



Invitation for Expressions of Interest from Local Areas: Neighbourhood Resolution Panels

29th July 2011

Dear Sir / Madam

'The Coalition: Programme for Government' stated that '*we will introduce effective measures to tackle anti-social behaviour and low-level crime, including forms of restorative justice such as Neighbourhood Justice Panels*'. This forms part of wider work to devolve criminal justice to a local level much more widely and give victims and communities a vital say in how justice is delivered. Today we are publishing this specification document which sets out a description and a framework for the Panel approach.

Following the consultation on the Green Paper Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders and as part of the government's wider strategy on Neighbourhood Justice, we are seeking expressions of interest to test the Neighbourhood Resolution Panel approach. This is an excellent opportunity to be involved in breaking new ground in dealing with local crime. The outcomes and learning from the test phase, which will run for two years, will be used to produce national guidance on the implementation, set up and running of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels.

Further, more detailed, information on the principles, scope, outcome and benefits of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels can be found in the attached published Specification – 'Testing the Neighbourhood Resolution Panel approach: a specification' (Annex A).

Although it will be for local areas to decide how to develop and implement Neighbourhood Resolution Panels, with support from the central Ministry of Justice team, there will a number of mandatory evaluation requirements. These are yet to be determined, but are likely to support work to look at "process" elements (looking at what is involved in setting up and running an NJP, including costs), and issues relating to satisfaction levels for victims, offenders and community members.

A Partnership Approach

As mentioned in the specification document, Panels can be used to resolve a number of different community issues, criminal and non-criminal. For this reason they may be interest in the approach from a number of different agencies and stakeholders. Wherever possible, we suggest the Panel approach should be a cross agency, collaborative scheme. For that reason we suggest you talk to your Community Safety Partnerships, Local Criminal Justice Boards, magistracy, Registered Social Landlords and others who might be interested in taking part.

Funding

Unfortunately there is no central programme funding available, and areas will be expected to resource the Panels themselves. Research into existing Panels suggest this is likely to be in the region of £60,000 to £130,000 a year to cover items such as training in restorative justice techniques, start up costs, costs of a co-ordinator to recruit and organise community volunteers and volunteer expenses. It is suggested that local agencies may look at pooling funding and resources where appropriate.

However, the Ministry of Justice will incur the cost of the evaluation, will provide support and facilitate sharing of best practice to assist local areas in running Panels.

Training

All parties wishing to express an interest in developing and implementing Neighbourhood Resolution Panels will be required to demonstrate that they have provided an appropriate level of accredited restorative justice training. Areas will be required to use training providers which have signed up to the Restorative Justice Council's Code of Conduct for Trainers and Training Organisations of Restorative Practice – January 2011

Equality and diversity

We suggest all parties with responsibility for designing and delivering Neighbourhood Resolution Panels, including the recruitment of Panel volunteers, need to pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Timescales and Next Steps

Areas who think they might wish to take part are asked to register their initial interest with us by letter or email using the contact details below Friday 9th September stating your title and area of responsibility and confirming that any partner agencies / organisations who are mentioned as part of the initial expression of interest have been consulted and initial agreement has been reached regarding their potential participation. Areas who feel they may already be delivering a similar model to that outlined above, and who would like to register their interest in taking part in the evaluation, are also asked to register their interest. If there are any questions or issues you would like to discuss prior to expressing an interest please contact Nick Wunderly (Nick.Wunderly@justice.gsi.gov.uk), 020 3334 5632 or 07788 190926.

Once initial expressions of interest have been received, areas will have the opportunity to request a face to face presentation during September and October 2011 and to ask questions to clarify any outstanding issues.

Areas who are interested in being included in the pilot will be asked to complete a proforma with additional detail on their proposals for taking Neighbourhood Resolution Panels forward. The contents of the completed proformas will inform decisions as to where pilots will take place, which we aim to be considering early November.

It is expected that the first areas will commence testing the approach during the early New Year.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Smith

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