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Home Office

BUILDING A SAFE, JUST
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

The Reducing Burglary Initiative: planning for partnership within a project setting

Jessica Jacobson

Home Office Online Report 04/03

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy).

Foreword

The Reducing Burglary Initiative

In 1998 the Home Office announced the Crime Reduction Programme. The programme was intended to develop and implement an integrated approach to reducing crime and making communities safer. The Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI), launched in 1999, was one of the first parts of this programme to commence.

The aims of the RBI are to:

- reduce burglary nationally by targeting areas with the worst domestic burglary problems;
- evaluate the cost effectiveness of the different approaches and;
- find out what works best where.

Two hundred and forty seven burglary reduction projects have been funded, covering over 2.1million households that suffered around 110,000 burglaries a year. Three distraction burglary projects have also been funded.

The RBI Evaluation

Three consortia of universities have intensively evaluated the first round of 63 RBI projects. A further five projects from subsequent rounds of the RBI (rounds two and three) are also being evaluated.

This report is based on an evaluation of 21 of the round one projects. It draws general lessons for partnership from the experience of these multi-agency projects, and in particular provides a framework which is intended to assist practitioners develop partnership-based projects more effectively. Though the lessons combined in this report derive from an evaluation of burglary reduction projects, they are widely applicable to the development and planning of partnership-based work in all fields of crime reduction.

The report is part of a series of studies examining burglary reduction practice being published during 2003. Also to be published are a summary and full report on the overall impact and cost-effectiveness of Round 1 of the RBI. Other themes to be covered in this series are:

- the delivery of burglary reduction projects;
- investigating burglary;
- publicity and awareness of burglary reduction schemes

Previously published RBI reports

Early lessons from the RBI have already been published in the following reports, which are available from www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pubsintro1.html

Tilley N, Pease K, Hough M and Brown R (1999) 'Burglary Prevention: Early Lessons from the Crime Reduction Programme' Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 1, London: Home Office

Curtin L, Tilley N, Owen M and Pease K (2001) 'Developing Crime Reduction Plans: Some Examples from the Reducing Burglary Initiative' Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 7, London: Home Office

Hedderman C and Williams C (2001) 'Making Partnership Work: Emerging Findings from the Reducing Burglary Initiative' Briefing Note 1/01, London: Home Office

Johnson S and Loxley C (2001) 'Installing Alley-gates: Practical Lessons from Burglary Prevention Projects' Briefing Note 2/01, London: Home Office

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Executive summary

Background

The idea that problems of crime and disorder can best be tackled by a range of agencies and services working 'in partnership' has had increasing influence in the UK since the early 1980s. In 1998, Sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act created a statutory duty on local authorities and police forces to work in partnership with each other and other relevant agencies, in developing and implementing strategies for addressing local problems. Alongside or incorporated within these umbrella crime and disorder reduction partnerships, are also numerous other multi-agency groupings of all shapes and sizes set up to tackle specific crime problems in local areas, on either an ongoing or a project basis. However, while partnership continues to be widely and frequently advocated, it has often proved difficult to deliver.

The aim of this study is to draw general lessons for partnership working from the experiences of 20 multi-agency projects that were set up to tackle burglary. These projects were funded by the Home Office Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI), and evaluated by South Bank University. The RBI was launched in April 1999 as part of the Government's wider Crime Reduction Programme. The 20 projects evaluated by South Bank University were part of a first round of RBI projects that were funded with the explicit aim of generating lessons on good practice and innovation in burglary reduction work.

The research conducted for this study had two phases. The first was a review of the findings of the evaluations, and focused on the partnership structures put in place in each of the RBI sites. The second was a series of interviews about experiences of partnership with personnel from seven of the projects, which were selected as case studies.

On the basis of the research findings, this report has sought to identify the essential foundations of effective partnership work, particularly in the context of project-based activity. Thus, while much previous research has tended to focus on the alternative forms that partnership can take, this report takes a step back from issues of structure and personnel – to consider what needs to be in place if partnership is to be a feasible and (potentially) valuable approach to crime reduction.

This broad question is addressed through the development of a good practice model of partnership. The model is organised around three key elements:

- **Knowledge:** that is, a partnership's understanding of exactly what interventions it is undertaking, and why;
- **Commitment:** that is, the individual partners' willingness to undertake the work proposed by the partnership; and
- **Capacity:** that is, the individual partners' practical capacity to undertake the work proposed.

These are defined as three prerequisites of effective partnership working, which must be established as a partnership begins to develop a programme of work, and be sustained throughout implementation. What is proposed here is that agencies engaged in multi-agency crime reduction work should see these three elements as constituting a framework for both planning and action.

Knowledge, commitment and capacity are clearly interdependent, and must be established and sustained throughout the life of a project. All three are dependent on similar mechanisms, such as detailed planning, thorough inter-agency consultation and effective project monitoring. However, notwithstanding the interrelationship of the three prerequisites, it is important to distinguish between them as each plays a critical role in making partnership

work possible and effective. They should therefore be regarded as discrete aims to be pursued throughout the lifetime of a project.

Knowledge

The term 'knowledge' is used here to refer to the information that a partnership acquires about the crime problem it is addressing, the methods that it can and does use, and the outcomes of its work. This is, in other words, a matter of adopting a problem-solving approach to crime reduction – which indeed is integral to the very concept of partnership working. For the most part, the RBI projects appeared committed in principle to a problem-solving approach; but the extent to which this was followed through was often limited by poor planning and review procedures.

It is evident from the work undertaken by the RBI projects that if a crime reduction partnership is to adopt fully a problem-oriented approach – and thereby ensure that it always acts on the basis of knowledge - it must address the following three questions:

- What kinds of responses to the crime problem could work **in theory**?
- What kinds of responses to the crime problem could work **in the context** into which they are being introduced?
- To what extent are the responses working **in practice**?

In assessing what response or responses might work in theory, the project planning process should involve a consideration of the full range of crime reduction interventions that might potentially have an impact on the crime problem being tackled.

The question of what response could work in context involves considering the full implications of developing and introducing the various potential responses to the crime problem. Therefore the issues of commitment and capacity come to the fore here, as a partnership must consider what exactly the individual agencies will be willing to do and capable of doing. The question of context also refers to the need to tailor a strategy to the specific problem that the partnership is seeking to address.

To determine the extent to which a partnership's strategy is working in practice, effective project monitoring and evaluation must be carried out. These processes should enable problem-solving to be carried out by partnerships in a reflexive way: that is, the results of implementation should feed back into the design of responses.

Commitment

Any multi-agency crime reduction project depends for its success on the relevant agencies' commitment to it. Among the agencies involved in the RBI projects, there was broad recognition of the importance of partnership, but levels of practical commitment varied among individual officers.

The commitment of officers seemed to be hindered by four main factors. First, in some cases prospective partners believed that they lacked the capacity – particularly in terms of available staff hours – to engage in partnership work. Secondly, the different agendas that agencies brought to the partnerships were a potential source of tension. Thirdly, within some agencies there was support for the general principle of partnership, but this support was weakened when the repercussions of partnership for the day-to-day work of officers was considered. Finally, lack of ownership tended to be a problem where agencies had had little input into the development of a partnership's strategy.

To overcome such obstacles to commitment, it can be helpful to consider the general principles that should underlie the processes and structures of partnership. In particular, constructive inter-agency relations seem most likely to emerge when efforts are made to:

- Engage all partners from the outset of project planning;

- Clarify inputs into the partnership that are expected from each partner;
- Encourage partners to air their grievances about the partnership openly; and
- Encourage consultation on partnership work within as well as among partners.

Commitment may also be enhanced if prospective partners consider the benefits that partnership is likely to bring them – in the short or longer term. These include:

- More resources or wider recognition for partner agencies as a result of their involvement in the partnership;
- Practical and supportive working relationships among partners, which can have a beneficial impact on all aspects of partners' day to day work; and
- Improved working conditions, resulting from the interventions of the partnership: for example, a general reduction in crime may facilitate partners' core activities.

Capacity

A crucial element of devising a partnership's strategy is identifying precisely what the partnership and its constituent parts have the capacity to undertake. The experiences of the RBI projects clearly demonstrate that the most obvious aspect to capacity is the issue of staff time; but that there are also many other practical requirements that limit or enhance the capacity of partnerships to carry out their work. Regardless of whether resource requirements are met out of core or project funding, any crime reduction project is likely to need all or most of the following:

- Staff available with the necessary **time** to carry out the work of the project – as project leaders, steering group representatives, and operational staff.
- Staff available with the necessary **skills and aptitude** to carry out the strategic and operational work of the project.
- Scope for **contracting out** portions of the operational work – including the necessary funding, the availability of contractors, and the availability of staff to carry out procurement and manage the contracts.
- Access to **equipment/devices** – for example target hardening equipment, property marking devices, computer software - which are available, affordable, and effective.
- Access to appropriate and affordable **facilities**.
- Access to specific **information** needed to implement certain initiatives.

Establishing and sustaining capacity involves a constant interplay between 'inter-agency' (i.e. *between* two or more agencies) and 'intra-agency' (i.e. *within* agencies) management structures. At an inter-agency level, the partnership management body should maintain an overview of issues relating to capacity, and ensure effective consultation between partners on these issues. At an intra-agency level, decisions about the partnership's use of agency resources should be clearly communicated to all relevant officers; managers should be fully supportive of the partnership commitments of their staff; and the repercussions of these commitments for other work should be monitored.

Summary

Partnership working was a principle to which projects under the RBI frequently aspired. However, adherence to this principle did not automatically equate with effective planning and implementation of project activities. The quality and strength of the partnerships varied markedly, and many project managers struggled to make token partnership structures functionally meaningful and productive. This report draws from these difficulties, and also from the evidence of successful partnership working, key learning points for project managers and agency representatives seeking to tackle crime by means of multi-agency initiatives.

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1. Introduction

Aims of the study

The idea that problems of crime and disorder can best be tackled by a range of agencies and services working ‘in partnership’ has come to be increasingly influential in the UK over the last 20 years. Since the early 1980s, many crime reduction partnerships of different kinds were established on a voluntary basis; and in 1998 Sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act created a statutory duty on local authorities and police forces to work in partnership with each other and other relevant agencies. Thus in each local authority area in England and Wales there is now a crime and disorder reduction (or, as they are often termed, community safety) partnership with responsibility for developing a strategy for addressing local crime problems, and overseeing its implementation.

Alongside or incorporated within these umbrella crime and disorder reduction partnerships, are numerous other multi-agency groupings of all shapes and sizes set up to tackle specific crime problems in local areas, either on an ongoing or project basis. The major aim of this study is to consider what can make such partnerships feasible and effective. This broad subject has been addressed by means of research into partnerships dealing with burglary under the Home Office-funded Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI).

The RBI projects have tackled burglary in a wide variety of ways, and in doing so have adopted a wide variety of structures. The large majority of them have involved at least some degree of multi-agency working as such working was explicitly encouraged in the RBI funding criteria developed by the Home Office. Therefore, their experiences provide insight into many of the challenges associated with the partnership approach to crime reduction.

In drawing out general lessons for multi-agency working from the varied experiences of the RBI projects, this study has sought to identify the **essential preconditions** for successful partnership, and the **general principles** that should ideally guide partnership work.¹ Thus, while much previous research has tended to focus on the alternative forms that partnership can take, this report takes a step back from issues of structure and personnel. It considers what needs to be in place – particularly in terms of the resourcing, interests and motivations of individual agencies – if partnership is to be a feasible and (potentially) valuable approach to tackling a given crime problem.

Therefore it is hoped that this study will assist those involved in partnerships to avoid or overcome the kinds of problems that frequently hinder the delivery of multi-agency work. By highlighting the pre-conditions for and principles of effective partnership, the report should serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it should increase the likelihood of success of well-planned and appropriate multi-agency interventions. On the other hand, it should help practitioners to avoid investing time and energy in designing interventions that are unlikely to be implemented because they make unrealistic demands on the agencies and personnel involved.

The conclusions of this study have relevance to partnerships engaged in tackling crime of all kinds. The most direct application is, however, to project-based work: that is, work which entails the pursuit of a defined set of goals within a finite time-scale, whether or not it is carried out with the help of external funding.

The RBI projects, and also previous research on the subject (for example, Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994a), demonstrate that the structures of crime reduction partnerships can take a great many different forms. Taking this into account, the term ‘partnership’ is used in a broad sense in this report: namely, to refer to a grouping of different agencies that has a formal basis to the extent that the agencies are represented by a management body, and are named as active partners in a policy

¹ Due to this focus on the more general processes of partnership, this study has not attempted to analyse the ways in which multi-agency working can assist a project to achieve its overall objectives. (Such a remit would in any case be problematic, given the difficulties of isolating the contribution of partnership-related factors to project outcomes.) However, all the burglary projects discussed in this report have been subject to external evaluation by South Bank University.

document. Such a structure may or may not incorporate a 'lead agency' that has primary responsibility for planning and implementation.

The Reducing Burglary Initiative

The Reducing Burglary Initiative was set up under the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme, launched in 1998. The first round involved the funding of 63 Strategic Development Projects (SDPs) across England and Wales, all of which were located in areas with high burglary rates and, as noted by Home Office consultants appointed to assist the projects with developing proposals, "were designed to extend current knowledge of cost-effective burglary prevention measures". The intention was, therefore, that they would "form the basis upon which future burglary reduction projects are designed" (Tilley *et al*, 1999: v).

Projects eligible for SDP funding were those focused on target areas comprising 3,000 to 5,000 households, which had a burglary rate of at least twice the national average. For the most part, the maximum funding received was £60,000, and projects were expected to spend the bulk of the money within a 12-month period. All the burglary SDPs were subject to detailed external evaluation, carried out by Home Office-appointed contractors. Twenty of the projects (those located in southern England, the Midlands and south Wales) were evaluated by the Criminal Policy Research Unit of South Bank University.

This study involved an investigation of issues relating to partnership encountered by the 20 projects evaluated by South Bank University. All but one of these 20 projects had at least some element of partnership, and most were managed by a multi-agency body of some description. Another common organisational feature was the presence of one or two individuals formally named as project 'managers', 'leaders' or partnership 'chairs'. The police played a part in all the projects and in many cases were regarded, formally or informally, as the lead agency; and local authority officers were involved - at least officially, if not always in practice - in all but one SDP. (All the original bid documents had to be signed by both the local authority chief executive and a police officer of the rank of Commander or above.) The local authority departments that were most frequently represented on the partnerships were community safety and housing; but environmental health, youth services, social services, sports and recreation and others also played a part. Other agencies involved in the projects included probation, schools, victim support, housing associations and neighbourhood watch.

Methodology

The present study built on the South Bank evaluations of the 20 burglary SDPs. These evaluations entailed the collection of a range of data at each of the sites, including:

- aggregated recorded crime data for burglary and other acquisitive crime and disaggregated data for domestic burglary showing dates and locations;
- data on offenders charged with domestic burglary;
- dates and locations of SDP target hardening and other preventative work;
- descriptions of policing operations introduced under the SDP;
- data on offenders charged with domestic burglary.

The main sources of the information were documentation provided by project staff and information services departments within the relevant police force, and semi-structured interviews conducted with project staff.

The partnership study involved a thorough review of the findings of the evaluations. Hence the evaluators' reports were examined; documentary material (including original bid documents) produced by each site was assessed; and, in addition, each of the evaluators was interviewed about the structures, management and inter-agency relations of the projects. By means of this review, an overview was gained of how the SDP partnerships operated, the kinds of problems they encountered, and the various ways in which they sought to overcome these.

On the basis of this analysis, seven of the SDPs were identified for further study, all of which had placed a strong emphasis on partnership and/or had evidently dealt with some particularly interesting

issues in this regard. Each of these seven sites were visited, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with key personnel (from the police, local authorities and, in one case, a housing association) about their experiences of working on the SDP in partnership with other agencies. These seven projects, details of which are provided in Table 1.1, below, are the source of the most detailed empirical material included in this paper. (For the purpose of maintaining respondents' confidentiality, the sites have been anonymised.) However, the experiences of all the projects evaluated by South Bank University were drawn on in developing and elaborating the model of partnership working that is presented over the course of this report.

Table 1.1: Case study sites

Project	Police force	Target area	Core activities
Coldfall	West Midlands Police	Local authority ward with population of about 10,000 in 3,600 households. Relatively deprived area within largely prosperous borough in West Midlands urban conurbation.	Target hardening vulnerable premises; alley-gating; improved street lighting; youth work initiatives.
Everington	West Midlands Police	Two burglary hot-spots within a single police beat. These cover 9 residential streets, comprising 583 properties. The area has mostly long-term residents, and some students.	Alley-gating; fencing.
Goodwynton	Metropolitan Police	Local authority ward in relatively prosperous London borough. Population is just over 7,000 in about 5,000 households – most of which are flats in houses of multiple occupation.	Target hardening; high visibility policing; promotion of neighbourhood watch.
Holliton	Metropolitan Police	Local authority ward and some of the surrounding area. Inner-city, ethnically diverse area, with total population of about 7,000 in 3,000 households.	Target hardening; crime prevention advice; work with repeat victims; crime pattern analysis.
Laineseide	Metropolitan Police	Local authority ward in ethnically diverse residential area comprising about 4,200 households. There is 15% unemployment, and the ward ranks first in the Borough's index of local deprivation.	Promotion of community involvement including neighbourhood watch; environmental improvements; publicity aimed at deterring burglars.
Wetherill	Metropolitan Police	Four housing estates (three owned by local authority and one by housing association) in ethnically diverse inner-city area. The estates comprise approximately 1,700 households in total.	Appointment of 'Rangers' to carry out security patrols.
Greenham	Thames Valley Police	Four policing areas covering approximately 40% of relatively prosperous commuter town. Total population about 30,000 in 11,000 households.	Target hardening; improved crime analysis; high profile policing; increasing awareness of burglary.

While the issues addressed by this report are firmly rooted in the experiences of the burglary SDPs, the discussion is also informed by relevant literature on partnership and community safety. The study is located within a considerable body of practitioner-oriented research, which dates back to the

growth of interest in partnership in the early 1980s, but has rapidly expanded since the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act in 1998. (See the Further Reading section of this report.)

Prerequisites for effective partnership working

The findings of the above research into the burglary SDPs have been used to develop and elaborate a model of partnership working. This model is based on three core concepts, namely:

- knowledge
- commitment
- capacity.

The model presents knowledge, commitment and capacity as three essential prerequisites of effective partnership. The term **knowledge** is used here to refer to the information that a partnership acquires about the crime problem it is addressing, the methods that it can and does use, and the outcomes of its work. This is, in other words, a matter of adopting a problem-solving approach to crime reduction. **Commitment** is essentially about attitude, and refers to the willingness of the individual partners to undertake the work proposed by the partnership as a whole, and, in carrying out this work, to co-ordinate their activities. **Capacity** is about ensuring that all involved in the partnership can, in practical terms, fulfil their responsibilities to it.

In short, the claim being made here is that a partnership depends for its success on its partners a) knowing what they should be doing; b) wanting to do this; and c) being able to do this.

It should be noted from the outset of this discussion that knowledge, commitment and capacity are interdependent, and that they must therefore be established and sustained through simultaneous processes rather than in separate stages. In a sense, knowledge might seem to come first, to the extent that the initial – pre-planning – stage of a project is likely to be the identification of the problem to be tackled. However, the development of knowledge is an ongoing process which rapidly becomes intertwined with the processes of establishing commitment and capacity. Moreover, knowledge, commitment and capacity are all dependent on similar mechanisms: in particular, detailed planning, thorough inter-agency consultation and effective project monitoring play a major part in each – as is illustrated in the chapters that follow.

Notwithstanding the close interrelationship (described in more detail in Chapter 2) between the three prerequisites, it is important to distinguish between them as each plays a critical role in making partnership work possible and, potentially, effective. Agency representatives involved in crime reduction partnerships should therefore consider them as discrete aims to be pursued throughout the life-time of a project - or as separate, staple ingredients for successful partnership. It is hoped that the model presented here will, thus, help to focus and direct efforts to set up new partnerships and rejuvenate existing multi-agency initiatives.

The knowledge-commitment-capacity model of partnership working is fully elaborated over Chapters 2 to 4 of this report, which deal with each of the three prerequisites in turn. Chapter 5 brings the report to its conclusion with a brief discussion of the key issues raised, highlighting the key factors which contribute to successful partnership working.

2. Knowledge

The problem-solving approach

The problem-solving approach to crime reduction is based on the premise that the police and other relevant agencies should tackle the underlying problems within a locality that give rise to crime and disorder. Police officers working within a problem-solving framework have widely adopted the 'SARA' model, which sets out four stages to the problem-solving process. These are described by Leigh *et al* (1996: 17) in the following terms:

- **Scanning** – spotting problems using knowledge, basic data and electronic maps;
- **Analysis** – using hunches and IT to dig deeper into problems' characteristics and causes;
- **Response** – working with the community, where necessary and possible, to devise a solution; and
- **Assessment** – looking back to see if the solution worked and what lessons can be learned.

Within police forces in England and Wales, the problem-solving approach has been increasingly prominent since the early 1990s. Furthermore, the growing emphasis placed by central government upon partnership working in the field of crime reduction has had the effect of elevating this approach further. Problem-solving is integral to the very concept of partnership working, since the rationale of partnership is that different agencies can offer different but often complementary means of addressing the wide range of problems that are likely to be the causes of crime and disorder in a given area. The problem-solving principle is therefore strongly endorsed by the guidance to statutory crime and disorder reduction partnerships issued by the Home Office (1998).

For any crime reduction partnership involved in project work, the 'scanning' stage of the SARA process entails the identification of the crime problem or problems to be addressed. It may be appropriate for this task to be primarily left to the police. Once this has been accomplished, all agencies should become involved in the subsequent stages of the problem-solving process, which require that the following inter-related questions are addressed:

- a) What kinds of responses to the crime problem could work **in theory**?
- b) What kinds of responses to the crime problem could work **in the context** into which they are to be introduced?
- c) To what extent are the responses working **in practice**?

In addressing these questions, a partnership should ensure that it acts and continues to act on the basis of **knowledge**. All three questions should be addressed over the life-time of a project; but the first and second, in particular, demand careful consideration during the planning phase. The evaluations of the burglary SDPs indicated that many of them suffered as a result of hurried planning – partly because the original bids for funding were drawn up within tight time constraints, and because it was difficult for agencies to commit time to drafting proposals when the outcomes of the bids were uncertain. What was required among the partnerships was, therefore, a recognition that planning must play a crucial part in project development well beyond the initial drafting of a proposal.

The remainder of this chapter considers the issues raised by each of the three above questions in turn.

What can work in theory?

If a partnership is to identify the best means by which to tackle a given crime problem or problems, and particularly if the aim is to develop solutions that are innovative to some degree, the project planning process should involve a consideration of the full range of interventions that might potentially have an impact. This may entail devoting some time to 'brainstorming' by project staff, in

order to produce a large number of ideas, of which the most promising can then be examined in more detail. The major sources of relevant ideas are likely to be the following:

- published literature on crime prevention;
- examples of good practice presented at seminars and conferences, on training courses, and on crime reduction websites;
- lessons learnt from past experiences of project personnel, and from past experiences of colleagues and associates.

The evidence from the burglary SDPs is that for the most part project staff were willing to consider a wide variety of approaches to crime reduction – as is evident from the fact that many of the project proposals encompassed a range of strategies. Those responsible for drafting the proposals often made an effort to consult relevant literature, at the same time as drawing on their own previous experiences, and, in some cases, taking on board suggestions made by the Home Office consultants who visited projects at an early stage. However, although one of the aims of the Reducing Burglary Initiative was to promote new approaches to tackling burglary, there was not a great deal of innovation in the SDP proposals, which largely incorporated fairly standard crime prevention measures.

No doubt this was partially due to the little time given to project planning. An illustration of this was provided by the project leaders of the Goodwynton project, who described the hurried process by which three officers (from the police and local authority) determined the strategy: namely, they “sat over a cup of tea” and discussed the options. The evidence suggests that this was not an untypical approach to planning. Time constraints are always likely to be a feature of project planning, and personnel thus have to strike a balance between, on the one hand, engaging in a reasonably thorough review of crime prevention options and, on the other hand, keeping up the momentum required of any project in its early stages.

In Goodwynton and in most of the other sites the two or three officers responsible for drafting the project proposal consulted minimally or not at all with colleagues within their own and other agencies. Where time permits, consultation with several agencies from the early stages of project planning can help to broaden the perspectives of those involved, and ensure that the widest possible range of solutions are considered. As has been noted in the literature on the subject (see, for example, Gilling, 1994), agencies involved in collaborative crime prevention often have a bias towards situational approaches. Situational methods may also be favoured because they can often be rapidly established and thus help to generate momentum within a partnership. Wide consultation as part of project planning can help to correct this bias, as each agency consulted should contribute views based on its own specialist knowledge and expertise. Among the burglary SDPs, situational measures certainly featured very heavily, although not in isolation from other approaches.

What can work in context?

The meaning of context

The issue of context does not simply refer to the characteristics of a specific locality. Rather, it is about working out the full implications of developing and introducing the various potential responses to the crime problem. Therefore with respect to any measures being considered by a partnership there are two sets of questions to be addressed:

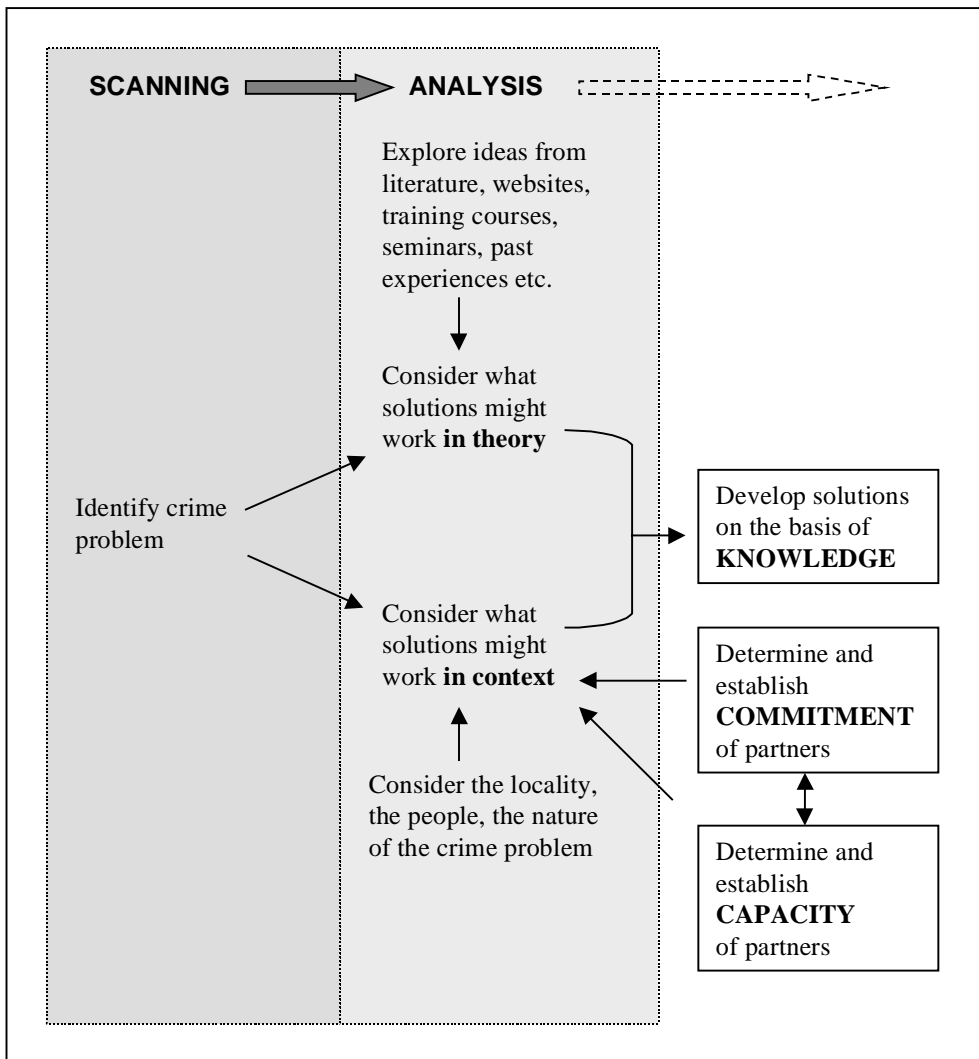
- Are the partner agencies **willing** to carry out the strategic and operational work that these measures entail, and are they **capable** of doing so?
- To what extent are these measures **suited to the local area**, its people and its crime and disorder problems?

The first of the above two points brings to the fore the critical issues of agencies' commitment to the work of the partnership, and their capacity to carry it out. Here, then, one can see the ways in which these two 'prerequisites' for effective partnership are linked to the other: that is, knowledge.

In other words, from this early stage of the problem-solving process, it is essential for a partnership to establish that partners have the necessary commitment and capacity. Where these are lacking, steps must be taken to establish them, or to revise proposals accordingly; and it is vital that the commitment and capacity are sustained if measures are to be implemented successfully. A partnership should also recognise the interdependence of commitment and capacity: agencies are more likely to be committed to work if they have the capacity to carry it out; and, vice versa, if they are committed to it the chances are increased that they will find the capacity to do it.

Figure 2.1 demonstrates the linkages between knowledge, commitment and capacity within the process of developing crime reduction solutions. This diagram shows the process to be dynamic, and fed by a range of considerations: that is, considerations of pre-existing ideas about possible interventions, the specific needs of the local area, and the commitment and capacity of partners.

Figure 2.1: Developing crime reduction solutions in partnership



As stated above, the issue of context is an issue of, on the one hand, the commitment and capacity of partners and, on the other hand, the specific needs of the area in which the project is to be carried out. The process of tailoring solutions to the local area involves:

- defining the precise boundaries of the target area;
- identifying the specific characteristics of the local crime problem;
- responding to the needs and expectations of local people.

The participation of all partner agencies in the consideration of these contextual issues is very important. In particular, input from officers who are working on the ground, and are therefore likely to have detailed local knowledge, can play an important part.

Defining boundaries

Depending on the nature and scope of the project, the target area will be set in accordance with any possible criteria for external funding, the location of the crime problem being addressed, or the boundaries of local authority and/or police areas – or any combination of these. There may, indeed, be a tension between a desire to set boundaries on the basis of local crime patterns, and a need to work within existing administrative boundaries in order to facilitate the involvement of partner agencies. Once a project's target area has been confirmed, project staff should ensure that they are informed of any other work being carried out in the locality that may have a bearing on their activities, and should revise their own goals and actions accordingly.

The full implications for a project of any change to the target area must be considered. In the case of the Wetherill SDP, an alteration to the target area boundaries after the original proposal had been drafted meant that a housing association estate was brought within the scope of the project alongside three local authority-owned estates, which had not been foreseen. Little effort was subsequently made to incorporate the housing association estate fully: for example, publicity about the project did not mention the estate, with the result that residents there tended to assume the project had little to do with them.

Analysing the crime problem

Whether or not the specific crime problem to be addressed by a project is set by funding criteria (as was the case for the burglary SDPs), the initial identification of a problem must be followed by detailed analysis of its specific characteristics. The levels of crime analysis undertaken by the SDPs – either as part of the initial process of drafting a proposal, or subsequently - were extremely varied. While some projects put effort into studying such matters as recent burglary trends, levels of repeat victimisation, burglary MOs, the spatio-temporal distribution of offences, and victim and offender characteristics, others provided no more than the most basic information on the local burglary rate.

The aim of the local crime analysis should be to establish which precise methods of crime reduction – whether put into place singly or in combination with others - are most likely to have an impact, and how they can be implemented most effectively. This demands careful consideration of the precise **mechanisms** by which certain initiatives may be expected to have certain effects in the specific context – for example, where these are expected to divert or remove existing or potential offenders; to increase the effort, risk or perceived risk associated with offending; or to reduce the potential reward of offending.² In addition to determining the specific measures to be introduced, the analysis of the local crime problem should also assist the setting of challenging but achievable outcome targets, and provide reliable baseline figures against which to assess progress.

Where a project focuses on one particular crime type, it may still be important for project staff to look at the extent and impact of other kinds of crime in the local area, and to take these into account in developing their strategy. If partner agencies and local people have serious concerns about crimes other than that which is being primarily targeted by the project, there is a risk that the project may be viewed as ineffective or one-dimensional. The Wetherill SDP provides an example of how a partnership can come under strain where there are disagreements among partners about the main aims of the project (see Box 2.1).

In this kind of situation (and if, for example because of funding constraints, there is no possibility of reorienting the entire project), there may be benefits to broadening the scope of the project so as to encompass some goals related to the 'other' crime problems. It is vital, however, that any such change to a project's aims and objectives is not simply drifted into, but is clearly thought through, authorised by the project management body, and communicated to all involved. Moreover, it is important for a project to retain a clear focus if its aims are to be achieved.

² See Tilley *et al* (1999) for an account of the range of interventions included in the original bids, which are variously classified as offender-related, specific situational, victim-related, and wider locality-related.

Box 2.1: The focus of the Wetherill SDP

Although there were several components to the original proposal for the Wetherill SDP, in practice the core element of the project was the appointment of 'Rangers' to conduct security patrols in the four housing estates that made up the target area.

The project faced various implementation problems, partially because of the poor management provided by the multi-agency project group, which was riven by conflict. One of the main causes of the conflict was the fact that some members felt strongly that the project should have prioritised the local drug problem rather than burglary, as the former was believed to be much more serious. In particular, frequent drug-taking in the stairwells of one of the estates was a matter of great concern to residents.

Hence there was apparently a discrepancy between the original project proposal (which did not even mention drugs) and the specific needs of the local area. Ultimately the presence of the Rangers did appear to have some impact on problems beyond burglary – including drug taking and dealing, and also anti-social behaviour. However, this was not the result of an intentional change to the broad strategy adopted by the project, but rather followed from the nature of the work (that is, general security patrols) carried out by the Rangers.

Needs and expectations of local people

Ultimately any locally-based crime reduction project aims to have a positive impact on the lives of the people who live and work in the area in which it is operating. Therefore there is often an expectation that local people will offer their active support for the work being done, and many multi-agency projects explicitly aim to work in partnership with local 'communities'. The very concept of 'community safety', which has been strongly promoted by central and local government in recent years, highlights this aspect of crime reduction. An Audit Commission report on community safety notes:

The key to successful community safety approaches is that they address what is directly relevant to people in their local setting ... In order to address the community's fears and concerns properly, community safety work must engage fundamentally with the community in a way that goes beyond the scope of traditional crime prevention work (1999:7).³

The burglary SDPs aimed to engage with local people – residents, landlords, owners of local business, employees in local businesses and services - in a wide variety of ways. Some of the projects sought to incorporate local residents, or representatives of residents' groups, as full, active partners. At the other end of the spectrum, local people were envisaged as essentially passive beneficiaries of the work that the projects were carrying out.

Across the spectrum of levels of involvement, the kinds of input that the SDPs sought – with varying degrees of success - from local people included:

- involvement in neighbourhood watch schemes;
- contribution of ideas about crime and crime reduction at public meetings;
- agreement to target-hardening measures;
- participation in community-based activities (for example rubbish collection and environmental work);
- compliance with crime prevention advice that was offered;
- the provision of sponsorship for local initiatives;
- participation in property-marking schemes.

As is apparent from the mixed results of the burglary projects' efforts in this regard, the aim of 'engagement' with local communities is generally not easy to achieve. In order to be successful in this

³ It should be noted that some of the academic literature on partnership working points to the tensions and contradictions inherent in the notion of 'community'. Crawford, for example, observes that in policy discourse 'community' is presented both as something that must be regenerated, and also as "a social and moral good in itself"; hence, the means and ends of 'community safety' work are confused (1997: 198).

aspect of its work, a partnership must think ahead about, first, how local people are likely to respond to any activities that are proposed and, secondly, how a positive response might be encouraged. Furthermore, in addressing these questions the project should consider the full implications of the local population's composition. For example, different sectors of a diverse population (in terms of ethnicity, class, age or other factor) may have very different needs and expectations - as might longer-term residents in comparison with transient members of the population.

The evidence from the burglary sites is that in many of these not much thought was put into the questions of what local people were likely to want and expect, and how their interest might be aroused. Frequently project staff simply assumed that residents and others would be responsive to what the projects offered. Three of the initiatives of the Goodwynton SDP, for example, while appearing reasonable in their aims and scope, revealed a lack of foresight about the needs and wishes of the intended recipients (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: Local needs and expectations overlooked in Goodwynton

One of the initiatives of the Goodwynton SDP was the target hardening of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). HMOs owned by private landlords (many of whom lived abroad) were believed to be frequently targeted by burglars. The target hardening of HMOs was carried out efficiently, thanks in large part to good co-operation between the police crime prevention officer and a representative of the local authority environmental health department. However, concerns were raised by one of the project leaders about whether it was appropriate for the project to put resources into providing what was effectively a free service for very wealthy, private landlords.

Another Goodwynton initiative did have the aim of encouraging landlords (and residents) to carry out their own security improvements, by distributing crime prevention packs to landlords and letting agents. In the event, one of the problems encountered by this initiative was that letting agents proved unwilling to pass on the crime prevention literature to tenants and prospective tenants, on the grounds that this might convey the impression that the local area had a major crime problem.

The provision of pendant alarms to elderly residents in Goodwynton was intended to combat artifice burglary. However, only eight of a proposed 50 alarms were issued, partly because the scheme was poorly administered by the lead agency. Another difficulty was the lack of interest in the offer of the alarms was among elderly residents, some of whom wanted regular burglar alarms that would prevent the burglary of empty premises rather than simply artifice burglary. In addition, some residents appeared mistrustful of the offer of alarms, believing that the local authority would not be willing to provide them with a free service.

In contrast, the Laineside SDP was quite successful in responding to the concerns of local residents. Relatively unusually among the SDPs, community involvement was one of this project's core aims. Its success in this regard was partly due to the staff's willingness to incorporate within the project a number of issues beyond burglary that mattered to residents (see Box 2.3). Clearly, one risk associated with this kind of community-led approach is that the work of the project can become unfocused; in Laineside, however, it was generally felt that any such risk was outweighed by the obvious benefits of drawing on the full range of community concerns.

Box 3: Community involvement in the Laineside SDP

The Laineside SDP was formally led by a police inspector, but the day-to-day management of the project was effectively carried out by the local beat officer together with a consultant who was employed by the project to work with the 'community'. A multi-agency steering group, which included residents' representatives, was set up at the time the Home Office bid was being devised.

In the early months of the project it was not easy to get the partnership working, particularly because the police inspector tried to focus the partnership meetings on burglary but found that the residents who attended were often keen to talk about other issues such as parking, street lighting, and rubbish collection. Also, residents were reluctant to take on responsibility for running the partnership: they assumed that the police should have this role given that the project was officially about crime.

In response to these problems, project staff decided to broaden its scope beyond burglary, and to amalgamate it with the meetings of the local neighbourhood watch co-ordinators. The result was that residents were more easily persuaded to participate. According to the beat officer involved in the project, the lesson to be learnt from this is that any community-led initiative should be about more than just crime, since crime tends not to affect residents on a day-to-day basis (unless fear of crime is particularly high), whereas issues like parking and rubbish impact on their everyday lives. Thus rather than seeing residents' concerns about non-crime issues as an obstruction, these concerns should be used to mobilise support for local initiatives. At the time of writing, the Laineside partnership continues to operate, with police and local authority funding; and environmental issues and other matters of concern to residents are now formally included in its remit.

While many local residents have taken on active roles in the partnership, there has been some disappointment that not all sections of the local population are represented on it. The area in which the project is located is ethnically diverse, and it has proved difficult to involve residents from some ethnic minority groups, partly because of language barriers. In addition, young people are under-represented, probably because they feel less affected than older residents by the issues dealt with by the partnership.

The Wetherill and Everington SDPs adopted very different approaches to publicising their respective activities. In Wetherill, publicity was seen as an 'add-on' rather than as an integral part of the project, according to a local housing officer. As a result, leaflets that were produced about the Rangers scheme were poorly designed, and provided little information to residents. By comparison, the Everington SDP – a project which primarily involved the gating of alleys and fencing of back gardens – made a strong effort to establish and maintain the support of local residents. Throughout the project, public meetings were held and newsletters circulated to inform residents about the work; and at a time when there was some dissatisfaction over delays in the gating, a property-marking scheme was introduced in order to sustain public interest.

Does it work in practice?

Monitoring and evaluation

The third fundamental question that a partnership must address, in adopting a knowledge-based approach to tackling a certain crime problem, is whether its initiatives are working in practice. This, in turn, can be broken down into two subsidiary questions:

- Are the initiatives being properly implemented, and if not, why not?
- What is their impact on the crime problem?

The process of project **evaluation** is intended to provide answers to the second of these two questions. In the case of the burglary SDPs, evaluation was conducted entirely externally to the projects. One of the conditions of receiving funding was that the projects should be amenable to thorough evaluation; therefore, project staff had to demonstrate that they had access to good quality data and data systems in order to be eligible. Despite this, several of the project evaluations were in fact hampered by a lack of access to adequate data.

The subject of project evaluation is a large and complex one, and it is beyond the scope of this report to examine it in any depth.⁴ It suffices to say here that evaluation, if conducted properly, is a crucial element of the problem-solving process – since it enables projects to build in an informed way on their successes and to make necessary corrections where there are failures. Moreover, the process of evaluation is an important part of partnership: commitment to a multi-agency project may be enhanced where its success, and particularly the parts played in that success by individual partners, can be demonstrated.

While evaluation is about assessing the impact of a project, the more straightforward process of determining whether initiatives are being properly implemented is generally described as **monitoring**.

⁴ See Hough and Tilley (1998) for a succinct discussion of what it means to evaluate crime reduction work and the kinds of problems encountered in conducting evaluations; and for references to relevant literature.

This is usually carried out by whatever kind of project management body is in place. Adequate monitoring requires the measurement of inputs (resources employed) and outputs (specific tasks carried out) against input and output targets, and the observation of the day-to-day work carried out by all agencies involved.

The reviews of implementation carried out as part of the monitoring process should also provide opportunities to call senior officers on the partnership to account, to ensure that they are seeing through their commitments to the project. The difficulty of establishing a proper system of accountability for partnership work should not be underestimated. This is dependent not only on agency representatives being answerable to the partnership management body, but also on the incorporation of partnership goals within the aims and objectives of the individual agencies – in order that officers engaged in partnership-related work at all levels are held to account for this work by their managers. This necessitates a close relationship between inter-agency (that is, between agencies) and intra-agency (within agencies) management structures: a subject to be considered further in Chapter 4.

Together with evaluation, the process of monitoring ensures that problem-solving is carried out by partnerships in a reflexive way: that is, that the results of implementation continually feed back into the design of responses. This allows shortcomings in project design or implementation to be dealt with (by amending targets, altering work practices or revising initiatives) as they arise and before they become overwhelming. Where projects have a short time-scale this feedback loop may have most relevance for subsequent work carried out by the same or other agencies; longer-term projects may themselves evolve over time in response to the findings of monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is also an integral part of the very process of partnership, since much of it is inevitably about identifying exactly what work is being done by which partners. By examining and giving credit for the contributions made by individual agencies, a partnership should encourage their overall commitment to the project and ensure that demands made on them are within their present capacity.

The linkages between knowledge, commitment and capacity are demonstrated in Figure 2.2, which extends Figure 2.1 (above) to depict the full process of problem-solving in partnership. According to this diagram, the crime reduction solutions that are implemented by a partnership should emerge out of its knowledge, commitment and capacity; and the monitoring and evaluation of these solutions should in turn feed back into, and bolster, that knowledge, commitment and capacity. Figure 2.2 also makes it clear that monitoring and evaluation should be treated as central to a project's operations, rather than as a 'tacked on' element of the work.

Monitoring arrangements in the burglary SDPs

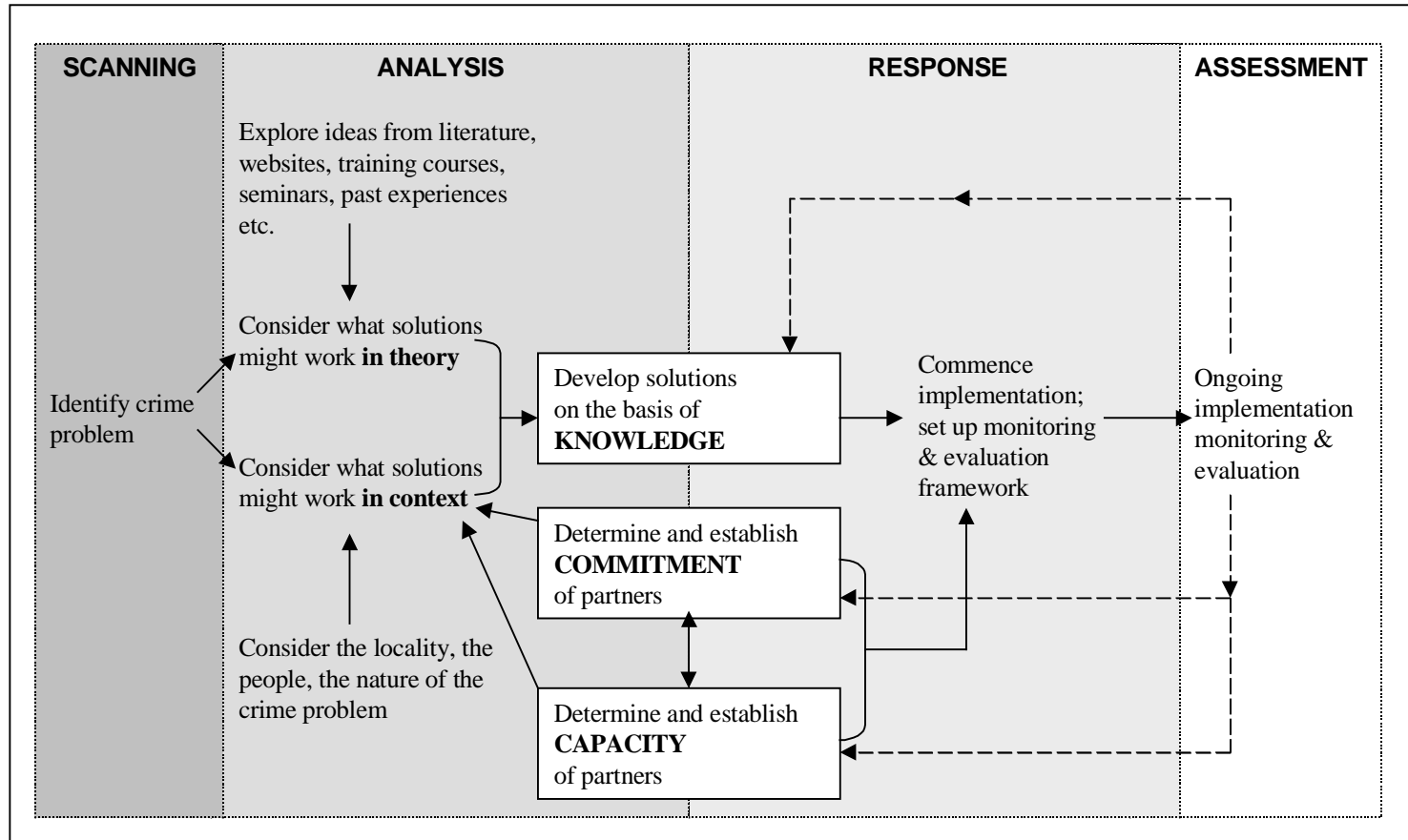
The majority of the burglary SDPs recognised the importance of monitoring their work. In most cases there was some kind of steering group dedicated to the project, the formal responsibilities of which included carrying out regular reviews of implementation. The Coldfall partnership had a particularly well-organised system of project review: here, two implementation sub-groups met in advance of the general partnership group, and provided the partnership with progress reports.

In contrast to Coldfall, however, several of the SDPs failed to monitor their work in an effective manner. Some did not have steering groups of any description, or were managed by groups which had wider responsibilities than the projects themselves and therefore could not keep a close check on progress. In several cases, the monitoring (and evaluation) was hindered by poor record-keeping, which meant that project staff did not have access to full details of expenditure and of exactly what work had been done, when, and by whom. While record-keeping may seem like a somewhat mundane issue, collecting and – equally importantly – collating the necessary information is a crucial and often demanding aspect of project work, especially when a project involves several initiatives and various agencies as did most of the SDPs.

In some of the burglary sites, it seems that when problems were encountered in implementing certain initiatives, these were simply jettisoned, rather than considered by the partnership and revised. For example, in Wetherill the general inadequacy of the monitoring arrangements were exposed by the project's failure to see through, and even to discuss, plans to install alarms and to hold police surgeries. This kind of response to implementation difficulties suggests that the principles of the problem-solving approach were easily forgotten by some of the partnerships. Moreover, just as some

elements of projects were abandoned with little further thought, so new elements were introduced by some projects with barely any consideration of their appropriateness. In Holliton, slow progress on implementation meant that not all the money available to the project was spent on the activities originally planned. As a result, a question frequently aired at partnership meetings was: 'Is there anything else we can spend some money on?', with little attempt being made to assess where the greatest needs lay.

Figure 2.2: Problem-solving in partnership



3. Commitment

The need for commitment

Any multi-agency crime reduction project depends for its success on relevant agencies' commitment to it and to the very idea of working in partnership.

With policy-makers paying ever greater attention to the role that partnerships can play in reducing crime, it might be expected that practitioners will increasingly take their involvement in multi-agency work for granted. At the present time, however, agencies vary widely in terms of their experience of partnership working, and hence general attitudes to partnership remain mixed. The burglary SDPs illustrate this range of experience: while some involved agencies that had long participated in multi-agency projects, others provided the very first opportunity for the respective agencies to engage in on-the-ground partnership work.

When agencies are willing to work together in a partnership, this willingness must be translated into co-operative action – which is where the main challenges are inevitably encountered. As much of the academic literature on crime reduction partnerships makes clear, inter-agency relationships are often marked by anxiety, tension and even conflict. Liddle and Gelsthorpe report, for example, that these relationships tend to be “highly complicated, seldom static, and influenced by a variety of institutional, individual and local/historical factors” (1994b: 2).⁵ Crawford notes that power differentials are often an aspect of problematic relationships between supposed partners (1997: 127). And Sampson *et al* write of their research on partnership:

one of our most consistent findings is the tendency for inter-agency conflicts and tensions to reappear, in spite of co-operative efforts, reflecting the oppositions between state agencies at a deep structural level ... Conflict is, at the very least, always latent even in situations of apparent co-operation and consensus (1988: 482).

It is therefore only to be expected that strained or conflictual inter-agency relations were a feature of many of the burglary SDPs – whether this was a matter of the key agencies failing to agree on what was to be done and how; one or two lead agencies not wanting to bring others on board; other agencies not wanting to be brought on board; agencies which were partners in name failing to take anything more than a passive role – or any combination of these and other circumstances. The problems faced by the burglary projects revealed four major obstacles to commitment to partnership, which are considered below. This is followed by a discussion of ways in which such difficulties may be overcome.

Obstacles to commitment

The main factors which appeared to hinder the commitment to partnership of the agencies involved in the burglary SDPs were:

1. Partners' lack of capacity to carry out the proposed work;
2. Different agendas of partners;
3. Reluctance of partners to change their ways of working;
4. Partners' lack of ownership of project initiatives.

Lack of capacity

Some agencies may be genuinely interested in being active members of a partnership, but do not translate this interest into action primarily because of a shortage of resources – particularly staff availability. In these circumstances, the problem becomes one of capacity (to

⁵ Liddle and Gelsthorpe (1994b) go on to explore the variations in attitudes to partnership among specific agencies, including the police, housing departments and social services.

be discussed below) rather than commitment. However, these two 'prerequisites' for effective partnership working tend to be closely interrelated, such that with greater commitment, especially at the most senior levels of an organisation, the necessary capacity may be found.

Staff in other agencies, moreover, are unlikely to be able to discern to what extent a potential partner is hindered by lack of capacity as opposed to a general unwillingness to become involved. For example, the project leaders of the Goodwynton SDP were disappointed at the failure of probation representatives to play an active part in the project. According to the probation representatives themselves, this was due to a lack of available staff; but from the viewpoint of the project leaders, the problem stemmed from a general failure to prioritise community safety within the probation service.

Different agendas

The rationale underlying partnership working is that each agency should make its own contribution, based on its own field of practice and expertise, to the task of crime reduction. This means that there is inevitably a tension between, on the one hand, drawing strength from the **differences** (in aims, methods, outlooks, working practices and cultures) between agencies, and, on the other hand, finding **common ground** on which they can work together. The risk in this is that the sense of difference will outweigh the awareness of shared interests, and that agency goals will be defined in narrow, mutually exclusive terms. In some cases, particularly where there is a history of poor relations or there has been little inter-agency contact of any kind in the past, agencies may maintain negative stereotypes of each other, which can enhance the sense of difference to the point where there is mutual mistrust.

In some of the burglary projects, multi-agency co-operation was certainly hindered by the different agendas that the agencies brought to the partnerships. In particular, police concerns with enforcement were sometimes seen as undermining the efforts of agencies more focused on welfare and social goals. In Coldfall, for example, conflict emerged between police and youth service representatives on the focus group (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1: Relations between the police and the youth service in Coldfall

In general, positive relationships were established among the members of the multi-agency Coldfall Focus Group. However, throughout the lifetime of the group to date there has been considerable tension between some of the police and youth service representatives. According to one of the Chairs of the group, the opposing viewpoints of these two groups of officers were illustrated by the very language they employed: within the youth service anyone under the age of 16 was referred to as a 'young person'; whereas to the police any such individual was, at best, a 'scallywag'.

In the opinion of another member of the focus group, the major cause of the tension was the fact that the two agencies were accustomed to working towards very different kinds of goals. The police were for the most part results driven: if they saw a problem they would send resources to deal with it, with the intention of resolving it and then moving on to the next problem. In contrast, the youth service tended to be oriented around largely intangible goals, as much of their work was about building relationships with young people. Moreover, there was a concern on the part of the youth service that to work closely with the police – and particularly, for example, to share information - would undermine their efforts to gain the trust of young people.

As occurred in Coldfall, the issue of data sharing can crystallise inter-agency conflict over aims and objectives, as information is a precious resource which can be used in very different ways by different agencies, and there may be concerns about infringing data protection legislation. Research on partnerships has found that agencies' reluctance to exchange data is often a cause of problems (see, for example, Phillips and Sampson, 1998; Phillips *et al*, 2002; HMIC, 2000). However, there is little doubt that the sharing of information of all kinds – for the purposes of problem analysis, to assist the development of solutions and the co-ordination of

responses, and in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation - is an essential aspect of partnership working.⁶

The impact on ways of working

Related to the problem of different agendas is that of agencies' reluctance to change their ways of working. Within some agencies there may be broad support for the general principle of partnership, but this support may be weakened when the repercussions of partnership for the day-to-day work of officers become clear. The impact of partnership on ways of working will be felt at many levels: in terms of strategic work, an agency's plans must now be co-ordinated with those of other agencies and the partnership as a whole; and at an operational level, new practices may be introduced, or at least the context for traditional working practices is bound to change.

For the police, it is not only partnership but the overall move towards problem-solving policing that demands an acceptance of new ways of working. The kinds of objections that have been made to the introduction of problem-oriented policing in Britain have been highlighted by Leigh *et al*, and include the notion that "it is the job of British police to respond to incidents as they happen ... It is for others to identify and solve underlying problems" (1996: 39). The project co-ordinator of the Greenham SDP commented on the tendency of some police officers to look down on work such as property marking (which was carried out as part of the project), seeing it as 'pink and fluffy', in comparison to the real, 'sexy' work of making arrests.

For other agencies, too, contributing to a partnership may entail a reorientation of operational work. For example, in Coldfall, the involvement of the local authority sports and recreation department in the partnership has had implications for the work of the staff in the local sports centre. Previously, the sports centre was run purely as a leisure facility for the public; now, however, it is seen as having a role in community development, in that it provides much-needed activities for local young people who would otherwise have too much time on their hands. Thus, the staff have been told that rather than throwing out any young people who cause trouble in the sports centre, they must seek to work with them. As might be expected, this message has not been welcomed by all.

Lack of ownership

'Ownership' is a concept that is often said to be central to effective partnership working. Liddle and Gelsthorpe argue, for example, that "ownership, both within participating agencies and among the public in particular local areas, will usually be a necessary condition for generating durable multi-agency crime prevention work, and for sustaining the structures which deliver it" (1994c: 6). In some of the burglary sites, there was evidence that lead agencies did not fully recognise the importance of allowing other partners to take on greater responsibility for the work of the partnership. In such cases there was a tendency for the lead agencies to be critical of the apparent lack of interest or commitment shown by other partners; but the root of the problem may in fact have been the lead agencies' reluctance to share ownership.

The project leaders of the Goodwynton SDP, for example, criticised some agencies for their apparent unwillingness to participate actively in the project. However, it appears that some of the proposed work of the project – for example, a multi-agency initiative to work with prolific offenders – was designed with little or no reference to the views and experience of those supposed partners. In Greenham, the leader and the co-ordinator of the SDP were somewhat critical of the passive stance adopted by the members of the project's multi-agency steering group. Here, however, since the SDP's initiatives were not only largely designed by the police but also predominantly police-oriented, it is difficult to envisage exactly what kind of active role might have been expected of other agencies. As described in Box 3.2, lack of ownership was also an issue faced by the Holliton SDP.

⁶ Because of the centrality of this issue to partnerships, it is addressed by the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998. Section 115 of the Act provides that disaggregated information can be lawfully disclosed to relevant authorities, where this is necessitated by any of the provisions of the Act. The Home Office guidance to crime and disorder reduction partnerships (1998) emphasises that "the best way of ensuring that disclosure is properly handled is to operate within carefully worked out information sharing protocols between the agencies involved" (para. 5.21).

Box 3.2: Lack of ownership of the Holliton SDP

The Holliton SDP was led by a police DCI, and managed by a steering group whose members included representatives of the police, the local authority community safety and housing departments, Victim Support and probation. Implementation of the project initiatives was very slow over the first six to nine months of the project, and appeared to be hampered by poor co-operation among the partner agencies.

The problematic inter-agency relations were probably caused in part by the one-sided view on partnership maintained by the police officers involved in the project. In the main, the officers appeared to take the view that they had control over the project, and that the other agencies were required to do as directed by them. For example, at an early point in the life of the project, a neighbourhood housing manager was invited to a steering group meeting at very short notice; and was unhappy to discover at the meeting that several actions (about which she had not been consulted) had been put against her name. There were other instances of steering group members receiving little notice of meetings; and also occasions when they were discouraged from talking about issues that were not directly relevant to their own specific fields of work.

In interview, the project leader spoke about the concept of partnership in such a way as to suggest that in his eyes it was a matter of non-police agencies assisting the police to carry out their work, rather than being about agencies undertaking joint work. When asked what benefits the Holliton SDP partnership had brought, he commented that “it has enabled us [i.e. the police] to do target-hardening”, since housing officers were in a better position than the police to identify and make contact with vulnerable residents. Talking more generally about partnership, he said that ‘partners’ can supply expertise that the police do not have at their disposal: for example, in relation to the investigation into the murder of a local schoolboy, the police have had to look to other agencies for information about the local youth subculture.

Overcoming the obstacles

All crime reduction partnerships can be expected to confront, at some stage, problems of the kind described above. The evidence from the burglary SDPs suggests that efforts to overcome these problems are likely to be most successful if project leaders and prospective partners adopt the following principles in building inter-agency relations:

- engage all partners from the outset;
- clarify partners’ inputs;
- allow partners to air grievances;
- encourage intra-agency consultation;
- highlight the benefits of partnership to partners.

Engage partners from the outset

The problem of lack of ownership may be avoided if potential partners are involved in devising the work of a partnership from the earliest possible stages. As noted in the previous chapter, the problem-solving process can itself also benefit if all partners are included in it from the outset, since each partner should be able to make a unique contribution to the analysis of the problem and development of the response. This indicates the need for formal partnership bodies – at least in embryonic form – to be set up as soon as the prospective partners are identified, at which point other formal or informal mechanisms for communication and consultation between partners should also be set in motion.⁷ This issue again points to the

⁷ The significance of informal inter-agency communication within partnerships has been observed by researchers in the field. Sampson *et al* (1988), for example, note that informal communication can be highly effective, although it can compromise the accountability of partnership working. Crawford and Jones see informal communication as

importance of an extended planning phase for project work, during which all partners can be identified and contacted, the most appropriate organisational structure established, and initial meetings held.

Two of the burglary SDPs which evidently benefited from engaging partners from an early stage were Coldfall and Laineside. In the case of Coldfall, the multi-agency focus group had been set up prior to the submission of the bid for RBI funding; and the fact that it was already in existence meant that for the most part its members had a high level of commitment both to the group itself and to the work it was undertaking. In Laineside, a multi-agency steering group (including residents' representatives along with police officers, representatives of the local authority and others) was set up to assist the development of the funding bid to the Home Office, and continued to meet regularly throughout the life of the project. This ensured that from the very beginning of the project, the issues of greatest concern to partners could be aired within the partnership, and all partners could have an impact on the direction taken by it. As noted above, one result of this has been that the partnership has come to focus on issues well beyond burglary.

Clarify inputs

Where potential partners are reluctant to commit to a project because of concerns about the demands on human and material resources that this might entail, it is important for the partnership as a whole to assess and clarify the demands it is making on all its individual members. This further illustrates the need for all partners to be engaged from the outset, since this enables them to make clear to each other what they are and are not able to contribute to the partnership in practical terms; and to negotiate roles for themselves that they have the capacity to perform.

The importance of clarifying inputs was stressed by members of the Police Partnership Team of Bishop's Borough police (within whose remit the Holliton SDP fell) – a unit dedicated to promoting and developing partnership work. This team has recently adopted the practice of drawing up contractual agreements with agencies which are working in partnership with the police on funded projects. These agreements specify the work to be carried out, the resources to be provided by the project, and the inputs expected of the partners. According to the partnership team, partner agencies greatly welcome the opportunity to have their contributions formalised in this manner.

However, to reach agreement over contributions in the first place is not necessarily a straightforward matter. The Everington SDP provided an illustration of the potentially fraught nature of this process (see Box 3.3). This example also demonstrates that it can be difficult to estimate in advance the demands on staff time that may ensue from an agency's involvement in a partnership project.

problematic: in their view, 'informal inter-agency relationships tend to increase power differentials between agencies', which is partly because 'access to the relevant informal settings itself becomes a powerful resource' (1995: 27).

Box 3.3: Negotiations between the police and local authority in Everington

The Everington SDP was devised and led by a police sergeant. Its major element was the installation of gates to block alleys between terraced housing and the fencing of gardens that backed on to public land.

The local authority had signed up to the original project proposal. The initial bid submitted to the Government Office contained no contingency fees. As a result, the understanding of the project leader was that local authority staff would be made available to work with him at no additional cost to the project. However, after the funding was awarded in April 1999 it became apparent that Landscape Practice Group of the local authority would not participate in certain parts of the process without being paid. Specifically, they expected payment for administering the contract, carrying out the planning supervision, and providing a Health and Safety plan.

There followed an extended period of argument between the project leader and local authority representatives. The project leader remained determined to see the local authority meet their obligations (as he saw it) to the project, and found himself in a strong position thanks to the support he received from a local councillor and the fact that local residents were becoming impatient with the failure of the promised security work to materialise.

Ultimately, a senior local authority officer was persuaded to make a commitment to the project, and was able to acquire some additional funding that could pay for staff time. From January 2000, rapid progress was made on the installation of the gates, thanks in large part to a close working relationship that developed between the project leader and staff from the local authority planning department. In retrospect, the project leader recognised the danger of assuming that the relevant local authority officers would have the freedom to commit time to the project as he did (during some periods, according to his own estimation, he spent 60-70% of his time on it).

Air grievances

Whether partner agencies involved in crime reduction projects are concerned about different agendas, excessive workloads, distraction from core activities, or anything else – it can be beneficial if they voice these concerns freely at partnership meetings. Clearly, there is little to be gained where argument is merely constant sniping or so aggressive as to be destructive; but where the discussion of points of difference and even conflict is conducted with the explicit aim of reaching compromise solutions it can produce positive results. This point was strongly made by one of the chairs of the Coldfall focus group, who stressed that he had to ensure the members of the group were able to be open and honest with each other, so that they could confront problems when they arose rather than retreat to their respective corners.

This is partly a matter of getting the right personalities around the table, since some individuals are bound to be better at negotiation than others, and more inclined to listen to and take on board the views of those who oppose them. However, no partnership can legislate for the effects of personality: it is simply something that every partnership must work with and around. The Coldfall project leader referred to above stressed that in the early days of the focus group he had had to 'eject' some individuals who were not suited to partnership working, and bring in the kinds of people who would be willing to co-operate. All in all, he remarked, it had taken "a lot of hard work and a lot of pain and a bit of blood-letting" to establish the partnership. The Everington project leader also described partnership as a 'painful' process – although he had originally expected it to be 'cosy'.

For those most involved in getting a new partnership off the ground, an important first step is perhaps to recognise that inter-agency relations are bound to be difficult: to labour under the impression that a partnership could or should be entirely harmonious might be to open oneself up to major problems when conflict first starts to emerge. The airing of grievances should thus involve the recognition and expression of the many differences among partners in terms of their functions, cultures and ideologies. Crawford has emphasised the importance of negotiating conflict openly and constructively. He notes that all too frequently partnerships

seek to suppress points of differences – sometimes adopting “highly creative strategies for ‘defining away’ and circumventing conflict” (1998: 173).

An officer involved in the Holliton SDP said that he always warns others that partnership is like a ‘rocky relationship’ rather than a ‘happy marriage’. He made the point that working with other agencies involves learning to accept difference rather than to see it as something negative: a hard lesson that the police are having to learn in relation to diversity issues generally.

Encourage intra-agency consultation

Clearly, there may be varying degrees of commitment to a partnership at different levels of a partner agency. Reporting on research on partnership, Liddle and Gelsthorpe point out that

A spirit of co-operation among representatives on a strategic level multi-agency crime prevention group might coexist with acrimonious relations at line-worker level, for example, and smooth relations on the ground sometimes coexist with higher level multi-agency disagreements about roles or policy. (1994b: 3).

It was stressed by the project co-ordinator of the Greenham SDP that the impetus for partnership, moreover, can emerge at different levels. On the one hand, senior officers may get together to devise a partnership strategy; on the other hand, officers working on the ground may discover the benefits co-operation for themselves, and institute practices of joint working which are subsequently formalised at higher levels. However, within many agencies it might be expected that operational officers are on the whole less aware of issues relating to partnership than their senior colleagues. For example, one of the police officers from the Bishop’s Borough Police Partnership Team spoke of there being increasing enthusiasm about partnership among senior officers, whereas grass roots officers are only “slowly waking up to the fact that [partnership] is going on”.

If there is to be a genuine sense of ownership of a partnership strategy by the agencies involved, and not simply by individual agency representatives, there must be effective consultation on that strategy within as well as between the agencies. In particular, if operational officers are given the opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute to current debates – relating to the direction taken by the partnership as a whole as well as to the implementation of work in which they are directly involved – not only will the likelihood of their commitment be enhanced, but the partnership itself will be able to draw on the widest possible pool of expertise in devising actions.

Highlight the benefits of partnership to partners

If agencies can be persuaded that, far from compromising their core activities, partnership will in fact allow those activities to be carried out more effectively, any initial reluctance to commit may be overcome. However, any benefits of partnership are unlikely to be immediate, and hence prospective partners might have to take a long-term view of these. The main benefits that partnership may bring – over time – to partner agencies are the following:

- more resources for and wider recognition of their work;
- practical support for officers carrying out their jobs;
- improved general conditions of work resulting from the impact of the partnership.

More resources/recognition

Membership of a partnership may provide an agency with access to additional resources through external project funding or funding that other partners are able to make available for multi-agency community safety work. It might also help to raise the profile of the work carried out by the agency – both among other agencies involved in the partnership, and in the local area generally through publicity received by the partnership. Furthermore, where an agency not traditionally seen as working in the field of crime reduction participates in a partnership, public perceptions of that agency may change for the better, with it being seen as playing a

more important part in the life of the local community. The head of the Borough Council's Department of Sports and Recreation described the effects of his department's incorporation in the Coldfall Focus Group in terms such as these (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.4: The involvement of the Department of Sports and Recreation in the Coldfall focus group

The head of the local authority Department of Sports and Recreation joined the Coldfall Focus Group in late 1999, after the partnership had already been in existence for over a year. He was brought in at the point when the group decided to do more work with young people, aiming in particular to tackle youth crime and address local concerns about anti-social behaviour.

In his own words, the department head found it 'very easy' to get involved in this kind of multi-agency work, as throughout his career in sports and recreation he had always been keen to focus on issues of social exclusion, and it had been clear to him that young people cause less nuisance and commit less crime if sports and leisure facilities are provided for them. He has found the police to be 'very receptive' to the inclusion of his department in the partnership, as they are keen to see young people 'off the streets', and know that sports provision is a way of achieving this. Similarly, officers from the local authority housing and environmental services departments are aware that one of the biggest concerns of residents is the problem of young people with nothing to do. Not only at a local level, but also at a national level, he feels that it has recently been recognised for the first time that sports and recreation services have an important role in crime reduction, and that there is an immediate relationship between these provisions and what is going on in the streets.

Hence the inclusion of the sports and recreation department in the focus group has helped to open up a debate about the role of local sports facilities in community development. It has also channelled some extra resources towards the department: for example, a youth scheme implemented by the department under the umbrella of the partnership received funding not only from the RBI, but also from the local authority chief executive's department, as a result of a request made by the police superintendent who co-chaired the focus group.

Practical support for officers

Officers working for agencies involved in partnerships may find that through formal and informal channels their partners can offer them help with specific problems encountered in their day-to-day work. In several of the burglary sites, it was apparent that officers from different agencies, at both senior and junior levels, would call on each other for assistance with greater ease than they had done in the past. This was because they knew each other personally, had wider knowledge of one another's working practices, and also had greater expectations of co-operation. The DCI who led the Holliton SDP, for example, spoke of being able to make a simple telephone call to the probation officer of a burglar who was wanted, which is something he would not have been able to do easily before. Talking about interaction at a different level, an officer from the Bishop's Borough Police Partnership Team commented that whatever awareness grass roots police officers have of partnership working, they are happy to 'reap the benefits' of partnership in that they are increasingly inclined to pass on certain issues to be dealt with by officers from other agencies, where appropriate.

Improved general conditions

If a crime reduction partnership is able to achieve its main goals, the conditions in which the individual partners work are likely to improve. To persuade prospective partners of this, the first step might be to focus their attention on the reality of the crime issues the partnership is setting out to address. In the words of a police officer involved in the Holliton SDP, this is a matter of 'marketing' crime reduction work, which requires the police (or other lead agencies) to 'evidence the problem' that is to be tackled.

The question then arises of what the benefits will be to the individual partners of a reduction in the crime or crimes at issue. The police will usually be the most direct and obvious

beneficiaries of success in crime reduction in terms of reduced workload; but other agencies, too, may stand to gain significantly - since crime and the wide-ranging problems associated with crime are likely to affect the people they work for and with, and the environment in which they work.

Lead agencies may have most success in 'selling' the benefits of partnership work to reluctant partners if they are able to 'translate' partnership objectives into a language that is relevant and sensitive to the priorities of those agencies and the constraints within which they operate. For example, a housing officer involved in the Wetherill SDP talked about the fact that crime reduction is generally not seen as part and parcel of local authority housing management. This, in the main, focuses on such matters as collecting rent, dealing with lettings, and resolving problems of neighbour nuisance. However, the reluctance of some housing officers to undertake crime reduction work may be overcome if they are shown that this can have a tangible impact on the job that they do: for example, a reduction in burglary in a housing estate will, in the long term, mean less maintenance work and fewer voids for them to deal with.

4. Capacity

Establishing and sustaining capacity

As observed above, a crucial element of project planning is the identification of what precisely the partnership and its constituent parts have the capacity to undertake. There is no point in developing ambitious proposals that in practical terms the partnership will not be able to manage or implement.

Perhaps the most obvious aspect to capacity is the matter of staff time. This is especially true when, as at the present time, officers within most public services feel that they are already overloaded with work. There are, however, many other practical requirements that limit or enhance the capacity of partnerships to carry out their work. Whether these are to be paid for out of core or project funding, any crime reduction partnership is likely to need all or most of the following:

- staff available with the necessary **time** to carry out the strategic and operational work of the project;
- staff available with the necessary **skills and general aptitude** to carry out the strategic and operational work of the project;
- scope for **contracting out** portions of the operational work;
- access to appropriate **equipment/devices**;
- access to appropriate **facilities**;
- access to specific **information**.

The above items are considered in the sections of this chapter that follow, under the headings 'Staffing', 'Contracting' and 'Practical means'.

Issues relating to capacity may appear to be relatively straightforward aspects of partnership working – compared with the more complex matters, for example, of problem-solving and commitment. It can therefore be all too easy for project leaders and steering group members to pay little attention to the details of capacity, and subsequently to find that aspects of the partnership's work are jeopardised as a result. Furthermore, whatever efforts are made to ensure the practical feasibility of a programme of work, it is inevitable that the implementation of that programme will give rise to some unanticipated demands. For example, aspects of the work may take up far greater staff time than was foreseen; revisions may be made to project plans which have far-reaching repercussions for staffing requirements; or contractors who were expected to undertake work for the project may find that they are overbooked.

All this points again to the need for careful and detailed project planning. Enough flexibility must also be built into project plans to allow a partnership to accommodate new or unforeseen demands. Project planners should also take account of the fact that some partner agencies may be more prone to sudden changes in resource availability than others (for example, a common difficulty in the SDP sites was the abstraction of CID police officers to serious crime investigations). Part of the process of project monitoring should be a continuous checking that capacity is **sustained** within all partner agencies and the partnership as a whole; and that when additional human or material needs arise, these can be met or the project goals are revised accordingly.

Establishing and sustaining capacity involves a constant interplay between intra-agency and inter-agency management structures. At an inter-agency level, whatever partnership management group is in place should maintain an overview of the issues relating to capacity, and ensure effective consultation on these issues between all involved. But intra-agency management structures are crucial, also: in particular, decisions about what agency resources (of all kinds) are to be directed to partnership working should be clearly communicated to all relevant officers; managers should be fully aware and supportive of the

partnership commitments of their staff; and the repercussions of these commitments for other work should be carefully monitored.

An effective system of accountability for partnership work can only emerge through a constructive and transparent relationship between inter- and intra-agency management. Proper accountability means that senior management within partner agencies should not only support their staff in carrying out partnership commitments, but also ensure that they deliver on them. In the absence of such a system, the risk is that staff will not prioritise partnership work, in the face of the many demands arising from core agency business that are likely to be made on their time.

Staffing

The enormous demands that partnership work can make on staff time are illustrated by Table 4.1, which provides details of personnel inputs into the Everington SDP. The table also shows the considerable amount of time that local residents, working on a voluntary basis, devoted to the project. (They were mostly involved in distributing property-marking kits and gate contracts, and assisting with local consultation.) The table excludes details of the work carried out by the private contractors who constructed and installed the Everington alley gates.

Table 4.1: Personnel inputs into the Everington SDP

PERSONNEL	Hours – March 1999 to Dec 2000
Police	
Community safety sergeant (project manager)	270
Police neighbourhood watch co-ordinator	30
Crime analyst	24
2 crime reduction officers	108
Beat officer	20
Local authority	
Councillor	87
Planning supervisor	70
Clerk of works	28
2 community workers	107
Head, leisure and community services	20
Other	
Business in the Community (voluntary organisation)	40
6 local residents	526

The discussion below focuses on staffing needs with respect to the three fundamental levels of partnership working:

- Project leadership
- Agency representation
- Implementation.

Project leadership

Effective project leadership can be a key to the success of a partnership (see, for example, Bennett and Durie, 1999). Hedderman and Williams, who looked at the implementation of the SDP strategies, found that

in all projects (multi-agency or not), the personal qualities and abilities of the project manager seems to be *the* factor which determines whether implementation is successful. In many cases, implementation seemed to have been achieved largely because of his or her imagination, stamina, networking and management skills, and dogged determination (2001: 2).

The amount of time that a project leader is able to commit to a project is often critical. The Goodwynton SDP was jointly led by a police inspector and the local authority community safety co-ordinator, who felt that the project benefited from the fact that they were able devote much time to it, thanks to the support they received from their senior managers. Another positive aspect to their role was that, as members of the multi-agency Goodwynton Community Safety Team, they worked together in the same office, where they were easily accessible to other officers. In contrast, the Wetherill SDP was officially led by a detective inspector, who had too many other demands on his time – especially because he was also head of the burglary squad – to pay the project his full attention. At the same time, other members of the partnership group did not want to take on responsibility for the work because of their own heavy workloads. The project leader of the Holliton SDP, a detective chief inspector, faced similar problems. (“Absolutely no way is that a role for a DCI” was the comment made by a lower-ranking police officer about the Holliton project leadership.)

Partnership working at all levels suffers when there is a high turn-over of staff within partner agencies; but it is particularly important that, wherever possible, the project leader remains in post throughout the project. One of the chairs of the Coldfall Focus Group attributed part of the success of the Group to the fact that his involvement had been ongoing – and that he had been “like a dog with a bone”. Similarly, the project leader of the Everington SDP commented that the project had benefited much from his being able to ‘hold the line’ over its life-time.

Another important issue related to leadership is seniority: that is, the project leader should have the necessary (formal or personal) authority to bring into the partnership and delegate work to officers within his or her own and other agencies. The project leader of the Greenham SDP remarked that as a police sector inspector he had not been able to mobilise many of the officers whom he would have liked to see involved in the (largely police-based) project. For example, he could not persuade officers in certain departments to utilise the information produced by a new crime analysis system which had been introduced as part of the project. The police sergeant who led the Everington SDP felt that his job was initially made difficult by his prior lack of project managements skills and experience. He has stressed the need for project management training for police officers; a point also made by police officers from the Holliton SDP.

In several of the burglary sites (including Holliton) where there were concerns about the lack of effective leadership, it was suggested that the appointment of dedicated project co-ordinators would have provided much-needed practical assistance to project leaders. The Greenham project was the only SDP that had a dedicated co-ordinator, and this arrangement was felt to work well. The co-ordinator worked closely with the project leader (a police inspector), who said that she was the project’s ‘anchor’ because she constantly pushed officers to undertake their respective tasks, thereby ensuring that the work was done. One of the officers from Holliton suggested that in the situation where two or three relatively small projects are running concurrently in an area, a single dedicated co-ordinator could have responsibility for all three, and hence promote co-ordination between as well as within the projects.

Agency representation

The individuals who represent their own agencies on steering groups or other partnership bodies must, first of all, have the necessary time and support of their senior management to be able to attend meetings regularly. As illustrated by the experiences of some of the burglary SDPs, a partnership will itself start to fragment without the regular representation of all its core agencies, and individual partners that are not well represented will find themselves outside the main decision-making processes and hence either marginalised or assigned roles which they are not able or prepared to fulfil.

As applies also to the specific position of project leader, the issue of seniority is highly relevant to steering group membership as a whole. If an inter-agency body is to be more than just a talking shop, its members must be in a position to make decisions about the precise contributions to be made to the partnership by their respective agencies, without referring back to more senior colleagues. The importance of having decision-makers around the table

was stressed by one of the participants in the Coldfall focus group, who pointed out that many members of the group were local authority department heads who were also spending officers, and therefore had access to resources. He also noted that to have had officers on the group who were more senior than this – such as department directors - would have been problematic, since they would have been ‘too strategic’ in their outlook, and less able to undertake work directly. According to Liddle and Gelsthorpe, something else to be avoided is any ‘imbalance of seniority’ among members of a multi-agency group, since this “can lead to tensions within the group ... and can also lead to erosion of seniority among representatives, as participants begin to ‘delegate down’” (1994b: 4).

Another issue here is personality, as has been touched on in the previous chapter. A steering group should be made up of individuals who are sufficiently motivated and interested to take on responsibility for those aspects of the partnership’s work that have greatest relevance to their own agencies, and, most importantly, to see that work through to its conclusion. Social skills, such as the ability to communicate well and to negotiate, are also a valuable asset. A member of the Wetherill SDP spoke about the fact that while the members of a partnership group should be able to make decisions, they must also be people who “know when to let go”: that is, who will not insist on having a say on every tiny detail of policy.

Implementation

As is true of all other aspects of partnership work, the implementation of strategies can be successful only if the staff involved have the time and skills to carry it out. Consistency of staffing is also a factor here: while the internal staffing arrangements of the partner agencies will not, of course, be under the control of the partnership, agencies can be made aware that rapid staff turn-over tends to be highly disruptive to project implementation.

If the operational work of an agency is to change in any significant way as a consequence of its involvement in a partnership, there may be a need for retraining of existing staff, or the recruitment of new staff where funding is available. In other circumstances, where implementation of an initiative entails minimal disruption to the everyday operations of a given agency, there may still be practical implications for the work of that agency that must be carefully assessed and communicated by project and agency staff. One of problems faced in distributing pendant alarms to elderly residents in Goodwynton was that the voluntary agency responsible for this initiative was required to operate outside its normal tight system (for example, in providing the alarms for free rather than charging a small rental as was usual), and did not seem able to cope with this.

Whatever the precise staffing requirements for implementation, management support for the staff involved, to permit the work to be prioritised to some degree, is important. The Goodwynton SDP provides a positive example of this: here, the target hardening work involved close co-operation between a police crime prevention officer and a local authority environmental health officer, who were both well supported in this work by their managers and thus able to dedicate sufficient time to it. This was not typical, however: Hedderman and Williams found that in most of the burglary SDPs, “project implementation has had to be fitted in around other commitments”, with the result that “progress has been slower than planned”. Moreover,

managing the implementation has taken its toll on many project managers who feel demoralised by the lack of recognition they get for their efforts. In some cases, their managers seemed to have little knowledge about what they were trying to accomplish (2001: 2).

No one should underestimate the difficulties that senior management face in determining priorities, when agencies are dealing with a vast number of pressing and competing demands. Where the burglary projects suffered because staff were not available to implement the initiatives – as in a case where police officers who were supposed to be used for high visibility policing under the project were reallocated to a local operation on street robbery – the problems stemmed not so much from ineffective intra-agency management as from the

near impossibility of responding to the full range of local needs and agendas, within the context of limited resources.

Contracting

Many partnership projects are likely to involve the contracting out of a certain portion of their work. In the case of the burglary SDPs, for example, most of the physical work of target hardening properties was carried out by external contractors. Where the funding is available to employ contractors, this brings the major advantage of providing the partnership with access to a much wider skills base and larger staffing resource than would otherwise be the case.

However, the use of contractors will enhance the capacity of a partnership in this way only if the process is properly planned and managed: as with all other aspects of partnership capacity, what may be regarded as a simple matter which demands little forethought can in practice prove more of a challenge or give rise to more practical difficulties than anticipated. The planning entails, in the first place, establishing the amount and precise nature of the work that must be undertaken by the contractors, and identifying individuals or companies who can carry out the desired tasks to a satisfactory standard, and within whatever budget and time-scale have been set. The project leader of the Holliton SDP, when asked what had been the main difficulty faced by the project, referred to the problem of finding the right contractors to do the target hardening work. This problem arose partly because the voluntary agency originally expected to do the work was unable to fulfil its commitments because of staffing shortages; hence the partnership had had to look for private contractors at a relatively late stage of the project.

Depending on the size of a contract to be awarded and the regulations of the agency responsible for it, it may be necessary to issue an invitation to tender for the work, in which case sufficient time must be allowed for this process. The requirements relating to contract procurement may also have to be discussed among the partner agencies: in at least one of the burglary SDPs, there was some frustration on the part of the police with what was seen as the overly long procurement process undertaken by the local authority. The project leader of the Everington SDP commented that he had had no training in or experience of procurement, and found the process of awarding the contract to the company that provided the project's security gates much more demanding and complex than he had expected.

The management of contractors is another aspect of the work that must be undertaken with care and foresight. Close monitoring of the work, regular feedback on progress to the partnership, and comprehensive record-keeping, are essential – not only for the purposes of contract management but also to feed into the overall process of project monitoring and evaluation. For example, unless project staff have full records of exactly what security measures have been provided for which properties, a thorough assessment of impact of a target hardening initiative will not be possible. The Wetherill SDP provided an example of poor management of the contract for provision of security patrols in the local estates. There was much concern among some of the project partners about the 'Rangers' apparent failure to carry out the full foot patrols that they had been employed to do. (For example, there were reports that they were driving on to the housing estates, and then not leaving their car.) However, as was observed by one of the housing officers involved in the partnership, the fact that the Rangers were themselves invited to meetings of the project management group made it difficult for the partners to discuss their work, and its shortcomings.

Practical means

Another aspect to capacity is a partnership's access to the practical means to be used in implementing its programme of work. It is useful to consider three categories here:

- Equipment/devices
- Facilities
- Information

Equipment/devices

Various initiatives undertaken by a partnership may involve the use of specific equipment or devices, in which case successful implementation will depend on that equipment being affordable, available, and effective. Determining affordability, availability and effectiveness is a relatively simple but crucial task, since a minor oversight in this regard can have significant repercussions for the work that is ultimately carried out. In Greenham, a supply shortage of suitable locks for upvc windows was one of several problems encountered in implementing a target hardening initiative – an initiative that resulted in no more than about 70 of a planned 350 properties being secured. Whether decisions about equipment are made by a partnership as a whole or by an individual agency, it is vital that those officers with detailed knowledge of the operational requirements have an input.

Where a partnership proposes to adopt an innovative approach to tackling a problem through the use of new technology, there is always a possibility that the costs of this may be higher than expected, or that the measures may not be as effective as had been hoped. One of the SDPs had planned to use a new security system for tracking the location of electronic appliances, but the development of this system was not completed in time by the company which had designed it. A similar problem was apparently encountered by another of the projects with respect to covert surveillance equipment to be used in properties vulnerable to burglary.

The use of new computer software may be one element of a project, in which case the partnership should ensure, first, that this meets the specific needs of the project and, secondly, that it is used by project staff as intended. Some new software was purchased by the Holliton SDP in order to assist crime pattern analysis, but was generally used not so much for the project itself as for the development of new bids. A major part of the Greenham project was meant to be the use of a computer program by the name of InvestigAide, intended to assist the detection of burglaries by matching offences to possible suspects, essentially by analysing the modus operandi (MOs) of the offences and linking them to the MOs of known local burglars. However, the package proved to be of limited use, because the burglary MOs were not sufficiently differentiated for the offences to be linked with any degree of certainty to individual burglars.

Facilities

Some activities of crime reduction partnerships - especially those oriented around 'social' goals - may require access to appropriate facilities, such as premises for youth work or meetings of residents' groups. The availability of facilities, whether rented by the project or provided free of charge by one of the partners or an associated organisation, should therefore be regarded as another dimension to a partnership's overall capacity.

In Coldfall, the focus group launched an initiative known as the 'Off the Wall' scheme, which involved the provision of activities for young people on two evenings per week. This scheme proved to be 'too successful', in the words of the officer responsible for it, as it attracted over 300 young people a night, which was too many to cope with (in terms of staffing as well as facilities). The initiative was therefore redefined and relaunched, with a view to restricting the number of participants. Another of the burglary SDPs encompassed a detached youth work scheme which had to be run from the back of the van for many months because no suitable room for it could be found.

A partnership may find it helpful to look beyond its immediate members for assistance with facilities. The very existence of a partnership may demonstrate to external organisations and services that there are a variety of ways of participating in crime reduction projects. The project leader of the Holliton SDP commented that general awareness of the range of multi-agency work currently being carried out across Bishop's borough has led to a number of offers of support and sponsorship by local businesses: for example, one local company recently provided mobile premises for an internet café, which is to be set up as part of a youth project.

The partnership established by the Laineside SDP has benefited from the fact that various local organisations – including pubs, places of worship and community groups - have provided premises for meetings. Given the project's aim of promoting community involvement, this level of support from local groups is in itself a measure of success. Project staff have been disappointed in the generally low level of participation of local businesses – although there have been some ad hoc business contributions to the partnership, such as the sponsorship of a tree-planting scheme by an estate agent.

Throughout this report, the importance of thorough and detailed planning of project work has been emphasised. However, a difficulty encountered by the Holliton SDP in relation to facilities illustrates the equally important point that partnerships must have the flexibility to work around the kinds of unpredictable events that can disrupt project implementation at any point. One of the initiatives of this project was meant to involve the use of offenders on community safety orders to make trellises, which would then be installed as target hardening measures. In the event, an injury in one of the workshops run by Probation for use by offenders led to all such workshops being shut down by the Health and Safety Executive. As a result, the trellises had to be bought rather than made, and the offenders were employed to install them only.

Information

Finally, in the context of this discussion of capacity it is worth briefly considering the issue of information. Information of various kinds plays an important part in much of the work of crime reduction partnerships – particularly in the processes of problem analysis and project evaluation. But a partnership might also need access to specific kinds of information in order to implement certain initiatives. In this sense, although this is not a matter of physical requirements such as equipment or facilities, the availability of particular information can be considered an aspect of capacity.

For some initiatives, the information that a project requires may not be contentious but nevertheless difficult to access. For example, one initiative of the Goodwynton SDP aimed to encourage landlords to improve the security of their premises. However, progress on this was hindered partly because up-to-date addresses of many of the (mostly absentee) landlords could not be found. In other cases, the issue of information is more complex: such as when a partnership or specific agencies seek data on offenders for purposes of offender-focused initiatives, or data on criminal activity to assist policing operations. In such circumstances, there may be a need for partner agencies to share sensitive information, which might require careful negotiation and the development of information exchange protocols.

5. Conclusions

The experiences of the RBI projects demonstrate that partnership work is complex and demanding. The personnel involved in these projects – from a wide range of agencies – clearly devoted a great deal of thought, time, effort and energy to the work, with the result that much was achieved in terms of the planning and implementation of many different kinds of initiatives. As is clear from the above discussion, many of the projects also encountered various problems in terms of partnership – which was no doubt inevitable, given the lack of experience of partnership working of some of the staff, the tight time frame within which the projects were organised, and the challenges that are inherent in inter-agency work of all kinds.

This concluding chapter seeks to pull out of the preceding discussions some of the key learning points that can assist partnerships engaged in crime reduction projects to enhance their effectiveness and avoid some of the difficulties they might otherwise face. These points are outlined below in relation to the three ‘prerequisites’ of knowledge, commitment and capacity.

In considering the learning points, it is important to remember that the concepts of knowledge, commitment and capacity encompass many overlapping and interlinked elements. In particular, the centrality to all three of thorough planning, project monitoring intra-agency consultation has been made clear throughout this report. However, the three ‘prerequisites’ have been treated here as analytically distinct components of the partnership process, in order to present a clear and coherent framework within which partnerships can plan and organise their activities.

Knowledge

All participants in a partnership should always know exactly what they are doing and why they are doing it. This entails adopting a problem-solving approach to crime reduction, which should indeed be at the heart of all partnership work.

The first stage of problem solving – the identification of the crime problem to be tackled – may be carried out by the police alone (although it cannot always be assumed that the police are able to identify all types of crime problems on their own). However, generally it is desirable for all agencies to become involved in the SARA process at the earliest opportunity. The subsequent stages – problem analysis, development of the response, and assessment – should involve all partners in an ongoing process of collecting, analysing and disseminating information about the issues being addressed and the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the work being done. Central to this process are three fundamental questions that must be addressed:

What methods of addressing the crime problem might work in theory?

- Consider, as part of the project planning process, the full range of crime reduction methods that might potentially have an impact on the crime problem being addressed.
- Consult as widely as possible with prospective partners from the initial stages of project planning, to ensure that a wide variety of possible solutions are explored, and that any bias in terms of the partnership’s broad approach is avoided.

What methods of addressing the crime problem might work in the specific context in which they are to be introduced?

- In developing the specific initiatives that are to be put into place, take fully into account the commitment and capacity of all partners (see below).

- Establish the precise boundaries of the area in which the project is to be carried out, and conduct a thorough analysis of the nature and specific characteristics of the crime problem that is being addressed.
- Examine the extent and impact of other kinds of crime in the local area. Where appropriate (for example, to encourage the participation of certain agencies, or to increase support for the project among the general public), consider broadening the scope of the project to encompass goals related to the 'other' crime problems.
- In developing the crime reduction strategy, investigate the needs and expectations of local people – taking into account the differing perspectives of different sectors of the population – and ensure that publicity is appropriately targeted.
- Where the active involvement of local people in the partnership is sought, be prepared to incorporate within the project (wherever possible) the range of issues that are of most direct concern to residents, even where they diverge from crime.

To what extent are the methods adopted by the partnership working in practice?

- Prior to project implementation, identify or set up data collection systems that will permit full (internal or external) evaluation of the impact.
- Establish monitoring arrangements for the measurement of inputs and outputs against input and output targets.
- As part of the monitoring process, examine closely and give credit for the contributions to the partnership made by individual partners, thereby promoting accountability, encouraging their overall commitment to the project, and ensuring that demands made on them remain within their present capacity.
- Use the findings of the project monitoring and evaluation in a constructive and reflexive manner - that is, to build in an informed way upon successes to date, and to make necessary corrections to the project plan where there are failings.

Commitment

Every multi-agency project depends for its success on the commitment of the individual partners to the co-operative venture. However, there are many potential obstacles to commitment. The evidence from the burglary SDP sites suggests that the most serious of these may be the lack of capacity of some partners to carry out the proposed work; conflicts or contradictions between the agendas of the different partners; the reluctance of partners to change their traditional ways of working; and partners' lack of a sense of ownership of project initiatives.

There are, however, various ways in which these obstacles can be overcome, and the commitment of partners can be promoted:

- Engage all prospective partners from the outset of a project – for example, through consulting extensively on project design. In particular, involve each agency in the process of determining its specific role within the partnership.
- Clarify the specific inputs that are expected of partners, taking into account what exactly they have the capacity to undertake.
- Allow grievances about the partnership to be aired in a constructive manner, in recognition that the bringing together of agencies with differing perspectives and cultures is always likely to produce some tensions.

- Encourage **intra-agency** consultation on partnership work to promote a genuine sense of ownership across agencies and not simply among individual agency representatives. Encourage operational as well as senior officers to express their views, so that the partnership can draw on the widest possible pool of expertise in devising actions.
- Highlight the benefits of partnership to partner agencies, including:
 - possible access to additional resources through external project funding or funding that other partners are able to acquire for multi-agency crime reduction work;
 - wider recognition of the work they do – both among other agencies involved in the partnership, and in the local area more generally through publicity received by the project;
 - the greater ease with which officers from different agencies can call on each other for assistance with their day-to-day work – resulting from the fact that they know each other personally, have wider knowledge of each others' working practices than hitherto, and have greater expectations of co-operation.
 - the short-term or long-term improvements to working conditions or reductions in workloads that should follow from any fall in crime brought about by the partnership.

Capacity

A crucial element of devising a partnership's strategy is the identification of what precisely the partnership and its constituent parts have the capacity to undertake. There is no point in developing ambitious proposals that in practical terms the partnership will not be able to manage and implement. Moreover, if a strategy includes tasks that are perceived by individual agencies as unachievable, this may have a demoralising effect, with the result that even the more workable parts of the strategy will not be implemented.

The most obvious aspect of capacity relates to the availability of staff time (whether paid for by core or project funding); but other important issues include access to contractors, and to the equipment, facilities and information required for project implementation.

Staffing

- Establish constructive and transparent relations between inter-agency and intra-agency management structures, in order to encourage managers within partner agencies to support their staff in carrying out partnership commitments and hold them accountable for delivery.
- Ensure that project leadership is undertaken by officers who can dedicate a substantial amount of time to the partnership and have the necessary skills and (formal or informal) authority to direct activities and motivate their partnership colleagues.
- Consider recruiting a dedicated project co-ordinator, who can provide practical assistance to the project leader by overseeing the work of all partners and facilitating communication among agencies.
- Ensure that agency representatives on partnership bodies have the necessary time and support of their senior management to be able to attend meetings regularly; are able to make decisions about the contributions of their respective agencies; and are motivated to take responsibility for the partnership's work.
- Ensure that staff are available within the partner agencies with the necessary time and skills to implement the partnership initiatives.

Contracting

- If contractors are to be employed, establish the precise amount and nature of the work to be contracted out, and identify individuals or companies who can carry out the required tasks within the budget and time-scale.
- Where competitive tendering is required by agency regulations, allow sufficient time for this process, and ensure that officers responsible for procurement have relevant training or experience.
- Ensure that management of contractors is carried out effectively, involving close monitoring of the work, regular feedback on progress to the partnership, and full record-keeping.

Practical means

- Where specific equipment or devices are needed to implement certain project initiatives, assess the affordability, availability and effectiveness of the required items as part of the planning process. Involve officers with detailed knowledge of the operational requirements in all decisions about equipment.
- If new technology, including computer software, is to be used, take into account the possibility that the costs of this may prove higher than expected, or that the equipment may not prove as effective or reliable as had been anticipated.
- If special facilities are required for project initiatives, a partnership should look beyond its immediate members for assistance – for example, to community organisations and local businesses.
- In planning the implementation of initiatives, take account of any requirements for specific kinds of information, the availability of that information, and any difficulties (for example relating to data protection) that may arise in accessing it.

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Further reading

Around the time of the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a considerable amount of practitioner-related research on the subject of partnership was carried out. For example, the Audit Commission, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and the Home Office Police Research Group undertook complementary studies in this area. These, respectively, looked at past attempts to undertake multi-agency community safety work (Audit Commission, 1999); surveyed crime reduction work across the police forces of England and Wales (HMIC, 1998); and summarised past research on crime prevention and partnership (Hough and Tilley, 1998).

Lessons to be learnt from the early experiences of partnerships under the Crime and Disorder Act have been highlighted by various Home Office publications, including a report on the experiences of 12 'pathfinder' partnerships (Home Office, 1999); an examination of the processes by which audits and strategies were produced by three case study partnerships (Phillips *et al*, 2002); and a review of good practice in crime and disorder consultations (Newburn and Jones, 2001). A thematic inspection on crime and disorder by HMIC reviewed the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act and sought to identify success factors for effective partnership working (HMIC, 2000).

A number of papers on partnership strategies against burglary have been published by the Home Office. These include reports on the outcomes of multi-agency Safer Cities initiatives against burglary (Tilley and Webb, 1994; Ekblom *et al*, 1996); Chenery *et al*'s evaluation (1997) of a Huddersfield project focused on reducing repeat burglary and motor vehicle crime; and Bennett and Durie's report (1999) on the work of the multi-agency Domestic Burglary Task Force in Cambridge. The early work of the partnerships established as part of the Reducing Burglary Initiative has been examined by Tilley *et al* (1999), who looked at the variety of approaches adopted by the burglary project; Hedderman and Williams (2001), who examined the implementation of the project strategies; and Curtin *et al* (2001), who provide guidance on the development of crime reduction plans, based on the experiences of three burglary projects.

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