

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

CELG(4)-04-11 : Paper 7

Inquiry into Community Safety in Wales – UNISON’s Cymru / Wales Police and Justice Group

UNISON has over 3,000 Police staff members spread across the four Welsh Police Forces with a UNISON branch for each force.

UNISON Cymru/Wales Police & Justice Group welcomes the opportunity to give its views and opinions to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee on the effect of the budget cuts in all four Police Forces in Wales. However, simplistic headline figures do not reflect the full impact, or more importantly, indicate where funding is crucial and where it needs to be continued to avoid our communities being adversely affected.

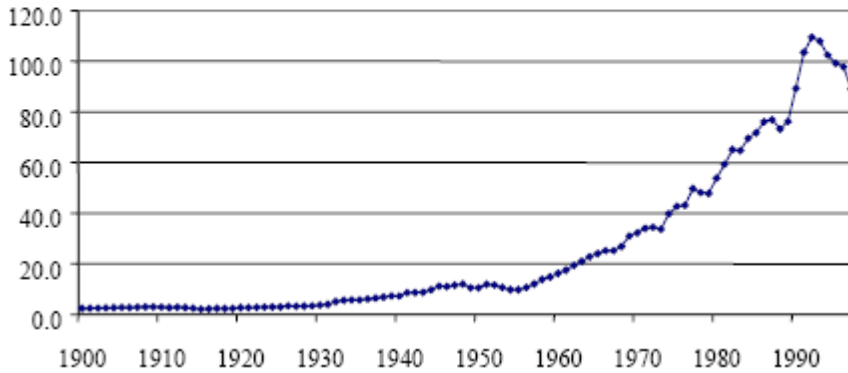
CUTS AND CRIME

Clearly there is a concern that with all Welsh Police Forces having their budgets reduced by 20%, it is inevitable crime will start to rise again.

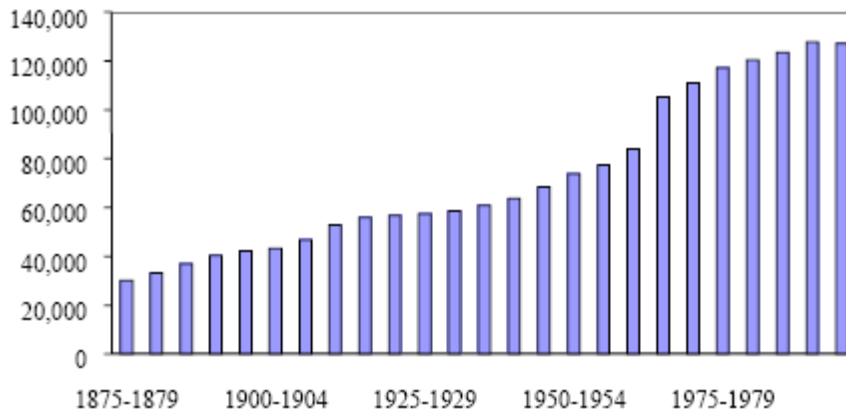
However, crime statistics can be notoriously hard to interpret. The British Crime Survey (BCS) explains in detail the difficulties. For example, in 1900 the number of indictable offences per thousand population was 2.4 and in 1997 it was 89.1. A cursory response could be interpreted that in almost a hundred years that crime had completely got out of hand in the UK. However, during that same period, police strengths went from 30,000 to 110,000 Police officers. It stands to reason with more Police resources, more crime is identified and therefore becomes a statistic rather than remaining hidden which accounts in part at least for some of the historic increase during the last century. It is also worth noting the BCS estimates that unreported crime nevertheless in 1976 stood at 56% of all crimes. Another interesting observation is that between 1900 and the present day, the role of Police staff has grown immensely.

Consistently, opinion polls have shown for the public, crime and disorder is an important issue. Researchers who have studied these responses in depth have indicated the concern is about “low level” crime, ie burglary, theft, assault and vandalism.

**Indictable Offences Known to the Police
(per thousand of population) in England &
Wales 1900-1997.**



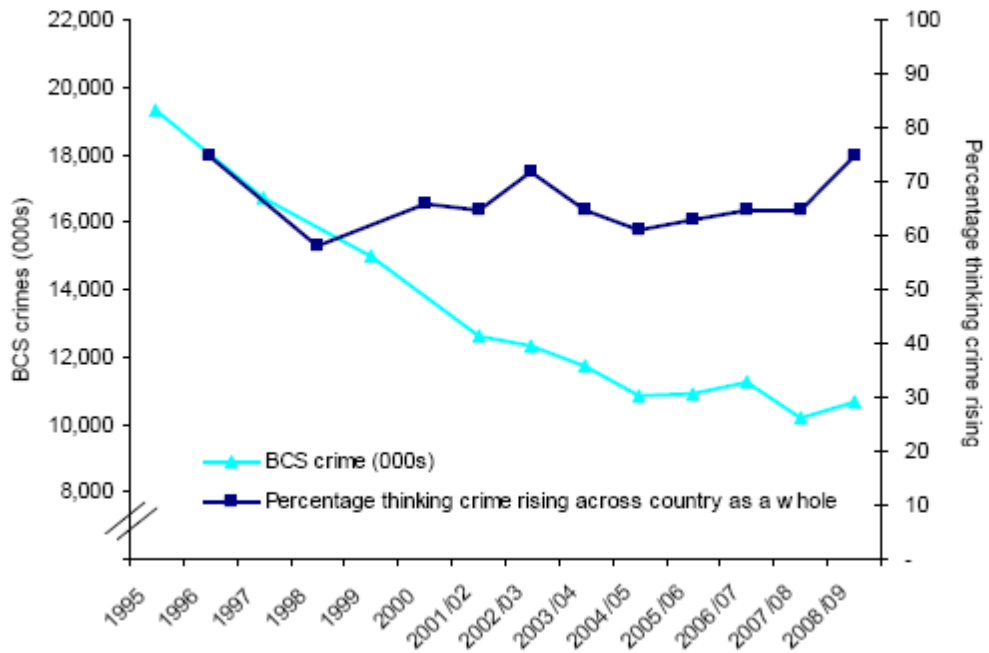
Police strength, England & Wales



A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900 House of Commons Research Paper December 1999

When addressing these “neighbourhood” crimes people’s perception of the number of crimes are always higher than the reality, and another consistent feature is that the crime rates and the likelihood of being a victim of these crimes is far higher in the country at large rather than in the respondent’s local communities. This is consistent across communities of different wealth, within gender, and within ethnic minorities.

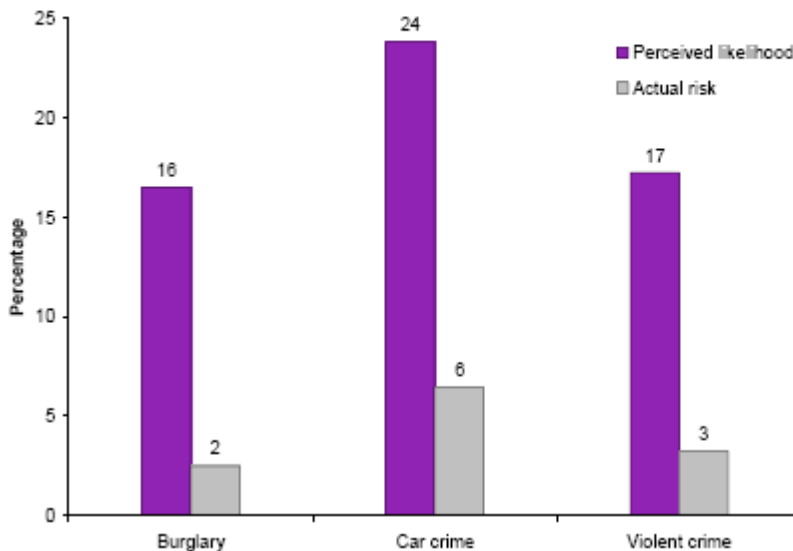
Figure 1.1 Trends in BCS crime and perceptions of changing crime levels, 1995 to 2008/09 BCS



Perceptions of crime and social behavior. Findings from 2008/9 British Crime Survey – supplementary Volume 1

Anti social behavior (ASB) or the perception of it is also a source of major concern.

Figure 5.3 Perceptions of likelihood of victimisation and actual risk by individual crime type, 2008/09 BCS



Perceptions of crime and social behavior. Findings from 2008/9 British Crime Survey – supplementary Volume 1

The commentary and table below shows some of the main ASB issues. Researchers talk of ASB in strands, and have researched various combinations, looking for perceived or actual crime patterns.

Among people who perceived a combination of two types of ASB there was a wide range of combinations. When three types of ASB were perceived together, the most common combinations were:

- teenagers hanging around, litter and vandalism or graffiti (mentioned by 2% of people who perceived at least one strand of ASB as a problem); and
- teenagers hanging around, people using or dealing drugs and people being drunk or rowdy (2%).

These strands also featured in the most commonly reported combinations of four ASB types, which were:

- teenagers hanging around, vandalism or graffiti, people using or dealing drugs and people being drunk or rowdy (mentioned by 3%); and
- teenagers hanging around, litter, vandalism and people being drunk or rowdy (2%).

Similarly, when five strands were reported, the most common combination consisted of: teenagers hanging around, litter, vandalism or graffiti, people using or dealing drugs and people being drunk or rowdy (5% of people perceived this combination of ASB strands to be a problem; Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2).

Overall, very few people perceived more than five strands to be a problem (4%). In particular, problems with noisy neighbours or with abandoned cars were less commonly reported alongside other forms of ASB.

Figure 2.2 Most commonly perceived combinations of strands of ASB, for people perceiving three or more strands of ASB as a problem, 2008/09 BCS

Noisy neighbours	Teenagers hanging around	Rubbish or litter	Vandalism or graffiti	People using or dealing drugs	People being drunk or rowdy	Abandoned cars	%*
	•	•	•	•	•		5
•	•	•	•	•	•		3
	•		•	•	•		3
	•	•	•				2
	•			•	•		2
	•	•	•		•		2
	•	•	•	•			2
	•	•	•	•	•	•	2
	•	•		•	•		2
		•	•	•	•		2

*Percentage represents the proportion of people perceiving this combination of strands (based on people who perceived at least one strand of ASB as a problem).

It is interesting to note the association with groups of young people on the streets and the linkage in many people’s minds with the perception of crime. It is this combination of young people and public places which fits neatly with the relatively new role of Police Community Support Officer. In their normal everyday work PCSO’s will regularly engage with groups of young people. The creation of PCSOs has been widely held as a success. UNISON members who are PCSOs have commented a number of times about the public’s positive reaction to their roles. The community at large view PCSOs as a visible, approachable reassurance to people whose perception is that crime is high and are seen as a deterrent against young people in particular committing ASB. From a policing perspective, the local

intelligence PCSOs gather is highly valued as the public do not harbour the same suspicions as they do towards police officers and are therefore more likely to confide and interact with PCSOs in their own neighbourhood. UNISON would like to see more cooperation between local authority agencies like the fly tippers, litter pickers, dog foulers and youth workers with PCSOs to provide a broad and integrated resource that the community relate to as their own and can trust.

POLICE STAFF AND THEIR ROLES

As well as PCSOs UNISON Police staff members in Wales work in all areas of crime scene detection including fingerprint experts and scene of crimes photographers. Vehicle and building plant maintenance, helicopter pilots, custody detention officers, public enquiry officers, mobile speed prevention teams, crime prevention, fire arms training, police community support officers as well as all the usual back office functions of finance, planning, legal, HR and training etc. Police Officers and many Police Staff working alongside each other is the shape of the Front Line within a modern Police Force. Therefore, the resource and capacity within Police Forces has increased beyond the simple number of increases in Police officers. From the above it can be seen that UNISON police staff members are part of the front line in modern day policing. Some Home Office ministers have suggested, a 20% budget cut will only fall on Police Staff and thus not affect the operational Police service. This is a fallacy and a nonsense. If Police Staff are to be the major casualties then many Police constables and other ranks will be redirected from their current roles simply to fill the gaps in vital police services left by Police staff who have been made redundant. With the pay levels of Police staff on average substantially below that of Police officers, this is a false economy and a waste of resources.

The relationship of Police officers to the Police service is a completely different one to Police Staff. Police Staff are engaged under Employment legislation and have traditional contracts of employment with their particular Police Force. Police officers as agents of the Crown do not have a traditional contract of employment nor do some pieces of employment legislation relate to them. Consequently, Police Forces cannot make Police officers redundant at this present time. However, they can invoke two clauses within the Police Act, that of A19 and A20. A19 can mean that Police Authorities can forcibly retire those Police officers not able to carry out the full functions of their job and who are currently on light duties normally in some back office function in a post that would otherwise be filled by Police Staff employees. A20 is the clause whereby Police Authorities can forcibly retire Police officers who have completed their maximum years of service.

THE BUDGET CUTS

As previously stated, all four Welsh Police forces are subject to the maximum 20 % cuts to budgets over a four year period with front-loading in the first two years. Police Forces however are probably the only part of the traditional public sector that has not previously been subject to substantial budget cuts in the past 30 years. UNISON's Police branches reported in the 2010/11 budgets, that Police Forces adjusted their budgets downwards by mostly benign measures of good housekeeping, although there were elements of freezing vacancies and voluntary schemes to reduce staff.

However, this year negotiations on budget cuts began in earnest. There have been discussions on Police Staff's terms and conditions where all Police Forces in Wales tabled proposals to reduce enhanced rates for unsocial hours, night work, weekend working and overtime along with other issues such as travel mileage allowance and protection measures in the event of Staff compulsory losing terms and conditions. This is despite the Westminster Government commissioning Tom Windsor, an ex Chief Constable, to set up an enquiry into all Police terms and conditions in England and Wales. The findings of this enquiry have yet to be published and will not be expected until next year.

Voluntary severance packages have been developed in an attempt to reduce numbers and all Forces are looking to reorganize their structures in order to reduce budgets. In Dyfed Powys and South Wales Forces, it has been stated that these measures will lead to station closures and Force capacity being stretched to its limits. One senior Police chief has stated openly that with these sorts of reductions some parts of the service will disappear. None of the Cuts packages have been agreed with the Trade Unions in any of the Police Forces to date. Therefore, the public at large have not seen anything near the true effects of the central government's drive to reduce budgets.

Nevertheless, we can report that in South Wales there have been 8 compulsory redundancies, 48 voluntary redundancies and 123 voluntary early retirements, which represents 179 Police Staff posts cut this year, and although we cannot obtain the direct numbers, South Wales Police have stated they have exceeded their planned totals for reducing Police officers this year.

In North Wales the savings for 2011/12 was £4.7M, the proposals suggest that over £2M of that will be savings made from redundancies of Police staff, £700,000 from 84 police officers predicted to retire by 31 March 2012, £1.4M on IT savings, £100,000 carried forward from last year which totals approximately £4.1M towards the overall target. North Wales Police are proposing to allow a further 11 to go on Voluntary Redundancy. 95 Police staff have gone consisting of 5 Redundancies and 90 through voluntary severance. There have also been 50 posts which have been deleted from the staffing structure.

In Gwent the Police staff establishment is 1025. In April 2011, Police staff numbers were down to 975 and Force proposals suggest that by March 2015, there will be 775 Police staff, an overall reduction through the four years of 250.

In Dyfed Powys, the Force wanted £1.21M savings from Police staff. A package, though not agreed, but is ready to be consulted on, contains just under £0.5M cuts with the Force saying it will save the remaining £600,000 from other means including reductions in the number of Police officers. To date amongst Police Staff, 51 have taken voluntary redundancy, 18 voluntary early retirement, and 151 police staff posts have been deleted. There have been no A19s or A20s issued to police officers although we know some have retired voluntarily after completing maximum service, but we do not have the exact numbers. The Force have also stated they will not recruit police officers above 95% of normal compliment.

There will most likely be a return to rising crime levels notwithstanding the misleading statistical evidence. The remorseless slide into recession has always in itself been accompanied by more crime. More importantly from Unison's perspective

front line police services simply can not avoid being hit by a 20% reduction in overall budgets, the magnitude is simply too great. *However, the effects have yet to been seen as the negotiations in all Forces are continuing, and implementation (or indeed agreement) will still be months away. A similar meeting to this in a years time will show the true level of service reductions.*

DEMOCRATIC CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE WELSH POLICE FORCES

Wales is in a unique position. As a country it has a devolved government, but unlike any of the other devolved governments in the UK it does not control its own Police Forces. With the divergence between Westminster and Cardiff on so many policy areas it seems bizarre that the four Welsh Police Forces are still being controlled from the Home Office.

This has a real relevance because as a result, all four Police Forces have had a full 20% budget cut imposed on them. Notwithstanding the impact of that in resource terms which we have dealt with elsewhere, it is also much more difficult to integrate Police resources into neighbourhood and community partnerships in a genuine way where most of the other partners and certainly all of the major ones are all within the sphere of influence of the Welsh Government. It was pleasing to note that there appears to be an informal political consensus between all the major parties in Wales for the Welsh Government assuming responsibility for their Police Forces, as evidenced by the response to just that question in a televised hustings meeting during the last Wales Government elections.

During the elections, the Party of Government's pledges was amongst others to provide 500 extra PCSOs within Wales. There may be a temptation within the four Police Forces when considering how to make 20% budget cuts to make reductions in an area of PCSO provision in the knowledge that the Welsh Government will provide resources that could replace the core budget reductions. UNISON is not privy to the details of the provision of these extra PCSOs but we are concerned that this extra provision which we applauded and welcomed would be negated by forces making compensatory cuts in those areas. Obviously, if this had been done in Northern Ireland or Scotland then because of their different relationship with their Police Forces, this could have been conditional.

COLLABORATION

The 1995 Police Act defined in Section 23 collaboration projects between two or more Police Forces. In Wales, Tarian (which is a regional task force in southern Wales and a pan Wales regional asset recovery team) and WECTU (Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit) are examples of existing collaboration projects. Recently, scientific investigation services which deals with all the scene of crimes and forensic investigations in Dyfed Powys, South Wales and Gwent Police Forces are involved in the collaboration project, however the uncertainty of resources both of property and staff due to the uncertainties created by budget cuts have hindered its development. UNISON has stated on a number of occasions that it has concerns because the more disparity there is between different Forces Police staff's terms and conditions then the harder it will be to integrate these different police staff within one collaboration project in a positive way. Consequently we have two Home Office initiatives which not only aren't integrated but actually impede one

another. Unison believes Public Services should always be scrutinized to improve service delivery and to ensure the best use of public funds, and even in an environment where funds are being cut, Collaboration as a system is more preferable as genuine inefficiencies can be identified although it is a shame savings that are generated could not be further invested in the service instead of disappearing altogether.

Glyn Jones – Unison Lead Organiser for the Police Service in Wales
26th September 2011

[http://teams.unison.org.uk/regions/cymruwales/organising/police_justice/11.09.23.report
for_communities_and_culture_mtg - gj.docx](http://teams.unison.org.uk/regions/cymruwales/organising/police_justice/11.09.23.report_for_communities_and_culture_mtg_-_gj.docx)