



Strategic role for government

Chapter 5: Co-ordinating change in policing

*The public want the police to have the **freedom to deliver locally**, and for the Government to **support them nationally**. There is a need to establish a clear framework for making **decisions at the right levels** because the current arrangements are less than ideal. The Home Office will take a more **strategic role**, but will help ensure local delivery is effective. This will involve setting **national minimum standards**, providing the national leadership required to deal with strategic challenges, and ensuring value for money is delivered. A new model for decision-making, based on clear principles, will clarify when it is right for decisions to be made at the national, regional and local level, with a stronger role for the **National Policing Board (NPB)** in shaping decisions.*

- 5.1 The direction of travel described in the previous chapters – to reduce bureaucracy, improve responsiveness and improve leadership and development – is key to maintaining and developing confidence in policing in this country. To be a success, it will need clear and coordinated leadership from the main players at all levels of policing – from the front line, at force level, in regional partnerships and at the level of national government and national leadership bodies. As the experience of neighbourhood policing demonstrates, these bodies can be a powerful coalition to deliver change when their efforts are aligned.
- 5.2 In recent years there have been significant changes in the way leadership is exercised at national level in policing:
 - The creation of the **National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA)** has created for the first time an integrated body, tripartite and police owned and led, which can support

change and improvement across the service and deliver common services for policing. It has taken on many of the support functions previously performed in the Home Office, allowing the Home Office to focus on strategic direction, funding and policy.

- The **Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)** continues to develop its leadership role for the service nationally, with a full time President since 2003 and the majority of chief officers playing significant national roles in leading change programmes across England and Wales.
- The **Association of Police Authorities (APA)** represents the views of police authorities throughout England and Wales and has played an increasingly pivotal role nationally, on areas such as pay, counter-terrorism and workforce reform.
- The **Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)**, set up in April 2006, has brought a new approach to tackling organised crime in the UK. As well as preventing and detecting crime it has the function of contributing to the reduction of such crime and the mitigation of the harm it causes. It is working closely with law enforcement and other partners to make the UK a more difficult place for organised criminals to operate.
- **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)** has played an increasingly key role in developing policing, adapting its inspection approach to a more risk based framework, and playing a major role of challenge and development in the work to develop protective services, and counter-terrorism capacity. In addition of course, the personal leadership of Sir Ronnie Flanagan, in the independent *Review of Policing* underpins many of the ideas in this Green Paper.
- HMIC's work in inspection, and the NPIA's in driving long term improvement programmes, has been complemented by the work of the Policing and Crime Standards Directorate in

the **Home Office**, which currently oversees progress against PSA objectives and coordinates support and intervention for forces and partnerships experiencing difficulties

- 5.3 All these bodies are represented on the NPB, which has now been developed as the main national forum for tripartite discussions on policing, allowing structured discussions on key strategic issues, and providing governance to joint work conducted at lower levels. This has the potential to be a powerful leadership coalition and to help drive and support performance and capacity improvement throughout policing in England and Wales.
- 5.4 In order for the NPB's support to be well-targeted, it believes that a new approach to decision-making is needed based on an agreed set of principles. We propose that these principles form the 'rules for engagement' which help determine when it is right for decisions to be taken nationally, encouraged regionally, or devolved locally. Such an approach enables us to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and demands, for example when a local problem starts to have national consequences.
- 5.5 Decisions need to be taken at the right level. A primary consideration is whether **operational benefit** and **cost-effectiveness** are maximised at that level. The decision-making level should be **proportionate** to the scale of the problem, and (as Sir Ronnie Flanagan's independent *Review of Policing* emphasised) enable **risk** to be managed effectively. Those responsible for a decision should have the right **skills and resources** to deliver and to innovate, and should be **accountable** for their decisions. There should be sufficient **resilience and flexibility** to meet changing demands and to ensure a **consistent and high-quality** approach is in place.
- 5.6 We want to use this Green Paper to consult on the application of these principles, and to start identifying decisions that should be taken at each level and who would be best placed to take them. In the Green Paper we have already identified strong candidates at each level:

- At the **local** level, forces should be responsible for agreeing the neighbourhood element of the Policing Pledge because they are closest to the communities they serve and it will lead to more responsive, personalised policing services. Local forces and their partners should also be responsible for agreeing which crimes and other local problems to target without assuming that one size, set by the centre, fits all. Local forces should be responsible for setting their workforce mix, although the centre should provide them with information to help them understand best practice.
 - At the **regional** level, there is now a substantial body of experience, although further co-ordination and collaboration is required to deliver effective corporate and protective services if we are to improve efficiency and help build forces' capacity and capability to deliver. We are building on the regional collaboration that is already providing improvements around the country, such as the Regional Intelligence Units (RIUs), Regional Tasking and Coordination Groups (RTCGs), Regional Asset Recovery Teams (RARTs) and Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Units (CTIUs). We will also want to learn from those areas that have built up regional operational teams to tackle serious organised crime such as Tarian in Wales and the East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU).
 - At the **national** level, operational co-operation arrangements are well established, with counter-terrorism being a prime example of a case where multiple forces work in tandem to protect the country and prosecute terrorists. But there is more scope to develop a strategic perspective on other issues, such as procurement, where a continuing focus at the local level means that forces are failing to benefit from economies of scale and efficiency gains. There would be scope to reap these benefits if they were organised at a more strategic level. The same is true of Information Technology (IT), where national agreement of the operational needs of the service as a whole should result in enhanced communication between forces and significant cost reductions. Other examples where action is needed at national level include the development and appointment of senior police leaders (see chapter three) – since the labour market is a national one.
- 5.7 The NPB is committed to providing the national leadership needed to find and drive forward national and regional solutions to these major problems. There is growing acceptance that, where there is a strong case for doing so, central mandation will be required to ensure the most effective solutions are adopted in full, particularly in those areas where progress with implementation has been slow in the past. For example, on protective services we will be considering progress against the 2009 and 2011 improvement objectives and HMIC's 2009 inspection in this area. We will then consider where there is a clear operational and business imperative for decisions and processes to be undertaken jointly at particular levels and in a consistent manner. **IT and procurement are other examples where strong national direction should be given to drive joining-up.**
- 5.8 It is through the NPB that we intend to gauge whether there is agreement among stakeholders on the best way ahead in those critical, high-risk areas of policing that have been flagged. Where there is a consensus among NPB members, supported by a strong evidence base, on both the nature of the problem and how it can be solved, they are committed to taking collective action. Where necessary, this would mean using the powers already available to the Home Secretary to back-up that consensus.
- 5.9 It is unrealistic to expect there will always be agreement among stakeholders on the best way ahead. Indeed, members of the tripartite have an important role to play in challenging decisions and holding each other to account for their actions. However, in those situations where a consensus cannot be reached but where there remains a compelling case on what would be effective, we are prepared to take robust and direct action to ensure the problem is addressed.

5.10 While the Government's preferred approach would be to encourage activity on the ground and provide the right incentives to do so, there may be occasions when implementation may not progress as rapidly as we would like. In these instances, we would be prepared to be more prescriptive in our approach, and use the powers introduced in the *Police Reform Act 2002* to specify the practices or the equipment to be used by the police in order to ensure the public receives the improvements they deserve.

5.11 The next two chapters set out in more detail how the Government plans for different players at national, regional and local level to work together in two important fields – collaboration between forces in chapter six, and performance management in chapter seven.



Courtesy of Northamptonshire Police and Northampton Borough Council.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- Are our proposals for strengthening the National Policing Board and encouraging collective action on the small number of issues that demand national attention right?
- Using the principles we have outlined, what issues should be decided at the national, regional and local level, and who should have responsibility for taking those decisions?
- In what areas of policing should we give greater freedoms to frontline practitioners to enable them to deliver on local priorities and on seriousness in the most effective and efficient way?