

Annex 2

Home Office advice on the balanced appointment objective (made available March 2012)

Legal Clarification

The Police and Social Responsibility Act specifies that Police and Crime Panels must be balanced in terms of geography, politics and the skills, knowledge and experience of panel members. Clarification on the specific legal position, and what this means for local partners in making their decisions on panel membership is set out below.

Ministers have been clear that the best panel arrangements will be those which are locally determined. In many cases achieving balance will be challenging, especially where perceived inequalities cannot be redressed through additional co-option of elected members. In recognition of this, the Act specifically states that the balanced appointment objective must be secured "as far as is practicable". However, local authorities will need a robust rationale for their final membership and be able to justify their decision to the public and their peers.

Geographical balance – "represent all parts of the relevant police area"

Councillor membership of the panel should reflect the geography and population size of the force area. In the first instance, the legislation seeks to achieve this by having every local authority in the area represented on the panel.

Political balance – "represent the political make-up of the relevant local authorities (when taken together)"

Councillor membership of the panel, when taken together, should reflect the political balance of the force area. Local authorities could look to achieve this, in the first instance, by considering the proportion of councillors from each political party across the force area. This approach is the closest to the spirit of the legislation and reflects the approach taken to police authority membership.

Skills, knowledge and experience

All appointments to the panel, of both councillors and independents, should be made in the context of ensuring that the panel has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to discharge its functions.