

# Community Contact Plan 2011-12



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## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



I am pleased to introduce Cheshire Police Authority's Community Contact Plan which describes how we will communicate, consult and engage with the people who live and work in Cheshire over the next year. It is important that the Authority represents all the people that it serves when carrying out its duty to ensure that Cheshire Constabulary delivers an efficient and effective police service and when holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of the people of Cheshire.

The current economic climate has resulted in the Coalition Government cutting the Authority's budget by £35.4 million over the next four years. Due to the scale of the financial challenge, it is inevitable that some changes will be necessary to the way policing services are currently delivered. The Authority will work with the Constabulary to ensure that any changes are communicated to the public and will seek to monitor how changes in resources or service provision impact upon user satisfaction and public perception.

The Coalition Government's proposals for police reform could see police authorities abolished in May 2012 and replaced with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. Subject to Parliamentary support, the Authority will engage in significant work over the period of this Plan to ensure that the public and staff are aware of the timescales and impact of the changes to ensure a safe and secure transition to a new model of police accountability.

In order for people to formulate informed opinions, the Authority will ensure that communication processes are in place for communities to have sufficient access to information regarding the delivery of policing and about how they can express their views, needs, expectations and disappointments. The Authority will continue to seek feedback about policing priorities and will encourage active participation in influencing the decision making processes which shape the Chief Constable's objectives and police budget.

This Plan embraces the diversity of our communities and the need to provide appropriate opportunities for people to participate and influence service delivery at whatever level they wish - based on our belief that:-

- all communities should be involved in the decisions that affect them;
- all communities deserve policing services shaped around their needs; and
- policing policies and strategies should reflect local priorities

We will continue to reduce crime by working in partnership with the public and other key stakeholders to create strong communities in which people feel safe.

*Margaret Ollerenshaw*

Margaret Ollerenshaw  
Chairman

## THE ROLE OF THE AUTHORITY IN COMMUNITY CONTACT

The Authority has a statutory duty to engage the community about a number of aspects of policing, and in order to inform the Authority's role in monitoring and scrutiny of policing services.

In broad terms, the areas about which the Authority will contact the community are:-

- The role of the Authority
- Confidence in and satisfaction with policing services
- Policing priorities
- Budget and council tax precepts for policing
- Performance and use of resources
- The impact of changes in service delivery
- Complaints
- Equality and Human Rights
- Stop and search
- Neighbourhood policing
- Preventing violent extremism

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY CONTACT

Due to the scale of the financial challenge, it is inevitable that some changes will be necessary to the way policing services are currently delivered. The Authority will work with the Constabulary to ensure that any changes are communicated to the public. Public engagement activity will seek to monitor how any subsequent changes in resources or service provision impact upon user satisfaction. The Authority will continue to seek feedback about policing priorities and will encourage active participation in influencing decision making processes.

The Authority will ensure that it implements an effective strategy to communicate and consult with partners, staff and the public about the impact of the proposed Police and Crime Commissioners in May 2012. The Police Authority will ensure that processes are in place for a smooth transition to the new model of police accountability.

In addition, the overarching aims of community contact remain; to ensure processes are in place for communities to have sufficient access to information regarding the delivery of local policing and how they can express their views, needs and expectations.

The objectives of the Community Contact Plan are to:-

- increase the knowledge and understanding of citizens and Constabulary staff about the role and responsibilities of the Authority;
- enable the Police Authority to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of policing services;
- ensure that the Authority's policies and decisions are, where appropriate, informed by the needs and expectations of the public, the business community, partner agencies and staff;
- reach a broad cross-section of people, representative of the population and identify public priorities in order to influence the delivery of policing services;
- ensure that community contact takes into account the differing needs of diverse communities;

- develop multi-agency approaches in order to support effective engagement, information sharing and partnership working;
- gather views and opinions about policing standards and quality of service; and
- support the Constabulary in improving policing services.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITIES

In order for effective contact to take place, the Authority will seek to ensure that it has a comprehensive understanding of the communities within the policing area.

The Authority will:-

- capitalise on the skills, experience and networks that Members bring as representatives of the community;
- work with the Constabulary and partners to gather and share data in relation to the make-up of local communities to help tailor consultation, engagement and information provision in an effective manner;
- represent the views of the citizens of the whole policing area;
- have an understanding and awareness of community intelligence to support the development of the Government Prevent strategy to enable the identification of individuals vulnerable to violent extremism and use this to monitor policing interventions; and
- Members will engage with the delivery of policing at a neighbourhood level by working with local officers in the Neighbourhood Policing Unit to which they are each assigned.

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Authority will work with the Constabulary and partners to establish mutual benefit from communication and engagement opportunities. The activity and outcomes of community contact will be shared with partners in order to assist them in developing their own strategies and business planning processes. As a “responsible” Authority, the targets and objectives cited in partnership arrangements will be considered in all community contact activity.

However, communities should also understand the role of the Authority as distinct and different from the services provided by other partners. In that respect, the Authority will communicate with communities separately from partners when appropriate and will seek to establish joint mechanisms wherever possible.

## THE CONTACT CYCLE

Throughout this Plan, the term “contact” has been used to describe the cyclical approach to community engagement that we will take to communication, consultation, community involvement in influencing Authority decisions and providing feedback. All of these are key drivers to improving policing services.

The Authority works within a framework of belief that policing must be more open, transparent and provide a greater means for the public (those who benefit from, use, pay for and are affected by policing) to have more input into the process. This involvement of the public and partner agencies in shaping or delivering priorities signals a fundamental shift from simply ‘policing by consent’ towards ‘policing by participation’.



Our aim is to focus on the public's local needs and deliver efficient and effective services that provide value for money whilst balancing these factors against national strategies and local priorities.

Effective community contact will assist the Authority in ensuring that the priorities of local people translate into strategy and decision making. Community engagement means ensuring that everyone in the policing area is given the opportunity to comment on the services provided for them and on the organisation's priorities. It also means involving them in influencing decisions that will affect them.

We believe that a community consists of many diverse people regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, location or interest. Each community will have different wants and needs that have to be balanced against Government priorities and policing intelligence.

The Authority will work with the Constabulary and partner agencies to:-

- inform the community about the issues that affect them;
- ensure the priorities of the community are considered in decision making;
- reduce consultation fatigue;
- provide feedback to participants about the outcomes of engagement;
- provide variety, flexibility and choice in community engagement activities; and
- listen and learn from our own and others' experience, putting the citizen's views at the heart of decision-making.

### COMMUNICATION (Telling)

The Authority will provide residents and communities with information about policing services, including how to access them, their performance, future changes, and progress on issues affecting them. Communication is a one way process to impart information where input from the community only occurs if an individual chooses to contact the Authority in response to what they have learned.

The Authority has statutory duties to produce information relating to different aspects of police business and ensure that the public have regular and consistent information regarding the following:-

- information about who to contact in what circumstances, including how to report crime and anti-social behaviour (including information on relevant local partners agencies);
- contact information of local neighbourhood teams, headquarters and the Authority;

- information about how to make a complaint against the police;
- information about how members of the public can express their views on local crime and anti-social behaviour, police response to local issues, local or force-wide priorities and strategies and budget issues; and
- an overview of the Constabulary priorities and objectives; and
- how well the Constabulary is performing.

Methods of communication will include new media, TV, newspaper and radio, the local policing summary, partner publications, posters and leaflets, focus groups and public meetings.

### CONSULTATION (Asking)

Consultation is a means to gather the views and opinions of the community in order to inform decisions taken by the Authority where community views must be taken into account. This includes activities such as public meetings, surveys, focus groups and workshops.

On a strategic level, the Authority must consult communities on a number of issues, including:-

- Identifying local priorities;
- budget decisions and council tax precepts for policing;
- assessing levels of satisfaction with performance and against priorities;
- whether the police force is providing an efficient and effective service to the public;
- thematic issues, e.g. stop and search; and
- understanding the views, needs and expectations of the public in relation to specific key issues/priorities

The Authority has adopted the Government's code of practice on consultation and will:-

- consult widely, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of a policy;
- be clear about our proposals, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses;
- ensure that consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible;
- give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy;
- monitor the effectiveness of consultation methods; and
- ensure that consultation follows best practice, including carrying out impact assessments when appropriate.

Public meetings will focus on the strategic issues affecting policing and provide a means for the public to hold Members of the Authority and Chief officers to account. Local problem solving will be conducted at neighbourhood level with local officers at beat meetings, police surgeries etc.

The Authority will take into account the range of consultation mechanisms already in place both nationally (e.g. the British Crime Survey), within the Constabulary (e.g. user satisfaction surveys), and through partners (e.g. Sustainable Community Strategies).

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (Influencing)

People will be involved by being able to influence the design, development and direction of activity and services. This also includes active participation from volunteers who get involved in assisting the Authority's scrutiny role such as custody visitors and front desk auditors.

### CONVERSING (Giving Feedback)

It is important that the public feel their views are taken into account in a way that meets their expectations. The Authority will consider how expectations can be managed to ensure that the public understand the limitations, such as financial constraints, of the area or issue they are being consulted about.

Whilst it is beneficial for those people consulted and directly involved to be provided with feedback, it is also important to provide all communities with consistent messages about how public views have impacted decision-making and policy development, which in turn encourages and promotes the advantages of engaging and responding to consultation.

Giving feedback to the community about what decisions have been taken as a result of their information or involvement closes the circle, leads to greater trust and confidence and strengthens future engagement activity. Feedback may be face to face or through communication methods, immediate or following a period of reflection and decision making.

### METHODS OF CONTACT

The following methods will be used to communicate, consult with, involve and converse with the public of Cheshire.

#### Media Relations

There is a need to heighten public and stakeholder awareness of the role of police authorities and demonstrate the value of police authorities in giving communities a voice in policing and the ability to hold Chief Officers to account. This in turn, raises public awareness of police authorities so that the policing services offered to the public improve.

Accordingly, there will be increased emphasis placed on strengthening relationships with local media through pro-active story development and Member involvement as spokespeople in their areas of expertise.

This will include print and broadcast media, and where appropriate, the use of "new" e-based communications tools.

#### Publications

The Authority will meet the statutory duty to deliver a Local Policing Summary to every household through the 'Your Policing' publication in July 2011. 'Your Policing' will report the policing objectives, budget, Constabulary performance and the role of the Authority. The emphasis for 2011 will be stories about changes in service delivery and how the frontline is being protected despite the budget challenges.

The Authority will complement the annual 'Your Policing' publication by placing a full page article in each of the local authority publications throughout the year. This will

enable an increased frequency of information about the Authority and provide feedback to the public about engagement that has taken place in their area.

Police budget and Council Tax information will be delivered to all households and will be included as an integral component of each Borough Council's billing leaflet.

The Policing Plan, which sets out the direction for the police service will be published on the website and sent to key opinion leaders.

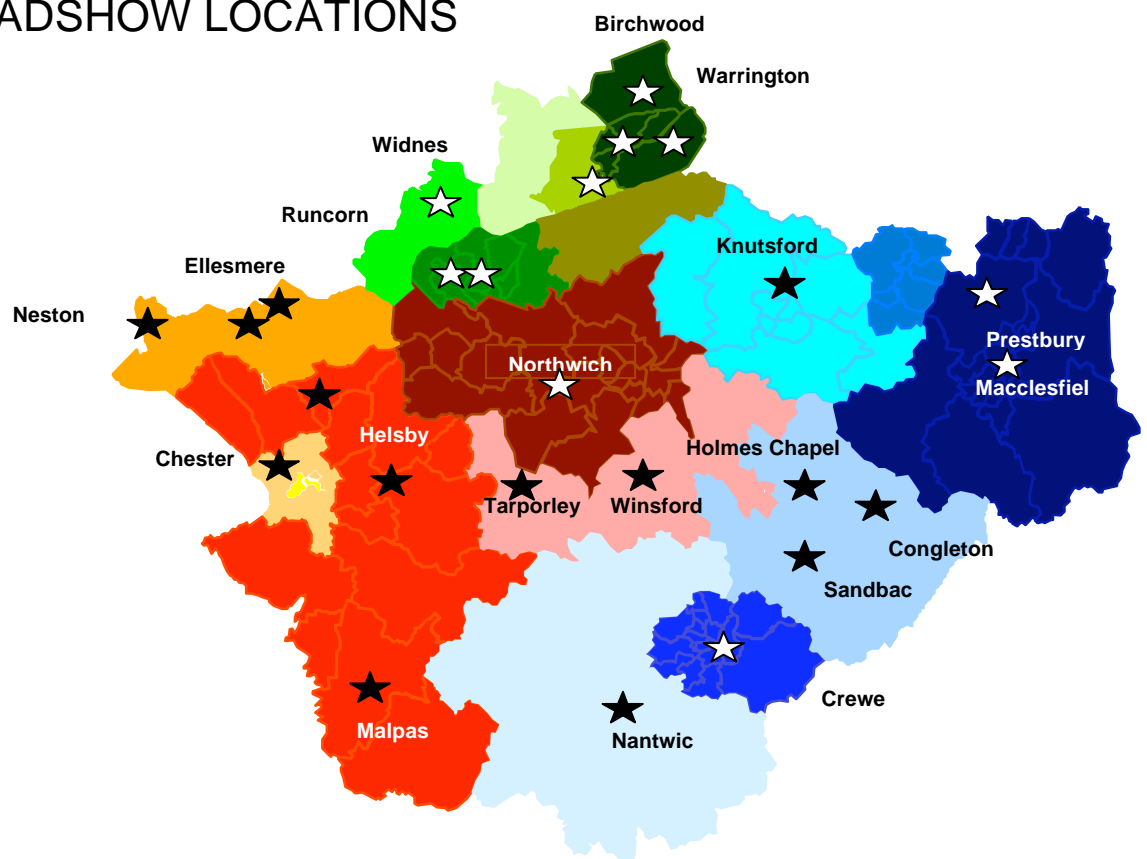
## Roadshows

The Authority has agreed to hold 'Roadshows' across the policing area from March to September 2011. The programme of roadshows will focus on urban and rural locations using the exhibition vehicle, supermarket foyers, markets or town halls. Where possible, the Roadshows will take place at larger events which are already taking place and which attract a large number of attendees such as the Cheshire Show, or in conjunction with neighbourhood based events such as police surgeries.

The objectives of the consultation roadshows are to:-

- raise the profile and awareness of the role and responsibilities of the Authority;
- ask the public about their priorities for policing to inform the 2012-13 objectives;
- seek feedback about changes in policing services;
- provide an opportunity for Members and local officers to discuss local policing matters with the public; and
- raise awareness of opportunities to volunteer in the police service.

## ROADSHOW LOCATIONS



## Website

The Authority will continue to develop its own website to ensure that people who wish to access data on-line are able to receive the required information, take part in surveys and receive feedback on previous activity. Wider use will also be made of community group sites (e.g. business community), social networking sites and community sites to raise awareness of public meetings, roadshows and other engagement activities.

## Kiosks

The Authority and Constabulary will work in partnership to:-

- seek public opinion about whether changes in resources or service provision have had an impact upon user satisfaction or public perception. The touch screen survey kiosks will be used to test public opinion in communities / locations which have been affected by changes in service as they are implemented through the Transforming Policing Programme. For example, as decisions are taken to co-locate police station front desks or to combine resources in neighbourhood policing units.
- Measure the level of understanding about changes to stop and account processes by using the touch screen survey kiosks in schools and young people's venues.

## Public Meetings

Public meetings have been a critical engagement tool used by the Authority and remain an important mechanism for the public to hold Authority Members and chief officers to account for policing.

'Police Question Time' events will be held to:-

- Enable the public to hold both the Authority and Constabulary to account;
- Consult about the 2012/13 budget and Chief Constable's objectives; and
- seek public opinion about whether changes in resources or service provision have had an impact upon user satisfaction or public perception

A newsletter will follow each cycle of meetings and summarise the debate. Press releases will be issued following each meeting to highlight the areas discussed.

## Focus Groups

Focus groups will be held with diverse community groups and in areas affected by changes in service as they are implemented through the Transforming Policing Programme. Areas of focus will include:-

- Young people;
- Groups of residents of Housing Trusts and Registered Social Landlords;

- BME communities;
- Faith Groups;
- The Business Community; and
- Volunteers

## Surveys

The Authority will continue to develop and use the Chambers of Commerce, 'Speak Out' Young People's Panel, Citizen's Panel, volunteers, Watch network, Community Contacts, parish councils and the Independent Advisory Group as a minimum to conduct postal and web based surveys. Surveys will also be used to seek public opinion from service users about whether changes in resources or service provision have had an impact on satisfaction, for example following changes in call handling.

## Involvement

The Authority has established a scheme of volunteer police station front desk auditors to ensure that the Constabulary is meeting its obligations to deliver a citizen focused service. Front desk visitors have been recruited from the Citizen's Panel, Young people's Panel and Custody Visitors and are impartial and independent of the police service. Front Desk Visitors will carry out an audit of specified police estates, with a view to act as a critical friend. They will observe and report on external and internal appearance of front desks and test service standards.

## Print media

Marketing collateral such as posters, leaflets and banners will be used to communicate key messages as appropriate in libraries, Citizen's Advice Bureaus, police stations, council offices, through Community Contacts, Watch co-ordinators, and parish councils.

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Authority will continue to engage with police officers, staff and volunteers to communicate key messages and gather their views about policing services. As a minimum this will include the intranet (Looking Glass), regular articles in Catalyst and e.mail broadcast messages.

## TARGET AUDIENCES (Who We Will Contact)

Some contact methods are effective as a broadcast medium for communicating with "the general public". However, more effective contact can be achieved by targeting specific groups and using the most relevant methods to convey different messages and achieve different aims.

Contact with each of these groups will be tailored to their specific needs. For example, we may wish to target opinion leaders to help influence wider community opinion. We may wish to make victims of poor service more aware of how to make a complaint when the Constabulary process has failed. We may wish to convey a particular message to a geographic area or community or we may wish to ask a particular community group about their experiences and how the policing services could be improved.

The public can be broadly categorised into six segments which are outlined below, however, there may often be crossover between the groups or occasions when we will target within a group or contact more than one or several groups.

#### GROUP A Internal Stakeholders

In an environment of continuous change and a need to achieve £34.5m savings over the next four years, there is an ever-increasing need to provide meaningful and effective internal communications. This is key to keeping staff informed, creating opportunities for feedback and enabling them to do their jobs to the best of their ability. The Authority supports the Constabulary's Communication Strategy and will seek to reinforce and not conflict with its key messages. In addition, the Authority will communicate and engage with staff about its role and to increase understanding about the implications of the proposed Police & Crime Commissioners.

#### GROUP B Opinion Formers / Messengers

Opinion formers and messengers are those organisations who communicate messages on our behalf, make policy decisions which affect the delivery of service or to whom communities go to gather information about public services. Perceptions about the Authority can be greatly influenced by them and they have the potential to communicate negative messages if not engaged with appropriately in decision making.

#### GROUP C Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders have greater sway than opinion formers and when making decisions about police reform, policing objectives or service delivery, they need to be engaged early enough to influence the outcome of those decisions.

#### GROUP D Communities

It has been estimated that there are over 400 groups of community representatives in the policing area. Many are self appointed community interest groups, others work for organisations, who by their nature have the ear of large segments of the population. Contact with these groups is an effective means of communicating key messages to a wide audience. These community groups can be divided into those who are nominated or elected to represent the views of others or those who are able to act as the voices of a community group.

#### GROUP E Consultees

There are several groups of individuals with whom we may consult face to face or by survey. The Authority will contact these groups when as appropriate to influence its' decision making.

#### GROUP F Diverse Groups

There is an identified need to increase contact with diverse communities and targeted community segments which find it more challenging to access or influence policing services.

### TARGET AUDIENCES

The table below provides examples of the organisations and groups of individuals by group. This is not an exhaustive list and different organisations within the groups may be contacted for specific reasons.

<b>GROUP A INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>GROUP B OPINION FORMERS/MESSENGERS</b>	<b>GROUP C OPINION LEADERS</b>
Police staff PCSOs Police Officers Volunteers UNISON Police Federation Women's Network Cheshire LGBT Cheshire Constabulary Minority & Ethnic Group Cheshire Christian Police Association	Media 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector ( voluntary, community faith and social enterprise groups) Homewatch co-ordinators Chief Executives Council Leaders Libraries Citizen's Advice Bureaus Community Services	Members of European Parliament Members of Parliament Cheshire Association of Local Councils Local Government Association Councillors Chambers of Commerce Federation of Small Businesses Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance
<b>GROUP D COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>GROUP E CONSULTEES</b>	<b>GROUP F DIVERSE GROUPS</b>
<b>REPRESENTATIVES</b> Residents Associations Youth Parliament Govenors' Associations Parent/Teachers Associations Trades Unions Student Unions Parish Councils  <b>VOICES</b> Victim Support Women's Institute Polish Association Cheshire Asian & Minority Communities Council Cheshire Ethnic Women's Group OCEAN Cheshire Older People's Network Warrington older People's Engagement Group Age UK Cheshire Disabilities Federation Cheshire Community Action	Roadshow & public meeting attendees Young People's Panel Independent Advisory Group Constabulary Citizens Panel Council Citizen's Panels Community Contacts Custody Visitors Front Desk Auditors Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race Equality Council  <b>PARTNERS</b> Cheshire East Council Cheshire West & Chester Council Halton Borough Council Warrington Borough Council Local Strategic Partnerships Community Safety Partnerships Children's Trusts Drug Action Teams Youth Offending Teams NHS Trusts Fire & Rescue Services Registered Social Landlords Youth Services Domestic Abuse Partners Courts Service Probation Services Crown Prosecution Service	People with a disability Gypsies Travellers Victims of crime Faith Groups Older people Young People Parents /carers Homeless Education (schools & colleges) Businesses Migrant Workers Unemployed Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities Black and minority ethnic communities

## MONITORING

As part of the ongoing scrutiny process, the Authority will monitor the methods and processes of community contact, with recommendations for change at Engagement Committee.

The outcomes of community contact such as policing priorities, front desk audits, the impact of changes in police services, proposed police reform and the budget will be considered by Engagement Committee, Performance and Service Improvement Panel or the full Authority as appropriate.

In addition, in exercising its duty to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police service, the Authority will scrutinise the Constabulary's communication and engagement processes and outcomes.

## BARRIERS

The Authority recognises that there are barriers to effective engagement to overcome such as low response rates to postal questionnaires – questionnaires will be used only as part of the overall consultation strategy, and will be used to target specific groups on particular issues, often at short notice, when other forms of consultation are not practical;

Wherever possible the Authority will ensure that wherever there is an identified need, contact will be made in accessible formats and using appropriate language. Consultation apathy will be taken seriously. The public must feel that their views have been considered seriously if they are to be encouraged to come forward and offer further views.

Feedback must be given to ensure the public are kept abreast of developments; Overall, engagement is the key to success. Wherever possible, citizens will be encouraged to take action to improve their local environment, quality of life and work with the police and partner agencies to do so.

