

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY GREAT BRITAIN

Chief Constable George E Fenn, LL.B, MBIM, commands 1,775 Police Officers, plus 885 Special Constables, Cadets, Traffic Wardens, and civilian employees. The 920,000 people residing in Cheshire have every reason to be proud of their elite Police authority and also their Police In The Community Section, Juvenile Liaison Departments, and Juvenile After-Care Scheme are all now rightly internationally known.

Sir James Houghton, CBE, QBM, H.M.Chief Inspector Of Constabulary for England and Wales highlights in his report for 1976 the virtues of providing a caring personalised service developing further community relations programmes, and placing greater emphasis upon Police warnings and cautions.

In 1829 Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police, and the 'Prevention of Crime Before it Occurs, and not its detention afterwards as always, and remains its primary objective'. Modernday police discretion normally takes the form of a suspending cautionary process against the offender who admits his guilt, and this non-custodial disposition is utilised as a non-penal alternative, and is logically far more humane and socially productive. Statistical data suggests that 50% of all criminal offences detected in this country are committed by juvenile delinquents under the age of 17 but that approximately 78% of such offenders never come before the Courts again, and that to give them a damaging Criminal Record Number is not always in the best interests of society.

Police authorities should be cultivating a social environment where even the more distasteful duties of law enforcement may be readily accepted with sympathy, and understanding. Happily the British Police have traditionally accepted the role of Ombudsman as a positive means of helping the weak, inarticulate, and socially disadvantaged, and this paper briefly outlines the new cult fashion of re-emphasising the need for greater personal and community responsibility towards ones neighbour. Fortunately the Cheshire Police Community Programmes are certainly helping to pioneer and to make this ideal a valid modernistic Concept.

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CHESHIRE'S VOLUNTARY POLICE IN THE COMMUNITY SECTION

Executive committee meets bi-monthly at Force Headquarters, Chester, under the Chairmanship of either the Chief Constable or his deputy, and this new innovation is quite unique and is now a fully integrated part of their comprehensive community involvement programmes. All five Police Divisions operate this project which is all the more praise-worthy for Police Officers who work permanent unsociable hours, and the following items were briefly discussed at two of their recent executive committee meetings.

Cheshire Police have a high percentage of professional and civilian employees involved in after duty hours in a multiplicity of activities which include helping uniformed, voluntary, statutory organisations and the elderly, disabled, mentally and physically handicapped people are not forgotten. Some of the Police Districts in conjunction with the Social Services during the winter months operate an early warning system for senior citizens especially at risk, and in the summer months numerous personnel act as voluntary drivers, and several old peoples homes are visited on a regular basis.

Within the County 650 Headmasters have been personally informed that the Force can actively assist, if invited, with organising quizzes, competitions, projects, and give lectures associated with anti-crime campaigns, vandalism and talks on civic responsibility. One Superintendent and his colleagues recently involved 150 children, and produced a successful stage production in the aid of the N.S.P.C.C. and two Police Constables raised over £700 by organising a sponsored walk and sponsored canoe trip. Also the Army, Air Force Cadets, Boys Brigade Scouts and Guides along with motor-cycle groups, Youth Clubs and Football Organisations throughout the County receive regular practical help, and possibly more important leadership expertise. One Inspector with a deep interest in a Youth Club Executive Committee has recently helped to raise £12,000 to renovate an activity farmhouse centre, while another Inspector spent some ten days with 120 Cheshire youngsters camping near Caernarvon and was largely responsible for raising some £1,000 in recent months.

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A superintendent involved with a boys club has culminated in a Christmas Show in the Civic Hall which involved all club members and two police constables were recently presented to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. One police officer helps with a Special Education Unit for consistent truants and young people with severe behaviour problems, and the local Probation Service had re-decorated their premises using labour which is the subject of a Community Service Order.

Another police constable has helped to open up a youth club for approximately 110 children and this is held at regular intervals in a local educational authority school and this is itself most unusual. Another officer and his wife have recently started a new Scout and Cub Group, while another married couple are engaged most weekends helping a local activity centre for handicapped youngsters.

In 1977, some 11 officers walked 25 miles on a sponsored walk, and raised £500 for the Spastics Appeal Fund, and one of their colleagues arranges the transport for 25 members of a local Multiple Sclerosis Society, and maintains the two ambulances used for this transportation.

Six members of a Police Division are involved with organising and acting as referees for a local youth football league which has already 19 teams, and one of their colleagues recently organised a coach trip to Liverpool for some 30 Sea Cadets to go on a sponsored guided tour around H.M.S. Blake. Numerous police personnel throughout the County are actually involved in the forces cycle registration scheme and to date there are over 20,000 registered. Also, help was given on a voluntary basis with helping to organise the forces motor cycle safety weekend which in fact had over 1,550 and Cheshire's Motor Safety Coach in 1970 was throughout the County on over 120 occasions. Cheshire's Police Brass Band is also a great attraction and they attended numerous church services throughout the five policedivisions.

The Crewe Force Training Centre last year organised twelve lectures for 85 youngsters for the Bronze, Silver, and Gold level awards of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and several Police Officers serve on the Award Scheme Committee. This centre operates two courses for Senior Overseas Police Officers, with one programme including students attending at a local College of Technology for approximately 12 months, and this new form of socialisation is being closely monitored by the British Foreign Office and several Commonwealth countries. The Cheshire Constabulary is now deeply committed to this exciting community venture programme, which have already been exported to many parts of the world, and fortunately Senior Police Officers personally take a keen interest in this scheme and of course high quality leadership always emanates from the top and for the past 20 years Cheshire have been singularly blessed with Chief Constables of high distinction.

CHESHIRE'S JUVENILE LIAISON DEPARTMENT

The British Childrens and Young Persons Act 1969, places a statutory duty on Police authorities, Social Services, and Probation Departments to work in closer harmony than has been previous traditional practice. Divisional juvenile departments cover the County, and new referrals for criminal offences are always investigated, and a home background report submitted to the Chief Superintendent, who in conjunction with social service departments has ultimate responsibility for deciding the course of action having regard to the offender's best interest.

Police discretion, and flexibility are the modern attributes of a progressive law enforcement authority, and approximately 65% of all first, and second offenders receive a Police Warning - Caution which is normally administered by a Chief Inspector or Superintendent in uniform at a local Police Station. In 1976 in the Warrington and Widnes Division they dealt with 2,861 referrals, 1,800 had no further action taken, 489 made a Court appearance, and 572 received an official police warning, and this compassionate approach meant that they did not make a damaging Court appearance. Cheshire's Police, Probation, and Social

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Services operate a mutually blanket referral system, and many legal experts consider this scheme to be a model of its kind. In England, and Wales, directly a juvenile delinquent has been found guilty before a Court of Law with few exceptions this individual becomes the sole responsibility of the local Social Services Department, who plan and implement the offenders social training and eventually rehabilitation.

These Juvenile Liaison Officers have wide terms of reference, and include visiting the home of the offenders to enable the Divisional Commander to decide whether a caution (which means no Court appearance is required) is appropriate in relation to the admitted offence, and throughout England and Wales 65% of all first offenders today normally receive an official police warning.

Improving relationships with Church Leaders, Headmasters, Teachers, pupils and arranging talks to be given for parent/teacher associations and keeping in touch with other community organisations along with visiting shop-keepers, and Youth Clubs is considered to be of fundamental importance. Also taking note of domestic disputes and families who appear to have serious social problems and passing on this relevant information to the professional case work services is also undertaken. These Police Officers are almost exclusively involved with the disadvantaged social losers having less than average social, and economic life's advantages. Fortunately these specialised personnel are dedicated to the prevention of delinquency by interception, and diversion at an early age, and acceptance of these valuable services is something that must be voluntarily asked for.

The New Cheshire Juvenile After Care Scheme founded in April 1976 is quite unusual for after a police caution the offender receives no positive guidance, or case work help, and this project is devised to help where parents either could, or would not adequately deal with their family problems for logically the prevention of crime is a community affair as opposed to a purely Police matter. With this in mind the Chief Constable supported by a Juvenile After Care Committee consisting of a wide range of voluntary, and statutory

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Organisations including the Social Services and Probation Personnel decided to implement effective remedial measures to help offenders who ask for such help and guidance.

Cheshire's juvenile volunteer after-care scheme continues to expand, and at the 31 December 1977, there were 121 adult volunteers and 63 children had been allocated to them and of course this has only been in operation for 12 months. These civilian volunteers receive some elementary case work training but they have absolute discretion on how they will help the young offenders committed to their charge, and this form of socialisation could be up to three months duration. This project was initially imported from America and already in the Crewe Division three civilian volunteers have organised a weekly youth club and this is composed of mainly young people who are already on the above after-care scheme.

The Cheshire Police Community Relations Booklet is freely available from the Chief Constable's Office, Police Headquarters, Chester, CHI 2PP. The Chief Constable of Cheshire has kindly supplied much of the above information and this is much appreciated.

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