

New Deal for Communities

The National Evaluation

Research Reports

Crime, Fear of Crime and Quality of Life Identifying and Responding to Problems

Research Report 35

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Those wishing to know more about the evaluation should consult the evaluation's web site in the first instance
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Sheffield Hallam University

**Crime, Fear of Crime and Quality of
Life Identifying and Responding to
Problems**

Research Report 35

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Executive Summary

- the majority of NDC areas have targets to reduce fear of crime. This is not surprising given fear of crimes current status on the policy agenda and the high levels of fear and worry about crime reported in the NDC Household Survey
- this report challenges the centrality of crime fear in shaping individuals' perceptions of the quality of their lives
- the majority of respondents to the NDC Household Survey felt their quality of life was 'fairly good'. Respondents were fairly evenly split between whether they felt the area was a good or a bad area to bring up children. These trends were broadly similar to national trends. While the majority of NDC respondents were 'fairly satisfied' with the area as a place to live, this level of satisfaction was considerably lower than national trends
- perception of crime was found to be important in explaining quality of life. Problems with debt and poor health were more important in explaining levels of self reported quality of life than crime. Perceptions of crime were more important than other factors in explaining satisfaction with the area and whether the area was a good place to bring up children
- when people have a perception of crime as a problem in an area, the experience of crime or worrying about crime does not offer much additional purchase in understanding their quality of life
- because perception of crime appears to be more helpful in explaining quality of life indicators than being a crime victim or being fearful of crime, we believe that shaping such perceptions offers more scope than engaging directly with crime fear
- rather than area crime level contributing directly to self-assessed quality of life, physical disorder is associated with crime level and with quality of life judgements separately. In the absence of direct experience of crime people may 'get their cues about crime from physical disorder cues
- in simple terms, the most direct approach to improving quality of life through crime-related factors is to address area perception, notably level of physical disorder, and we so recommend
- the recommendation to address perceptions of crime comes with two qualifiers. One is that to address such perceptions without changing the underlying reality of crime is to lead people towards lifestyles which place them at greater risk; hence crime reduction itself must go alongside perception change. The other is that crime victims appear particularly sensitized to perceptions of area disorder, and merit particular attention in any thrust towards perception change
- measurement of perceptions of crime can be achieved with survey questions but responding to perceptions and the problems that inform them requires more detailed local intelligence. Examples from the case studies have suggested approaches that can be taken to identify and respond to local problems, and highlighted factors associated with their success and problems to avoid. These included:
 - Community Watch Groups
 - these groups need to consider and address the problems barring participation in high crime areas
 - strong proactive co-ordination is required to achieve and maintain high levels of involvement
 - a detachment from the police can avoid concerns about intimidation and harassment. Small and low key groups can also help members to avoid the dangers of being branded an 'informant'

➤ Neighbourhood Wardens

- wardens enable a rapid identification and response to environmental problems that may inform perceptions of crime
- increasing visibility of wardens will increase the perception of guardianship. This might include initiatives that focus on small areas for a number of days
- given the importance of perceptions of young people causing trouble, wardens have a key part to play in engaging young people and challenging perceptions
- wardens do not necessarily have an enforcement role, if they are not prepared to challenge problem individuals to some degree, concerns and frustrations of the community will be heightened rather than alleviated

➤ Ensuring two way communication and accountability

- wardens and community watch groups must receive sufficient priority from agencies to ensure identified problems are acted upon
- support should be provided for anyone reporting information and feedback given regarding how it was used
- transparency of interventions such as the CCTV scheme in Bradford enables the community to be aware of what is provided and to avoid over expectation
- communication of successes is essential to challenge perceptions but when the message does not match the community's experience; perceptions can be heightened rather than assuaged

1. Introduction

The reduction of fear of crime is well established on the policy agenda, being signalled as a priority for policing and as a Best Value Performance Indicator for local authorities. Those on low incomes, in social sector housing and/or in inner city areas are more likely to state that they are worried about crime. Unsurprisingly surveys report that worry about crime is higher in New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas compared to national averages. The majority of NDCs (37/39) included the reduction of fear of crime as a target in their delivery plans.

NDC Partnerships, no less than academics, have struggled to define fear of crime, and to separate the community's personal fears from their wider and more general emotions, judgements and perceptions. There is a growing body of research to suggest that fear is not a necessary consequence of crime victimisation and that fear is not the most frequently mentioned emotional response to crime. When given the opportunity people are more likely to describe their feelings about crime in terms of anger and shock. Crime fear is also a compound of different insecurities. As a result it is difficult to unpick what is really measured when we ask about fear of crime. This report aims to reposition the fear of crime in the wider complex of insecurities that people perceive or experience in certain environments and to place this within a broader quality of life framework.

Our starting point is that people's assessment of their quality of life is of focal concern. If fear of crime is strongly associated with people's self-assessed quality of life, it is a candidate for attention by those wishing to enhance quality of life.

Identifying those problems that are most damaging to quality of life can inform policy priorities. The report also looks at the ways that NDCs are trying to identify and respond to problems in the community and because so many factors influencing perceptions are outside of NDC control we review ways to counter negative perceptions by communicating successes.

To summarise, the aim of this report is to:

- examine the relative impact of crime variables on quality of life
- outline the approaches NDCs are taking to identify and respond to the issues perceived by the community as a problem in their area
- outline approaches to fostering a flow of communication with the community about local problems and ongoing interventions which prioritises those variables impacting most upon quality of life

2. Methodology

The report contains an analysis of fear of crime and quality of life questions based on responses to a household survey conducted in the 39 NDC areas between July and October 2002. The survey conducted by MORI, interviewed approximately 500 individuals in each NDC, selected randomly. A range of topics were covered including quality of life, housing, health, employment and crime. The survey will be repeated in 2004. Additional analysis has used questions about disorder asked in the 2000 British Crime Survey (BCS). The BCS surveys a nationally representative sample of approximately 20,000 people across England and Wales.

In the three case study NDCs, Bradford, Brighton and Hackney, interviews have been conducted with those responsible for interventions. Neighbourhood Wardens in Brighton and Hackney have been shadowed and their interactions with community members have

been observed. We have attended Community Forums and reviewed minutes of past community meetings.

3. The Relative Impact of Crime and Fear of Crime on Quality of Life

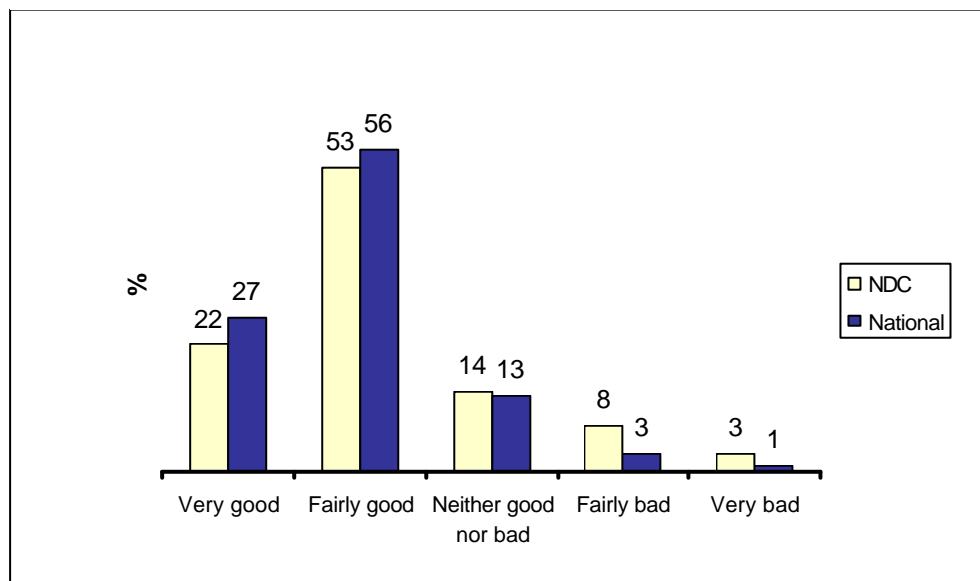
The following section places the impact of crime on quality of life relative to other factors and seeks to explore the relationships between fear of crime, perceptions of crime and victimisation with quality of life in order to further understand the extent to which quality of life can be enhanced through fear of crime and crime reduction strategies. Although research has highlighted that fear is only one emotion associated with crime, it has not been possible to analyse the impact of other crime related emotions such as anger or shock on quality of life as these questions were not included in the MORI survey.

a. Quality of Life in the MORI Survey

Responses to three questions in the MORI Household Survey were used as indicators of quality of life, these were:

- how do you rate your quality of life?
- how satisfied are you with this area as a place to live?
- do you think this is a good area to bring up children?

Figure 1: How do you rate your quality of life?



Figures 1 to 3 compare the results of the MORI survey with findings from national surveys. As Figure 1 above shows when asked about their quality of life the majority (over half) of respondents believed their quality of life to be ‘fairly good.’ This is similar to the national pattern. Figure 2 shows that 18% of respondents in the NDC areas were very satisfied with their area as a place to live while 42% were fairly satisfied. This is very different from the national picture where 50% were very satisfied and 37% were fairly satisfied. Figure 3 shows that 42% of respondents felt that their area was a good place to bring up children, 43% felt it was a bad area to bring up children and 16% did not know (all respondents were asked this question, regardless of whether or not they were parents or guardians). As with self-assessed quality of life the NDC profile in Figure 3 closely resemble the national picture.

Figure 2: How satisfied are you with this area as a place to live?

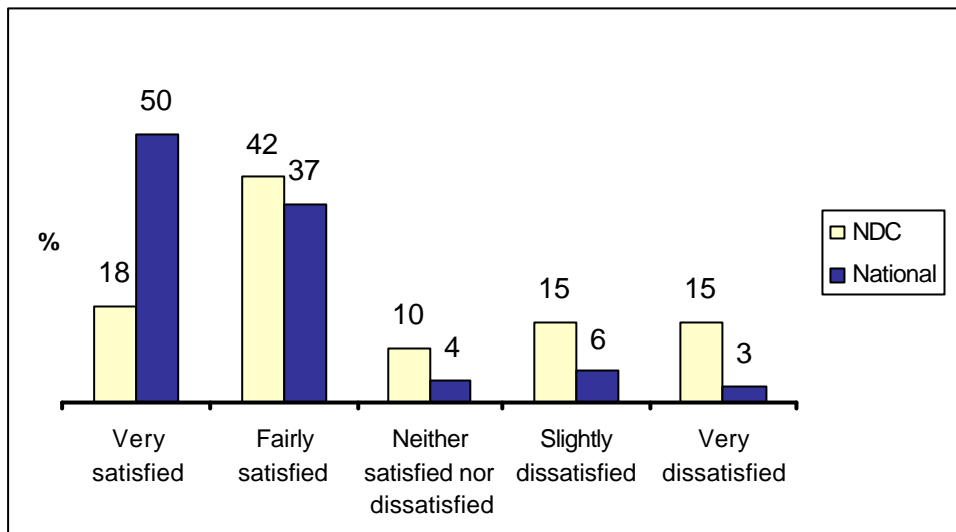
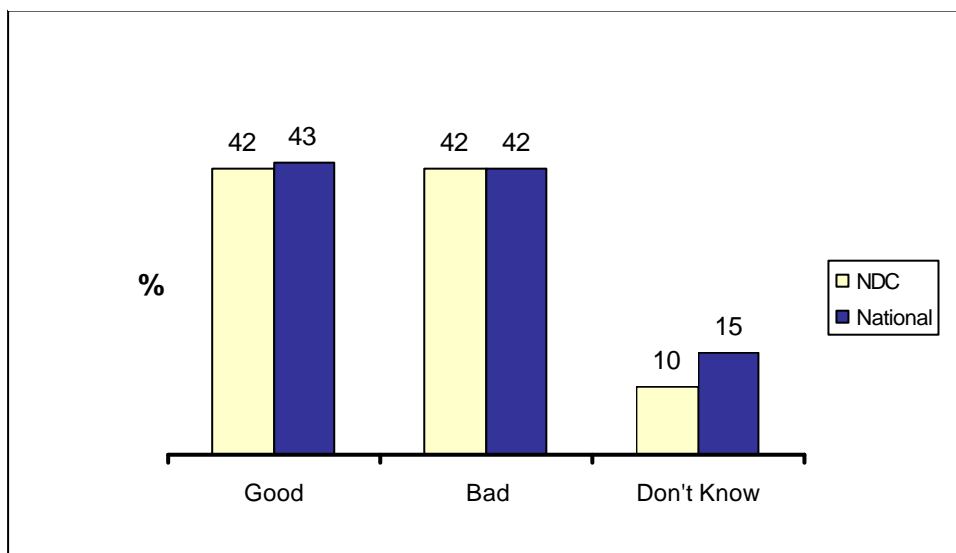


Figure 3: do you think this is a good area to bring up children?



A range of problems included in the MORI survey with the potential to affect quality of life were identified. The impact of these problems on the three quality of life questions was measured. Tables 1 to 3 list these problems ranked according to their impact on each quality of life variable, with the greatest impact at the top of the table. (Each table provides the correlation co-efficient¹ with the respective quality of life variable and gives an estimate of the proportion of the variance explained by each test variable).

¹Correlation co-efficients are a type of statistic used to measure the extent to which two variables are related. Correlations range from 0 to 1 with 0 indicating no relationship and 1 indicating a perfect relationship. A positive correlation shows that high values on one variable are associated with high values on another e.g. the better the quality of accommodation the higher the quality of life. A negative correlation shows that high values on one variable are associated with low values on another e.g. the more burglaries experienced the lower the quality of life.

It is immediately noticeable that in isolation no single test variable explains a substantial proportion of the variance in the quality of life variables; in Table 1 in particular even the strongest relationships can only be regarded as weak.

Table 1 shows that debt and health have a greater impact on self assessed quality of life than crime and that housing a greater impact than more serious crime. Perceptions of minor crime and perceptions of more serious crimes each explained only 4% of the variance in quality of life measures. This was nonetheless more than was accounted for by individual victimisation. Fear of personal crime and fear of property crime explained less than 1%. There were no associations between the overall level of property and violent crime in the area² and quality of life.

When perceptions of crime were examined separately, hooliganism, drug dealing/use, teenagers hanging around, and vandalism had the greatest impact on quality of life. Amongst the crimes in the survey being a victim of burglary and crimes against the person had the greatest impact upon quality of life.

Table 1: Correlations with Quality of Life

	Test Variable	Co-efficient	% variance explained
1	Difficulty with debt	-0.197	3.9
2	State of health	0.183	3.3
3	Minor crime and social disorder a problem in this area	-0.173	3.0
4	Satisfaction with housing	0.160	2.6
5	Crime a problem in this area	-0.129	1.7
6	Trust in authorities	0.121	1.5
7	No. of times victim of crime in the last 12 months ²	-0.119	1.4
8	Physical disorder/lack of facilities a problem in this area	-0.109	1.2
9	Fear of crime against the person	-0.080	0.6
10	Strong community	0.078	0.6
11	Housing tenure	0.070	0.5
12	Satisfaction with education and childcare provision	0.067	0.4
13	Fear of property crime	-0.032	0.1
14	Age	0.030	0.1
15	NDC Area Violence Prevalence	-0.026	0.1
16	NDC Area Violence Incidence ^s	-0.010	0.0
17	NDC Area Concentration of Burglary ^s	-0.010	0.0
18	Gender	0.009	0.0
19	NDC Area Burglary Incidence ^{ns}	-0.006	0.0
20	NDC Area Violence Concentration ^{ns}	-0.004	0.0
21	NDC Area Prevalence of Burglary ^{ns}	-0.001	0.0

¹ All correlations were statistically significant with the exception of those marked ^{ns}

² Excluding car crime

Table 2 shows that the problems tested explained more of the variation in satisfaction with the area; the strongest correlation of -.356 can be regarded as substantial.

Perceptions of crime were more important in understanding satisfaction with the area than area crime rates and individual victimisation. Perceptions of minor crime and social disorder in the area explained the greatest proportion of variance in satisfaction with the area (13%), followed by perceptions of crime (10%). When perceptions of crime were examined separately vandalism, drug dealing and use, hooliganism and teenagers

² Calculated from self reported crime in the MORI survey

hanging around had the greatest impact upon quality of life (the same problems as for quality of life but in a different order). Perceptions of physical neglect and lack of physical facilities e.g. open space and public transport, (7%) were also important. Fear of crime was less important than perception of crime. Personal victimisation was also low in the table. Debt, health and housing are relatively less important in explaining satisfaction with the area than they were in explaining self assessed quality of life.

Table 2: Correlations with Satisfaction with area

	Test Variable	Co-efficient¹	% variance explained
1	Minor crime and social disorder a problem in this area	-0.356	12.7
2	Crime a problem in the area	-0.314	9.9
3	Physical disorder/lack of facilities a problem in this area	-0.263	6.9
4	Quality of Housing	0.204	4.2
5	Fear of Property crime	-0.174	3.0
6	Fear of Crimes Against the Person	-0.151	2.3
7	No. of times a victim of crime in the last 12 months ²	-0.144	2.1
8	Trust in the authorities	0.127	1.6
9	Age	0.074	0.5
10	Community strength	0.071	0.5
11	Satisfaction with education and childcare provision	0.071	0.5
12	Difficulty with debt	-0.063	0.4
13	NDC Area Prevalence of Burglary	-0.059	0.3
14	NDC Area Incidence of Burglary	-0.056	0.3
15	Health	0.043	0.2
16	NDC Area Violence Prevalence	-0.023	0.1
17	Housing tenure	0.021	0.0
18	NDC Area Violence Incidence	-0.021	0.0
19	Sex	0.017	0.0
20	NDC Area Concentration of Burglary	-0.015	0.0
21	NDC Area Violence Concentration	-0.004	0.0

¹ All correlations were statistically significant with the exception of those marked ^{ns}

² Excluding car crime

Table 3: Correlations with 'A good area to bring up children'

	Test Variable	Co-efficient	% variance explained
1	Minor crime and social disorder a problem in this area	0.433	18.7
2	Crime a Problem in This Area	0.399	15.9
3	Physical disorder/lack of facilities a problem in this area	0.375	14.1
4	Trust in the authorities	0.228	5.2
5	Fear of Crimes Against the Person	0.224	5.0
6	Fear of Property crime	0.210	4.4
7	No. of crimes experienced in the last 12 months ²	0.191	3.6
8	Quality of Housing	0.189	3.6
9	Education and childcare	0.135	1.8
10	Age	0.135	1.8
11	Difficulty with debt	0.113	1.3
12	Community strength	0.088	0.8
13	NDC Area Incidence of Burglary	0.066	0.4
14	Housing tenure	0.062	0.4
15	NDC Area Prevalence of Burglary	0.060	0.4
16	Health	0.057	0.3
17	NDC Area Violence Concentration	0.040	0.2
18	NDC Area Violence Prevalence	0.036	0.1
19	NDC Area Violence Incidence ^{ns}	0.017	0.0
20	Sex	0.014	0.0
21	NDC Area Concentration of Burglary ^{ns}	0.012	0.0

¹ All correlations were statistically significant with the exception of those marked ^{ns}

² Excluding car crime

Again in Table 3 the problems tested produced stronger associations with 'A good area to bring up children' compared to self assessed quality of life. And the table displays a similar pattern to satisfaction with the area.

Perception of minor crime and disorder problems in the area is most important in explaining the dependent variable, an estimated 19%. When perceptions of crime were examined separately drug dealing and use, vandalism, violence and hooliganism, had the greatest impact upon quality of life. Perceptions of crime explain around 16%, physical neglect and lack of physical facilities were again also relatively important (7%). Once more fear of crime appeared more important than experience of crime in explaining this indicator of quality of life. Amongst the crimes listed being a victim of theft, burglary and vandalism had the greatest impact on an individual's view of the area as a place to bring up children.

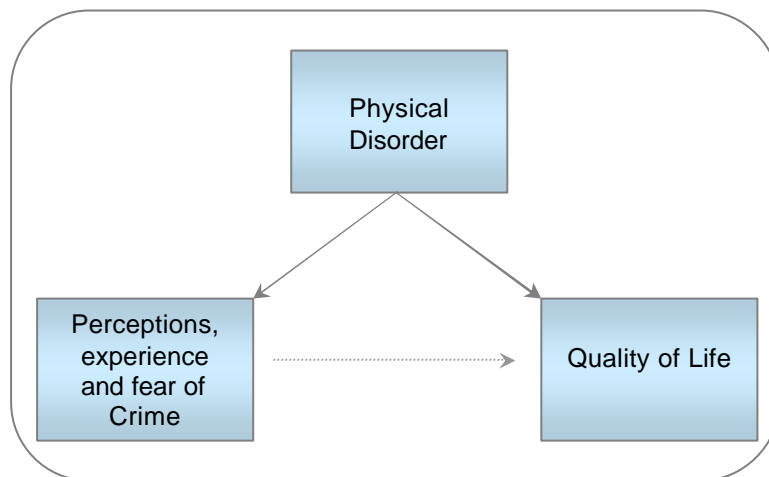
Tables 1 to 3 examined the impact of problems on quality of life 'one at a time.' However in reality such factors rarely work in isolation apparent relationships between two factors may actually be the result of other factors intervening. An identified association between two variables may turn out to be a mere coincidence or chance, or the result of a far more complex process. In order to explore whether the identified relationships were genuine, or whether they were the by-products of other untested relationships the relationship between problems and quality of life we measured again if debt, satisfaction with housing, health, trust in authorities, sense of community, and perception of physical disorder were controlled for. This analysis demonstrated that:

- when perception of crime was controlled for fear of crime did not offer any additional value in explaining quality of life. In other words when people have a high perception of crime as a problem in an area the extent to which they worry about crime does not offer any additional understanding of their quality of life. **This suggests that**

perceptions of crime are far more useful than fear of crime in understanding and addressing quality of life. Perception of crime and its relationship with experience of crime will be explored further in Section B below

- the analysis also found that **all of the correlations between crime related variables and the quality of life variables were reduced or removed when perceptions of physical disorder and lack of facilities in the area were controlled for.** Physical disorder included dogs causing nuisance, litter and run-down properties; facilities lacking included public transport and open spaces. Thus rather than a direct relationship between quality of life and crime this finding suggests that physical disorder contributes to crime and to quality of life separately as illustrated in Figure 4

Figure 4: The links between Physical Disorder, Quality of Life and Crime



Physical disorder is itself influenced by direct factors such as deprivation which impact quality of life.

b. Perceptions of Crime and Disorder

The previous section highlighted that perceptions of crime and disorder are more helpful in explaining quality of life than experience or fear of crime. Perceptions of crime are largely based on experience but we know that the relationship is not perfect. In our previous report we highlighted that some people's perceptions outweigh the risks, while others do not appear to be fearful enough. Research has suggested that individuals have different levels of tolerance to disorder and crime that in turn will influence their response to questions about perceptions. *“One of the differences between high crime and low crime areas seems to be the tolerance of offending with low crime residents less prepared to tolerate crime and incivility in comparison with residents of typically higher crime areas”* (Laycock and Tilley 1995). Finding different perceptions about a problem does not suggest that one must be wrong, or irrational. Perceptions of a problem and tolerance to it will depend on the level of previous exposure to these problems. We were interested in looking at whether experience of crime and socio-demographic background influenced the perception of crime and disorder. However when respondents to a survey covering a large geographical area provide different opinions about levels of crime and disorder it is difficult to determine whether this is the result of objective differences in the level of a problem or different reactions to that problem. This section uses questions from the British Crime Survey (BCS) to test variations in the perception of disorder. The BCS asks both respondents and interviewers to assess the extent to which types of disorder are common in the area around the sampled address. The problems assessed by both are:

- rubbish and litter lying around
- homes in poor condition
- vandalism, graffiti and deliberate damage to property

The possible responses to these questions were:

1. very common
2. fairly common
3. not very common
4. not at all common

The interviewer assessments provide an opportunity to compare two views of the same area, and then to explore the potential influence of socio-demographic group and experience of crime and disorder. The interviewer's assessment is used as a proxy 'objective' baseline against which differences can be compared.

According to both BCS interviewers and respondents the three problems are not very common around the sampled addresses. Of the three problems litter was most likely to be fairly common. Although interviewer and respondent assessments provided broadly the same picture, respondents tended to think that each problem was somewhat more common than the interview had assessed. Possible explanations for respondents' more negative views include the impact that of problems have on respondents (respondents are tying up impact in their responses to frequency). Respondents may also be thinking about a wider area than interviewers. Interviewers are specifically asked to rate the area **immediately around** the houses, while respondents are asked to judge a radius of a 15-minute walk.

Figure 5: Interviewer and Respondent Assessments of Vandalism by ACORN group

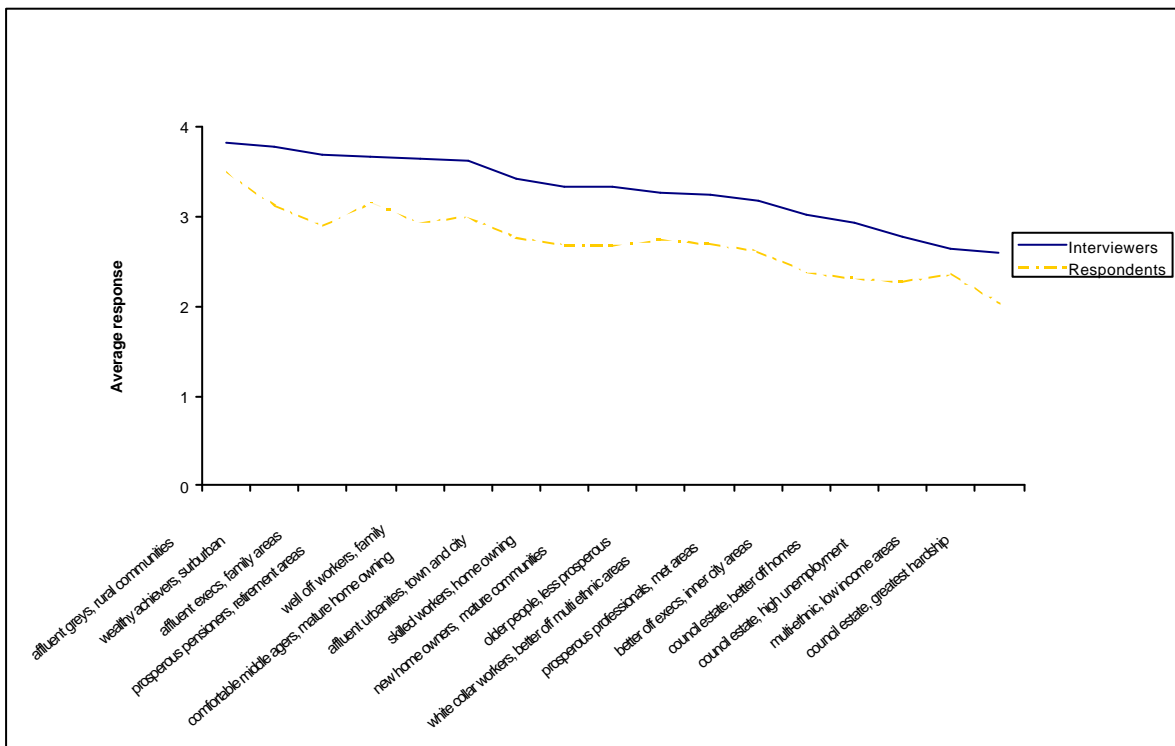


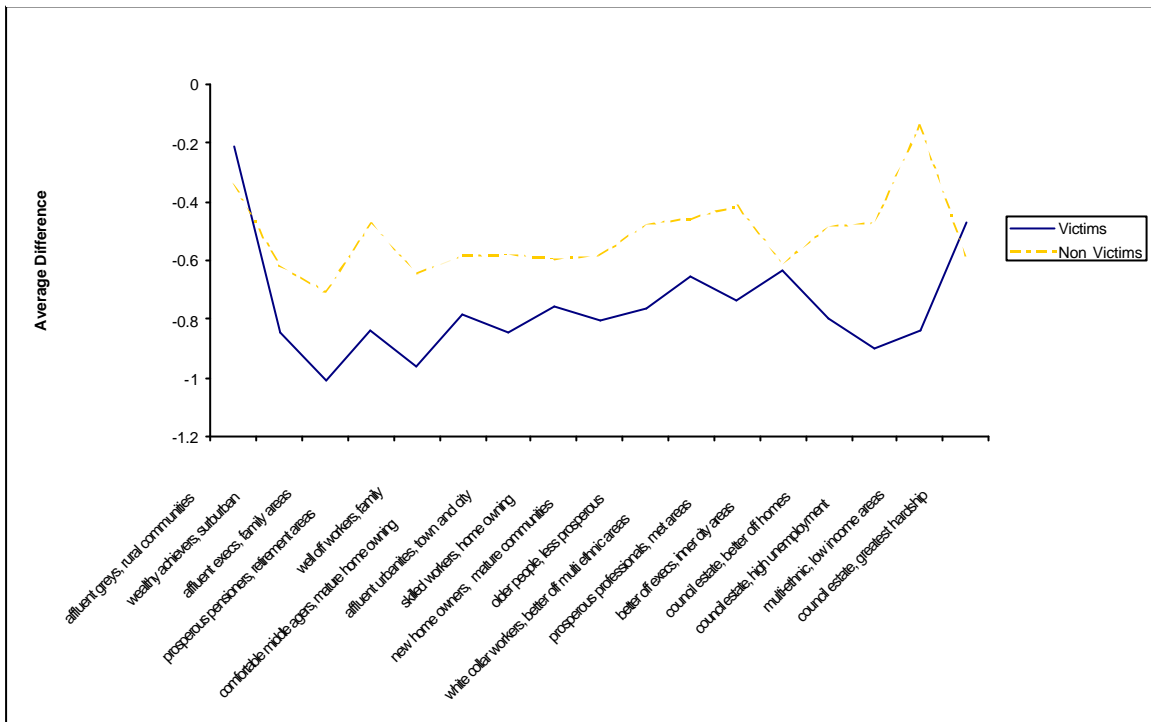
Figure 5 above compares the average response given by interviewers and respondents to the question about vandalism, graffiti and deliberate damage across different types of area³. The chart confirms that across all types of area vandalism was thought to be 'not very common,' although it was slightly more common in the more deprived areas. Respondents tended to be a little more negative but the assessment of interviewers closely matches respondents, again across all types of area. Comparable results were found with 'litter and rubbish lying' around and 'homes in poor condition.' In a previous report we recommended that practitioners should aim to identify which problems are interpreted as a concern in their locality and prioritise them. These findings suggest that the interviewers' ability to get it about right in a wide range of different areas suggests that identifying concerns can be straightforward. In the BCS, interviewers and respondents appear to be using similar cues to assess disorder and there does not appear to be very much local variation in the interpretation of these cues. For practitioners working on the ground this suggests the cues which members of the community use to inform their perceptions of disorder are likely to match their own consequently identification of those problems that inform perceptions and damage quality of life should be straightforward. A visual assessment by an objective observer will be more helpful than expensive surveys asking about hypothetical situations particularly as observations can be linked to the location of the problem, and can be conducted on a routine basis as is the case with neighbourhood warden patrols.

Another finding that was consistent across all types of area was that those with direct experience of crime and disorder were more likely to disagree with the 'objective' assessment of the interviewer, and had a more negative view of the problem. Figure 6 below shows the average difference between interviewer and respondent and compares those who have been a victim of crime or disorder⁴ with non-victims. A negative score on the graph shows that respondents thought the problems was worse than the interviewer did. The graph shows the pattern for vandalism but similar findings were produced for the other variables. We saw above that respondents rated disorder in their area as slightly more common than did the interviewers. The graph below shows that this difference is more apparent for victims.

³ The BCS uses the ACORN classification to characterise different areas in the survey. ACORN categories all postcodes in the UK into distinct socio-demographic groups. The classification developed by CACI is used extensively in market and social research.

⁴ Victim refers to any respondent who has experienced at least one of the crimes included in the BCS survey in 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 6: Difference between Interviewer and Respondent Assessment of Vandalism by ACORN Group and Experience of Crime Disorder



The finding that victims have different perceptions of disorder suggests they may have a heightened awareness as a result of their experience. As suggested earlier, feelings about severity and likelihood of impact may also be tied up in responses about commonality. Given that we found earlier that perception of crime is important in understanding quality of life this finding serves to recommend a victim focus to targeting resources and the provision of victim support. It also highlights the need to adopt rapid responses to the identification and intervention into disorder problems. We would argue that this recommendation should be extended to crime problems for two reasons, firstly because we believe similar patterns would have emerged had an 'objective' baseline of crime been available for analysis, and secondly, because of the ethical concerns with reducing perceptions of an area without tackling the risks.

Summary

Tables 1 to 3 show that crime is but one component of quality of life although it does rank as an important factor particularly in explaining satisfaction with the area generally and as place to bring up children. Perceptions of both minor and more serious crime are particularly important. Fear of crime was found to be less important than perception of crime in understanding quality of life.

The findings suggest that improvements to the physical environment will have an impact upon quality of life and perception of crime. Because perceptions of crime are informed by the physical environment attempts to change crime perceptions without removing the physical cues will be unsuccessful in contributing to quality of life. Improving the physical environment without affecting crime will have an impact on quality of life independent of crime. However because perceptions of crime are also informed by experiences of crime, improving the environment and attempting to change perceptions without altering the risk of crime will be unsuccessful in reducing perception of crime, and the impact on quality of life may therefore be limited. There are also ethical problems encountered when attempting to challenge perceptions of crime without tackling the risk of crime as altered perception could result in more people exhibiting 'risky behaviours.' In the event any

‘unethical’ alteration of perceptions of crime would be short lived, as perception would soon re-align with bad experience.

Consequently we would argue that any attempt improve quality of life through crime reduction should combine physical improvements and manipulation of perception and should essentially be backed up with interventions designed to tackle crime directly, rather than fear or perceptions of crime. This is supported with evidence from the case studies where physical improvements to the area do not appear to have alleviated concerns about crime because clear evidence of crime problems remains.

4. Identifying and Responding to Problems in the NDC Areas

The above sections attempted to frame experience and worry about crime in terms of the impact upon quality of life. It highlighted the relative importance of the impact of perception of crime upon quality of life. It was argued that perception of crime were informed both by experience of crime and by problems of physical disorder which act as proxy cues for crime. The following sections look at ways in which three case study NDCs are attempting to identify and respond to the issues perceived by the community as a problem in their area.

Identifying the problems in each has not proved too challenging, these problems do seem to be fairly consistent across the case study areas, and they correspond to the problems identified in the household survey: young people causing nuisance, drug dealing and vandalism. The more challenging aspect has been obtaining more detailed intelligence on this problem on which to inform action. A further challenge has been responding to the problems in a visible manner, and in communicating progress and outcomes to communities.

a. Community Watch, Restyling Neighbourhood Watch in Bradford

The aim of Bradford Trident Community Watch is to generate “an active partnership with local people, local business and the police” to address concerns regarding criminal activity, nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Described as a “restyled neighbourhood watch” the scheme has directly addressed the implementation problems experienced with many traditional neighbourhood watch schemes. The scheme appears to have successfully secured a high level of involvement from both residents and businesses within a high crime area where fear of intimidation is high and trust in the police is limited. The design of the Bradford scheme has taken account of the specific context of the area and the Trident version corresponds favourably with recommendations stemming from previous evaluations of neighbourhood watch (see Table 4).

The restyling in Bradford began with a name change; ‘Community’ was favoured as it was a term residents actually used, particularly those within Asian communities and it made more intuitive sense to them. The name change also disassociated the scheme from neighbourhood watch as a traditionally police-led scheme. Amongst the police the name change may also have had the advantage of demonstrating that the scheme was something different from those they often view as ineffective. The second key difference is the employment of a non-uniformed civilian Community Watch co-ordinator who acts as an intermediary between local residents and businesses on the one hand and the police and local authorities on the other, the role is considerably more pro-active than is normally the case with traditional neighbourhood watches. The co-ordinator has Trident funding enabling her to spend two days a week within the NDC area.

The civilian co-ordinator also allows a degree of detachment from the police to be maintained. Whilst distinct from the police the co-ordinator is strongly networked with agencies in the area, including the Trident Community Police Team, the Neighbourhood Wardens and anti-crime partnership.

Table 4: Community Watch Groups in High Crime Areas: Strategic Framework

Goals	Characteristics	Level of Police Involvement
Reduce crime	Multi-agency support	Active encouragement of schemes
Increase community control	Strong volunteer coordinators with local support groups in place	Immediate feedback of successes
Decrease tolerance to crime	Small schemes	Engage other agencies
Increase confidence in policing	Active support for victims and witnesses	Rapid response to intimidation
Reduce fear of crime	Active involvement of young people in crime control 'Tailor-made' schemes to reflect local circumstances	Provide detailed crime data

The successful implementation of Community Watch is largely due to the different approaches taken to involve different sections of the community, rather than attempting to catch all with one approach. Business watches (including shop, pub and club watches) and some resident watches are organised along formal lines with regular meetings. However amongst most residents the relationship with community watch tends to be more informal with a combination of very small watch groups and less structured contact including regular 'tea stops.' The co-ordinator's early days in post were literally spent wandering around the area and speaking to people. A short period was spent where both sides 'sussed each other out' the community needed to trust that any information provided would be treated sensitively, but this was also a time where the co-ordinator had to judge the motives of the voices in the community. Understanding that some sections of the community can support crime and anti-social behaviour and that as a consequence involvement with Community Watch might result in alienation or intimidation a number of watches are covert. Details of membership and records of meetings are not kept. Covert watches have been essential in gaining the participation of Asian women who are concerned about crossing traditional family roles.

Both for the safety of the co-ordinator and for those in the community who work with her, a delicate balance has to be maintained between promoting her role while keeping it a secret from offenders. Surprisingly after a year in post this balance appears to have been maintained, residents appear to implicitly recognise the need for secrecy and the co-ordinator commented that she felt 'cocooned' by watch members. The co-ordinator does not live in the area and while her visits are regular they do not follow a predictable pattern. Although the co-ordinator works regularly with the community police team and neighbourhood wardens they do not acknowledge her, should they see her, in the Trident Area. As is so often the case with crime prevention initiatives a significant element of success lies in the personal characteristics of the co-ordinator, of whom the Bradford

Trident Crime Lead commented, "I wish I had five." The co-ordinator feels she has become a friend to members of the community, which has been essential in building the required trust but also requires an extreme level of determination. Residents commented that the co-ordinator is '*approachable*' and not '*stand offish*' and it is clear that she does not represent an authority figure to them.

In its simplest form Community Watch provides a contact point to approach with problems, concerns or intelligence, a known face that is regularly in the area or otherwise is contactable via a mobile phone number. Problems can be dealt with directly or passed onto relevant agencies. The co-ordinator will follow up problems to ensure they are resolved, 'getting results' has been a key element to the development of trust. Information received about crime or anti-social behaviour is treated in strict confidence and will not be used further without the permission of the source. Advice about the process of making a report to the police is provided and witnesses/victims are supported throughout. To this end the co-ordinator works with victim support agencies to provide active support, including through court cases. Where individuals do not wish to make a formal report the co-ordinator can mention intelligence informally to the police. In isolation such information is insufficient to constitute evidence but particularly when corroborated by further sources it can focus police activity. Evidence for anti-social behaviour orders has been gathered in this way.

Crime prevention advice and details of current interventions are disseminated through the community watch networks. Again this varies from structured training to alerts regarding specific criminal modus operandi. These alerts have proved particularly successful against bogus callers. The co-ordinator has recognised that young people are all too often the focus of community concerns. While a small proportion of youths are engaged in crime and intimidating behaviour in most cases concerns are based on misunderstandings and the co-ordinator has attempted to address these perceptions, particularly amongst the elderly. Direct work with young people has been minimal partly because of concerns that young people are less able to treat information, and the role of the co-ordinator, sensitively.

Two-way communication is maintained with the co-ordinator providing feedback from agencies regarding the utility of information provided. The links that have been established with agencies working in the area are essential in informing the community network of the reasons for and outcome of any activity in the area. The coordinator is normally already aware of any initiatives the community police team or neighbourhood wardens are running. Problems have been encountered when specialist teams have targeted the area, for example with drugs raids. Answering queries on these raids had required a little more 'ferreting' for information, but on most occasions the information had been tracked down. Raids are often based to an extent on information received from the community, and acknowledgement can be confidentially returned to sources so they can feel their efforts were worthwhile.

Feedback regarding Community Watch has been positive and the scheme has also provided feedback regarding neighbourhood wardens and the community police team. Residents report feeling more in control of their area. A particular strength noted has been the visibility and continuity of the community police team and wardens. At the time of the launch of Bradford Trident rising crime against business had forced a number to leave the area and many more were considering it. Now while business crime remains a problem many now report an increased confidence that the area is changing for the better and are more willing to stay. An increase in trade, including evening trade, has also been reported.

Summary

After 12 months operating in the Bradford Trident Area, Community Watch has secured and sustained an active membership, a success that has eluded many traditional neighbourhood watch groups in high crime areas. Successful implementation has stemmed largely from allowing members to contribute in a way that suits them and from the constant flow of feedback from agencies that demonstrate the positive outcomes generated from the schemes activities.

Key Strengths

- maintained a degree of separation of the police while remaining linked
- pro-active recruitment of volunteers
- flexible approach, not imposing one structure on everyone
- directly addressed concerns regarding intimidation
- provided two-way communication, participants can see they are getting something in return
- active support for victims and witnesses
- includes crime prevention activity in addition to surveillance
- links into the framework of community police, neighbourhood wardens and anticrime partnership
- funding enables considerable time to be dedicated to establishing the network

Lessons

- highlighted the need to be kept informed by all policing teams

b. Neighbourhood Wardens

The Social Exclusion Unit has highlighted the potential contribution of warden schemes in tackling problems of crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, and social exclusion. There is a huge variation in neighbourhood warden schemes, but four key functions are common to most: crime prevention, environmental improvements, community development, and housing management. Evidence from evaluations of warden schemes has shown that well structured schemes can impact on community confidence and participation, and contribute to local reductions in crime and disorder.

All three of the case study areas have introduced Neighbourhood Wardens, they are longest established in East Brighton where they have patrolled for three years, the Shoreditch Wardens were launched in the summer of 2003 and Bradford Trident's wardens began operating in late 2003. There are differences in the schemes but all three aims to be a key source of local information for police and local agencies, identifying and reporting incidents while gathering local intelligence. In addition all three aim to provide a communication channel to inform the public of initiatives and their outcomes.

Neighbourhood Wardens in Shoreditch, Hackney

Neighbourhood Wardens in Shoreditch were launched in May 2003 with the motto of "reassurance through presence." A team of 11 wardens including two supervisors and a manager are funded by ShOW NDC and managed by Pinnacle Housing. The scheme has funding for three years. The Wardens operate five days a week (Tuesday to Saturday) between 10am and 11pm. Hours that were selected to cover problem periods for anti-social behaviour. The ShOW wardens do not have an enforcement role but one primarily

of guardianship, communication and reassurance. The wardens have a strongly publicised aim to reduce the fear of crime, for example they "...carry out checks on vulnerable people in the community who may have a heightened fear of crime," and "their presence will seek to reassure the community, particularly the elderly and the vulnerable."

The remit outlined for the wardens was extensive and included:

- identifying and responding to incidents of disorder and anti-social behaviour
- identifying visible problems in the environment including graffiti, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and void properties and reporting problems to the relevant authorities
- assisting with the implementation of acceptable behaviour contracts
- building relationships with young people and between young people and other members of the community
- briefing agencies in the area on local problems
- increasing the public's opportunity to report crime and disorder
- providing a link between the Police and victims, visiting vulnerable people including victims
- linking eligible candidates into crime prevention initiatives

Wardens are actively involved in crime prevention activities. Elderly residents are referred to Help the Aged's Handy Van Scheme that fits free home safety and security products. Between September and December 20 people were referred to this scheme. Working with the police, wardens are aiming to reduce thefts from cars by noting down the registration numbers of cars in which items have been left on display. Details are then forwarded onto the DVLA who then send the owner a letter and advice on car crime prevention, in November and December 14 registrations were collected and passed on the DVLA.

In building relationships with the community the Wardens have made particular gains with young people. Warden teams have played in football tournaments with young people. Presentations to schools have covered issues from litter to antisocial behaviour and drug awareness. In and out of school the wardens discuss their role with young people and explain the steps they would take to deal with issues such as bullying. Young people are reassured that the wardens' first step in dealing with trouble may not automatically result in contacting parents or the police, this helps to establish trust with young people. However it is made clear that if problems cannot be resolved another way these steps might have to be taken and perhaps in contrast to Brighton the wardens have not been afraid to confront young people where necessary.

Two warden newsletters have been published; the first coincided with the launch of the scheme. It introduced the team, explained what can be expected of the wardens and what they will not do and provided contact details. The second newsletter provided details of current initiatives, statistics on activities conducted in the first six months and before and after pictures showing environmental improvements that are a direct result of Warden activity. The development of community links also includes attendance at community meetings such as Tenant and Resident Associations, Estate Committees, Crime Task Groups and Anti-Social Behaviour Partnerships.

While patrolling Wardens make a point of talking to people to explain their role, these chats are recorded as an output on activity logs. Residents' encountered while on patrol with the wardens had positive comments and a clear idea of their role. However a few residents have commented that they do not see enough of the wardens, and there have been claims that the wardens only focus on specific areas. Although the team patrol in highly visible uniforms it is not possible to be everywhere at once. Wardens log all of their activity through hand held computers and a bar code system which records the locations visited.

Problems spotted while on patrol are logged on the system. This information is used to monitor warden activity and to ensure that all areas are covered. Details of warden activities were published in the warden newsletter although more detailed information on the areas covered would allay criticisms that the Wardens favour particular areas and further contribute to the accountability of the scheme.

Intensive activities known as 'Block monitoring' have had the dual benefit of focusing on specific problems while enhancing the wardens' visible presence. Increases visibility by concentrating the Wardens in one area for a period of days. Monitoring focuses on a specific problem such as drugs, anti-social behaviour or noise and concentrates the wardens in one area for a period of days. This increases residents' opportunities to come into contact with a warden. 30 block-monitoring exercises were conducted in the first six months of operation.

The Wardens have not been involved with supporting vulnerable victims to the extent that they had planned. Eight visits were conducted during the first six months. The low number of visits was partly the result of low numbers of referrals from agencies and partly because victims declined the offer of support.

One Wardens intervention, the 'Safely Home Escort Service' has highlighted a central question about the role of Wardens in reducing fear of crime. Elderly people who are concerned about walking through the area after dark can request a warden to escort them home from social groups, it is planned to extend this scheme to include escorting pensioners to and from the Post Office to ensure they can collect their pensions safely. The Wardens had carried out 350 home escorts between September and the end of December 2003. The Wardens and their management team at Pinnacle Housing feel the home escort service responds directly to residents' concerns and thus provides a valuable service to residents. An attack on a pensioner returning from the Post Office provided the impetus for this extension to the scheme. The response the service has received would appear to confirm that the wardens are responding to a genuine need. The requests for escorts home suggests that concerns about crime persist amongst some groups despite other improvements to the area including street lighting and environmental improvements. However the NDC board have raised concerns that home escorts do not constitute a cost effective use of Warden resources, as they concentrate time on a small section of the community and reduce the time that wardens can spend patrolling and responding to other problems. The board are concerned that the home safe service risks residents becoming over dependent on Wardens when the aim is actually to support members of the community in developing the capacity to take control of their own safety. A compromise between these two approaches may be to use the home safe service as a foundation for concerned residents to develop their own collective response, perhaps walking each other home from activities.

The ShOW team are currently conducting an evaluation of the Warden scheme the results of which are anticipated in April 2004.

Benefits:

- the launch of the initiative was well timed to follow Community Police beat sweeps
- the Warden's have developed strong links with young people in the area
- the newsletter is actively publishing warden activities and successes
- extensive hours

Problems:

- the Safe Home Escort Service has raised debate regarding the cost effective use of warden time over the need to provide a service for which there is a clear demand

Wardens in East Brighton

The neighbourhood warden service in East Brighton has been running since September 2000. The scheme is funded by the NDC and is currently managed by Brighton and Hove City Council. Six wardens supported by an administrator and manager, provide patrols for the Moulsecoomb, Bates, Saunders Park, Whitehawk and Manor Farm estates. The original objectives of the neighbourhood warden service were: 'to contribute to the reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour, reduction in fear of crime and improvements in the quality of the physical environment.' The management of the service was transferred to Brighton and Hove City Council in July 2003, where it obtained funding for a further year (two short of the requested three year renewal). This period is now due to expire, and new funding is being sought. The eb4U area has seen consistent falls in overall volume crime over a four-year period, with the 2003 figures recording an overall 23% decrease from 1999. The best performance in the NDC was for non-dwelling burglary. Criminal damage (-21%) and theft of vehicle (-28%), all of which are often associated with young people also showed marked reductions from the 1999 baseline.

The wardens' role has also evolved in a direction that sees more emphasis on supporting victims of crime than the earlier priority of patrolling the eb4U area. No longer is every street covered on a daily basis by patrolling wardens, although patrolling still makes up a large part of their duties, victim care and calling on new tenants is now prioritised. Three reasons underlie this change; firstly, the team thought that many of the problems prevailed in the early days of the scheme are now less problematic now; secondly, that environmental problems have been better addressed through the workings of service level agreements; and lastly, problems recruiting wardens have meant staff shortages and hence a degree of patrolling has been sacrificed in favour of other tasks. In one sense this newer role is similar to the work housing officers already undertake, but wardens were keen to emphasize that in practice much of the victim support and liaison would not take place without their additional input. Wardens are especially vigilant to new residents moving into the area due to vulnerabilities and the increased likelihood of them becoming victims of crime or harassment. The community safety team reiterated the value in this victim support activity and saw it as a positive move beneficial to residents by assuaging some of their concerns, increasing reporting and linking them into other services.

The council has recently reappraised one of the service level agreements in favour of a more cost effective approach over rapid responses to environmental waste and graffiti (being removed within 24 hours). It is these physical disorders that correlate strongly with residents reported quality of life and hence has concerned the crime prevention team who are monitoring the number of days that rubbish is now left on the streets, along with levels of graffiti (only graffiti considered obscene will now be removed in 24 hours). If a noticeable decline occurs then the team will confront the council and press for a return to the previous arrangement.

Wardens also substantiate that there is a genuine problem with youth offending and anti-social behaviour on the estate. The warden manager argued that this was not simply the result of perception and cited incidents of large groups of youths who harass other residents. One group had occupied a void loft within a block of flats from which they drank, smoked and caused nuisance to other residents. Successive attempts at preventing access, both in terms of target hardening and threatened action against residents for allowing the youths in, had been met with escalating damage to the property

as attempts to gain access had become ever more drastic. Reports of youths throwing stones at those they take a dislike too, along with other vandalism and theft came from both residents and wardens.

The wardens do not have an enforcement role and therefore are not involved in directly challenging problem behaviour or confronting problem youths. Neither do wardens patrol on evenings and weekends, an explicit policy as the wardens do not assume any enforcement capacity in which to tackle this behaviour. Concerns were also expressed about wardens' own safety in patrolling at these times. Those with an enforcement capacity, Sussex police beat officers, are unable to respond adequately due to the pressure of calls which are prioritised into the city centre leaving them unable to attend incidents in the eb4U area. This would seem especially acute in the evenings and weekends when problems of youth disorder are highest, complaints from residents are at their most urgent and when police response times are longest. Partly in response to these difficulties, the community safety team manager is currently applying for additional funding for two Police Community Support Officers to provide a uniformed enforcement presence in the eb4U area, this being an extension of the police family that had already proved successful in the Sussex Force and to which the police were looking to mainstream.

One indicator of the wardens' difficulty impacting on the local community comes from the postal survey conducted in October 2003. It appears that three years after the scheme was established only 49% of the 157 respondents had heard of the wardens, only 15% had ever seen a warden, and only 13% had any contact with a neighbourhood warden. The theoretical mechanism through which wardens are intended to work is through increased visibility; it is therefore not surprising that only 47% of respondents felt that having wardens made the area safer. However wardens may have a more indirect effect upon quality of life by removing crime cues from the environment, residents may feel more reassured although they may not attribute this improvement to Wardens. The survey results do validate the current emphasis upon victim care, with visiting victims of crime being seen as the second most important service when respondents were asked to list priorities for the wardens. Wardens in East Brighton visit all new residents with a welcome pack; this is felt to be an important step in including new residents in the community and thereby buttressing community sustainability. This key element of the service was not viewed as a priority although this may have reflected the number of long-term residents amongst the survey respondents. The survey also failed to stress the potential vulnerabilities of new people moving to the area. Overall residents' views of what wardens should do matched the current remit of the service, reporting problems, visiting victims of crime, patrolling and visiting vulnerable residents. Some doubts regarding the benefits of wardens on patrol were raised including the concern that wardens may not be sufficiently qualified to deal with problems. While one respondent commented that warden patrols were a waste of time because people would simply wait until they had gone before committing a crime.

Strengths

- visits to new residents are an innovative feature of the project; however they were not raised as a priority in the resident survey. This highlights issues about meeting resident demands versus meeting resident needs
- the publicity newsletter launched in March 2004 helps to raise the profile of wardens and situate them within the larger community safety family

Lessons

- options should be explored to make patrols more visible
- more awareness may help residents to make connections between the work of the wardens and improvements in the area

Tackling youth disorder and nuisance behaviour in East Brighton

The analysis in Section 3a above demonstrated that perceptions of crime were relatively important in understanding quality of life and satisfaction with an area as a place to live and bring up children. The analysis also showed that of the crimes and disorders analysed, problems created by young people were particularly important in understanding quality of life. Levels of youth disorder and nuisance behaviour remain a problem in the eb4U area, this is despite much good work in both enforcement action through issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and youth engagement via Youth Inclusion Programs and associated youth provision. To date 69 ABCs have been issued, with 54 completed and 30 requiring no further action. 17 have been extended, with eight requiring no further action after extension. Of ABCs that have been breached, five have led to issuing of an ASBO, and four other breaches have led to a possession action. The team believes that ABCs have proved very effective in providing an early formal intervention and there are plans to increase the involvement of victims by introducing an element of reparation duties into the package. Victims would have involvement in drawing up the terms of this package.

Eb4U's community safety team obtained the first ASBOs in Brighton and Hove, with 16 ASBOs being currently in place. The team reported a high reoffending rate, for instance 10 of the current ASBOs have been breached on one or more occasion. This was thought to be due to sanctioning the worst offenders first and that initial breaches had received lenient sentencing from Magistrates. This has subsequently changed and a tougher stance has been adopted. Brighton University's recent independent evaluation of the teams' use of ABCs highlighted discrepancies between the perceptions of some families and what the team were trying to achieve. The report found that many of the parents and also young people themselves were unable to recall the terms of their contracts or the specific reasons for the ABCs. This led the authors to propose "fostering more involvement in the planning and implementation of the contracts, greater dialogue, reciprocity and fostering of effective collaborative relationships through mutual rights and obligations between formal agencies and those subject to ABCs."⁵

A more thorough support package is also deemed desirable by the team such that recipients understand the conditions of the order, particularly its continuance after minor breaches. Generally then, the team favour a more holistic package with an emphasis upon formal assessment of need - one that crosses other services such as social care, education and health in addition to enforcement actions including restorative justice approaches. This is an ambitious target and the team realise this requires a lot of work to build up.

Not all residents are convinced that current youth work will address the problems. There are calls for more responsive and effective action taken against perpetrators. There is strong resident support at Whitehawk Crime Prevention Forum for a 'naming and shaming' approach this would see flyers distributed detailing offenders ASBO restrictions accompanied by their photographs. These developments signal the strength of feeling of residents who are victims of anti-social behaviour. Feeling that is clearly expressed as anger and frustration but not fear.

A naming and shaming approach has not yet been adopted but work to publicise the activities of the community safety team and increase the confidence of residents that the police and council agencies are indeed responding to incidents of anti-social behaviour has led to the publication of a quarterly newsletter. The first edition appeared in March

⁵ Stephen D.E & Squires P. (2003) *Community Safety, Enforcement and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts: An Evaluation of the work of the Community Safety Team in the East Brighton New Deal for Communities*. Health and Social Policy Research Centre, University of Brighton.

2004 and incorporated crime data and case work information, a referral list with processes and contact details of staff (a 'who is who' and 'who does what'). The more controversial area concerning inclusion of information on ASBOs, injunctions and possession orders, including banning terms of orders on offending youths is still under discussion. The community safety team were not opposed in principle to including this information; rather their concern was to avoid sensationalising incidents and demonising individuals - something the earlier proposed 'naming and shaming' flyers would risk - although this detailed information on ABCs, ASBOs, injunction and possession action is made available to victims, witnesses and residents in specifically affected areas. Letters also notify surrounding residents where action is taken to close Class A drug houses. Other community safety publicity continues, with regular community forums and surgeries on the different estates across eb4U.

Strengths

- development of a holistic support package for ABC and ASBO recipients
- targeted publicity of enforcement actions taken against offenders to affected victims and residents

Lessons

- a robust stance to ASBO breaches stance is required
- ensure recipients understand the requirement of ABC contracts by ensuring their involvement in their planning and development

c. CCTV and Accountability in Bradford

The role of CCTV in the reduction of crime and fear of crime had been contested. Much of the concern surrounding CCTV has focused upon its implementation, the positioning of cameras and the extent and nature of monitoring. CCTV cameras have been installed in the Bradford Trident area; the cameras are monitored from a control room in Bradford city centre that is shared by other schemes in city. To ensure that quality of service is provided from the monitoring staff members of the Trident team make regular visits to the control room to evaluate the extent of monitoring, to ensure that staff capacity is sufficient to monitor the Trident schemes and to assess the positioning of cameras. Ensuring that control over interventions are not lost once implemented by intervention is a key strength in itself but in the Trident case the monitoring of this intervention is extended to key stakeholders in the community who are invited to view the control room. This enables community members to 'see what they are getting' in terms of service provision and to understand the benefits and limits of the interventions.

5. Conclusions and Lessons

- crime is an important factor in understanding quality of life
- if perception of crime is known then fear of crime and experience of crime do not offer any additional information with which to understand quality of life. However perception of crime cannot be reduced without tackling experience of crime
- this report has argued that improvements to the physical environment have an impact upon quality of life, and can also impact upon perceptions of crime and even crime itself under certain conditions
- any attempt to improve quality of life by reducing crime should combine physical improvements with the attempts to address perceptions and this should be underpinned with interventions designed to tackle crime directly

- strategies that fail to include all of these elements are likely to fail or to be short lived. Strategies that do not tackle physical disorder will leave cues for the community to read as a proxy for crime and these will inform their perceptions. On the other hand strategies that do not tackle the level of crime may encourage risky behaviours that expose people to the experience of crime
- the case studies have shown that where experience of crime, disorder and nuisance remains, perception of crime will not change
- identifying crime and disorder issues perceived as a problem locally was not seen as a complex exercise. Analysis demonstrated that the perceptions of outside observers are close enough to the perceptions of those living in the community
- the above point does not mean that the community's perceptions are not important. The case studies have provided examples of approaches to identifying and responding to problems which involve the community as central partners, notably the use of neighbourhood wardens and community watch. These must be tailored to the local problems and in particular to the problems of high crime areas
- the advantage of these approaches is that they provide more detailed and location specific information. Successful approaches are those that are linked into agencies charged with the rapid response to problems and which provide feedback on progress to the communities that have assisted them

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Website Links

The Home Office Research Development Statistics Directorate

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>

Crime Reduction Website. This site has a knowledgebase, toolkits and downloadable publications

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk>

The NDC National Evaluation Website

<http://www.ndcevaluation.adc.shu.ac.uk>