

New plan outlines major changes for policing in South Wales

Clare Hutchinson, Crime Correspondent | [Jan 31 2013](#)



South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael

The face of policing in South Wales could change in the next four years, with more emphasis on restorative justice and efforts to tackle internet crime and bullying on a local level.

The proposals, outlined in South Wales police's Police and Crime Plan and initially approved by its police and crime panel this week, outline what the "key priorities" will be, including:

- * A new initiative to tackle online bullying and online crime, including child abuse, on a local basis;
- * Greater use of restorative justice – where victims and perpetrators meet face-to-face;
- * A force wide roll-out of the Cardiff violence reduction model, in which A&E staff share information about violent incidents with police;
- * More work to encourage people to report crimes, including hate crimes and crimes against women and girls;
- * More "partnership working" with local authorities, health boards and charities;
- * Improving communications between the police and public, including banning all acronyms and encouraging police community support officers and councillors to hold regular "information sharing" meetings.

Police and crime commissioner Alun Michael, who drew up the plan with the force's chief constable, Peter Vaughan, said it would contain clear targets for improvement and "real outcomes".

Speaking before the police and crime panel, which was brought in with the police and crime commissioners in November, the former Labour MP for Cardiff South and Penarth said it was "just the start of the process".

He said: "This plan will guide our actions in the immediate future, but finalising and agreeing this plan is just the start of the process, not the end of it.

"In effect it's the first step on a shared journey, not just with South Wales Police, but with all partner agencies."

It comes as the police and crime panel also voted to approve a 7% rise in the police precept – the amount of money the force gets from council tax – 2% more than the 5% precept that had originally been suggested.

That extra 2% is set to pay for 40 more police community support officers and £1m for the force's work with community safety partnerships and other organisations like Victim Support, Sexual Assault Referral Centres and Bawso.

Figures published last week by the Office for National Statistics found crime in South Wales is at its lowest in 30 years, with overall crime dropping by 5% between September 2011 and 2012.

Speaking at the meeting, Mr Michael said his focus on reducing crime was "absolutely central for everything we do", adding: "My priorities are based on a fundamental principle to be tough on crime and the causes of crime, tackling and preventing crime with an emphasis on promoting an evidence-based, partnership approach to 'what works' and how I can add value."

He said as well as tackling the "headline issues" of violence against women and honour-based violence, the force will also focus on "hidden issues", like elder abuse and violence against disabled people, encouraging more victims to come forward and report crime.

Admitting there had been problems with communication, particularly during the widespread police station front desk closures in 2012, he said he was nonetheless "persuaded" that the closures were the "right decision" and had been made necessary by Government cuts.

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