

**STATEMENT  
BY  
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

**TITLE** Working Together for Safer Communities

**DATE** 12 December 2017

**BY** Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services

Next year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Crime & Disorder Act that put statutory partnership working at the heart of efforts to address community safety issues.

Although the ‘partnership’ principle of the original Act still holds, today’s social, political, economic and environmental conditions in Wales are very different to those in which ‘community safety partnerships’ were established in the 1990s.

Today’s challenges include; a range of new types of crime including modern slavery and hate crime; the escalating threat from international terrorism; the influence of new psychoactive substances and the effects of cyber-enabled offending.

Public service structures in Wales have evolved since 1998 as a result of devolution and there have been numerous changes to the primary legislation itself.

The Auditor General’s critical report *Community Safety in Wales* published in October 2016 suggested that Welsh community safety partnerships were not as effective as they should be. It highlighted important issues including the complex and confusing policy landscape in which partners now operate and concerns about leadership and accountability in the delivery of community safety priorities.

However, the report doesn't fully reflect our work to create more sustainable partnership approaches to public services delivery. The recommendations are also unlikely to address the challenges and issues the Auditor General identifies.

Building on previous work, we have now undertaken a comprehensive and wide-ranging review of community safety partnership working in Wales. I am confident this will help us further develop the many successes of the Welsh Government's approach.

In partnership with the Youth Justice Board Cymru we have achieved significant and sustained reductions in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system. We have halved the number of fire casualties and fires including grass fires set deliberately. Welsh police forces have recruited an additional 500 community support officers paid for by the Welsh Government while many areas in England are losing these valuable community assets. We have introduced ground-breaking legislation to address violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and are leading the way with our pioneering work to address modern slavery.

Announcing the nature and scope of the review in March, the former Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant, said he wanted the review to be 'ambitious in its thinking' and that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act gave us an unprecedented opportunity to establish a sustainable approach to safer communities.

I am pleased to say that the review has lived up to his hopes, placing the Sustainable Development Principle at the heart of its approach.

It has involved the widest possible range of stakeholders aided by an Oversight Group with representation from local government, fire and rescue services, Police and Crime Commissioners, the Youth Justice Board Cymru, police chiefs, probation and prison services, the third sector and UK Government departments.

As the review report is being published today, I do not propose to rehearse its conclusions here. I will, however, say that I'm very encouraged by the

over-riding conclusion that, despite the issues and challenges identified by the Auditor General, we have much to be proud of and to build upon in establishing a new and shared vision for Working Together for Safer Communities.

This vision will be achieved through collaborative and integrated multi-agency activity that:

- Is evidence-based and intelligence-led;
- Is supported by appropriate skills & knowledge;
- Is sustainably resourced and matches local needs;
- Engages and involves citizens;
- Takes a preventative approach and intervenes as early as possible;
- Focuses on long-term improvements and benefits.

This is a vision which is underpinned by our Welsh Government ambition to create Prosperity for All.

The Welsh Government is therefore committed to a long-term Safer Communities programme of work – in partnership with our devolved and non-devolved partners and stakeholders – that will:

- Work with the Justice Commission for Wales to consider how we can do things differently in Wales and identify options for the development of a distinct Welsh justice system.
- Develop a different relationship and strategic approach with non-devolved community safety partners, which establishes a more effective community safety leadership role for Welsh Government.
- Establish a community safety ‘partnership’ policy & practice leadership function within the Welsh Government.
- Develop new Wales-specific guidance that builds on the sustainable development principle and the Hallmarks of Effective Partnership.
- Consider how to establish a new and inclusive national community safety network for Wales to support future Welsh community safety policy and practice development and to help to build the ‘appropriate skills and knowledge’ required;

- Explore opportunities for piloting joint thematic inspection arrangements for partnership working around the 'reducing reoffending' theme;
- Consider how to improve community safety funding programmes to secure longer term and more flexible 'outcomes focused' funding.

I look forward to working with our many partners and stakeholders – both devolved and non-devolved – in leading this programme to help us achieve our ambitious and sustainable vision for safer communities and prosperity for all across Wales.