



To: Local Authority Chief Executives in England

1 March 2010

Dear Colleague

PUBLICATION OF SAFE AND CONFIDENT NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

We are today publishing a new [Safe and Confident Neighbourhoods Strategy](#) which sets out a cross Government and agency vision for safe and confident neighbourhoods. It aims to build on the success of neighbourhood policing, setting out a clear message on how we intend to sustain and embed it into a wider force approach. Critically it also recognises that the police can not deliver safe and confident neighbourhoods alone – only by working in partnership with local authorities and other key agencies can this be achieved. By working with the police, you have contributed to the national improvement we have seen in the percentage of people that are confident that the police and local authorities are dealing with the antisocial behaviour and crime issues that matter locally, which has risen by 4% points in the last year to 50%. We are keen to ensure that we maintain this momentum and look for your support in driving this forward. **We are clear that this has to be done in partnership.**

At the local level, we have seen through the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment, that partners are working together effectively to drive improved outcomes through local area agreements on key issues such as increasing public confidence and reducing perceptions of anti-social behaviour. **Building on existing good practice, such as linked neighbourhood management and neighbouring policing teams, we want to drive and embed a strong partnership approach at the neighbourhood level.**

We know that neighbourhood structures, bringing together public and voluntary service providers, and residents work. Independent evaluations show that approaches like neighbourhood management, and wardens schemes have helped to cut crime and enhance community safety. They also improve people's perceptions of where they live and their satisfaction with local services, as well as their ability to get their voice heard when it comes to agreeing local priorities for action. And as the strategy sets out, we have helped these schemes to develop through the support provided by organisations such as the National Association for Neighbourhood Management and the Neighbourhood Training and Resource Centres.

We know that neighbourhood partnerships have already been established in many places, and continue to develop using different models and approaches that suit the particular needs of each area such as neighbourhood management. It is important that we continue to support local variation and flexibility, and help you to further strengthen these. That is why, through this strategy, we are **giving CSPs**

(Community Safety Partnerships) a clear strategic role in promoting and enabling neighbourhood partnerships working with LSPs/LSBs to link neighbourhoods to a shared vision for communities. This will involve:

- Defining the nature and location of priority issues for your neighbourhoods through information from partners and the communities;
- Ensuring there is the right mix of partners in the right neighbourhoods and that collective resources can be used flexibly to best effect to drive improve outcomes in those areas e.g. through continuing to support neighbourhood policing teams through match funding of PCSOs; and
- Tackling blockages at the delivery level and escalating issues as necessary to the LSP.

As strategic leaders and democratic champions for their communities and members of both the CSP and LSP, the local authority has an important role to play. We are also writing with more detail to CSP chairs, which you will receive if you also hold that post.

To ensure that neighbourhood partnership working can be effective, it is important that neighbourhood partners such as neighbourhood policing teams or neighbourhood managers have clear points of contact in other services which can help them to tackle ASB and some of the root causes of crime. **The strategy therefore expects local authorities and other key partners such as PCTs, and Children's Trusts to support neighbourhood partners and partnerships through clear, identified or named points of contact** enabling them to raise any issues/ challenges, and receive advice on how they might overcome those.

It is vital also to ensure that local people are fully engaged and feel part of any neighbourhood arrangements. **The strategy announces 12 areas that have successfully bid to test out Neighbourhood Agreements which can bring partnership working and community engagement at the neighbourhood level.** Similar to Community Contracts - which have been shown to improve satisfaction in the local area - Neighbourhood Agreements provide a way for communities and local partnerships to negotiate and agree standards of service across the community safety and justice agendas, linking up neighbourhood views with strategic priority setting. Importantly they also empower the public to have a say about how issues in their area could best be tackled, share responsibility with local services, and hold partner agencies to account. **Support and advice will also be available for others who wish to develop this approach**

Neighbourhood partnerships and agreements are an important and effective vehicle for local people and communities to voice their concerns at the neighbourhood level, but there will be issues which they will need support on to address and resolve. Local Government with their strong democratic mandate have a central role to play, in particular through their overview and scrutiny committees by championing issues of local concern and taking those issues up with other service providers to seek action. Building on this important role, we are supporting a Private Members Bill which develops proposals from the *Strengthening Local Democracy* consultation, which establishes a framework to further enhance local government scrutiny powers to facilitate the scrutiny of local public service providers.

We recognise that Government must also play a strong role. There are a number of other ways in which we aim to support and enable you to work with practitioners and

communities at the neighbourhood level to ensure that people feel safe and confident in the places that they live and work.

In response to requests from practitioners we intend to publish consolidated guidance for neighbourhood partnerships. We are also working together to develop a range of performance support for police forces and partnerships to ensure the 2012 target on public confidence is delivered (and we will be writing out shortly on this) and have supported forces to, from today, publish local confidence information at CSP level. And our work with you and other local partners on Total Place and Integrated Offender Management will help us to better understand the challenges and barriers to local partnership working, and inform what future action we can take to drive a more efficient and effective way of working for us all.

The Local Government Association is supportive of the direction of this Strategy and will work to support local authorities to take this forward.

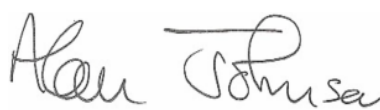
Finally, we know that local communities are at their strongest and most confident when residents themselves come together, work to shared goals and are actively involved in helping to solve problems that affect them. We want to support and back those people that want to make a difference in their community by giving them the training and hands on support they need to work together to solve problems. That is why we are providing help to local communities and practitioners in many neighbourhoods through our Connecting Communities programme, and through training events and programmes being held across England to equip up to 10,000 front-line staff and community champions with the confidence and know-how they need to join together and take a stand against anti-social behaviour.

Making neighbourhoods feel safe and confident relies on us all to play our part, and we look forward to working with you to take forward this important area of work together.

Yours sincerely



Rt. Hon John Denham MP
Secretary of State for Communities
and Local Government



Rt. Hon Alan Johnson MP
Home Secretary

