



CSNB RESPONSE TO THE MOPAC AND METROPOLITAN POLICE DRAFT PUBLIC ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The responses below are the result of a public community consultation organised by the CSNB that was held on Tuesday 19 September and further discussions with CSNB Trustees.

1. To what extent do you agree that the Metropolitan Police Service should improve its current online offer to the public?

Online is not resource free and requires trained staff who can respond appropriately. Residents would prefer to maintain a telephone-based system until online provision is proven.

The Met performance in answering 101 calls has been extremely poor. The Met needs to get existing forms of communications right before they become reliant on new ones. There are also concerns that sections of the community who are vulnerable, but not technically savvy, could feel even more isolated.

There is a danger that expectations are being built up. The Met needs to be realistic about what can be achieved with the resources that are available. Most importantly, before new services are introduced the Met need to make sure alternatives are in place first. The police have a poor history when it comes to introducing new technologies so they need to get significantly better at this.

2. After reading the draft strategy document, do any partners or other community members have suggestions for possible suitable locations for new Dedicated Ward Officer hubs?

Work with local authorities, community provisions such as tenant and resident groups, youth clubs, local business, GP surgeries/health centres etc. They all have premises in the community often used by people who would not normally come into contact with the police.

3. Community Contact Sessions are designed to free up officer time and meet the needs of individual communities across London. To what extent do you agree that existing Contact Points should be replaced with Community Contact Sessions?

Contact Points were a total waste of resources. Identify three or four areas in each ward that are of the greatest concern, then hold the Community Contact Sessions at those locations. Ideally this would link into the ward promises and priorities. Again, use local authority premises such as libraries, local businesses and community facilities such as youth centres, community centres, TRA buildings, sports centres etc.

The Met should make better use of volunteers (not just tokenistic flirtations). Volunteers are not a free resource; they will cost money to train, but they could assist on front counters and with Community Contact Sessions. They could even bring with them knowledge of different communities.

4. Do you have any suggestions for how Community Contact Sessions could best meet the needs of your community?

There are concerns that people might think the only option they have to report crime is through their local Community Contact Sessions. This will not meet peoples' needs particularly when it comes to reporting sensitive crimes such as sexual violence and domestic violence. There should be clear signposting for how people can report such crimes.

5. To what extent do you agree that flexible opportunities to contact police officers (e.g. Community Contact Sessions) are a suitable alternative to accessing the police via a front counter?

Make sure the basics are working; that phone calls and emails are answered. Unless positive action is taken (as outlined in question 3), there is a danger that Community Contact Sessions will be no better than Contact Points.

6. Please include any further comments - about flexible opportunities to contact police officers as an alternative to accessing the police via a front counter.

DWOs must be known to their communities. They must be regular visitors to the focal points that every community has; it could be just a matter of popping in to the local shop and chatting with the shopkeeper or stopping by the community centre for a coffee with the mums and toddlers group.

7. It is proposed some front counter locations are swapped across London, in order to maximise savings and capital receipts. To what extent do you agree that the following changes should take place?

It is logical to invest in people rather than buildings.

8. After reading the draft strategy document, should we consider low-cost alternatives to front counters for communities over 45 minutes from their nearest front counter? What options should we consider?

Nowhere in Camden will residents be over 45 minutes away from a front counter.

9. How can we ensure that hard to reach communities are identified and their voices actively sought on London-wide and Borough-level policing issues?

The Met and MOPAC need to support existing structures. Specifically, using corporate resources to raise awareness of SNPs and SNBs. This could be centrally produced information targeted at underrepresented communities about the purpose of SNPs and how they can get involved. SNBs should be better funded so they were able to produce their own bespoke publicity.

SNPs have now been around for over 10 years and need to be rejuvenated. They need to be outward looking and regularly review their membership to make sure they represent all the areas and all the communities in their ward. Because of the bottom-up approach, any changes to SNPs will be reflected in the composition of SNBs and, in turn London-wide bodies.

Most important is the role of DWOs. DWOs must link into community networks that currently exist on their patches. They should reach out to “hard to reach” groups and meet them on their own territories (particularly when engaging with young people). Relationships take time to build will take more than one visit. Having said this, the best thing they can do is be a visible presence on the streets and in estates. Residents should be familiar with, and know the names of, their DWOs. This brings to mind the tenure of DWOs; the Met need a revolution in how they move officers on at short notice and with **NO** succession planning – thereby losing all the goodwill and contacts that had been established. With regard to succession planning the same can be said of the churn in Borough Commanders and their relationships with SNBs.

The police have still got a long way to go to gain the trust and confidence of all communities. People still do not feel confident to speak and explain their issues and any criminal activities in their areas to the police.

10. How can MOPAC better enable local communities to be more aware of, and involved, in the work of the local Independent Advisory Groups, Safer Neighbourhood Boards, Independent Custody Visiting and Community Monitoring Groups?

As mentioned above (in question 8), MOPAC should use their corporate resources to promote SNBs. MOPAC also need to fund SNBs appropriately, the myth that SNBs can fund all their personal and administration from the £5,000 core funding is fanciful. Once independent SNBs such as Camden pay rent, phone, insurance and other basic costs there is nothing left for administrative support.

MOPAC should provide sufficient funds for SNBs to devise their own local publicity that can be used to recruit new members.

There are concerns that MOPAC impose their plans regardless of the outcomes of the consultations undertaken.

There needs to be ongoing clarification about the different roles IAGs and SNBs to avoid confusion. In Camden the IAG and ICVs are members of the SNB. We each understand our roles, but under a previous Borough Commander (many years ago) there were concerns he was using the IAG as his chosen consultative mechanism.

11. How can the Metropolitan Police's community engagement complement and work more closely with the public engagement by local authorities?

Camden has a strong tradition of partnership working, not just between the police and local authority, but with other statutory agencies and the third sector. Camden SNB has been a member of that partnership from the beginning and the CSNB has been commissioned by the Community Safety Partnership to undertake numerous community engagement activities. At time of budget reductions public authorities must not cut back on engaging communities. Through the funding it provides to Community Safety Partnerships MOPAC should challenge levels of community engagement has taken place.

12. What type of information should be shared by the police to help communities feel informed about policing and crime in their area?

MOPAC provide excellent web-based data sets on police performance that communities can access. This has come a long way over the past 10 years and we hope MOPAC will continue with its development.

In Camden the police email the SNB with 'Partnership Notices' regarding critical incidents and incidents of community concern. The SNB immediately share these notices with SNP chairs. This is a very useful way to disseminate information fast and reduce speculation and gossip within communities.

Camden SNB holds public meetings where the Borough Commander can update residents on policing issues and residents can ask questions. We also hold 'Trustees' meetings (other boroughs might call them 'Executive' meetings) where the Borough Commander can speak in confidence and be robustly challenged by Trustees.

At ward level DWOs should keep in regular contact with their SNT chairs. They should also provide policing updates at every SNP meeting. In addition SNTs should provide regular ward email updates highlighting the activities the DWOs have undertaken. This would contribute to building confidence.

13. What type of information should be shared by the police to help communities protect themselves from crime and anti-social behaviour?

By what delivery method should this information be shared? Are there new digital or innovative methods that should be trialled?

The Met should have a policy that everything can be shared unless there are clear reasons why something should not.

Following the terrorist incidents last summer, Camden SNB arranged for the Met to provide residents with a presentation/advice on what to do in the event of a terrorist incident. The SNB paid for this event from its own resources because it felt it was highly likely Camden would be subject to another terrorist attack. Under the old CPEG system these types of presentations happened regularly (on different subjects), however under the SNB project-based model there is less scope for such events.

If the move to merge boroughs ever takes place there is a concern that the link between the Borough Commander and SNBs will be weakened with Borough Commanders delegating ever junior officers to substitute for them.

Innovation is overrated – just get the basics right.

14. How should the police reassure the public about crime trends and be a trusted source of facts, particularly on social media?

See above. In addition social media should only ever be considered icing on the cake.

15. How can communities be reassured about real-time events or trends in their area?

See response to question 11 above.

16. How can we empower local citizens to influence Borough and Ward-level policing? How can this be achieved digitally or through other virtual means, so it is not just through physical attendance at Community Contact Sessions?

The Met could develop apps for younger people or use apps that have already been developed by third parties. Whatever moves there are to empower residents digitally the Met will need to continue to use traditional methods of engaging communities. Otherwise all the Met will do is create new groups of hard to reach people made up of those without technical knowhow.

17. What tools or training do local citizens need to feel empowered to assist and work with the police to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour in their area?

The Met should be more creative in ways they could use volunteers. Volunteers should receive training from the police. Volunteers should patrol

their own neighbourhoods and when they witness incidents, they would not intervene. They should be supplied with radios to communicate with Met Call Centres, which will assign Police Officers to attend and deal with the situation as required.

There should be greater investment in Police-led Neighbourhood Watches whose members can feed into SNPs.

Borough-based Police Crime Prevention Officers should be reintroduced to raise Community Security awareness.