

An ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) convened group, 'Working the Beat', has recently drawn up a set of fundamental principles which set out the basis on which it considers the police can engage with the development of warden type schemes.

“WORKING THE BEAT” - FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Establishment of Schemes

Schemes should be established based on a locally expressed need, which will allow for them to be tailored to that local need.

Powers

There should be no diminution of the powers of police officers. In respect of neighbourhood warden and similar schemes, there should be no enhancement of powers beyond that of the ordinary citizen.

Intervention

The police must remain the only body with powers to intervene in situations without consent. Other persons may only intervene with consent or under whatever arrangement lies between the employer of the warden/patrol and the citizen.

Government

Local authority patrols must be accountable to local authorities but, since their employment should arise from the community safety proposals of the Crime and Disorder Act, partnership working with the police is essential. However, they must bear responsibility for their own actions in joint initiatives whether with the police service or other agencies.

Regulation

Regulation of the security industry must be vigorously pursued; in the interim the police should seek an active local role in such matters as vetting and quality control to ensure that schemes are operating to an agreed acceptable standard.

Appearance

The appearance of non-police warden and patrol personnel must be distinct from that of the police in terms of uniform, livery and corporate image.

Standard Operating Procedures

Specimen standard operating procedures should be developed for a range of different locations (residential, town-centre), circumstances (intervention, patrol), relationship (local authority, private security) and purposes (information exchange, call responses). This must include reference to such matters as recruitment, training, managing processes and facilities management.

Funding

Complementary patrols and neighbourhood warden schemes should be funded from identifiable sources, which do not involve any diminution of police budgets.

POLICY ACTION TEAM 6 – NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS (March 2000)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF POLICY ACTION TEAM REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. Following the publication of its report into neighbourhood renewal in September 1998, the Social Exclusion Unit asked Policy Action Team 6 (PAT 6) to look further at the concept of neighbourhood wardens. In particular, it asked what models of neighbourhood warden schemes are cost-effective and how they are financed; and whether the Government ought to take steps to encourage neighbourhood warden schemes more widely.

2. The PAT included a wide range of external people including those with expertise in housing management and the police. Our approach has been a practical one. We have tried to identify what types of warden scheme exist and which of them work well - or less well –through a combination of research, which identified 50 schemes, and visits. Some further work is needed (indicated in the recommendations) and the Government may now wish to consider taking this forward.

FINDINGS THUS FAR

3. Thus far we have found that there are already a wide variety of warden schemes – though all the schemes we were asked to visit had the common element of providing an official presence in a residential area which is designed to assist in the maintenance of order through a visible and accessible presence. The key functions of schemes fall into one or more of four broad categories:

- crime prevention
- environmental improvements
- community development and
- housing management.

There are also, broadly speaking, four methods by which these functions are met - patroller, concierge, caretaker/supercaretaker and neighbourhood support worker.

4. Some examples of good schemes we saw include the Central Estate (a social housing development of 600 homes) in Hartlepool where recorded crime dropped by 35% between 1994 and 1997; the Aylesbury Estate Security Patrol (an estate of over 2,200 homes) in Southwark where crime rates have dropped significantly; and the Sedgefield Community Force where police time has been freed up to deal with more serious crimes. In each instance, there is believed to be a high level of public satisfaction and a significant reduction in the fear of crime.

Why are neighbourhood wardens needed?

5. Why should local authorities, police and other partners be interested in neighbourhood warden schemes? There are a number of reasons.

Crime and the fear of crime: There has been a significant rise in crime and disorder over the past 20 years. Between 1981 and 1993, recorded crime rose by 111%. The rise in crime measured by the British Crime Survey was less steep at 77%. 40% of crime takes place in just 10% of areas. 10% of residents of **inner city areas** are burgled once or more in a year - double the rate elsewhere. Half the people who were victims of crime were repeat victims, accounting for 81% of recorded crime. 25% of minority ethnic residents in low income multi-ethnic areas say racially motivated attacks are a fairly or very big problem for them. The impact of crime on these victims is compounded by their poverty and relative inability to protect themselves. The public overwhelmingly and consistently cite crime as one of their three main concerns. The Survey of English Housing found it was the single most important factor that determined peoples' satisfaction with their neighbourhood.

Social housing: At the same time, the population housed by social landlords has become progressively more disadvantaged over the past 20 years. There are more households whose income is less than half the national average, more teenage pregnancy, more youth underachievement, more children who truant or who have been excluded from school, more unemployment, more drug misuse, more ill health. These problems are associated with higher crime and offending rates but also reduce levels of informal social control and the capacity of the community to police and regulate itself.

Neighbourhood staff: In spite of this, there has been a gradual withdrawal of staff from neighbourhoods by a range of agencies over the last 20 years. Housing departments have withdrawn their caretakers and locally-based staff, with often serious consequences. There are far fewer patch-based social workers and youth and community workers. Park keepers and bus conductors are much less in evidence. Generally, there are fewer people around able to exercise the sort of informal surveillance that can enhance safety and deter crime.

6. In areas where all of the above factors exist, such as in many deprived neighbourhoods, neighbourhood wardens can make a real difference to the quality of residents' life, to their sense of security, and to the way they feel about their environment. There is emerging evidence for this from research both in this country and in the Netherlands, but there is a clear need for more research into the impact of Warden schemes. The schemes we visited were successful, liked by residents and agencies including the police, and produced positive outcomes - on their own or as part of a wider range of measures. PATs 4 and 5 (Housing Management and Neighbourhood Management) have both looked at ways of improving the quality of residents' lives.

What makes a successful neighbourhood warden scheme?

7. The key factors of successful schemes are:

- having clear objectives and being well designed
- full involvement of residents and of relevant local partners
- particular emphasis on signing up and involving local authorities and the police
- effective communications between all partners
- high quality training and proper lines of accountability
- continuity - the presence of wardens sustained over a period of time can ensure they realise their potential to contribute to prevention rather than just reacting to problems.

8. Of course, warden schemes cannot be the only solution for every residential area faced by problems of crime, poor housing and a run-down environment. Local agencies, including the residents themselves, need to consider carefully whether a warden scheme is the right answer; whether it needs other supporting measures (e.g. to design out crime) to enable it to work effectively; and what form the scheme should take. These are some of the key issues the statutory partnerships formed under the Crime and Disorder Act are designed to address.

How are schemes funded?

9. Our study so far indicates that the main funders are local authorities using resources from their mainstream programmes. Whilst this form of funding is likely to continue, we are looking to find other ways of injecting more money into warden schemes, including privately sponsored or managed schemes. For example, we are recommending that DETR should review the guidance for the next round of the SRB Challenge Fund and the guidance for the second New Deal for Communities funding round, to include references to neighbourhood warden schemes for funding. DETR sponsored schemes (e.g. New Deal for Communities and the Single Regeneration Budget) and the Home Office should also consider the scope for pump priming funding for specific warden schemes which seek to address racial harassment and/or involve minority ethnic groups in their scheme. (This funding is now available and the Greater Humberstone Management Group has made a bid)

Why should the police support neighbourhood wardens?

10. Our findings indicate that well structured warden schemes, supported by the police, local authorities and residents, can benefit the police. They can be a source of valuable information, and can deal with some of the more minor incidents of anti-social behaviour, so freeing up police time to deal with other matters. They can also benefit the housing management service, and play an important role in integrated approaches to improving the poorest neighbourhoods. The most striking schemes had active police involvement.

11. We understand - and share - concerns about the prospect of people being faced with poorly trained, unaccountable wardens. But we believe that the recommendations we have made in this report - about the functions and powers of wardens, the need for accountability and the need for high quality training - meet these concerns.

12. We do not recommend giving any special powers to wardens - their effectiveness comes from working with, and adding value to, the work of local agencies. Wardens are not to be seen as a substitute for the police or for local authority or other statutory services, but as complementary to them.

13. We endorse the “Fundamental Principles”, drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers’ (ACPO) group, “Working the Beat”:

- that wardens should not be given new powers
- that local authorities and the police should have joint accountability for the outcomes of warden schemes
- that the uniforms of wardens should be distinct from the police uniform
- for warden schemes with a patrol/crime prevention focus, standard operating procedures and protocols should be drawn up
- schemes should be set up based on local need
- wardens must not intervene in incidents without consent
- regulation of the private security industry must be vigorously pursued
- warden schemes must not be funded from police budgets.

What are the advantages to the local authority/social landlords?

14. For social agencies trying to address anti-social behaviour, address the effects of crime and the fear of it, improve areas of unpopular housing, encourage resident participation and generally improve neighbourhoods, warden schemes can produce positive outcomes. Indeed, the majority of schemes in this report were initiated and are funded by such agencies.

Tackling racial harassment

15. Local partnerships involved in the establishment of warden schemes should always consider whether one of the objectives of the scheme should be tackling racial harassment. If so, black and minority ethnic communities should be fully involved. If not, other measures to tackle racial harassment should be put in place. One of this report’s recommendations is also that, where possible, warden schemes should look to reflect the communities they serve.

Should more schemes be encouraged?

16. The development of neighbourhood warden schemes, in a way which reflects the points we have made above, needs to be actively encouraged. The evidence is that, in the right circumstances, and when set up in the right way, they can be an effective way of addressing some of the most worrying and corrosive problems experienced by people who live in deprived residential areas. During the course of PAT 6’s work it has also become apparent that neighbourhood wardens can also be effective

in town centres (the Bury Community Safety Warden Scheme is one example) and rural areas. We suggest that many of the points brought out in this report might equally apply to these areas.

FURTHER WORK

17. We were specifically asked whether a national framework is needed to clarify links to and the split of roles with the police and local housing management, and the safeguards that might be necessary. Our current thinking is that a formal framework is probably not necessary at this stage so long as our draft recommendations are followed through and implemented.

18. Although it has not been possible to consider a large number of schemes, the PAT believes that the Government should take steps to encourage neighbourhood warden schemes more widely and encourage those at local levels to initiate them. Within this broad message our views are that:

- the precise form of schemes should continue to be determined to suit local conditions, not be centrally prescribed;
- the Government should support the ‘Fundamental Principles’ identified by ACPO, which are particularly relevant to patrol type schemes;
- the Home Office and DETR should take the lead on neighbourhood wardens, working closely with other Departments. In particular, they should commission for wide dissemination:
- a training programme, setting out minimum training standards for wardens
- a checklist of issues for prospective warden schemes
- a good practice guide for managers of prospective warden schemes
- further evaluation of warden schemes to identify more information about what schemes work best in what circumstances.
- The Home Office and DETR should also ensure consideration is given to how sources of funding might be brought together in a way more accessible to local communities.
- The Home Office should ensure local crime and disorder partnerships are aware of the potential contribution of warden schemes.

19. A number of schemes are linked to employment initiatives. We recommend that further work is done to explore how neighbourhood warden schemes could be promoted within existing New Deal options.

KEY FUNCTIONS OF WARDENS SCHEMES

CRIME PREVENTION

Reducing levels of crime
Reducing fear of crime
Reducing levels of anti-social behaviour

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Improving general state of repair of properties
Proactive tackling of vandalism and repairs
Rapid response to environmental/physical problems
Improving quality of life for residents

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Increasing efficiency of housing maintenance
Increasing demand for housing

Reducing tenancy terminations
Reducing number of empty properties
Reducing levels of neighbourhood nuisance

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Promoting community solidarity
Enhancing informal social control
Increasing levels of employment
Building confidence in local agencies, including the police
Promoting intolerance of crime and anti-social behaviour

PRIMARY METHODS OF PERFORMING KEY FUNCTIONS

CRIME PREVENTION

Mobile patrols
Foot patrols
Installation of alarms in void properties
Concierge service - controlling access

CCTV
Design improvements (e.g. improving lighting; demolishing walk-ways)
Promotion of Neighbourhood Watch

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Resident caretaker
Localising cleaning services
Provision of information to residents regarding maintenance services
Liaison with residents to identify environmental/maintenance problems
On-going reporting of repairs to relevant authorities

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Checking empty properties
Local lettings
Local rent collection
Locally-controlled budget for repairs and maintenance
On-going liaison with tenants

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Promotion of residents' associations
Organisation of events for residents
Organisation of activities for young people
Provision of a newsletter for residents
Consultation with residents over strategy
Provision of employment services and training
Liaison with health services