

If properly supported, local partnerships could help tackle radicalisation in UK communities



Local partnership working helps not only detect, but also tackle radicalisation in a joined up way. But are these partnerships properly resourced and co-ordinated? [Sue Roberts](#) explains why, despite being vital, local multi-agency partnerships are being hindered by their unclear role and austerity cuts.

After the Manchester, London Bridge, Borough Market and Finsbury Park terrorist attacks in 2017, [politicians](#) and [commentators](#) began to remark on the pressing need for local partnership working to help detect the signs of radicalisation in communities. It is locally based, multi-agency partnership that offers the crucial discussion forum where information can be shared by those who are able to make a difference.

So why, in light of 2017's terrorist incidents, are there pleas for a *return* to local partnership working rather than calling for even greater involvement of local partnerships in the fight against terrorism?

A confused role

Partnerships such as the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) that bring local agencies together, have seen their role confused and in some cases side-lined by the introduction of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Barry Loveday [warned of this](#), pointing out that the PCCs could affect the CSPs negatively, not least because there is no statutory imperative to compel the PCCs to work with the CSPs; the rather flaccid responsibility by PCCs to monitor the CSPs casts them in a more remote role. But Loveday also highlighted the benefits of local multi-agency partnership, established under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), in which agencies are required to tackle local issues of concern in a joined up way. This is the means by which inter-operability by such agencies as the Police, Community Safety, Probation, Health and local authorities discuss community problems in the local area.

The austerity context

Local partnership working with key local agencies is taking place in an environment of diminishing police resources, where the police workforce has been reduced by 17%. We have also begun to see cuts to Police Community Support Officers whose connections with local communities provide [detailed knowledge](#) to the police about issues of serious concern.

There are anxieties that the police may need to divert already-strained resources to tackle terrorism, which may leave other core services vulnerable. Notwithstanding this situation, and given that tackling terrorism is a key priority, the connections to vital local intelligence where terrorism can germinate through radicalisation, are more important than ever. The planning behind a terrorist attack is not undertaken in the open. These are covert activities which occur in local communities where we are now experiencing deep cuts to neighbourhood policing.

Why multi-level engagement matters

The Faith Matters Group, a UK based multi-faith organisation, wrote an [open letter](#) to Theresa May in 2017 saying:

The only way forward is through multi-level engagement and dialogue, irrespective of political differences. Her Majesty's Government is also our Government and we firmly believe that dialogue and partnership are the best ways to counter extremism

What is it about these local ventures that makes them so important? The bodies involved represent a group of agencies and individuals who can share information about local issues, troubleshoot problems quickly, and jointly take action. For example, the CSPs include a broad based multi-agency membership including Police, Probation, Community Safety, Local Authority representatives, local councillors, Fire and Rescue Services, Housing, and Youth Offending Teams.

Of course, local multi-agency partnership as a concept is not new. CSPs and Local Strategic Partnerships (now diminished in number) have been around since the late 1990s when Labour came into power and introduced a more “[joined up](#)” notion of localism. The problems have emerged for local partnership since the cuts to local authority funding from 2010 and further [planned cuts](#) in future. With cuts to police funding and neighbourhood policing, cuts to local authority funding, representatives of whom often support the CSPs, we are in a less resourced position to address radicalisation in communities and the resultant terrorist threats that often emerge from it.

Apart from the anxieties about the loss of neighbourhood police and the PCSOs, as well as the fall in public sector staffing numbers, Britain is now preparing for a massive national occasion: the marriage of Prince Harry to Meghan Markle in 2018. This will, of course require additional resources from the Metropolitan Police and additional policing resources from other areas. This is just one issue for which the Police and other agencies will require further funding.

Properly resourced, well co-ordinated work in neighbourhoods addresses today’s complex community problems. The things that make a real, tangible difference to community safety are the day-to-day police interaction with the public, helping to detect and tackle radicalisation; the support and information that is obtained through multi-agency partnership working; the building of trusted relationships between community and statutory agencies, and the hard yards of neighbourhood policing.

About the Author



Sue Roberts is Senior Lecturer in the School of Social, Historical and Literary Studies at the University of Portsmouth.

All articles posted on this blog give the views of the author(s), and not the position of LSE British Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Featured image credit: [Pixabay](#)/Public Domain.