

# Brief Lines

A bridge between business and the local community

## About CSP

Welcome to the latest edition of the Brief Lines newsletter, published by Community Safety Partnerships Ltd (CSP) which offers quality solutions to help address safety and other risks. Specialising in personal, community and system safety issues, CSP provides a holistic intelligence-led approach to partnership between business and community, business and regulator and other interfaces where risk arises.

CSP is headed by Aidan and Sue Nelson who between them have wide experience in corporate reputation handling, developing and delivering community safety strategies and campaigns, crisis management, and the advancement of health, safety and environmental policy both internationally and nationally at industry, multi-party programme and individual company levels.

## Fatal crossing not up to standard

A level crossing at the centre of a horrific train and truck collision in which two people were killed and a dozen injured did not meet Australian safety standards. In April 2006 a two-carriage VLocity train collided with a truck on the level crossing about 40km west of Ballarat in the state of Victoria. The truck driver has been charged with 52 offences including two of culpable driving, but magistrates were told that the crossing, although fitted with signs, was unprotected because it lacked boom gates and flashing lights. The crossing also failed to provide proper visibility for truck drivers in accordance with Victoria's road safety standards.

## New life for communities

Local councils are being challenged to transform run-down buildings by transferring them to community groups for as little as £1 in a bid to improve facilities in deprived neighbourhoods.

A major review, *Making Assets Work*, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government looked at what prevents more public buildings being taken over by community groups, and found that obstacles to transferring public buildings to the community are often cultural rather than legal. Now Local Government Minister Phil Woolas has announced a six-point action plan to give communities greater control on improving their neighbourhoods by breathing new life into old buildings such as redundant police stations, old hospital sites, empty shopping parades, closed down pubs on estates and leisure centres.

The plan includes a new £400,000 challenge for councils to become one of 20 pilot areas who will transfer up to 40 key assets from local authorities to community organisations. It also outlines access to a £30m Cabinet Office community assets fund to support community-led organisations in owning and running buildings to improve local facilities. New guidance will be issued to all local authorities to help them pro-actively identify all assets that could be run by local community organisations, and there will be a new drive to promote powers available to residents to call for assets to be devolved for local use. Training programmes for community organisations and local authority officers highlight the relevant management skills and cultural shift needed to take full advantage of the scheme, plus greater collaboration between financiers to maximise funding leverage will also be implemented.

The new approach follows initiatives such as the government's *New Deal for Communities* which sought to empower communities and improve their quality of life in the most deprived areas. The link between deprivation and crime is well-documented and it is hoped that this latest scheme will see tangible spin-offs such as reducing crime and the fear of crime.

For more information go to [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

## Understanding 'risky facilities'

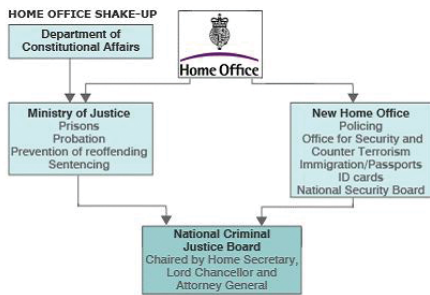
In any large city it is usually just a handful of bars that give police far more trouble than the rest put together. The same is true of many other types of establishments, such as schools, local shopping parades, housing estates or car parks. In each case just a few produce far more crime, disorder and calls for police assistance than the rest of the group combined. Examples of this phenomenon - called 'risky facilities' - include a study in Merseyside which showed that about 4% of bus routes experienced 80% of all reported bus-related crime incidents and that about 5% of bus stops experienced nearly 30% of vandal attacks. The phenomenon has important implications for many problem-oriented policing projects and recognition of the issues can help to focus effort where it is most needed and assist in the selection of appropriate preventative measures. Now a new guide *Understanding Risky Facilities* has been made available through the government's crime reduction website to help practitioners.

It can be downloaded at [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)



## New crime and justice arrangements now in place

This diagram shows the revised responsibilities of the Home Office following a government shake-up which led to the formation of a new Ministry of Justice on May 9th.



The division of the Home Office follows a speedy programme of reform initiated by Home Secretary John Reid, with the work of the department now being focused on crime, immigration and the prevention of terrorism.

All responsibilities for criminal law and sentencing, reducing re-offending, and prisons and probation have transferred to the new Ministry of Justice headed by Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor and first Secretary of State for Justice.

Front line delivery of the work of the new department will be dispensed through 595 court houses including 90 crown courts and 360 magistrates' courts, 226 county courts, 21 central government tribunals, 139 prisons and 42 local probation areas, spending a budget of £8.8bn for 2007/8.

The workload is huge - for example, probation officers are dealing with 200,000 cases daily, assisting courts with 246,000 pre-sentence reports and 20,000 bail information reports each year, plus supervising more than 8 million hours of unpaid work in the community by offenders each year. Magistrates' courts alone dealt with 2.3 million defendants in criminal cases and 1.2 million civilian applications in 2006. And during 2006/7 crown courts disposed of 127,751 hearings or trials and county courts heard 1,975,560 claims.

Go to [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk) and [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk) for more details on each department's roles and responsibilities.

## Partnership Profile - B is for Barking and Dagenham

In this series *Brief Lines* will each month feature a crime and disorder reduction partnership or community safety partnership operating in England, Scotland or Wales. Next month will feature a partnership beginning with 'C' so let us know which one you think it should be and why.

THE London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is at the centre of the Thames Gateway Project, the largest regeneration area in Europe. Three of its council wards fall within the top 10% of most deprived wards in England and Wales, and almost 40% of borough residents overall have no formal qualifications compared to the national average of just under 30%. The proportion of residents living in socially rented accommodation is almost twice as high as the England and Wales average. Almost a quarter of the population are under 19. The borough's overall crime figure and levels of violent crime - particularly common assault and wounding - are higher in Barking and Dagenham than in most similar boroughs.

An extensive community consultation exercise was undertaken in the borough to better understand the nature and impact of crime, disorder and drugs, and identify local people's concerns and priorities. A total of 68% of all respondents felt threatened by crime in the borough and in every area where they felt unsafe, anti-social behaviour was the predominant concern. Youths congregating during the day made 63% of respondents feel unsafe, rising to 83% after dark. People felt most unsafe in parks, Barking town centre, bus stops and railway stations. The borough identified a number of local strategic priorities to tackle the issues, the top two of which are anti-social behaviour and engaging young people.

The borough's statutory crime and disorder reduction partnership has been organised into a Community Safety Strategic Partnership (CSSP) which meets quarterly to provide forum for key stakeholders and review activity in relevant areas. The CSSP has established a dedicated crime and anti-social behaviour unit to tackle one of the top

two biggest issues for residents, while the borough's youth offending team takes the lead on diverting young people away from crime and low level disorder. In addition partnership working is going on to tackle violent crime, property crime and drug and alcohol misuse. Consistent effort in recent years has seen the borough improve from 74th to 43rd in the Home Office ranking of high crime boroughs and move from 17th to the 15th safest borough in London. To learn more go to the borough's website, [www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk)

## Youngsters need way out of 'gang' involvement

Teenagers could gravitate towards gangs and group violence as a result of poor family relationships, exclusion from school, absence of positive role models and a lack of youth facilities, according to a report commissioned by the Youth Justice Board. The research, *Groups, Gangs and Weapons*, also found that clear distinctions need to be made between 'real' gangs and groups of young people who may commit low-level anti-social behaviour and crime. Mislabelling youth groups as gangs risks glamorising them and may even encourage young people to become involved in more serious criminal behaviour. The report found that group offending is a complex and fluid issue and strategies to tackle it need to be geared to local problems. Graham Robb of YJB says: "Young people on the cusp of anti-social behaviour and offending must be given the right 'emergency exits' to avoid falling into more serious group offending and gangs in those areas where they exist. No agency - statutory or community - can tackle this alone. There is already much work going on but more needs to be done, especially in prevention work, to halt serious offending and gang culture."

The report's recommendations for tackling delinquent youth groups include a need to continue to invest in preventative and diversionary activities alongside enforcement, with community intervention and strategies to break the cycle of low-level offending. To download the report, go to [www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)

## Getting community payback

A scheme operated by the probation service gives communities the chance to influence the type of unpaid work offenders can carry out as part of their sentence. Community Payback aims to make the unpaid work performed by offenders more visible and more representative of communities' needs. Some five million hours of unpaid work are carried out every year in England and Wales, with projects including graffiti removal, redecorating community centres and environmental work. As well as carrying out work, offenders acquire skills which are useful in the job market. All probation areas have set up systems allowing the public to suggest projects which they would like to see carried out in their neighbourhood.

For more information go to [www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk)

## Reducing re-offending programme

A personalised skills assessment is to be made available in prisons and the wider community to identify offenders who will benefit from a programme of employment-focused learning and skills training to reduce re-offending.

Under a new system - the 'campus' model - selected offenders will receive tailored information, advice and guidance and be offered a range of skills training. This could take the form of literacy, numeracy, language and key skills, employer-led vocational skills, enterprise and self-employment training, work trials, work experience and voluntary work. Two test bed regions - East of England and West Midlands - are taking forward the initiative with the aim of helping offenders develop skills and secure better jobs in a bid to stop them re-offending. For more information go to [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

## Ex-offenders to help probation policies

The National Probation Service is using ex-offenders to advise on how to stop people re-offending as part of a scheme by The Prince's Trust. A network of ex-offenders is being set up to act as advisers to the 42 local probation boards in England and Wales. Two in three young offenders return to crime costing the economy £1bn each year, according

to the trust, which says young people who have experienced the system are well-placed to offer advice on how to tackle the problem of young people re-offending.

## Diana fund tackles youth custody

A £1.5m grant has been awarded to the Prison Reform Trust by the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund to create a strategy to reduce the number of children and young people in jail. The strategy, to be delivered over a period of five years, will feature an independent inquiry into the treatment of, and conditions for, young prisoners and their families and review the range and effectiveness of alternatives to custody. The number of people being sentenced to custody has almost doubled in the past 10 years, says the trust, and 'punitive policies' and a reliance on prison are 'damaging and excluding young people already existing on the edge of society.'

## Keeping on track of criminals

British Transport Police are solving more crimes on Sunderland's Metro system than anywhere else on the rail network throughout Britain, new figures have revealed. The Sunderland police post, with five PCs and one sergeant, has the highest rate of detections for crimes on and around the railway nationwide. A total of 152 crimes were committed on the Sunderland extension on the Metro last year, and more than half of them were solved - the highest detection rate across the force. Excellent police work, positive partnership working, the effective use of CCTV and local education programmes are all said to have played an important part in delivering the results.

## Project to cut police activity on low-level crimes

A project has been set up in the West Midlands to train residential care home staff in tackling youngsters' behavioural problems rather than involving the police. The project was commissioned by the Dudley Youth Offending Service because 45% of young people in the area caught up in "offending behaviour" live in residential homes. The objective is to give care staff the expertise to

resolve problems as parents would in the family home rather than involving the police in issues such as fighting and truancy.

## Bobbies on the beat

Every train station on Central Trains' cross city north and south lines operating across the Birmingham conurbation now has its own dedicated neighbourhood policing officer. Since their launch in January this year, Birmingham's Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) have seen anti-social behaviour fall by 28% in some areas. With 11 police community support officers, nine PCs, two sergeants and an inspector, the teams have worked hard to make themselves known to rail staff and customers alike. Now there are plans for the dedicated officers have public surgeries at their stations every six weeks, giving members of the community the chance to meet them face-to-face and discuss concerns. Contact details of officers and details of the surgeries are being made available at every station covered by the scheme.

## Have some savvy with your satnav...

A 20-year-old woman said her satellite navigation system was the cause of her driving on to a railway line and her car being wrecked after it was hit by a train seconds later. Paula Ceely of Redditch, Worcester, was driving for the first time to her boyfriend's house in Hebron, Carmarthenshire 150 miles away when the accident happened. As night fell, the satnav system directed her on to a country lane in Ffyonogain, west Wales and through a large metal gate which Ms Ceely opened and drove through. As she got out to close the gate she heard a train horn and realised she was standing on railway tracks. She says she just had time to get out of the way before the train hit her car and carried it down the track. No one on the train was hurt. The crossing was correctly signed and was equipped with miniature warning lights suitable for the crossing type. There's no suggestion that the car headlights weren't working. A British Transport Police spokesman said: "We would advise people to use satnavs with due caution."

## Level crossing driving ban

A 49-year-old woman has been banned from driving for year and fined a total of £2,100 after being convicted of ignoring red lights at a Norfolk level crossing. Lorraine Hodgkinson from Outwell, near Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, overtook another vehicle and zig-zagged round the crossing barrier at Downham Market as it closed. She was found guilty of dangerous driving at Norwich Crown Court, banned from driving, fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £1,100 costs.

## It's all down to the children...

A new study suggests that community cohesion lies in the hands of children and their social networks. The Economic and Social Research Council looked at the role played by children in forming local networks and found that the more social networks children have, the greater the confidence in the safety of the area. According to the study Children Now, parents are more likely to form links with other members of the community, and as a result are more involved in the lives of their neighbours, give more freedom to their children and report an enhanced confidence in the safety of the neighbourhood area. The findings, based on a three-year study involving 600 children in five contrasting areas, suggest that many parents are torn between wanting to protect their children and wanting them to be streetwise. Go to [www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk) for more details.

## Partnership solutions for level crossings

Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) was among level crossing experts from across Europe who met in May to discuss how safety issues are best managed at this critical road-rail interface. The meeting, which was hosted jointly by the European

Transport Safety Council (ETSC) and the European Railway Agency (ERA), agreed that safety at level crossings needs to be managed as a partnership between road and rail and not solely as a railway issue. Rail sector delegates were keen to learn how the European Commission intended to take forward the recommendations to member states from the second report of the High-level Road Safety Group published in December 2003. However they were surprised to hear that the ERA was seen as their focal point for considering "where next?" as most of the recommendations are, in reality, focused on highways and road driver licensing authorities. If you want a copy of the report get in touch with

[aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com](mailto:aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com)

## Highlight of community safety calendar

This is the last call to attend the National Convention for Safer Communities to be held in Sheffield on June 19th - 21st. The event, said to be the largest in the community safety calendar, is organised by the National Community Safety Network and is aimed at all those working in the safer communities' field. The programme has been developed and delivered by a multi-agency group looking at the latest policies and thinking on a range of issues. Delegates can design their own itinerary from a series of mini-conference and workshop options. Go to [www.community-safety.net/convention/2007/home.htm](http://www.community-safety.net/convention/2007/home.htm) for more details.

## Nominations open for Justice Awards

Anyone working at the front line of criminal justice with victims, witnesses, defendants, offenders and the local community is eligible for the Justice Awards 2007. Both individuals and teams can enter from among those working in the courts service,

the CPS, police, prison service, probation service and youth offending teams. The Justice Awards are organised by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform to recognise outstanding achievement by staff from a criminal justice agency or from a voluntary sector organisation working with victims, witnesses, defendants or offenders. To nominate go to [www.cjonline.gov.uk/justiceawards](http://www.cjonline.gov.uk/justiceawards)

## Mind the doors...

An elderly woman escaped with minor injuries after she drove her mobility scooter on to a train then crashed through the doors on the opposite side of the carriage and landed on the track. The 80-year-old drove her buggy - top speed 8mph - on to the Metro train at Brockley Whins, Newcastle, with enough force to break open the lock on the opposite doors. The scooter became wedged in the doors and she fell out on to the track.

## Keep in touch...

If you have any news you wish to share, details of an event you want to highlight, or would like further information on Community Safety Partnerships Ltd contact [suenelson@comsafetypartners.com](mailto:suenelson@comsafetypartners.com) or [aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com](mailto:aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com)