



East Herts

Community Safety Partnership

Community Safety Workshops

Consultation September 2008

Bishop's Stortford

1. Aims

- To consult with communities about the community safety priorities the partnership should tackle
- To obtain information as part of the strategic assessment information gathering process to help inform the community safety action plan 2009-11

2. Structure

There were four workshops which lasted an hour:

- *Reducing Crime*
- *Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)*
- *Tackling drug and alcohol misuse*
- *Community Safety; getting involved and feeling safe*

3. Workshop findings

Workshop 1: Reducing Crime

Questions

1. What type of crime do you think the Community Safety Partnership can address?
2. When and where does crime occur?
3. Do you or your neighbours feel confident in reporting crime?
4. What do you think would help the Community Safety Partnership tackle crime even more in East Herts?

The group listed the following crime types which can be addressed in partnership:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Alcohol related violence
- Nuisance crime – littering, criminal damage, vandalism, distraction burglary
- Residential burglary

The group listed the following as crime locations:

- Graffiti – north Bishop's Stortford
- Friday and Saturdays in Bishop's Stortford
- Rubbish along river
- Areas where it is easy to disperse
- Dark areas in villages
- Rural areas

The group suggested that people may not report crime because they fear retaliation. Some respondents were unaware of who to call. It was also suggested that there was a lack of trust and community spirit which may be a reason why people don't report crime on behalf of the community.

The list below shows the suggestions made by the group about how to address crime issues:

- Provide victim/witness updates
- Make people more aware of crime issues
- Better neighbourhood watch
- More parental involvement
- Encourage people to be more environmentally aware
- Provide CCTV

Partnership consideration

- Publicise how to report crime, in particular, the police non emergency number
- Offer information on crime issues, such as how to prevent being a victim of crime
- Focus attention on nuisance crime – such as litter and graffiti

Workshop 2: Tackling anti-social behaviour

Questions

1. What is anti-social behaviour?
2. When and where does ASB occur?
3. If you haven't personally seen or experienced ASB, have you heard about it?
4. Do you or your neighbours feel confident in reporting ASB?
5. What steps do you think can help tackle ASB?

The group had a good understanding of the causes, perceptions and affects of anti-social behaviour, as shown in the list below:

- Anti social drinking; drunken behaviour from people leaving clubs and pubs
- Begging, intimidation and harassment
- Visual effects, such as criminal damage or graffiti
- Criminal damage by youths
- The group had a lengthy discussion on the perceptions associated with youths congregating in large groups

The group pointed out that anti-social behaviour occurs in a variety of places across the district. It was also suggested that ASB heightens in the summer months and over holiday periods:

- Residential areas
- Early hours of morning
- Public open spaces and parks
- Halloween
- School holidays (linked to good weather)
- Walking distance to and from pubs

Initially, the group were unsure about how to report anti-social behaviour and feared repercussions associated with doing so. The facilitator briefed the group on the range of ways to report anti-social behaviour and that it can be done anonymously. Positive suggestions were then raised on how the partnership could let more people gain an understanding on how to report anti-social behaviour:

- More publicity/awareness of reporting ASB
- More awareness on work of local Neighbourhood Watch groups

It was also suggested that it can be problematic to report the misuse of fireworks as it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact location.

The group suggested a variety of methods which could help tackle anti-social behaviour:

- More work in schools, possibly with older children

- Review of licensing laws
- Look at under-age sales and enforce via prosecution
- Youth alcohol programme
- Antisocial Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) for youths
- More police in residential areas
- Encourage all reporting of ASB
- Support/increase provision of taxi marshals
- Dispersal of crowds at busy times
- High profile punishments
- Awareness of implications of ASBOs (Anti Social Behaviour Order)
- Mobile CCTV cameras for specific areas (such as properties)
- Publicity for ASB success
- Have incentives for community involvement
- Education campaigns on alcohol abuse

To conclude, the group said that they felt informed about anti-social behaviour through discussions with neighbours, either in passing or at structured community group meetings. The group also said they were made aware of anti-social behaviour issues through reports on the television and through the press.

Partnership consideration

- Provide more information on how to report ASB to residents
- Raise awareness of implications for individuals responsible for ASB
- Focus on positive publicity on ASB initiatives and projects
- Support existing initiatives, such as taxi marshalling, and the positive effects achieved in reducing ASB
- Offer incentives for more community involvement to help tackle ASB
- Focus future ASB campaigns on education/work in schools, in particular on the effects of alcohol in relation to behaviour

Workshop 3: Tackling drug and alcohol misuse

Questions

1. What alcohol and drug issues affect your community?
2. Do you know how to identify signs of drug use?
3. What measures are you aware of that the Community Safety Partnership can support to tackle alcohol and drug misuse?
4. What do you think would be the most effective way to tackle both drug and alcohol misuse in East Herts?

The group said the following alcohol and drug issues affect their community:

- Feeling unsafe in the town – people being drunk
- Groups of young people in parks who look suspicious – suggest perception of drug dealing
- Drug raids on local pubs

- ASB on the way back from pub
- Damage to properties
- Fear of crime late at night
- Intimidation by groups and youths
- Alcohol abuse in town centres

The group suggested that the public should be reassured about the situation after drug raids on local pubs. It was also suggested that information on drug issues should be presented in schools.

The group suggested a variety of methods which could help tackle alcohol and drug misuse:

- Drug education in schools. This was considered the most valuable tool.
- Police presence
- Provide taxi marshalling in Bishop's Stortford
- Publicity on drugs and drinking
- Share best practices across county or nationally
- Abuse by youths in parks – should consider implementing no alcohol zones (DPPO)
- Use of stop and search powers

Partnership consideration

- Focus on education/raising awareness on alcohol and drug misuse among young people
- Consider implementing projects with a reassurance focus

Workshop 4: Community Safety; getting involved and feeling safe

Questions

1. How informed do you feel about community safety issues in your area?
2. What do you or people in your community fear the most?
3. How would you most like to be kept informed about community safety and policing issues in your area?
4. What can the Community Safety Partnership do to help you and others feel safe?
5. We hope these workshops will help shape our priorities. Are there other things the partnership could do find out what people think?
6. How would you or people you know like to get involved in community safety on a more regular basis?

The group were divided about how informed they felt towards community safety issues. One response focused on the question:

“Do people really want to hear good news stories?”

This was contradicted with the role positive news stories can play in helping individuals to feel safe.

The role of Neighbourhood Watch Groups was considered a valuable way to help people feel safe. However, it was suggested that there is less interest in being part of Neighbourhood Watch in towns in comparison to rural areas. This was linked to community spirit, which was perceived to be more prevalent in rural areas. The group focused on the positive role the community can play with regards to community safety.

The group said the following were feared within their communities:

- Fast driving in towns, rural areas, around schools
- Fear of cars racing around rural areas, car accidents, drunk driving
- After school hours – children leaving schools in groups can intimidate vulnerable individuals and members of the community
- Litter and vandalism
- Personal attacks

The group put forward positive and preventative suggestions which could help individuals to feel safer:

- Road safety
- Deal with outlets that sell cheap booze
- Raise awareness of how individuals can make a difference by having personal responsibility, such as not leaving valuables in cars
- Make people realise the value of community
- Focus on more resources for hard to reach people e.g. deaf people can now text 999
- ‘Know your community, know your neighbours’ should be emphasised.

The group was divided about the effects badly lit areas may have on feelings of safety. It was suggested that where a badly lit area can draw attention to the fear a crime, in other areas, such as rural villages, unlit areas may be desired. Therefore locality characteristics should be considered when implementing community safety projects and initiatives to ensure sensitivity to community needs.

The group suggested the following could be adopted by the Community Safety Partnership to find out what people think with regards to community safety within the district:

- Provide community safety email updates – through subscription
- Street canvassing
- Hold school events to consult with young people
- Work with the 18-25 year old age group as it is a challenge to encourage them to be involved in shaping their community
- Questionnaires
- Community champions – can they play a role?
- “Bring back the village bobby”
- Offer on going consultation

These responses were cautioned by one respondent who suggested that society may be over consulting which may result in fuelling public criticism. It was suggested that over consultation may be why people do not respect police authority like they used to.

To conclude, the group was asked to suggest how people might like to get involved with community safety:

- Adults should be responsible for youth actions/behaviour
- Young people need positive encouragement
- People should look out for each other, such as looking after neighbours house when on holiday
- People should reach out to the community (beyond Neighbourhood Watch and Parish Council)
- Work with existing community groups

Partnership consideration

- Publicise good news stories as widely as possible
- Provide the public with useful messages about keeping and staying safe, including road safety issues
- Offer on-going involvement/consultation
- Recognise and encourage the role the community can play in supporting each other and helping individuals to feel safe
- Work with existing community groups to identify community safety concerns
- Consult and involve young people with community safety decisions and initiatives
- Recognise that community safety issues should be tailored to meet the varying dynamics of individual communities

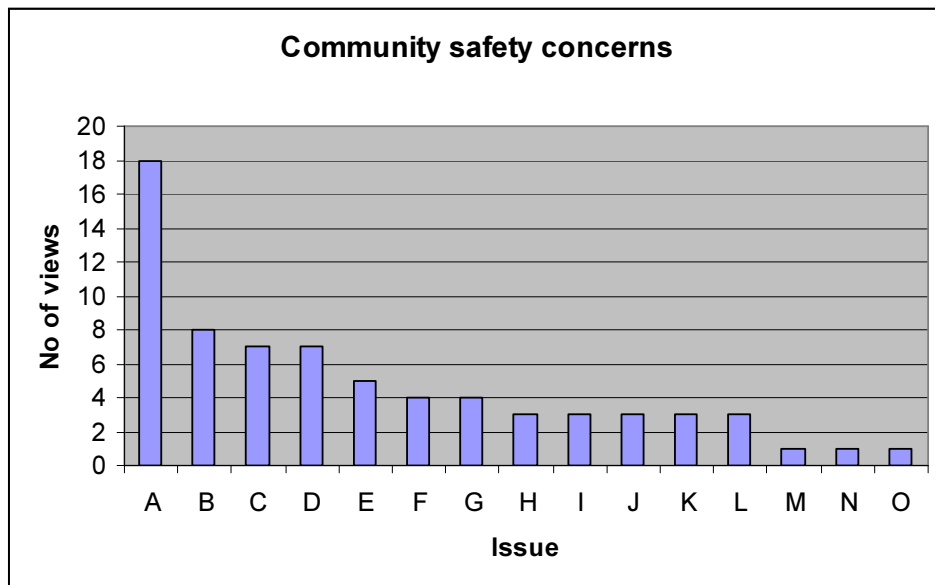
4. Respondent feedback

Respondents completed a feedback sheet. Findings are shown below.

Community safety concerns

Respondents were asked to highlight their community safety concerns. The chart below shows the distribution of concerns.

Figure 1



Key	
A	Anti-social behaviour
B	Domestic burglaries
C	Reduce alcohol and drug abuse
D	Road safety (including drunk driving and speeding)
E	Criminal damage/vandalism
F	Community engagement/empowerment
G	Increase feelings of safety/reduce fear of crime
H	Theft of property (includes reducing mugging/purse snatching)
I	Reduce crime
J	Increase police visibility (including night time patrols)
K	Litter
L	Involving young people (includes education)
M	Hate crime
N	Car crime
O	Tighter licensing laws

As shown, anti-social behaviour is the dominant concern of many respondents at the workshop. This is followed by domestic burglaries, alcohol and drug abuse and road safety.

Top priorities for the Community Safety Partnership

Respondents were asked to list one priority for the Community Safety Partnership. These suggestions are shown in italics under four common themes:

❖ Community involvement

“To encourage development of community looking out for each other”

“Involving people - looking at who the residents of East Herts are and that everyone should have a voice through consultation”

“Promote community”

“Involve the community and keep people motivated”

“Hold more local consultations with identified groups”

“Regular participation in community meetings in different areas around the district”

“More involvement with teenagers”

“Strategies for involving the public – especially how to report incidents”

❖ Anti-social behaviour

“Anti-social youths in Ware & Hertford”

“Tackle anti-social people coming home from the pubs/clubs”

❖ Police and crime

“Better police visibility”

“Make aware of who to contact in case of emergency”

“To raise awareness of how the police tackle crime, the successes and how to contact them”

“More attempts to involve parents in youth crime”

“Have fines for litter and set fine awareness workshops – concerning what happens as a result of your behaviour”

“Target speeding, drink driving in rural villages”

❖ Alcohol and drug issues

“Seriously consider impact of extended alcohol licensing. It seems police capacity is overstretched at the late hour when property crime and rural area problems occur”

“Drugs & alcohol”

“Try to obtain more press coverage – with photos of drunken behaviour to shame offenders”

“Drinking in the town (Bishop’s Stortford), control of licensed and booze outlets”

“Education re behaviour in public drug and alcohol abuse and responsibility to each other”

5. Respondent profile

The table below shows the percentage age ranges of respondents who took part in the consultation:

Age	Under 18	19-25	26-35	46-55	56-64	65+
Percentage	0%	0%	20%	25%	23%	34%

The age range of participants in attendance at the workshops shows that people under the age of 35 were under represented or not in attendance. The importance of involving and consulting with young people was reflected in some of the thoughts shared by respondents in workshop 4.

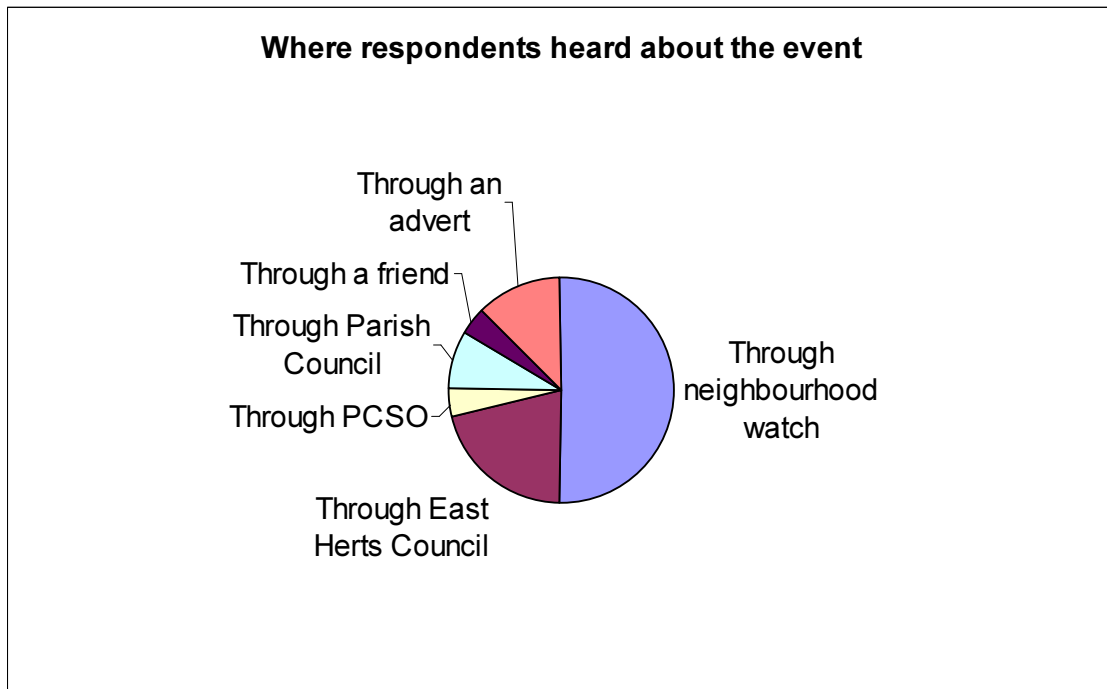
6. Publicity

The workshop event was advertised via the following:

- Posters - distributed to partner agencies to display at their premises, shops in the towns, leisure centres, parish councils, town councils, churches, religious groups, voluntary organisations
- On the East Herts Council website
- On other partner websites e.g. Riversmead Housing Association
- Through PCSOs when out on their patrols
- Through neighbourhood watch co-ordinators (facilitated by the watch liaison officer at the Police)
- Letters sent to a random sample of Housing Association tenants
- Via East Herts Youth Council
- Through the district councillors weekly Members Bulletin

The graph below shows where respondents heard about the event:

Figure 2



Just over 50% of respondents heard about the event via Neighbourhood Watch networks. This demonstrates that publicity should be extended to reach wider community groups. Publicity for future Community Safety Partnership consultation will seek to reach young age groups.

7. Conclusions

Community safety concerns

The information obtained from the workshops has provided the Community Safety Partnership with valuable insights into public views on community safety issues. This detail will help develop and build upon existing community safety partnership work.

Partnership consideration

The Community Safety Partnership creates a new action plan every year. This consultation will help determine partnership activity for the action plan to run from April 2009 to March 2010.

Workshop choices

Prior to the event individuals were asked to state which workshop they would most like to participate in. The most popular topics were the 'reducing crime' and 'responding to anti-social behaviour' workshops. This popularity is mirrored in the community safety concerns of those who took part in the consultation, as shown on figure 1.

Cross cutting themes

Some issues were mentioned on more than one workshop. For example, anti-social behaviour was discussed as a crime in workshop 1, was identified in workshop 4 through concerns of people who drive fast, display intimidating behaviour or drop litter, and was mentioned as a consequence from alcohol abuse in workshop 3. It is likely cross cutting themes such as this will be given more weight when identifying the community safety priorities for 2009-10.

8. What next?

The information gathered from this consultation will help inform the partnership strategic assessment. The strategic assessment will provide the evidence for the Community Safety Action Plan 2009-10.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who took part in this consultation.



East Herts
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