

More police on the streets (July 2004)

Help the Aged has welcomed the proposal by the Home Secretary to fund an increase in the number of police community support officers on our streets. It is planned that by 2008, there will be a total of 24,000 community support officers in England and Wales 'to patrol the streets and offer reassurance to the public'. The aim is to bring about a situation in which people worry less about becoming a victim of crime and are less likely to feel that anti-social behaviour is a problem in their area.

The Charity is calling for the Home Secretary and Police Chiefs to encourage 'purposeful patrolling'. It is essential that these new officers: find out the places that older people are afraid to go to because they feel unsafe, and patrol in these areas; stop anti-social behaviour, such as riding cycles on the pavement, making excessive noise after dark, graffiti and littering; and are ready to respond quickly to calls and complaints from older members of the public.

We would be pleased to collaborate with police forces to ensure that the needs of older people are met. Research undertaken by Help the Aged shows that many older people are anxious about crime, particularly those who live in high crime areas, live on their own, are in poor health or have been a victim of crime themselves. All our surveys show that older people want more police on the streets.

Alan Burnett