



Title: Developing Crime Reduction Plans: Some Examples from the Reducing Burglary Initiative (Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 7)

Authors: Liz Curtin, Nick Tilley, Mark Owen and Ken Pease

Date published: 2001

Funding body: Home Office: Policing and Reducing Crime Unit

Document available to download at:

http://www-staff.lboro.ac.uk/~ssgf/KP/2001_Crime%20Reduction%20Plans.pdf
(accessed July 20th 2010)

SCS topic headings: Monitoring and Evaluation, Safety in Public Spaces (ASB), Environmental Safety (ASB), Home Safety, Offending Management

[This document is a GUIDANCE DOCUMENT based on REVIEWS of effective intervention approaches and practice.](#)

Summary of the intervention's aim

This report has been produced as a guidance document for all practitioners and local policy makers planning crime reduction projects. The lessons were drawn from demonstration projects with three partnerships in order to generate burglary reduction plans.

It describes the stages involved in preparing a crime reduction project plan, providing examples from three case studies. Each displays different burglary problems and this enabled various kinds of analysis to be undertaken and interventions to be adopted. Each area exhibited differences in terms of geography, socio-demographic make-up and the nature of offending.

It is hoped that the report will provide useful, practical guidance to those involved in preparing crime reduction plans.

NB. The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

Outcomes

The order of the document's discussion takes the reader through the process of developing a plan. The following discussion draws on three project plans, in whose development PRCU worked with local agencies, making use of data that were available locally. The three project sites were chosen because they encompass a range of presenting contexts and problems. The following sections are outlined and use extracts from plans will illustrate what can be done, where appropriate.

- **Identifying populations at high risk**

There are two main ways of identifying populations at high risk. One obvious and convenient method of doing so is to scan geographical areas. Alternatively, there may be 'virtual communities' within an area, i.e. those not defined purely in geographical terms.

- **Using crime and social data**

One of the reasons for using standard geographical areas for finding high burglary populations is that census data and crime data can be fitted to it relatively easily. It can otherwise be more difficult to calculate numbers of burglaries, and numbers of potential victims. Unless **crime records** specify a defining feature of risk (or can be adapted to do so, e.g. by including a 'students' category on a crime report) it will be hard to provide counts of offences fitting a conjectured at risk category. **Census data** and **Police records** e.g. victim attributes. In some areas, **local crime surveys** may supplement what can be achieved with administrative data to identify groups at abnormally high risk.

- **Analysing the nature and source of the burglary problem faced**

Data quality

Whatever other data systems are used, police records will invariably have to be called on. The partial reporting and recording of crime are well recognised. Nothing can be done about this problem in the short time during which plans normally have to be prepared. It will be important to be sensitive to other potential difficulties in police data. These vary by force, but few, if any systems will be without problems of some kind. The analyst needs to look carefully at the data and at how they are recorded to work out the limits to their use, to flag up major uncertainties, and to undertake necessary 'cleaning'.

- **Analysis**

Analysis is always partial. What can be done is confined only by the imagination of the analyst and the thinking of those feeding into the analysis. There is never time to do all the analysis that might, in principle, be done. Choices, therefore, have to be made to get the best out of the data.

Using **analysis software** and the importance of **analysis presentation** is also discussed (page 21).

- **From analysis to strategy**

The kind of analysis for project development described here (intended to produce coherent evidence-based plans) requires a close partnership between practitioner, analyst and policymaker, as follows:

- **Practitioner-** will have a good feel for local issues, and can inform the analysis
- **Analyst-** will have ideas, but can also test and add substance to the practitioner's best hunches
- **Policy-maker-** can work through what plausible, affordable options for prevention are suggested by the close-textured and informed analysis.

The analyst can then check out any additional assumptions smuggled into the proposed strategy. The practitioner can read it critically to add further views on how it might play locally.

- **Defining the project aim**

The project aim outlines the overall project rationale. This should be kept as simple and as short as possible, preferably as a single sentence. While such aims can come in many guises, they should ideally be framed in terms of the desired outcome or effect the project hopes to achieve. Most crime reduction projects will target specific geographic areas, communities or socio-demographic groups. These should also be specified in the aim definition. Examples of project aims might be:

- To reduce domestic burglary in [name of town / wards / beats etc.]
- To reduce domestic burglary suffered by students in [name of town / wards / beats etc.]
- To reduce distraction burglary suffered by residents aged over 60 in [name of town/wards / beats etc.]

- **Defining the project objectives**

The objectives (usually there will be more than one in a project plan) should be clearly related to the overall project plan. For example, if a project is designed to reduce the victimisation of students, then the objectives should provide details of how this is to be achieved. In essence, they are a kind of mini aim that when added together describe the ways in which the project aims will be achieved.

- **Setting up outputs and milestones**

Outputs are measures of the activity conducted during an intervention. These should be simple, measurable activities that provide an indication of how well the project is progressing. As such, they are essential for project management purposes as they allow the project manager to plan how much will be achieved during the life of the project and to assess at the end of the project whether the original plan was fulfilled.

Setting a target percentage reduction probably only makes sense for the project as a whole, rather than for individual elements as there will almost certainly be an interaction effect between interventions.

- **Performance Indicators**

When setting project targets, 'cross cutting' performance indicators may need to be addressed. Multi-agency plans, such as described here, rely on partnerships setting targets rather than individual agencies, and such targets may complicate or conflict with the performance indicators set by single agencies. Ideally, the targets established by multi-agency partnerships should co-exist alongside the performance indicators set by each individual agency.

- **Project monitoring**

Monitoring is more likely to be effective if projects are kept simple, with clear stated aims, objectives and outputs. It is easier to assess whether a project is fulfilling its overarching aim if it is utilising quantifiable measures such as outputs and targets.

- **Achieving sustainability**

Projects funded for a finite period are often felt to limit the potential for sustainability. Examples of improving sustainability include incorporating good lessons into mainstream practice and investing in comprehensive security upgrading, avoiding 'short term fixes'.

- **Developing an action plan**

Charting the key project stages, working out slack project time, delegating particular areas of work to the project team and creating an activity network (i.e. the 'critical path') are all important tasks. An action plan should also place the interventions in a logical order, by working out how short, medium or long term work interacts.

- **Developing an action plan**

Issues around implementation interventions will make up the body of the action plan. Interventions need to be thought about in terms of whether they are short or long term. An intervention that brings early results will boost confidence and hopefully deliver some promising crime figures, for example target hardening. Alternatively, longer term solutions that are more labour intensive and therefore more expensive e.g. offender targeting schemes or offender diversion programmes, will take considerably longer to implement and will not deliver 'quick win' results.

- **Timescales**

The best crime reduction action plans are short, set out clearly and have a timetable attached. It is a good idea to chart the key project stages. Gantt charts are very useful for drawing up daily/weekly/monthly project timescales, working out 'slack' project time and delegating particular areas of work to members of the project team.

- **Costing interventions** can be done in either of two ways:

- ***Overall cost of the project***

- Regardless of whether funding is being sought from external agencies, it is good practice to cost the resources going into a project. This should ideally be divided into two kinds of cost- those which involve using existing or redirected resources within the organisation and those requiring additional resources that would otherwise not have been available.

- ***Monthly/quarterly expenditure profiles***

- Once overall costs have been calculated, these should be broken down into smaller time periods (months/quarters) so that the project

spend can be monitored closely, allowing project managers to identify at an early stage whether the project is heading for an under/overspend.

- **Estimating the time needed to prepare a plan**

It is not possible to determine with much precision how long it should take to prepare a funding bid. This will depend on the quality of the data being used, the familiarity of the analysts with the data-systems being drawn on, the ease with which the analysts can tap into local understanding of the problem, and the complexity of the procedures for agreeing the bid. Here, the authors take fifteen person days as a modal figure. However, this does not necessarily mean that it can be done within three working weeks.

- **A plan preparation checklist** (page 40) may help in ensuring that the most important parts to the bid are completed.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The report as it stands is a mixture of reporting a process in which experience and analysis combine to optimise (a) crime reduction possibilities, and (b) judgements of what looks and feels like a good way of doing things.

- Much can usefully be gleaned through interrogating crime data routinely collected by the police, though what can be analysed varies by force.
- Though the time taken to prepare plans will clearly vary by the nature and extent of the problem, fifteen working days should be sufficient in most circumstances.
- Crime problems are not concentrated only in terms of geography but also in terms of 'virtual communities'. Whilst national research can point to some characteristic high risk groups, and local knowledge can be helpful in identifying other candidates, local research is needed to test out hypotheses about those who are most vulnerable.
- Even where high-victimisation rate populations are defined in geographical terms, there will be substantial variation in risk in sub-areas, where preventive efforts can most usefully be targeted.
- High rates of repeat victimisation, especially in the period immediately after a crime, are common and provide a routine focus for analysis and preventive efforts. Crime risks appear also to be heightened in the short term close by those who have been victimised. This too provides a focus for routine analysis and preventive work.

- Other indicators of heightened risk by place and time can be analysed in terms of available data. Analysis can also usefully be informed by research, common sense and informed local opinion.
- Understanding of high risk populations and of what might be done to reduce risk can be gained by site visits, interrogating data about MOs, goods stolen, and the attributes of victims.
- Different suites of measures will be appropriate, according to the nature of the high risk communities and what leads them to suffer high risks.
- There are various ways of trying to achieve longer-term impact. Their planning requires imagination and thought from the early stages of project development.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The guidance presented here emerged from a number of development visits to three crime and disorder partnerships to help them draw up local burglary reduction plans. Information about strengths and weaknesses in the preparation of bids for funding was also gathered from the first and second rounds of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme's Reducing Burglary Initiative.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request.

Date added to the SCS website: July 2010 (RC)