

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.

If you have any news to share, details of an event you want to highlight, or want further information on Community Safety Partnerships Ltd contact suenelson@comsafetypartners.com or aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com

For the diary...

The Railway Community Safety Forum organised by the Rail Safety and Standards Board on behalf of Britain's rail industry will be held on Wednesday, March 18 at the National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull, West Midlands. The event will include presentations on safeguarding level crossings, protecting ticket vending machines, cross industry resources for community safety practitioners, reassurance policing and preventing cable theft. Attendance is free, but places are limited.

Go to www.rssb.co.uk/events/index.asp for more details.

Policing and crime Bill aims to put people first

New measures to protect the public, increase police accountability and effectiveness and tackle crime and disorder have been set out in the new Policing and Crime Bill.

The new Bill – due to get its Second Reading on January 12 - sets out the ways the government will work with police to give a clear and powerful voice to the public, drive down crime, drive up public confidence and give local people more information and a bigger say in how their neighbourhood is policed.

The main benefits of the bill include:

- Increase police accountability and effectiveness by providing a clear and powerful voice for the public through directly elected representatives
- Protect the public by facilitating and strengthening collaborative working of police forces at all levels from local neighbourhood policing through to the regional and national levels
- Protect vulnerable groups, particularly women and children by tackling demand for prostitution and strengthening arrangements around sex offender prevention orders and foreign travel orders
- Prevent low-level crime and disorder taking root in communities by tightening controls around lap dancing clubs and the misuse of alcohol, including its sale
- Strengthen the ability to fight serious and organised crime through improved recovery of criminal assets and improved international judicial co-operation
- Provide greater clarity for all in airport security by improving inter-agency co-operation in establishing airport security arrangements

In addition it is planned those subject to football banning orders in England and Wales are also banned from attending regulated football matches in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Reducing re-offending will also be added to the statutory responsibilities of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships as well as ensuring the Probation Service is a key partner.

From April 2009, police authorities will face regular inspection to test that they are visible to their communities and working to improve public confidence. They will benefit from increased training for members to help them to deliver these goals, and will be provided with new powers to write the performance appraisal of their Chief Constable and ensure that they are delivering for their community.

The Policing and Crime Bill is seeking to implement the reforms set out in the government's Policing Green Paper, which was published in 2008 as a direct result of the Sir Ronnie Flanagan's independent policing review.



Tackling alcohol related crime

A new power targeting offenders who commit crime under the influence of alcohol has been unveiled.

From next summer, drinking banning orders will allow police and local authorities to stop a person entering certain premises if they have been involved in criminal or disorderly conduct under the influence of alcohol. Breach of a drinking banning order, which can last up to two years, could lead to a fine of up to £2,500. The orders are focused on people whose drinking has been identified as a factor in their irresponsible and disorderly behaviour.

To add to the range of tools and powers to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder, the government has also published new guidance on obtaining designated public place orders and establishing alcohol disorder zones.

Travelling jobs face on-the-spot fines

Jobs who cause misery for other passengers by smoking, drinking or causing a nuisance on the railways will face on-the-spot fines under new police powers, Transport Minister Andrew Adonis has announced.

British Transport Police can warn or arrest anti-social passengers - but new penalties, introduced in the new year, gives them a third option of issuing a £50 fine.

The transport minister said passengers have the right to travel in peace on the rail network and should not have to put up with people smoking, drinking alcohol excessively and causing a nuisance, but these new penalties – introduced as part of the government's extension to its Penalty Notice for Disorder Scheme.

The scheme is intended to free up police time from dealing with low-level bad behaviour and designed as a more efficient way of dealing with offenders rather than arresting them, charging them and then taking the case through the courts.

Deputy Chief Constable Andy Trotter, of British Transport Police, says: "The ability to issue penalty notices for these new offences will give officers another weapon in their armoury to continue driving down anti-social behaviour.

"We know that penalty notices prove a deterrent to anti-social behaviour and will save valuable police time, allowing us to have a greater visible uniformed presence on the rail system. However for the more serious crimes our officers will continue to arrest and lock up offenders."

Tougher penalties for knife carriers

Tougher more intensive punishments for people who carry illegal knives have been announced by government.

From January 5 courts are now able to hand out tougher and more intensive penalties for everyone convicted of possession of a knife who are ordered by the courts to carry out community payback work such as picking up litter, renovating community centres, clearing undergrowth and cleaning up graffiti for local communities.

Offenders sentenced to pay for their crimes within the community already have to work hard, wear high visibility orange jackets with the distinctive 'Community Payback' logo, give something back to their neighbourhoods and lose much of their free time.

The government says it wants to ensure knife crime offenders are treated with the seriousness they deserve. Where jail is the best option offenders will be sent there,

but the government also wants to see tougher and more effective community based sentences for those the courts choose not to send to jail.

Last year the government announced that anyone convicted of a knife-related offence and sentenced to the maximum 300 hours of community payback from the courts would complete their sentence in intensive blocks.

This is now being extended to include all knife crime offenders given any amount of community payback as part of their sentence. They will now have to do at least 18 hours of work a week, and potentially be subject to a curfew that keeps them off the streets in the evening and a probation appointment during the week on top of these hours.

Knife crime offenders may also have to do programmes or activities with their community payback work that are designed to reform their behaviour and so reduce the likelihood of re-offending. This might involve attendance on an offending behaviour group work programme or a course to improve prospects of employment. Offenders may also have to attend drug rehabilitation, which may involve more than three days of all their activities each week.

- Last year there were 55,771 completions of community payback across England and Wales, providing over six million hours of free labour for communities. Recent statistics show that frequency of re-offending for community sentences have fallen sharply by 13%. The re-offending rate following a short custodial sentence is 59.7% but that drops to 37.9% following a community sentence.

Violence Action Plan guidance

The Home Office has published guidance on implementing its Tackling Violence Action Plan. This document includes operational structures and plans local partnerships should consider putting in place to deliver reductions in serious violence in their local areas. It also contains a number of best practice case studies.

Although serious violence is thankfully a rare event in England and Wales, homicide and serious wounding remain a real worry for the public and feature heavily in the public debate about violent crime. As a result the government has set a key Public Service Agreement (PSA) ambition to reduce the most serious violence (PSA 23(1)) and why 49 different local areas have identified Most Serious Violence (MSV) in their local area agreements.

The guidance sets out the government's response to Most Serious Violence (MSV) and recognises the key role local partnerships play in reducing serious violence.

The guidance is published as an iterative document and will be updated as the Tackling Violence Action Plan is implemented. To help with this, the Home Office wants to hear the views of local practitioners on the guidance and how it can be shaped to help their role. Examples of effective practice are also needed to incorporate into future editions of the guidance. Send feedback to Claire.heaney@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or the Violent Crime Unit at VCUStrategy&DeliveryTeam@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

£30 million boost for police handheld computers

A further 25 police forces are to

benefit from state-of-the art, handheld computers in a bid to reduce red tape and improve efficiency in the fight against crime.

The £30 million bureaucracy-busting devices save officers up to 30 minutes per shift as they are able to send and receive information while on the beat - meaning less time in the station and more on the streets.

The money, including an extra £5 million on top of the £25 million announced in the Policing Green Paper 'From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing Our Communities Together', will build on the existing investment to provide a total of 30,000 handheld computers by March 2010. All forces across England, Scotland and Wales will be given a portion of funding to roll out the mobile information programme. The latest allocation of mobile information devices to 25 forces and two agencies is the second phase of a programme to use technology to cut red tape.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead for mobile information and Deputy Chief Constable of British Transport Police Andy Trotter says: "This is an excellent example of 21st century technology enabling officers to get back to their traditional role - out on the beat protecting people.

"This type of technology streamlines administrative processes and improves intelligence sharing to get officers out from behind their desks and on to the streets. The public want to see highly visible patrols of officers tackling crime and providing reassurance. I am determined we consider every possible solution to enable us to deliver the type of policing people want."

The new funding is in addition to £50 million provided by the Government earlier this year to deliver 10,000 devices by the end of September 2008 for phase one of the programme. The target was exceeded and there are now over 13,000 handheld computers being used by frontline officers. British Transport Police was among 27 forces in phase one of the programme to receive the mobile devices and was in the forefront of piloting the scheme.

Police red tape cut for 2009

From this month (January) police forces in Britain will axe the lengthy Stop and Account form and cut the level of form-filling for most crimes. Forces will only be required to record ethnicity rather than complete the current lengthy Stop and Account forms, which on average takes 10 minutes to complete on the street. They will also make more use of their radio airwaves and other mobile technologies.

The changes could save up to seven million hours of policing time - an equivalent of 3,500 extra police officers on the streets.

As well as axing the Stop and Account form nationally, the Home Office has brought forward the national changes to crime recording, four months earlier than planned.

All forces are now able to remove forms for less serious crimes to free up more police officers to be on the beat. The Home Secretary also announced that following a successful pilot, collecting data from under 16s in the British Crime Survey from January 2009 will take place.

£9 million boost for young people

A new £9 million scheme to help young people spearhead and deliver ideas for positive activities has been unveiled by Children and Young People's Minister Beverley Hughes.

Funding and practical support will be available for young people to think of new ideas for positive activities, which could be anything from sport to music to art, which they will then deliver in their local communities, on Friday and Saturday nights. Third sector organisations are being invited to bid to run the scheme and support the young people involved.

The scheme aims to be up and running in the first half of 2009 and will aim to tailor activities as much as possible to the needs of young people. It will give them influence and control over the types of positive activities that emerge within their communities and will also mean youngsters get a chance to become role models and leaders to their peers within their communities.

The new scheme delivers a key commitment of the government's 'Aiming high for young people' strategy to develop and deliver projects to provide positive activities for young people. The investment in positive activities will initially be available in around 50 of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.

Honour for crisis management expert

Rosie Murray, the chair of the Emergency Planning Society's

Human Aspects Group has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year Honours in recognition of her work with vulnerable people and in emergency planning. Rosie has worked with the victims of the Kegworth air disaster, the 2004 Tsunami, the London bombings and elsewhere. The Human Aspects Group advises government and others on humanitarian assistance issues relating to major disaster or incident. Sue Nelson of CSP is a member of the group as result of her work with those affected by rail accidents, including Southall, Ladbroke Grove, Hatfield, Great Heck and Potters Bar.

Risk-taking brains

Scientists at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee have found physical evidence that may drive risky behaviour. The study, reported in the Journal of Neuroscience, although small scale opens up the possibility of better understanding why people take risks when faced with the task of navigating a level crossing safely. The same thesis has relevance to those dealing with the spectrum of community safety issues.

The Vanderbilt scientists say they have found physical evidence of brain differences which may drive "thrill-seekers" to act impulsively or dangerously. The study also found that those taking the greatest risks processed the brain "reward chemical" dopamine differently, having fewer "receptors" for the chemical on the surface of the cells which make it.

The study, reported in the Journal of Neuroscience, could also help explain why some are more vulnerable to drug abuse and other addictions than others. This tendency is believed to be connected to dopamine, a brain hormone that, among other things, can produce a sense of enjoyment connected with certain activities. Relevant traits alongside thrill-seeking and risk taking appear to include a propensity to spend money freely and a greater sense of spontaneity. The study has "found that the density of these dopamine auto-receptors is inversely related to an individual's interest in and desire for novel experiences". The scientists added that their "research suggests that in high novelty-seeking individuals the brain is less able to regulate dopamine, and this may lead these individuals to be particularly responsive to novel and rewarding situations that normally induce dopamine release."

This study potentially adds a whole new dimension to the understanding of human behaviour at level crossings and elsewhere on and around the railway.

Keep in touch...

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