

National Assembly for Wales
Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

Policy Review: The Structure of Police Forces in Wales

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Police Structures Review

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1 Introduction

1.1 In 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary undertook a professional assessment of the ability of the current structure of policing in Wales and England to provide effective and sustainable 'protective services' (also known as organised and Level 2 services) to a national common standard.

1.2 The report framed its work within the three-tier model of criminality commonly adopted across the police service, where:

Level 1 Local issues – usually crime, criminals, anti-social behaviour and a concomitant need for reassurance – that can be managed within a Basic Command Unit (BCU).

Level 2 Cross-border issues; usually arising from organised criminality, major incidents and events affecting more than one BCU and potentially across boundaries into neighbouring forces. This can also include issues of wider public disquiet, notwithstanding that the original incident might otherwise be categorised as Level 1.

Level 3 Serious and organised crime, terrorism or other extremist activity operating on a national or international level. This can also include major incidents, events and other issues of widespread national concern, often with national media coverage, that can seriously undermine confidence on a wider scale.

1.3 Protective services in this context are made up as follows:

- Counter terrorism and extremism;
- Serious organised and cross border crime;
- Civil contingencies and emergency planning;
- Critical incident management;
- Major crime (homicide);
- Public order;
- Strategic roads policing.

1.4 The findings of the review were produced in the report entitled 'Closing the Gap: A review of the fitness for purpose of the current structure of policing in England and Wales'.

1.5 The report set out three primary responsibilities for policing below national level:

- The development of local and neighbourhood policing;

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- The provision of protective services to national standards;
 - The organisation of affordable support and strategic development.
- 1.6 The review concluded that whilst at a local level the Basic Command Unit arrangements and neighbourhood policing provided a solid platform for the future, the current 30 year old, 43 force structure - with forces of varying sizes and capabilities - did not.
- 1.7 The review went on to say that for the future there would be a requirement for a more efficient, integrated operating platform above BCU level and that the organisation of service delivery must be on a scale large enough to respond dynamically but local enough to understand the diverse context within which it operated:
- ‘In creating a structure that is fit for purpose the overall goal should be the creation of organisations that are large enough to provide a full suite of sustainable services, yet still small enough to be able to relate to local communities.’
- 1.8 It also said that to achieve this would require a significant rationalisation of the way that protective services and support processes were organised to put them on a stronger and more efficient footing
- 1.9 The Home Secretary accepted the findings of the HMIC report and invited forces to develop options for force restructuring which would best suit future service delivery. This work was to include key stakeholders.
- 1.10 Further, the Home Secretary set out his view that the HMIC report was unambiguous in its conclusion that the establishment of strategic forces - where forces were re-grouped against a framework of design considerations that include size, patterns of criminality and geography - offered the best long-term business solution. He did not rule out other solutions but indicated clearly that a very compelling case would have to be made out by forces putting forward alternative options for change.
- 1.11 The forces and police authorities in Wales adopted a unified approach to considering all available options for Wales. A joint project team was established with representation from all forces reporting to a programme board whose membership consists of the four Chief Constables and the Chairs of their respective police authorities. It should be stressed that the project is not looking at BCUs.
- 1.12 The Project Team is led by DCC Paul Wood and is based at Brecon Police Station.
- 1.13 The remainder of this document sets out the methodology and findings of the Project Team to date.

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2 Context

2.1 The following factors are pertinent to any debate about policing in Wales:

2.1.1 Political

- Wales is a country in its own right with its own language, culture and national identity. It has its own National Assembly and devolved responsibility for a number of key services including local government, education and health.
- Within Wales each force has its own strong local identity within the national context. At the operational level Basic Command Units in Wales are coterminous with unitary authority boundaries, offering excellent opportunities for partnership working which the police service and its partners have not been slow to grasp and develop over the last few years.
- The current proposed reorganisation does not presuppose the devolution of policing to Wales, nor envisage change to the BCU structure that is the bedrock of local partnership activity.

2.1.2 Economic

- The three principal cities in Wales lie along the M4 corridor. Cardiff is one of the fastest growing capital cities in Europe and is regarded as the political, commercial and business centre of Wales.
- The majority of economic activity lies along the M4 and A55 corridors and in parts of Wales there is still a significant legacy resulting from the decline of major industries such as coal and steel production. Income levels in many areas remain below national averages and many parts of the country have Objective One status.
- The foot and mouth epidemic had a significant impact on the rural economy of Wales.
- Precept levels vary significantly across the country.
- There is a growing tourist industry within Wales.
- Links with Ireland for freight and transport are strong in both the north and south of the country.

2.1.3 Social

- The landmass of Wales is 2,074,203 hectares.
- The population of Wales is 2,952,500 with the greatest population densities in the south of the country. The area served by the South Wales Police, for example, covers 10% of landmass and is home to 46% of the people.

- This inevitably gives rise to great variation in population density which in itself has implications for policing.
- There are a large number of long established communities in rural areas and in many the Welsh language is the primary means of communication. Welsh is currently spoken by 27.8% of the population overall and is now a core subject on the GCSE curriculum as part of a longer term aim to establish a truly bilingual nation.
- Multi-racial communities are predominantly located in south Wales and Cardiff in particular has 8.4% of its population from minority ethnic groups.
- Unemployment levels in Wales average 4.7% and vary across the country from 2.3% in Powys to 7.5% in Blaenau Gwent. There are high levels of deprivation in both urban and rural areas. Sickness levels in some areas are well above UK averages and there are significant levels of long-term unemployment.
- North Wales historically has strong links to the north west of England. Similarly, South Wales and Gwent have linkages to Bristol and the south west of England.

2.1.4 Technical

- Many rural parts of mid and north Wales suffer technical difficulties in relation to mobile communication.

2.1.5 Environmental

- The distance from North to South Wales is approximately 155 miles. The journey takes some four hours as the arterial road links from the North to South of Wales are relatively poor and the road infrastructure does not easily lend itself to collaborative working.
- Density of population across the country varies significantly.
- The main rail links internally in Wales run from east to west.
- Wales has one international airport, near Cardiff. Other primary airports used by people in Wales other than London tend to be Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham. The use of air travel for business within Wales remains in its infancy.
- Wales has a coastline of some 1,680.31 miles including islands. The primary ports are Holyhead, Fishguard, Milford Haven and Swansea.

2.1.6 Legal and/or Logistical

- The devolution settlement means that most public services fall under the aegis of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG).

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- The Welsh Language Act requires English and Welsh to be dealt with on an equal basis.
- There are a number of pan-Wales organisations including Wales ACPO, WLGA as well as varying regional structures. There is a Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) committee.
- The Courts Service is organised on a Wales and Chester basis. There is a small body of Welsh administrative law but the legal system is essentially a Wales and England one.

2.1.7 Service Performance

- Recent baseline assessments conducted across the country by HMIC showed the following position in relation to the Welsh forces:

	SOUTH WALES	NORTH WALES	GWENT	DYFED POWYS
Reducing Crime	Good Improved	Good Stable	Fair Stable	Excellent Stable
Investigating Crime	Good Stable	Good Improved	Good Deteriorated	Fair Deteriorated
Promoting Safety	Good Improved	Fair Improved	Good Stable	Fair Improved
Providing Assistance	Fair Stable	Good Improved	Good Stable	Fair Stable
Citizen Focus	Fair Improved	Fair Stable	Fair Stable	Good Stable
Resource Use	Fair Improved	Good Improved	Fair Improved	Fair Stable
Local Policing	Fair Stable	Good Stable	Fair Stable	Good Stable

2.1.8 Other

- The British Transport Police has a total of 3,002 officers across Scotland, England and Wales and is split into 7 regions. The Wales & West Region extends west from Birmingham and includes Wales and the south west of England. The Region has a total of 281 officers and 79 police staff, though only a small proportion of these are based in Wales. For this reason their numbers have not been considered with any of the options.

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3 Drivers for Change

3.1 There are a number of drivers for change in the main arising from the work undertaken by HMIC. These include:

- Improved protective services across the country;
- Opportunities for better intelligence gathering;
- Opportunity for service re configuration that will generate economies of scale and improved service resilience;
- Improved implementation of the neighbourhood policing initiative;
- Opportunity for closer alignment with political and partner structures.

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4 Stakeholder Engagement

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- 4.1 A project team was assembled with representation from all four Welsh forces. A programme board was established comprising the four Chief Constables and Chairs of police authorities in Wales.
- 4.2 An early conference and workshops were held during October 2005 to identify possible options for change. These were attended by BCU commanders, heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety, heads of profession from the support services and representatives of the staff associations (UNISON, Superintendents Association, Police Federation) and police authorities.
- 4.3 The Programme Board met thereafter to decide which of the options identified were to go forward for a protective services and organisational assessment.
- 4.4 A protective services assessment was undertaken in a workshop attended by Heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety.
- 4.5 The organisational assessment was undertaken in a similar way by Heads of Crime, Operations, Community Safety, a number of BCU Commanders, heads of support services, representatives of staff associations, police authorities and WLGA. Other partners were invited but due to tight timescales found themselves unable to attend.
- 4.6 WLGA, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and PAW were also consulted.
- 4.7 The Programme Board then considered an initial business case prepared to meet the deadline of 31st October 2005 for the first submission to the Home Office. The business case is a joint submission by police authorities and forces across Wales.
- 4.8 It should be noted that at the time of writing time constraints have seriously restricted debate and in particular have not allowed for effective consultation with the public - both for forces and police authorities - though some attempts have been made on a localised basis. A meeting in Wrexham was attended by over 50 people. Their perspective was not to support any restructuring of forces in Wales and to retain the North Wales Police boundaries and identity.
- 4.9 It is intended that a more extensive consultation exercise, a key driver to inform decision-making, will be undertaken via a public opinion survey after the Home Secretary has considered the merits of the initial business case submitted.
- 4.10 There has also been little or no opportunity to fully engage each local authority and other partner agencies. This will also be addressed in the next phases.
- 4.11 To date the following external service stakeholders have been engaged:
 - Crime Reduction Director for Wales;
 - Director of WLGA;

- SOLACE
- Wales Office;
- Local Criminal Justice Boards.

4.12 The following internal stakeholders have also been engaged in the process:

- PAW;
- Chairs and members of police authorities;
- Chief Constables of the four Welsh Forces;
- BCU Commanders;
- Heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety;
- Heads of support services;
- Staff Associations and Trades Unions.

4.13 All four police authorities have been engaged throughout the process by the Project Team. All have concerns regarding the time-scales of the process and the barrier this has presented to effective engagement with the public of Wales. Additionally, many in North Wales remain unconvinced of the need for change. All authorities were concerned over the governance structure for Police Authorities that would exist in the future.

4.14 A report has been prepared on behalf of the four police authorities on the way in which Police Authority governance and accountability could be adapted and can be seen in the attached Appendix 1.

4.15 Their report argues that moving to a Strategic Police Authority (be it one or two) would require efficient administration to be undertaken through a tier of Regional Committees.

4.16 Staff have been kept informed through staff association involvement in the initial identification of options and the organisational assessment of the protective services options. This will continue in subsequent phases of the exercise. In addition, internal and external press releases have been made at key points in the process to keep staff and the public informed of progress.

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5 Options for Change – Identification and Assessment

- 5.1 Despite the success of all four Welsh forces in delivering local policing and the significant investment made through their police authorities, the HMIC report shows that, from now on, policing in Wales will need to encompass the ability to provide Level 2 protective services to a higher standard as well as improved neighbourhood policing. This will require further investment and the current review of structures aims to identify the best way of organising policing above BCU level to achieve this.
- 5.2 Standing still is not a viable way forward and the ‘no change’ option did not pass the protective services assessment for effective Level 2 service delivery.
- 5.3 Again as previously stated, key stakeholders were invited to assist in the identification of options for change. These options were then presented to the Programme Board. Initially, no options were discounted.
- 5.4 The options discussed and considered in relation to moving forward to a formal assessment process were:
- No change;
 - Cross border amalgamations between English and Welsh Forces;
 - Collaborative arrangements amongst the forces in Wales;
 - The selection of a ‘lead regional force’ – which in this context would involve the identification and resourcing of one force within the region to host the personnel, finance and logistics of the regional protective services requirements on behalf of the other forces in the region;
 - The selection of a ‘lead force for specialist capabilities’ – which would involve one force in the region leading on the investigation of specific categories of crime;
 - A federation of forces where, against an agreed regional framework, forces could reform by contracting together to be served by a common set of protective services that could extend to the brigading of support services;
 - Strategic Forces. Examples for consideration were:
 - Three forces based on, for example, Fire Service boundaries;
 - Three forces with South Wales Police standing alone and two other forces;
 - Two forces – Dyfed Powys Police (DPP) and North Wales Police (NWP)/ South Wales Police (SWP) and Gwent Police (GP);
 - Two forces – DPP, NWP and West Glamorgan (currently part of SWP) as one force and GP, Mid and South Glamorgan (SWP) as the other;
 - Two forces – SWP/ DPP, NWP and GP;

- One Strategic Force for Wales.

5.5 The Programme Board considered that the following options should be discounted:

- Amalgamations between English and Welsh Forces;
- Collaboration;
- A lead force;
- A lead specialist force;
- A federation of forces.

5.6 Broadly these were discounted at this stage because there was little if any compelling evidence to support taking these options forward to the scoring stage of the process. This was largely because of deficiencies in the arrangements for governance and command. It was felt that the existing collaboration in Wales was not sufficiently effective and that to move to a federation would simply be collaboration by other means - with ambiguous governance. The evidence set out in 'Closing the Gap' was felt to apply to Wales as much as in any other area. This evidence posed significant questions regarding the ability of the options listed above to deliver fully effective Level 2 services.

5.7 The Programme Board approved the following seven options for formal scoring at the protective services assessment:

- The 'no change' option;
- Three forces based on, for example, Fire Service boundaries;
- Three forces with South Wales standing alone and two other forces;
- Two forces -
 - DPP and NWP;
 - SWP and GP;
- Two forces -
 - DPP, NWP and West Glamorgan;
 - GP, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan;
- Two forces -

- SWP;
- GP, DPP and NWP;
- One strategic force for the whole of Wales.

5.8 The process for the protective services assessment was set out in Home Office guidance. It involved a panel of senior managers, with professional knowledge in the seven service areas, assessing the viability of the options under consideration to support the delivery of protective services to nationally accepted standards. In relation to each option for change each protective service was scored in turn against a set of standard attributes set out in the guidance. Recent independent assessments of each force undertaken by HMIC were also taken into account.

5.9 The attributes assessed were:

Capacity	Capability
Performance	Criminality
Geography	Coterminosity
Identity	Governance
Economic	Risk

5.10 Only the following options passed the protective services assessment and were considered for the next stage of the process - the organisational assessment:

- No change (failed the protective services test but was required as a baseline);
- Two forces –
 - DPP and NWP;
 - SWP and GP;
- Two forces –
 - SWP;
 - GP, DPP and NWP;
- One strategic force.

- 5.11 The same process was subsequently applied for the organisational assessment with increased weighting for geography and identity. This increase in weighting was supported by the Programme Board in recognition of the strong identity of Wales and its difficult geography.
- 5.12 The four options subject to organisational assessment were presented to the Chairs of police authorities and their Chief Constables on 19th October 2005. After discussion, one option, which involved South Wales Police standing alone, was withdrawn as it was felt that this was not in the best interests of Wales as a whole.
- 5.13 The following three options have been submitted to the Home Office:
- No change;
 - Two Forces:
 - SWP / GP;
 - DPP / NWP;
 - One strategic Force for Wales.

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