



**October 2006**

**Briefing 06/48**

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts, Street Scene, Grounds Maintenance and Refuse and Street Cleansing Contacts

**Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG): National Evaluation of the Street Wardens Programme (SWP)**

**Key Issues:**

- **Are wardens providing a 'visible, recognisable presence to deter crime and tackle low-level Anti-Social Behaviour?**
- **The relationship between wardens and Service Providers is central to the success of the Street Wardens Programme.**
- **The report identifies that wardens are an integral part of delivering the Liveability Agenda.**

**1. Introduction**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has published a report on the National Evaluation of the Street Wardens Programme (SWP). The programme was created in 2002 and was allocated £35 million in order to boost the establishment of street warden schemes up to the period March 2005.

**2. What are the main goals of the Street Wardens Programme (SWP)?**

The central goals of the street wardens have been to improve liveability in deprived areas using the following means:

- Improving the physical appearance of the streets
- Fostering social inclusion
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Deterring anti-social behaviour

The broad operational remit for warden activities has been defined as tackling "nuisances, incivilities and inconveniences." In order to achieve this wardens have been tasked with the following:

- Being a uniformed, visible presence other than the police. This includes the recognition of the need for a uniformed, patrolling presence that the public remember fondly as the old local ‘bobby on the beat’.
- Co-ordinating the provision of local services
- Providing reassurance to local residents
- Responsibility for problem solving
- Fostering social inclusion and community spirit.

The report admits that this definition is “pretty loose” and has resulted in a diverse range of responses being adopted by wardens across the 121 schemes established across the nine Government Offices. Schemes have included different types of the following activities:

- Patrolling, reporting, promoting, diversionary activities, direct action, enforcing, supporting and community facilitation.
- Commonalities between these schemes (those aspects that apply right across the UK spectrum) include:
- Wardens spending time patrolling the streets supported by managers.
- A parent organisation that has an influence on the emphasis of the wardens’ work.
- Reliance on partnerships with a range of other agencies to deliver their intervention.

A key function which the report has identified and which is common across the schemes is that of providing “a visible, recognisable presence to deter crime and tackle low-level anti-social behaviour.”

### **3. What are the characteristics of a good Warden Scheme?**

Some of the pre-conditions for the creation of successful schemes include:

- An understanding of the needs of the local area
- An understanding of the local mainstream service provision context.
- Effective relationships with partner agencies including:
  - Strategic and managerial links with the partner agency to ensure commitment to the warden scheme.
  - Regular communication
  - Joint planning so as to ensure that activities do not conflict and that the agencies complement rather than duplicate work and that they are clearly delineated areas of individual responsibility.
  - Coterminous boundaries.
  - Giving schemes the opportunity to promote joint working with other agencies; and;
  - Formal agreements to provide consistency of service.

It has been identified that wardens have tended to develop good relationships through the ‘informal’ networks of their scheme managers rather than through formal agreements with partners. This has been a key element in the successful implementation of the scheme.

### **4. What types of ‘Interventions’ do Wardens undertake?**

The type of ‘interventions’ undertaken by wardens has also been identified as a crucial area of warden activity. The most commonly used are those of ‘patrolling’ – that is “providing a reassuring and deterring presence in the community.” Crucial to the implementation of successful patrols is the way in which their objectives are set. For example, if the objective is to reduce crime then patrols need to be “intensive and on foot.” Conversely, if the objective is to improve environmental management then patrols can be less intensive. The

report makes the important point that as the programme has grown in maturity wardens have 'learnt what works' - this had led to a gradual shift away from only 'patrolling and reporting' towards 'supporting and taking direct action.'

Interventions are identified as varying at the local level dependent upon the following variables:

- The problems faced by residents
- The resources and skills possessed by the scheme
- The jurisdiction of mainstream service providers
- The ability of mainstream providers to respond to warden reports.

## **5. Why is Local Knowledge so important?**

The main barriers identified in the functioning of the warden scheme tend to emanate from local residents. Thus the local knowledge of managers within the programme in relation to local mainstream providers, and the liveability agenda more broadly is viewed as indispensable. The report goes on to state that "when a scheme manager does not have such prior knowledge of the area, more formal information sharing agreements and systematic community engagement may be required for successful problem identification."

In order to avoid duplicating the role of service providers the report encourages "process mapping of current provision" in order to "help wardens gain knowledge." Again, this process has tended to rely on the informal knowledge of warden managers in terms of local service providers.

This relationship is also crucial in terms of making sure that warden reports are acted upon and not simply ignored by service providers. Cost constraint is a crucial element here in that service providers have competing demands and reports are dealt with most effectively where there exists a named contact at the service provider and where there is a set protocol describing the mutual obligations of the service provider and the warden service.

## **6. The role of Partnerships in the Street Wardens Programme**

One of the backbones of the warden programme is 'partnership working.' The report states that "productive partner relationships ensure that warden reports are acted on, that wardens get access to information concerning local area need, and that operational protocols can be developed to avoid duplication of activities." The report suggests that wardens have been indispensable to partners by acting as the "eyes and ears" of service providers on the ground and their existence has also encouraged a radical rethink about 'the way' in which local services are delivered.

## **7. What is the function of Steering Groups?**

In the words of the report "steering groups represent a diverse range of partners, including the police, local authorities, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and so on." The Warden scheme has sometimes found it difficult to engage certain partners within the scheme. Areas where this led to deficiencies in delivery include the following:

- There is a lack of Local Authority environmental management team involvement despite the focus of warden objectives in this area.
- There is a lack of Drug Action team (DAT) and Youth Offending Team (YOT) representatives on steering groups; and

- Difficulties in engaging the local community through the steering groups and concern over how representative participation is where it is occurring.

In order to effectively 'engage and challenge' the report states that steering groups require "clearly defined terms of reference, roles and responsibilities, and a published agenda."

## **8. The Impact of the Street Wardens Programme**

- Surveys of residents have shown that liveability has improved since the inception of the Street Wardens Programme. For example:
- In areas with street wardens more residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (74% in 2005 as opposed to 71 % in 2003).
- Most residents in areas with street warden areas felt the area had improved over the last two years (19% in 2005 as opposed to 16% in 2003.)
- There is a slightly reduced risk of crime in areas where there are resident street wardens – 75% said they had experienced no crime in 2005 as opposed to 69% in 2003.
- Residents also felt their area had improved in terms of environmental problems, social inclusion, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.

## **9. Have there been improvements in Liveability?**

These improvements in liveability, states the report, cannot be reduced to the impact of the Street Warden Programme because other areas without wardens have also seen improvements. The reasons why this might be the case include the following:

- Implementation variability – there have been varying degrees of the Street Wardens Programme's success.
- Benefits can be dispersed to other areas.
- There may be schemes running in comparator areas that are similar to Street Warden Programmes?
- In at least one area Street Warden Programme was so successful that it was expanded to include part of the comparator area.

Overall the research showed "a positive relationship between awareness of and contact with street wardens, and perceptions that the neighbourhood had improved." This was also found to be true in comparator areas.

## **10. What are the resource implications of the programme?**

Costs of the Street Warden Programme varied from an average of £0.15 million to £0.45 million per annum. Costs largely depend of the amount of interventions undertaken by each scheme. The point is also made that those services that focus on paperwork in the form of reports tend to add to the overall resource burden in terms of creating work for other agencies thereby putting other resources under pressure. The report states that services dealing with their own problems free up resources for other agencies and that this should be considered at the planning stage.

These figures do not however take into account any savings that may accrue from reduced levels of environmental crime or improvements in the physical appearance of an area. APSE has evidence from other local authorities that enforcement of local environmental objectives can result in savings by helping divert resources from issues such as fly-tipping clearance into other areas. DEFRA estimate that for flytipping, 80% of current local

authority expenditure goes on clearance and urging local authorities to spend more on enforcement and education. Warden schemes with their increased street presence can assist in achieving this.

## **11. How successful has the programme been?**

Overall, the scheme is judged to have been successful in that:

- Wardens have tended to achieve an understanding of the local area.
- Wardens have developed an understanding of local mainstream services.
- Wardens have developed productive relationships with partners.
- The deployment of wardens is leading to a rethink in how local services are delivered.
- Overall the Street Warden Programme has been well implemented and there is good case-study evidence to back this up – especially in the area of environmental management.

## **12. What are the policy implications and how do wardens operate alongside Police Community Support Officers?**

The key policy implication stems from the fact that “wardens are seen as a key mechanism for implementing the liveability agenda.” This also puts them at the centre of the local authority attempt to roll out the neighbourhood management model still further. A key question raised in the final section of the report is whether Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are a more effective intervention than street warden teams.

Initially it was feared that PCSOs would undercut street warden schemes due to the police’s unwillingness to work with the schemes. The report argues that such fears have proven ill founded and that PCSOs actually provide “different and complementary functions.”

In terms of how these roles can co-exist the report states that wardens have come to hone in more on “environmental management work, while others do more work with young people through visits and activities?”

The report also gave some examples of current warden – PCSO partnership working suggesting that both can agree on the following:

- Agree on expectations, demarcations and responsibilities as soon as possible.
- Share intelligence on crime and ASB
- Avoid the duplication of patrols
- Work together on operational matters
- Divide responsibilities so that PCSOs primarily focus on ASB and crime while wardens concentrate on environmental management and social inclusion.

Finally, the report elicits a number of areas where wardens will be more appropriate than PCSOs including:

- When many of an area’s problems are felt to derive from environmental management issues – wardens are ideally placed to resolve such issues.
- When the residents of an area are disaffected with the police – wardens are seen as effective in terms of engagement where there has been a breakdown in trust with the police.

- Where wardens can help complement the activities of local authority service provision – this could take the form of providing an integrated report function or as a complement to the neighbourhood management approach to improving an area.

### **13. APSE Comments**

APSE has been broadly supportive of the street wardens' programmes so long as they offer value for money and can command local legitimacy and support the role of local elected members. Street wardens have been an integral part of delivering and implementing the Liveability agenda and providing visible reassurance to communities by providing a presence on the ground. They also play a vital role in bringing local knowledge and contacts to their role thereby gaining trust where the police, for example, may find it more difficult.

The wardens also help in forging and supporting local partnerships while complementing service delivery. The report makes clear that in terms of cost and resources the warden scheme benefits from well defined protocols and 'process mapping' in terms of how they work with other agencies and a beefed up role for the steering groups which oversee their function. The role of service providers has been enhanced by warden reports which provide a great deal of informal knowledge that can help service providers.

The main function of the wardens when the scheme began revolved around 'patrolling and reporting' but the report identifies a shift towards "supporting and taking direct action.' Rather than simply passing on reports to other agencies the wardens have been problem-solving on the ground and also demonstrating how vital their function has become. During the course of the programme wardens have 'learnt what works' while in the process gaining local knowledge. As the report states, the way in which the scheme operates differs from place to place and so the definition of the Street Warden Programme remains loose and open to local input.

In terms of the cost implications of street wardens, the Home Office Together campaign calculated a figure of £185 for each incident of rowdy and nuisance behaviour and noise. Moreover, such behaviour made up 40% of ASB 'calls for service' in 2004. Neighbour disputes/complaints over noise account for over half of all calls to housing offices – therefore speedier resolution of such disputes will have a positive cost benefit. These will reduce and offset the cost implications if implementing warden schemes.

A recent report from Sheffield Hallam University entitled *Neighbourhood Wardens: More than the 'Eyes and Ears' of Communities: Research Report 60* is also worth looking at as it covers some of the themes addressed here looking at partnerships between stakeholders as well as community engagement, the setting up of e-communities and engages more directly with the role of vulnerable groups and the role of PCSOs which it says may have "superseded" warden schemes "to some extent" and in some areas. For details click on the following:

<http://ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk/ndcevaluation/Documents/Research%20Reports/RR60.pdf#search='community%20wardens%20research'>

Many authorities are now using IT as an efficient means of reducing anti-social behaviour to assist wardens in their duties. For example, East Ayrshire's use of Respond Complaint and Feedback Management Software. The programme has helped highlight trouble spots" before they "escalate" while "facilitating interaction with third parties such as community wardens." Importantly the system "provides the data required to secure central government funding" thereby offsetting what the council spends on the programme.

Programmes such as these may offer another source of support and enhance initiatives such as the Street Wardens Programme as they are applied across the UK. The impact of street wardens is now well documented. Whether this is through community engagement, prevention or enforcement, street wardens can have an impact on the public perception of how “liveable” a community is, which is increasingly a political priority.

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