

6.4 Perceptions of community safety

Public confidence in the local Police and partnership services is intrinsically linked to fear of crime. The understanding of 'fear of crime' has developed since the first surveys were conducted in 1982. Those surveys compared the main source of people's perceptions about crime against the actual level of crimes. The general finding then, as now, suggested that the fear of crime far exceeded the likelihood of actually being a victim.

There are three broad elements that influence an individual's response to the threat posed by crime in society. These are comprised of individual characteristics and resilience as well as personal characteristics that are difficult to change and may change over time, for example, as we get older. In addition an individual's perceptions of risk, is dependent on experience and understanding of personal risk, perceptions about themselves and of their local area. Finally, confidence in the capacity of local agencies to manage crime, this reduces anxiety if local people believe the local agencies (predominantly the Police and the Council) are able to manage and deal with the crime and anti-social behaviour effectively. Furthermore anxiety reduces if residents feel involved in and informed about the process. The theory is that increased confidence reduces personal anxiety and latest research suggests that, by improving confidence in the agencies charged with crime and disorder reduction, there will be consequent impacts on a resident's perceptions of crime.

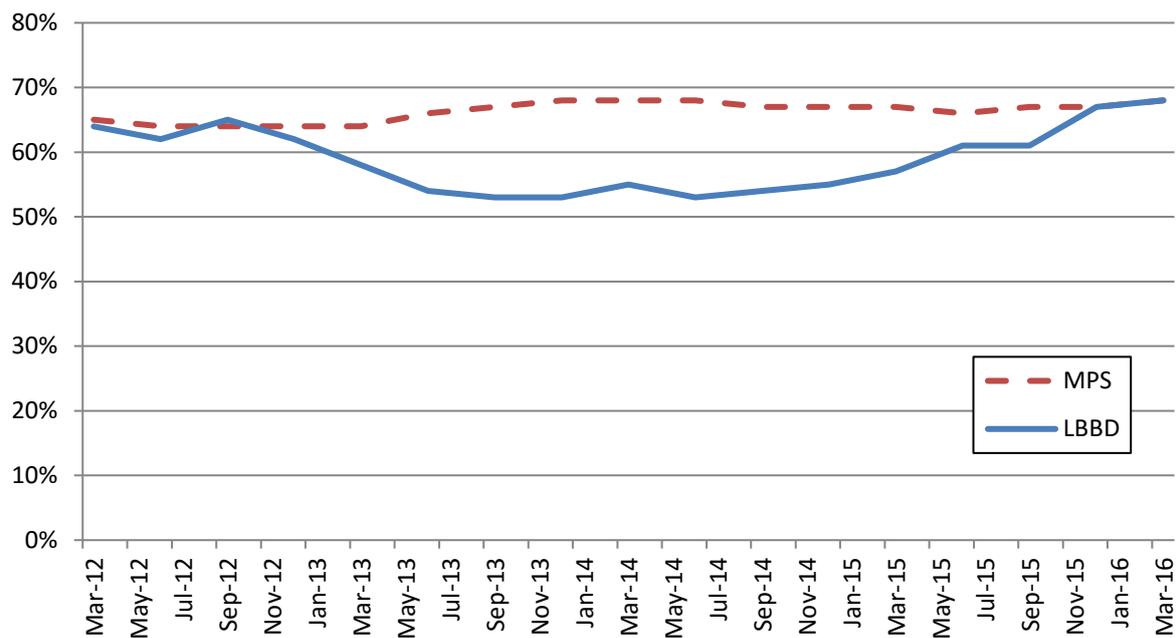
Questionnaires and surveys are usually utilised to gain an understanding of resident's perceptions of crime and confidence in agencies ability to deal with crime.

6.4.1 Adult perceptions

MOPAC confidence data found at <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-research/confidence/confidence-dashboard>

According to the MOPAC Confidence Dashboard, as of March 2016, 68% of the residents in Barking and Dagenham have confidence in policing. This is the same as the average for London (68%). This demonstrates an increase in confidence locally bringing the confidence rate in line with London. This is an increase of 11 percentage points between March 2015 (57%) and March 2016 (68%).

Figure 6.4.1 Londoners' Confidence in Policing (March 2012 – March 2016)



Source: Mayor of London, MOPAC dashboard

According to the 2014/15 quarter 4 Police Public Attitude Survey, 57% of people felt that the Police were doing a good job in Barking and Dagenham, an increase from 55% from the previous year. During quarter 4 of 2014/15, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) average was 67% (Figure 6.4.1). Therefore the current position of 68% confidence rate shows a steady rate of positive progress in terms of this indicator and a substantial improvement from the 2013/14 figures.

The Council also surveys residents about their views on their area and the services they receive from the Council. In the 2015 Residents Survey 70% of residents in Barking and Dagenham are satisfied with their local area. Residents top three areas of concern were: Crime (40%), lack of affordable housing (29%) and litter/dirt in the streets (23%)

6.4.2 Young people's perceptions

Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum

The Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum (BADYF) was set up in 2001 by young people to allow young people to have a say in issues affecting their lives and communities. The forum, comprising of 13 to 19 year olds is elected by peers in schools and youth groups and continues to have a say and influence on policy makers.

BADYF discussions cover a range of different areas from crime, health and education to building a positive image of young people, or simply what to do and where to go. The BAD Youth Forum members meet for 2 hours weekly at the Vibe Youth Centre (Dagenham) between 5pm and 7pm. At these sessions work takes place on the members chosen campaign or project with an aim of making a difference in the local area. Youth Forum members have the opportunity to speak to people who have the power to make a difference including:

- Local MPs
- Local Councillors
- Council officers, including Directors, the Chief Executive and other managers
- Youth organisations
- Schools
- Police
- Health representatives
- Transport representative, and many more

Forum members can stand for election as a Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) and if elected to the [UK Youth Parliament](#) they will attend regional and national meetings to represent young people of Barking and Dagenham.

Members of the BADYF must live, work or be in education or training in Barking & Dagenham. Elections are held every January in all Barking and Dagenham secondary schools and Trinity School. Young People who do not live, work or are in education or training in Barking and Dagenham or attend a youth group can still raise issues by contacting Sally Allen-Clarke at The Vibe, 195-211 Becontree Avenue, Dagenham, RM8 2UT on 07971 111 532 (sally.allen-clarke@lbbd.gov.uk).

6.4.3 Addressing perceptions of community safety

It is believed that the most important elements in achieving public confidence are; public engagement, fair treatment, effectiveness in dealing with crime and alleviating ASB. In seeking to address reassurance and public confidence in the Metropolitan Police the Police and partnership services engage with the public in the following ways:

The Local Policing Model

The Local Policing Model (LPM) was introduced to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in 2013. The current LPM gives each Ward 3 dedicated ward officers: a Police Sergeant, Police Officer and a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to respond to local issues.

As part of the LPM, the 17 wards in Barking and Dagenham were grouped into three Neighbourhoods: Barking, Dagenham and Whalebone. Each Neighbourhood has a Neighbourhood Inspector who is responsible for policing in that area.

The LPM aims to improve engagement between local people and the Police in order to continue to improve confidence in the Police, ensure that policing priorities and promises are maintained (explained below) as well as respond to the concerns of residents. The Police hold a Ward Panel in each ward every ten weeks to discuss policing issues in the local area and set policing promises. Policing promises address local community issues to which police are capable of providing a response without the need for long-term activity or requiring little if any partnership working.

These meetings are attended by the Police, Ward Councillors, the public and Council staff.

The Inspector for each area also holds a meeting with the Chairs of all the wards in their area. This meeting is to set neighbourhood level policing priorities. The priorities selected are generally issues which require the resource of the wider

neighbourhood teams to respond to and resolve. These priorities are also discussed at the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) quarterly and each Inspector provides a report to the SNB on the priorities and the action taken to deal with the issues. SNB open meetings are held every six weeks and discuss policing and community issues across the borough.

Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Board is a partnership group which is accountable for ensuring development and delivery of the community safety priorities in the borough. The CSP meets quarterly and key partners are: MPS; Barking and Dagenham Council; London Probation Service; London Fire Brigade; Clinical Commissioning Group; the Courts; Victim Support; Public Health; Job Centre Plus; and the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). The key priorities for the CSP are; Integrated Offender Management, Integrated Victim Management and improving public confidence. This meeting is open to the public, which facilitates transparency and enables resident engagement. Minutes and Agendas for this meeting are available at <http://moderngov.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=476&Year=0>

Ward Panels

Residents can meet with their local dedicated Ward Officers at their regular Ward Panel meeting. Attendance at Ward Panel meetings varies across the borough but is generally between 12 and 20 members of the public. Residents can find details of upcoming meetings of their local Ward Panel by entering their postcode into the Find Your Local Police search bar on the MPS's [Safer Neighbourhoods website](#) and selecting their ward.

The Police also hold Virtual Ward Panels, using an online survey to gather input from a wider audience, which feeds into and impacts actual Ward Panels. The survey asks individuals about hyper local issues, the results are then shared at Ward Panel meetings and responses fed back to participants. Virtual Ward Panels are free to boroughs and have the potential to raise participation of young people, business and increase confidence and satisfaction. Typically, Virtual Ward Panel surveys are distributed to several hundred residents per Ward via Smartsurvey, an online survey tool. Engagement rates have been good, with reports of up to 20 responses per Ward.

Safer Neighbourhood Board

The Safer Neighbourhood Board is held every six weeks. The SNB meeting ratifies priorities proposed by Neighbourhood Panels and discusses issues which affect the whole borough. There are two parts to the meeting: a members section held by members of the Board (including the Police, Council staff, chairs of Ward Panels and sub-groups and representatives of community organisations) and a public section which is attended by the members of the Board and is open to the public. The open meeting is publicised to residents through means such as writing to residents who attend Ward Panels and information posted to the Police and Council's social media feeds.

Independent Advisory Group

The Independent Advisory Group (IAG) is made up of volunteers from various communities within the borough who make themselves available to assist the Police in two way communication with residents of the borough. Independent Advisors work with the Police at specific incidents; during Gold Groups following serious and critical incidents and pro-active police operations, which they are invited to attend. Additionally, they are involved in ongoing consultation of a thematic nature, for example regarding the Police Confidence campaign.

The borough has an active and effective IAG. They have made recent efforts to address demographic representation of the borough on the Group, which are continuing. They are consistently reliable in their attendance at Gold Group meetings are often used to inform decision making around incidents and initiatives as well as acting as a “critical friend”.

Neighbourhood Watch

In June 2014 the Barking and Dagenham SNB agreed to fund a bid entitled ‘My Street’ which aimed to reinvigorate Neighbourhood Watches across the borough and to form a new borough-wide Neighbourhood Watch Association. In September 2014 an event was held for residents interested in starting up a Neighbourhood Watch and those who already ran or belonged to one. This was attended by approximately 60 people. From this group a steering group was formed, which officially became the New Association at their meeting on 6 January 2015. An initial audit of Neighbourhood Watches across the borough has indicated that there are currently over 40 active Watches.

The Police and Council are supporting the New Association through providing administrative, practical and advisory support. Dedicated Ward Officers have been trained to understand the role of the Neighbourhood Watch and the positive impact it can have on reducing crime. Ward teams now actively recruit residents who are interested in the scheme and the number of Neighbourhood Watches has steadily increased throughout 2015/16. One of the things which has assisted with the increase of Neighbourhood Watch groups has been the roll out of the Met Trace Scheme. This is the supply of smart water kits to homes in key areas in the Borough to reduce burglary. While rolling out Met Trace officers promote Neighbourhood Watch and encourage residents to either take part in an existing scheme or start a watch.

Key Individual Networks

A Key Individual Network (KIN) member is an opinion former, or influential and engaged person at ward level, who helps the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team to identify issues and understand the thoughts and feelings of the local community. Instead of attending Ward Panels, a KIN member can choose to be contacted by telephone, email, post or attending less formal meetings with the local Police Team. They may be asked to carry out surveys about crime and anti-social behaviour in the community, get involved in supporting an initiative or campaign or be asked their thoughts on a particular local issue.

Barking and Dagenham MPS currently have 1,451 KIN members. Their details are held electronically. They are sent crime prevention messages and newsletters to disseminate and are often contacted when a critical incident occurs to assist in gauging the impact it has on the community.

Neighbourhood Link

Neighbourhood Link is a community messaging service from the MPS that provides news and information about policing activity or initiatives as well as crime prevention advice. It delivers messages about incidents affecting residents' local area, the borough or any major incident affecting the whole of London. Anyone who lives and/or works in London can sign up online to receive these messages.

Stop and Search Sub-Group

The perception of Stop and Search procedures used by the Police can often be negative, causing a detrimental impact on confidence in Policing. Stop and Search is regularly scrutinised in the press and Police accused of using procedures unfairly to target specific groups. The borough has a dedicated Stop & Search Sub-Group, which reports to the Safer Neighbourhood Board and is independently chaired by a member of the local community. The Group receive data on Stop and Search in the borough and are able to give verbal and written feedback to the Police. The Group are also given the opportunity to quality assure stop and search slips completed by officers and to attend pre-planned operations, such as observing use of knife arches. This aims to increase confidence in Police methods, allowing residents to feel confident that procedures are used fairly and appropriately. Since 2015 The Stop and Search Sub Group has included young people who have been invited to the group following the work by Arc Theatre in schools in the Borough around stop and search. The work by Arc Theatre with Borough schools was funded by the Safer Neighbourhood Board from funding from MOPAC.

Twitter

Barking and Dagenham Police currently have around 8,000 Twitter followers. Successful and engaging approaches to local tweeting have included; witness appeals following incidents, requests for help in identifying unidentified suspects from CCTV images, crime prevention advice, and updates on crime pictures or offences in custody. Officers who are Twitter trained are encouraged to provide the public with live updates to events that are occurring. This is believed to have contributed to the rise in confidence.

Crime prevention activity

The Police continue to provide crime prevention advice to victims and residents. This includes cocooning; visiting houses surrounding a property that has been burgled to offer burglary prevention advice, and working with victims of all crime to safeguard against repeat victimisation. As mentioned above in 2015/16 the police have been rolling out the Met Trace scheme which has seen over 9,500 premises provided with smart water kits and signs being placed to identify that the borough uses Met Trace. This has seen a large decrease in burglary (33%) in areas where the kits have been delivered and is believed to have contributed to the increase in community confidence.

Recommendations for Commissioners

The Community Safety Partnership should continue to monitor the police Public Attitude Survey question on the effectiveness of the partnership as a measure of local confidence.

'Confidence' in services should continue to a priority for the Community Safety Partnership.

Further and wider consultation with children, young people, older people and other vulnerable groups on crime and community safety issues should be built into the programmes of the Children's Trust, Community Safety Partnership, the work of the Engagement Team, the Community Safety Coordinators and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The Community Safety Partnership to work with the Barking And Dagenham Youth Forum (BADYF) to obtain up to date information on young people's perceptions of crime and disorder in Barking and Dagenham.

There needs to be more effective promotion of Community Safety and its initiatives. Key messages need to be more interactive and delivered in a way that people understand. The Community Safety Partnership needs to be innovative in its approach to delivering the key messages. Projects and initiatives need to be marketed effectively to enable engagement of hard to hear groups, such as young people, LGBT, and people with Learning Disabilities.

Shared communication opportunities with health in relation to both health and community safety products should be explored, such as the feasibility of inserting news of health developments into the Safer Neighbourhood Team newsletters or inserting community safety advice into health brochures.

Existing boards such as the Safer Neighbourhood Board will and need to be in place to encourage residents to take social responsibility for their own feelings of safety.