

Evaluation of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum

November 2009





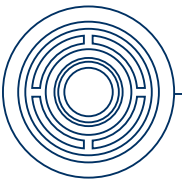
Evaluation of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum

November 2009

Presented to the Houses of Parliament by the
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under
Section 49 (2) of the Justice (Northern Ireland)
Act 2002.

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
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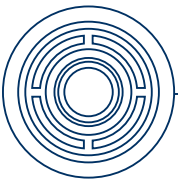






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List of abbreviations

BCC	Belfast City Council
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CRJI	Community Restorative Justice Ireland
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DPP	District Policing Partnership
DSD	Department of Social Development
FCC	Falls Community Council
GSCSN	Greater Shankill Community Safety Network
HSCB	Health and Social Care Board
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NRP	Neighbourhood Renewal Programme
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PPANI	Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland
PPS	Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RPA	Review of Public Administration
ToR	Terms of Reference
USSNF	Upper Springfield Safer Neighbourhood Forum
VSNI	Victim Support Northern Ireland
WBCSF	West Belfast Community Safety Forum
WBCSP	West Belfast Community Safety Plan
WBPB	West Belfast Partnership Board
YJA	Youth Justice Agency



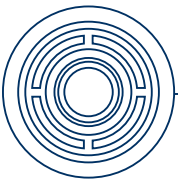
Chief Inspector's Foreword

In August 2008 the Minister for Criminal Justice, Paul Goggins MP, asked Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) to conduct an evaluation of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum (WBCSF). The purpose of the evaluation was to develop an understanding of the work of the Forum and provide insight into the impact it was having on the ground. Our evaluation commenced in May 2009 – only six months after the Facilitator was appointed. It is thus early days in the development of the Forum and its work. Our approach was to undertake a qualitative assessment of the work of the Forum taking account of the early stage of its development and the cost benefit of undertaking a larger scale quantitative survey of changes in community confidence levels.

On the basis of the evidence examined Inspectors' assessment is that the WBCSF has made a positive contribution to the delivery of a safer community in West Belfast. Inspectors heard consistent support for the work of the Forum from the statutory agencies who sit on the steering group. They believed that their respective services had become more responsive and were able to target their resources more effectively as a direct result of their engagement with the Forum. Inspectors were provided with examples by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS), Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI), and Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) where the Forum had facilitated outreach opportunities in West Belfast. Often these opportunities were in response to community concerns about particular issues. The Forum had also been involved with the police in developing effective responses to interface tensions.

An important question in an evaluation of this type is the question of additionally – would many or all of the actions delivered under the umbrella of the Forum have happened anyway had it not been created. The simple answer is probably yes. West Belfast – like any other part of Belfast – has an established network of local political and community representation that can bring to the attention of statutory agencies issues concerning the implementation of services at a local level. In addition, there are established community safety/district policing arrangements that provide an interface between the local community and the services provided by statutory and criminal justice organisations.

What then is the value added by the existence of the Forum? Based on the qualitative evidence provided by our interview programme we suggest that it has helped to focus the needs of existing agencies in the area and provide a connection between local demands and the services provided by government agencies. This has helped to target and accelerate the direction of activity into the area. Moreover the existence of the Forum also provided a tangible manifestation of action on the ground at a time of considerable community unease about local criminality. The composition of those involved in the Forum has also facilitated the connection between the justice system and the local community; this can only assist in the normalisation of policing and justice in the area.



Not all of those spoken to were supportive. The criminal justice area in West Belfast is a contested space from a variety of perspectives. Some political representatives were concerned that the targeted attention given to the Forum by Government would reinforce local political difficulties rather than bring the community together because of the perceived political allegiances of those involved. In addition there were concerns expressed to Inspectors that the activity of the Forum could undermine the work of the existing structures – specifically the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and city-wide Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

Any further decision about the development of the Forum can only be made in the context of a wider consideration of the other agencies involved in similar work. The context in which community safety is delivered will change in the next few years. The possible devolution of Justice and Policing will bring a new emphasis on finding local solutions to local problems. In addition the roll-out of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) is intended to include the introduction of community planning arrangements. These would include a lead role for the Council in co-ordinating delivery of public services locally, and a statutory duty upon agencies to participate in co-ordinating arrangements under the community-planning banner. These changes provide an opportunity to consider the future of all community safety initiatives across the city. Certainly lessons can be learned from the development of the Forum to help shape future direction in this area.

The inspection was carried out by Brendan McGuigan and supported by Amanda Hannan. My thanks to all those who participated in the inspection process.

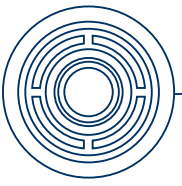
Dr Michael Maguire
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

November 2009

Section



Inspection Report

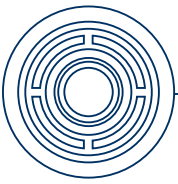


CHAPTER 1:

Introduction and background to the evaluation



- 1.1 The levels of crime, and fear of crime, are widely acknowledged as having significant influence on community safety. The CJI report on the *Handling of Volume Crime* conducted in 2006 and 2009 reported that: *“Volume crime has a significant impact on communities and the fear of crime. It is often a barometer for other social problems and can highlight issues around community cohesion and indicators such as drug and alcohol problems. (Fear of crime increases amongst people who live in areas that have a high incidence of volume crime and this fear has a detrimental effect on community cohesion. A sense of community safety is closely linked with lower levels of violent crime, domestic burglary and vehicle crime.)”*
- 1.2 In 2006 there were particular problems in West Belfast arising from a long standing dispute between two prominent families living in the Ballymurphy estate. The feud culminated in the murder of Gerard Devlin outside his family home in February 2006. In the aftermath of the murder there were a series of reprisal attacks by members and supporters of each family. The situation in the estate reached a crisis where substantial numbers of police were being deployed round the clock to maintain order. Whole families were having to be re-housed as a result of attacks on property, individuals were being subjected to serious assault, intimidation and threats, and there was a real concern that the situation was spiralling out of control and that the community was being drawn into a conflict that was not of their making and one which they were powerless to resolve.
- 1.3 In January 2007, Gerry Adams MP and MLA for West Belfast led a delegation of community workers from the Upper Springfield area to meet with the Criminal Justice Minister at the time, David Hanson MP to discuss the worsening situation and to call for a more effective response from the statutory agencies. In January 2007, the Department of Social Development (DSD) established an Inter-Agency Working Group to look at improving co-ordination and statutory responses to the ‘Ballymurphy Feud’. Following on from this initial work, a sub-group was established to deal with community safety issues in the area. This in turn led to the establishment of the Upper Springfield Safer Neighbourhood Forum (USSNF). The purpose of the Forum was to provide an ongoing and co-ordinated



response to local community safety issues through a partnership approach involving the various statutory agencies and local community representatives.

1.4 In 2008, Gerry Adams MP, MLA met with the current Criminal Justice Minister, Paul Goggins MP to call for a more effective response from statutory organisations in the light of the more recent murders of Harry Holland, Frank McGreevy and John Mongan in West Belfast. The Minister tasked officials to work with community leaders and statutory agencies and in June 2008 the West Belfast Community Safety Forum (WBCSF) was set up. The Forum was modelled on the USSNF and it was intended that it would provide new effort to deliver effective community safety to all of West Belfast. The aim was to sharpen the provision of services by statutory and non-statutory bodies, and increase the engagement of the community with them. It was intended that the USSNF would gradually be subsumed into the WBCSF.

1.5 The Minister had set the strategic outcomes for the work of the Forum as being to bring about:


- a measurable increase in community confidence in the safety of their neighbourhood;
- a measurable increase in community confidence in the service provided by statutory criminal justice organisations locally; and
- a measurable increase in community engagement with the statutory criminal justice agencies.

1.6 Below that level the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) representing the Minister had set a number of strategic objectives to ensure that the energies of the forum were being channelled in the right way. These were around:

- encouraging and fostering community engagement with delivery agencies and organisations providing community safety interventions;
- ensuring the delivery of community safety interventions appropriate to the neighbourhood; and
- overseeing the best use of public funds to improve the experience of living in target neighbourhoods.

1.7 The Forum was provided with funding (£40,000) by the NIO through Belfast City Council (BCC) Community Safety Partnership to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to employ a Facilitator. The Facilitator was appointed through open competition and took up post in October 2008. The reason for funding the role of Co-ordinator/ Facilitator was to mirror the USSNF structure. Administrative and policy support to the Forum was provided through the Core Improvement Team at Belfast City Council and the Belfast Community Safety Partnership.

1.8 The intention was for the Forum to provide opportunities for statutory and non-statutory organisations and communities to discuss issues of community safety and ways of addressing them. The Government was clear that there would be no



additional money for the agencies and that it was incumbent on all those involved to ensure that the existing funding for West Belfast was being channelled more effectively.

Background to the evaluation

1.9 In August 2008 the Minister asked Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) to conduct an evaluation of the WBCSF. The request was made under section 47(4) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. It was proposed that CJI would provide a report to the NIO in September 2009. CJI prepared the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the inspection in August 2008 in the belief that the Forum should be evaluated on the basis of what they had achieved over a 12-month period. The ToR was shared and agreed with the NIO and the WBCSF. The evaluation set out to answer three questions:

- has the Forum made a difference?
- has the Forum been an effective means of meeting the community safety needs of the area as articulated in the Minister's strategic aims? and
- should the model be developed further, and if so in what ways?

1.10 In establishing the WBCSF, there was a clear expectation that it would make a real difference on the ground with particular regard to a measurable increase in community confidence around the safety of their neighbourhood; the services provided by statutory agencies; and the degree to which the West Belfast community engaged with criminal justice

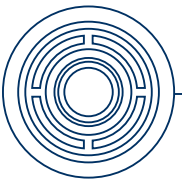
agencies. This was to be achieved by the work of the Forum helping to deliver a more targeted approach to the work of statutory agencies in the area.

1.11 Our evaluation commenced in May 2009 – six months after the Facilitator was appointed. It is thus early days in the development of the Forum and its work. Our approach was to undertake a qualitative assessment of the work of the Forum taking account of the early stage of its development and the cost benefit of undertaking a larger scale quantitative survey of changes in community confidence levels. The purpose of the evaluation was to develop an understanding of the work of the Forum and insight into the impact it was having on the ground.

1.12 Our assessment comprised the following components:

- interviews with Forum Members (including the Chairperson and Facilitator);
- interviews with a wide range of statutory agencies operating in the area;
- a review of the minutes and other documentation provided by the Forum on its work;
- interviews with local political representatives; and
- interviews with voluntary and community sector organisations in the area, including residents groups.

1.13 A full list of those consulted is provided in Appendix 2.

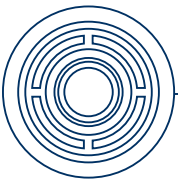


CHAPTER 2:


The work of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum



- 2.1 The key players in establishing the USSNF were engaged in establishing the WBCSF. They were drawn from a variety of backgrounds and comprised:
- Belfast Community Safety Partnership;
 - Belfast Education and Library Board;
 - Catholic Controlled Maintained Schools;
 - Department of Social Development;
 - Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland;
 - Police Service of Northern Ireland;
 - Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service;
 - Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
 - Probation Board for Northern Ireland;
 - Youth Justice Agency;
 - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
 - Belfast District Policing Partnership;
 - Community Safety Unit (Northern Ireland Office);
 - Victim Support Northern Ireland;
 - Community Restorative Justice Ireland;
 - West Belfast Partnership Board;
 - Falls Community Council; and
 - Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships.
- 2.2 Significant practical support for the Forum was provided by senior managers from Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in particular. The Chief Executive of BCC has acted as the interim chairperson, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership, but it was always intended that this position would be filled by a nominated Chairperson, once the Forum was fully established. The consensus view of those involved was that the USSNF was working and that the principles and relationships that had been developed could be rolled out to service a bigger geographical area.
- 2.3 At the outset the Forum had set itself very ambitious objectives to complete an activity audit and future work plan for West Belfast. The proposed structure of the Forum was comprehensive and attempted to cover a number of areas of community life in West Belfast. The programme of activity was set around six key themes:
- identification of crime and anti-social behaviour ‘hotspots’;
 - planning for key dates/events which have an impact on the life of the community, including interface issues;



- developing a strategic approach to alcohol and drugs use in West Belfast;
 - engaging, understanding and meeting the needs of young people, steering them away from crime and anti-social behaviour;
 - developing a communications and media strategy for the work of the Forum; and
 - developing a rolling programme of community clean-ups.
- 2.4 The Forum further proposed forming eight sub-groups to prepare action plans and co-ordinate delivery. The sub-groups were to be as follows:
- Hotspots and Open Spaces sub-group;
 - Housing and Community Clean-up sub-group;
 - Youth sub-group;
 - Alcohol and Drug sub-group;
 - Policing and Justice sub-group;
 - Communications and Media sub-group;
 - Planning and Evaluation for Key Events; and
 - miscellaneous/as required to support linked Neighbourhood Renewal Programme activity.
- 2.5 Initially it was believed that the Forum should undertake an audit of the resources which were being dedicated to West Belfast. Mapping the intervention and social support landscape for West Belfast was always going to be a challenge. This has yet to be undertaken and the WBCSF have no plans to complete this work, however, it is still regarded as an important building block for improving co-ordination and impact. Inspectors believe that this needs to be given a higher priority by the Forum.
- 2.6 The proposed architecture of the Forum looked complicated especially since there was also an aim to establish linkages with the existing structures, in particular the Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes (NRP). Shortly after it was established the Forum began to identify the resource and capacity requirements that would be needed to support and sustain the structure. The Forum was also clear in not wanting to duplicate existing structures that were delivering effectively.
- 2.7 Subsequent discussions with officials from BCC, NRP's and meetings of the Forum led to an acceptance that the capacity requirements, governance and accountability arrangements were just too much, hence the narrowing of focus to the present two themes of Community Safety and Policing and Criminal Justice issues. Officials are continuing to work with the Forum to develop a performance matrix and anticipate that this will be completed after the Steering Group begins to function.
- ### The work of the Forum
- 2.8 Inspectors examined the background papers to the establishment of the Forum and minutes of the five Forum meetings that have been held since its establishment. The minutes of the Forum meetings are recorded by the Strategic Planning and Policy Officer of BCC, who is assisted by some of the council's Community Safety Partnership team. The minutes reflect the development of the Forum and how it has refined its activities to

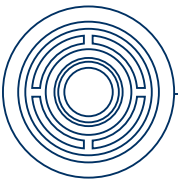


community safety and policing and justice. They also show a business-like approach to Actions and Matters Arising and a constant referral to the ongoing work of the DPP's, CSP's and NRP's.

- 2.9 Inspectors also examined the Facilitator's reports and reports from the sub-groups (Upper Springfield, Upper Falls, Greater Andersonstown and Colin) and conducted an analysis of the Forum's activity database. They found that of the 214 records or activities recorded, 40% related to meetings and work conducted between the Facilitator and the sub-groups, 35% related to meetings and work between the Facilitator and various community groups, and 25% related to meetings between the Facilitator and criminal justice and/or other public sector agencies. In examining the range of meetings attended by the Facilitator there was evidence of contact across the criminal justice organisations including PSNI, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, PPS, and the Youth Justice Agency. In addition the range of statutory agencies engaged with included NI Housing Executive, Belfast City Council, Department of Social Development and Social Services. The Facilitator also was involved in community consultation initiatives with local residents, political representatives and existing community bodies (such as the West Belfast Partnership Board, residents groups and local schools).
- 2.10 The early meetings of the Forum were mostly concerned with the strategic direction and scope of the group together with some discussions

about how it should work with the existing Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the Belfast District Policing Partnership. Establishing a strategic tier for the Forum was to be achieved by co-opting some members from the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the West Belfast District Policing Partnership. Many of those statutory bodies represented on the Belfast CSP joined the WBCSF. However, the principle Belfast District Policing Partnership proved more difficult, mainly for political reasons, however, these have now been resolved and so the strategic tier should now begin to function.

- 2.11 The sub-groups reports raise community safety problems and then report how they are engaging through the Facilitator with the criminal justice and other agencies to find solutions. The Forum has engaged with agencies around a variety of problems including:
- anti-social behaviour; including the design and delivery of initiatives to address issues around
 - alley-gating identified problem areas;
 - underage drinking and the effective enforcement;
 - the supply and use of illegal drugs by young people;
 - anti-social behaviour effecting social housing areas;
 - action on neighbour disputes; and
 - action on noisy parties.
 - social housing issues and the impact on local crime including
 - the delivery of crime prevention advice for crime 'hot spots';
 - designing out crime for social housing 'new builds';



- landscaping some open spaces to combat anti-social behaviour; and
- dealing with void housing.

- 2.12 Not all the problems raised with the Forum by the sub-groups have been solved and there are resource issues that need further discussion. However, even when a solution is not found, the criminal justice agencies have been provided opportunities to talk to the community about issues and their concerns. Examples of these include the granting of bail to offenders, the granting of leave to prisoners and young offenders, the management and monitoring of sex offenders in the community, explanations of how the criminal justice system works, children at risk, domestic violence, how the courts operate and the support that is available to victims and witnesses.
- 2.13 The Facilitator has been making the connections between the sub-groups and the various agencies, recording these contacts and reporting back to the Forum on progress. The agencies told Inspectors that they value the convenience of being able to raise issues with the Facilitator on a daily basis and not having to wait for the next meeting of the Forum. The Facilitator, prior to her appointment, had been involved with both CRJI and USSNF and has a community profile within West Belfast.
- 2.14 The written reports delivered by the Facilitator to the Forum, together with the supportive comments supplied by the agencies and various neighbourhood/community groups, indicate the focus that a facilitator has brought to the work of the

Forum. The Facilitator is in regular contact with the agencies, sub-groups and communities obtaining up-dates and getting feedback and communicating this to all those involved.

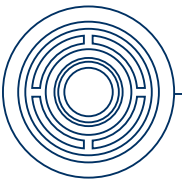
- 2.15 The Facilitator and the sub-groups have recently completed and presented the West Belfast Community Safety Plan to the Forum, a document which articulates the main community safety concerns and needs of the participating communities in West Belfast. The document was prepared in consultation with residents associations and community groups. There is a strong neighbourhood/estate focus to the document. The early reaction from the agencies is positive though it is viewed by them as work in progress. The Plan is being considered by participants as a strategic assessment of need and an aid to agencies in terms of priority setting and resource allocation. Belfast City Council and Belfast Community Safety Partnership are currently having further discussions with the Forum in terms of prioritising the action plan into short, medium and long-term actions and also to consider further some of the resourcing constraints with a view to finding innovative ways to address these. BCC and other agencies are charged with delivering services equitably across the city, and have to do so with ever reducing resources. Therefore further dialogue is required.
- 2.16 Participating criminal justice agencies and other statutory and voluntary organisations told Inspectors that the



success of the WBCSF model is largely because of its focus on 'live' issues which can be tackled before they become major problems, sometimes with the direct help of local people.

- 2.17 They accepted that there are still some major challenges ahead, in particular the integration and meshing with existing structures which will be required if duplication is to be avoided. They believe that in meeting the emerging challenges, the Forum must retain the current levels of agency leadership, community participation and involvement.
- 2.18 Inspectors spoke to many of those community groups and individuals identified through the database who confirmed their relationship with the Forum and who spoke positively about the Facilitator and the work of the sub-groups. They described how their relationship with the criminal justice agencies had changed for the better as a result of what they described as "*the enabling and empowering influences*" generated through the Forum.
- 2.19 Inspectors spoke to senior figures in both Falls Community Council (FCC) and the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB), and their assessment of the work of the Forum was that it was still in its infancy, that it needed sustained, serious investment and that it should be linked into broader Belfast initiatives and schemes. These organisations had confidence in the work of the Forum to the extent that they were now making referrals through the Forum to the criminal justice agencies.

2.20 It is the case that the Forum does not directly deliver services to the local area. As such it cannot claim direct credit for the on the ground operations of the various agencies designed to improve local community safety. It is to the question of the value added by the Forum that we now turn.

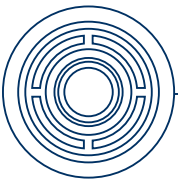


CHAPTER 3:

Assessment of delivery – The impact of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum



- 3.1 The assessment of quantitative outcomes of an organisation such as WBCSF is difficult at the best of times. The short time period covered by the evaluation presents further difficulties. It is not possible, for example, to make a clear connection between recorded crime rates in the area and the work of the Forum. The PSNI crime statistics for West Belfast indicates that overall crime in the area is continuing to fall. There has been a 6.7% reduction in recorded crime between April 2008 – March 2009 and an 11.9% reduction in the period 1 April 2009 – 6 August 2009 in comparison to the same period last year. The main reductions were in Criminal Damage, Domestic Burglary, Thefts and Vehicle Crime. The most recent PSNI figures (6 August 2009) show a 25% reduction in the number of Violent Assaults in comparison to the same period last year. The Forum is not a delivery agency and of course has no real connection with activity on the ground. Such a change in recorded crime will have been the result of a number of contributory factors, possibly including, but not exclusively the result of the work of the Forum.
- 3.2 Many of the figures who were involved in leading the condemnations of the murders which led to the establishment of the Forum, including members of the victim's family, however, told Inspectors that in their experience West Belfast is now a safer place as a result of the work of the Forum. Inspectors heard positive messages of support for the work of the Forum. 'Feeling safe' is, however, ultimately a judgement for the people who live work and visit the area. In order to test these assertions it would also have been necessary to undertake a recognised evidence-based public attitude survey at the time of the Forum's establishment (as a baseline) and subsequently to map changes and attribute direct connection with the work of the Forum. Such an approach would have been expensive, complex given the range of variables involved, and 'overkill' given the level of government expenditure on the Forum.
- 3.3 The big question in evaluations of this type is the issue of 'additionally' – would the action have happened anyway without the intervention of the body under review? In order to assess the 'impact' of the Forum we undertook a series of interviews with key stakeholders to obtain a qualitative assessment of its work and to highlight issues moving forward.



This was supplemented by a review of documentation provided by the Forum on its work. In assessing the comments made about the organisation by the range of stakeholders consulted, two particular areas were highlighted as important. In particular, its role in helping to target the work of statutory agencies and in engaging the community with criminal justice agencies. We will deal with each in turn.


Working with statutory agencies

- 3.4 Agencies told Inspectors that they had now been provided with the opportunity to help define community expectations which were realistic and achievable, and that difficult issues such as confidentiality and the limitations on the sharing of information were being discussed openly and frankly. Examination of the Forum's database confirmed that these events had occurred and that data protection and confidentiality issues were being applied. The criminal justice agencies suggested that this engagement was helping create a different, more understanding relationship with communities.
- 3.5 Inspectors heard from the statutory agencies that the delivery co-ordination tier of the Forum was the key to ensuring the effective and targeted responses of the agencies to the issues identified by the community. The minutes of the Forum meetings together with the Facilitator's reports and the outcomes of the meetings, which are held in the individual areas, all focus on identified problems and service

delivery issues with a clear allocation of responsibility for named individuals to action. Examples of these were:

- meetings with NIHE to discuss void housing;
- meetings with BCC wardens to deal with identified issues;
- meetings with Road Service regarding street lighting in problem areas;
- referrals to the local Health and Social Care staff regarding problem families and children perceived by the community to be at risk; and
- meetings with the various Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes to discuss issues of mutual interest.

- 3.6 Inspectors were told by the participating agencies that the Forum/Facilitator model is particularly effective for them. The agencies believe that the Facilitator helps maintain and monitor progress and provide feedback on agreed actions. This will allow the meetings of the Steering Group to focus on wider service delivery issues and identifying new challenges.
- 3.7 Inspectors heard consistent support for the work of the Forum from the statutory agencies who attend the Forum meetings. They believed that their respective services had become more responsive and were able to target their resources more effectively as a direct result of their engagement with the Forum.
- 3.8 Examination of the minutes of the various meetings of the Forum and reports from both the Facilitator and Chairs of the various Area Forums



indicates sustained contact with agencies. They all indicate that the Forum is retaining community support for its work and the attendance of senior managers from the public services is a testament to the esteem with which it is viewed. Participants told Inspectors that the Forum provides the opportunity for neighbourhoods to have their voices heard by agencies and where undertakings by both agencies and communities are monitored and reported through the Facilitator and the Forum.

3.9 Some of the positive comments made by agencies and interviewees included:

- “the Forum has created a great opportunity for agencies to get into West Belfast;”
- “...[it’s been] pivotal in building relationships and trust between the community and statutory agencies;”
- “key decision makers are now in the room discussing issues;”
- “the Forum enables me to work in West Belfast;”
- “the Forum has generated an amazing sense of ownership.”

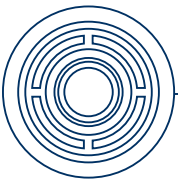
Working with Criminal Justice agencies

3.10 The Forum believes that it is currently delivering its primary aim which is to build a strong partnership between public agencies, voluntary groups and people who live in the area in order to tackle the anti-social behaviour; to improve community safety and quality of life locally. The PSNI in particular were able to

report that the Forum was facilitating and supporting them in the delivery of neighbourhood policing and crime prevention initiatives in previously hard to reach communities. The examples presented reflected a problem solving approach by police and other agencies being matched with community intelligence and participation. The PSNI representatives Inspectors spoke to were adamant that these opportunities would not have happened without the help of the Forum.

3.11 The Forum had also been involved with the PSNI in developing effective responses to interface tensions which included the Forum with PSNI advice preparing, publishing and delivering posters and letters requesting parents to exercise more control of their children to end interface violence. There were also occasions when the Forum had facilitated dialogue, between community activists from both sides of the interface and the police, to reduce tensions and propose more effective policing responses. Some examples described to Inspectors were:

- 11th July Night Bonfire at the Suffolk interface where the Facilitator and sub-group worked with PSNI to ensure that young people from their area did not congregate and react to the young people attending the bonfire. The sub-group liaised with loyalist interface workers to ensure that they knew what steps were being taken and how their involvement could help keep the event peaceful;
- pre ‘Whiterock Parade’ discussions between the PSNI and residents of



Sliab Duibh to ensure that people living in the area could have greater access during the period that the parade was taking place; and

- interface violence between Moyard/Ballygomartin and Springmartin estates. Children from the estates had been actively seeking each other out for confrontation and stone throwing. Subsequent discussions with PSNI confirmed that the Facilitator and sub-groups had been involved in helping resolve these issues.

3.12 Inspectors were provided with examples by the PSNI, the PPS, Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI), and Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) where the Forum had facilitated outreach opportunities in West Belfast. Often these opportunities were in response to community concerns about particular issues. The organisations all reported positive engagements where they were given an opportunity to talk about community issues or individual problems. Often these engagements were about explaining organisational processes, statutory powers or limitations, and how decisions are arrived at. Some examples of these were:

- presentations by the PPS on the granting of bail following complaints from the community about prolific offenders;
- presentation by PPANI, PBNI and PSNI to community groups on the management and monitoring of sex offenders in the community following concerns about individuals living in the community;

- presentations by the PSNI to community and women's groups on the investigation of cases of domestic violence; and
- presentation organised by the PBNI on the Roghanna Project, diverting young people away from crime and drug abuse.

3.13 Some agencies have benefited more than others, and Inspectors would single out the PSNI and the PPS in particular. The Forum has facilitated and enabled the PSNI in West Belfast to engage not only at a strategic level with political and community leadership, but now operationally with communities. Front line officers are engaging more effectively with the local community through the Forum, understanding their needs and expectations, and what the citizen and the police will have to do to help make it happen. The PPS has been able to reach out to some of the most difficult communities and to provide explanations on why some high profile cases fail, the reasons why prolific offenders are granted bail, and how the community can play its part in reporting offending behaviour to the police.

3.14 Positive comments made by criminal justice agencies on the work of the Forum included:

- “this level of contact will increase people's confidence in the CJS;”
- “the Forum can take credit for bettering community relations with the police;”
- “For years the police have been crying out for the type of opportunities the Forum has created;” and
- “the Forum presents a radical

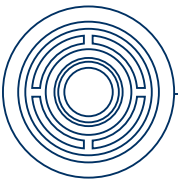
approach to improving community safety.”

Concerns about the work of the Forum

- 3.15 The question of ‘*additionally*’ is a complex one – would many or all of the actions delivered under the umbrella of the Forum have happened anyway had it not been created. The simple answer is probably yes. ‘*Alley gating*’ for example is a recognised mechanism for addressing anti-social behaviour and exists throughout Belfast. Moreover, West Belfast – like any other part of Belfast – has an established network of local political and community representation that can bring to the attention of statutory agencies issues concerning the implementation of services at a local level. In addition there are established community safety/district policing arrangements that provide an interface between the local community and the services provided by statutory and criminal justice organisations. In that sense the work of the Forum is not that radical.
- 3.16 What then is the value added by the existence of the Forum? Based on the qualitative evidence provided by our interview programme we suggest that it has helped to focus the needs of existing agencies in the area and provide a valuable connection between local demands and the services provided by government agencies. This has helped to target and accelerate the direction of activity into the area. Moreover the existence of the Forum also provided

a tangible manifestation of action on the ground at a time of considerable community unease about local criminality. The composition of those involved in the Forum has also facilitated the connection between the justice system and the local community; this can only assist in the normalisation of policing and justice in the area.

- 3.17 Not all of those spoken to were supportive and some expressed concerns that the Forum was simply another mechanism for controlling communities. The criminal justice area in West Belfast is a contested space from a variety of perspectives. Some political representatives were concerned that the targeted attention given to the Forum by Government would reinforce local political difficulties rather than bring the community together because of the perceived political allegiances of those involved. It was suggested that it supports a politically motivated agenda and that alternative political viewpoints were being excluded.
- 3.18 Inspectors put this to the Forum members and to the Facilitator. They denied excluding anyone from attending the meetings and referred to previous meetings establishing the USSNF where there had been broad political representation. An examination of the list of attendees at the various WBCSF meetings reveals that there were no elected political representatives in attendance. This is not to undermine the point that there is a perceived political imbalance within the Forum or that members of the Forum did not have political allegiances. We did not



consider this area, but it reinforces the point for the need for widespread community support to ensure cross party participation.

- 3.19 In addition, Inspectors were told that the Forum was being used at a local level to direct police attention towards specific areas – to the exclusion of others. We found no evidence of this from our conversations with the PSNI.
- 3.20 Inspectors did hear concerns from officials in BCC that in terms of the West Belfast Action Plan, there is a need to ensure that what agencies commit to can actually be delivered with realistic timeframes and available resources, so that there will not be frustration and disappointment at a later stage. In other words, there needs to be more clarity around the actions in the plan, the ability of agencies to deliver and community expectations of how and when these can be achieved. There needs to be further open discussion about the constraints which exist around some of the actions, an example being that whilst alleygating is listed as an action, there is currently no resource to install alleygates anywhere in the city. BCC has also to be mindful of equity in terms of resource allocation across the city.
- 3.21 In addition there were concerns that it could undermine the work of the existing structures, DPP's and the city-wide CSP's. The NIO and BCC have continued in their efforts to establish the strategic tier for the Forum, which was regarded as a fundamental building block to enable the integration of the Forum into

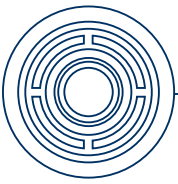
existing structures. The main reason for delay was in securing the necessary cross party political support. However, a recent agreement within the Belfast District Policing Partnership now path's the way for nominees of the West Belfast District Policing Partnership to sit on the steering group of the Forum, this will include a representative from the Shankill. In the longer term the question arises as to whether there is space for all the agencies involved in the co-ordination and facilitation of criminal justice and other services in the local area. The Forum was established to address particular community needs. It is not clear to us that there is sufficient clarity between the roles of the Forum and the likes of the Community Safety Partnership and the District Policing Partnerships. Any further decision about the development of the Forum can only be made in the context of a wider consideration of the other agencies involved in similar work.

CHAPTER 4:

Conclusion



- 4.1 On the basis of the evidence examined Inspectors' assessment is that the WBCSF has made a positive contribution to the delivery of a safer community in West Belfast. Given the small amount of money received, this represents real value. The Forum has effectively engaged the community with the criminal justice and wider Government agencies on the delivery of service provision in West Belfast and that there is clear and consistent support from those agencies for the work of the Forum and its potential for the future. Equally, it has developed levels of trust and confidence between the community and in particular, the criminal justice agencies.
- 4.2 The attendance of senior managers from BCC, PSNI, PBNI, NIHE, HSCB and YJA who attended the Forum meetings has been crucial to the success of the Forum. These individuals have the authority and influence over policy development and resource allocation. This not only inspires confidence in service deliverers but also the community, and provides real proof that their issues are being taken seriously. While it may be time consuming for senior managers, the levels of success delivered by the Forum was always going to come with a price tag, not perhaps in monetary terms, but in the time and commitment they continue to give. Inspectors assess that for the foreseeable future this should continue.
- 4.3 Inspectors assess lessons can be learned from the experience of WBSCF that can be used effectively elsewhere. This is provided there is a real need that has been identified by the local communities and where those communities are prepared to play a partnership role. Inspectors accept that a Forum may not be right or necessary for every area, however the agencies themselves have learnt a great deal from this experience which they feel can be transferred. The merits of such fora should be considered further in light of the review of DPP's and CSP's and the introduction of community planning.
- 4.4 There are a number of challenges remaining for the Forum. In particular co-ordinating activities with the main CSP and DPP will be important. The first stage of this can be achieved with the creation of the strategic tier; Inspectors would expect progress in this area to follow. The community safety area is an extremely cluttered landscape and there needs to be real and meaningful co-ordination and co-operation to



ensure success. The recent NIO consultation on '*Local Partnership Working On Policing & Community Safety: A Way Forward*' acknowledges that the current arrangements are not ideal and it is actively seeking ways of merging the roles of the existing DPP's and CSP's. Several of the agencies who have knowledge and currently participate in both were prepared to declare to Inspectors their preference was for how the WBCSF conducts itself and that it was, in their view, a much more effective body.

- 4.5 In addition, there is a need to ensure that the work of the Forum is inclusive rather than exclusive. All parties have a stake in, and commitment to, the West Belfast community and this needs to be reflected in the composition of those involved in the delivery of Government community initiatives. CJI conducted an inspection of the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) in Northern Ireland in 2006. One of the key findings was that there was inadequate community representation and that their inclusion would improve the effectiveness of the partnerships.
- 4.6 In addition there are a number of practical issues facing the Forum. They include:
- establishing the strategic tier for the Forum. It is expected that this will be established shortly with nominations now having been received from West Belfast DPP and nominations from the Community Safety Partnership have yet to be confirmed;
 - continuing funding. The NIO have

secured funding for the Facilitator's post until 31 March 2010. If the Forum is to continue beyond that date it is not unreasonable to expect the main beneficiaries to contribute to the running costs; and

- integrating with the BCC *Safer Belfast Plan*. The drafting of the West Belfast Community Safety Plan is an important first step which other areas should follow to ensure that the overall Safer Belfast Plan is both relevant and effective.

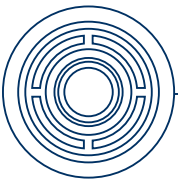
- 4.7 The context in which community safety is delivered will change in the next few years. The devolution of Justice and Policing will bring a new emphasis on finding local solutions to local problems. In addition, the roll-out of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) is intended to include the introduction of community planning arrangements. These would include a lead role for the Council in co-ordinating delivery of public services locally, and a statutory duty upon agencies to participate in co-ordinating arrangements under the community-planning banner. Senior managers of criminal justice agencies and BCC have suggested to Inspectors that the principals behind the WBCSF are a good example of what this might look like.
- 4.8 Inspectors understand that the Forum has helped to create the space where difficult questions can be asked of service deliverers and their leadership and where the community accepts that it has an equal part to play in making their environment safer.

Section



Appendices





Appendix 1:

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROPOSED EVALUATION OF THE WEST BELFAST COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

The Criminal Justice Inspectorate (Northern Ireland) ('CJI') will conduct an evaluation of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum ('the Forum'). The assessment will take place in July and August 2009, one year after the Forum was set up, and the Inspectorate will report to the Northern Ireland Office in September 2009.

Aims:

1. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the Forum has been beneficial, how it can be improved, and how it could be replicated elsewhere.
2. The evaluation will, as far as possible, seek to answer the following questions:

.1 Has the Forum made a difference?

- (a) Has the Forum improved community safety in the area?
- (b) Has the Forum improved the effectiveness of the statutory agencies operating in the area?
- (c) Has the Forum improved relationships between agencies and communities through its work?
- (d) How well has the Forum met its stated objectives? and
- (e) What could have been done differently to achieve more?

.2 Has the Forum been an effective means of meeting the community safety needs of the area?

- (a) Does the Steering Group/Forum/Facilitator model work?
- (b) Has a West Belfast-wide Forum added value that could not be met by neighbourhood-level groups or the city-level Community Safety Partnership? and
- (b) Has the Facilitator been effectively deployed?

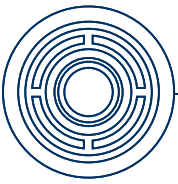


.3 Should the model be developed further, and if so in what ways?


- (a) What potential does the Forum have to be more effective in West Belfast?
- (b) How might the Facilitator's role be extended or replicated to be more effective in West Belfast?
- (c) What potential does the model have to be used effectively elsewhere? and
- (d) What factors would be required to ensure that the model is effective elsewhere?

Methodology

- 3. CJI will set out performance indicators against which they will evaluate the effectiveness of the Forum in due course, and ensure mechanisms for measurement are in place within the Forum. The development of performance indicators may be informed by those being set by the Upper Springfield Safer Neighbourhoods Forum. At this stage CJI are expecting that a Strategic Assessment will be completed by the Forum within the next few months, this will in turn provide the baseline for future assessment and evaluation. The Strategic Assessment should include details of any:
 - .1 an information sharing protocol;
 - .2 a statement of principles and values;
 - .3 child protection arrangements; and
 - .4 data protection, human rights and freedom of information policies.
- 4. CJI would expect that the Forum will then develop a performance matrix relating to the aims, objectives and milestones it sets for itself. At this stage CJI envisage that the following will be used as performance indicators:
 - .1 crime statistics, in particular the levels of reporting to police:
 - (a) anti-social behaviour;
 - (b) assaults;
 - (c) domestic violence;
 - (d) criminal damage;



- (e) under-age drinking;
 - (f) use of illegal drugs;
 - (g) car crime;
 - (h) bail breaches;
 - (i) attacks on emergency vehicles;
 - (j) attacks on essential services vehicles; and
 - (k) threats and intimidation.
- .2 the number and type of incidents reported to the Facilitator;
 - .3 the number and type of referrals made to other statutory agencies, for example health, education, environment, road service and street lighting;
 - .4 complaints to Belfast City Council regarding graffiti, noise, littering;
 - .5 complaints to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive regarding neighbour behaviour, intimidation, emergency housing requests;
 - .6 initiatives/projects which include elements of education, enforcement, engagement and diversion;
 - .7 levels of engagement with local community including numbers of meetings and numbers of community attending;
 - .8 community attitude survey to include fear of crime and satisfaction with the work of the Forum;
 - .9 visibility of the work of the Forum;
 - .10 number and frequency of meetings;
 - .11 organisations/members involved;
 - .12 completion of strategic assessment;
 - .13 formation of task groups;
 - .14 reporting and monitoring system;
 - .15 contacts database; and



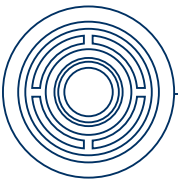
.16 funding applications.

5 During the course of the evaluation in summer 2009, to answer the questions set out above, Inspectors will meet with:

- .1 members of the Forum;
- .2 members of the Steering Group;
- .3 members of the community in West Belfast;
- .4 the Community Safety Facilitator; and
- .5 other observers of the work of the Forum, including the Community Safety Unit (NIO), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB), Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Belfast District Policing Partnership (DPP).

6 Inspectors will also:

- .1 examine the minutes of the Forum and Steering Group as well as associated papers, and attend meetings of the Forum and Steering Group;
- .2 seek information from the main statutory agencies to assess changes in community attitude and behaviour; and
- .3 examine overall crime reporting levels in the West Belfast Community Safety Forum area.



Appendix 2:

List of organisations consulted:

Criminal justice agencies and Government departments:

- Representatives from Belfast City Council (BCC);
- the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE);
- the Northern Ireland Office Community Safety Unit (NIO CSU);
- the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI);
- the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS);
- the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI);
- the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI);
- the West Belfast Independent District Policing Partnership members; and
- the Youth Justice Agency.


Community-based and voluntary sector groups:

- Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (Social Services);
- Colin Community Safety Forum;
- Corpus Christi Youth Services;
- Falls Community Council;
- Greater Falls Neighbourhood Renewal;
- Greater Shankill Community Safety Network;
- Northern Ireland Alternatives;
- Sliabh Dubh Residents Association;
- Upper Falls Community Safety Forum;
- Upper Springfield Community Safety Forum;
- Upper Springfield Intervention Project;
- Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI);
- West Belfast Community Safety Forum; and
- West Belfast Partnership Board.

Political Parties:

- Representatives from Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP); and
- representatives from Sinn Fein (SF).





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First published in Northern Ireland in November 2009 by
CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSPECTION NORTHERN IRELAND
14 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BA
www.cjini.org

ISBN 978-1-905283-44-6

Typeset in Gill Sans
Printed in Northern Ireland by Commercial Graphics Limited
Designed by Page Setup