



Engaging with your Police and Crime Commissioner

What is a PCC?

Your police and crime commissioner (PCC) is the official elected by the public within your police force area to hold the police to account and represent the views of the local population.

PCCs have the power to set the priorities of the police, hire and fire the chief constable and set the budget. The PCC does not have the power to get involved in individual complaints or get involved in what are known as 'operational' issues. In other words, they can set the priorities of the police, help develop general policies and set the budget but they cannot get involved in how the police do their job. PCCs are civilians and are not serving police officers although many of them have some sort of experience of being a police officer or working in the criminal justice system.

You can find out who your PCC is by visiting the 'Your Area' part of our website at: <http://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/>

How can I influence my PCC?

One of the best ways to influence the work of the PCC is to get them to address your concerns in the Police and Crime Plan. This plan sets the priorities of the police force and once something is in the plan then the police are bound by it and it is very hard for them to ignore that issue. Police and Crime Plans are usually revised every financial year leading up to the April of that year and the PCC's website should have all the necessary details outlining how you can take part.

Can I meet my PCC?

Yes you can. PCCs are very keen to attend community and public meetings so you might be able to meet your PCC at an event or even invite them to one you are arranging. This is also a good way of getting them to pledge to review certain policies or bring about changes. For example, in direct response to questions during public question and answer sessions, the PCCs for Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and the West Midlands all pledged to review how the police conduct and record stop and search powers.

Many PCCs are also keen to show that they are doing their job properly and hold official meetings in public and welcome people to attend. Young people can have a huge impact on these meetings because not that many youth attend anyway and their presence is always felt. Details of meetings can be found on the PCC's website.

What if my PCC does not seem interested in my concerns?

There are other ways to grab your PCC's attention. Many of them use social media and you can organise an online campaign. More traditional and effective routes include the following:

Police and Crime Panels

You can also speak to local councillors who sit on the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) for your area. PCPs are responsible for scrutinising PCCs' decisions, priorities and how they use the budget but they do not have the powers to force him or her to do anything. However, they are a 'moral voice' and can embarrass a PCC into taking notice of local concerns. They regularly hold meetings with the PCC and these are also open to the public to attend. Some of them dedicate some time in the meeting for you to ask your PCC or chief constable questions and this is a good way of being able to question them directly and have any pledges officially recorded to then use for your campaign. You can also arrange to meet with any member of the panel, talk to them about your concerns and ask them to raise it at the next meeting. Your police and crime panel should have a website with the details of its members, meetings schedules and the agenda and minutes of future and previous meetings. Your PCC website should also have a link directly to the panel's own site or you can search for it online.

Advisory Groups or Panels

Some PCCs have set up special groups or committees designed to enable members of the public to advise them on policing issues which you can try to get yourself on to. Some groups deal with broad issues such as anything affecting black and minority ethnic communities but some are set up to scrutinise very specific issues like how stop and search is used. Some PCCs have set up youth panels consisting entirely of young people but others have appointed a young person or adult whose job it is to go around communities and engage young people on the issues that matter to them. All the relevant details for these groups and roles should be on the PCC's website if they exist for your area.

Local Council Groups

Local councils have scrutiny committees made up of councillors and some of them investigate crime and policing issues. They are different to police and crime panels because they are not part of the PCC structure but can also act as a moral voice and can help bring attention to issues relevant to you. The best way to find out about these committees is by browsing through your local council's website.

Your Police Force

PCCs can be more comfortable to talk compared to police officers but you may find it easier to talk directly to the police. In this case, there are a number of ways you can do this either by joining Independent Advisory Groups hosted by police officers or by attending meetings of your local policing unit or local neighbourhood team. All of the details should be on your police force's website but you might find it easier to first use the www.police.uk website and type in your postcode to find out which local policing unit or neighbourhood team your area falls into.

Where else can I get help for my campaign?

Organisations like StopWatch can provide guidance and data for you to use in your campaign. Our website is a great first point of information and has regular briefings and up-to-date information on various police powers which you might find useful. Our website is www.stop-watch.org and you can also email us at info@stop-watch.org.