

## **Stockton Borough Council**

### **Engaging partners**

'Problems are seen as a challenge'

#### **Executive summary**

- 1 The Safer Stockton Partnership has made collaborative working a reality. Achievement has involved the creative use of funding, valuing members, breaking down barriers and developing trust. The partnership has an impressive track record in attracting external funding and in sustaining successful interventions beyond the lifetime of the funding regime. This is achieved, by using a strong performance management ethos, to monitor and evaluate success, thereby generating confidence with the funding sources.

#### **Context**

- 2 Stockton-on-Tees is situated in the North East of England and forms part of the Tees Valley sub-region. It is a unitary authority and a borough of contrasts with a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. Most of its wards register as the most deprived in England, except for five wards, which are among the most affluent.
- 3 The Safer Stockton Partnership is the 'community safety arm' of the Stockton Renaissance – the Local Strategic Partnership and demonstrates Stockton's commitment to partnership working. Stockton's Community Safety Plan links with:
  - the Community Strategy
  - youth justice plan
  - medium-term plans for all organisations, who are members of the Safer Stockton Partnership
  - drug action team plans
- 4 Within limited resources, the partnership has achieved substantial reductions in dwelling burglary and vehicle crime, and has maintained a top quartile position in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Family Group for Violent Crime.
- 5 The local authority initiated the 'Safer Stockton Partnership' in 1998, but there has been a history of strong partnerships in Stockton for many years. For example, area partnerships predate this and have involved the voluntary sector and community representatives. Investment in making collaborative working a reality has created a second generation of partnership working. This has been largely achieved with the

creative use of funding and relationship management. Time has been given to valuing members, breaking down barriers and developing trust.

### **Project implementation**

- 6 The partnership operates at a strategic level and part of its success is in having the 'right' membership. This ensures that every member makes a difference, by his or her contribution and has also helped to sustain their interest and commitment. At an operational level there are action groups for each key objective in the Community Safety Plan. A representative from a member agency chairs these six groups. For example, an ex-police commander chairs the arson group, to offer challenge and a wider perspective. The community safety team also take on the role of digesting and providing summaries of the latest updates, to facilitate partners being briefed, but not overwhelmed with the volume of new information. Induction packs have been created to enable new members to have the necessary information to start as active participants.
- 7 The Safer Stockton Partnership merged with the Youth Offending Steering Group in 2002 and integrated with the Stockton Drug Action Team in 2003. They now have joint meetings every six months. In addition, they work with wider partners as well as local agencies, for example:
  - the Stockton Renaissance
  - Safe in Tees Valley, a sub-regional community safety organisation. This has provided an opportunity to share good practice across the region
  - Neighbouring Community Safety Partnerships such as Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland
- 8 **The Government has invited Stockton**, to become one of the 21 national pilots for a new system of Local Area Agreements that aim to give Local Strategic Partnerships more flexibility in the use of Government funding.
- 9 Partner agencies use elements of their mainstream resources, to achieve the six objectives. In 2002, they set up a small, pooled budget of £17,000 for joint work. The partnership also has the lead role in managing two areas of Government funding: the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund and the Police Basic Command Unit Fund. It intends to seek funding from other sources, such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the European Union.
- 10 The Safer Stockton Partnership has a formal written constitution, but has never needed to vote on an issue as consensus has always been reached following debate and discussion. This reflects representatives from partner agencies, who are:
  - from the correct level and can make decisions
  - committed to sharing the partnership objectives
  - embrace the performance management framework

- 11 The partnership has an impressive track record in attracting external funding, to deliver local solutions to local issues, which is identified through consultation and in sustaining successful interventions, beyond the lifetime of the funding regime. For example, monies have been received for 2004-06 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Home Office and European Funding.
- 12 This is achieved by using a strong performance management ethos, to monitor and evaluate success and by generating confidence with the funding sources. For example, the partnership set targets in their second Community Safety Plan 2002-05 and received a report on progress against each of the six objectives every six months. By the end of 2005, they intend to prepare an overall evaluation of how well they have performed. In addition, for the new Community Safety Plan 2005-08, a lead agency and a deputy have been identified for each objective, to achieve more accountability and drive the targets.
- 13 Consultation is at the centre of their work and Stockton Council conduct comprehensive market research every other year that supplements dedicated consultation work in preparation for the three-year Community Safety Plan. For example, Stockton Council commissioned MORI in the years 1998, 2002 and 2004, to survey the local community. In the summer of 2004, the fear of crime was at its lowest level since the surveys began, where 46 per cent of people said they felt safe after dark.
- 14 Protocols have been developed between different professional groups, to promote working together that advances community safety. For example, those between social workers and RSPCA officers exist, so that there is an expectation to pass on relevant information to each other.

### **Critical success factors**

- a solution-focused culture, where problems are seen as challenges. There is a regular evaluation of outcomes and new plans are put in place, if outcomes are not achieved. Customer satisfaction is at the heart of community safety and a key target. Regular feedback mechanisms are in place to measure this
- partners having a stake and commitment in a tangible manner. For example, in a shared budget and shared operational leads on projects
- the creation of a 'bank' of projects in preparation allows funding, when it is released at a late stage, to be utilised
- good negotiation strategies and skills, to ensure that 'everyone leaves the table with something'

### **What are the barriers and challenges?**

- it has been difficult to engage some partners, for example, health, but now the manager of accident and emergency chairs the domestic violence sub-group
- the late release of funding, which means that projects can be delayed

- the existing FLARE IT system, which records all incidents of anti-social behaviour and disorder, has been developed, to be fit for purpose rather than procuring a new and expensive bespoke system. One of the key challenges was to change the indexing from addresses to names
- recruiting youth workers to staff the pods. The 'pods' are mobile units, which are used by young people as an opportunity to meet together. To meet this challenge, funding for extended schools has been used to train mentors, who will eventually staff the pods and an external organisation has been commissioned to run them
- advice and support is offered to landlords, to help them if they need to go to court to end a tenancy because of anti-social behaviour. This is part of a scheme, to get references for every tenant before offering them a tenancy, but encouraging private sector landlords to use the scheme is a challenge

### **What has been learnt from the experience of delivering the project?**

- 15 Secondments – from the police and Tristar Homes, the arms-length management company, who manage the council's housing stock, and probation to the anti-social behaviour team, who are managed by the council – can drive collaboration, particularly when they have a base that is shared with the local authority team.
- 16 Efficiencies can be achieved through partnership, but the structures need to be in place, to provide opportunities.

For example, through the Neighbourhood Management Path Finder, the community safety manager became aware that the council was replacing the street lighting in some areas. Negotiations resulted in money being transferred from community safety, so that within the same contract, plugs were inserted for CCTV cameras. A further spin-off from this was that the streets with a higher record of crime, were prioritised for new street lighting.

- 17 The multi-agency partnership can make a difference through collaboration and can achieve more collectively.

For example, the arson group has helped to reduce the incidents of arson, by a number of initiatives, such as the removal of rubbish, the issuing of fixed penalties and the provision of a vehicle to remove abandoned cars. In addition, the Fire Service has piloted a project called, Life Programme, which is aimed at young people, who are at risk of being excluded from society. The scheme concentrates on helping young people to work as a team and develop better social skills, through fire fighter training for one week.

### **Do's and don'ts**

Do

- ensure that every member of the partnership has an opportunity, to make a difference and is supported to do so
- work together and harness the power of the media

For example, Stockton has a strong prosecution policy against kerb crawlers and, whenever they take enforcement action, they inform both their local newspapers and the newspaper, where the kerb crawler comes from. This gives a clear message to the public about Stockton's stance on street prostitution.

Don't

- do not continue with something if it is not working

### **Documents available in hard copy**

- 18 Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Plan 2002-05.
- 19 Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Plan 2005-08 – draft copy only.
- 20 Safer Stockton Partnership Tackling Crime and Disorder Audit, August 2004.

### **Key contacts**

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### **Links to other local authorities' work**

- 21 Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police had wanted to develop greater integration in working arrangements, between the two lead authorities, and agree as to the roles and responsibilities. A review was carried out, by senior staff from both the local authority and the police, which enabled the partnership to agree a detailed specification for the management and operation of a Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) and agree a set of core requirements for policy, management and operational staff. This approach helped the partnership to develop detailed job descriptions for community safety officers within both the police and the local authority and identified key tasks for all staff involved in the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act.

Further information is available from: Lisa Furnish on: 0113 395 0840  
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- 22 An independent chief executive, who is accountable to the total partnership and leads the Thames Valley Partnership. Funding is drawn from a wide variety of sources, including districts and the business sector. Staff are seconded from key agencies, including: the county council; the police; probation and prison services; and the private sector. The partnership offers a support and advisory role to the local authorities, which take responsibility for the development and implementation of their own community safety strategies, in response to local district priorities. However, in collaboration with the local authorities, the partnership has agreed key priorities for cross-boundary working

including, domestic violence and burglary. Funding secured by the partnership is used to implement these priorities and to part-fund local district-led projects.

Further information is available on: 01844 202001 or  
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- 23 The Community Safety Partnership, in the Rhondda Cynon Taff area of Wales, is extremely well developed. The partnership has been strongly led, by the local authority chief executive and senior officers and has good working relationships with agencies, such as the police, the youth offending service, health, probation and several voluntary, charitable and business organisations. The greatest success factor is the quality of individuals leading the partnership, who are able to drive through potential barriers to multi-agency working.

Operating from a single base, the partnership is staffed by various agencies. This collaboration is housed under one roof, in a purpose-built building, which has made communication between partners and cooperation on a number of initiatives much easier than traditional partnership arrangements.

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