



**CAJ**

**Committee on the  
Administration of Justice**

*CAJ's response to the Northern Ireland Policing Board on*

**Review of Chapter 13: Policing in the Community of the  
2008 Human Rights Annual Report**

**June 2009**

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**Promoting Justice / Protecting Rights**

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The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) was established in 1981 and is an independent non-governmental organisation affiliated to the International Federation of Human Rights. CAJ takes no position on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and is firmly opposed to the use of violence for political ends. Its membership is drawn from across the community.

The Committee seeks to ensure the highest standards in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland by ensuring that the government complies with its responsibilities in international human rights law. The CAJ works closely with other domestic and international human rights groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights First (formerly the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights) and Human Rights Watch and makes regular submissions to a number of United Nations and European bodies established to protect human rights.

CAJ's activities include - publishing reports, conducting research, holding conferences, campaigning locally and internationally, individual casework and providing legal advice. Its areas of work are extensive and include policing, emergency laws and the criminal justice system, equality and advocacy for a Bill of Rights.

CAJ however would not be in a position to do any of this work, without the financial help of its funders, individual donors and charitable trusts (since CAJ does not take government funding). We would like to take this opportunity to thank Atlantic Philanthropies, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Hilda Mullen Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Oak Foundation and UNISON.

The organisation has been awarded several international human rights prizes, including the Reebok Human Rights Award and the Council of Europe Human Rights Prize.

<b>Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Ltd</b>
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**Promoting Justice / Protecting Rights**

*Winner of the Council of Europe Human Rights Prize*



Peter Gilleece  
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10 June 2009

Dear Peter,

**Re: Review of Chapter 13: ‘Policing with the Community’ of the 2008 Human Rights Annual Report**

Thank you for inviting the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) to comment on Chapter 13: ‘Policing with the Community’ of the 2008 Human Rights Annual Report as part of the Human Rights & Professional Standards Committee’s Programme of Work.

The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) is a non-governmental human rights organisation. With respect to policing, CAJ works to ensure that policing structures, policies, practices, and conduct conform to best practice and internationally recognised human rights standards. CAJ is mindful that police reform takes a long time, involves transforming power relations in society, and requires changes in police culture, structures, doctrine, and practice. CAJ recognizes the positive changes that have occurred within the PSNI, most notably to policing structures, as well as the deficit of trust that still informs community-police relations.

With respect to *Chapter 13: Policing with the Community*, CAJ welcomes the work of the PSNI Policing with the Community team within the Criminal Justice department to make policing with the

community (PwC) the core function of the PSNI. CAJ recognizes the very difficult job of policing and supports the ongoing transition which is supported by the PSNI Community team's objective of developing a programme of work to embed PwC throughout the Police Service.

Ultimately every level of policing is about human interaction. This reality directs policing towards the importance of social relations and shared processes in the formation of a policing service. Only by taking an interactive view, and recognizing the crucial importance of interpersonal and communal relations to the police organization, will the new ethos of 'policing with the community' diffuse throughout the entire organization and embed in the fabric of PSNI.

With respect to policing CAJ operates from two foundational assumptions: police culture is the single biggest challenge to police reform; and, a progressive, professional, and high quality police service can result only from the commitment, involvement, and partnership of the wider community. Following from this CAJ offers the following recommendations and observations:

- 1. The PSNI Community team's programme of work should identify bureaucratic practices, procedures, and processes which hinder the implementation of PwC as the dominant style of policing.** Bureaucracy delimits the space for communities to participate in policing and marginalizes the very communities a policing service should be in partnership with. Additionally the Community team's programme should detail initiatives to educate existing officers and staff, not only new recruits, to new ways of working.
- 2. The PSNI needs to enhance its capacity to work in a more complementary fashion with the community and voluntary sector.** At the moment public meetings and initiatives are driven solely by police imperatives, attitudes, and beliefs; are shaped by bureaucratic ways of working; and are infused with a police point of view. A complementary relationship would ensure that communities are involved from the very beginning in the design, implementation, and on-going delivery of all facets of policing. The core function of the police service is not policing *for* the community but policing *with* the community. By extension such endeavors should not be undertaken to 'tick boxes' but to consolidate new policing relations and build sustainable partnerships.

3. **Sustainable partnerships balance results with process and relations.** In collaborative efforts how the work gets done and how people interact is as important as the accomplishment of tasks or the achievement of goals. This is distinctly different from heavily bureaucratized ways of working which stifle relations and individual creativity to disproportionately emphasize effective and efficient performance above collaborative processes and associations.
4. **A major impediment to police-community relations is the deficit of trust.** As a matter of priority, the PSNI needs to be seen to be making a concerted effort to work *collaboratively* with key stakeholder groups *outside of formal bodies*. This would involve meetings, discussion, and debates to encourage the building of relations and to develop police-community networks independent of bureaucratic processes. This is of particular importance in those communities most impacted by the conflict and a legacy of economic deprivation. In these areas, community groups have deep roots in the community and possess organic knowledge and extensive expertise. Such groups are rich resources with a unique skill-set finely honed from years of dealing with a wide range of issues which impact traditionally working-class communities. The working manner of the PSNI with these community-based groups will be taken to indicate how the police feel about the community in general.
5. **Terminology that is narrowly defined in line with a police perspective is anti-community in practice.** For the purposes of policing documents and public bodies (DPP's, NIPB) the meanings of foundational words – such as accountability, transparency, and community, have been largely defined by the police and do not reflect a community-based perspective. Whilst the words themselves may sound progressive their interpretation in practice fails to integrate the point of view of the community and consequently results in terms of reference which are 'community blind' in practice. Without the incorporation of a community-based perspective, and the full and equal involvement of the community sector, the nature and essential qualities of terms will simply reflect the thinking and perspective of the PSNI. Processes which are meant to engage communities in *partnership* but which use definitions which do not reflect the beliefs, attitudes, and values of communities effectively silence public voices. This does

not lead to a shared understanding, collaborative work, or joint ownership of processes. In this sense terminology serves to disempower and marginalize communities and therefore is anti-community in practice.

6. **Community participation in public bodies is not the same as full and equal engagement.** Following from the above point, processes which are defined in line with a police perspective lead to working relations, practices, and procedures which often result in police empowerment but not community empowerment. Policing with the community should be first and foremost about changing power relations between a *policing service* and the wider community. By extension, ways of working that are not mutually agreed do not lead to the collaborative, interdependent relations suggested by a police and community partnership.
  
7. **Language usage should reinforce the new collective dispensation of policing with the community.** Language is a conveyor of relation and meaning, and provides a salient indication of how people comprehend and participate in their worlds. This was perhaps most apparent during the conflict in the significance attached to place names and the labelling of people and their actions. By extension, language can be a significant indication of political identity and as such, express significant elements of culture and orientation. By way of example, command staff are inclined to refer to police personnel as “my officers”. While perhaps understandable, from the community perspective such language is taken as a tacit indication of a wider possessive “discourse of ownership” which reflects a different political sensibility than the ethos of policing with the community.

In conclusion, questions of social relations – how people relate to each other and work together, how they collaborate on processes, how they treat one another and how they communicate, are central to translate ‘policing with the community’ from an aspirational goal to daily policing practice.

Yours sincerely,

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