

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



1 Crime has a detrimental impact on quality of life - victims and witnesses suffer financial and emotional loss and the fear of crime can mean people feel unsafe, particularly at night.

2 The British Crime Survey is regarded by the Home Office as the most authoritative source for assessing crime levels as it measures people's direct experiences of crime and is not affected by reporting or recording changes. The survey results are based on interviews with up to 40,000 people a year. In 2004, its estimate for the number of crimes committed is 11.7 million, which is five per cent less than the previous year and 22 per cent less than five years earlier. There were over 5.9 million crimes recorded by the Police in England and Wales in 2003-04, equivalent to 113 crimes per 1,000 people. As the British Crime Survey estimates show, the true figure could be much higher, however, as victims do not report every incident to the Police. This is why the Home Office is convinced the British Crime Survey provides a more accurate measure of crime than the recorded crime statistics.

3 The Home Office aims to reduce crime in England and Wales and has provided grants of £926.8 million since 1999 to fund specific crime reduction projects. Grants have gone to Police Basic Command Units, 354 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England and 22 Community Safety Partnerships in Wales. These local Partnerships include Police, local Police and Fire Authorities, and the NHS and are required to work with the Probation Service, voluntary sector and local residents and businesses to find local solutions to local crime problems. The crime reduction projects funded by the Home Office include:

- **Initiatives focused on potential and known offenders** to deter individuals from committing crime. Schemes include specialist staff to provide help, such as support in dealing with drug dependency, and schemes to keep young people 'off the streets'.
- **Initiatives focused on specific locations.** Some locations can become crime 'hotspots'. Initiatives include better lighting, closed circuit television and cleaning up graffiti.
- **Initiatives aimed at potential victims of crime.** Projects include raising awareness, such as reminders to secure buildings and vehicles and advising vulnerable groups of risk.

These specific grants form a relatively small part of the funding dedicated to delivering Home Office Aim 1 - a reduction in crime and fear of crime. In 2003-04, the Home Office spent around £5.5 billion to help meet this objective a large proportion of which is directed to the Police.

Main conclusions of our report

4 Home Office grants to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Police Basic Command Units have contributed to the 39 per cent reduction in the number of crimes reported through the British Crime Survey between 1995 and 2003-04. Many of the projects funded by the Home Office have been diverse in nature, innovative and successful in reducing crime. In one successful project in Blackpool, for example, the Partnership estimated that the initiative had prevented 262 crimes and led to a net financial saving to society of over £200,000¹ plus non-quantifiable improvements in people's quality of life.

5 The Home Office regards the provision of grants to new organisations as inevitably likely to lead to increased administration and bureaucracy. No single initiative alone is likely to resolve all aspects of crime and we believe the Home Office is to be congratulated on the range and diversity of the projects and initiatives it has supported. Although it is difficult to demonstrate direct cause and effect, the work of the Home Office Crime Reduction Directorate has contributed to the continuing reduction in crime reported by the British Crime Survey in recent years.

6 That said, we believe that the Home Office could have achieved bigger reductions in crime by minimising the administrative work done by Partnerships, so that more monies can be spent on successful crime prevention initiatives instead. While some of this was most likely inevitable, Partnerships have too often 'reinvented the wheel' by not using lessons learned elsewhere. Resources have too often been tied up dealing with administration of different grant conditions imposed by the Home Office and other Departments. And smaller Partnerships spent a higher proportion of their grant monies on staff costs. Improvements depend on the Home Office encouraging neighbouring Partnerships to communicate and collaborate more and by simplifying grant procedures to reduce the administrative burden.

7 In this context, the Home Office reported that it has put in place Local Delivery Agreements with two local authorities - Bradford, and Hammersmith and Fulham - under which a wide range of separate grants have been pooled and a greatly simplified performance management system introduced. The Home Office also confirmed two further initiatives to reduce bureaucracy in 2005-06. The first is the plan to merge a number of separate streams of Home Office funding with further funding streams from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister into a single Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. The second is the launch of 21 Local Area Agreement pilots which will incorporate a still wider set of funding streams and draw together spending from the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health into three separate "chapters", covering Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities and Healthier Communities and Older People.

¹ The Partnership estimated the project had cost £281,000 to operate and had generated a financial saving of £481,400.

Our main findings in more detail

Crime reduction projects are more likely to be successful when there is commitment and synergy within a Partnership

8 The involvement of Partner agencies is critical to Partnerships having the information and skills to design and run crime reduction initiatives. Divisional Police Commanders and the Chairs of Partnerships typically rated their local Probation Service and local Health Service as less active than other key statutory Partner agencies due to resource constraints and competing priorities.

9 Success in reducing crime depends on generating a synergy amongst those in each Partnership and a commitment to tackle crime - issues of genuine local concern were more likely to generate such commitment among Partners. Each Partnership strategy is a means to pull together different bodies to achieve success, but the quality of the strategies is variable. Existing Home Office guidance focuses on the structure of the document rather than whether it will enable the Partnership to achieve significant reductions in crime. We developed a checklist of ten good practices the Home Office could use to assess Partnerships' plans before committing resources.

10 Partnerships' commitment to tackle local crime concerns depends on devising suitable initiatives to address the problem and getting the projects up and running quickly. We found that successful projects target underlying causes of crime through a strong analysis of local data and by drawing upon lessons learned. Only 44 of the 72 projects we examined, however, had specific, measurable and realistic targets. About half of the projects we examined had been delayed by between two months and a year, and 69 per cent of Partnerships and 80 per cent of Police Basic Command Units cited delays as a reason why they might not achieve their crime reduction targets for 2002-05.

11 Project hold ups were partly due to delays by the Home Office in confirming the amount and conditions attached to funds provided. Seventy six per cent of Partnerships said projects were also delayed because of recruitment difficulties - in particular because of difficulties in finding skilled staff. Small neighbouring Partnerships could collaborate more closely to share resources so that they can recruit and retain sufficient in-house staff between them with the skills and experience to manage crime reduction projects. Few of the Partnership strategies we examined, however, demonstrated awareness of work being done by neighbouring Partnerships.

Ten good practices the Home Office could use to assess Partnerships' plans

- 1 The Mission Statement is clear, concise and relevant.
- 2 Targets set are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) and clearly aligned to priorities.
- 3 The actions and interventions proposed are matched to targets.
- 4 Funding streams are identified and non-Home Office funds have been considered.
- 5 Long-term sustainability of the funding of interventions has been considered.
- 6 The structure of the Partnership is defined and lead roles assigned by expertise and skills.
- 7 The strategy is reviewed and updated annually.
- 8 Priorities are supported by clear reference to crime and consultation data and partners' plans.
- 9 There is awareness of regional and national priorities and cohesion with neighbouring Partnerships.
- 10 There is a balanced appraisal of the previous strategy and lessons learned.

12 The Home Office could improve the way it targets its resources through closer monitoring by Home Office Regional Directors of how Partnerships have implemented and managed projects and whether they have taken account of lessons learned elsewhere when developing new projects. The Home Office already has a crime reduction website (www.crimereduction.gov.uk) and a quarterly magazine to promote good practice as well as a Crime Reduction Centre to provide a source of information and advice for practitioners. Only 39 per cent of Partnership projects and 51 per cent of Police-led projects, however, had been subject to any review. Home Office Regional Directors should make sure lessons are learned and taken into account in the development of subsequent projects.

13 However, there are some notable examples where good practices have been disseminated. For example, the Tower Project in Blackpool, established in January 2002, was developed to tackle prolific volume crime offenders identified through the Police's National Intelligence Model. The Home Office confirmed it has taken the Tower model and other similar examples of good practice (including the Tameside project, the Staffordshire Chase Division Prolific Offender Project and the Avon and Somerset Prolific Offender Scheme), and developed from them a Prolific and Other Priority Offenders Strategy, launched nationally at the beginning of September 2004. The Home Office intends to target the new strategy towards a relatively small number of people who cause a disproportionate amount of crime, disorder and mayhem in their communities, damaging people's confidence and increasing feelings of uneased and the fear of crime.

14 The Home Office has improved its monitoring of performance in 2003-04 and Partnerships were required to complete an annual report on the implementation of their crime and disorder reduction strategy. However, Partnerships have mixed views on the feedback they receive from the regional Home Office crime reduction teams. Thirty three per cent of the Partnerships thought they did not receive enough effective feedback. (See Recommendations i - vii).

Complex funding systems have placed an administrative burden on Partnerships

15 The Home Office allocates grant monies according to the extent of crime and the population in each area of England and Wales, although a different weighting system is used for Partnerships and Police. The Partnerships and Police have expressed dissatisfaction with existing arrangements. Between April 1999 and March 2003, the Home Office introduced fourteen different types of crime reduction grant, each with different conditions and requiring separate audit certificates, which has placed an undue burden of bureaucracy on Partnerships. The Home Office has already reduced the number of different grants from fourteen to three and plans to rationalise further to one single grant scheme for 2005-06.

16 The Home Office has not previously co-ordinated its funding with other central government departments and some of the projects it has helped finance have also been part-funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This lack of co-ordination has increased the risk that resources could be wasted. Different terms and conditions of grants increase the administrative burden by requiring the collection and submission of different information.

17 Home Office grants have been time-limited to give an initial cash boost to get projects up and running and then to enable local services to fund projects from thereon. A significant minority of successful projects come to an end, however, because there are insufficient funds to keep them going. Closing down a successful project can have a detrimental impact on levels of crime. Partnership staff explained, however, that it is often difficult to find alternative sources of funds.

18 The Home Office simplified its own grant procedures for 2003-04 by bringing together some of its grants into a single fund, the Building Safer Communities grant, and by announcing funding allocations before the start of the financial year. Further progress is needed, however, as Partnerships are only allocated funds for one year at a time and the Building Safer Communities grant was not finalised until May 2003. Uncertainties about levels and conditions of funding have been a major cause of programme slippage and led to pressure being put on Partnerships and the Police to spend monies in the last quarter of the financial year. The Home Office confirmed the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund will be rolled out to all Local Authorities in England from 2005-06. The new fund merges a number of existing Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office funding streams, and provides local Partnerships with more freedom and flexibility to deliver on local priorities. (See [Recommendations viii - ix](#)).



RECOMMENDATIONS

- i** The Home Office should encourage Police and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to review what lessons they have learned by stating this requirement clearly in its grant conditions and by making future funding allocations dependent on having suitable project review arrangements in place.
- ii** The Home Office should encourage greater sharing of good practices and lessons learned between Partnerships by tasking Home Office Regional Directors in co-ordination with the Crime Reduction Centre to draw such information to the attention of Partnerships. This could involve compiling a checklist of good practices and lessons learned for each main approach to crime reduction (such as working with potential victims or collecting information on crime patterns) so that key information is readily available for Partnerships, Police and regional Home Office staff to use.
- iii** Home Office regional teams should assess each proposed project against the proposed checklists of good practices and lessons learned as well as the four factors we identified as critical to success:
 - Is the project focused on crime reduction?
 - Has there been sufficient analysis to define and target the problem?
 - Is the project a logical solution in line with existing knowledge about crime reduction techniques?
 - Is the project of sufficient size to make a difference?
- iv** Home Office Regional Directors could encourage better project management by Police and Partnerships by compiling local lists of suitably skilled and experienced project managers for Partnerships to use, closer monitoring of progress against milestones and by taking account of past performance in subsequent funding allocations.



- v Home Office Regional Directors should encourage each Partnership to develop a strategic approach that will co-ordinate the various projects proposed and the commitment required from each Partner so they can maximise their effectiveness in reducing crime. Building on the ten good practice criteria we developed, the Home Office should give Partnerships clear feedback on the quality of their current strategy and what it expects from the next round of strategies.
- vi The Home Office should encourage smaller, neighbouring Partnerships to collaborate more closely, for example by sharing resources, or even, where appropriate, to merge so that they can build up greater levels of expertise and resources to tackle crime. Such encouragement could include making some grant allocations dependent upon evidence of closer working with neighbouring Partnerships.
- vii Home Office Regional Directors should build on their self assessment arrangements to improve their feedback to Partnerships by giving regular information on their performance relative to neighbouring Partnerships.
- viii The Home Office should simplify its funding arrangements further by standardising the terms and conditions of its grants and co-ordinating its funding allocations with those of other central government departments.
- ix As a major contributor to the Safer Stronger Communities grant scheme, the Home Office should work closely with other central government departments and agencies to finalise grant conditions and funding arrangements well in advance of the start of the financial year.