

Lancashire Police Authority

Transition to police and crime commissioners

About this review

On 15 November 2012 the first elections outside London for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) will be held across England and Wales. PCCs will hold chief constables to account for policing in their force area on behalf of the public. New police and crime panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of each PCC and make sure information is available for the public, enabling them to hold the PCC to account. Police authorities will cease to exist.

During early summer 2012,¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) assessed how police authorities are preparing for this change. We examined their transition plans and visited every authority to ask:

- Is the police authority ensuring business as usual until November 2012?
- Has the police authority got a plan for managing the transition to PCCs?
- Are arrangements in place to secure a seamless handover to PCCs?
- Are other stakeholders properly involved in the transition process?

This report summarises what we found in Lancashire. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Lancashire Police Authority has already put in place sound plans for managing the handover to PCCs. These include ensuring partners are involved in the transition and making the public aware of what the changes will mean to them (using innovative communication channels). The authority's active participation and contribution to developing national PCC guidance means that the Lancashire transition board is well informed.

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual and has identified the key decisions that need to be made between now and November. It has also already begun to develop both an induction programme, and a number of different office structures and skill sets options for the PCC to consider as he or she decides how to operate. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

¹ Meetings with police authorities took place between April and June.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

The authority is fully committed to ensuring that business as usual is maintained until November. They are taking key decisions where necessary (as opposed to leaving them for the PCC): for instance, on how to make financial savings, and on future plans for force ICT and vehicles. It has found funding to support recruitment of additional officers ahead of Preston Guild, Open Golf and the Olympic Games.

Internal committee meetings that monitor and scrutinise the expenditure, performance and progress against agreed objectives in the annual policing plan continue, but balance regular authority work with the creation of new frameworks to facilitate the first police and crime plan (which the PCC will have to draft by March 2013) and the establishment of the police and crime panel.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Lancashire has a clear transition plan. This is being managed through an established transition board, which includes representatives of the police authority, constabulary and partner organisations.

The plan is divided into a number of workstreams, which all have joint authority and force ownership: this provides a good balance of knowledge, skills and experience. Key risks to the plan have been identified, with action taken to mitigate them. Clear links have been made between the risks and the impact these might have on the handover process.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively from day one. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the force to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities. To help with this, the authority is developing a range of options for governance, accountability and decision making for the incoming PCC to consider. The ongoing scenario planning in relation to potential variances in the level of knowledge and understanding of the PCC will assist the transition. The strong, constructive relationship that has existed between the authority and constabulary will be a positive legacy.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

Key stakeholders sit on the transition governance board, and there are ongoing discussions with community safety partnerships, youth offending teams, criminal justice boards and other partners. The transition board are working closely with partners to put in place a single approach to how services will be commissioned from the PCC based on shared outcomes. Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are transparent and being shared with staff to ensure a consistent approach.

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition to PCCs, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable PCCs to work effectively from day one.