

The Government has now published, under your leadership, a new ten year strategy entitled 'Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain'. In terms of policing strategies, what sets this new initiative apart from the previous strategy of the mid-1990's 'Tackling Drugs Together'?

I think the difference is that in 'Tackling Drugs Together' the police's contribution was simply to have a drugs strategy. All forces had to have one and all forces got one and then their performance was measured by the number of

And whilst it was not always easy to identify, what weight of drugs were seized (the police service was not as well organised as the Customs in doing that) those were in my mind process measures. They were clear and relatively simple.

I think what most Chief Constables, and particularly those who are interested in drugs saw, was that, 'yes we arrested them', and 'yes they went to court' and many of them went to prison but they came out and did just the same again. So many Chief Constables, even before the last *Tackling Drugs Together*, were investing in diversion programmes that were linking with treatment programmes, were linking with probation. This current strategy endorses that and because it's government policy it actually becomes a given. That is what the police service will do because the performance measures are different. The process ones are still there, it is still important that you arrest people, but the end product of that arrest must be seen as reducing the availability of drugs. That is really the challenge I suppose - not just for the police service but the other agencies that work with it.

I think the other thing is the corporate performance indicators. The indicators under *Tackling Drugs Together* for the police service were single indicators. The new strategy clearly gives the police service shared indicators. How does the police service contribute to reducing the recidivism caused by drugs, the criminality caused by drugs? Its contribution is much greater than just saying we've arrested them, let somebody else deal with them. We are into caution-plus schemes, we are into arrest referral schemes, we are into counsellors in police cells, we are into the police service seeing an individual in a much broader way than some have done in the past.

In developing this new focus for policing strategies, your report talks of stifling illegal drugs on our streets. Will this mean the creation of, for example, any new police squads or formations?

In short, the answer to that is no. It would be for the police service to decide how it organised itself. My job will be to set targets for

the nation, and the targets will be set corporately against some of these aims. But they will be set individually within the different agencies, in this instance, the police service, the crime squad, the National Crime Squad, the National Criminal Intelligence Service. Their performance will be measured not just corporately with other agencies but individually. Those targets will reflect the high level performance measures and targets within the strategy. So there are going to be more levers than there were in the past in terms of how the police service and how the squads associated in policing (Customs obviously as well) operate.

What it also says is that we need, particularly where those agencies are separate ones, clear, unambiguous areas of operation so that they are not duplicating or competing against each other to deliver against the targets. From my point of view, I want to know what the distribution network is within the United Kingdom. We know the routes within Europe: we are not as well-versed with what they are in the United Kingdom.

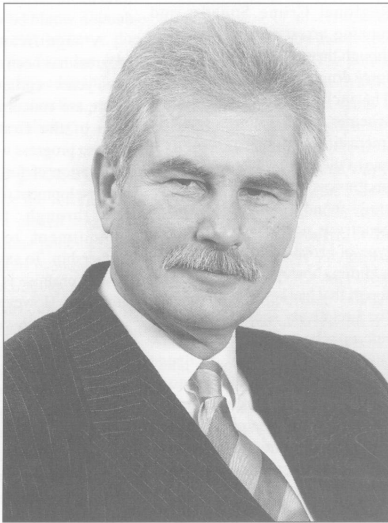
How the National Crime Squad and the police forces judge those and how they react and respond to the information they get from that information and intelligence will be up to them. My job isn't to say 'the police service should do this'. My job is to advise government that these are the actions that these agencies ought to take. These are the targets that I feel comfortable with and it's important that they feel comfortable too, and that the targets are achievable. How they get on with it in a way is up to them. But at each year end, I have to report to government on the progress against the national plan of action and therefore I would have the opportunity to intervene if I felt that there needed to be some adjustment of guidance.

You say there are more levers today than in the past. Is there one significant lever that has evolved as far as policing is concerned?

No, I think with the complexity of public service and particularly the independence that the police service has from both central and local government that it is important that you give people

Drug-buster

Keith Hellowell the UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator, talks to David Kidd-Hewitt.



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arrests and the amount of drugs that police forces seized. Those are fairly crude measurements. They are easy measurements because they are quantitative. Some of them I think have been counter-productive and I'll tell you for why. Even when we moved towards more dealers, a substantial majority of those who were arrested for dealing tended to be small-time dealers, user dealers, so that the figures were in a way self-fulfilling. Consequently each force did have a greater arrest rate each year.

“Someone falls foul, gets into the system, and is brought before the police. It isn’t just because it’s the first time in possession of drugs or whatever, that we caution them. It is an assessment of that individual. If it’s cannabis and it’s unlikely they are going to have it any more and they shared it in the school playground, then a straightforward caution with parents could well be the end of it. If it’s possession of Ecstasy, but it is clear, on a proper assessment, that this person is addicted to heroin or some other drug, a straight caution is a waste of time.”

a range of levers. The first one with this government policy is that resources will shift from dealing with the consequences of crime through drugs and the consequences of drug addiction to preventing it. One or two people have said to me ‘well, the police service won’t be happy with that because they’ve been locking them up’. My reaction has been, ‘but look why the police service was set up. The primary role of the police service is to prevent crime’. What we are talking about is preventing it happening and these schemes are built around treatment. This inter-agency stuff that the police service is doing, is bang in the centre of prevention. When you look at the police service, the amount of money it spends on prevention is negligible overall. So the strategy doesn’t need to be a lever in a way. The service is saying ‘we want to prevent it’. It is much easier to prevent it than dealing with it afterwards.

I think money is another lever. Government money on drugs will be behind the strategy. That does not mean, and this is an important point, that the Government’s going to say ‘we’ll pull a big chunk out of one organisation and put it into another’ because they are all hard-pressed. What it does mean is a change in emphasis. It means getting involved in ways which mean those people arrested are not going to re-offend. It means disrupting the market places in which they operate. It means contributing to information and intelligence.

On the international side, coming back to the stifling of availability on the streets, all our efforts

have been compartmentalised. Whether it is crop suppression, crop substitution development and control of precursor chemicals, money seizure - all that - we need to clearly put the link back to the major aim and that has not been in place before. We need to look at ways in which we are effective and not just cost-effective. We know, for example that 90% of our heroin is grown in Afghanistan, we know that 80% of it is processed in Turkey. By and large we know the routes through which those drugs pass to get to here. By and large we know where the precursor chemicals come from. We are beginning to know where the money is going - not just the profits from it but to fund it. I think we have got to be one step ahead rather than saying the way to deal with it is taking out the dealers. Yes that is part of it but the strategy in dealing with heroin needs to be an overall strategy in which the police service has a part to play, with other agencies, and that again is what I am looking at. I want to make some impact. I want to reduce that availability.

One of your declared strategies is to help young people to resist drug misuse. What will be the police’s role in this?

The police are one of the agencies that are involved right across all of the areas of the strategy. I think that the general view of the police service - and I’ve only been out six months but certainly when I was in it - was that the base education for life skills ought to be done in schools and in the home and ought to be done by

parents and by teachers. There are one or two chief constables - and they are one or two - who believe that the police should have total responsibility in schools and that it isn’t the teacher’s responsibility - it is theirs, and they have invested a lot of time and a lot of energy in doing that. But when I left, the consensus was that teaching children in schools was the responsibility of the schools and that police responsibility, their commitment, was to helping, intervening, giving inputs as and when required. The perceived wisdom is that they are involved in this area because it is their primary duty to prevent crime, to keep communities safe.

So, at one end of the spectrum there are one or two chief constables saying ‘we will take on that responsibility. We will fund it, we will put police officers in schools and all drugs training in schools is done by us’. At the other end of the spectrum, ‘It’s up to the schools if they want to call us in. We’ll come in, but basically it’s their issue’. The strategy says that it should be the responsibility of schools. We should lay down a trail of information for children as young as five which is helping to build their resistance, helping them to make their own choices, reasoned choices, obviously, hopefully, in the right direction. But helping them with the skills to resist not just the pressure which they are going to get, but the temptation to get involved.

Are the police going to be torn in their perceived need to deal with anti-social behaviour some of which is drug-related, whilst also having to recognise that many of these people are in fact victims and need help rather than low tolerance policing?

I think in terms of those children highly at risk. We can see them. As a police chief I used to walk out on the beat regularly and they were second generation, the same nuisance families. Government policy is that we need to intervene really early to prevent them getting on that road, to reduce the risk of getting involved and the police service does have some part to play in that. The police service runs clubs and sets up football teams and has holiday schemes. All of those things whilst not directly related to the drugs strategy, do in

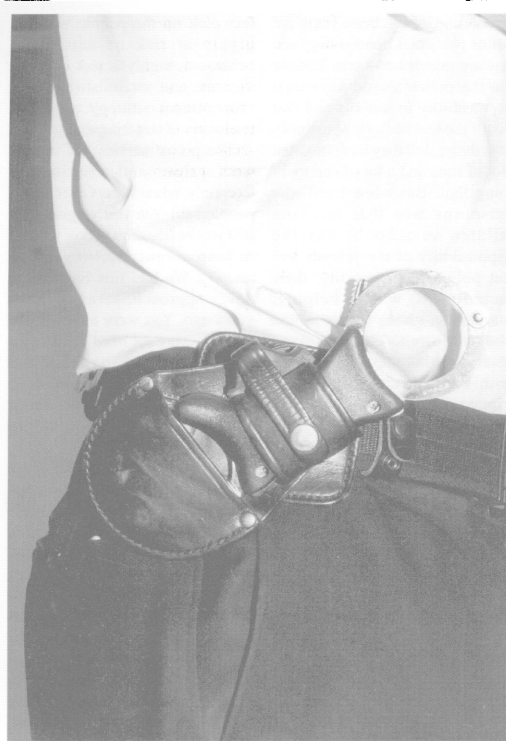
fact pick up the people who are highly at risk of anti-social behaviour, highly at risk of being victims, and victimising others. Government strategy on social exclusion is targeting that group.

The police service has to deal with crime and criminality. Certainly, when I was Chief, some people said ‘Oh you’ve gone soft and you’re liberal because you are talking about treating these people.’ We had this hawks and doves approach, seven or eight years ago. You were either in the hawks - they all need locking up and that’s the way you deal with it - or the doves - no, we ought to treat them and the criminal justice system shouldn’t play any part in it.

I felt as a Chief Constable that the service generally bridges that gap. Yes, it is the police service’s job to try and stop it happening in the first place. Inevitably it’s going to happen: deal with it, arrest those people, have ways to deal with it because the public does need that safety. But rather than seeing it as a single stream - we’ve arrested them, it’s up to court to deal with it - do what many forces are doing and make an assessment on arrest. Assessment for caution, assessment for caution plus, assessment for arrest referral - still make the assessment about whether or not the person needs to go through the criminal justice system because of their level of criminality.

Someone falls foul, gets into the system, and is brought before the police. It isn’t just because it’s the first time in possession of drugs or whatever, that we caution them. It is an assessment of that individual. If it’s cannabis and it’s unlikely they are going to have it any more and they shared it in the school playground, then a straightforward caution with parents could well be the end of it. If it’s possession of Ecstasy, but it is clear, on a proper assessment, that this person is addicted to heroin or some other drug, a straight caution is a waste of time because they feel they’ve got off with it and they are out again. Putting them into the criminal justice system without anything else, again, is a waste of time because they are going to come back through the system. So those assessments need to be more sophisticated, and they are in some police areas but not in all.

What’s the severity of the



crime? Is it one that we will caution? If we do caution, do we need people to go and link with treatment? Do they need advice? Do they need a straight caution? If they have been here before do we need to put them in the criminal justice system anyway to safeguard the community? With the Drugs Treatment and Testing Orders, we now have another option, an opportunity to say 'Yes you've done this but we still feel that going to a treatment programme is the best way for you'.

With the new Prison Service guidelines and guidance on drugs, if they go to prison because it's important, because of the severity of their crime or the number of times they've recommitted crime, they are actually treated there as well. So it's not 'instead of', it's a sort of dual track.

Now in addition to that I'm also asking the police service to

disrupt the market places in which they operate - because it does put some dealers off, puts some casual users off. It is overall a more sophisticated strategy.

Are you asking too much of the police? This is a tremendous agenda you are giving them.

I don't think so. The phenomenon of drugs involves more than a single agency approach: that's where the hawks and doves went wrong. People would have said 'well it's up to the police to resolve all this'. Well the police cannot resolve the social conditions in which people live, they cannot resolve the circumstances in which they're brought up. They cannot resolve the poverty and hopelessness. But they can contribute in some ways and many police services do.

At least 50% of all crime in this country now is a direct result of

drugs. So it's right at the heart of the work of the police service. The police service is recognising that the simplistic approach of arrest and court does not resolve the problem. So it's saying 'we need to branch out and look at this in different ways. All the agencies involved need to help each other if we are going to resolve this'. That's the way the service has been going.

I would be very surprised if any Chief Constable says 'that's what we are doing already'. I think they are doing it to varying degrees. And I don't think any Chief Constable will say 'what the devil's all this?' I don't think you'll get a backlash of Chiefs.

Will all of this need to feed through to a new training regime for existing and new police officers?

Basic training is being reviewed to reflect more closely the needs of the police service in the 90s. I think it was last reviewed 10 years ago. But also, *Tackling Drugs Together* put an onus on the police service to train in relation to drugs and a number of training courses have been set up at different levels. I was fortunate that West Yorkshire Police was one of the training schools that did it. So, the training facilities are being developed as we move forward. But what is important is that training isn't just enforcement training, in disrupting drugs market places. The important thing is bringing in support units within communities to keep them clear once you've got the dealers out.

I think in the past sometimes we've had a sort of focus on *let's have a go at the dealers. We've got them all: let's go away.* The strategies need to be more holistic. So training isn't just as easy as, *we'll train them to lock them up*, or do undercover operations or whatever. It is the strategy and management of some of these social issues that for me is the big challenge as we move into the next millennium. Not just singly within an organisation but corporately across those organisations. That's why Drug Action Teams are really at the heart of the way forward.

So moving into the next millennium, the vision outlined in this White Paper is of

a healthy and confident society. Are we on target to create this confident society?

I think society's not that bad you know. If you read some of the apocalyptic reports you would believe that we lived in an awful society, with all young people committing crime and everybody addicted to drugs. The reality is this ain't a bad society. We've got a lot going for us. I think we are moaners. We moan because I think we expect so much and we have high anticipations because we are a developed civilised society. It brought it home when our water ran dry and everyone ran around moaning. Yet there are still nations, as we see tragically on our televisions, where there is no water, there's no education, there are no health services. I'm proud to be British and I'm proud to be from Yorkshire. It is a good society and I do think it is a confident society. I think that this strategy and the other government strategies to build a better Britain are going to have a positive impact and I think that our starting level isn't that bad, to be honest. We are just going to get better.

When you submit your first annual report next March, what is the one thing you would like to be able to say at the beginning?

I don't know. I think I'll have to wait and see what all the feedback has been. I think that the thing I would like to say, (and I have felt it so far and I have felt it today, and felt it from the police service and Customs and all the agencies I have spoken to) is that people are prepared to buy into the new strategy because they believe it will make things better. ■

Keith Hellawell is the UK's first ever Anti-Drugs Coordinator. He spent 36 years in the police service and was Chief Constable of Cleveland and then West Yorkshire Police. He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 1990. Mr Hellawell is a former member of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Footnote:

1. *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*, Cm 3945. The Stationery Office, April 1988.

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