**Appendix 1: Safer Neighbourhood panels and community engagement**

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Introduction
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The Safer Neighbourhoods mini project looked at the community engagement work of Safer Neighbourhoods panels. A Terms of Reference[1] was devised and signed off by the MPA and MPS. Due to limited capacity and because the work needed to be completed during the lifetime of the MPA, it was agreed that rather than undertaking an in-depth comprehensive consultation with a number of Safer Neighbourhoods panels, focused work would be undertaken with a small group of Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants, a few Safer Neighbourhoods panel members and a few Community Police Engagement Groups[2] (CPEGs). These interviews would be underpinned with the views of the MPA Engagement and Partnership Officers. Therefore the following report only provides an indication of the community engagement work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams and panels. However, whilst it can only provide an indication, there is a consistency in the views of the consultees and therefore these views must be taken into consideration in any review of the Safer Neighbourhoods panel guidance by the central Safer Neighbourhoods Unit. The views of the respondents also correspond to the findings of the July 2010 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study report and the February 2011 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report.

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Methodology
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The report is based on the views of:

- 18 Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants from 18 different boroughs[3] who took part in two informal focus group sessions;
- Six Community Police Engagement Group representatives (chairs, vice chairs and developmental staff), four of whom were also linked to or are members of Safer Neighbourhoods panels;
- Seven Safer Neighbourhoods panel representatives (chairs, vice chairs and co-chairs) one of whom is a member of two Safer Neighbourhood panels and four of whom have regular contact with their borough CPEG; and finally[4],
- Four MPA Engagement and Partnership Officers.[5]

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[1] The terms of reference for this work were considered by Clive Lawton and Cindy Butts.
The suggestion for this mini project came out of discussions held at numerous Communities, Equalities and People Committee meetings throughout 2011.
[2] Community & Police Engagement Groups (CPEGs) are the primary local groups for delivering the MPA community police engagement and consultation programme. They provide the structure to enable local people to regularly consult with their local police, the police authority, key stakeholders in crime and disorder reduction, and each other about strategic policing. CPEGs are intended to be representative of the local population, and more particularly those groups that interact with the police in disproportionate numbers and their activities are not limited to committee work but include active community engagement in neighbourhoods and with local groups.
The term Community Police Engagement Group is an umbrella term and encompasses Community Safety Boards, Community Police Consultative Groups and Police Community Consultative Groups
[3] The two focus groups were arranged by the central Safer Neighbourhoods unit. All Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants were invited to take part. 18 names were provided to the MPA. Two focus groups were held.
[4] The web based tool, Random Number Generator, was used to identify the five boroughs. Having identified the boroughs – one from each of the command areas – Random Number Generator was again used to choose one ward from each of the five boroughs.

The 18 Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants took part in two focus groups. The remaining consultation either took the form of telephone interviews or face to face interviews.

The original intention had been to provide a report with supporting information from research undertaken by the MPS Strategy, Research and Analysis Unit (SRAU). The SRAU has undertaken considerable work into Safer Neighbourhoods teams, including a seven year longitudinal study. Their work would have provided a useful comparison with the MPA/MPS mini study. However, as the consultation took longer than anticipated, it has not been possible to also undertake a desk based review into existing MPS Safer Neighbourhoods panel research. This report will therefore only reflect the views of the consultees and draw on any relevant information from the July 2010 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study report and the February 2011 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report.

This report has not attempted to identify good practice or establish 'what works' for Safer Neighbourhoods panels. Community volunteers who participated in this mini project were keen to stress that each ward/borough is different and that what may work in one ward/borough may not work in another. However, the consultees were able to identify good practice which they suggested other wards/boroughs could consider.

Finally, to ensure all respondents were willing to talk openly about their experiences, we assured all respondents that the names of their boroughs/wards would not be included in the final MPA report. Therefore the term community volunteers will be used to refer to the Safer Neighbourhoods panel and CPEG representatives, however, where it is useful to separate the Safer Neighbourhoods panel contributions from the CPEGs contributions this will be done. The term consultee(s) will be used when the views expressed include those expressed by the MPA EPU staff.

## Section one - Current practices

This section of the report covers a broad range of areas: it looks at whether Safer Neighbourhoods panels understand their roles; lists their examples of good practice and their general opinions of Safer Neighbourhood policing.

Prior to exploring these themes, it would be useful to look at the guidance developed by the central Safer Neighbourhoods Unit for setting up and maintaining Safer Neighbourhood panels. This advises Safer Neighbourhoods teams, that Safer Neighbourhoods panels should:

- be made up of local people who live or work in the area;
- ensure panel members are recruited from all six diversity strands[6];

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[5] The four Engagement and Partnership Officers represent 25 boroughs between them and therefore were able to provide a broad perspective of the community engagement work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams and panels.
[6] Race, Age, Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief. The term 'diversity strands' is no longer used by the MPA. The Equality Act 2010 refers to 'protective characteristics' rather than diversity strands.

- be made up of 10 – 12 people;
- be chaired by community members. Local councillors, it recommends, should not chair meetings;
- feed back the results of police/partner activity to the wider communities; and finally
- meet regularly. The guidance suggests meetings should occur every six weeks.

The above guidance should be kept in mind when considering the findings from the mini project. At each consultation session or focus group consultees were asked whether Safer Neighbourhoods panel members understood their roles as panel members and whether they knew what was expected of them.

The vast majority of the community volunteers understood what was expected of Safer Neighbourhoods panel members. They explained that it was the responsibility of Safer Neighbourhoods panels to *'coordinate the views of the wider communities and to decide on the ward priorities'.* One volunteer went onto say that a by product of this role was to develop community engagement between the police and the public and in doing so improve community police relations. Three community volunteers also felt it was the responsibility of existing panel members to inform new panel members of their responsibilities.

Only one of the 17 community consultees felt panel members were unsure what was expected of them. However, the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants were less certain about whether Safer Neighbourhoods panels were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. They had had varied experiences of administering and managing panels and their experiences had highlighted that an understanding of roles and responsibilities was often dependant on the membership of the panel.

In regards to the priority setting process, there was a consensus that *'setting the right priorities was the responsibility of the panel.'* However, one consultee stated it was imperative that once panels had determined the priorities, they had the appropriate skills and training in order to complete the next steps – problem solving.

Before considering the community engagement activities of the panels, it would be helpful to highlight what community volunteers generally thought of community police engagement.

Consultees told the MPA that:

- community police engagement helped to develop positive relationships between the police and the public and in doing so helped to *'bust the myths'* that people had about the police

- community police engagement allowed *'ordinary'* members of the public to directly raise issues with local police;

- community police engagement allowed residents to fully understand the challenges faced by the police when dealing with particular issues. The example given by a few of the community volunteers was the recent London disturbances;

- (following on from the above point) community police engagement allowed Londoners to learn how the police managed the resources that were available to them in any given week and how the police made decisions on how these resources would be deployed;

- Safer Neighbourhoods panels provided an opportunity for Safer Neighbourhood teams to communicate information to the wider public; and finally,

- Safer Neighbourhoods panels gave Londoners an opportunity to see how Safer Neighbourhoods teams were dealing with the concerns expressed by the public.

In addition to speaking about the importance of community police engagement, community volunteers were also keen to stress the importance of the Safer Neighbourhood policing approach. They said it had allowed the MPS to develop a more community focused approach to policing. Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants agreed with this assessment. They explained that as Safer Neighbourhoods teams were known to take ownership of the concerns and priorities expressed by Londoners they were often considered by Londoners to be one of the most important aspects of the MPS.

All consultees were asked to consider what they felt had worked well in their ward/boroughs in regards to community police engagement and in particular in regards to the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process. They highlighted the following:

**Rotating meetings:** Four community volunteers stated that rotating panel meetings worked well. Hosting panel meetings in different parts of the ward encouraged attendance as did holding meetings at different times of the day and on different days. One panel member said that as wards are artificial constructs and some wards bring together multiple communities by moving meetings around the ward no one community could feel excluded.

Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants said that in their experience, going to people (for example: catching people at train stations and supermarkets) rather than expecting them to come to the police, worked well in engaging Londoners but also in attracting different types of people to more formalised meetings.

**Themed meetings:** Two volunteers spoke about how thematic meetings with speakers had encouraged attendance at Safer Neighbourhoods panel and CPEG meetings. Thematic meetings with speakers from specialist policing areas and from the wider Criminal Justice field, provided community volunteers with a better understanding of how the work of their local police sat within the wider Criminal Justice arena. Connected to the above issue, one panel member said panel members and partners were always given designated slots on the meeting agenda. This panel member said it

was important that members of the public who were invited to take part in meetings were given the opportunity to have their say. Panel meetings had to allow for this.

**Utilising non police meetings:** Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants said that *'gate crashing'* or having a Safer Neighbourhoods policing agenda item at a partnership meetings or Council meeting was a useful mechanism as it provided an opportunity for the *'right people'* to hear community concerns, in other words those agencies who would be able to take forward the non policing priorities. This approach is similar to an issue that was raised during the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny.

**Utilising the skills of the panel membership:** Two panel members explained that each member of their panel had a designated responsibility for liaising with a different group/organisation in the ward. Each panel member had core skills and competencies which in order to carry out the business of the panel needed to be utilised. For example, one panel member had expressed an interest in ensuring the needs of young people were considered by the panel. She had been advised to develop links with the Safer Schools officers working in the ward. The two panel members said, *'[it was]...essential to use the expertise in the group and make each panel member responsible for their suggestions and areas of work.'*

**Information provision:** Four community volunteers spoke about how they used existing communication mechanisms to share information with the wider public about the work of their panels. One panel stated they utilised resident magazines to ensure non panel members were kept abreast about their work. Two other panels utilised their local Neighbourhood Watch Schemes to share information with non panel members. Linked to the above, one panel member stated that having panel members who were linked to other networks or community groups would also ensure that information was passed on to the wider public.

**Problem solving process:** Eight community volunteers were pleased that the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process allowed Londoners to work with the police on determining solutions for the priorities identified. The MPA were told that the *'police were interested in hearing their [panel members] solutions on what could be done.'* However, community volunteers were also pragmatic about the problem solving process. One community volunteer stated it was essential solutions did not criminalise or target particular sections of the population, for example young people. Another recognised that the problem solving process did not result in change overnight and often the slow progress made by the Safer Neighbourhoods teams could frustrate community volunteers. Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants recognised this concern and stated it was important Safer Neighbourhoods teams were honest and frank about what could and could not be achieved by them.

Only two of the community volunteers from the 17 community consultees, felt that whilst panels had an advisory role in regards to the problem solving process, it was ultimately the responsibility of the police to determine the solutions.

**Relationships with borough CPEGs:** Four of the Safer Neighbourhood panel representatives spoke about the importance of their relationships with borough CPEGs. The MPA were told that the CPEG meetings provided an opportunity *'to network with other partner agencies, meet with senior MPS officers ...'* and that CPEG meetings '*... bought together Safer Neighbourhoods panel chairs.'* Two panel members stated that the *'big picture'* opportunities that this type of meeting provided were crucial because panel members needed to know *'what the police were trying to achieve [across the borough] and the overall direction of the [borough] policing strategy.'* A CPEG chair who was also a member of two Safer Neighbourhood panels stated that panels and CPEGs were part of a three tier process. At a street level there was the local Neighbourhood Watch who held localised information. The middle tier was the ward based Safer Neighbourhoods panel who bought together the localised information to determine the priorities for the entire ward. Finally, at the borough level, there was the CPEG, which gathered information and intelligence from the panels and other sources to build a borough wide picture. All three mechanisms relied on each other for information provision and dissemination of information.

**Setting short term targets:** One panel set short term targets for the Safer Neighbourhoods team to complete in the eight week period between meetings.

**Membership:** The Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants highlighted that having a broad membership which included key individuals and organisations ensured an effective Safer Neighbourhoods panel. Their panels included:

- Local Authority staff. Local Authority staff were often better placed to deal with issues that arose at panel meetings, for example: housing and dog fouling etc.
- Representatives from educational establishments, such as teachers, governors, parent governors and sixth form students.
- Businesses
- Registered Social Landlords
- Licensees
- Town Centre Managers
- Tenants and Residents Associations.

They also commented that having panel members who were members of other local community groups provided the teams with an opportunity to share information with non panel members.

**Virtual ward panels:** Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants from boroughs where the Safer Neighbourhoods virtual ward pilot is being run stated this new approach was working well in their wards. Other Sergeants recognised that a virtual ward panel would encourage those who were not able to attend formal meetings to get involved.

In summary:

- The importance of the community engagement remit is recognised by both community volunteers and the Safer Neighbourhoods teams;

- Safer Neighbourhoods panels and Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants have tried a variety of approaches to ensure engagement by Londoners in the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process; and finally,
- To support the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process a comprehensive membership which includes a range of community members and representatives from relevant agencies is required.

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**Section two - Challenges**

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Community volunteers had a number of concerns about the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process. On the whole these concerns were unsurprising and reflected issues previously raised in the July 2010 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study report and the February 2011 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report.

Prior to exploring the comments made by consultees, it would be worthwhile highlighting a few broad concerns raised by some of the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants. They felt that the central MPS request to Safer Neighbourhoods teams to set up panels swiftly had been unhelpful. This desire for a speedy set up was further exacerbated by a delay in formal guidance being provided to Safer Neighbourhoods teams on the development and roll out of panels. This had resulted in boroughs adopting a number of varied approaches which in turn had resulted in a lack of consistency across the Capital.

Consultees highlighted the following:

**Information provision:** It was concerning that four community volunteers were unsure how information from panel meetings was shared with non panel members. Similar concerns were raised by community volunteers who took part in the Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study. However, there was also speculation by community volunteers on whether it was the responsibility of the panel to share information with the wider public or whether this responsibility lay with the Safer Neighbourhoods teams.

**Problem solving process:** Two consultees felt that the problem solving process was still predominately being driven by the police. One suggested that panels felt the problem solving process was the responsibility of the police *'and they [Safer Neighbourhoods teams] should be getting on with it'.* Another stated that one of the reasons why panels were not actively involved in the problem solving process was because they did not understand their roles as panel members.

**Relationships with borough CPEGs:** The majority of CPEG volunteers spoke about the difficulties of engaging Safer Neighbourhoods panels in the CEPG process[7]. Varied concerns were expressed:

- They stated panel attendance at CPEG meetings varied considerably. One stated that in their borough, attendance was often dependant on who would be speaking at the CPEG meeting. Two consultees stated that this lack of attendance had resulted in the borough CPEG being unsure what priorities the panels were focusing on.

- Two CPEG volunteers felt panel members should be 'urged' to attend CPEG meetings and that in turn the CPEG chair/vice chairs should meet with the Safer Neighbourhoods panel chairs on a bi annual basis.

- One CPEG community volunteer stated that their borough had specifically set up a panel Chairs Forum to bring together all panel chairs on a regular basis because panel Chairs were not attending CPEG meetings. Whilst this approach had met with partial success, the CPEG has also had to continue with phone and email contact in between and prior to meetings to ensure that representatives attended the Forum meetings. A CPEG volunteer from the same borough stated that it was *'important that all [panels] got together as it provides an opportunity to build a borough picture and share good practice. At the moment very little information is being shared between wards. [this is of concern] ...as some priorities are borough wide.'*

- Two Safer Neighbourhoods panel members had not heard of the CPEG process.

- One Safer Neighbourhoods panel member felt that CPEG meetings were a waste of time, *'they sit around talking about the same things over and over again.'*

- Two consultees were concerned that panels were operating in a vacuum with little contact with other community volunteers or the wider public. This concern was given some credence when two panel members stated that they had no contact at all with other community groups and volunteers. At the two Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeant focus groups, a number of the Sergeants also stated that very few panel members went out and collected information from the wider community. These Sergeants felt the information panel members shared at panel meetings was often based on their own individual opinions.

- However, there was also recognition amongst some CPEG and panel consultees that it was not possible to compel Safer Neighbourhoods panels to liaise with CPEGs or other community volunteers. Panel members had joined the Safer

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[7] It is worth keeping in mind than when talking about the difficulties that CPEGs had in engaging Safer Neighbourhoods panels in the CPEG process, they were talking in general terms about all the panels in their boroughs. Therefore, whilst they may have had particular successes with one or two panels, on the whole, they had found it difficult to engage panels in the CPEG process.

Neighbourhoods panel process because it had a neighbourhood focus, consequently they may not be interested in working at a borough level. Three community consultees speculated whether this issue, the relationship between panels and other volunteers, needed to be reconsidered when the central Safer Neighbourhoods unit revisited the guidance for Safer Neighbourhoods panels. This concern was echoed by some of the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants who said that the MPS expected too much of panel members. They said panel members had joined on the basis of attending a meeting every two months or so, however they were often expected to undertake additional duties, such as meetings with borough commanders, community groups and other volunteers and taking part in borough or corporate consultations.

The above commentary corresponds to the concerns expressed by community volunteers who participated in the July 2010 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study and the February 2011 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny. Back then, community volunteers commented on how the relationships between Safer Neighbourhoods panels and CPEGs were disjointed, with each CPEG/panel rarely informing the work of the other. CPEG respondents who took part in Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny consultation felt there needed to be better links between Safer Neighbourhoods teams, Safer Neighbourhoods panels and CPEGs. Some CPEG respondents felt certain crime and policing issues could not be dealt with at a ward level and CPEGs were better placed to raise issues directly with Borough Commanders and other senior officers. Other CPEG respondents stated that whilst the MPA required CPEGs to involve Safer Neighbourhoods panels in their community engagement work; this was not always possible as some Safer Neighbourhoods panel chairs were not interested at working at this level.

**Membership and Governance:** The majority of the community consultees recognised they had gaps in their panel memberships. The majority agreed it was difficult to get Londoners involved in community police engagement and that whilst Londoners may attend meetings when they had specific problems, it can be tough to retain their interest once the issue had been resolved. However, the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants pointed out that despite this difficulty, as part of their day to day duties they undertook considerable community police engagement and members of the public knew how to contact their local teams for advice, information or support.

This issue, the difficulty of involving the wider public in community police engagement work, was also highlighted during the Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny consultation when respondents told us that many Londoners only require information about what is being done in their areas and may not be interested in taking part in more formalised community police engagement activities.

One borough was exploring the possibility of having virtual memberships for both its CPEG and its Safer Neighbourhoods panels. It was hoped that this would encourage the participation of residents who were unwilling or unable to attend formal meetings. Two volunteers from another borough expressed similar sentiments. They felt their residents preferred to be contacted and to contribute through email and social media.

However, they did not think that this was unique to the world of community police engagement. Email and social media provided a conveniencey to people with busy lives who may not want the additional responsibility/burden of volunteering.

A majority of consultees recognised they needed to involve young people in the work of Safer Neighbourhoods panels but equally recognised the difficulties of doing so. Two consultees stated that in their borough, introducing young people to the CPEG process had resulted in safeguarding concerns. Bringing young people safely to and from the evening meetings had proven problematic and had added an additional responsibility to the work of the Safer Neighbourhoods team.

The majority of volunteers recognised panels needed to be inclusive and representative of the communities they represented. However, a few also stressed that inclusiveness should not simply focus on the 'protective characteristics[8]' which can often be the basis on how gaps in membership are filled. Volunteers recognised that memberships of the panels also had to consider *'communities within communities.'* In other words, if the ward contained a secondary school, a representative from the school should be involved in the panel.

Two consultees were concerned that there had been little change in Safer Neighbourhoods panel memberships over the years as turnover in membership was minimal. One said that when panels had originally been set up their memberships had been developed by the police. This consultee concluded that, *'...it is likely that current memberships of panels would consist of people who had been handpicked by the police.'*

Two consultees spoke about the impact of panels not being provided with their own financial resources. They explained they had to balance the expectations of the panel membership and the wider public against what they were able to do with the limited resources they had available. This issue was also raised by consultees during the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study. They suggested that in order for volunteers to be able to fulfil their panel or CPEG duties effectively they required better support services, including financial support.

A number of community volunteers raised the issue of councillor involvement. One Safer Neighbourhoods panel chair explained that councillors were not involved in their panel. This was because in other parts of the borough, local councillors had tried to *'take over'* the panel process. Another Safer Neighbourhoods panel chair stated that councillors had the same voting rights as other members; two others stated that councillors were members but did not have voting rights. A few of the community volunteers felt that councillor presence at panel meetings was essential, as was Local Authority representation. Local Authority representation would ensure that information from the meetings and non policing priorities could be taken back to the Local Authority and actioned. However Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants highlighted that budget cuts

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[8] Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex or Sexual Orientation.

and redundancies had led to a reduction in Local Authority officers attending panel meetings and consequently this was having an impact on the involvement of Local Authorities in the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process.

There was also some debate during the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeant focus groups about whether councillors should be part of panels. Views varied from offering councillors full membership, councillors being welcome to attend but not vote and councillors not being able to attend at all. Some Sergeants were also concerned that councillors could use meetings to promote their own political agendas. However, whilst there was little consensus amongst the respondents regarding whether Safer Neighbourhoods panels should include councillors, the vast majority of the consultees agreed councillors should not be panel chairs.

The interviews highlighted that there was a number of different approaches to panel administration. One panel chair explained that all the administration for the panel was undertaken by the Safer Neighbourhoods team. However, other panels had either taken on this responsibility or shared it with the Safer Neighbourhoods team. They felt that by taking on this task or sharing with the teams, they were *'freeing'* up the Safer Neighbourhoods teams to focus on policing and taking forward the panel priorities.

**Priority setting process:** Four consultees stated that in some wards Safer Neighbourhoods teams played a large role in determining the ward priorities. One of the consultees suggested that this was because on occasion Safer Neighbourhoods team knew more about the issue affecting the ward than the Safer Neighbourhood panel. Some Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants said the panels were often reluctant to change their priorities, regardless of whether they were achievable or not.  They felt that there was sometimes a divergence between what the panels thought priorities should be and what the police felt they needed to be.

Two consultees were concerned with the '*mixed messages from the centre.'* One said that if the primary role of Safer Neighbourhoods panels was to determine the wards policing priorities, the centre, the borough or the Safer Neighbourhoods teams should not be *'foisting'* their priorities onto the panels. The other said, '*panels may not identify the issues that are imposed on them by Safer Neighbourhoods teams and may question why they are being asked to address Motor Vehicle Crime when they believe the key issue is ASB by young people.'* A third consultee agreed with this assessment. This consultee explained that in setting up the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process, the MPS had informed volunteers that their key responsibility would be to set the policing priorities for the ward. The intention had been that panel members, *'would identify their local priorities based on what they knew were the local problems.'* Therefore it seemed somewhat contradictory for Safer Neighbourhoods teams to then put forward alternative priorities for the panels.

These concerns were also expressed by CPEG respondents to the Safer Neighbourhoods Scrutiny consultation. They told the MPA that Safer Neighbourhoods teams were weighted down by too many priorities - local, borough and central. They felt

Safer Neighbourhoods teams should only work to one set of priorities, those set by Safer Neighbourhoods panels

The Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants explained during the focus group sessions that Safer Neighbourhoods teams are often tasked from the centre or asked to focus on borough priorities. This detracts from work on local issues and means that Safer Neighbourhoods teams are not able to deal with local priorities. They felt that Safer Neighbourhoods teams did not have the capacity to tackle central targets and that they should be left to focus on the local problems identified by Safer Neighbourhoods panels.

**Information provided by the police:** Two consultees were concerned that the information provided by the police to panels was confusing and inaccessible.  One said that, Safer Neighbourhoods teams *'simply gave out handouts and then threw statistics at people.'*  The other suggested that Safer Neighbourhoods teams should liaise with panels beforehand in order to ensure that panels understood the data. This type of preparation would be useful for both teams and panels as community volunteers would be better able to support Safer Neighbourhoods team with their work.

Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants had mixed views about how well data was used by panels. They felt that some panel members were not interested in crime statistics and were more interested in what the Sergeant had to say, whilst others made good use of police and partnership data.

**Other community engagement mechanisms used by Safer Neighbourhoods teams:** Very little commentary was provided by community volunteers on the other community engagement activities undertaken by Safer Neighbourhoods teams. Two panel volunteers mentioned street briefings and surgeries. Neither felt that these methods were particularly useful. Both felt that rather than doing these types of activities, it would be more *'useful for officers to be walking the beat and talking to people.'* This was echoed by the police participants who took part in the Safer Neighbourhoods Scrutiny consultation who said that the most effective engagement occurred through informal day to day contact. They felt the police should be *'engaging with a purpose'* whether this was through formalised engagement methods such as Safer Neighbourhoods panels or through informal street based face to face encounters.

Only one of the 17 community volunteers mentioned the Key Individual Network (KIN) process. This panel member was also a KIN but was unsure how the KIN process was aligned to Safer Neighbourhoods panels. This consultee suggested that Safer Neighbourhoods teams needed to be clearer, about where '*KINs sat in regards to the priority setting process ... how they fit in?'* Concerns about KINs not being effectively utilised were also highlighted during the Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny.

The majority of the 18 Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants were dismissive of the Safer Neighbourhoods newsletters produced by the centre. They explained that as these bi annual newsletters were planned months in advance, by the time they were produced and disseminated they were out of date. In addition, not all households received them.

They suggested Safer Neighbourhoods newsletters should be produced locally, so that they were timely and were relevant to their communities.

In summary:

- similar to concerns highlighted in the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study and the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report, there appears to be a disconnect between some CPEGs and some Safer Neighbourhoods panels;

- it seems Safer Neighbourhoods teams are increasingly being asked to focus on borough and centrally prescribed priorities. This can cause a tension at a local level, where panels expect teams to be focusing on locally agreed priorities;

- there is variance in the governance and administration of panels; and finally,

- there is also variance in panel memberships; however this is reflective of local needs and priorities. However, there was considerable debate about the role of ward councillors on Safer Neighbourhoods panels.

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**Section three - Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the suggestions of the consultees. They have also been informed by the July 2010 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study report and the February 2011 MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report.

**Membership and Governance – recommendations**

- ***In order to involve young people in the Safer Neighbourhoods panel process, Safer Neighbourhoods teams and Safer Neighbourhoods panels should use innovative engagement methods and make better use of social media.*** In one borough, for example, rather than expecting young people to take part in formal Safer Neighbourhoods panel or CPEG meetings, targeted community police engagement events have been held for young people. These have included regular 'Question Time' sessions where young people have had the opportunity to directly question senior MPS officers.

- ***The membership of Safer Neighbourhoods panels should reflect the needs and makeup of the ward.*** panels should aim to include the following members/groups:
    - councillors;
    - Educational representatives;
    - Small and Medium Enterprises and local traders;
    - Representatives from large industrial estates;
    - The local Voluntary Sector Council;
    - Housing representatives

- o Neighbourhood Watch
- o Local Authority officers such as the Anti Social Behaviour officer
- o Tenant and Resident Associations
- o Health professionals
- o Young people (where possible)

Each ward is different; therefore Safer Neighbourhoods teams require autonomy to determine who needs to be on their panel. However, some groups/individuals are crucial to the work of panels and therefore all teams should be required to have these group/individuals involved. ***MPS central guidance for Safer Neighbourhoods panels should stipulate a consistent core membership.***

- In addition to developing memberships that better reflect the ward, ***Safer Neighbourhoods teams should have a range of individual contacts within the ward, a list of key individuals who can keep them abreast of local concerns***[9]. The list of suggested key individuals include:
  - o Publicans
  - o Newsagents
  - o Concierge staff
  - o Security staff
  - o Priests
  - o Imams

- ***Panel memberships should be regularly reviewed.*** Safer Neighbourhoods teams should ensure the *'right'* people remain on the panel. In line with suggestions made in the earlier MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny report, Safer Neighbourhoods teams should seek individuals with the most appropriate skills so that panels are able to effectively deliver on their remits.

- ***Safer Neighbourhoods teams need to consider how they balance the opinions of panel members.*** Panel memberships can include individuals who do not represent organisations or groups and panel members who do. Some community consultees felt it would be reasonable to give more weight to those individuals who were representing an organisation or a group rather than those who were not. This would also ensure that *'single issue'* or non inclusive members did not dominate panel meetings.

- ***The central Safer Neighbourhoods Unit should provide clearer guidance on whether panel meetings should be open to the public or closed to everyone bar panel members.*** There was a mixture of approaches amongst those that were interviewed, some panels only held closed meetings, others held only open meetings and some panels held a mixture of the two. Again, some community volunteers highlighted the need for a consistent approach. ***Whilst the MPA does***

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[9] It was unclear from the interviews undertaken whether the MPS are still utilising the KIN process. Should the KIN process still be in use, the MPA would suggest that KIN lists should be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that they are up to date and remain relevant to the needs of the ward.

*not require the MPS to develop a prescriptive approach, in order to promote community police engagement and ensure transparency, a mixture of open and closed meetings should be required of all panels.*

- **Community volunteers should be provided with relevant training.** This training could cover a range of issues, but an understanding of community engagement; how to use police and partnership data, problem solving and chairs training were cited as key requirements by some of the consultees. **Where possible and in line with the MPA/MPS community engagement commitment action plans, the MPA and MPS should endeavour to hold training sessions in partnership.**

- **Safer Neighbourhoods teams should encourage Neighbourhood Watch schemes to be involved in Safer Neighbourhoods panels.**

- **Panel meetings should be held at different times of the day, on different days and at different locations in the ward to encourage attendance by a wide range of people.**

- **Safer Neighbourhoods panels should be advised that the remit of Safer Neighbourhoods teams has expanded and continues to develop. Safer Neighbourhoods teams are taking on additional responsibilities such as Anti Social Behaviour, Offender Management and victim visits.**

**Information provision – recommendations**

- **Safer Neighbourhoods teams should be aware of existing local communication mechanisms to share information with the wider public.** Consultees suggested that Safer Neighbourhoods teams:
  - should make better use of community websites such as http://www.london-se1.co.uk/ to share information on the work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams and panel priorities. Information from these websites could also be a useful source of information at Safer Neighbourhoods panel meetings;
  - should include information in local free magazines that are delivered door to door;
  - should place information in public spaces which are used/visited by the wider public, such as transport hubs; super markets; local coffee shops; local post offices; doctor surgeries/clinics and shopping centres.

Community volunteers recognised that by improving information provision it was also possible to improve community police engagement. A more effective promotion of the work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams and panels would *'encourage attendance and involvement [in panels and CPEGs] by residents.'* More publicity and information on the work of panels would also *'ensure that people know it is worth calling the police.'*

- *Feedback on progress made on priorities should always be a key item of Safer Neighbourhoods panel agendas.*

- *Safer Neighbourhoods newsletters should be produced locally. Safer Neighbourhoods teams should have the autonomy to decide the content.*

**Community Engagement – recommendations**

- *A one size fits all approach to community engagement does not work. The MPS should allow each Safer Neighbourhoods team to develop community engagement approaches that meet the needs of their ward.*

- Linked to the above, *The central Safer Neighbourhoods unit should provide a 'shopping list' of options for Safer Neighbourhoods teams, highlighting which community engagement methods work well and in which circumstance.*

- *Safer Neighbourhoods teams should be monitored on the outcomes of their community engagement activities, rather than their community engagement outputs.*

- *The central Safer Neighbourhoods unit should consider how information collected by Safer Neighbourhoods teams whilst walking the beat can be used to inform the priority setting process;*

- *It is the responsibility of the Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants to ensure that each Safer Neighbourhoods team has only one set of policing priorities to work with.* Community volunteers suggested that rather than Safer Neighbourhoods officers attending numerous community and resident group meetings, representatives from these groups should be encouraged to attend or join their local Safer Neighbourhoods panel. It was felt that additional demands and requirements from community and resident group meetings could compromise priorities that had already been agreed with Safer Neighbourhoods panels. However, conversely, there was also recognition that attendance at these types of meetings met with a core Safer Neighbourhoods priority to engage with and become familiar with the needs of local communities.

The central Safer Neighbourhoods unit may also wish to consider the following points:

- Safer Neighbourhoods teams may wish to undertake exit interviews with departing Safer Neighbourhoods panel members. Information from exit interviews could be used to continually improve the Safer Neighbourhoods panel's process.

- Approximately four to six Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants in each borough will now be responsible for two Safer Neighbourhoods teams and therefore will find

themselves responsible for two panels. Depending on local circumstances, it may be useful for some Sergeants to merge their two panels. This would reduce the number of meetings that Safer Neighbourhoods teams and Local Authority officers have to attend. Combining panel meetings could also achieve a bigger turn out at meetings.

- There needs to be better internal and external communication about the work and remit of Safer Neighbourhoods teams. This issue has been repeatedly highlighted in previous MPA reports including both the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scoping study and the MPA Safer Neighbourhoods scrutiny reports.

- There appears to be a misunderstanding in the MPS about the capacity of Safer Neighbourhoods teams and how much work they can take on, for example working on central operations whilst also tackling local priorities.

- Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants requested that there should be limits on who can directly task Safer Neighbourhoods teams. In their opinion Safer Neighbourhoods tasking should go through a direct line management chain.