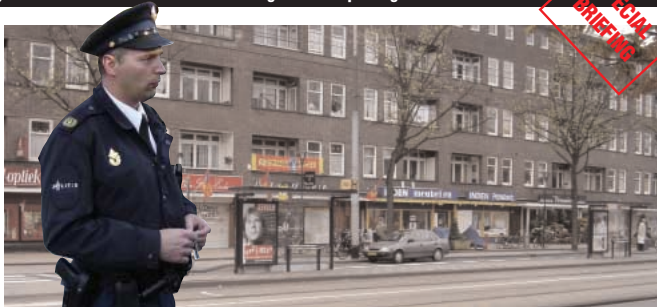




by Metropolitan Police Federation Deputy General Secretary Colin Rogers, who recently visited Amsterdam as part of an MPS fact-finding visit



In the Dutch police family, there are no poor relations. Even the humblest members (broadly equivalent to British council wardens) are given twice as much training as PCSOs in England and Wales.

For almost 20 years, the Dutch have been dedicated to neighbourhood policing. Their towns and cities, like ours, have police auxiliaries to help accomplish this.

But their Ministry of the Interior does not face the accusation which has been levelled at David Blunkett's Home Office: that auxiliaries are simply policing on the cheap.

Nor are questions being asked about their training, aptitude or competence.

In fact, from the Dutch public's point of view, there is very little difference between a police auxiliary and a fully attested police officer.

The Dutch police family comprises three types of operational staff and, in this respect, Amsterdam is typical of cities across the country.

At one end of the scale is a group called MTVs - these are the staff who are similar to council wardens in Britain. In fact, the local authorities fund them, although they operate within the police.

They wear a uniform which makes them recognisably part of the police but have no police powers at all. Their job is to meet and talk to people in the community and discover which local issues are concerning residents and businesses - in other words, to act as the eyes and ears of the police.

They are given an initial six-week training course - compared to a three-week course for PCSOs - although they receive no further formal training.

MTVs are supervised by a police sergeant at a ratio of ten to one. The true auxiliaries, however, are to be found in the ranks of what are known as Operational Assistants (OAs). These are identical to fully-attested police officers in every way except the hours they work - they do not do night shifts - and the duties they perform (they are not equipped with the self-loading pistol that fully-attested officers carry but they do carry batons and CS spray).

OAs operate at neighbourhood level, under the supervision of sergeants. Their full-powers status is reflected in the three-year-long training programme that they undergo.

Following an initial course, which lasts for 12 weeks, they spend 12

Dutch police family show training is the lesson to be learned

weeks on operational duties before returning for a further 12 weeks of training. This cycle is repeated. Fifteen months of their first three years will be spent as gaoler at the main cell suite in Police Headquarters, although there are plans to cut the length of time they spend on this duty by 2006.

Their job is strictly local patrolling

'The job of MTVs is to talk to people in the community'

Two Amsterdam MTVs... although they have no police powers and are employed only to gather information from the neighbourhoods, they receive twice as much training as Police Community Support Officers in England and Wales



and they are employed on no other operational police tasks, although they are assigned some non-operational roles, such as station reception duties.

They are subject to the same discipline code as police officers and neither they nor the MTVs have the right to strike.

Fully attested officers perform, of course, all police duties and, as in London, run neighbourhood policing.

But their approach to community policing is very different to London's, although it closely resembles a policing style abandoned by the Met more than 20 years ago - that of the home beat officer.

Amsterdam comprises 220 'neighbourhoods', each of which has a population of between 2,500 and 5,000. Every neighbourhood is policed by a sergeant, who is called the Neighbourhood Director.

Their is the responsibility for looking after the community - a job which is regarded as high-status by the force. But their approach to community policing is very different to London's, although it closely resembles a policing style abandoned by the Met more than 20 years ago - that of the home beat officer.

It sees these sergeants as important specialists and rewards them accordingly - each receives an additional 360 euros a month (£270) for doing the job. Nobody is posted to a neighbourhood directorship. Any officer who wants to become a director has to apply. The Neighbourhood Director to whom I was introduced, Sgt Nick Daniels, had been a career detective.

Dutch police in general receive much more training than their counterparts in Britain. Like the OAs, the full officers perform, after an initial course, 12 weeks of operations followed by a 12-week period of training. This pattern continues for over four years.

And the training has a high academic content - the officers will learn about psychology, criminology and English, among other topics.

For Neighbourhood Directors, there is further training. For the first two years in post, they spend three days a

month training, which culminates in a straight pass-or-fail written exam.

Their job is to build and maintain ties with their communities, as well as performing the functions of a police officer, including the detection of crime and the investigation of less serious offences.

A recent community initiative that Sgt Daniels had implemented in co-operation with another Neighbourhood Director was a system for resolving on-going neighbour disputes.

'Neighbourhood Directors earn an extra £270 a month'

It involved setting up a conciliation panel of ordinary citizens, which could step in when there is a dispute to help all parties reach an agreement.

The Dutch system is strongly reminiscent of the home beat system which existed in London during the 1970s, under which a constable would be

given responsibility for a local beat and would become well known to the whole community - a way of working which the Met threw into the dustbin of policing history in favour of a more reactive style.

Unlike PCSOs, the OAs and MTVs of Amsterdam are not permanently based in each neighbourhood, but are a mobile resource, brought in when required by a Neighbourhood Director.

To facilitate this, the city has numerous small police stations similar to those which the Met once had but which it sold. Each one has a charge room and cells for temporary accommodation until prisoners can be moved to the cell suite at Headquarters.

Dutch police officers accept that OAs free them from doing many routine tasks and accept them as part of the police service. But, like their counterparts in England and Wales, they are worried that police officer numbers may fall.

With an election apparently approaching in the UK, I would expect to see the intended police family in London get even bigger.

If this is not policing on the cheap, what is it? I firmly believe that policing is a job for police officers.



Sgt Nick Daniels... a former career detective who now runs a neighbourhood



POLICE REFORM



mpf
METROPOLITAN POLICE FEDERATION

Community policing in London

Causes for concern

Community policing has never had a bigger champion in London than the Metropolitan Police Federation.

Now it is becoming a reality, with Safer Neighbourhood teams being introduced across the capital until finally, if all goes to plan, there is one in every ward.

Those of our members who are involved in these teams are working energetically to re-establish close links between police and local communities, identify the issues that really concern individuals in their neighbourhoods,

find long-term solutions to problems, and provide re-assurance to the public.

Inside this briefing sheet, you will read about the experiences of just one of these teams, which since last April has been working on Faraday Ward in North Southwark. This is an area blighted by deprivation, with all its associated problems of crime and anti social behaviour.

What is important now is to ensure the Safer Neighbourhoods initiative is as effective as possible in improving the lives of Londoners.

On this count, we have two concerns.

One is the historical tendency of the Metropolitan Police Service to concentrate as many of its resources as possible on the type of high-impact crime and disorder which hits the headlines rather than the sort of low-level crime which makes people's day-to-day lives an unremitting misery.

In the 1970s, we had beat officers, whose

job was almost identical to that of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams but who disappeared from the streets simply to fill gaps in the ranks elsewhere.

Another attempt at good community policing - the Sector Policing initiative of the early 1990s - also disappeared in the sands of expediency.

The Safer Neighbourhood teams are ring-fenced so they cannot simply be shipped out of their communities.

But within their wards they can be used in the wrong way to achieve the wrong ends (short term temporary fixes as opposed to long-term solutions). This is a fear which is already at

the forefront of some officers' minds as they perform their new neighbourhood roles (see overleaf).

Our other concern continues to be with Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), especially in the light of reports that the Home Office has been considering equipping them with batons and CS spray, as well as extending their powers to carry out stop and search.

PCSOs are prominent members of Safer Neighbourhood teams and, as such, are being presented to the public as part of the face of modern policing.

PCSOs receive just three weeks' training before going on the streets. Police officers, on the other hand, undergo an 18-week initial training programme, followed by a 10-week, closely supervised on-the-job course, during which they learn their street duties, followed, in turn, by a two-year probationary period during which their training continues.

It is fair on PCSOs to let alone the public who the MPS exists to serve - but that they should take on these new powers and responsibilities

with such scant training? What will happen to public confidence - so vital to the success of community policing - if (or we would suggest, when) something goes horribly wrong?

If PCSOs are to be given the duties of warranted officers, their training must be that of police officers and nowhere is this more true than in the sensitive area of the Safer Neighbourhood teams.

And if their training is that of police officers, then why not simply replace them with police officers?

This topic has clearly been at the forefront of the authorities' minds in the Netherlands, which also operates a 'police family' and their solution is informative (see back page).

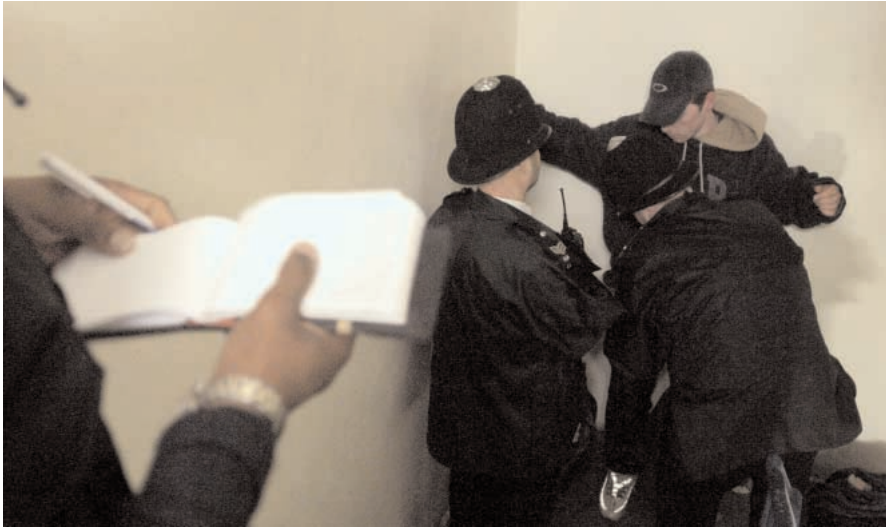
The Metropolitan Police is a brand and a potent one. And, like any brand, it will only succeed if it maintains its brand values. Successful brands become and stay outstandingly popular with the public not only because people like them but because they recognise them easily in shops and know they can rely absolutely on their quality.

It is the public we serve and by whose consent we police. They, too, are entitled to expect the same consistent standards and quality which are provided by properly trained warranted officers.

'What is important is to ensure the initiative is as effective as possible in improving the lives of Londoners'



Its creator committed suicide, jobs took it over... now a Safer Neighbourhoods team is bringing permanent fixes to the Aylesbury's problems



Andy Smyth... explained how intimate local knowledge of Faraday Ward was uncovering the activities of previously unknown offenders



Bob Glynn... said that the team's arrival had stripped the gangs of their cloak of anonymity and disrupted their activities



Driven to distraction

When the designer of the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark returned after several years to see how his creation was faring, the shock at what he found was so great that he committed suicide.

Blighted by crime, grime, graffiti and gangs, the estate - built in the early 1970s - had become a nightmare contrast to the idealistic dream with which he set about building it.

The long, broad walkways which he provided at first floor level so that residents and visitors could walk to and from the flats above the noise and traffic of the streets, turned out to be ideal for local youths to speed-trial their motor scooters. They also served as look-out platforms to give early warning of approaching police and as avenues of escape.

Stairwells provided dark places where the gangs of neighbouring tower blocks were ideal locations for vagrants to shoot heroin, leaving behind them their needles and excrement.

The youth clubs offered enticing venues for youths from neighbouring Peckham to loiter around and show a little muscle.

And the sheer size of the place - it was reputed to be the second-largest housing development in Europe when built - offered anonymity to offenders.

Into this stepped, last April, the Faraday Ward Safer Neighbourhoods Team with the task of finding medium or long term solutions to the problems plaguing the estate which had for so long defied all counter-measures.

For Sgt Russell Jones, who heads the team, it was a violent baptism.

"I stopped a guy with a scooter on a walkway," he explained. "We had a fight which prevented me from taking the key out of his machine. He lit the scooter

up - he was a six-foot two-inch 17-year-old - and managed to get it going. "He then rammed me into a concrete pillar with it and drove away, dragging me for about 100 yards until I eventually came off. That was my first experience on the estate."

On this occasion, the offender was arrested and convicted on six counts, including assault on police, dangerous driving and driving while disqualified, and was jailed for over 12 months.

Most of the scooter riders, however, were continuing to endanger ordinary residents with seeming impunity.

"They wore crash helmets, so we couldn't identify them," Russell contin-

'He drove away, dragging me for about 100 yards'

ued. "Only about half the scooters were legitimately owned and the youths swapped registration plates, so it was very difficult to track people down."

"When they saw a police car or a uniform approaching, they simply roared off - or they drove at us, fast."

With apprehension of the offenders usually impossible, it looked as though the problem - which the team had made their first priority - would be uncrackable.

The solution was to install (with funding from Southwark Council) a series of barriers along the walkways, similar to those used to prevent young children running out of school gates and into the



road. They stowed the scooters up and made them vulnerable to being stopped by police.

Although there were sustained attempts by enraged youths to kick the barriers down, the scooter problem duly abated.

In addition to Russell, the team comprises two constables - Bob Glynn and

Andy Smyth - and three PCSOs: Godfrey Duffles, Faith Adeyeye and Lauren Ruffles. For a while, they have had a fourth PCSO on temporary attachment.

Bob and Andy were both previously local home beat officers and the implementation of the Safer Neighbourhoods team has revolutionised what they have been able to achieve.

How team saved estate's residents from a dangerous motor scooter menace... up on the first floor

Explained Bob: "When there was just the two of us, different shift patterns meant we often had to do solo patrols. The team means we now have more impact."

"Anti social behaviour almost always comes down to youth gangs. If you're on your own, it's difficult to get names and addresses. They see you and run off. Now, when there are gangs around, we can go and hit them as a squad. By working in pairs, we can track them as

'We have an anti-police family who think they own the landing'

well as watching each other's backs. "The more we get to know about them, the less they can revel in anonymity. We know who they are and where they live."

The increasingly intimate knowledge of the community which the team is acquiring is having a big positive impact on intelligence-gathering, Andy Smyth explained.

"We are the experts on Faraday Ward," he explained. "North Southwark is too big for the response teams to know everybody and a lot of low-level offenders won't come to their notice. But we're

finding out about them. And if we see a new face, it really sticks out."

The Faraday Safer Neighbourhoods team are able to draw on squads and uniform/hotspot teams but work most closely with the Southwark Anti-social Behaviour Unit (SASBU). This is police and council tackling problems in partnership.

Explained Russell: "We have an anti-police family who think they own the landing outside their flat. They attract other individuals with like minds who are very intimidating for other residents and who think they can challenge council wardens, PCSOs and even police."

"SASBU can be very useful in dealing with families like this by pulling them in

for questioning, because they are tenants, and draw up behavioural contracts which, if broken, can be good evidence if we seek an Anti Social Behaviour Order.

The council can also do many other things that we can't because they have the necessary funds, such as equipping residents with video cameras so that they can carry out their own surveillance."

The Faraday team are guided in deciding their priorities directly by the local community. They have set up their own steering group, whose members include representatives from tenants associations, the council and New Deal for Communities, which is providing funding to rejuvenate the estate. The membership

also includes an elected youth. The team also holds a regular police surgery which is advertised by means of fliers paid for by New Deal for Communities (NDC).

"People know that they can walk in off the street at a particular time and they will be able to talk to a police officer about crime, ask for advice or even make a complaint," said Russell.

"A major part of our job is to tackle the fear of crime and the surgery is a good way to provide re-assurance." "NDC is a much-needed ally in the fight for residents' hearts and minds," said Russell.

"Its funds and know-how are critical in turning around an area like this."



SPECIAL BRIEFING

Officers warn of a threat from within

The Faraday team has sounded a warning that the success of the Safer Neighbourhoods initiative could be placed in jeopardy unless the Met adopts a new mind-set about community policing.

They fear that borough operational command units may be tempted to use their Safer Neighbourhood teams for quick fixes to improve performance figures and thereby neuter them as effective community police.

"Safer Neighbourhood policing is about finding medium or long-term solutions to problems, not about achieving short term success," Russell Jones explained.

In the past, we had beat officers and then sector officers. The Met abused them by regularly abstracting them for aid - they'd be lucky if they were on the beat for two years out of five. Communities were given too many promises which were subsequently broken.

"So consistency is very important if we are to rebuild their trust in us."



Safer Neighbourhood teams, he continued, are almost a race apart within the Met because of their problem-solving abilities.

"We're supposed to be separate, which is why we're paid for by the Mayor and ring-fenced," he said.

"But historically, the Met doesn't like units which don't produce statistics that can be quoted at meetings. Middle management - when it's under pressure - could come to see us as just another resource."

"If they treat us like that, it would be a tragedy for the people of London; another chance to get it right - lost."

"When response officers are called to an incident, they deal with it and then disappear again. But we're there constantly, mixing, engaging and ensuring that there's a uniform presence which people can see. We are dealing with the fear of crime as well as crime itself."

"We will most definitely have a positive effect on burglary and robbery levels. But management must be farsighted enough to let us do our job and not be obsessed with a short-term focus on figures."

Bob Glynn agreed. "This is a different type of policing to the one the Met has become used to and must be judged by different criteria," he said.

"It's like putting £1,000 on deposit and then deciding you'd like to spend £500 of it. You won't earn as high a level of interest as if you left the capital sum untouched - so have you got the willpower to leave the whole £1,000 intact? That's the situation the Met is facing with us."

"It remains to be seen whether the Met can resist the temptation to manipulate us for their own ends."