime rates.

Reduction of fear of crime

The Crime and Victimisation Survey of 2010 showed that over 40% of people feared being a victim of crime, a decrease from 53% in 2006 and 58% in 2003. Almost three-quarters (74%) of those surveyed in 2010 stated that they felt safe or very safe walking home alone in their neighbourhood after dark, unchanged from 2003 and 2006. For every 1,000 persons, 92% said that they would feel safe or very safe alone in their homes after dark, a figure which is similar to that recorded in previous years. However, when asked about the seriousness of crime in Ireland, 83% responded that it was either a serious or very serious problem. This had not changed appreciably since 2003 when 81% responded similarly.

A review of the Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Schemes was carried out in 1998. As was the case in other countries, there was no change in crime rates. However these schemes were thought to play a role in reducing the fear of crime.

Increased legitimacy of the police and public satisfaction

Garda Public Attitudes Surveys from 2002 to 2008 show satisfaction with the Garda to be consistently very high, with an average of over 80% recorded. Conway points out that general satisfaction could represent more holistic and symbolic attachments rather than particular experiences (e.g. as a victim or witness to a crime) or other aspects of actual police functioning. Over 65% of respondents in the 2008 survey were satisfied with the level of Garda visibility in their locality, which had remained broadly stable throughout the years of the surveys.

Increased public engagement

As noted above, there have been efforts to use locally based partnerships to increase engagement in identifying and tackling public problems. Following successful pilots of the Joint Policing Schemes (JPCs) in 2006 in 29 local authority areas, they were rolled out on a national basis. A review is currently underway into the operation of JPCs by the Department of Justice. Consultation for the White Paper on Crime (see below) showed that those consulted were in general positive about JPCs, and their potential to deliver a more effective and sustainable approach to crime prevention if properly resourced and enabling real engagement with the community.  

Feedback on policing and the community

The Department of Justice and Equality is developing a White Paper on Crime which is due for publication in 2012. It has the aim of assessing the systems and measures in place to prevent and combat crime and to plan for future policy development. Consultation was carried out from 2009 and four discussion documents provided the structure to consultation.

The following section is based upon upon the First Discussion Document, ‘Crime Prevention and Community Safety’ and the Fourth Discussion Document, ‘The Community and the Criminal Justice System’, and in particular the reports on each which give an overview of submissions received and summary reports of consultation put together by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Those who submitted consultations included Local Drug Task Forces and Community Taskforces (Canal Communities Local Task Force, Athlone Community Taskforce); Joint Policing Committees (County Mayo Joint Policing Committee and Dublin City Council Joint Policing Committee) as well as non-government organisations including Pavé Point Travellers’ Centre, Women’s Aid, Crime Victims Ireland and the Irish Penal Reform Trust and many individuals. Regional consultations were held for Discussion Document No. 1 in Dundalk, Sligo, Dublin, Athlone and Cork with around 200 attendees and for Discussion Document No. 4 in Tralee, Waterford, Limerick, Galway and Dublin with 270 participants. They included representatives from community and voluntary groups, statutory organisations and public representatives.

Some key remarks relevant to community policing can be drawn out from these sources and give an insight into stakeholders’ views on community policing and possibilities for reform:

Knowing your Garda: It was said that members of the community should not just encounter a Garda when they are reporting a crime. It was said to be important that the Community Garda be known and recognised by the community and become part of the community.

Fixed Garda presence: Worry was expressed about the closure of smaller Garda stations in both urban and rural areas. Others said that community policing should be given priority in rural as well as urban areas and not just in identified problem-areas.

Continuity of community police: The turnover of Community Gardaí was said to create a loss of continuity in community relationships with An Garda Síochána. It was suggested that Garda management need to operate a succession

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60 See http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/White_Paper_on_Crime_Overview
61 Ibid.
planning strategy for Community Gardaí who sometimes appear to be redeployed to another assignment at very short notice. It was also suggested that change or imminent change of Garda personnel in an area should be communicated to the community.

**Whole of Garda response:** Some submissions said that community policing should not be the sole responsibility of Community Gardaí but rather a priority of all members of An Garda Síochána.

**Garda training:** Some noted the need for more awareness of the relationship between inequality, social exclusion, poverty and crime in Garda training. Others said that more efforts should be made to recruit Gardaí from disadvantaged communities. There was a perception that some members of the Garda have a negative attitude towards certain communities or see a community as difficult rather than comprising difficult individuals.

**Multi-agency response:** There was said to be a need for co-ordination of the various agencies involved in a community (criminal justice, health service, and voluntary community groups). A thread common to several submissions was that responsibility for reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour should not be the sole responsibility of the Gardaí, but must be shared out among other public bodies and the community.

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<th>Box 8: Stakeholder example of multi-agency successes&lt;sup&gt;66&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Coordinated interagency community partnership approaches in Ballymun, Limerick, and North Inner City Dublin</td>
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<td>• Community Drug Teams working to target drug users to stabilise drug use and reduce criminal activity</td>
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<td>• Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative, a “Prevention and Early Intervention” group, which has commissioned a Community Safety Initiative in Tallaght and has carried out research, consultation and seminars, supporting residents’ participation in local decision-making</td>
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<td>• Community Mediation Works, a community mediation and restorative justice service operating in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and Bray areas, which provides a free and confidential conflict resolution service to disadvantaged and marginalised communities throughout the area</td>
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<td>• South West Clondalkin Community Safety Forum, an initiative of the Dolcain Project which is a partnership between community, Gardaí and South Dublin County Council, working together on issues of community safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community Platform, a membership organisation representing organisations working in the areas of poverty and social exclusion across South Co. Dublin</td>
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**Involve the community:** There were calls for greater community engagement in order to prevent crime.

**Partnership:** Joint Policing Committees were said to be in their infancy in many cases and therefore could not be evaluated at an early stage of their development. It was also said that they should be more accountable to local communities in order to give communities a greater input into policing policies and should include representation from community organisations, businesses and the health and education sectors. Their potential to deliver a more effective and sustainable approach to crime prevention, if properly resourced and co-ordinated was recognised. Several submissions favoured a broader and more inclusive membership for JPCs. Suggestions were made for the involvement of representatives from the voluntary sector, youth organisations, Rape Crisis Centres and other victim support organisations, Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert schemes and Traveller and Roma communities, as well as new communities.

**Review of Funding:** Perceived overlaps in funding to some agencies and gaps in funding to others were suspected, thought to perhaps be caused by the lack of centralised funding.

**Evaluation of Initiatives:** There was recognition of the need to evaluate project operations and outcomes.

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<sup>66</sup> See First Discussion Document - Overview of Submissions received February 2010
Current and future developments

Though recent crime statistics show a fall in crime in many categories, there remain perceived problems with low-level crime, anti-social behaviour and drugs throughout Ireland. The responses to these problems need to be look at in the context of limited economic resources and rationalisation underway in public service provision.

Community policing remains a central part of policing planning despite national economic difficulties. The Programme for Government 2011-2016 recognises the desire ‘that a higher priority be attached to community policing’. The Commission of An Garda Síochána has emphasised the commitment that the continued commitment to community policing.

I stress the strong commitment of An Garda Síochána to community policing. Obviously, as a public sector organisation, we are not immune to the economic realities that prevail at present. An Garda Síochána, like every other public agency, is required to provide efficiencies and savings in the work it does. There is a challenge in maintaining public expectations and explaining that the policing service may not always be provided in the same manner in which it was in the past but that it is no less effective and our commitment to the community has not diminished in any way. We see community policing as an integral part of maintaining law and order and keeping communities safe, while being cognisant of the fear of crime and the well-being of those within our communities (Martin Callinan, Garda Commissioner, 2011).  

The White Paper on Crime, from which a National Anti-Crime Strategy will emerge, is expected to be published before the end of 2012. The discussion documents and the voices from consultation documents noted above seem to suggest community policing measures will be a central theme. The review that is underway on Joint Policing Committees by the Department of Justice will also contribute to the future direction of community policing. An Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Community Policing was set up in 2012 with the view to examining the role

In thinking about community policing in Ireland, there is an opportunity to think more broadly about the challenges for An Garda Síochána in Ireland today and what politicians and the public want from An Garda Síochána and from Gardaí in their community.

This points to the need for future debate on many issues surrounding policing and the community, including:

- how community policing fits into the wider policing agenda and the organisation of the criminal justice system in Ireland
- how An Garda Síochána meets international, national and local demands of policing, which require very different methods of engagement and coordination
- what the role of An Garda Síochána is and what is expected of them by the public
- how the resources of An Garda Síochána are managed and how rationalisation is undertaken
- how community police officers and the Garda Reserve are utilised in community policing
- how innovative means of maintaining a presence in a community can be developed

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