



## Beyond Visibility: Safer Neighbourhoods teams' use of Key Individual Networks

August 2007

*Community engagement is at the heart of Safer Neighbourhoods policing and the Key Individual Network (KIN) is seen as a vital tool in engaging with individuals. This short qualitative study investigates how KINs are operating 'on the ground' and the contribution they are making to the work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams in the Metropolitan Police Service*

## **Introduction and background**

Community involvement in shaping public services has become an increasingly important aspect of government policy in recent years. A variety of policy initiatives including the National Reassurance Policing Programme, civil renewal and active citizenship and the establishment of Safer Neighbourhoods (SN) policing teams have promoted the involvement of the community in crime and disorder problem solving. Common to each of these initiatives is the acknowledgement that the community is critical in identifying and dealing with problems in the local area (Forrest et al, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

Community engagement is at the heart of SN policing. The Key Individual Network (KIN), a representative cross section of individuals who play a key role in the community (e.g. shopkeepers, faith group representatives, teachers, young people, park keepers, residents and those who work and commute in the area), is seen as a vital tool to engage with individuals in a ward and contributes to each stage of the seven-stage model<sup>2</sup> essential to the work of Safer Neighbourhoods teams (SNTs). The KIN survey is viewed as a vital part of the KIN process, enabling SN officers to engage with members of the community on a regular basis to explore issues of concern at local level, collect up to date community intelligence and feed information from this into the SNT tasking and priority setting process. In addition, the KIN interview is a useful opportunity for officers to feed information back to the community and survey results can be a key source of information for ward panel<sup>3</sup> members in the priority setting process. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) advises SNTs to carry out at least 30 interviews with individual KIN members during one month and repeat the process on a six-monthly basis.

Analytical products such as problem profiles and survey results analyses are critical to the success of SNTs in relation to evidence-based priority setting, addressing local concerns and keeping the public informed. However, previous research suggests that KIN survey analysis is not being fully utilised. SN officers may have limited skills and experience to carry out interviews and analysts often lack awareness of the types of products required from KIN survey analysis. Differences in perceptions about the purpose and function of

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<sup>1</sup> Forrest, S., Myhill, A. & Tilley, N. (2005) *Practical lessons for involving the community in crime and disorder problem solving* Development and Practice Report 43 London: Home Office

<sup>2</sup> The seven-stage model consists of: research, engagement, identifying issues, investigation and analysis, the community deciding priority issues, dealing with priorities and review and feedback.

<sup>3</sup> A ward panel is made up of local people whose role is to assess the local concerns identified through community engagement and analysis, and establish priorities for policing in the area.

the KIN survey are also evident. Some officers and analysts view it as a performance tool, rather than a method of engaging with the community, affecting the types of analytical products generated (Rehman, 2005; Williams et al, 2006a; Williams et al, 2006b)<sup>4</sup>.

Following discussions with the authors of these reports in the MPS Strategic Research Unit (SRU), the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) Planning and Performance Unit decided to conduct further investigation into SNTs use of the KIN.

### **Aims of the research**

The research sought to investigate how KINs operate and how SNTs use information from KIN interviews, including the types of analytical products generated and how these are used to inform the SNT tasking and priority setting process. It also set out to draw together some examples of good practice where information and analysis derived from KIN interviews has had a positive impact.

It is hoped that findings from this research will provide the central SNT, local SNTs and MPA with an insight into how the KIN process is working 'on the ground' and how information from KIN interviews is currently used. This may inform efforts to promote more effective use of the KIN. Examples of good practice highlighting innovative use of the KIN may also inspire other SNTs.

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<sup>4</sup> Rehman, U. (2005) *Briefing on usefulness of KIN*; Williams, E., Rehman, U., O'Connor, J. & Wunsch, D. (2006a) *Evaluation of Safer Neighbourhoods Phase II: The SN Analysts*; Williams, E. Rehman, U., O'Connor, J. & Wunsch, D. (2006b) *Evaluation of Safer Neighbourhoods: A review of the development of the ward panel meetings* All published by the MPS Strategic Research Unit

## Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative approach. A brief review of relevant literature was conducted together with five interviews with key MPA and MPS stakeholders to provide background information and context to the research and inform the interview schedule.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 16 SN sergeants and 12 SN analysts in 16 wards<sup>5</sup> across 15 boroughs. The wards were chosen from an original list of 23 wards selected by the MPS SRU based on ACORN<sup>6</sup> classification, crime rate and SNT roll out date as part of their evaluation of the SN programme. When the methodology for one phase of the MPS SRU evaluation altered slightly to focus on seven wards, it was agreed to use the remaining 16 wards within this research.

## Interview findings

### *Purpose of the KIN*

The sergeants interviewed most commonly viewed their KIN as a method of community engagement and a two-way communication channel between the police and the community. The KIN was seen as a list of contacts with significant people in the community or as one sergeant referred to them “...people with a sphere of influence” who could disseminate information to and from their “sphere”. The KIN was considered to be a useful source to identify issues in the local area and, in some cases, to understand police performance issues.

Analysts had a similar idea of the purpose of the KIN. They saw it as a method of determining perceptions of crime/fear of crime and the location of problems in the ward. Some analysts also referred to the KINs role in understanding police performance issues. While acknowledging the survey was not designed for this purpose, they felt that some of the questions (e.g. perceptions of changes in levels of police presence in the area) lent themselves to performance management.

All sergeants interviewed had other methods of engaging with the community and gaining community intelligence in addition to the KIN. These included surgeries, ‘have a say’ days, community meetings, information from the Criminal Intelligence System (CRIMINT)<sup>7</sup> and general day-to-day interaction with the public. However, a number of sergeants commented that KIN was one of the better community engagement tools used by the SNT. One felt that

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<sup>5</sup> Eastbury (Barking & Dagenham), West Thornton (Croydon), Broad Green (Croydon), Coombe Hill (Kingston upon Thames), Fulham Town (Hammersmith & Fulham), Hainault (Redbridge), Sutton Central (Sutton), West Hendon (Barnet), Willesden Green (Brent), Cranford (Hounslow), Crouch End (Haringey), East Wickham (Bexley), Faraday (Southwark), Hayes and Coney Hall (Bromley), Vassall (Lambeth), Kenton East (Harrow). See appendices one and two for copies of the interview schedules.

<sup>6</sup> ACORN is a geo-demographic tool used to identify and understand the UK population

<sup>7</sup> The Criminal intelligence (CRIMINT) system is an MPS computer system for recording information and intelligence.

the KIN provided more detailed information, as members had higher levels of trust in the police than the general public. Another felt that the KIN was one of the best community engagement tools as it included "...the absolute key people in the area". With the exception of information included on CRIMINT, KIN survey data seemed to be the only information documenting community concerns received by the Borough Intelligence Unit (BIU)<sup>8</sup>. One analyst felt that KIN survey data was unique as it was "...straight from the horse's mouth" while another stated "... [KIN] is the only formal ward level information on public perceptions that is returned to the BIU". Analysts seemed to view the KIN as a highly useful tool for collecting and analysing local concerns. However, there were some frustrations around the design of the survey and the way it was conducted by SNTs. These will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

### *Make up of KINs*

Almost all (15) of the 16 sergeants interviewed had a KIN in place. The size of KINs varied from between 17 and 96 members, however most were between 30 and 40 people. Sergeants stated that some KIN members were considerably more active than others and that different members served different purposes (e.g. gatekeeper to a particular community, information source/disseminator) depending on issues in the community at the time.

A variety of different people made up the KINs in the wards interviewed. Local businesses, schools or colleges and religious/faith group representatives were the most commonly mentioned groups. However, membership spanned a variety of sectors depending on the dynamics of the community, including hospital or health care staff, the head of the local allotment association and a representative from the local football team. Many sergeants interviewed had 'inherited' KIN members from previous sergeants or former home beat officers. Other popular methods of KIN recruitment were surveying or leafleting people to generate interest in becoming involved or through generally engaging with people on a day-to-day basis. One sergeant stated that an officer could tell if a person is likely to be a useful KIN member, often due to their position within the community or their access to resources. A good example of this came from a sergeant who described how he had recruited one of his "most valuable KIN members" by arranging access for him to unclaimed pedal cycles found by the police to utilise within his young person's bike repair scheme. The individual was initially cynical of the police and felt that the sergeant would probably "move to another area next week" but the sergeant has since gained his trust and a vital link with local young people.

Many sergeants interviewed stated that there was at least some under representation on their KINs, most notably young people. While representatives from schools, colleges and youth groups were often part of the KIN there was usually little direct input from the young people themselves. Sergeants seemed keen to address this. Some mentioned plans to formulate

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<sup>8</sup> The Borough Intelligence Unit (BIU) is responsible for the collation, assessment and dissemination of intelligence across the borough.

youth ward panels, but there were limited suggestions for how they could achieve better representation of young people on the KIN. Some ethnic groups and people who were out of the home all day also proved difficult to recruit for some sergeants. This was often addressed by marketing to specific groups and liaising with 'gatekeepers' who could provide access to particular communities.

Analysts interviewed seemed uncertain when asked if all SNTs in their borough had a KIN but it was presumed that most did or were meant to. Analysts only seemed certain of KIN existence on a ward if SNTs had returned completed KIN surveys for analysis, indicating that this is usually the only time they become involved in the KIN process.

The majority of analysts interviewed felt that KINs were not representative of the wards. Many mentioned the lack of young people involved and felt that KINs often included the "usual suspects" or those who were involved in other police/community initiatives. This was also raised by stakeholders interviewed who were concerned that it was often the "same old community groups accessed and the same old people approached". One analyst felt that there should be more guidance for SNTs on how to make their KIN representative. She thought this should be quite prescriptive, perhaps in the form of a stratified sample framework, for example directing the officer to engage with three people aged 18 to 20 years and two people from the Black African community. However, there was a feeling amongst some analysts interviewed that a KIN of just 30 people could never be representative and that numbers should be flexible to fit the size of the ward.

### *Conducting KIN interviews*

Surveys were usually conducted every six months, but some sergeants preferred to interview more frequently. One sergeant interviewed fewer KIN members on a quarterly basis, as he liked to get a "fresh feel for what was going on". Another sergeant had been asked by his borough commander to interview KIN members quarterly to feed directly into the ward panel meeting. Some teams (approximately three) had not conducted any formal KIN interviews to date, while others had only conducted interviews "when instructed by the centre". Around half of analysts interviewed had a rota system in place where two or three SNTs per month were scheduled to conduct and return their surveys. The system seemed to work well, reminding sergeants to conduct their surveys regularly and avoid overloading the analyst with disproportionately large amounts of KIN analysis in certain months. KIN interviews were largely conducted in the home or business and, while a few sergeants stated that they occasionally left surveys with interviewees to complete in their own time, most felt that surveys should always be conducted face-to-face. One sergeant commented that not conducting the survey this way was a lost opportunity for vital interaction with the community.

Most sergeants interviewed used the centrally generated KIN survey template. However, one had amended it slightly to reduce some duplication in questions and the overall size of the survey. Again, most sergeants used a map of the ward within their surveys to allow people to pinpoint issues in the

area. The map was seen as a very useful tool, mainly because it allowed people to see where the ward boundaries were and helped to focus KIN members' minds on the area that their SNT is responsible for. One sergeant felt that the process simply "...doesn't work without a map" and that people felt valued when they could visually see their street as part of the SNT's responsibilities. Despite this, a number of analysts felt that better use could be made of the KIN survey ward map, both in terms of providing more contextual information behind the often meaningless 'dots on maps' and more SNTs actually including the map within their surveys, both of which would result in better data for analysis.

Sergeants also used the KIN interview as an opportunity to publicise the work of the SNT, often asking KIN members to disseminate these messages further in their own communities. In some SNTs, the interview was also a chance to update KIN members on actions taken to address specific issues they had previously raised and to consult with them around the type of engagement they would like to see from the police in the future.

### *KIN analytical products*

Over half of the sergeants interviewed returned their surveys to the SN analyst. A few sergeants conducted their own analysis with their SNT while others chose to do both: draw out initial issues in the first instance then send surveys to their analyst for a more in-depth product. Analysts interviewed often commented on how time consuming inputting survey data was and felt that it was not an appropriate task for either them or the SN researcher. One analyst had devised a simple survey analysis spreadsheet that enabled SNT officers to input the more straightforward questions allowing her to concentrate on analysing the more complex, open-ended questions.

The type of KIN analytical products that sergeants stated they received from analysts varied from survey results presented in PowerPoint presentation slides, Excel analysis and other documents including ward profiles, general crime trends and hotspot maps. Analysis seemed to be largely used to inform tasking, and to tailor shift and patrolling patterns in response to community concerns. For example, one sergeant had organised a specific anti-social behaviour (ASB) patrol in response to information from the KIN survey about drug related problems on a particular estate, while another had tasked his team to patrol a local parade of shops after the survey highlighted problems in the area.

One sergeant compared KIN analysis to recorded crime figures to gauge an understanding of the similarities or disparities between perceptions and what actually gets recorded. Another sergeant triangulated information from KIN surveys with other sources to ensure that only genuine issues are acted upon, rather than views of "people with their own agendas", which can lead to inappropriate action by the team. This sergeant conducted what he described as a "benefits analysis" before tasking his team. As resources were finite he thought it necessary to consider how many people in the ward would benefit, or the "maximum spread effect" as he termed it, before investing.

Although all sergeants interviewed attended their ward panel meetings, very little information was provided around how the ward panel used KIN analysis. Despite this, half felt that it informed decision-making at the ward panel meeting. Fewer analysts attended ward panel meetings but similarly, half of those interviewed felt that KIN analysis had some influence on decision-making. One sergeant felt that KIN analysis often confirms what ward panel members already think, but seeing that other people are of the same opinion gives them the confidence to raise it at the meeting and consider it as a priority. However, this was not always the case when analysis did not mirror the panel members' views. As one sergeant stated, ward panel members often have their own agendas and will only pursue these. As such, KIN analysis is likely to have minimal influence on decisions made. One sergeant found KIN analysis more useful for his own purposes, allowing him to understand issues affecting the community and guide the ward panel accordingly.

### *Communication of KIN findings*

Half of sergeants interviewed communicated findings from KIN analysis back to their ward panel or intended to when they had conducted surveys, while a few others only provided the ward panel with analysis that they thought would be interesting or useful to them. A small number of sergeants interviewed chose not to send KIN analysis back to their ward panels as they thought it might overwhelm them with information or be too statistical to fully understand. One sergeant felt that the KIN survey was not useful to present to the ward panel as it often contained information not specifically related to crime/ASB such as litter or car-parking problems. While the sergeant was happy to tackle these issues in partnership with other agencies, he was keen to focus the ward panel exclusively on crime/ASB issues.

A couple of sergeants interviewed had other processes in place, which they felt were more useful for the ward panel than KIN survey analysis. One sergeant completed tasking sheets, recording issues raised by the public or the SNT and all actions taken to tackle them. These were updated regularly and presented to the ward panel. Another sergeant operated a 'what, when, where' system in which he and the SNT captured the views of around 200 people in the ward every six months recording 'what' the problem was, 'where' it was happening and 'when'. Again, this was presented back to the ward panel to inform their decision-making.

Ward panel meetings were not the only forums in which SNTs communicated findings from KIN surveys. Over half of the sergeants interviewed fed KIN analysis back to the community in other ways, usually via team newsletters. One sergeant showed an example of a chatty, informal newsletter regularly sent to KIN members to enable them to disseminate key messages to their own sectors of the community. Another sergeant included 'before' and 'after' photographs in his team newsletter to visually display how the team dealt with problems in the ward (e.g. graffiti on shop shutters, unkempt areas on estates) many of which were raised by KIN members.

Communication between SN sergeants and analysts around the KIN process seemed problematic. For example, only one sergeant reported directly tasking the analyst to conduct any specific work around the KIN survey. It seemed that most sergeants simply returned their surveys to the analyst with minimal or, in most cases, no instructions around the type of information they were interested in<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, while interviews with sergeants indicated that KIN analysis was being utilised by SNTs, the majority of analysts interviewed were unsure if, or how, their work was being used due to a lack of feedback. They seemed interested in examples of how the KIN and KIN analysis was used and felt it would be useful to be informed of this regularly, both in terms of job satisfaction and creating an even better product for SNTs. Limited communication between SNTs and analysts was also raised by Williams et al (2006a) who felt that feedback on analytical products was critical in order for analysts to understand the impact their products have and where improvements are needed<sup>10</sup>.

#### *What does the KIN contribute to the work of SNTs?*

There was a consensus amongst sergeants interviewed that the KIN made a positive and useful contribution to the work of their SNT. The KIN was seen as an information source and method of disseminating information to the wider community and provided regular ongoing contact with specific individuals, some of whom may be gatekeepers to sections of the community that police may have previously struggled to engage with. The KIN also contributed to assessing performance of SNTs (one sergeant described it as a “benchmark for how the team is doing”), increasing understanding of where officers are and aren’t being seen and where the public think they should be. In addition, KIN members sometimes provided support to police officers at community and other meetings.

To one sergeant interviewed, the KIN was a “...checklist to ensure that the SNT are doing the right thing and getting it right”, while another viewed it as a “reality check on the ward” He felt that as KIN members lived, worked and socialised in the ward they were better placed than police officers (who were usually in the area only for the duration of their shift) to know what was going on. He felt that the police often didn’t give enough credit to how much information the community hold and that speaking to local residents was “the way forward”.

There was concern from one sergeant that the KIN process made only a limited contribution to the work of his team as “people often question statistics”. This comment perhaps suggested dissatisfaction with the contribution of KIN analytical products rather than the whole initiative as the sergeant went on to describe how he often used the KIN as a “template for mediation” between different parties in the community. Interviewees generally reported how the KIN contributed positively to the work of their team. As one sergeant stated “...without KIN [the team] couldn’t do anything. It contributes information, problems and solutions. The KIN is key to the work of the SNT”.

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<sup>9</sup> Reasons for this were not clear from the interviews conducted. It is possible that sergeants are unaware of the type of analysis available or how to request it.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 4.

Analysts interviewed clearly recognised the value of the KIN survey to the work of SNTs. One analyst viewed it as a starting point for conducting further analysis and research and felt that it promoted “bottom up, community led” working within the SNT. However, analysts also expressed a number of frustrations with the survey, the way it was conducted and the data it produced. There was a sense that KIN analysis could contribute much more to the work of SNTs if these concerns were addressed. Analysts most commonly mentioned KIN survey questions stating that they were unspecific, too open ended, difficult to code and in some parts duplicated each other. There was also concern that the survey contained some performance related questions that were inconsistent with the aims of the KIN survey. One analyst commented how the broad questions in the KIN survey often resulted in problems being raised that were outside the remit of police work (e.g. overflowing rubbish bins, lack of parking spaces) and was concerned that this may raise expectations of what the police can do and then damage confidence when they cannot deliver. Previous research has highlighted how essential it is to manage community expectations and how failure to do so can lead to frustration and risk of disengagement<sup>11</sup>. Analysts queried whether other partners should be involved in the KIN survey process. As one stated “the centre needs to consider what the survey is for. Is it purely police related or multi-agency...?” If the latter, analysts felt there should be closer working with other agencies both to conduct and analyse surveys and deal with the issues raised.

Many analysts interviewed felt that the average KIN sample size of 30 people was too small to conduct any meaningful analysis. One felt that it would be “more productive...to do more surveys but to survey less frequently”. Analysts and stakeholders interviewed often questioned the skills of SN officers to conduct KIN surveys. As one analyst stated “they don’t know how to ask questions correctly or probe to get useful information”. It was felt that more training and guidance should be offered to SN officers around how to carry out KIN surveys. They felt this, along with better use of the map included within the interview schedule, would produce more useful data for analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> Mistry, D. (2007) *Community engagement: practical lessons from a pilot project* Development and Practice Report 48 London: Home Office

## Innovative use of the KIN

Interviews with sergeants identified a number of examples of how the KIN process has been used innovatively. A selection of these is set out below:

- Sergeant A worked with one of his KIN members, a local estate agent, to produce a SN information pack which is given to every person who buys or rents a property in the ward.
- Sergeant B has a busy market within his ward. A number of traders are part of the KIN and had identified rising crime and ASB in the area. The SNT have planned to conduct high visibility patrols in the market to establish whether this has an impact on levels and perceptions of crime. The team will conduct a pre and post operation KIN survey to evaluate how successful the operation has been. Depending on the outcome they are planning to use this information to support a business case for a team of dedicated officers in the market area.
- Sergeant C has commissioned a member of his KIN to survey her neighbours regarding an alleyway behind their houses. This will contribute to a business case to fit gates to prevent recent rising crime and ASB in the alleyway.
- Sergeant D has the local vicar as part of his KIN. After a recent murder on his ward the sergeant arranged to attend the vicar's Sunday service, enabling local residents to speak to him about their concerns. The success of this has led to the sergeant regularly attending services. The sergeant's KIN also includes residents from both affluent and less affluent estates positioned opposite each other. Residents from the more affluent estate have worked with the police to fund projects for residents on the less affluent estates. To date they have paid for a computer suite, a strip for the local football team and are now interested in funding diversionary projects for young people.
- Following a number of problems on a local allotment, sergeant E arranged for his team to get their own plot. The benefits of this have been more than simply being able to monitor activities in the allotment. The SNT have the opportunity to engage with allotment owners, use the plot as an observation point for the open areas surrounding the allotment, have linked in with local businesses to provide tools and other materials and are involving local school children in tending to the allotment as part of their studies.
- A member of sergeant F's KIN highlighted how poor lighting in his road was contributing to crime and fear of crime. The KIN member contacted other concerned residents and the sergeant arranged a meeting between them and the council street lighting department. The council is now addressing the issue. This example illustrates how KIN members themselves can join together to tackle problems in their area.

- Other examples of how sergeants used their KIN include telephoning members to keep them informed of SNT operations, involving KIN members in distributing newsletters and utilising KIN members as 'rumour managers', informing them of accurate details of local events and asking them to disseminate this to the community to avoid circulation of incorrect stories which may unnecessarily heighten fear of crime. One sergeant interviewed allowed his PCSOs to manage the KIN process. This gave PCSOs responsibility, promoted community engagement and freed up officer time to deal with other issues.

## Summary of findings

### *Purpose of the KIN*

- Community engagement tool
- Two-way communication process between police and community
- List of contacts with significant people in the community
- Method of highlighting actual and perceived crime/ASB
- Sometimes used to understand police performance issues
- While all sergeants had other methods of engaging with the public, the KIN was seen as one of the most useful

### *Make up of KINs*

- Usually between 30 and 40 KIN members
- Different KIN members often serve different purposes e.g. disseminating information, gatekeeper to another community or access to resources
- Variety of different groups represented on KINs including businesses, schools and faith groups
- Some KINs do not fully represent the community. SNTs have faced particular challenges recruiting young people to KINs
- Analysts felt that more guidance should be made available to SNTs to ensure their KIN is representative
- Analysts were concerned that a sample size of approximately 30 KIN members could not fully represent the community

### *Conducting KIN interviews*

- Interviews were usually conducted every six months however some sergeants preferred to conduct them more frequently while others had not conducted any surveys to date
- The survey rota system arranged by some analysts seemed to work well, reminding sergeants when to conduct a round of KIN surveys and avoiding overloading the SN analyst and researcher
- Sergeants felt the map included in the KIN survey was useful, however analysts felt that better use could be made of it during interviews
- The KIN interview was used as an opportunity to feed back information and publicise the work of the SNT

### *KIN analytical products*

- Surveys were usually returned to the SN analyst. Some analysts felt that time consuming data inputting was not an appropriate task for them or the SN researcher
- Analysis was used to inform tasking and tailor shift/patrolling patterns
- Although half of sergeants interviewed sent KIN analysis to their ward panel, there was little specific information around how this was used
- Half of sergeants and analysts interviewed felt that KIN analysis informed ward panel decision making

### *Communication of KIN findings*

- Half of sergeants communicated findings from KIN analysis back to their ward panel
- Sergeants also often fed back findings from KIN survey analysis within SNT newsletters
- There was little communication between SN sergeants and analysts in terms of tasking to analyse the surveys or feedback on how useful analysis was

### *What does the KIN contribute to the work of SNTs?*

- Sergeants interviewed unanimously felt that the KIN made a positive contribution to the work of their SNT
- The KIN was viewed as an information source and means of disseminating information, a method of engaging regularly with key people in the community and a means of accessing sections of the community, who police may have previously struggled to engage with, though gatekeepers
- Analysts recognised the positive contribution of the KIN survey but expressed some frustrations with the questions included and the lack of guidance and training for SN officers around how to properly conduct surveys

## Moving forward – making even better use of the KIN process

- Having the right people: Ensuring the right people are part of the KIN is crucial to how useful the process can be. As the name suggests, the process is about having a network of ‘key’ individuals and these are not necessarily just the ‘usual suspects’ who engage regularly in police-community initiatives. The KIN list should be regularly revised to ensure appropriate membership and efforts made to involve young people, who were highlighted in this research as underrepresented within KINs.
- Training: Sergeants interviewed generally felt that training around the KIN process was not required as community engagement represents a core part of everyday SN policing. Conversely, analysts felt that both themselves and sergeants needed better training and guidance around how to conduct KIN interviews, how to probe interviewees to produce more detailed, useful answers and the types of analytical products that can be generated.
- KIN interview schedule: Many analysts interviewed felt that the MPS should revisit the survey questions to ensure they are still fit-for-purpose. There was concern that questions were too vague and open-ended, difficult to code, repetitive and allowed too much scope for non-crime/ASB related issues to be mentioned. Both sergeants and analysts interviewed felt that questions should focus more exclusively on SN, rather than general policing. There was also concern that the survey was too long and that this may deter some members of the community from taking part. It was felt that more focused questions and removing duplication could address this.
- Ward map: The ward map included within the KIN survey was considered to be very useful but had the potential to be even more so if further information was obtained from interviewees. Analysts often complained of meaningless ‘dots on maps’ and felt that more useful analysis could be conducted if the SN officer or PCSO obtained more information from the interviewee. A sergeant suggested relating some of the survey questions directly to the map. As well as providing more meaningful geographic data for analysis, this may assist in reducing the overall size of the survey.
- Feedback on analytical products: The benefits of feedback from sergeants to analysts around the products they generate are three-fold: analysts could develop a more relevant, fit-for-purpose product, sergeants would receive analysis to better meet their local need and, perhaps most importantly, the community would benefit from more informed SNT and ward panel decision making. The issue around lack of feedback seemed to indicate a lack of communication between SN analysts and sergeants in general. Analyst-generated KIN survey rotas seemed to work well, reminding sergeants when to commence the interview process and reducing the likelihood of the analyst and

researcher being overwhelmed with survey returns. Analysts may be able to use this process as an opportunity to introduce themselves to the sergeant and become more engaged in the KIN process.

- Involving other agencies: KIN surveys often highlight an array of non-crime/ASB related issues such as overflowing rubbish bins and insufficient residential parking facilities. While these issues undoubtedly affect quality of life, the local SNT are not necessarily best placed to deal with them. It is important to ensure that processes are in place to share responsibilities outside of police control with the relevant authority and to keep the public informed of this joint working.
- Getting the community working together: A good KIN can result in more than just a two-way flow of information between the police and community. It can introduce key individuals to each other who may then become self-sufficient, facilitating community action with minimal support needed from the SNT. This can free up officers to focus on engagement with other sections of the community.

## **Concluding remarks**

Community engagement is a core function of SN policing and sergeants and analysts interviewed for this research recognised the KIN process as a vital tool to engage with key individuals in the ward. Sergeants interviewed attached great value to their KIN as a contact list of key people to exchange information with. There was a sense from many sergeants that the KIN survey was perhaps one of the less important aspects of the KIN process overall, but interviews with analysts indicated that this was usually the only stage in which they became involved. It seemed that without the survey, analysts would know very little about KINs in their borough. The lack of communication between SN sergeants and analysts was clearly evident, even from the limited number of interviews conducted as part of this research. Involving analysts in other stages of the KIN process such as recruitment, information gathering and providing more feedback around analytical products would help to improve this. Better communication and joint working between the SNTs and SN analyst could assist in more informed decision making, high quality evidence led initiatives and an even better service in general for the communities the SNT serves.

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<sup>12</sup> Melissa Wagstaff is a research analyst in the MPA Planning and Performance Unit. The author would like to thank the MPS Safer Neighbourhoods Team for their advice and support throughout the project, especially Chris Hemstead for his assistance in arranging interviews. Particular thanks also go to the MPS Strategic Research Unit for their ongoing advice, Laura McCartney, Jane Owen and Gemma Deadman for assistance with data inputting and support throughout the study. The author would also like to thank the peer reviewers and MPA editorial board for their helpful and insightful comments. Above all, the author would like to thank the sergeants and analysts who agreed to be interviewed – without them this study would not have been possible.

## Appendix One

### Key Individual Network (KIN) research – Sergeants' interview schedule

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is conducting a short piece of research into how Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) use their Key Individual Network (KIN). The research will consist of semi-structured interviews with SN sergeants and analysts in 16 wards across 15 boroughs, randomly selected by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Strategic Research Unit (SRU) based on crime rates, ACORN classification and SNT roll out date. The research aims to inform the central SNT around how KINs are being used, the types of analytical products produced and collect any examples of good practice in the use of KINs. The research will also complement the MPS SRUs process evaluation of the SN programme.

The interviews are completely confidential and your name will not be used in the final report, however a list of the wards included in the research will. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer that is fine.

#### **Interviewee details**

Interviewee name:

Borough name:

Ward name:

Date of interview:

Time of interview:

Location of interview:

Q1. Do you have a KIN?

*If required, explain what a KIN is. Some SNTs may operate something resembling a KIN but not refer to it as a KIN. Also probe here whether teams have different KINs for different communities/problems. If so, need to bear this in mind throughout interview.*

Yes  (Go to section A)

No  (Got to section B)

**Section A**

Q2. What do you think the purpose of the KIN/KIN survey is?

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Q3. How many people are in your KIN?

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Q4. What sorts of people are in your KIN? Do they reflect the demographic make up of your ward? If not, why?

*Probe if any analytical products were used to ensure the KIN was representative.*

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Q5. How do you/did you recruit people to your KIN? Do you/did you have any problems recruiting?

*Probe if there is/was any particular group/section of the community that is/was difficult to recruit. Have you overcome the problems? If so, how?*

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Q6. How often do you conduct KIN interviews?

*If more than one round of interviews conducted, probe if the SNT was able to capture the same interviewees. If no interviews conducted in the last six months ask why. Would be useful to find out who conducts KIN interviews and where (e.g. in the home, place of work, street etc)*

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Q7. Do you use the central KIN survey or does your team have a locally adapted version? If team uses a locally adapted version, what does this provide that the central survey does not?

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Q8. Do you use a map within your survey (for respondents to plot problem areas etc)? If not, why? If so, is the map useful?

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Q9. Do you feedback information about the work of your SNT (both KIN and non-KIN related) within KIN interviews? If not, why?

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Q10. Have you or any other member of your team (officers or analyst) received any training about KIN and what it is used for? Was this useful? If not, why? What training/information would have been useful?

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Q11. Who analyses the KIN surveys?

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Q12. Do you know if any other information (e.g. local crime figures, CAD data) is analysed alongside KIN surveys? How?

*This question may be more appropriate for analysts, however would be useful to gauge sergeants' understanding/knowledge of this. Make note of the other information sources (e.g. crime figures, CAD data) that KIN is analysed alongside.*

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Q13. Are there are any specific analytical products generated using KIN information? Please provide details.

*Find out if the sergeant tasks the analyst to generate any KIN analysis products.*

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Q14. Is KIN analysis sent back to your SNT? How does the SNT use this information? If not sent back, why?

*Aim to find out how analysis is used e.g. tasking, priority setting, performance management. Would be useful to get some specific examples of how KIN analysis has been used.*

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Q15. Is KIN analysis sent to the ward panel? Do you know how the ward panel use this information? If not sent back, why?  
*Would be useful to get some specific examples here of how KIN analysis has been used.*

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Q16. Do you/any of your team attend the ward panel?  
*Make note of who attends the panel (e.g. sergeant, police officer, PCSO, analyst). Also note whether a member of the SNT chairs the panel.*

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Q17. How much does KIN analysis actually inform decision-making (either by the ward panel or SNT)?

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Q18. Is KIN analysis fed back to the KIN and/or community? How? (E.g. a newsletter, community meeting, informal chats) If not, why?  
*Make clear in answer whether information is fed back to whole community or just KIN and how.*

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Q19. Does the information you receive from KIN interviews differ from other information you have? How?

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Q20. What does having a KIN contribute to the work of your SNT?

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Q21. How does KIN fit into the whole SN programme?

*For example, the KIN may be a key method of feeding back information to the community or may be the basis of community meetings. This may indicate how important the KIN is to the SNT/how much it is used.*

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Q22. Are there any other ways of using KIN (including analytical products generated) that you think would contribute more effectively to the work of your SNT?

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Q23. Can you think of any other (innovative?) ways that your SNT has used the KIN?

*Try and obtain examples of good practice here if possible.*

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Q24. Is there any other information about KIN that you would like to mention?

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**Section B**

Q25. Do you know why your SNT does not have a KIN?

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Q26. Do you use any other formal ways of engaging with key members of your ward? If so, what are these? How is the information used? Who is it shared with?

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Q27. Do you think a KIN could be of use to your SNT? How? If not, why?

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**Thank you for your co-operation**

## Appendix Two

### Key Individual Network (KIN) research – Analysts' interview schedule

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is conducting a short piece of research into how Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) use their Key Individual Network (KIN). The research will consist of semi-structured interviews with SN sergeants and analysts in 16 wards across 15 boroughs, randomly selected by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Strategic Research Unit (SRU) based on crime rates, ACORN classification and SNT roll out date. The research aims to inform the central SNT around how KINs are being used, the types of analytical products produced and collect any examples of good practice in the use of KINs. The research will also complement the MPS SRUs process evaluation of the SN programme.

The interviews are completely confidential and your name will not be used in the final report, however a list of the wards included in the research will. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer that is fine.

#### **Interviewee details**

Interviewee name:

Borough name:

Ward name:

Date of interview:

Time of interview:

Location of interview:

Q1. How many of the SNTs in your borough have a KIN?  
*If required, explain what a KIN is. Some SNTs may operate something resembling a KIN but not refer to it as a KIN. Also probe here whether teams have different KINs for different communities/problems. If so, need to bear this in mind throughout interview. For SNTs who do have a KIN see Section A. For SNTs who do not have a KIN see Section B.*

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## Section A

*SN analysts cover all SNTs in the borough. Answers may be general or referring to specific SNTs. Where possible, obtain further details/make note of this.*

Q2. What do you think the purpose of the KIN/KIN survey is?

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Q3. Do people on the KINs in your borough reflect the demographic make up of the SNT areas/wards?  
*Probe if any analytical products were generated (e.g. ward profiles) to assist this.*

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Q4. Who analyses KIN surveys?  
*Presume it is just the analyst; however there may be other staff involved.*

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Q5. How often are KIN surveys analysed?  
*Is it only a one-off when interviews are carried out or is the information accessed on an ongoing basis for different tasks?*

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Q6. Have you received any training about KIN (e.g. what it is used for, the type of analytical products it can produce)? Was this useful? If not, why? What training/information would have been useful?

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Q7. How are you tasked/what brief are you given to analyse KIN surveys? Does this differ by SNT?  
*E.g. to identify priorities, understand levels of safety, satisfaction with policing. Also find out if/how they analyse maps.*

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Q8. What analytical products do you generate from KIN? Are these standard products or do they differ by SNT?

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Q9. Is any other information (e.g. local crime figures, CAD data) analysed alongside KIN surveys? How?

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Q10. Is KIN analysis sent back to the SNTs? Do you know how the SNT uses this information? If not sent back, why?  
*Aim to find out how analysis is used e.g. tasking, priority setting, performance management. Would be useful to get some specific examples of how KIN analysis has been used.*

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Q11. Is KIN analysis sent to the ward panels? Do you know how the panels use this information? If not sent back, why?  
*Would be useful to get some specific examples here of how KIN analysis has been used.*

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Q12. Do you attend/have you ever attended a ward panel?

- Yes (attended one-off)
- Yes (attend regularly)
- No (never attended)

Q13. How much do think KIN analysis actually informs decision-making (either by the ward panel or SNT)?

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Q14. Is KIN analysis fed back to the KINs and/or community? How? (E.g. a newsletter, community meeting, informal chats) If not, why?  
*Make clear in answer whether information is fed back to whole community or just KIN and how.*

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Q15. Do you get any feedback (either from the SNTs, wider MPS or community) about the KIN analysis you produce? What sort of feedback is it?  
*Make note of who the feedback was from.*

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Q16. Does the information from KIN analysis differ from other information/analysis used by the SNT? How?

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Q17. Is there a difference in the way SNTs in your borough use their KIN (either generally or the analysis)?

*Aim to find out whether some SNTS have a better understanding/utilise their KIN more effectively. Details of this may have become clear throughout the interview.*

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Q18. What does KIN analysis contribute to the work of the SNTs?

*For example, it is a formal mechanism for capturing people's concerns or it is a way to involve the community in the priority setting process.*

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Q19. How does KIN fit into the whole SN programme?

*For example, the KIN may be a key method of feeding back information to the community or may be the basis of community meetings. This may indicate how important the KIN is to the SNTs/how much it is used.*

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Q20. Are there any other ways of analysing KIN that you think might contribute more effectively to the work of the SNTs?

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Q21. Can you think of any other (innovative?) ways that the SNTs in your borough have used the KIN?

*Try and obtain examples of good practice here if possible.*

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Q22. Is there any other information about KIN that you would like to mention?

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## **Section B**

Q23. Do you know why the SNTs in your borough do not have a KIN?

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Q24. Do the SNTs have any other formal way of engaging with key members of the ward? Do you analyse this information? How?

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Q25. Do you think a KIN could be of use to the SNTs in your borough? Is there any additional analysis that you could carry out if there were KINs?

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**Thank you for your co-operation**