

HOW CAN CHARITIES MAXIMISE THEIR IMPACT BY WORKING WITH POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS?



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In October 2016 NPC and the Police Foundation convened a roundtable of charities from across the criminal justice system, many of whom have been working with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) over the past four years. The aim of the roundtable was to explore how the role of PCCs has evolved, and to identify where new opportunities for partnerships with the voluntary sector may arise as the devolution agenda takes shape. The roundtable addressed a number of questions, including:

- How successfully have PCCs and the voluntary sector worked together over the past four years?
- What are the implications of devolution for the commissioning of criminal justice services?
- What opportunities are there for collaboration and innovation between PCCs and the voluntary sector?

In the following pages we share the key insights from this roundtable.

The role and rationale for PCCs

PCCs are elected representatives who work to ensure police forces in England and Wales are running effectively. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners describe the role of PCCs as: *'to be the voice of the people and hold the police to account. They are responsible for the totality of policing ... aim[ing] to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their force area.'*¹

Four years after the first cohort of PCCs were elected in 2012, they are now an established part of the criminal justice landscape. While there was initially scepticism around their introduction, many of the concerns raised—most notably that their democratic election would lead to the politicisation of policing—have arguably not come to fruition. PCCs are now supported by both the Prime Minister and the Official Opposition. The next PCC elections also fall on the same day as the general election in 2020, and so—in practical terms—even in the event of an elected government wishing to overturn PCCs, they are likely to be embedded in policing structures until at least 2024.

PCCs are likely to take on more powers from central government, and will be important actors for charities in this field to engage with.

¹ See Association of Police and Crime Commissioners website: <http://www.apccs.police.uk/role-of-the-pcc/>

PCCs were introduced with three primary purposes: increasing transparency, improving public engagement and promoting innovation. Encouragingly, the roundtable heard that there have been successes in all three areas over the past four years. Attendees argued that not only have PCCs made policing more accountable, through being publically elected, but their ability to curtail the power of the Chief Constable has also ensured that the performance of the police is more transparent to the public it serves. It was also argued that PCCs have made significant progress in the context of innovation. New partnerships both with other forces and across the public sector have changed the way that forces interact with citizens and how support is provided to victims. Through taking a step back from day-to-day operational concerns, and focusing not just on policing but also crime reduction, PCCs have also had a greater ability to prioritise early intervention.

The context for collaboration between charities and PCCs

The wider devolution agenda

Devolution offers the welcome ability to tackle interrelated issues that are specific to each locality. With plans to devolve new powers to PCCs, and possibly to prison governors, there is a real opportunity for more effective civic engagement and a faster pace of change. In some city regions, the powers and functions of the PCC will be merged into the new role of 'metro mayor'.

The wider devolution agenda offers an opportunity to do things differently by breaking down public sector silos. Attendees suggested that although devolution was initially driven by economic arguments, it is now shifting to include public service transformation as local areas bring together a range of actors to tackle shared challenges.

Devolution also offers opportunities for new forms of voluntary sector engagement. Local budgets have the potential to bring smaller organisations into criminal justice service delivery. However, attendees said that charities remain anxious about what localism means for them and their service users. This anxiety is likely to be for several reasons.

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Firstly, the devolution agenda is fragmented and imperfect, not least because its multiple players often have competing agendas. This poses a challenge for national organisations who must now navigate a more complex policy environment. Meanwhile, the relationships many small charities have established with their Local Authorities (LAs)—which are often important partnerships, including for funding—are now uncertain as power shifts into new hands.

Secondly, though localism is arguably a welcome movement, it is taking place in the context of austerity. While achieving better value for money has been cited as a core driver of public service transformation, this puts pressure on the local authorities and the partners they work with, including the voluntary sector, to continually deliver more for less.

Finally, devolution is only as good as each locality's individual decision making and it is worth bearing in mind that a drawback to a localised model is the significant variation in standards across the country. This has been particularly true in the context of PCCs—both because of the unprecedented nature of the role and the different experiences and personalities of the individual commissioners. The devolution of justice services is further complicated by the overlapping boundaries of PCCs, LAs, Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) areas. This is a complex terrain which charities expressed as difficult to navigate.

Whether under the PCC model or the metro mayor model, the devolution agenda suggests—especially in the youth justice arena—that police and justice leaders are likely to take on more powers from central government than they have had in the past. As a result, regardless of the challenges outlined above, they will be important actors for charities in this field to engage with.

Shifting demands in policing

The landscape in which PCCs operate has changed significantly since their genesis. The concept of PCCs was developed in the early 2000s when public concerns centred around the levels of police presence on the streets, burglary, graffiti and anti-social behaviour. In other words, these were crimes committed in the public realm. Over the past decade, however, the prevalence of these offences has fallen dramatically across the UK.² As a result, policing priorities have shifted into the private realm to focus on more 'hidden harms' such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, radicalisation, modern slavery and female genital mutilation (FGM). Cybercrime's cross-border nature also cuts through traditional, localised policing structures. These crimes are often higher-harm offences focused on highly vulnerable groups in the community. They are also both less reported and much harder to investigate. Looking ahead, this trend is only expected to accelerate, meaning PCCs will continue to operate in a rapidly changing and very challenging environment over the next four to eight years.

The roundtable also heard that as a result of this shift there is now a disconnect between police priorities and the public's perception of what the police are for. Local communities, for example, continue to call for greater numbers of officers on the beat, despite the fact that this would have little impact on the growing crime types mentioned previously. Those who most need to engage with the police are also perhaps the least likely to, and as charities know well, a vulnerable individual is often both the perpetrator and victim of crime. This provides a particular challenge for PCCs as democratically accountable leaders when the public want a tough approach to crime. How will PCCs focus on the changing nature of crime and bring the public along with them?

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The potential for greater collaboration

Opportunities for collaboration

Charities have many valuable insights to offer to the re-design of statutory services. Those working with individual with complex social needs often understand the interconnections between crime, drugs, alcohol and domestic violence, and therefore have a good knowledge of the reasons underpinning trends in criminal activity. They are well positioned to tackle the 'hidden harm' crimes that now occupy policing priorities, because of the person centred, holistic approach they take with their service users. Some third sector organisations also work across the criminal justice system, supporting offenders, victims, witnesses, defendants and their families. This gives them a unique perspective of multi-dimensional problems such as reoffending and repeat victimisation.

When working with offenders, the charity sector's relative distance from 'the system' means they are often greatly trusted. They charities tend to work with individuals over a sustained period of time, and many are service user led. When working to protect victims, charities also know the warning signs of crimes that are committed away from the public eye, as well as how best to support those individuals out of a situation such as domestic violence, sexual assault and modern day slavery.

PCCs could utilise the decades of experience and expertise within the voluntary sector.

Harnessing this insight and expertise offers an opportunity for PCCs to meet their primary objective of reducing crime within their local area. With demand shifting towards complex, high volume and high risk crimes affecting vulnerable communities, PCCs could utilise the decades of experience and expertise within the voluntary sector. For instance, work undertaken by the Metropolitan Police Service for the Independent Commission for Mental Health and Policing estimated that 15% to 20% of incidents are linked to mental health.³ This suggests that

² Since 1995, for example, incidents of theft have fallen 67% and domestic burglary by 70%. See Office of National Statistics (2016) *Crime in England and Wales: Year ending December 2015*

³ College of Policing, (2015) *College of Policing analysis: Estimated demand of the police service*

PCCs could significantly reduce demand through collaborating with the mental health voluntary sector—as well as providing a more appropriate response to individuals in crisis.

Participants of the roundtable also identified that charities have a crucial role in advocacy, amplifying the voice of their service users—whether victims, perpetrators or both. This is still very valuable for PCCs as it will help them to better understand how to tackle crime in their communities. The voluntary sector could also support PCCs to push through more difficult agendas where it is in the interests of their beneficiaries, such as greater investment in staff who are not working on the frontline, by advocating to the public that focusing on high harm offences is in the interest of the whole community.

Case study: The benefits of collaboration

In Northumbria, following the rape of a young girl who had been witnessed leaving a club intoxicated with a male passer-by, PCC Vera Baird brought together a number of organisations from across the third sector and local industry to develop new safeguarding measures. This involved working with the local rape crisis centre to introduce a new training package for frontline workers involved with the night-time economy, including taxi drivers, bouncers and bus drivers. These measures are designed to help protect vulnerable people leaving late-night establishments.

Challenges to collaboration

Collaboration is sometimes easier said than done, and is limited in particular by both the complexity of the commissioning environment and the turnover of elected PCCs.

Partnership between the voluntary sector and PCCs is often more straightforward when the relationship is contractual, however charities will need to understand that collaboration does not necessarily mean being commissioned to deliver a service. Here, PCCs can still play a valuable role by convening third sector stakeholders who have shared priorities and can bring valuable insights.

Collaboration can also be disrupted when PCCs change every four years. Individual commissioners may have very different backgrounds and also very different priorities. Some, for example, are elected because they said they would hold the Chief Constable to account, putting an emphasis on their oversight role and potentially diminishing their capacity to focus on developing effective collaboration agreements with local partners. Though there have been exciting initiatives over the past four years, the roundtable also heard that some PCCs began by rolling over commissioning models that were no longer fit for purpose, leaving little room to innovate.

Penetrating the PCC landscape can be hard for charities. But the voluntary sector is equally daunting for PCCs.

The introduction of metro mayors in some areas adds a further level of complexity. Several attendees raised concerns that the clear focus some PCCs had brought to the role is unlikely to be replicated in the much wider brief of a metro mayor.

How PCCs and charities can best engage with one another

Collaboration between charities

While penetrating the PCC landscape can be hard for charities, it was highlighted that the voluntary sector is equally daunting for PCCs, particularly because it is so diverse. It is hard to know where to start in a local area with a sector that can span thousands of organisations from small community groups to large national providers of services. There are an estimated 1,475 charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations in England whose main clients are offenders, ex-offenders and their families, and as many as 13,596 voluntary organisations working in some way with offenders.⁴ Roundtable attendees suspect that similar numbers of charities work with the victims of crime. Each PCC could therefore face dealing with hundreds, or even thousands, of relevant charities in their area. Here, the roundtable heard there is a role for infrastructure organisations, and perhaps larger charities, to broker partnerships within the sector—particularly where there is a shared agenda.

However, both the voluntary sector and PCCs should be realistic about what it is feasible to achieve and not set unreasonable expectations. The roundtable heard that where PCCs have had successes in their first term it was often because they had concentrated on one or two key issues in their area. A more focused approach enabled the marshalling of collective resources to maximise impact on a particular challenge. Charities should seek to understand what the top two or three issues are for their local PCCs and demonstrate what they can bring to the table to help tackle these challenges. As stated previously this may not always, or often, be a contractual relationship, but it could be around insight, training or advocacy.

Engaging with PCCs' Police and Crime Plans

Rather than waiting for a public consultation, charities should proactively approach PCCs with ideas for collaboration while their ideas and plans have not yet begun to form. PCCs are currently consulting on Police and Crime Plans, and for the voluntary sector to be engaged in final plans it is vital that they input at these early stages. It is much harder to penetrate the PCC landscape at a later stage once priorities have been identified.

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It is also important that both parties' key priorities are aligned. If the charity and the PCC have differing priorities, the chances of establishing a meaningful collaboration agreement to tackle an issue are low.

Establishing what works

In order to establish effective relationships, PCCs want to be presented with better evidence of the positive outcomes of third sector initiatives—for example their impact on crime rates within a given location. Attendees of the roundtable expressed that they struggle to provide this evidence, often because of resourcing and capacity.

To establish the collective offer of the voluntary sector to PCCs, charities should aim to build a unified evidence base. This should clearly evidence the positive impact they have made in the areas that PCCs focus on. At NPC we think there should be a more strategic approach to collective evidence in the criminal justice sector, particularly around creating the right incentives for determining and demonstrating what works.⁵

Attendees were, however, optimistic about initiatives to improve impact measurement. The [Justice Data Lab](#)⁶ offers an opportunity to build a stronger picture of the impact of criminal justice organisations and there are also a

⁴ Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society (2010) *National survey of charities and social enterprises*. Accessed via Clinks (2014) *Renewing our bond with the third sector*

⁵ For more on this view, see Noble, J., van Vliet, A., (2015), *Under the Microscope: Data, charities, and working with offenders*.

⁶ See the NPC website <http://www.thinknpc.org/our-work/projects/data-labs/justice-data-lab/> and the Ministry of Justice website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/justice-data-lab>

number of resources that can help organisations collectively seeking to improve their evidence base, such as the [Inspiring Impact](#)⁷ programme.

Conclusion

As a new wave of PCCs develop their plans, and those in their second term get more comfortable in the role, the opportunity for the wider voluntary sector to work with PCCs to deliver greater impact is clear. As the wider devolution agenda takes shape, new opportunities will also emerge. The roundtable heard, however, that in this new landscape there will also be fresh barriers to overcome. Charities will need to be clear about shared priorities, work together to present collective offers, and demonstrate good evidence of their impact. If the sector can meet these challenges, then together charities and PCCs can deliver better outcomes for both offenders and communities.

⁷ See the Inspiring Impact website: <http://inspiringimpact.org/>

TRANSFORMING THE CHARITY SECTOR

NPC is a charity think tank and consultancy which occupies a unique position at the nexus between charities and funders, helping them achieve the greatest impact. We are driven by the values and mission of the charity sector, to which we bring the rigour, clarity and analysis needed to better achieve the outcomes we all seek. We also share the motivations and passion of funders, to which we bring our expertise, experience and track record of success.

Increasing the impact of charities: NPC exists to make charities and social enterprises more successful in achieving their missions. Through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking, we make charities' money and energy go further, and help them to achieve the greatest impact.

Increasing the impact of funders: NPC's role is to make funders more successful too. We share the passion funders have for helping charities and changing people's lives. We understand their motivations and their objectives, and we know that giving is more rewarding if it achieves the greatest impact it can.

Strengthening the partnership between charities and funders: NPC's mission is also to bring the two sides of the funding equation together, improving understanding and enhancing their combined impact. We can help funders and those they fund to connect and transform the way they work together to achieve their vision.

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