

Communications Strategy

Written by

Communications Consultant
Natalie Williams

for the

**Thurrock Community
Safety Partnership**



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CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

2. BACKGROUND..... 4

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE FEAR OF CRIME..... 5

4. NATIONAL CONTEXT 6

5. THURROCK CONTEXT 9

6. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS..... 13

A. COMMUNICATIONS: GENERAL 13

B. COMMUNICATIONS: THROUGH THE MEDIA 16

C. COMMUNICATIONS: COMMUNITY TV 18

D. COMMUNICATIONS: PUBLICATIONS 20

E. COMMUNICATIONS: ONLINE 22

F. COMMUNICATIONS: FACE-TO-FACE 23

G. COMMUNICATIONS: ADVERTISING 24

H. COMMUNICATIONS: INTERNAL 25

I. COMMUNICATIONS: CAMPAIGNS 26

J. COMMUNICATIONS: EVALUATION 27

7. CONCLUSION 28

APPENDIX A – List of key stakeholders and staff interviewed 29

APPENDIX B – Branding Guidelines 30

APPENDIX C – Press Release Template 31

BIBLIOGRAPHY 32

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) aims to make a significant, measurable impact on the fear of crime and feelings of safety in Thurrock. This requires a robust approach with a cohesive strategy and innovative projects, backed by human and financial resources and the partner agencies.

Nationally, there is now a strong focus on communicating messages about community safety, with police forces and local authorities increasingly directed to improve perceptions, confidence and satisfaction. The Home Office has in recent weeks published *Communicating for Confidence* – a research and guidance document for community safety partnerships.

The Home Office guidance to partnerships entitled *Communicating Crime Reduction*, published at www.crimereduction.gov.uk, states:

“The whole partnership must agree the aims and objectives of the communication strategy. This will make sure that each partner is committed to the strategy and will abide by the unified message [...] Agencies that pursue their own agenda at the expense of the partnership will undermine any partnership communications activity.”

This TCSP Communications Strategy outlines 34 recommendations for the Partnership to implement. The first 33 recommendations are under the following communication headings: General; Through the Media; Community TV; Publications; Online; Face-to-Face; Advertising; Internal; Campaigns; and Evaluation.

Many of the recommendations are concerned with ensuring that there is a consistent approach to communicating with residents. To achieve this, it is recommended that TCSP:

- Dedicate resources – both human and financial;
- Develop a communications calendar – to draw together all communications activity and facilitate a strategic approach each year; and
- Produce consistent communication materials – including establishing branding, a set style for printed documents and a central point of contact for the media, as well as clarifying which issues fall under the Partnership’s remit.

Other recommendations include examples of best practice and ideas for how to engage in two-way communications with residents. These include:

- Using community television to its full potential;
- Mapping, political ‘speed-dating’, door-to-door and other consultation activities.

Internal communications is an important factor, especially as the Home Office’s *Communicating for Confidence: Insight & Research* document, published in May 2009, reveals that “more criminal justice staff [say] they would speak critically about the system (32%) than those who say they would speak highly of it (19%). Most critical of the system are the police, with just one in ten (10%) saying they would speak highly and half (49%) saying they would speak critically”. As such, recommendations for improving internal communications are included in this document.

Measuring the effectiveness of communications is very important to ascertain which initiatives are the most successful in Thurrock and also to secure future communications budgets, and therefore a recommendation about evaluating each activity.

Ultimately this Communications Strategy, alongside the very recent Home Office guidance, aims to enable the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership to have one consistent dialogue on crime and anti-social behaviour with residents.

To that end, the final recommendation is that the partners sign up to this strategy and support its implementation.

2. BACKGROUND

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) tasked Communications Consultant Natalie Williams with developing a comprehensive Communications Strategy to enable TCSP to make measurable progress in raising the profile of the work of the Partnership, improving residents' perceptions of crime and therefore reducing the fear of crime in Thurrock.

A 'Needs Assessment' was conducted in April 2009. This involved interviews with 14 key stakeholders from Thurrock Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service and the Thurrock Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).

Research into statutory requirements, national guidelines and best practice was carried out prior to the interviews with stakeholders.

This **Communications Strategy** reflects the findings of the Needs Assessment and Research, and takes into account both statutory and local requirements. It outlines the current national context before going on to detail measurable objectives and recommending a variety of actions to achieve these.

Objectives of this Communications Strategy

The purpose of this Communications Strategy is to:

1. Set out the current national context for communicating crime reduction and general community safety messages, including Government policy, guidance and research;
2. Outline communications activity options for the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership to consider carrying out over the 2009/10-financial year and beyond;
3. Facilitate an improvement in the overall communications of the TCSP with residents, thereby reducing the fear of crime;
4. Facilitate an improvement in the overall communications of the TCSP with its statutory, non-statutory and voluntary partners, and the staff members of these agencies.
5. By identifying local priorities and keeping people informed, we can help to increase public confidence by 5% over the next two years in the work of the local services to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. (As measured by reward target Ni 21 perception indicator)

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE FEAR OF CRIME

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself” – Franklin D Roosevelt

The fear of crime is a complex issue that has attracted an increasing focus from central Government, local authorities, police forces and community safety partnerships over the last few years, from the creation of the Home Office Fear of Crime Unit in 2001 to the Casey Review “Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime” published in June 2008 and the announcement from the Home Secretary in March 2009 that there is now a new, single national target for police forces, which, in line with the Policing Green Paper (July 2008), focuses on perceptions and public confidence.

Local authorities in urban and rural areas alike are finding that they need to address the fear of crime because it is affecting the quality of their residents’ lives, irrespective of actual crime levels. In fact, this is one issue that is a more significant problem for lower crime areas, because it is in ‘safer’ areas that public perceptions are far removed from the reality.

The British Crime Survey shows that more than a third of the population (36%) feel that the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) has a negative impact on the day-to-day quality of their lives.¹

Challenging the perception gap is important. As the Policing Green Paper, “From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together”, states:

“If crime falls but people do not have the confidence that this is happening in their neighbourhood, their quality of life is affected and the benefits of reduced crime are not realised. This matters because it undermines our efforts to engage the community through crime reporting, intelligence gathering and community engagement activities.”

There is not a ‘quick fix’ or ‘golden bullet’ solution to the fear of crime, but what is clear is that good, two-way communication is crucial. Therefore, changing public perceptions of crime requires a robust, consistent, long-term communications strategy.

¹ Home Office Statistical Bulletin, “Crime in England and Wales 2007/08”, July 2008

4. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Nationally, crime has been falling steadily for more than a decade, with a reduction of 48% since 1995.² Yet only 20% are willing to accept this – in fact, 66% think there is more crime than two years ago (including 35% who believe crime has risen ‘a lot’³) and just 6% think there is less.⁴

Of those surveyed who think that crime rates are rising, 57% said what they see on television makes them believe that there is more crime than two years ago, while 48% said it is because of what they read in newspapers. Every other response option scored 24% or less, including experiences of people they know (24%) and personal experience (20%).⁵

Nicholas and Walker (Home Office Statistical Bulletin, “Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003”) found that one of the four factors most strongly independently associated with perceiving that the national crime rate had increased was reading a newspaper other than the *Guardian* or *Independent*, or not regularly reading any newspaper.

Perception gaps are found in other public sectors, such as health, but are more pronounced in relation to crime, perhaps because this is the issue that matters most to the public: Crime was found to be the public’s primary concern in social research institute Ipsos MORI’s August 2007 Political Monitor, with 55% placing it as their top priority. Crime was 20 percentage points ahead of the next most important issue.

The British Crime Survey 2007/08 revealed that people have more positive perceptions about the area in which they live – 39% think that crime in their local area has increased (including 13% who believe crime has risen ‘a lot’ in their local area).⁶

Good Communication

Current Home Office guidance for Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (also known as Community Safety Partnerships), “Delivering Safer Communities: A Guide to Effective Partnership Working” (published in September 2007), states that:

“An effective partnership should be visible and accountable to its community for the decisions and actions it takes on their behalf. Strong communities are ones where people are informed about what is being done to address their concerns [...] It is important that the communities are able to access the information on what partners are doing to address crime and anti-social behaviour.”⁷

The Casey Review reiterates the importance of good communication between agencies that are reducing crime and the public, stating:

“Good quality information and communication are vital in improving public awareness, confidence and perceptions of crime. The better informed the public are, the greater their confidence in the police and other criminal justice agencies. And [...] confidence plays a critical part in reducing the fear of crime, strengthening community spirit and getting citizens more involved in tackling crime.”⁸

The Government’s guidance on tackling the fear of crime says that effective communication is vital to the success of local Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) because,

² Policing Green Paper, “From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together”, July 2008

³ Ibid 1

⁴ Ipsos MORI report, “Closing the Gaps: Crime & Public Perceptions”, December 2007

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid 1

⁷ L3. Visibility and Accountability

⁸ Chapter 4: Crime Statistics – a new approach

even if it is achieving significant reductions in crime, if it is not informing its residents about what is being done and why, it is “failing in one of its core responsibilities”.⁹

This guidance outlines the importance of raising the profile of the partnership and ensuring that messages from all partner agencies are consistent. It even goes so far as to state that targeting public perceptions of local crime can be more effective in reducing the fear of crime than actual changes in the level of crime, and the Flanagan Review suggests that “community confidence and satisfaction are given sufficient weight alongside measures of crime”.¹⁰

In view of this, under “The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators”, a significant number of the indicators relate to satisfaction/perception issues, and these indicators have been identified for inclusion in the new Place Survey (introduced late 2008), which replaced the BVPI satisfaction surveys. The new suite of National indicators includes:

- NI 2 – % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood;
- NI 4 – % of people who feel they can influence decisions in the locality;
- NI 5 – overall/general satisfaction with local area;
- NI 17 – perceptions of anti-social behaviour;
- NI 21 – dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police;
- NI 25 – satisfaction of different groups with the way the police and local council dealt with anti-social behaviour;
- NI 27 – understanding local concerns of crime and anti-social behaviour by police and local authority.

These, along with the other National Indicators relating to perception/satisfaction, are to be reported at a borough/district level.

Furthermore, earlier guidance published by the Home Office’s Partnership Performance & Support Unit (PPSU) stated that communication was a key indicator in measuring the success of CDRPs in delivering PSA 1, PSA 2 and PSA 4. It required evidence that:

- A communication strategy/plan is in place that proactively informs and engages staff, partners, stakeholders and the local community of its objectives, priorities and progress;
- Communicating success and learning lessons of the Partnership is raising the confidence of stakeholders and the local community, and increasing involvement with its work.¹¹

Ipsos-MORI’s “Closing the Gaps” report (December 2007) states:

“Even the simplest analysis shows the importance of communications to perceptions of crime and related issues [...] those who feel informed are more confident in the approaches being used.”

On a national level, there is statistical evidence of this for both the police and local authorities. Of those who feel informed by the police about how ASB is being tackled 65% feel confident, while of those who do not feel informed only 41% feel confident. Of those who feel informed by the local authority about how ASB is being tackled 54% feel confident, while of those who do not feel informed only 28% feel confident.¹²

The Casey Review identifies the type of crime information the public want, and this includes information about action (what the police and others are doing to tackle crime, feedback

⁹ “Communicating Crime Reduction”, www.crimereduction.gov.uk

¹⁰ “Review of Policing: Interim Report”, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, 2007

¹¹ “Reducing Crime, the Harm Caused by Drugs & Anti-social Behaviour: Delivering PSA 1, PSA 4 & PSA 2”, April 2006

¹² Ibid 4

including outcomes, etc), straight facts (not 'spin'), practical information (names and numbers of local police teams and other agencies, how to get involved, etc), information from a variety of sources (suggestions included advertorials in local newspapers, newsletters, street-meetings, etc), local information (specific to their neighbourhood) and regular information (45% prefer monthly; 28% quarterly).¹³

On the back of The Casey Review and other recent research showing that newsletters are one of the most important and trusted sources of information (yet relatively underused),¹⁴ the Home Office recently published a document entitled, "Local newsletters about crime and anti-social behaviour: Evidence-based recommendations", which emphasises that partnership communications activity must back up action, stating:

"Without proper action to tackle problems, however good your communications with the public might be, you won't have a real basis with which to communicate or build trust. But good communication can build on action to ensure that the public is properly connected to the criminal justice response to crime and disorder."

In May 2009, the Home Office launched its Communicating for Confidence toolkit. The Research & Insight document builds on the findings of The Casey Review, outlining why community safety partnerships must communicate with their residents. It reveals that a lack of confidence and trust in the response to crime affects individuals, communities and police, CDRP/CSP and DAAT partnerships with the public.

The accompanying Practical Guide document sets out a number of tools by which partnerships can communicate with their residents, many of which are covered by the recommendations in this TCSP Communications Strategy. According to Communicating for Confidence: A Practical Guide, there are three "fundamental channels" that partnerships should use – newsletters, local media and national campaigns.

Reiterating other Home Office guidance, this latest document is also very clear that "it is important that all sections of the partnership sign up to these [communication] objectives. Agencies that pursue their own agenda at the expense of the Partnership's will create confusion and undermine the partnership's communications activity".

¹³ "Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime", June 2008

¹⁴ The Home Office's "Local newsletters about crime and anti-social behaviour: Evidence-based recommendations", May 2009

5. THURROCK CONTEXT

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership has achieved significant reductions in total crime over the last few years – including a 9% reduction in 2008/09 (compared to 2007/08).

However, like many other areas across the UK, there is a gap between this reality of falling crime and Thurrock residents' perceptions of crime. The Partnership's 2008-11 Strategy reveals that 80% of respondents in community consultation towards the end of 2006 stated "preventing crime" as one of their priorities, and goes on to state: "The message for the Partnership is that although crime has fallen, people do not feel safer. The new plan has been designed to focus on those things that worry people the most and working more closely with residents."

The results of the Government's inaugural Place Survey have not yet entered the public domain. However, early indications are that residents' perceptions of Thurrock do not line up to the reality of falling crime and increasing safety in the area.

During interviews with key stakeholders, they identified a number of issues as contributing to the fear of crime in Thurrock. These included:

- Physical signs of anti-social behaviour;
- The local media and in London media;
- Environmental factors other than ASB (such as boarded-up buildings);
- Perceptions of young people, who tend to congregate in groups so that they themselves feel safe;
- Thurrock's fast changing demographics.

A recent study by Marketry entitled "Thurrock: Perceptions of safety and crime" involved in-depth telephone interviews with 324 residents. Its purpose was to determine feelings of general safety, people's views on crime and to measure the gap between the actual level of crime and the perceived level.

Statistics

The findings of the Marketry research, which were published in June 2009, include:

- Around two-thirds (68%) of respondents view Thurrock as safe, but a significant minority (20%) see it as not particularly safe – 21% of white residents see the area as unsafe, compared to 9% of those with an ethnic background.
- 33% of respondents said that they feel safe because they are not aware of and have not experienced crime.
- When respondents who felt unsafe were asked why, they mentioned young people hanging around, night-time and particular areas such as Tilbury, Grays and South Ockenden.
- Perceptions of crime and feeling unsafe are more likely to have an impact on the behaviour of white people than that of those with an ethnic background – 34% of white respondents said that their feelings of how safe they are stop them from doing certain things or going to certain places, compared to 14% of respondents with an ethnic background. In total 71% of respondents said they were stopped from going out at night because of feeling unsafe, while 35% were stopped from going to certain places. Among respondents with an ethnic background, 27% avoid youths/groups of people.

- Most respondents feel safe in Thurrock during the day but, in line with most areas in the country, feelings of safety decline at night. Public transport and walking to public transport were ranked the least safe after-dark activities in Thurrock.
- 63% of respondents said a more visible police presence would make them feel safer. More action on young people hanging around was also mentioned.
- In a prompted question about what would make them feel safer, 83% wanted more police, with 60% saying better lighting at night and 58% wanting more CCTV cameras. 40% said that more publicity about success in dealing with crime would make them feel safer.
- In terms of the areas in Thurrock that could be made safer, there were differences in the answers given by white respondents and those respondents with an ethnic background. For white respondents, the top areas that could be made safer are Grays (38%), the town centre (28%) and Tilbury (23%). Respondents with an ethnic background thought the station/train/bus station (20%), Grays (17%), dark streets/alleys/subways (14%) and the town centre (14%) are the areas that most need to be made safer.
- Respondents' main crime concerns are burglary, being mugged, criminal damage, people carrying knives and being attacked. Their main anti-social behaviour concerns are young people hanging around, threatening behaviour, noise, graffiti and gangs. Respondents with an ethnic background were also concerned about harassment and fights on the street.
- In total, 49% of respondents are quite or very satisfied with the way police and the council handle crime in Thurrock. This rises to 65% among respondents with an ethnic background.
- 27% of all respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the way police and the council handle crime in Thurrock, which lines up with the 26% of respondents who said their previous answer was based on having no experience.
- While 43% of respondents think police and the council could do more, 33% believe they are doing their best. Anecdotally, most respondents know little about what the council is doing and where they felt the police could be more helpful, this was often due to a poor personal experience.
- Respondents are less satisfied with how police and the council handle anti-social behaviour in Thurrock, with 41% quite or very satisfied in total. Again, this rises among respondents with an ethnic background, to 62%.
- Drinking/alcohol, drugs, young people/gangs hanging around are perceived to be the causes of anti-social behaviour issues, which are mainly problems in the evening/at night and in Grays, at the park/playground and in the town centre.
- Respondents suggest that more visible police, more action by police, stiffer penalties for offenders and control of alcohol sales will help to address drunk and rowdy behaviour and drug use.
- 46% believe Thurrock Council understands local concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour quite or very well. More believe the police understand local concerns about crime (54%) and anti-social behaviour (52%) quite or very well. There were much higher ratings of the council and police among those with an ethnic background (between 63% and 71% across the various questions).
- Ethnic respondents were much more likely than white respondents to say that police and the council are doing their best, and this was much more likely to be because

they had no experience of crime. White respondents were much more likely to say that not enough is being done, and this, too, was often linked to their experience.

- 80% of white respondents said they had experienced crime and other issues in Thurrock. Of all respondents who had experienced crime, 18% had been victims of burglary or theft, though 17% of those with an ethnic background who had experienced crime stated that they had been harassed or threatened.
- When discussing respondents' experience of crime, only 51% said that police had been involved, revealing a need to encourage residents to report incidents. (This is consistent with the British Crime Survey (BCS).)
- When discussing respondents' experience of crime, only 9.8% involved the council.
- Many of the suggestions from respondents as to what would reduce crime centred on young people.
- While 80% of white respondents said they have experienced crime and other issues, 42% had ever been a victim of crime, compared to 30% of ethnic respondents (41% across all respondents).
- 35% of all respondents believe that crime in Thurrock has gone up over the last two years; 31% believe that drug-related crime has gone up over that same period; 46% feel alcohol-related crime has risen; and 49% say anti-social behaviour has increased. Ethnic respondents were less likely to feel there had been increases in crime than white respondents.
- 2% of all respondents feel that crime in Thurrock has gone down over the last two years; 4% believe drug-related crime has fallen; 3% think alcohol-related crime has reduced; and 4% feel anti-social behaviour has gone down.
- When asked what makes them think crime has gone up or down, 33% based their perceptions on publicity/newspapers/TV. The media was also revealed to be a significant influencing factor in relation to perceptions of anti-social behaviour, with 21% stating media/newspapers/TV make them think that anti-social behaviour has gone up or down. Both in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour, personally seeing or experiencing incidents influenced many respondents' perceptions.
- 58% of all respondents feel that people from different backgrounds get on quite or very well in Thurrock, while 17% feel that they do not get on too well or at all well. Among ethnic respondents, 73% feel that people in Thurrock get on well together, with only 9% saying "not too well" and none saying "not at all well". Fewer white respondents (but still a majority) feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Thurrock (56%), while more think people do not get on too well or at all well (17%).

Local Media

In terms of the local media, Thurrock falls into a geographical 'gap' between broadcasters, and therefore does not receive much TV coverage. There is no local radio station specifically for Thurrock, though SAFE radio – which is aimed at young people in Essex and showcases young talent from the county – covers and has a studio in Thurrock.

The *Thurrock Gazette* delivers 51,688 issues per week to households in Thurrock. However, this is missing approximately 10% of Thurrock homes. Feedback from stakeholders included that the areas that are not covered by the *Thurrock Gazette* are key areas in terms of communicating community safety messages.

The *Yellow Advertiser* delivers 37,243 issues per week to households in Thurrock (again according to ABC data covering 30th June 2008 to 28th December 2008).

Despite the challenging media context, the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership's determination to communicate with its residents is demonstrated through its Communications Group, which was established in its original format in 2005. This group is responsible for taking forward communications actions, such as arranging community engagement events and discussing the "duty to involve".

In March 2009, TCSP launched its own community TV network, with 10 42" plasma screens at venues including the Civic Offices in Grays, Asda in Tilbury, Ikea, Orsett Hospital and McDonald's at Lakeside. These will broadcast more than three million community safety messages per year to residents and visitors in Thurrock.

The Partnership has a clear commitment to raising the profile of its work, communicating with residents and engaging them on community safety issues.

6. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Home Office guidance and national research demonstrate that communication is the key to improving feelings of safety and awareness of what partners are doing to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership should consider the following 34 recommendations as it seeks to raise awareness of its activities and achievements, reduce the fear of crime and improve feelings of safety. These are set out under the following headings:

- A. GENERAL
- B. THROUGH THE MEDIA
- C. COMMUNITY TV
- D. PUBLICATIONS
- E. ONLINE
- F. FACE-TO-FACE
- G. ADVERTISING
- H. INTERNAL
- I. CAMPAIGNS
- J. EVALUATION

(Recommendation 34 features in the Conclusion section of this document.)

When considering implementation of each recommendation in this Strategy, the Partnership should take care to ensure that all methods of communication it uses are accessible to the widest number of residents possible, so that no residents are excluded. For example, all printed and online materials must be accessible and DDA compliant, including available in relevant languages other than English.

Likewise, all of the communications activities below must take into account the Local Safeguarding Children Board's Business Plan, which outlines how local organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and includes discussion about publications aimed at young people.

A. COMMUNICATIONS: GENERAL

Dedicated Resources

The community safety partnerships that are recognised as the most successful in tackling negative perceptions and the fear of crime tend to have one thing in common: a post (part-time or full-time) dedicated to communicating crime reduction messages, engaging with the community and raising the profile of the partnership.

In line with this, Home Office guidance says that there are two options for partnerships to develop their communications – the first is for one of the partner agencies to allocate a member of its communications team to partnership work; the second is for the partnership to employ a communications officer to “work specifically on partnership work and report directly to the partnership”.¹⁵

The guidance goes on to outline two dangers with the first option: one is that “the allocated member of staff sees themselves first and foremost as a member of their partner agency, answerable to that agency rather than to the partnership as a whole”; the other is that there may be a tendency to promote that particular agency at the expense of the partnership and/or other partners. Therefore, the Government advice is that the second option is preferable.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid 9

¹⁶ Ibid

Either way, without a dedicated post, it will prove considerably more difficult to implement the other proposed actions in this strategy. Unfortunately, Thurrock CSP's trial with a dedicated partnership communications post was not as successful as the Partnership would have hoped. However, this should not deter TCSP from considering this option and continuing to explore whether there is any funding available to support and sustain such a post.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Either: Investigate the possibility of employing a dedicated Partnership communications officer that has a journalism, media, PR and/or marketing background, as this will be of greater benefit to TCSP than an understanding of community safety partnerships, which is easier to pick up. The post-holder would oversee all TCSP communications activity.

Or: If it is not possible to employ a dedicated Partnership communications officer, explore the possibility of one of the partners allocating responsibility for TCSP communications to an existing member of communications staff. For example, with the recently expanded team at Thurrock Council, it may be possible that one member of the team is responsible for community safety press releases and other TCSP communications as part of their job. However, if this second option is adopted, caution is recommended regarding the potential issues mentioned in the Home Office guidance above and, in particular, over issues of branding.

In either case, implementing this recommendation will enable the Partnership to have a single point of contact for journalists, media enquiries and communication between agencies (see [Recommendation 6](#)).

RECOMMENDATION 2: In addition to a dedicated human resource, it is also recommended that TCSP continues to have a ring-fenced budget of at least £10,000 per year for its work to communicate community safety and crime reduction messages to residents. Any costs of monitoring and evaluation should also be considered when TCSP allocates a budget for its public reassurance projects.

Communications Calendar

Developing a Communications Calendar, which includes events, press releases, new content for community TV and all other communications activities will facilitate a more strategic approach to raising the profile of the Partnership and its work and communicating with residents.

The Home Office's Communicating for Confidence: A Practical Guide document provides some useful examples of fresh approaches to a communications calendar, such as running a 'Love Your Neighbourhood' campaign around Valentine's Day and linking in with Mother's Day by interviewing local mums about how anti-social behaviour powers have made their neighbourhood safer for their children.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That TSCP draw up a Communications Calendar for activity over the 2009/10-financial year. It may be beneficial to develop two separate Communications Calendars – one for external communications; one for internal.

Below is an example of how this might be set out:

MONTH	PLANNING	ACTIVITY	DEADLINE	OFFICER
November	Drink-drive messages; Domestic Violence services over the Christmas period		30/11	AB
		DV – White Ribbon Day – pre-event	18/11	CD
		DV – White Ribbon Day – post-event	25/11	CD
		DV – White Ribbon Day	25/11	EF
		Burglary – Christmas	10/11	GH

		messages		
		Burglary – Christmas messages	10/11	IJ

For ease of use, this could be colour-coded – in the example above, the colour-coding is as follows:

	Press releases
	Events
	Community TV content

By nature this would need to be a ‘living’ document, flexible and subject to change as the year progresses. But even an initial draft will provide the Partnership with an overview of all of the activity that can be publicised and promoted, and the range of communications tools by which this can be achieved.

A communications calendar will also enable the Partnership to capitalise on national campaigns by knowing what is coming up and when. Often the Home Office provides communications support, sample media releases and promotional merchandise for community safety partnerships for its major annual campaigns.

Branding

Raising the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership’s profile will help the local community to understand that crime reduction is a collaborative effort, and this in turn will increase their confidence in individual agencies and the Partnership as a whole, reassuring them that partners are working together to make them safer.

In order to raise the profile of both the Partnership itself and its work, it is important that any printed materials – whether they be press releases, letters, leaflets, flyers, display stands, website, even promotional items – bear the TCSP logo.

RECOMMENDATION 4: All printed materials should bear the Partnership logo as the primary logo in the correct format (see Appendix B).

While seeking to increase an understanding of what the Partnership is, its partners and what they do, including other logos on printed materials is beneficial. However, it is important that the TCSP logo is larger and positioned apart from other logos so that it does not appear as just one of a series of logos. The message of organisations coming together as equals to form a Partnership is undermined and blurred when a community safety partnership logo sits alongside other logos (usually local authority and police force logos) at the same size.

Carefully positioning and sizing the TCSP logo and the logos of partners can aid the communication of the message that there are many organisations in Thurrock working together to tackle crime and improve safety. The difficulty can be in selecting which logos to use, and so that no partners are offended it is usually best to select just the logos of the statutory partners, only adding another partner’s logo if that partner has led on a specific project.

The one exception to this rule is that careful consideration should be given to where the police logo is placed in newsletters, because research shows that the public trusts information from the police more than other organisations, and is generally suspicious of information from some other partners, such as local authorities.¹⁷

RECOMMENDATION 5: Other logos should be used on printed materials, but only those of statutory partners as a general rule. A format for positioning of these logos should be developed that retains the primacy of the TCSP logo – see the example in Appendix B.

¹⁷ Communicating for Confidence: Insight & Research, May 2009

B. COMMUNICATIONS: THROUGH THE MEDIA

Media Protocols

Media protocols give security to the Partnership and its partners, and act as a safeguard in maintaining consistency and harmony among the different agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Media protocols should be drawn up to outline the correct course of action to be followed in normal circumstances, and each partner agency should sign up to these.

For example, one of the protocols could be that the chair of the Partnership is always quoted, where possible, on any news release and put forward for any broadcast media interviews.

Protocols would also enable partners to determine which themes and issues fall under its remit. There are frequently occasions in any partnership when it is not clear whether a news release or story should be handled by an individual agency or the partnership as a whole. Therefore, it is important to establish which news releases should be issued under the TCSP branding. This ensures consistency and also aids journalists in knowing on which issues to ask the Partnership for comment and information.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Partners should agree what TCSP will tell the local media that no one else will.

For example, partners may agree that anti-social behaviour, hate crime and crime prevention advice are best communicated by the Partnership. Proactive press releases from TCSP on these subjects, as well as becoming *the* source for accurate, reliable and fast information, will within a short space of time establish the Partnership as the key organisation for journalists to contact on these issues.

If the Partnership communications officer or lead does not know the answer to a reporter's question on these subjects, rather than instruct the reporter to contact one of the individual partner agencies, the officer/lead should find out the information him/herself and then promptly get back to the reporter with the information required.

In order for media protocols to be effective, all partner agencies would need to sign up to them.

Dealing with the Media

Establishing TCSP media protocols will give the Partnership and its members clarity and security, but it is also important to develop procedures that suit the local media as well as the Partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Regardless of whether or not [Recommendation 1](#) is implemented, or how, the Partnership should establish one main point of contact for journalists. This will strengthen relationships with the local media as they will know who to contact and (from [Recommendation 7](#)) on what subjects.

It will also avoid the frustration of reporters being passed from one person or organisation to another, particularly on topics which could fall to a number of partners to comment on.

Obviously a secondary contact person would need to be available in the event of absence.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Relationships should be built between the TCSP communications officer/lead and individual journalists. This will stand the Partnership in good stead when wanting to publicise a particular campaign or initiative, as well as in the event of a critical incident or bad news breaking.

In addition, forging healthy relationships with individual journalists will enable the Partnership, through its communications officer/lead, to discover what type of stories they each want (and

therefore what they can almost guarantee making it into print), how they want stories to be provided to them, and when they want them.

Sending the local media stories that are of interest to them and their readers, being reliable when asked for comments and information, and making well-briefed spokespeople available when required, will all lead to developing healthy, strong relationships with the local media.

RECOMMENDATION 10: A distribution list should be drawn up by the Partnership so that all press releases are issued to the same people on each occasion. This list should include individual journalists, statutory and other key partners, TCSP officers and communication leads at other agencies (Thurrock Council and Essex Police in particular).

Including partners on a press distribution list gives them the opportunity to see what messages and information are being issued by the Partnership, thereby giving them a sense of ownership, increasing their awareness of the wide raft of initiatives delivered by TCSP and its partners, and avoid any embarrassing situations where a member of the Partnership is asked a question by a journalist about a recent press release but knows nothing about it.

Proactive Press Releases

There is a great deal of excellent, effective community safety activity conducted by the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, and communicating this to residents should remain high on the agenda and should be filtered through to every sub-group of the Partnership to consider along with its primary focus.

Currently the Partnership receives support with press releases from Thurrock Council. The benefit to this is that a communications professional is writing and issuing the releases, but it means that the Partnership's messages bear the Council's branding and are in the Council's recognised format, which then undermines attempts to raise the profile of the Partnership and communicate that partners are working together to make Thurrock safer.

RECOMMENDATION 11: TCSP should develop a set format for press releases, and this should be based on discussions with key local media. Some newspapers, in particular, have a clear preference as to whether press releases are sent attached to an email or as the main body of the email. (See Appendix C for an example template of a press release that would be sent as an attachment.)

Partnership press releases should be consistent, always including key information (the '5W' checklist: what, where, why, when, who – and how) and a quote from the key spokesperson as stated in the media protocols.

The headline and opening paragraph need to 'hook' readers – in this case, both journalists and residents – so that they want to continue reading on to where the actual information is presented. It is more important that the opening paragraph is captivating than that it contains lots of information. In fact, the where and when information is better placed in the second or third paragraph than the first, in most cases.

Press releases should be kept to one page of a Word document where possible, and therefore logos and spacing should not be spread out to make the document longer. A style guide is helpful, especially if press releases are to be written by more than one person, as this determines consistency in, for example, how job titles are written, how the date is written, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 12: TCSP should set itself a target for the number of press releases it aims to issue. A realistic starting point could be two per month. Whenever possible, an interesting photograph or image should accompany each press release, and this should be supplied to the media already converted to CMYK colour and at a resolution of 300dpi at standard photo size.

In addition to covering crime reduction initiatives, news and other community safety topics, many of the recommendations in this **Communications Strategy** could generate press releases. For example, now that TCSP has its own community TV network, there are many

opportunities to issue press releases, such as when new content is broadcast, when specific campaigns receive a response (see the section on community TV, below, for examples) and when local residents are involved in filming.

Developing a Communications Calendar (see [Recommendation 3](#) above) will enable TCSP to plan the proactive press releases it will issue over the course of the year, and therefore the target should not be difficult to set and achieve.

The Partnership should keep a folder of hard copies of each press release and the press cuttings of any articles printed in connection with the release, including any follow-up articles. This will prove a useful record for evaluation purposes and also to which partners can refer when necessary.

Reactive Press Releases

RECOMMENDATION 13: Be prepared and quick to comment when bad news is breaking.

This is important in terms of both maintaining healthy relationships with the local media and giving the Partnership a strong voice, thereby raising its profile. Even if a comment from TCSP is not requested, sending a statement or press release will strengthen the Partnership's relationship with local media and gain the Partnership a good reputation leading, after time, to the local media recognising the Partnership as an organisation that can be relied upon to comment and provide information, where possible, and therefore coming to the Partnership and including TCSP in articles on key community safety issues and incidents.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Do not say "no comment" – instead, always be prepared to comment, even if it is with a local angle to a national news story.

Saying "no comment" will, firstly, immediately be a source of tension between the Partnership and the journalist, and if an organisation gets a reputation for refusing to comment, reporters will simply stop asking. While police forces and local authorities are usually exceptions to this rule as journalists rely on them for a steady stream of information day-by-day, a Community Safety Partnership is not afforded the same position and therefore it would damage TCSP's relationship with local reporters if "no comment" is its response to a question.

Secondly, when an organisation says "no comment", typically this will be mentioned in the article or broadcast, which does not reflect well on the organisation – residents are likely to assume the organisation has something to hide or is not prepared to be honest, both of which imply that the organisation cannot be trusted. This undermines the credibility of the organisation and the messages it communicates to residents.

Conversely, being prepared to comment with a local perspective on a national news story will gain the Partnership a good reputation with journalists, especially if this is done proactively when possible, rather than waiting for a reporter to contact the Partnership.

C. COMMUNICATIONS: COMMUNITY TV

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership launched its 10-screen community television network in March 2009. Community TV is a common feature of the most proactive partnerships across the country. It has proven to be one of the most innovative and effective public reassurance tools used by community safety partnerships, local authorities, police forces, local strategic partnerships and fire services over recent years.

RECOMMENDATION 15: TCSP should consider examples of best practice from other community safety partnerships with community TV networks and seek to emulate any examples that are appropriate for Thurrock.

There are numerous and varied examples of what partnerships have achieved with community TV, some of which are outlined here:

Basildon CSP has used its community TV network to broadcast 'wanted' images showing prolific offenders that the police are trying to locate. Within the first two weeks of these

'wanted' images airing, three of the offenders featured on the TV network handed themselves in to police after seeing themselves on the screens.

In Hastings, where the network is also run by the community safety partnership, approximately 75% of respondents in the CSP's annual Fear of Crime Survey state they have viewed the screens, and evaluation reveals that the network has resulted in a 20% shift in the number who now realise crime is falling in the town, and has contributed to a 50% reduction in the number who perceive anti-social behaviour to be high (the third largest reduction nationally).¹⁸

In Avon, where the Fire Service manages the community TV network, there was a 139% increase in requests for Fire Home Safety Visits within six weeks of promoting them on the Avon community television network, and a 50% reduction in hoax calls directly correlating to messages broadcast on the system.

Medway CSP has a successful TV network where film slots have been sold to statutory and non-statutory partners to raise revenue, and among police-led community TV networks, the Northern Constabulary has found 90% of missing people that have featured on the system.

The Safer Hastings Partnership has used its system as a platform for schools competitions, which have engaged with up 1,800 local young people on community safety issues over the last three years, winning the Home Office Tilley Award for the South East in 2008 for the behavioural and attitudinal changes this has caused. This model of schools competitions linked to community TV has since been reproduced in Newry, Avon and Medway, and is due to take place in Thurrock towards the end of 2009.

Community TV Content

TCSP is allocated 16 locally filmed initiatives per year as part of its contract with CCN Ltd. The first four of these were filmed prior to the launch and are currently broadcasting on the system. The remainder will be filmed in Thurrock over the course of the 2009/10-financial year – four per quarter.

In addition, Central Office of Information (COI) and other films can be selected by TCSP from CCN's library. These, together with daily national news, sport and weather, emergency messages and 'For Your Information' slots, form the remainder of the playlist, which results in a 30-minute (approximately) loop.

RECOMMENDATION 16: That content be planned strategically over the course of each financial/performance year, and that where possible COI and library films be used to communicate seasonal campaigns, leaving the locally filmed initiative slots to produce bespoke films about priority and emerging issues, such as ASB and hate crime, as well as to broadcast feedback to residents about specific actions that have been taken and the Partnership's achievements (e.g. 'You said... We did...').

Developing a Communications Calendar (see [Recommendation 3](#) above) will enable TCSP to plan its content according to seasonal campaigns and its priority issues, as well as ensuring the work of all partners' is promoted.

The Partnership communications officer/lead should develop a community TV plan that allocates a share of airtime to each of the statutory partners (at least) over the course of the year, promoting the specific initiatives on which they lead that feed into the Partnership's strategic aims and targets.

Familiarity with the CCN library of films is recommended as this will avoid unnecessary use of the limited number of locally filmed initiatives if existing films communicate the correct message and can be adapted to bear the Partnership branding, contact details and any other Thurrock-specific information.

¹⁸ 2006/07 Local Government User Satisfaction Survey compared with 2003/04 figures

As well as communicating with residents and providing them with information about the wide range of activity the Partnership conducts to make them safer, community TV can be an excellent engagement tool, particularly through competitions and acting opportunities.

There are already firm plans for a schools competition connected to community TV to run in Thurrock from September to December 2009.

RECOMMENDATION 17: That TCSP offer acting opportunities to residents whenever possible.

This could be through existing links with schools or a way to forge new links with schools (e.g. asking them if GCSE drama students would like to get involved in filming), inviting local drama groups to participate or even requesting for volunteer actors through the local media (thereby raising the profile of the Partnership and community TV in the local media, as well as engaging with residents who respond).

In addition to engaging with those who take part, this will also drive family, friends and neighbours to view the screens at local venues or online, especially if children and young people are involved.

D. COMMUNICATIONS: PUBLICATIONS

Geographically, Thurrock is located in a 'gap' between media organisations in the region, and therefore does not receive a large amount of broadcast media coverage, and its local newspaper, the *Thurrock Gazette*, does not reach every household – in fact, it does not cover at least 10% of homes, many of which fall in key areas from the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership's perspective.

Therefore, the Partnership has not been able to rely on local media as its primary method of communicating with residents. As such, TCSP's own newsletter is published twice a year and delivered to every household in Thurrock. The total cost per year is £8,000.

The Casey Review identified the type of crime information the public wants, and newsletters were highlighted as one of the preferred ways in which the public would like to receive community safety information.

Newsletters are a valuable means by which to communicate with residents. However, it is important that the design is eye-catching and modern, the headlines are bold and intriguing, and the content is interesting to residents.

Following on from The Casey Review, in May 2009 the Home Office published a guidance document entitled, "Local newsletters about crime and anti-social behaviour: Evidence-based recommendations", which sets out clear guidance about how to create an effective newsletter.

In addition, *Communicating for Confidence: A Practical Guide* states that newsletters are one of three fundamental channels that partnerships should be using.

Even so, the value of distributing a newsletter to every household in Thurrock must be weighed against the cost, which is 80% of the annual budget for Partnership communications. Prior to deciding whether or not to continue with TCSP newsletters to every household in the 2009/10-financial year, the Partnership should consider other options.

An emerging opportunity could come in the form of Thurrock Council's plans for a fortnightly or monthly newsletter, as stated in its Draft Communications Strategy, which mentions that it could include double-page spreads on different council services. It is proposed in this document that: "Working with the police/courts, it may be possible to run a regular 'in the courts' section with brief details of charges, pleas and sentences."¹⁹

¹⁹ Thurrock Council's Draft Communications Strategy v04 by Andy Lever

Therefore, there is already openness to involving partners and covering community safety in this publication, if it goes ahead.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The Partnership should discuss with Thurrock Council's head of communications when the newsletter is likely to be launched and whether or not there is any opportunity of a regular double-page spread on community safety, clearly bearing the TCSP logo as the primary logo on the pages. If this is not possible, the Partnership should enquire as to whether or not economies of scale may be found in the Partnership newsletter being distributed as an 'insert' with the Council's newsletter.

This option should only be pursued if the Partnership branding can be used and providing TCSP has editorial control of its own pages in terms of the subject matter and also the content being presented clearly as Partnership rather than only Council.

If this is not possible, the Partnership newsletter will remain a useful tool, but if there is an alternative printer or distributor at a less expensive rate, or if advertising by partners could offset some of the cost, these should definitely be explored afresh.

RECOMMENDATION 19: If the Partnership newsletter continues, it should be revamped. The front cover should feature a colourful, interesting photo to attract residents' attention, along with a headline that will do the same. The back cover should always include a brief, jargon-free explanation of what the Partnership is and who its partners are.

Content should be in the form of articles (e.g. with a hook, written in the style of a newspaper, including a quote, etc) rather than merely information, and the newsletter should not be too text-heavy, but instead feature interesting colour photos and images. Subject matter should fit in with what residents want to know, as set out in the Casey Review, which includes:

- Feedback – what happened after they reported crime/ASB or raised a concern or filled in a survey;
- Information about action – what is the Partnership doing to tackle crime/ASB;
- Information about consequences – what happens to those who commit crimes;
- Practical information – specific names, photos, contact numbers and email addresses of local police teams and other agencies, as well as where and when to meet them to discuss concerns and what opportunities exist for them to get involved;
- Local information – specific to their neighbourhood;
- Priorities clearly identified, followed by what happens now residents have shared their priorities with the Partnership;
- Straight facts: no spin, no story, just facts.

The Casey Review also found that the public want information regularly – the strongest preference was for monthly information (45%), followed by quarterly (28%).

RECOMMENDATION 20: If TCSP can identify where cost-savings or economies of scale can be found, then publishing a four-page quarterly newsletter that is enhanced by other publicity materials throughout the year is recommended.

Other published materials that have proven effective elsewhere and are considered best practice include ASBO leaflets and 'You said... We did...' flyers and posters. Both are relatively inexpensive (e.g. approximately £100 for 5,000 flyers at A6 post card size, on 300gsm paper weight, printed double-sided, full colour).

RECOMMENDATION 21: That TCSP use such materials strategically in specific neighbourhoods where issues have been raised, crimes/incidents of ASB reported or hotspots for specific crime/ASB-types have been identified.

In the case of 'You said... We did...' materials, these should be planned strategically to ensure that all neighbourhoods are covered over the course of the year (if possible and appropriate) and to be tailored to those specific neighbourhoods and the crime/ASB-types prioritised by

those who live there. The Communications Calendar would enable these to coincide with events, campaigns and the work of the Geo Group.

ASBO leaflets can also be a useful tool for communicating that the Partnership has listened to residents' concerns, acted to resolve them, and inform the public about the part they can play in preventing repeat incidents. These leaflets typically include a photo, name and date of birth of the person who has been given an ASBO, followed by the dates of their ASBO, an outline of the behaviour that caused them to be given an ASBO, a brief and jargon-free summary of the conditions of the ASBO, and information about what residents should do if they witness the perpetrator breaching their ASBO.

Again this type of material is best tailored to individual circumstances. For example, if the subject of the ASBO leaflet is a street drinker, leaflets should be distributed to off licenses, pub landlords and residents in and around the location where the perpetrator is known to drink in public.

E. COMMUNICATIONS: ONLINE

Great Britain has seen an average increase of over one million households per year connecting to the Internet since 2004, reaching a total of 16.05 million (65%) in 2008. This compares to 11.02 million, or 46%, in 2002. In the East of England, 70% of households had Internet access in 2008.²⁰

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership web pages are easy to find through the major search engines – such as Google, Yahoo and MSN – and easy to navigate. However, to keep it clear and simple, it may be worthwhile grouping crime-types, for example, under one subheading rather than listing them individually. In addition, the single item on the news page is dated 17th October 2008, and was therefore posted six months ago, and the site could benefit from some colourful photos on each page to make it more appealing, particularly to a younger audience.

RECOMMENDATION 22: That the Partnership revamp its existing website and update it on a regular basis (at least monthly). It is recommended that the information the public wants, as identified by the Casey Review, be available and easy to access on the TCSP website, which should remain fully DDA compliant.

Possible sections could include: about us (introduction, structure), news (all press releases to be placed online when issued, meaning the top story is also recent and an archive is built up at the same time), feedback on what has been delivered so far compared with what residents expressed concerns about, crime statistics, crime types, achievements, keep yourself safe (crime prevention advice), your neighbourhood (ward-specific information), relevant contact numbers and links to partners website.

Photos of Partnership activity, Thurrock itself and the Thurrock community should be included on the first page of each section, at least. Pages should be interlinked for easy access – for example, news articles should finish with a link to a relevant page.

A short survey could also be included on the site. For example, a short question that changes on a monthly basis, such as, "Do you believe crime has gone up or down in Thurrock over the last year?" with the answers, "Up", "Down" and "Stayed the same". This function could also be used as part of the evaluation of communications initiatives – asking questions such as, "Have you seen TCSP TV?" with the answers "Yes" (leading to "Please tell us where"), "No" and "Not sure". If these questions are placed on rotation, it would enable the Partnership to set a baseline and then compare results each time a question is repeated, which may also help to identify Thurrock-specific perception trends based on the time of year.

In the intervening years between the Place Survey, the Partnership may also wish to run a longer survey on its website.

²⁰ Office for National Statistics, August 2008

An 'Ask the Partners' section could also be included, enabling residents to email questions to a generic address that is checked by the Partnership communications officer/lead and emails sent to the relevant partner for a response.

RECOMMENDATION 23: That TCSP considers using social networking sites to engage with young people on specific issues. This has been tried by a number of local authorities, police forces and community safety partnerships.

In Canada, a prolific graffiti tagger was caught by posting his tags on Facebook and this has led to other organisations, such as police in Harrogate, setting up Facebook pages with the specific aim of catching taggers.

YouTube has been used to great effect by North Lancashire PCT, who commissioned a film called Steamed Up to promote its anti-drink/drive message to local young people. The 1m40s film received 3.3million hits within its first 12 months on YouTube, and the monitoring capabilities of the site enabled the PCT to pinpoint that more than 45,000 of those hits came from young people living in North Lancashire.

Other sites TCSP might wish to explore using include Bebo (for younger teens), MySpace and Twitter.

F. COMMUNICATIONS: FACE-TO-FACE

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is committed to getting out-and-about in the community to meet residents, as evidenced by its well established community engagement events.

RECOMMENDATION 24: TCSP should continue its effective use of community engagement events, introducing new and varied ways for residents to express their views on community safety in Thurrock.

There are many methods through which a partnership can engage its residents in two-way dialogue, and it is important to keep these fresh and varied so as to engage with a broad cross-section of the community.

Some ideas that have been used elsewhere (some of which were discussed at the media training day in March 2009) include:

- Mapping – a large map of Thurrock on display or set out on a table with coloured pins linked to different crime/ASB-types (e.g. black = drug-dealing; red = dog-fouling). Residents are invited to select a pin representing the issue that most concerns them, and stick it in the map at the specific location where they consider this to be a problem. Over the course of a day, clusters are likely to form, indicating hotspots or, at the very least, perception hotspots.
- Traffic light post-its – an alternative to mapping, the Partnership uses flipcharts and post-it notes for the same purpose. Pink (representing red), yellow (amber) and green post-it notes are available for residents to write down their concerns, with the colours representing whether the concern is major or urgent (pink/red), medium (amber) or mild (green).
- Political 'speed-dating' – this is particularly effective with small groups from a specific community group, such as young people, seniors' forums and other hard-to-reach groups. Basically, representatives (decision-making) of the Partnership are available for open, one-to-one communication with individuals in the group, who are each given a speed-dating-style three minutes to quiz each representative. This could also prove a valuable tool for internal communications, giving partners the opportunity to find out more about each others' work. It could also be adapted to a 'speed-matching' event hosted by the Partnership where, for example, members of the public who are keen to volunteer but don't know where or for who could be invited to spend three or four minutes meeting each of the various volunteer agencies involved in TCSP.

- Environmental Visual Audits – again this is most effective with a small group representing one section of the community, and involves Partnership representatives participating in ‘walkabouts’ in specific neighbourhoods, where residents or a particular group can physically point out what concerns them about the area and discuss why it is a problem and possible solutions. This has been conducted slightly differently in some areas, where, for example, a young person’s council and seniors’ forum have both gone out into the same neighbourhood together with digital photographs showing what makes them feel unsafe and what they like about the area. They then return to a ‘base’ to share their photos with each other, the purpose of which is to identify any differences and to promote better mutual understanding. (One example of an issue raised via this exercise is graffiti – young people took photos of what they considered to be artistic graffiti (not tagging) as something they liked in the neighbourhood; whereas members of the seniors’ forum had photographed the same graffiti as an example of what makes them feel unsafe in the area.)
- Door-to-door – when holding a community engagement event, community clear-up, Geo Group activity or community payback in a particular neighbourhood, the Partnership could go door-to-door asking residents what crime/ASB concerns they have for the neighbourhood. By setting these out in a table, the Partnership will be able to clearly see whether a large proportion of residents in a particular street or group of streets identify the same concerns.

These activities can be carried out and adapted to a range of people-groups and locations. For example, they can be conducted with young people, older people, in churches, in mosques and with various BME groups.

RECOMMENDATION 25: When TCSP receives feedback from known individuals, residents or groups, it is vital that the Partnership goes on to contact them with information about what has been done about their concerns. Where a very serious concern has been raised, or the person is concerned to the extent that it is having a significant, negative impact on their quality of life on a daily basis, writing to them individually is recommended, and regularly updating them (if appropriate) is important.

If an issue is raised by several people in the same area, ‘You said... We did...’ flyer- or leaflet-dropping to specific households is recommended.

The Partnership will gain a good reputation among residents if it is known to respond to concerns, give feedback on what it has done to resolve them and provide access to those who are able to make decisions and set budgets.

G. COMMUNICATIONS: ADVERTISING

Many advertising opportunities will inevitably be presented to the Partnership over the course of any financial year. Ad hoc advertising can be expensive for a low or difficult-to-measure return.

RECOMMENDATION 26: TCSP should note the various publications in which it is offered advertising space, so that in the 2010/11-financial year it can be prepared with a clear answer for each one, or type.

When deciding whether or not to advertise in any given publication, the Partnership should consider how many copies are printed, how they are distributed, the lifespan of the publication, who is likely to read it, whether or not a prime position is available and what message might be appropriate.

For example, hospital guides usually have a large initial print run that is often followed by a second print run, especially if the guide is to last for two years. As well as being situated in most departments of a hospital, including outpatients, many hospital guides are now sent out with appointment letters, in which case they are more likely to be looked at by a higher

number of people. If a prime position is available and a suitable cost can be negotiated, it is worth advertising in a hospital guide if the budget is available.

The advertising spots that are prime position depend on the size and format of the publication, but typically the Partnership should request or opt for:

- A right-hand page rather than a left-hand page (or the right-hand side rather than the left-hand side), because your eye is naturally drawn to the right;
- The top rather than the bottom;
- The cover, inside cover, page 3, inside back cover or back cover;
- If the document is folded like a map, the back cover or the inside as the reader first opens it.

If the Partnership has decided to advertise in a particular publication, it should request a guaranteed position for its advert.

Often cold-callers will say that there are only a few advertising slots still available and that they can offer a special rate if it is kept confidential. However, usually the special rate is available to most advertisers and if an organisation is not able to make a quick decision, advertising space is still available, so the Partnership should exercise caution in these circumstances and not be rushed into making a decision.

If a publication is printed on a regular basis and an advertising offer appeals to the Partnership, it is worth making a few calls to other advertisers to ask them if their business or organisation has benefitted from advertising in this publication and whether or not they would place an advertisement again.

When booking an advertisement, always request at least two hard copies of the publication in which it appears so that you can check that the advert appears as you intended, and also to keep these for your records.

H. COMMUNICATIONS: INTERNAL

In regard to a community safety partnership, 'internal' refers to all statutory and other key partners, and the purpose of internal communications is to ensure that the staff of partner agencies know about TCSP, understand why it exists, what it does, who is involved and are informed about the community safety work carried out by partners. By raising the profile of the Partnership and its work with staff members on every level of each organisation, TCSP will become better known externally as well as internally. It will also ensure that staff – from frontline to strategic levels – understand why their organisation is involved in the Partnership, why resources are allocated to Partnership work and why an event, press release, leaflet or other activity or material bears TCSP branding rather than that of their individual organisation. The more staff members who understand the Partnership and the spirit of partnership working, the more advocates for the Partnership there will be communicating to residents that agencies are working together to make Thurrock safer.

RECOMMENDATION 27: TCSP endeavours to have training on the Partnership delivered to new employees, particularly of Thurrock Council (Section 17 training) and Essex Police. The Media and Communications Co-ordinator for Essex Police's South Western Division plans to introduce training for officers on media law, what they can say to the press after an arrest and a range of other topics, and is enthusiastic about including training on the Partnership, which would develop an understanding of partnership working for new PCs and PCSOs.

The TCSP stakeholder database holds full contact details for all stakeholders, including a named individual, their position, the organisation and the specific sector of the community they represent.

RECOMMENDATION 28: The stakeholder database should be refined and updated regularly. Responsibility for this should be delegated to a specific post.

However, it could be time-consuming to go through the stakeholder database each time the Partnership plans to issue information, so the distribution list for press releases ([Recommendation 10](#)) should be separate and, in order to communicate the Partnership's work to a broad number of staff across partner agencies, TCSP could have a wider database of email addresses of frontline to strategic-level staff who would benefit from receiving a regular enewsletter to illustrate the big picture of all the partners working to make Thurrock safer.

RECOMMENDATION 29: That TCSP develop a monthly enewsletter for staff of partner agencies. This would include attention-grabbing headlines and brief introductory paragraphs for staff to scan, from which they could click on a link taking them to the full story on the Partnership website or a specific partner's website.

Each edition could feature articles from one of the Partnership groups, one of the statutory partners and one of the non-statutory partners, plus the press releases that had been issued in the previous month and a diary of events coming up in the next month.

Even if an external company was to provide this for the Partnership, once a bespoke template has been designed the cost of issuing enewsletters is usually inexpensive (approximately 1p per 'send credit', meaning that if 1,000 people sign up for the enewsletter and it is issued monthly, the cost per year would be £120).

RECOMMENDATION 30: The Partnership should explore the possibility of posting articles on partners' intranet sites. This will again promote the work of other partners and the spirit of partnership working that is making Thurrock safer, as well as communicating achievements of the Partnership as a whole. Articles placed in partners' internal newsletters will help to achieve this.

Bringing together partners to discuss perceptions, public reassurance and communications – including the actions in this **Communications Strategy** – may be beneficial in terms of representatives of all partner agencies understanding why communications activity is important and why resources are dedicated to it.

RECOMMENDATION 31: The Partnership may choose to hold a 'Perception Away Day', where members of the partner agencies come together to discuss perceptions, but also to try out some of the activities in this strategy, such as mapping, traffic light post-its and even the 'speed-dating' to enable agencies to find out more about the community safety work of other partners.

Mapping could prove particularly interesting if the representatives of Essex Police are able to map actual crime/ASB hotspots, while others who live in Thurrock map their perceptions and those who do not live in Thurrock separately map their perceptions.

The purpose of this event would be twofold: firstly, to discuss perceptions and even identify partners' perceptions of Thurrock, community safety and each other as a constructive exercise by which to consider public perceptions realistically, and therefore making it clear how important good communication is if the public is to feel safer and more confident in agencies; and secondly, in order that representatives of the partners can become familiar with communication activities that will be used as a tool to engage the public.

I. COMMUNICATIONS: CAMPAIGNS

The activities detailed in this document have all proven effective in other areas of England and Wales, but bringing them together to deliver strategic, consistent communications activity is the key to causing a long-term shift in public perceptions of crime, which in turn will cause residents to feel safer in Thurrock.

The Communications Calendar ([Recommendation 3](#)) will give partners an overview and enable a strategic, consistent approach to key messages being communicated on a regular, frequent basis, but running campaigns can also help to draw different activities together.

RECOMMENDATION 32: That TCSP build up to a 12-month campaign that sees all communications activity over that period promoting one key message, 'Making Thurrock Safer'. Community engagement events, press releases, community TV and all other communications activity would be planned to reinforce the key message and to ensure it is repeated all year round by one means or another.

To reflect the fact that it is not just partners working together to make Thurrock safer, but also residents play their part too, a campaign of this type could culminate in a Community Awards ceremony, where members of the public are nominated by partners to receive an award for the contribution they have made to reducing crime, ASB and/or the fear of crime in their neighbourhoods.

J. COMMUNICATIONS: EVALUATION

Measuring the success of communications activity is not easy because measuring perceptions is complicated. A serious incident on the eve of the Partnership conducting a survey, for example, can skew results.

However, it is important to monitor and evaluate communications activity so that TCSP can ascertain what works well in Thurrock, and what does not.

RECOMMENDATION 33: That the Partnership monitors and evaluates its communications activity as thoroughly as possible and presents an annual evaluation to its Executive.

Some of the recommendations set out in this document are easy to monitor – for example, how many press releases are picked up by the local newspaper, as well as how much of the original press release makes it into the article in the newspaper, is measurable.

Likewise, specific campaigns are easier to measure: if alcohol-related A&E admissions and public place violent crimes incidents fall while the Partnership is running a 'Know Your Limits' campaign, it is reasonable to say that the campaign has had an impact.

Counting the number of short surveys filled in at a community engagement event, or those who request something that has only been advertised on community TV, or the number of hits on the Partnership website – these are all measures of the effectiveness of the Partnership's communications activity.

The Home Office's *Communicating for Confidence: A Practical Guide*, published in May 2009, suggests that focus groups can also be used to evaluate your communications activities and publications.

It also advises that an annual evaluation is presented to the Executive and/or partnership agencies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the communications activity and to help secure a communications budget for the following financial year.

Each TSCP communications initiative should be measured during the 2009/10-financial year to establish a baseline, if one does not exist already.

Ultimately, the Place Survey will provide data as to whether public perceptions of safety and confidence in partner agencies are improving.

7. CONCLUSION

TCSP aims to make a significant, measurable impact on the fear of crime and feelings of safety in Thurrock. This requires a robust approach with a cohesive strategy and innovative projects, backed by human and financial resources and the partner agencies.

The Home Office guidance on communicating crime reduction states:

“The whole partnership must agree the aims and objectives of the communication strategy. This will make sure that each partner is committed to the strategy and will abide by the unified message [...] Agencies that pursue their own agenda at the expense of the partnership will undermine any partnership communications activity.”²¹

RECOMMENDATION 34: That statutory and non-statutory partners sign up to this **Communications Strategy**, supporting its implementation, which will enable the Partnership to effectively communicate to its residents that many organisations are working together to make Thurrock an even safer place.

²¹ Ibid 9

APPENDIX A – List of key stakeholders and staff interviewed

Superintendent Ivor Harvey, Essex Police – Chair of TCSP Strategic Board

Michelle Cunningham, Community Safety Manager, TCSP

Chief Inspector Paul Moor, District Commander, Essex Police

Lucy Magill, Head of Public Service Protection, Thurrock Council – Chair of the TCSP Exec

Lizette Fox, LSP Director

Janet Davison, Community Safety Development Officer, Thurrock Council – Chair of the TSCP Communications Group

Laura Anderson, Media and Communications Co-ordinator (South Western Division), Essex Police

Steve Greener, Community Safety Manager, Essex Police

Myles Rapley, Essex Fire & Rescue Service

Steve Reynolds, Essex Fire & Rescue Service

Jim Nicolson, Thurrock DAAT Manager & Lead for Domestic Violence, Thurrock Council

Holly Edwards, Thurrock DAAT

Jacqui Payne, Community Development Officer, Ngage

Andy Lever, Communications Manager, Thurrock Council

APPENDIX B – Branding Guidelines

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership logo should be immediately recognisable to residents, who should understand – at the very least – that it represents partners working together to make Thurrock a safer place. In order for this to happen over time, it is important that the logo be used in its proper format and faithfully reproduced everywhere it appears. The logo should never be distorted, but always kept in proportion when increased or reduced in size.

When an external agency (whether it be a partner or not) requests the logo, the Partnership should send it as a .JPG or .EPS version, not as part of a Word document or PowerPoint slide. Guidelines for its use should be sent at the same time.

There are three formats for the logo: full colour, greyscale and ‘white out of background’.



Full Colour



Greyscale

Full colour should be used in colour publications. It comprises two colours:

- The word ‘THURROCK’ is formed of CMYK: C = 62%, M = 94%, Y = 0%, K = 0%
- The lighter shade is formed of CMYK: C = 34%, M = 51%, Y = 0%, K = 0%

The greyscale version should be used in black and white publications, and the ‘white out of background’ version is for use when the background colour is not white. This version can only be produced using professional design software

It is important that the logo is not crowded by text, images or other objects, and therefore a clear space, equivalent to the distance of the base width of the letter ‘T’ in Thurrock, provides the exclusion zone.

The minimum size at which the logo should be reproduced is 30mm in width. Any smaller and the typographic elements of the logo will become illegible.

Where partners’ logos are used with the Partnership logo, the TCSP logo should be at least 50% larger than the other logos, and in a prime position, such as the top right of the printed material (see example headed paper, right).

In order to be easily accessible to all readers, the minimum size for text should be 11pt, using relative font sizes – that is, headings in a larger size than the main body of the text so that they can be easily distinguished. Standard, clear fonts such as Arial should be used, and consideration should be given to the colours used to ensure that the colour of any text contrasts significantly with the background colour, for example black or a dark blue on a white background.



APPENDIX C – Press Release Template



News Release

Ref: TCSP/001

Date: 28 April 2009

£30,000 community grants up for grabs

This is the 'hook' paragraph, where your first line should reiterate the headline (it doesn't have to be identical, but likewise it doesn't matter if it is) and state the fact that is most likely to attract residents' attention to the story, making them want to read more. This paragraph should be fairly short.

In paragraph two, include more information and if the Partnership is not mentioned in the first paragraph, it should definitely be in the second. It may also be appropriate to set out the where and when details in this paragraph, depending on the type of event. Keeping each paragraph short avoids the press release appearing text heavy and enables journalists to scan easily through the information.

Superintendent Ivor Harvey, chair of the TCSP, said, "This is a good place to use a quote. This is the only part of the press release that cannot be edited – it can be removed or cut, but the wording cannot be changed – so this is the place to communicate the key message(s) that you want kept in the article."

By the time you get to paragraph four, this should be towards the end of your press release so you need to include any information not covered above. If when, where and other specific details have not been included so far, then they should be included here.

Finally, include contact details for people who require more information or, if that's not relevant, include the website address.

Ends

Notes to editors: The accompanying photo (tscp001.jpg) shows Supt Harvey and LSP Director Lizette Fox being quizzed by local young people at the 'speed-dating' event.

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) is a statutory organisation bringing together Thurrock Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, SW Essex Primary Care Trust, Essex Police Authority, Probation in Essex and many others to make Thurrock an even safer place to live, work and visit.

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