



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice

# Community Safety

## Policy Paper



## Table of Contents

<b>Community Safety</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. General Overview</b> .....	<b>3</b>
What is Community Safety? .....	3
How will the community safety approach make a difference? .....	3
<b>2. Piloting the Community Safety Approach</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) Pilots.....	5
<b>3. Community Safety Objectives and Structures</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Objectives of the local Community Safety Partnerships .....	5
Local Community Safety Partnerships - Proposed Structure .....	6
Support to Local Partnerships: Community Safety Coordinators.....	7

# Community Safety

## 1. General Overview

### What is Community Safety?

The concept of community safety is about people being safe and feeling safe in their own community. At the heart of this policy is the principle that every community has the right to be and feel safe in order to thrive and flourish.

Ireland is generally regarded as a safe country in international terms, with relatively low crime rates and a general feeling of safety and security. However, we recognise that this is not the case in every community and that people living in disadvantaged areas can experience a different reality.<sup>1</sup>

The new community safety policy will ensure communities are safer and feel safer by making community safety a whole of Government responsibility and priority, to be delivered through Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs), supported through a national governance structure.

This structure will ensure that communities are empowered to have a strong say in what actions are prioritised by the services operating in their area, and will also have a key oversight role in ensuring those actions are followed through.

### How will the community safety approach make a difference?

While State services carry out their individual responsibilities, too often their interventions rely on a reactive response to emergency and crisis situations. The aim of community safety is to focus all relevant Government services on prevention and early interventions, and the impact that a shared approach to problem solving can have in ensuring that situations do not develop to the point where they impact on the safety, or feeling of safety, of the community at large.

This will mean State services working with each other and the community to ensure there is better coordination between services such as educational and youth work with young people, the availability of local health and mental health services, drug prevention, housing and the built environment, and actions taken to combat alcohol and substance abuse, domestic abuse, youth crime, anti-social behaviour, and hate crime. This approach has had positive results in Northern Ireland, where Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) bring together members of the community alongside representatives from policing, probation, housing, youth, emergency and education services. Some examples of projects run by PCSPs include a programme designed to help young people understand the consequences of their online reputation,

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019 nearly 75% of people reported feeling 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' walking in their local area at night. CSO Crime and Victimisation 2019.

a Roadsafe Roadshow aimed at local students to ensure they take more responsibility on the roads, and a multimedia campaign to help a local community tackle street level drug dealing, raising awareness of resources available to the public in reporting crime and community concerns.

Often the risk a person poses may be to themselves, but their behaviour can also negatively impact on the sense of safety of those within their community. Ensuring that people in these situations can get the right support at the right time is vital.

This means harm prevention and interventions delivered pro-actively, by the service best placed to deliver it, and doing so in a joined up, integrated way with other services. This will include addressing individual mental health and addiction needs, services and supports for homeless people, reduction strategies for childhood trauma or ensuring older people and other at-risk groups have access to effective supports and advocates. These are some of the key underlying issues that make communities unsafe or feel unsafe and dealing with them in an effective way, before they reach the point where an emergency or crisis situation develops, is central to community safety.

Clearly, this approach goes far beyond the traditional policing response and requires all relevant state bodies and voluntary organisations to work together in a joined up way in partnership with the local community to prioritise and address issues in their own area. The structures detailed below have been designed to create an environment that can support this approach.

Success will require strong collaborative leadership to achieve the necessary inter-agency delivery as well as proactive and ongoing dialogue with the local community. The primary goal of the policy is to provide more targeted and effective support to the most disadvantaged communities and foster safe local areas for families, residents and businesses and that feel more secure. The objective is to link with other whole of Government strategies and structures, such as the Healthy Communities initiative being developed under Sláintecare and the existing Local Community Development Committees, to allow these areas to develop and flourish and for some areas break the cycle of disadvantage.

This policy will be supported by the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill - legislation which places a statutory obligation on Government Departments, local authorities, public bodies and agencies to have regard to harm prevention in their activities, and to cooperate with each other to deliver safer communities.

## 2. Piloting the Community Safety Approach

### Local Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) Pilots

Local Community Safety Partnerships will be piloted in three areas around the country, in Dublin's North Inner City, Waterford City and County and Longford County.

The locations of the pilots were chosen based on a number of factors, including population density, crime rates and deprivation. These locations allow the proposed structure to be trialled in a high population density area, a medium population density area and a low population density area, with a regional distribution. The pilots will run for 24 months and will be subject to a robust independent evaluation from the outset, in order to ensure the proposed structures are fulfilling their objectives.

The learnings from the pilots and their evaluation will be taken into account in the drafting of the statutory framework for community safety, and will be applied to the national roll out of similar partnerships in communities across the country.

## 3. Community Safety Objectives and Structures

Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs) will bring all services and the community together at local authority level, replacing the existing Joint Policing Committees, to serve as a forum for discussion and decisions on community priorities.

The LCSPs will join up with similar approaches in related policy areas such as Slaintecare's Healthy Communities initiative and the existing Local Community Development Committees.

The final statutory framework to bring together, oversee and drive the delivery of this whole of Government approach and align it with related strategies will be informed by the experience of the pilot areas.

### Objectives of the local Community Safety Partnerships

The partnership approach is built on two premises:

1. Every community is different and has different problems and issues.
2. Responding to those problems and issues requires a range of inputs from across Government, local services, voluntary sector and the community itself.

The response to the issues identified above requires the following elements:

1. Community engagement in identifying what the needs of the community are;
2. Commitment and buy-in from State, local and voluntary service providers to work together to address those needs.

The local Community Safety Partnerships aim to foster sustained community involvement in identifying needs and co-designing solutions, and sustained commitment from services in working together to address those needs. The objectives and intended outcomes of Local Community Safety Partnerships will be to:

- Prioritise issues identified by the community as safety concerns
  - The community will be engaged and represented on the Local Community Safety Partnership
  - A Local Community Safety Plan will be developed which will reflect priorities identified by the community.
- Improve multi-agency collaboration in the pilot area
  - Relevant service providers will be represented on the Local Community Safety Partnership and will work collaboratively on solutions to safety issues.
- Increase community confidence in service providers
  - Service providers will be accountable to the community in fulfilling the agreed actions identified in the Local Community Safety Plan.
  - The community will be better informed about and empowered to participate in community safety activities in the area.

### Local Community Safety Partnerships - Proposed Structure

It is intended that membership of the Local Community Safety Partnership will include: residents; community representatives, including representatives of youth, new communities and the voluntary sector; business and education representatives; relevant public services in the area, including HSE, Tusla, AGS, and the local authority; and Local councillors

As residents are central to identifying problems and solutions for their community, the partnerships will have a 51/49% split in favour of local residents and community representatives on the committee.

### Local Community Safety Partnership – Structure



## **Support to Local Partnerships: Community Safety Coordinators**

The Local Community Safety Partnership will be actively supported by a local community safety coordinator whose role is to support the Partnership, engage the residents in the community on safety issues and link them in with the work of the Partnership.

This can be done through local communications campaigns, local workshops and events in the community. The intention is to provide an on-site, day-to-day, joined-up connection back to the individual services and between the partnership and the community.

The Local Community Safety Partnership will be responsible for developing a tailored and prioritised local community safety plan in conjunction with both community and public services. The intention is to build the capacity of local residents to enable them to engage meaningfully in the Local Community Safety Partnership and grow local community leadership and participation, and developing this will be a key aspect of the role of the Community Safety Coordinator.

This will enable the Local Community Safety Partnership to function as a forum for dialogue between the community and service providers and should strengthen trust in the people providing services. The Local Community Safety Partnership will also work to identify specific initiatives where the community can support local services and An Garda Síochána in their community safety work, including outreach programmes.

Each community's issues and solutions will be different and tailored to the needs of that community, but some examples of what might be in local safety plans could include:

- Tackling issues in the built environment that make people feel unsafe, e.g., rapid responses to graffiti, addressing dumping and littering, and fixing street lighting.
- Educational programmes to be run in schools to encourage intercultural exchange.
- Focussing Garda resources on issues of note e.g. open drug dealing in X area, or implementing a bike tagging scheme.

