



Simon Reed is Chairman of the Legislation Sub-Committee

## Off-target

Over the years, targets have become the mainstay of policing. Last year's conference revealed the extent to which officers are forced to pursue minor crimes in order for national targets to be achieved. We hoped it would be a wake up call to the Home Office to take a long, hard look at the target culture, but that doesn't seem to have been the case according to the Home Secretary's Strategic Policing Priorities for 2008-09.

The target – SPP4 – states that we need to deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive CJS for victims and the public. This is a sentiment that we wholeheartedly agree with, but if you examine the target further there is an additional paragraph that says: "The Government will also continue to use offences brought to justice as an indicator to manage LCJB performance."

**"The counting rules and measures are relevant only to politicians, criminologists, statisticians and chief officers, and totally irrelevant to local communities."**

This one sentence tells us that the Government has not listened to the service about the negative impact sanction detections are having. Our concerns are further reinforced by 'Annex A.4', which states: "The rate of offences brought to justice will be used as a proxy indicator to help assess and manage LCJB performance."

There is an attempt to soften this by using the word 'rate' instead of number, and by using 'proxy', but we believe it is highly unlikely that these will be used 'merely as a guide to performance'.

While stating that the intention is to focus on serious acquisitive crime, such as burglary and robbery, there is another annex, A.8, which will include all notifiable offences. This will mean that sanction detections will continue to drive the bottom-up performance culture.

The policing priorities document shows no consideration to our ability to respond at a local, cross-border and national level. There is no mention, for example, of the police service being primarily or otherwise an emergency service, or of our co-ordinating responsibilities at times of civil emergency (such as floods and foot and mouth disease).

Many of the priorities are not 'policing priorities' per se,

but dependent to a larger or lesser extent on other parts of criminal justice system over which we have no control. SPPs 2, 3 and 4 set targets that are dependent on reducing re-offending rates. The overall rate is approximately 61% of all convicted persons being re-convicted within two years. This figure goes up to 73% for young persons aged 18-21 years and 82% for males aged 15-18. This level of recidivism is emasculating the police service by having to commit considerable resources to deal with this volume of crime at the expense of other priorities.

The counting rules and measures are relevant only to politicians, criminologists, statisticians and chief officers, and totally irrelevant to local communities. The performance of the police must be measured against local policing needs and not against national Pls set by the Home Office. There must be a simplified measure based on performance that is relevant to and understood by local communities.

We would like to see the measures simplified to three or four 'big issues' that local communities understand, are relevant to the delivery of policing in their area and which they can measure. These could be similar to how SOCA is measured – which is based not on quantitative measures but rather outcomes, such as relationships with other agencies, which are measured through regular surveys.

For the police service, these 'big issues' could centre around outcomes such as;

- Public satisfaction – general service delivery, response to service, anti-social behaviour
- Fear of crime – visibility, reassurance, crime reduction/prevention
- Major incidents – floods, disasters, serious/major crime inquiries, terrorism.

This would be more meaningful than the wish list currently being touted.