The Fulbright, the US Government’s flagship international exchange programme was established under legislation introduced by Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946; it is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those from other countries. The US / UK Fulbright Commission offers up to three grants per year to active UK police officers and staff – chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential- to conduct research, pursue professional development, exchange ideas and/or assess best practice affiliated with any US institution for a period of three to five months.

Detective Chief Inspector John Paterson, Strathclyde Police, was awarded the 2012 / 13 Scottish Police Research Fellowship. John spent 3½ months as a Visiting Fellow with the Programme in Criminal Justice at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. During his time in the US, John worked closely with the Boston Police Department and the many State and voluntary organisations operating in the City; sharing the Scottish experience and finding out how Boston deals with the challenges of youth crime and violence.

As well as lecturing to Faculty and students at Harvard University, John also delivered presentations to staff and students at Suffolk University’s Business School, George Mason University’s Centre for Evidence Based Crime Policy, US Department of Justice and the Police Foundation. The following is a summary of John’s project which was based around partnership approaches to tackling youth crime, violence and disorder.

**Tackling Youth Crime, Violence & Disorder: A Partnership Approach**

The overall aims and objectives of this Fulbright Police Fellowship project were to share best practice whilst looking at ways to build upon work already carried out in respect of reducing offending by young people and consider the scalability and transferability of programmes so as to inform the policy making process and practical application of related strategies in Scotland and the United States. To achieve this, reference was made to the pioneering work carried out by Professor David Kennedy at the Centre for Crime Prevention & Control, John Jay College, New York and Professor Anthony Braga at the Harvard Kennedy School in respect of the Boston Ceasefire Project in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A key part of the
research was to find out how these early programmes have developed in terms of sustainability and viability, and how they have helped to shape and inform wider criminal justice policies and operational procedures.

Through visiting and working with the Boston Police Department and the many State, private and voluntary organisations operating within the City, this Fulbright Fellowship looked at how front line services are delivered and how operational activity links into and integrates with other police, government and partnership initiatives to reduce youth crime and offending to ensure, where possible, that such activity is not undertaken in 'silos' but as part of a wider crime reduction strategy.

Youth crime and violence have been clearly identified at national level as serious problems that can have lasting harmful effects on victims, their families, friends and the wider community. During the period of research, it was evident that the goal for youth crime and violence prevention policies and programmes in both countries is simple - stop it from happening in the first place. But this is easier said than done, as the solutions are often as complex as the problem. Prevention, intervention and diversion strategies should aim to reduce / remove factors that place young people at risk of committing crimes and / or acts of violence and promote factors which protect those who are at risk. In addition, these activities need to recognise and address all types of influences on young people; be it individual, relationship, community or societal. Effective strategies are necessary to promote awareness about youth crime and to foster the commitment to social change.

That said, discussions about ways to prevent youth crime and violence - one of the oldest studied fields - continue to advance rapidly. Many prevention tools, programmes and strategies have been developed, implemented and evaluated with a significant number found to be effective at stopping crime, violence and related behaviours among youth. The use of such evidence based programmes has been shown to deliver positive results in many communities.

With regard to the City of Boston, many people will say that the so called ‘Boston Miracle’ and associated reductions in youth crime and violence in the City were solely the result of Operation Ceasefire.

Ceasefire was most certainly ground-breaking in its day – but that day was some 18 years ago. Motivational factors for committing crime, the composition of gangs, policing tactics and partnerships have developed over the years; today Boston is much more than Operation Ceasefire. Boston’s Mayor, Police Commissioner, Executive Director of Public Health, Public Schools Superintendent, District Attorney and many other public, private and third sector leaders across the City continue to show the way in developing new and innovative
practices aimed at tackling youth crime and violent behaviours. Examples of this work include:

- Partnerships Advancing Communities Together (PACT) (Multi Agency Initiative to Identify & Tackle the Most Violent Offenders in the City)
- Youth Violence Prevention Plan (Comprehensive City Wide Plan for Tackling Youth Violence)
- Violence Intervention & Prevention (Community Focussed / Led Violence Prevention Initiative)
- Violence Intervention Advocacy Programme (Hospital Based Support)
- Operation Homefront (Police, Education & Faith Based Partnership)
- Operation Nightlight (Police & Probation Home Visits to Monitor Compliance with Curfews etc)
- Streetworkers Programme (City Funded Direct Outreach – Linked to PACT)
- Safe Streets Teams (Location Based Problem Solving Teams)
- Youth Connect (Social Workers Based in Police Stations)
- Youth Options Unlimited (Education & Employment Guidance & Support)
- Family Justice Centre (Co-located, Multi-disciplinary Support to Victims of Family & Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Rape / Sexual Assault, Hate Crime, Human Trafficking)
- Adult & Youth Re-Entry Programmes (Multi Agency Re-Integration)
- Start Strong Initiative (Prevent Teen Dating Abuse)
- Defending Childhood Initiative (Prevent Child Exposure to Violence)

The purpose of this project was not to add to the academic debate about what causes youth crime and disorder, but rather capture some of the learned thinking and operationally effective activities that have helped to reduce the levels of youth crime and violence in communities. In this regard, it is hoped that as the police service and central / local government bodies develop new ways to work in partnership with the many third sector organisations operating throughout the country, some of the aforementioned innovative practices and ideas can be replicated in Scotland and perhaps other places across the United Kingdom.