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NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND CRIME:
AN ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Sohail Husain

Criminal Justice/NCCD Collection
Rutgers University
S.J. Liebowitz Center for Law & Justice
15 Washington St., 4th Fl.
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Sohail Husain
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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 1982, the expansion of Neighbourhood Watch (NW) in England and Wales has been a remarkable phenomenon. Not only has it captured public interest in the seemingly mundane topic of crime prevention, something which has proved exceedingly difficult to achieve in the past, it has actually stimulated active involvement in a community-based initiative in a way unparalleled by any other post-war voluntary movement. Such has been its rate of growth that by late 1989, according to Home Office records, there were 75,000 schemes in operation, and more than three million households were living within scheme boundaries.

It is not difficult to see why this occurred. NW has received approbation from politicians and the police, and apparently successful schemes have been given extensive publicity. To the public, support from these agencies for what seemed intuitively to be a good idea has proved irresistible. At a time of widespread concern about rising levels of crime, they were receptive to new initiatives and readily responded to this innovative concept. But although there were theoretical and practical reasons to justify the introduction of NW, and although it has been shown to reduce the fear of crime, there remains much uncertainty about its impact, especially in the context of crime prevention. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that NW has been widely implemented because many people have an instinctive conviction that it should prevent crime, rather than because there is detailed evidence that it does.

This unsatisfactory situation, in which a policy has been widely implemented without detailed appreciation of its consequences, has developed for several reasons. The escalating crime problem created a demand for rapid implementation, precluding the establishment of properly planned evaluative programmes. Practical and other problems have probably also deterred investigation. The small number of isolated schemes that have been studied have produced equivocal conclusions. It is unclear whether apparently successful schemes are representative of the total population or are atypical exceptions to the rule. Above all, there has been no attempt to collate the available evidence to develop an overview of scheme effectiveness.

But the need to resolve this question remains vital. After all, whatever other benefits NW might bring, it is being presented to, and adopted by, the public as a crime prevention measure. It would therefore be misleading, and possibly irresponsible, to continue to encourage the public to place confidence in an initiative which cannot be shown to work. Furthermore, NW is consuming substantial resources, particularly in the form of support from the police. Unless the crime preventative benefits of NW schemes can be assessed and confirmed, the cost-effectiveness of such resource provision will remain unclear.

This report is intended to increase our understanding of this important issue. It presents the results of a research project, sponsored by The Police Foundation, the objective of which was to assess the effect of NW on crime. It begins with a review of the development of NW in England and Wales. This is followed by an overview of previous evaluative studies and critical appraisal of their methods and results. Finally, the main part of the report is concerned with the previously unpublished

findings from a study of a further sample of schemes. This empirical analysis is based on evidence from a variety of residential locations, but uses a common method of analysis to obtain a comparative assessment of the effect that NW has on particular Crimes.

SECTION TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH IN BRITAIN

Crime has become an issue of widespread public concern in recent years, and it is not difficult to see why. For more than three decades, the number of recorded offences has climbed almost inexorably upwards, doubling between 1974 and 1987. The Government has given law and order issues a high profile, increasing media coverage and raising public awareness of the problem. Many of the offences - most noticeably burglary - occur in residential areas and therefore directly affect private individuals and families in their homes. Crime has serious consequences for the people directly affected; material losses, stress and considerable inconvenience accompany even minor offences. Moreover, although such events only affect a relatively small proportion of the population, they have generated a much more widely experienced fear of crime, a state of mind that can not only have adverse psychological consequences, but can also influence individual behaviour and inhibit personal liberty.

Against this backcloth NW has emerged. Supported by the public, the Government and many police officers, the speed at which it has expanded and the level of interest it has generated have surpassed all expectations. Schemes are strongly concentrated in urban areas, but NW can now be found in all forms of residential environment from remote rural villages to densely populated inner cities. The concept has been extended beyond the conventional housing area to incorporate university campuses and nurses' hostels, and to non-residential locations such as shopping centres, industrial estates, marinas and farms (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Some variations on the 'Watch' model

Boat Watch	Campus Watch
Card Watch	City Watch
Countryside Watch	Drug Watch
Farm Watch	Forest Watch
Hospital Watch	Industry Watch
Poacher Watch	Pub Watch
School Watch	Taxi Watch

Objectives and operation

NW is a community-based activity that is primarily directed at crime prevention in residential areas. It depends on individual residents accepting greater responsibility for crime prevention in their community and cooperating with police to take effective action. The underlying rationale is that NW schemes will deter prospective criminals because it will be known that residents in such areas will be vigilant, property will be protected and offences will be quickly reported. The opportunities for crime will therefore be lower, and the risk of detection higher, than elsewhere. However, the benefits to be anticipated from NW extend far beyond crime prevention alone. Because NW requires residents to work together to protect

each other's property, successful schemes will increase contact and interaction within neighbourhoods, thereby improving community spirit. In turn, this socialisation - combined with the anticipated reduction in crime - will provide reassurance to residents and reduce their fear of victimisation. Finally, since the police play a key role in NW, it provides them with an opportunity to establish constructive links with residents and improve relationships with the local community.

Although the methods used to achieve these goals vary considerably in detail, a generalised model of scheme formation and development applicable in many areas can be identified. In most localities the police, often with the cooperation of local media, have publicised the benefits that NW might bring, but have adopted a reactive approach to scheme formation. This means that, although they have been willing to cooperate and provide advice, the onus has been on residents to make the initial approach, to canvass support and to organise an initial meeting. Their rationale has been that, since NW can only work where residents are genuinely enthusiastic, this type of approach ensures schemes are only formed where this is the case. Thus, most schemes have resulted from requests from individuals, residents* associations, parish groups or other community organisations. Nevertheless, on occasions a more proactive stance has been adopted, with schemes being deliberately established by the police in targeted areas where it was thought their introduction could contribute to the solution of a particular local problem.

The steps leading to scheme formation have usually begun with an initial assessment of local support. Indeed, some forces require written confirmation from a given proportion of households to demonstrate that a scheme is viable. There follows a meeting of residents with the police, at which the objectives and activities of NW are explained. The meeting may be attended by crime prevention or community liaison officers from headquarters, as well as the local beat officer who subsequently will have responsibility for liaison with the residents. The opportunity is often also used to present guidance on home security and other crime prevention measures. Finally, one or more coordinators will be chosen or elected to provide leadership within the scheme and to act as the point of formal contact between police and local residents.

For the individual resident, participation requires two basic types of activity to prevent crime. The first is intended to have a beneficial effect throughout the local area and is arguably more dependent on a change of attitude than behavioural change. Residents are required to become more vigilant, to notice unusual activities or people, and to report anything suspicious. This, of course, can only be accomplished if residents know what is normal in their area, emphasising the need for participants to take an interest in their neighbourhood and get to know their neighbours. The second type of activity is designed to lessen the risk of personal victimisation. Individuals are encouraged to ensure that their home is secure, to 'mark*' their property with their postcode and to keep neighbours informed when their home is unoccupied. Such measures do require action to be taken, demonstrating that NW can only work where residents recognise that they have a personal responsibility to protect their property and cannot rely on the police or others to do it for them. To have a deterrent effect, however, the existence of a scheme - and the involvement of individual households - must be made known, for which purpose street signs and window stickers are widely displayed.

Once a scheme has been launched, the residents are expected to take responsibility for its administration and management. This often involves the organisation of a

programme of activities to inform participants of relevant developments in their area, to maintain interest, strengthen contacts within the community and bring new members into the scheme. Meetings about crime prevention, social functions such as street parties, and charity fundraising illustrate the diverse nature of events included in such programmes.

A committee may be appointed to undertake these tasks but the main burden normally falls on the coordinator. In some areas an administrative hierarchy is established with each road having its own street coordinator, while area coordinators maintain links between schemes. The coordinator is also the point of contact between the scheme and outside agencies, and in particular with the local beat officer. In successful schemes the officer will provide on a regular basis information about local crime developments, feedback about reports from residents, news from other schemes and information about crime prevention for onward dissemination. In return, the coordinator will pass on questions and information from residents, which - for various reasons - they may have been reluctant or unable to communicate direct to the police.

The exchange of information between police and residents appears to be a crucial ingredient in maintaining the momentum of a scheme. Residents, it appears, need frequent reassurance that the police value their contribution and, when necessary, will respond appropriately. Whilst they are willing to supply information, they also expect communication to be a two-way process from which they too will benefit. Recognising the importance of this relationship, some forces organise conferences for participants, while elsewhere communication is achieved through the distribution of newsletters prepared by the police or the coordinator.

Undertaking the various crime prevention measures and other activities linked to NW inevitably requires financial expenditure. Although large sums need not be involved, the costs of stationery, photocopying of newsletters, property marking kits and improved home security hardware can amount to a significant amount for low-income households. Street signs can be particularly costly if payment has to be made for planning permission, erection and public liability insurance in addition to the cost of the signs themselves. However, a range of solutions has been devised to overcome this potential obstacle to scheme development. Police forces have made available stationery and photocopying facilities for the preparation of newsletters. Private businesses have sponsored the manufacture of signs; local authorities have erected them without charge; and the Department of the Environment has eased the relevant planning regulations. Finally, some groups operate a small subscription scheme to provide resources for their activities.

Origins and diffusion

Citizen involvement in crime prevention programmes has been prevalent in the United States since the 1970s, and is also well-developed in Australasia and Canada. Its introduction to Britain can be traced to the establishment in 1982 of a single scheme at Mollington, a small Cheshire village, which at the time was experiencing a spate of serious burglaries. Although the precise location is unremarkable, the circumstances surrounding scheme formation here are of considerable interest because subsequently they have been replicated many times across the country. Residents were concerned about crime in their community and wanted preventive measures to be taken; the police had insufficient resources to provide what they considered to be adequate protection. The result was an innovative venture that depended on the participation of both parties.

Diffusion of the NW concept from Cheshire was initially slow and localised. Schemes soon appeared in the Metropolitan Police District, South Wales, Merseyside and Essex, but in January 1986 half of the police forces in England and Wales reported fewer than ten schemes in existence. Many, including Hampshire, Lincolnshire and Gwent, had none at all. It is clear that in several of these areas senior officers were extremely apprehensive about becoming involved in what was then a radical initiative and preferred to wait and learn from the experiences being gained elsewhere. It has therefore been in the period since mid-1986 that NW has taken off.

Accurate data about the number of schemes are scarce. The sole source for national figures is the Home Office, which has collated returns from individual police forces at irregular intervals. Discrepancies have been found in some areas between these returns and schemes actually in existence, and the totals should therefore be viewed as indicative. Nevertheless, as Table 2.2 depicts, the rate of expansion has been extremely high and NW has now spread to all areas of the country. Statistics for the number of participants have not been collated centrally on a regular basis. However, in September 1989 the Home Office estimated that 3.7m households were covered by NW, or approximately one in five of the population. The distribution of schemes and the extent of population coverage in England and Wales is shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.2 The growth of NW schemes in **England and Wales**

January 1985	3,669
December 1985	8,106
June 1986	14,523
October 1986	17,422
March 1987	28,515
October 1987	43,375
March 1988	51,887
July 1988	55,836
October 1988	59,476
December 1988	63,970
March 1989	66,523
September 1989	75,354

Source: Home Office statistics (unpublished)

Table 2.3 The estimated distribution of NW in England and Wales, September 1989

Police force	Schemes	Households	Ave size	% NW
Metropolitan	9,864	978,851	99	36
Avon & Somerset	1,512	97,000	64	19
Bedfordshire	1,508	30,160	20	16
Cambridgeshire	369	12,256	33	5
Cheshire	4,132	124,000	30	37
Cleveland	519	21,347	41	11
Cumbria	950	16,230	17	9
Derbyshire	290	21,000	72	6
Devon & Cornwall	2,043	53,057	26	10
Dorset	324	39,000	120	15
Durham	366	61,283	167	28
Dyfed-Powys	652	22,500	35	14
Essex	2,160	108,000	50	21
Gloucestershire	541	16,500	30	9
G'ter Manchester	8,700	174,000	20	18
Gwent	16	800	50	1
Hampshire	715	32,100	45	5
Hertfordshire	1,546	80,408	52	27
Humberside	1,300	30,000	23	10
Kent	1,604	201,363	126	37
Lancashire	943	126,594	134	25
Leicestershire	1,090	60,900	56	19
Lincolnshire	1,008	20,400	20	10
Merseyside	4,300	150,000	35	29
Norfolk	508	12,440	24	4
Northamptonshire	386	19,300	50	10
Northumbria	2,633	199,971	76	38
North Wales	1,738	34,174	20	15
North Yorkshire	1,413	36,181	26	13
Nottinghamshire	303	48,805	161	13
South Wales	450	8,707	19	2
South Yorkshire	1,098	59,875	55	13
Staffordshire	760	84,340	111	23
Suffolk	259	13,000	50	6
Surrey	454	36,500	80	13
Sussex	3,854	164,000	43	30
Thames Valley	3,320	56,440	17	8
Warwickshire	895	54,469	61	32
West Mercia	2,928	73,200	25	19
West Midlands	5,204	182,140	35	19
West Yorkshire	1,441	97,823	68	13
Wiltshire	1,258	21,948	17	11
Total	75,354	3,681,062	49	20

Sources; OPCS *Census 1981, Population and household tables*, HMSO, London.
 CIPFA *Police statistics; Estimates 1988-89*, London.

Accounting for growth

Why did this astonishing explosion occur when it did? There is no simple answer but two fundamental underlying causes can be identified. Firstly, rising levels of crime and fear of crime generated pressure for effective counter measures to be taken by the police. Secondly, conventional approaches to crime prevention, the framework for which was provided by the Cornish Committee in 1965 (Home Office, 1965), appeared unable to interrupt the upward trend, despite long-term expansion in police manpower and steady investment in technological support. To understand why this particular response to the problem emerged, it is necessary to examine further the reasons for this lack of success in the past.

Part of the explanation undoubtedly lies in operational aspects of preventative policing. Within police forces, crime prevention has traditionally not been accorded the status of certain other specialist activities, and has arguably been provided with inadequate resources. Opportunities for career progression are limited, so it has been difficult to retain good officers committed to crime prevention (Weatheritt, 1986). For similar reasons, local beat constables, who have considerable discretion over the use of their time, have given preventative work a low priority. At the same time, undue emphasis may have been placed on physical measures and technology which do nothing to change the attitudes or value judgements that create offenders in the first place. Investment in equipment and new centralised managerial structures, intended to make the police more effective, may have had the reverse effect. The introduction of motorised patrols and modern communications systems have reduced the need and opportunities for the personal contacts with the public which are now recognised as being highly beneficial.

But while such arguments may be well-founded, it would be quite wrong to attribute responsibility for the continued upward trend solely to the inadequacy of police action. The variable success of crime prevention publicity campaigns has demonstrated that the public is resistant to behavioural change that might lessen the risk of an offence being committed (Riley and Mayhew, 1980).

Critical examination of lack of success in the past has, however, extended far beyond aspects of policy implementation and addressed the theoretical framework on which that policy has been based. This framework has conventionally been provided by 'medico-psychological' interpretations of criminal behaviour which suggest that some people are born with, or acquire, a disposition to offend. In consequence, crime prevention research and policy in Britain has traditionally been directed at the potential offender, with corrective and rehabilitative programmes, intended to weaken the propensity of individuals to offend, forming an important component of this approach (Clarke and Cornish, 1983). The apparent ineffectiveness of such programmes and the failure of the theoretical model to generate alternative policy options has led to a fundamental questioning of its validity and utility.

Recognition of inadequacies in both the theoretical and operational frameworks for crime prevention has been followed by the emergence of new ideas and perspectives. These developments are reflected in recent work by Heal and Laycock (1986), Hope and Shaw (1988) and Tuck (1988). However, three issues are particularly relevant to the growth of NW: the concept of rational choice in the explanation of criminal behaviour; the involvement of the public in preventative action; and the promotion of area-based policies. These are examined individually below.

Rational choice and situational crime prevention

The concept of rational choice has been put forward as an alternative to the medico-psychological explanation for criminal behaviour (Heal and Laycock, 1986). It is based on the premiss that whether or not an offence is actually committed depends on a logical assessment by the potential offender of the opportunities, risks and rewards of a particular course of action. It is recognised that individuals will view situations through their own unique perceptual filter and the assessment will be based on imperfect information. Consequently, on any particular occasion different individuals will reach different conclusions. Nevertheless, within these limits an offence is the outcome of a rational decision making process and, if the circumstances are unfavourable, the individual will desist from carrying out the offence. The important implication of this model, subsequently formally expressed as rational choice theory, is that by reducing the opportunities, increasing the risks and minimising rewards, specific crimes can be prevented.

The generality of this argument remains unclear. The 'protection*' of a particular target is unlikely to persuade professional criminals, such as bank robbers, to change their occupation. Given the vast number of potential targets and the impossibility of protecting them all, such action may simply lead to displacement in time, space, type of offence or method of operation. Rational choice also seems inadequate in the context of crimes of passion or expressive crimes, such as murder or rape. Nevertheless, a variety of evidence has been put forward to demonstrate that previous crime prevention measures - that affected the balance between opportunity, risk and reward - did dramatically reduce the incidence of certain crimes committed by opportunistic or low-rate offenders.

The development of such ideas has resulted in a significant reorientation in crime prevention policy. Activities aimed at the offender are now being widely supplemented by 'situational' measures directed at the immediate environment in which offences can occur. These have been largely concentrated on reducing the physical opportunities for crime and/or increasing the risk of the offender being caught. The first category obviously includes conventional target hardening, for example through the fitting of locks and bolts. More imaginatively, however, attention has also been directed towards the incorporation of crime prevention considerations in environmental planning, architectural design and engineering projects, an approach explored by Clarke and Mayhew (1980). Steps taken to increase the risk of apprehension have attempted to make it more likely that an offence will be seen and reported. The use of video surveillance and improved street lighting illustrate the application of technology to this end. But the more usual strategy has been to seek the support of the general public. By instilling an awareness of crime and developing the notion that individuals in a community share responsibility for its protection, the intention has been to encourage vigilance and a higher level of offence reporting. Crimebusters-type schemes for anonymous reporting of information are just one manifestation of this approach.

Involvement of the public in crime prevention

This last point draws attention to the growing awareness that lack of success in the past cannot simply be rectified by additional resource provision for the police, but depends on public consent and cooperation. This is not a new idea, but the need for good personal contacts between the police and the public seems to have been underestimated or neglected in recent years at the same time as opportunities to develop such contacts have been declining. Increasing demands on police time, the introduction of new technology and managerial changes all contributed to a gradual

distancing between the two parties. Other developments, perhaps most dramatically the urban riots and industrial disputes of the 1980s, have brought the police into violent conflict with particular social groups. These incidents have not only soured the police's relationship with such groups, but have also attracted much media criticism of police behaviour.

The need for a reorientation of policing policy to counteract these types of problem was forcefully advocated by Alderson (1979). His concept of community policing, an approach that builds on improved relationships with the public to achieve effective crime prevention and detection, has subsequently been widely supported. Indeed, community policing - albeit with various names - has emerged as a central plank in the strategy of many forces. One consequence of this has been the increased use of foot patrol officers who, in addition to their normal duties, have the specific task of developing good relationships with the population in the area to which they are assigned (Weatheritt, 1986).

Accompanying these changes have been a number of interventions by central government which attempted to influence police-community relationships in two ways. Firstly, they were to promote consensual policing by ensuring that the police were aware of, and responded to, the views of the people. In this respect they were clearly a consequence of the Scarman Report (1981) which, in concluding that the Brixton riots were an 'outburst of anger and resentment ... against the police', recommended the establishment of statutory liaison committees or other consultative arrangements. Home Office Circulars 54/82 and 2/85 provided detailed guidance to police authorities on how this was to be achieved. Secondly, however, they sought to enlist the active support of the community in crime prevention, recognising that 'police effectiveness cannot be greatly increased unless the community can be persuaded to do more for itself (Home Office Circular 8/84). The way forward was seen to involve increased communication to exchange information and concerns about crime and its prevention; environmental improvements to allow and encourage community involvement; and specific measures to lessen the opportunity for crime and/or increase the chances of apprehending offenders.

Area-based policing strategies

The third influence on change has been the increased emphasis on policing tailored to specific neighbourhoods. It has, of course, long been recognised that there is considerable spatial variation between areas in the level and nature of crime problems, but there is now greater use of that variation in strategy formulation. This may not be explicitly documented in official policy statements. However, it inevitably follows from wider recognition of the need to adapt policy to the characteristics of particular situations, to tackle specific local problems and to take account of the needs and sensibilities of the local population. Thus, a strong spatial dimension can now be identified in a range of crime prevention activities. The use of targeting as a form of tactical policing; the use of community policing, as discussed above; and improvement of the physical environment on 'problem' estates all exemplify this trend.

Within this context, it is quite clear that NW is a logical policy development. Within a single initiative, it encapsulates a framework for the application of situational measures, provides opportunities for community involvement and is by definition an area-based initiative.

SECTION THREE

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ON CRIME

Evaluation of the impact of NW is clearly of fundamental importance. Without knowledge of its effects or effectiveness, rational policy development is impossible. Indeed, continued promotion of the initiative in the absence of evaluative study would be irresponsible, possibly leading to misplaced confidence in schemes by the public and misallocation of resources by the police. Unfortunately, deciding whether NW is successful is extremely problematical. The first difficulty is to reach a definition of success. Given that NW is expected to produce multiple benefits, many of a social nature, one measure of success would be the extent to which such multiple benefits are created. Arguably, however, the main function of NW is as a crime prevention measure. It has been presented to the public in this way and it is with this aim in mind that the public have given their support so enthusiastically. Consequently, although 'social' benefits are desirable and require evaluation, they may be considered ancillary to the main objective and it must be against this that NW should be primarily judged.

Indirect evidence from a variety of sources suggests that the success of NW is almost beyond doubt. Certainly, participants in NW believe it does prevent crime. One survey of coordinators revealed that more than 70 per cent perceived their scheme had been successful in this respect, especially in preventing burglary (Husain, 1988). They also identified a wide range of other undesirable activities - including autocrime, vandalism, prostitution and the activities of con-men - that had been affected by scheme operation. Such confidence appears to exist for three reasons. Firstly, intuitively NW does seem to make sense; one might expect increased surveillance and security to reduce the opportunities for crime and increase the probability of criminals being apprehended. Secondly, participants have been told by both the police and other agencies that NW can prevent crime. Thirdly, considerable publicity has been given to apparently successful schemes in areas that have experienced dramatic reductions in crime following the introduction of NW.

Central government has undoubtedly contributed to the formation of such optimistic perceptions. Statements by Home Office ministers have repeatedly linked reductions in crime to the spread of NW schemes. Initially, these tended to focus on local examples and particularly on reductions in burglary, as a selection of responses to parliamentary questions illustrates (Table 3.1). More recently, the national downturn in property crimes that has been evident since mid-1987 has been implicitly attributed, at least partially, to the spread of NW schemes across the country (Table 3.2). Encouragement to set up schemes has also featured prominently in national crime prevention campaigns, such as the 'Crime - together we'll crack it' initiative and, above all, in the 'Practical ways to crack crime' publication, of which more than two million have now been distributed. These same sentiments have been conveyed to and by the police. In April 1985, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Lawrence Byford, wrote to all chief officers of police about NW and stated, 'Although neighbourhood watch is not solely concerned with residential burglary it can perhaps make most immediate impact on this form of crime'. Similarly, in his annual report for the same year, he wrote, 'Reports from several forces show that Neighbourhood Watch has successfully reduced local crime'¹.

Through both direct and indirect means, therefore, confidence in NW has been transmitted to the public. The statements, being made by authoritative figures in government and other agencies, inevitably attracted considerable media attention. Moreover, although closer examination of the wording of many of the statements shows that they clearly indicate that NW can or may reduce crime, the impression has been given that NW is a highly successful venture likely to reduce crime almost wherever it was set up. But what evidence is there to justify such confidence? This chapter considers the difficulty of obtaining such evidence and provides an appraisal of a selection of evaluative studies that have examined this question.

Table 3.1 NW and local crime reduction: Parliamentary statements by Home Office ministers

... where schemes are carefully designed and introduced, crime is reduced.
[Mr Giles Shaw, 17 June 1986]

Where police forces have isolated crime figures for individual schemes, the results have indicated that neighbourhood watch can reduce burglary in the scheme area.
[Mr Douglas Hogg, 20 November 1986]

A good deal of information is now to hand suggesting that some neighbourhood watch schemes are effective in reducing crime ...
[Mr Douglas Hurd, 7 May 1987]

Since its introduction [in Chatham] there has been a 57% reduction in all reported crime, including a 58% reduction in burglaries.
[Mr Douglas Hogg, 12 May 1987]

There are, however, schemes where a reduction in recorded crime has followed the introduction of neighbourhood watch ... In the London Borough of Wandsworth an increase in the number of neighbourhood watch schemes from 375 in 1985 to 558 in 1986 coincided with a reduction in residential burglaries from 4,119 to 3,514.
[Mr Douglas Hogg, 13 May 1987]

... some schemes are more effective than others. There are, however, many examples of schemes where crime has been reduced in NW areas ...
[Mr Douglas Hogg, 21 April 1988]

Source: Hansard

Table 3.2 NW and national crime reduction: Parliamentary statements by Home Office ministers

The House will be pleased to note that burglaries across England and Wales fell by 3 per cent last year. There are now 9,500 neighbourhood watch schemes - twice the number of a year ago - and they are playing an important part in crime prevention.

[Mr Douglas Hurd, 22 May 1986]

It is interesting to note that this welcome decrease in burglaries has taken place as the number of neighbourhood watch schemes has increased.

[Mr John Patten, commenting on the 1987 fall in residential burglary in England and Wales, 13 May 1988]

It is not possible to be certain about the precise effects of watch schemes on crime figures, but I very much welcome the fact that as the number of Neighbourhood Watch schemes has increased, there has been a welcome decrease in burglaries in dwellings - down about five per cent in the Metropolitan Police area and 4.5 per cent in England and Wales ...

[Mr John Patten, 21 July 1988]

Source: Hansard

Constraints on evaluative analysis

Assessing the impact of NW on crime is fraught with difficulties. These difficulties inhibit research and, where they are not adequately resolved, can render those studies that are undertaken liable to criticism for their methodological shortcomings. Lurigio and Rosenbaum (1986) have outlined several requirements for a rigorous research framework but, such are the constraints on most evaluative studies, that their idealised model can only be just that. In reality, the design of evaluative studies is often determined as much by what is feasible and practicable as by what is methodologically desirable.

A fundamental problem arises from the fact that crime patterns vary continuously in space and time in response to a wide range of variables. Specific offences may have irregular temporal and spatial patterns. Much of the variation is unpredictable and cannot be 'controlled*' in an experimental sense. It is consequently difficult to attribute any change to the introduction of one particular initiative.

The problems of counting crime are also considerable. As the British Crime Survey has repeatedly shown, official statistics substantially underestimate the actual frequency of certain offences. Moreover, initiatives such as NW may cause a change in reporting practice and lead to an increase or decrease in the proportion of total crime recorded, removing whatever consistency might have existed in the data. To complicate matters further, official statistics are seldom available in a format convenient for analysis. Units of spatial aggregation rarely coincide with NW areas, necessitating the extraction of relevant offences from disaggregated source records, a problem exacerbated by a general lack of computerised or historical data.

Victim surveys are the conventional response to overcoming some of these problems, but they do require substantial financial and manpower resources if a large sample is to be collected. The standard pre-test/post-test model requires separate surveys

to be undertaken before and after implementation of an initiative, and an interval of at least one year between surveys is arguably essential to eliminate the effects of seasonal variations in crime rates. It follows that the use of victim surveys involves the collection of data over an extended period of time and is dependent on evaluation being built into the implementation process. This approach, therefore, does not lend itself to retrospective assessment of a strategy, such as NW, which has been widely introduced without thought of evaluation, but for which evaluation is subsequently needed.

Statistical difficulties also arise from sample size. NW schemes are often small and situated in low-crime areas. This means that in any year the total number of crimes occurring is very low and 'normal' fluctuations are likely to be large relative to the total number of crimes. It therefore becomes difficult to distinguish any effect that NW might have on the figures from variations arising from other factors.

The results of any evaluation are also likely to be influenced by the scope and scale of the investigation, and by the extent to which displacement of crime is examined. If, as a result of a local initiative, participants experienced a reduction in a particular targeted crime, one might conclude that the initiative had been successful. However, if criminal activity was wholly or partially deflected to alternative locations, offences or times, that conclusion would require qualification. It may be that the total level of crime remained constant, although the distribution was significantly altered. Such displacement could only be identified if the scope and scale of the evaluation were sufficiently broad. However, few studies are able to include an examination of all possible dimensions of displacement.

Previous studies

The largest volume of evaluative studies has been completed abroad, notably in the United States. Rosenbaum (1988) points out that many of these have methodological weaknesses, but two particular studies have a more rigorous research design and produced results that warrant individual consideration.

The Seattle Community Crime Prevention Program (SCCPP), implemented in the mid-1970s, is perhaps the most well-known community-based initiative in the United States. Targeted at areas and dwellings with a high incidence of burglary, the program adopted a proactive strategy to promote three 'primary' activities: the organisation of block watch, property marking and household security inspections. It included, therefore, precisely those activities now widely associated with NW in Britain. Having analysed the impact of the SCCPP, Lindsay and McGillis (1986) concluded that the burglary rate of participants in the scheme was lower than for non-participants, that there was no evidence of displacement, but that the effects of the measures dissipated after 12-18 months.

Rosenbaum et al's (1985) evaluation of the Chicago Urban Crime Prevention Program resulted in more equivocal conclusions. Of nine neighbourhoods included in the program, his work focused on four communities that were 'most interested in pursuing a block watch-type program'. Personal experience of victimisation by survey participants changed significantly in three of these areas, but in two cases the trend was upward. Interestingly, the one case of relative reduction occurred in the only area which had actually established a dense coverage of block watches, although

even here there was no significant reduction in the level of victimisation known to have occurred to other people.

In Britain, references can be found in various places that suggest the impact of NW on crime has been widely measured and that impressive reductions in crime have been frequently identified. The parliamentary quotations in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 exemplify this point well, but similar comments can be found in chief constables* annual reports (Table 3.3). In fact, very few such analyses have been published and even fewer have been undertaken by specialist research workers. The majority are the result of small-scale localised projects completed by police officers, either as part of their training or as a short-term ad hoc task allocated by a superior officer. Most were not intended for widespread distribution.

Critical examination of such studies is perhaps invidious. They were not conceived as authoritative academic research and any lack of rigour in comparison with a carefully planned and adequately resourced evaluative programme can hardly be seen as a shortcoming. Nevertheless, they cannot be ignored because it seems that, where they have reached favourable conclusions, their results have indirectly been conveyed to a much wider audience and have been influential in shaping public opinion and policy towards NW. Unfortunately, acquisition of the source documents is often difficult and the end products have tended to be terse summaries rather than detailed research reports. Nevertheless, the following discussion assesses a selection of such studies, as well as a much smaller number of more rigorously planned and executed evaluations. It should be stressed that most of such studies are concerned with a wide range of impacts resulting from NW, but it is only their assessment of impact on crime that is examined in detail here.

Table 3.3 Chief constables' annual reports referring to crime prevention associated with NW schemes

1984	Merseyside Northumbria	Northamptonshire South Wales
1985	Cambridgeshire Kent Northamptonshire South Wales Staffordshire	Dorset Lothian and Borders Northumbria South Yorkshire Warwickshire
1986	Avon and Somerset Humberside Northumbria West Yorkshire	Cumbria Kent Thames Valley
1987	Avon and Somerset Staffordshire	Kent West Midlands

One of the earliest publications relates appropriately to Cheshire. Anderton's (1985) study of the effectiveness of Home Watch, as it is termed in that county, covers much more than impact on crime, acknowledging the contribution schemes have made in apprehending criminals and reducing the fear of crime. However, he emphasises that the main objective is to reduce crime in general and house burglary

in particular, and comes to the conclusion that this objective has been achieved. This is based on an analysis of recorded crime statistics which encompasses consideration of both small-area data for individual or small clusters of schemes as well as aggregated data covering the whole force.

In MoUngton village, the location of the first scheme in Britain, Anderton reports a dramatic improvement. There were 19 high-value house burglaries in the 18 months prior to scheme formation but not one in the 30 months that followed. A similar comparison is made for two other low-crime areas, which also experienced reductions. Between September 1983 and October 1984, before schemes were started, there were four burglaries in one area and five in the other. In the corresponding six months of the following year, there were none in the first area and only two in the second. He also cites several other locations where there have been no - or very few - burglaries after schemes have been formed.

Within the whole of the Cheshire Constabulary area, Anderton examines the incidence of six categories of crime, including burglary, cycle theft, vehicle crime and criminal damage for the period January to March 1985. He shows that, although Home Watch at this time covered approximately 10 per cent of the county, in each case the proportion of crimes committed in the scheme areas was substantially below this figure.

These results clearly lend support to Anderton's conclusion. But he is the first to acknowledge that the evidence is far from conclusive because of the inadequacy of the data. The number of crimes from individual locations is generally extremely small, making it difficult to distinguish chance or pseudo-random fluctuations; from actual trends. Moreover, in several instances the level of crime before the scheme is unknown. It is, therefore, impossible to argue that a reduction has occurred. This latter point applies equally to the force-wide analysis. Indeed, it seems improbable that Home Watch areas would have attracted 10 per cent of the crime even before scheme formation because, as Husain (1988) has shown in a study that includes Cheshire, low-crime areas have tended to be over-represented in the total number of Watch schemes around the country.

Some would also question whether recorded crime data are an adequate measure of actual crime. Under-recording undoubtedly occurs and the extent of under-recording may change once schemes are set up. This point is examined further below. Finally, the limited timescale of the study must be emphasised, a point made poignant by news media reports in 1987 that MoUngton had experienced five burglaries in six months, hardly sufficient to be called a spate, but enough to raise a question about the long-term effects of NW (*The Guardian*, 8 April 1987).

A more extensive analysis was completed at about the same time by Veater. His (undated) report on the Kingsdown scheme in Bristol covers the first year of its operation from March 1983 to February 1984. Kingsdown contains about 2,000 households, with almost three-quarters in privately rented or local authority accommodation. Within its police division it was identified as having one of the highest crime rates, burglary, theft of cars and theft from cars being the principal problems. A questionnaire survey in late 1982 revealed widespread concern about crime and a willingness to participate in NW, and the resultant scheme was undoubtedly well-supported.

Veater discovered that in ten successive months following scheme formation, there was an absolute reduction in total recorded crime but, possibly because of certain

recording anomalies, this was not sustained right to the end of the first year. Overall, there was a fall of 22 per cent with individual offences experiencing reductions ranging from 42 per cent (theft of cars) to 3 per cent (burglary in a dwelling). Only one offence category (other burglaries) registered an increase. This apparent improvement was reflected in Kingsdown beat slipping from first place in the divisional 'league table' of crime for much of the year, although this position was regained in the final months.

Veater's analysis is, however, not limited to consideration of recorded crime. He also addresses the question of under-reporting and the effect NW might have on reporting patterns. The pre-scheme survey revealed that 72 per cent of crimes had been reported to the police. The follow-up survey showed that this figure had risen slightly to 74 per cent. There is no information presented about the nature of the unreported offences and it is unlikely that an even rate applied to each category. Nevertheless, the implication is that, while recorded crime figures may have understated total crime, they did provide a good indication of the change that followed the introduction of NW because the proportion of crime recorded remained virtually constant.

One further aspect of this study deserves a mention. In addition to measuring crime in Kingsdown, an adjoining area was also monitored, with the intention of assessing the extent to which displacement occurred. But as Veater points out, the 42 per cent rise in crime recorded here cannot be simply attributed to displacement because there is a mismatch between the types of offences showing the greatest change. Indeed, although car thefts fell dramatically in Kingsdown, there was no increase at all in the control area. There is little evidence therefore to quantify the extent of any displacement, or indeed to suggest that any displacement occurred.

Veater's study represents an important contribution to our knowledge of NW impact. His before-and-after surveys, investigation of unrecorded crime and use of a control area provide a sound methodological framework for the investigation, which gives credibility to his favourable conclusions. It is, however, important to recognise that this is a study of one scheme over one year. The initial impact on crime figures appears impressive, but by the end of the year there are some disconcerting indications that the upward trend might be resuming. A longer-term assessment would clearly be advantageous. A further question is raised by the fact that this was one of the earliest schemes to be set up in the region and, because of this, was given substantial media coverage. Scheme formation was also accompanied by deployment of special constables through the area. One must question whether these unique circumstances influenced the outcome, and whether the effects could continue to be so marked now that schemes are commonplace, attract less publicity and do not always involve specials.

In Scotland, Lothian and Borders Police carried out an evaluation of four police-initiated pilot NW schemes in Edinburgh which began operating in June 1984. It seems that the pilot programme encountered a number of problems. Areas with high crime, clear boundaries and mixed housing were sought, but there were no suitable locations that actually had all these. Although it was thought essential for 40 per cent of residents to give their support to NW for it to be viable, this target was only reached in one scheme. Thus, whereas there were almost 2,700 households in the four scheme areas, only 850 agreed to participate. Lastly, it seems that the schemes failed to function as planned, with coordinators failing to develop adequate contacts with other residents or the police at the level thought desirable.

This was therefore not an auspicious situation for NW to succeed, but the report nevertheless draws some favourable conclusions (Lothian and Borders Police, 1985). Comparison of total crime in the six months before the schemes started with the six months following their inception shows a reduction at three out of the four locations for selected crime categories. These reductions ranged from 19 per cent to 42 per cent, with the greatest falls - up to 80 per cent - being recorded for theft by housebreaking. In the fourth scheme, which had the lowest level of support, the overall crime total rose slightly. A further before-and-after comparison is made for the months January to March in 1984 and 1985. This reveals overall reductions ranging from 27 per cent to 66 per cent in all four scheme areas, and falls of up to 91 per cent in theft by housebreaking.

Control areas were also used in this investigation to examine whether crime was displaced as a result of NW. Comparative data for nine months of scheme operation between July 1984 and March 1985 provided no evidence that improvement in scheme areas had resulted in a deterioration elsewhere.

Despite these apparently promising outcomes, the authors recognise that there are serious weaknesses in their analysis. The absolute number of crimes is generally low, with only one area - the poorly supported scheme - having more than 20 burglaries in the six-month period. Differentiation between pseudo-random fluctuations and significant changes is therefore difficult and change expressed as percentages can give a quite misleading impression. Perhaps more seriously, comparison of data for January-June with July-December is difficult to justify, given that seasonal fluctuations significantly affect the level of crime in most areas. Of course, this comparison is supplemented by examination of data for the same months - January to March - in two years. But this is clearly too short a period and provides too small a sample on which to base firm conclusions.

The usefulness of the control areas must also be questioned. Given the low total number of offences, any displacement would only be detectable if it were concentrated. This might occur if it was localised, perhaps to adjoining areas. If it was spatially dispersed, it would become insignificant in the total level of crime. Yet only two of the control areas were close to the schemes; in the others there could be no expectation that displacement could be identified. Furthermore, the most important function of control areas was overlooked. No attempt was made to set the changes in the scheme areas in the context of broader crime patterns in this part of Edinburgh. Although reductions followed the introduction of NW, the question of whether this was something specific to the NW areas or was part of a wider trend remains unanswered. If the former is true, it would give greater justification to a causal explanation linked to NW. The alternative would suggest that any reduction was purely coincidental.

An evaluation of Home Watch in two areas on the periphery of the Merseyside conurbation, Wallasey and St Helens, was completed in 1987 (Merseyside Police, 1987). This was based on crime statistics covering the year before and year after scheme formation, and gives particular attention to domestic burglary. Four schemes were included, all in areas with substantial crime and social problems, but contrasting residential environments that ranged from affluent suburban housing to poor quality council housing. In three areas the schemes started in January 1985, while the fourth commenced in June that year. The schemes were small; none exceeded 100 houses and the average size was only 66.

The results varied between schemes. The report suggests that in three areas (two in

St Helens and one in Wallasey) there was a substantial decrease in total crime, while in the fourth (in Wallasey) the reverse occurred. In one area the rate fell from 27 offences per 100 houses in the year before the scheme to 18 offences in the following twelve months, with much of this fall being attributable to a decline in burglary. To put these changes in context, it is important to note that over the same period crime was declining throughout the St Helens sub-division, but at a lower rate than in the schemes. In Wallasey sub-division, total crime figures remained constant, but a small increase in burglary was recorded. The report concludes, therefore, that Home Watch can contribute to a reduction in crime but it is not a panacea for all areas.

On the basis of the evidence presented, these comments are appropriate. But some concern must be expressed about the actual number of crimes on which the analysis is based. Conversion of the rates expressed as offences per 100 houses into absolute values reveals that, for example, in one of the St Helens schemes the reported 'significant decrease* in burglary probably represents an actual fall from four to one (or perhaps none). Similarly, the decline in Wallasey may be based on a drop from eight to six burglaries. The comments made above about the difficulty of drawing conclusions from such small changes are, therefore, particularly applicable here.

The most widely publicised analysis of NW has undoubtedly been Bennett's (1987) research in the Metropolitan Police District (MPD). His study of two schemes, one in Acton and the other in Wimbledon, compared crime levels in the year before NW started with the year after. These individual schemes were selected because they conformed to what was thought to be the ideal type of NW. Consequently, if NW could have a definite impact on crime, it was expected to be detectable here. In addition, during the same periods crime was also monitored in a control area and an area close to one of the schemes to which crime might have been displaced. In each area, the study was based on victimisation surveys, not recorded crime.

The results of Bennett's multiple regression analysis were not encouraging for supporters of NW. He found no significant reduction in the incidence or prevalence of victimisation in either NW area compared to the control area. He also failed to find any significant increase in reporting rates. Given the rigorous quasi-experimental approach adopted in his analysis, these results are important. However, Bennett was careful not to dismiss the concept of NW as ineffective. Although 'theory failure' was possible, he inclined to the view that, despite careful selection, his study areas were not ideal examples of NW in operation, largely because of their design and administration. More specifically, Bennett highlights a number of problems in the implementation of NW in the MPD which might have prevented their potential from being fully realised. Given these circumstances and the fact that only two schemes were examined, generalisations based on this study are obviously inappropriate.

A similarly inconclusive outcome came from another study of six schemes set up in Humberside between June and August 1986 (Ramsay, 1987). The schemes, which varied in size from 300 to 1,500 dwellings, were established in contrasting residential environments and initiated by the police. The study made use of reported crime statistics for two years before NW and one year after scheme formation, but these were supplemented by victimisation surveys carried out immediately before implementation and one year after. The remainder of the beat in which each scheme was located provided a control against which scheme performance was evaluated.

In absolute terms there was an overall increase in crime of 24 per cent over the preceding 12 months in scheme areas, with both burglary (dwelling and other) and autocrime exceeding this figure. When compared to the total crime reported for the remainder of each beat, it is clear that even in relative terms there was no identifiable improvement with NW. Part of this increase could be attributable to an increase in reporting rates for particular types of offence, notably criminal damage and non-dwelling burglary. However, there was no significant rise in the proportion of burglaries in a dwelling reported. The victimisation surveys also failed to reveal significant differences either in the pre-scheme/post-scheme situation or between scheme and control areas.

Once again, however, the authors recognised that small samples, data collection problems and other considerations limited the opportunities for analysis. In addition, with hindsight it became clear that the quality of some schemes could have been much higher. Thus, while it was possible to conclude that in these areas NW did not have an apparent impact on crime, this conclusion should clearly not be extrapolated to other contexts.

Finally, mention should be made of an evaluation of a form of NW that was implemented within the framework of a multi-faceted burglary prevention project on Kirkholt estate, Rochdale (Forrester, Chatterton and Pease, 1988). Cocoon NW was the term coined to describe the mini-NW schemes set up for victims of burglary and their immediate neighbours on an estate where a high proportion of the many burglaries were thought to be committed by local residents. Data for a nine-month period showed a substantial reduction in the risk of burglary compared to the same period the previous year, and other crimes showed a lower rate of increase than in the rest of the sub-division. These results give some grounds for optimism about the efficacy of NW, but it must be remembered that the Rochdale project comprised a comprehensive programme and any improvement cannot be easily attributed to NW alone. Moreover, the evaluation covered just nine months, so longer-term effects remain unknown.

The impact on crime: a status report

This critical examination of evaluations is not exhaustive, but it does demonstrate that assessing the impact of NW on crime is extremely difficult and that our understanding of it is limited. Although politicians, police and public have - and give - the impression that schemes are effective, reliable supportive evidence is scarce. In fact there has been no substantive study covering more than a couple of schemes that has indicated that NW may be preventing crime. This situation exists partly because the number of schemes examined is low. In the reports discussed above - which form a substantial proportion of those completed - detailed analysis is restricted to a mere 19 schemes. But there are two other explanatory factors.

Firstly, it is a consequence of the practical limitations imposed on such research. Financial constraints and data availability, for example, have restricted the duration of studies and investigations covering only a few months can at best provide only a partial assessment. Secondly, methodological shortcomings leave several studies open to serious criticism. Failure to relate scheme performance to the pre-scheme situation or to a control area, reduces substantially the usefulness of any data. These considerations have contributed to the inconclusive outcome of several studies.

From the above it is clear that further study is essential if the question of impact on crime is to be clarified. However, these previous studies have performed a useful function by pointing the way forward. There is a requirement for more schemes to be evaluated simply to increase the number on which to make an assessment. It is apparent that analyses should cover at least one year - and preferably longer - of scheme operation, so that results are not simply based on what might be the 'honeymoon*' period. There is a need to take into account the numbers of crimes committed in the areas involved, so that datasets contain sufficient offences to distinguish between pseudo-random fluctuations and significant trend changes. Finally, scheme performance must be set in context by relating it to the pre-scheme situation and/or control areas without NW.

SECTION FOUR

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND CRIME: NEW RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of recent research carried out to provide more information about the effect that NW has on the incidence of particular crimes. The specific objectives were to establish whether NW can contribute to crime reduction, the scale of reduction that might be achieved, and the types of residential environment in which NW can be shown to work. The research was primarily focused on the offence of burglary in a dwelling with loss (BD), which has been the main target of NW schemes. In addition, and where appropriate, two other types of offence have been included: unauthorised taking and driving away of a motor vehicle (TADA) and theft from a motor vehicle (TFMV). These are both prevalent problems in residential areas and could be expected to be affected by successful NW activity.

Research design

The research was designed to increase substantially the number of schemes for which information was available, rather than to provide extremely detailed analyses of a small number of schemes. This was accomplished by adopting a statistical approach that made use of police records of recorded crime. Of course, such data do have inadequacies - notably the unrealistically low figure they give for total crime because of under-reporting - and there may be those who will criticise this report for that reason. However, its use here was justified for several reasons.

Firstly, as the British Crime Survey shows, the level of under-reporting varies between offence categories, and two of the offences examined are well-recorded. About three-quarters of BD offences enter police records, while the figure for TADA is considerably higher. These levels appear to have changed only slightly over the period covered by this investigation. The marginal increase that has occurred may underestimate, but will certainly not exaggerate, any change associated with NW. The third offence, TFMV, is less well recorded - the BCS suggests about 30 per cent - but this figure also appears to be almost constant (Hough and Mayhew, 1985). Secondly, and more important, those previous studies that have been based on victimisation surveys have all concluded that the level of reporting does not change significantly with NW or, if it does increase, it is the reporting of more trivial offences that rises. Therefore, whilst official figures may be underestimates, the basis for comparison remains constant. Thirdly, the use of victimisation surveys, the only alternative to recorded statistics, would not have been a realistic option for a large number of schemes, given the time and resources such surveys require. Finally, it should not be overlooked that recorded crime has been the indicator on which much of the comment on NW by politicians and police has been based. It is also influential in policy formulation and receives considerable media coverage. Establishing the impact of NW on recorded crime was therefore considered extremely important.

The selection of areas for examination was based on a range of criteria. Within a national context, the search process was confined to those regions with considerable experience of NW and where police forces were willing to cooperate with the study.

At a more local level, the existence of an apparently successful scheme was a prerequisite. There was little point in looking for an impact on crime in schemes that were obviously not active or well-supported. However, unlike Bennett (1987), no specific thresholds were used to identify such schemes. Instead, local police were asked to identify schemes which they considered to be good examples in their area. It was obviously also important to select areas that had not been subjected to other local crime prevention initiatives so that any observed changes could be reasonably assumed to result from NW.

NW areas needed to be of sufficient size to generate crime totals large enough to allow the interpretation of change with some confidence. This excluded small isolated schemes in low-crime areas. However, the inclusion of small schemes was thought important since these seemed intuitively to offer better prospects for success. To overcome this difficulty, individual large schemes were supplemented by 'scheme aggregations*', extensive NW areas that actually comprised many small schemes which had emerged and functioned as separate entities. It was also desirable to include schemes from a range of residential environments so that comparisons could be made.

Appropriate control areas were also necessary. These had to be comparable to the scheme areas in terms of scale, residential environment and crime problems prior to NW being implemented, but should not have been directly affected by NW or other local crime prevention initiatives. Wherever possible, control areas were sought that were spatially removed from the schemes to avoid possible complications from 'spillover' effects. It was envisaged that these could be either beneficial, with crime preventative impact extending across scheme boundaries, or could involve displacement of offences to neighbouring areas. Several steps were taken in the identification of such areas. The matter was discussed with local police who were usually able to suggest several possibilities. These areas were then examined on maps and by field visits, and comparisons were made of their demographic and housing structure using 'Superprofile*' groups, a classification of areas based on census data. Although no two areas are identical, these procedures attempted to ensure that the 'best match' in the local area was found.

Finally, an important constraint on area selection was data availability. It was essential to be able to obtain crime data that corresponded or approximated to both the NW and control areas. Furthermore, such data were required on a monthly basis so that offences in the relevant pre-scheme and post-scheme periods could be clearly identified. The nature of the planned analysis also demanded that the data be available for a period that ideally extended from at least two years before the scheme to one year after its formation. It has to be said that these requirements severely limited the number of locations that could be investigated. It was frequently the case that aggregated statistics could only be easily accessed for individual beats or other data collection units. In these situations, schemes could only be included if there was congruence with such units. Elsewhere, aggregated totals for schemes could only be obtained by searching all the source records for a particular area to isolate crimes occurring within the NW boundary. Given that few forces have computerised search facilities available for historical data, this involved painstaking manual scrutiny of paper records.

Unfortunately no schemes were encountered that could meet all the conditions outlined above. In every case compromise was necessary as comparable pre-scheme data that covered more than two years was almost non-existent. However, the selection process led to the inclusion in the study of the schemes and scheme

aggregations shown in Table 4.1. As can be seen, a variety of locations is included and they encompass over 550 NW schemes. The number at each location is also variable but clearly Manchester is exceptional, accounting for over 90 per cent of the total.

Methodology

It was considered important that a uniform research method be applied to all the study areas. This posed a number of problems because the areas varied considerably in scale, level of crime, data availability and other factors. However, eventually a two-stage approach was adopted which, with minor variations, could be applied in all cases. The first stage involved comparison of the absolute number of offences in the study areas in the period before scheme initiation with that in the succeeding period. In most cases, data for each of the relevant offences was aggregated to quarterly totals to increase the sample size. However, in Manchester the totals were sufficiently high to allow analysis on a monthly basis.

Table 4.1 Schemes and scheme aggregations included in the analysis

Location	Neighbourhood	Schemes	Households
Birmingham	Hands worth Wood	1	7,000
Brighton	Saltdean	21	1,500
Burnley	Hargher Clough	1	1,000
Manchester	Trafford/Stretford	517	11,000
Preston	Grange Estate/Moor Nook	2	1,600
Sutton Coldfield	Boldmere/Maney/Wylde Green	11	3,600

The second stage involved estimation of the crime totals that could have been expected in scheme areas if they had experienced the same crime trends as the control areas. It was then possible to compare actual and expected values, with the deviations providing evidence for the existence and scale of any NW effect. Once again the analysis was based on quarterly totals (monthly in Manchester) for particular crimes. For each quarter the annual rate of change in the control area was calculated. This was then applied to the corresponding data for the scheme area to obtain an expected value. The following example illustrates this method.

Residential burglaries in Area XXX for the first quarter of 1986 totalled 54. A NW scheme was introduced in this area later in the year. In the same quarter in 1987, the total was 65.

In the control area for this scheme, YYY, there were 48 residential burglaries in the first quarter of 1986, but 72 in the corresponding quarter the following year.

There was a 50 per cent rise in burglary in the control area. If this had occurred in area XXX, there would have been 81. There were therefore 16 fewer than expected, a relative reduction of 20 per cent.

Crucial to the success of such an approach is the validity of the assumption that the control area is an accurate indicator of what would have happened in the scheme area, something that could never be proved.

However, two steps were taken to minimise the risk of misleading results. Firstly, as indicated above, the control areas were carefully selected and various factors taken into account to maximise comparability with scheme areas. Secondly, wherever possible, comparisons were made for the pre-scheme as well as the post-scheme period, so that any pre-existing differences could be identified and taken into account in the assessment. Even with these precautions, however, it was clear that quarterly figures vary in response to many short-term and localised influences. It could not be expected that any one quarter could give a reliable indication of the consequences of NW. Cumulative actual and expected totals for particular offences were therefore examined, as were the deviations between them. These provided a longer term overview of the performance of the study areas after the schemes had been introduced.

In the following sections of this chapter, each of the study areas is examined in turn. A brief description of the residential environment is followed by an account of the pre-scheme crime situation and the development of NW. The results of the analysis are then discussed, with the essential data presented in graphical form in a standardised format for each area.

Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

Handsworth Wood is a high-status residential neighbourhood situated near the northern periphery of Birmingham. Although once close to the urban fringe, it is now in the core of the West Midlands conurbation, and enclosed to the north, west and east by the M5 and M6 motorways which sweep around this part of the city. Large

parts of Handsworth Wood are characterised by detached and semi-detached inter-war dwellings. However, along the main arterial routes houses are older and larger, with some converted into flats, hotels and accommodation for the elderly. The

population of Handsworth Wood at the time of the 1981 Census was characterised by families of professional and managerial workers of varying age. In addition, there were a significant number of one- and two-person pensioner households with white-collar backgrounds. There is also a strong and active Residents' Association. In contrast to Handsworth Wood, the adjacent inner city multi-ethnic area of Handsworth has a more problematical physical and social environment. Buildings in poor condition and high unemployment are just two of the symptoms in an area which in recent years has experienced urban violence and unrest.

NW activities in Handsworth Wood developed in November 1985 from a joint initiative of residents and the local police. The NW area encloses all 7,000 households in the neighbourhood, with approximately two-thirds of these being actual participants.

The size of the area obviously imposes certain logistical constraints on its operation as a single scheme, but it is reportedly functioning well with the support of 30 volunteer coordinators.

Crime statistics for the relevant sub-division (Thornhill Road) of Birmingham were limited to aggregated beat totals for individual offences. However, these were available on a monthly basis from January 1984. The NW area enclosed two complete

beats and the major part of a third which also extends into Handsworth proper. For

the purposes of the analysis, the NW area was defined as comprising all three beats. It was recognised that this would mean that some crime from outside would be incorporated. However, if this were to influence the analysis, it was more likely to lead to conservative conclusions, underestimating any NW effect rather than exaggerating it, and the risk was therefore considered acceptable.

To the east of Handsworth Wood lies an area with a similar socio-economic profile and comparable residential environment. Despite being physically adjacent to the NW scheme, it is isolated from it by a railway which restricts movement between the two zones and it can be considered to function independently. Having no comparable community crime prevention initiatives, it provided a suitable control area against which to measure the impact of NW in Handsworth Wood. The area coincided with two police beats for which data were available.

Crime rates in Handsworth Wood and in the control area appear to have been similar prior to the introduction of NW, with the risk of crime being low in both locations. Nevertheless, because the areas involved are substantial, the total number of offences recorded provided a large sample for analysis as can be seen from the annual totals shown in Table 4.2. In 1984 there were 734 offences in the three categories being considered, and almost 600 in the following year.

Quarterly figures for residential burglaries from early 1984 to mid-1987 are depicted in Figure 4.1. The data show a consistent pattern over the period of analysis. In each quarter the peak of 1984 was followed by a substantial fall in 1985 and a modest rise in 1986. Where figures are available, a further fall was evident in 1987. At first sight, therefore, there is little in these figures to suggest a reduction coincident with the introduction of NW in late 1985. The decline begins in 1985, before schemes were set up, and in the year following scheme formation the figures actually rise.

Table 4.2 Annual offence totals for Handsworth Wood

	1984	1985	1986	1987
BD	431	260	306	150
TADA	166	154	131	102
TFMV	137	174	170	156

Figures for 1987 cover period January to August

Further support for this conclusion may be inferred from comparison of Handsworth Wood with the control area. Negative deviations from expected values appear before scheme formation, and there is no apparent change of pattern once the scheme is in place. Indeed there are more quarters with positive deviations in the post-scheme period. The cumulative totals show a fairly constant gap between expected and actual values, with the scheme area having a lower total than expected throughout the whole period, not just during 1986/87.

TADA offences show a similar encouraging decline in annual totals since the peak of 1984 (Table 4.2). However, quarterly statistics exhibit a much less systematic pattern than those considered above, and there is no consistent trend evident in

Figure 4.1 BD statistics for Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

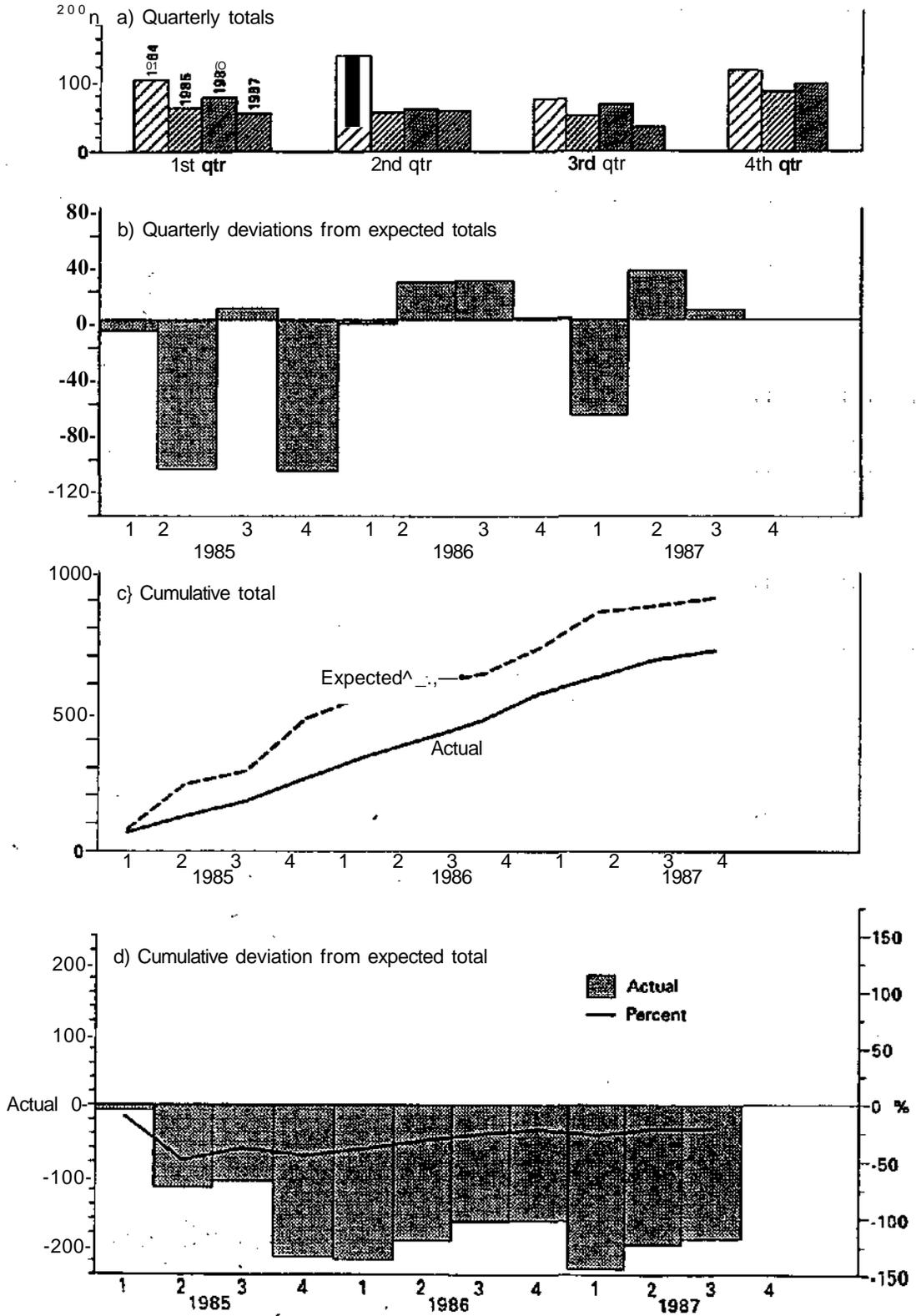


Figure 4.2 TADA statistics for Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

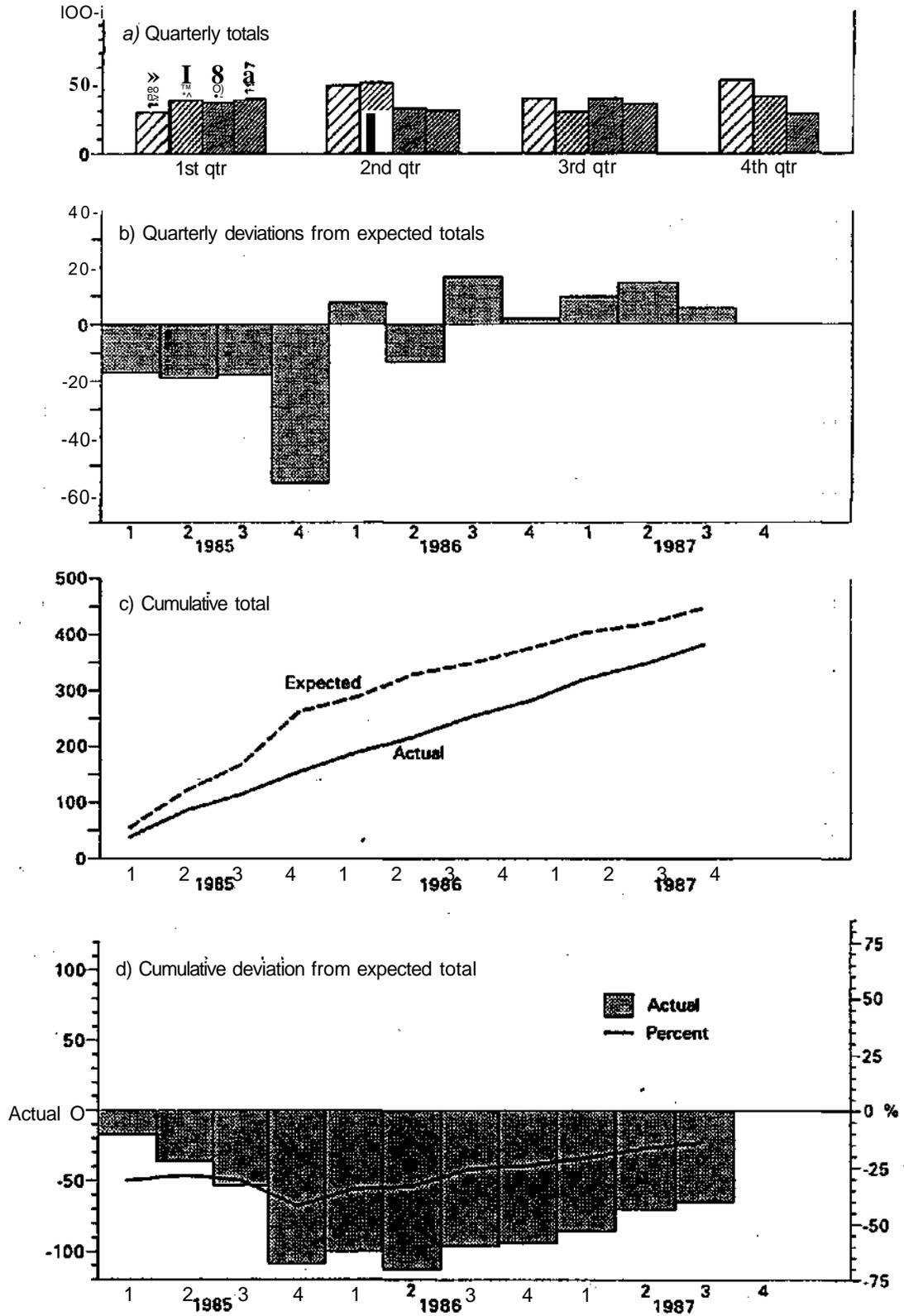


Figure 4.3 TFMV statistics for Handsworth Wood, Birmingham

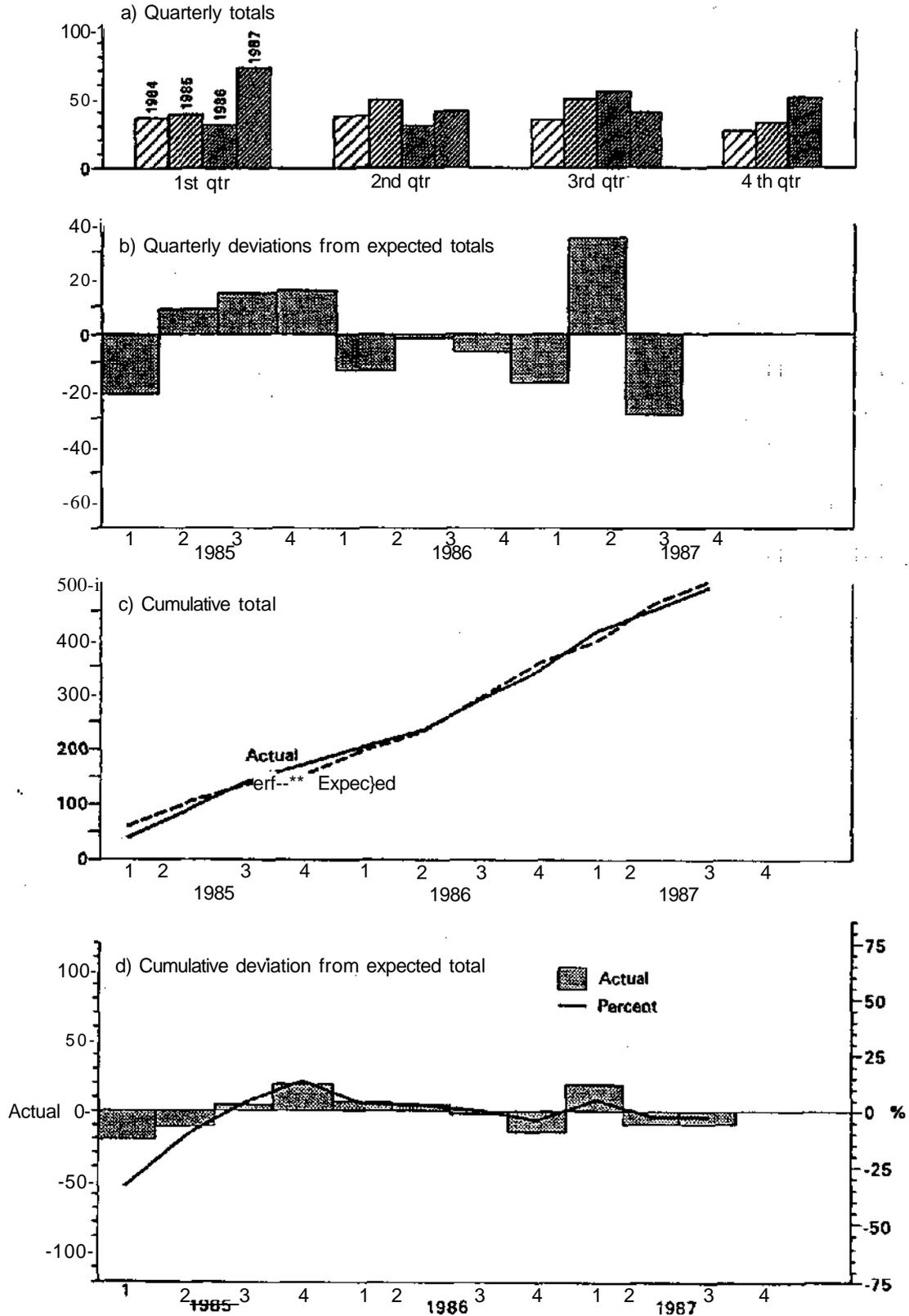


Figure 4.2. Comparison with the control area reveals substantial negative deviations from expected values during 1985 and early 1986, but since then the situation has been reversed. Cumulative figures suggest that the NW area has performed better than the control area. However, one must be cautious in attributing this situation to the impact of NW. Lower than expected values appear before NW started in 1985. Moreover, the performance of Handsworth Wood before NW was apparently better than in the subsequent period. Indeed, the gap between actual and expected values, both in absolute and proportional terms, has been closing since scheme formation.

The occurrence of TFMV exhibits a quite different annual pattern, with 1984 being the lowest total in the data series, with the prospect of the higher levels in 1985 and 1986 being matched in 1987 (Table 4.2). This increase is reflected in the quarterly pattern shown in Figure 4.3, with the levels of 1984 exceeded in each quarter of the following year. After only a brief interruption during the first half of 1986, the upward trend continued into 1987. There is little in these figures to suggest that NW has been effective in reducing the incidence of this particular offence. Nevertheless, some encouragement can be found when comparisons are made with the control area; quarterly offence totals throughout 1986 were lower than expected, in contrast to the situation before NW was introduced. However, the trend is inconsistent, with the 1987 figures not very different from those predicted from non-NW areas. Overall, the cumulative actual incidence of TFMV has been only slightly below that expected, 3 per cent lower since NW was introduced in the autumn of 1985, 8 per cent lower since the beginning of 1986.

The conclusion one must draw from examination of the statistics for Handsworth Wood is that there is no indication here that NW has had any beneficial effect on the incidence of these three types of crime.

Saltdean, Brighton

Saltdean is an extensive residential settlement on the Sussex coast that straddles the administrative boundary between Brighton and Lewes. Situated immediately off the coast road, which provides the main access, it is virtually surrounded by open land but is only seven kilometers from Brighton town centre. Saltdean can be described as a high-status residential area, a consequence of its location close to the sea front, its attractive hilly situation and the quality of its dwellings. Almost all the housing is in owner occupation, most of the workers are in white collar jobs and unemployment is low. However, a significant proportion of the population of about 4,000 are elderly and retired, many of them living in bungalows.

Crime cannot be considered to have been a widespread problem in Saltdean even before NW. In 1985 there were fewer than 40 recorded burglaries of all kinds, only 26 offences related to vehicles and there were virtually no other offences recorded. Nevertheless, NW has taken a firm foothold as residents have attempted to maintain and even improve this situation. Scheme growth has been gradual and based on small individual initiatives, many covering only 10-25 houses, rather than larger organisational units. The first scheme was formed in March 1985, but this was an isolated instance and rapid expansion did not begin until November of that year. By the end of March 1986, 21 schemes were operating, covering as much as one-third of Saltdean, and subsequent slower growth brought about one-half of the homes under the NW umbrella.

It is important to stress that these schemes did not form a contiguous area.

Although there were clusters, many were set up in isolation and NW was therefore a discontinuous feature in Saltdean, a situation that sets it apart from other case studies in this report. This allows exploration of some interesting questions about whether any impact is strictly confined to participating households, or whether benefits can 'rub off' on to those nearby, which in this case means most of the remainder of Saltdean. This matter is explored further below.

It was possible to obtain precise locations of offences for the period January 1985 to June 1987, allowing differentiation within Saltdean of crimes committed inside NW and those outside. Unfortunately, the low level of crime means that only residential burglary provides a sample of adequate size and analysis is consequently restricted to this offence. Even then, the frequencies are too low to draw more than tentative conclusions about the significance of observed changes.

Ovingdean and Woodingdean, to the west of Saltdean, were selected as appropriate control areas with comparable housing environments. The choice was not ideal, insofar as these were not areas in which NW was unknown. A very small number of schemes were in operation here before April 1986. However, there was no significant coverage until towards the end of that year and more schemes were set up in early 1987. On this basis, one would expect any beneficial effects of NW in Saltdean to show up in early and mid 1986, when the contrast between the two was greatest. Later in the year and during 1987, any relative advantage from NW would have been eroded by scheme formation in the control areas.

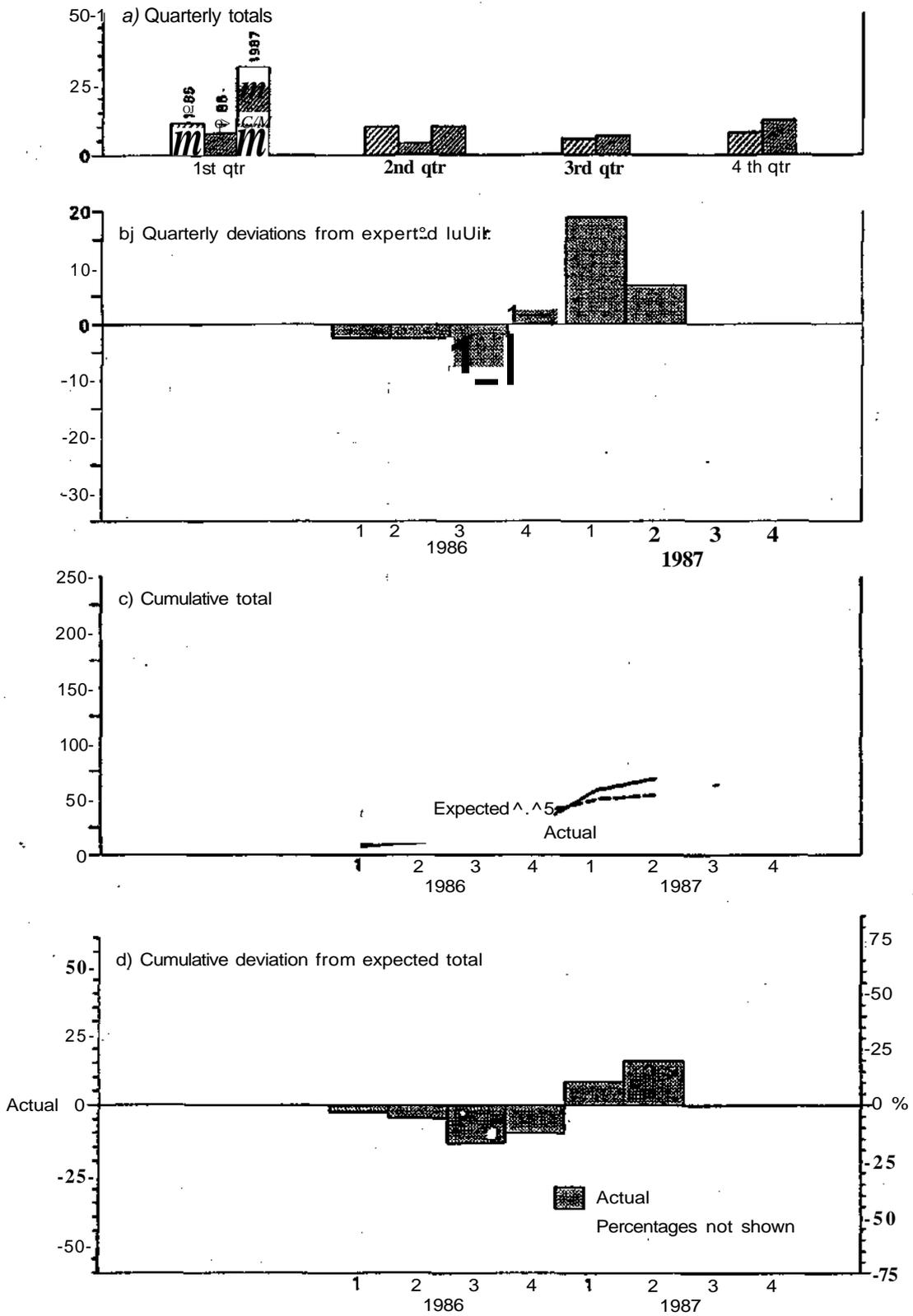
The data analysis for Saltdean is divided into two stages. The first involves assessment of the impact of NW on burglary in Saltdean as a whole. Analysis based on the whole area - rather than just the schemes - was thought appropriate for several reasons. If NW does have a real preventative effect, this should be evident in the statistics for the whole of Saltdean since a substantial proportion of the housing is covered by NW. A further consideration, though, was that any benefit from NW might be expected to spill over into non-scheme areas. This is because there is no clearly visible boundary between scheme and non-scheme areas which might influence criminal behaviour and because surveillance by participants would inevitably extend to houses not actually in the schemes. Restriction of the analysis to schemes only might therefore have overlooked the full extent of any change.

Annual totals for burglary in Saltdean do not suggest that NW has brought about any dramatic improvement. Although the total for 1986 was slightly lower than for 1985, in the first six months of 1987 there were substantially more burglaries than in the whole of the previous year (Table 4.3). Examination of quarterly data shows that this upward trend actually commenced in the second half of 1986 and has continued over four successive quarters. It seems to begin soon after the main phase of NW expansion, quite contrary to what one might expect if NW were properly effective (Figure 4.4).

Table 4.3 Recorded BD offences in Saltdean

1985	32	
1986	29	
1987	41	(6 months)

Figure 4.4 BD statistics for Saltdean, Brighton



Comparison-with the control area shows that NW may nevertheless have had some effect. During the first three quarters of 1986, burglary levels were below those which would have occurred if Saltdean had followed the trend in Ovingdean and Woodingdean. By the end of September the cumulative total of 17 burglaries was substantially lower than the expected total of 30, while the 53 in the following nine months was more than double the 24 predicted from the control areas. The trend, therefore, conforms to that anticipated earlier. During the period in which Saltdean alone was covered by NW, it experienced a relative reduction in the risk of burglary. Once NW became established in the control area, this advantage disappeared and the reverse situation developed. It must be emphasised, however, that the number of offences is small and care must be exercised in the interpretation of such figures.

The second stage of the analysis involves examination of changes in the distribution of burglary within Saltdean. If the above figures are correctly interpreted as showing some initial relative improvement, then it is relevant to examine whether this has been experienced throughout the area or whether it is restricted to scheme participants. Conversely, if there has been no improvement, or even a deterioration, it is appropriate to establish whether this adverse effect has been uniformly experienced or been concentrated in non-scheme areas.

This issue seems much easier to resolve, although the problem of small numbers recurs. During the initial 15 months of the study period, there were 19 burglaries in dwellings that were in areas that later became NW schemes. This amounted to 56 per cent of all those in Saltdean, a figure that accords closely with the proportion of homes involved and suggesting an even distribution of burglaries in this period. In the following 15 months, during which the schemes were operating, there were still 13 burglaries in NW areas, but this represented only 26 per cent of the total. The overall increase in burglary, therefore, has been accompanied by a distinct distributional change that has substantially reduced the relative risk, and probably also the absolute risk, of being victimised for those living within NW.

The results from Saltdean suggest that although there was a minimal reduction in burglary levels immediately following scheme formation, this was quite significant when set in the context of trends in the control area. However, once schemes began in the control area, this advantage disappeared. Within Saltdean a substantial redistribution of offences has occurred that has reduced victimisation of those in NW areas but increased the problem for those outside schemes. Regrettably, though, despite certain *relative* improvements the *absolute* total has risen steadily.

Hargher Clough, Burnley

Hargher Clough was built in the late nineteenth century to accommodate workers in the textile mills of Burnley. Situated to the west of the River Calder, it is only one kilometre from the town centre but - this being a densely settled and compact town - it is also close to the edge of the built-up area. Hargher Clough is but one of many such developments that surrounded the town's mills, comprising small terraced houses laid out in narrow rectilinear streets, resulting in a high population density. At the time of the last census, the population composition reflected a high concentration of skilled and semi-skilled manual workers, many employed in manufacturing industries. There was a significant proportion of elderly people, but otherwise household structure was close to the national average.

Property tenure included both houses in owner occupation and unfurnished rented accommodation. Residential turnover was low.

Burglary has been the most prevalent crime in Hargher Clough in recent years. The risk of victimisation, at about one in 20 in any year, has been well above the national average for recorded offences, but the incidence of other crimes, such as vehicle theft, has been very much lower. It was therefore primarily to combat burglary that a NW scheme was started here in November 1984, the fifth and largest in Burnley at that time. There is uncertainty about whether the initiative was taken by residents or the local police, but the scheme covers about half of Hargher Clough, extending across a rectangular area containing about 1,000 households.

Precise locations of offences in Hargher Clough were available for the period from January 1984 until November 1987, and this allowed identification of all recorded crimes occurring within the scheme area. Unfortunately, the early scheme start date and lack of available data before 1984 meant that examination of the pre-scheme situation was limited to a period slightly less than one year. Moreover, only burglary provided a sample large enough for analysis and subsequent comments are restricted to this offence. The non-scheme part of Hargher Clough is used as the control area. This area has a very similar residential environment and demographic composition. It was also thought to have had an almost identical crime profile prior to NW. Being adjacent to the scheme meant that it was not ideally located but the decision was constrained by data availability.

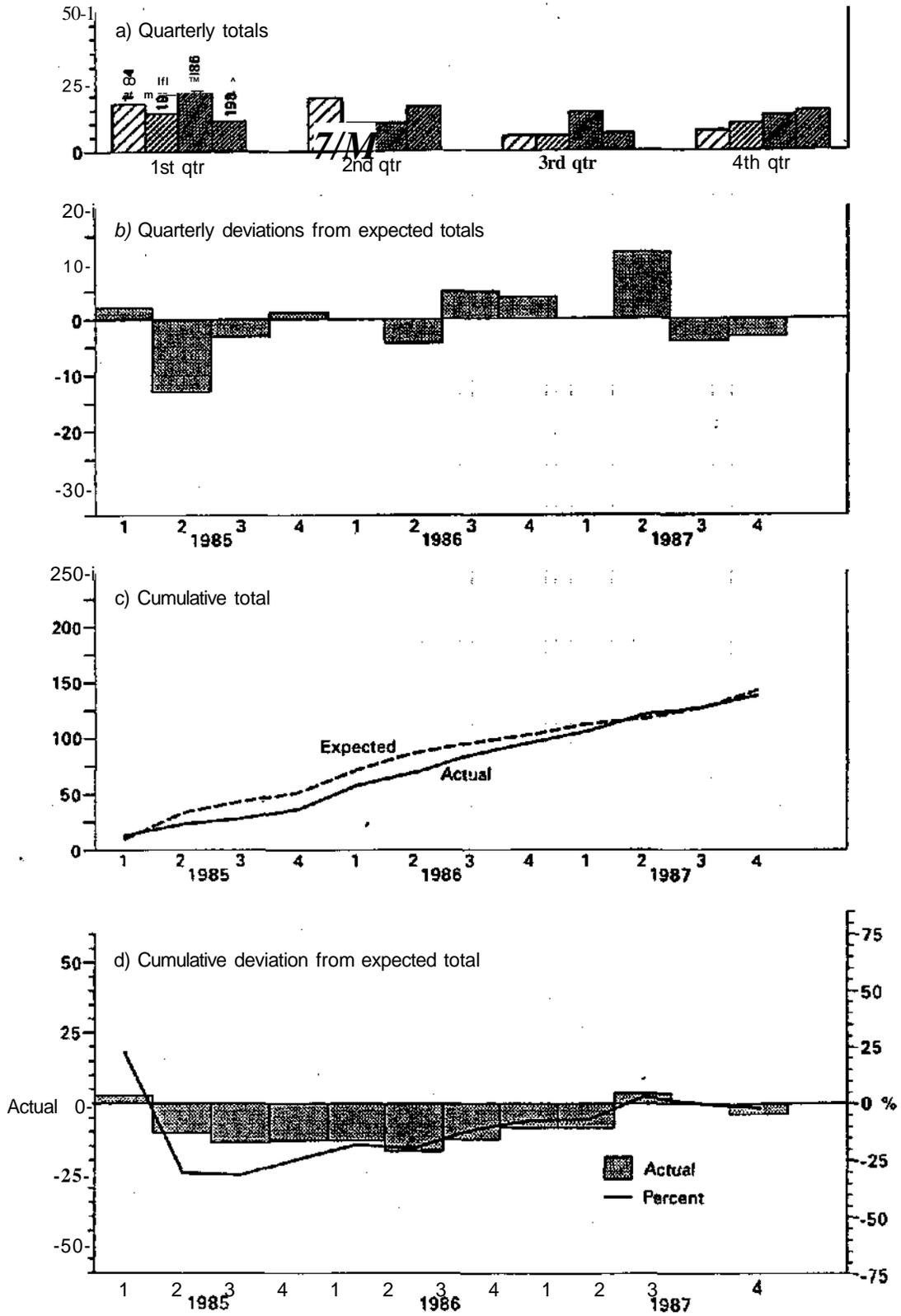
Annual burglary totals have fluctuated considerably during the study period. From 49 offences in 1984, the figure declined to only 38 in 1985, the first full year of NW activity. Any hopes of a long term reversal, however, were dispelled by a sharp increase in 1986. Finally, in 1987 there were 43 burglaries during the first 11 months, a decrease from the 54 recorded during the equivalent period the previous year (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Burglary in Hargher Clough NW area

	Jan-Dec	Jan-Nov
1984	49	
1985	38	
1986	59	54
1987		43

There seems little in these data to suggest that NW has reduced the incidence of burglary, and this impression is not changed by consideration of quarterly statistics. Figure 4.5 shows increases and decreases distributed apparently randomly through the study period. Furthermore, comparison with the control area supports the notion that crime trends in the NW area have not been significantly different from those experienced elsewhere. Although in the first nine months of 1985, burglaries were one-third below expected values, it is impossible to attribute this improvement to NW. The fall is largely the result of a particularly low total in one quarter, rather than a sustained lower rate. This, combined with the disappearance of any cumulative deviation, the small sample, and large irregular oscillations inevitably lead to the conclusion that any apparent improvement was simply part of the normal fluctuation in crime statistics that affect all areas.

Figure 4.5 BD statistics for Hargher Ciough, Burnley



Trafford and Stretford, Manchester

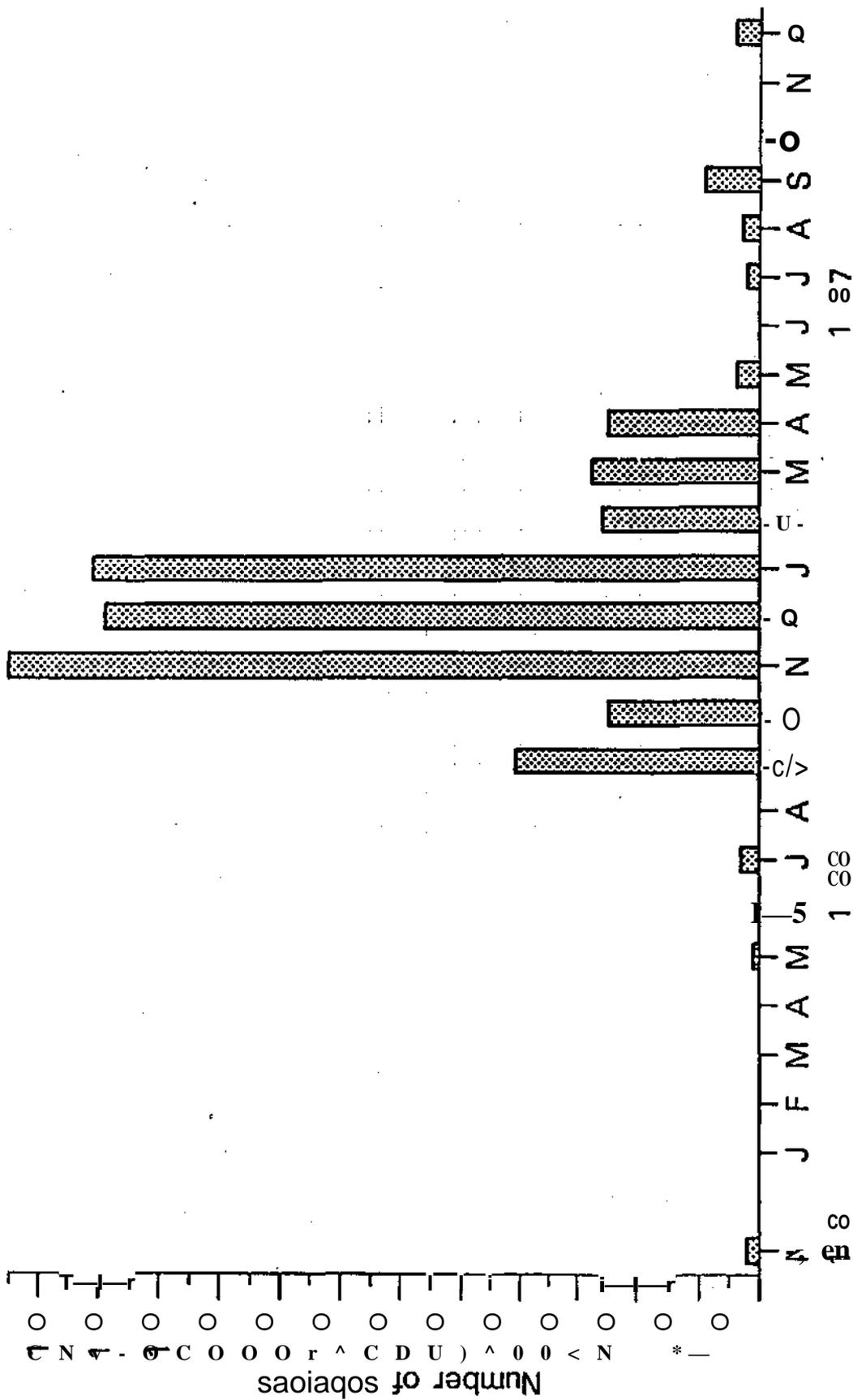
The first NW scheme was established in Greater Manchester in 1984 and the initiative has subsequently spread extensively, its development having been encouraged by both the police and certain local authorities. Most schemes have been formed in response to specific requests from residents and, in accordance with local policy, have tended to be extremely small, often fewer than 20 households. This situation has resulted in a pattern of development that has been irregular in both time and space, limiting the opportunities for evaluative analysis which demands sizeable spatial units that at any particular time are either wholly inside or outside the NW framework.

The study area, which is the largest examined in this report, comprises an elongated belt of land that extends south west from the city centre towards the M63 motorway, incorporating major parts of the residential districts of Trafford and Stretford. Although some housing closer to the central business district is excluded, at its nearest, point the study area is less than two kilometres from the city centre and the housing environment in parts of Trafford exhibits many of the characteristics and problems associated with the inner city. Much of the housing here is old, terraced, sub-divided and privately-rented, and there is an above average residential turnover. The population is cosmopolitan, with a preponderance of West Indians and larger families with young children. Wage-earners tend to be in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations which are poorly paid. Unemployment is relatively high. Yet in several respects this area lacks homogeneity. There is a variety of dwelling types and tenure. Local authority and owner occupied housing are also present, and with increasing distance from the centre, the quality and status of the residential environment improve noticeably.

In the past the incidence of crime in the study area has been high. During 1986 approximately 1,600 BD, 600 TADA and almost 1,000 TFMV offences were recorded. These were relatively concentrated in the inner zone, where the risk of being the victim of a residential burglary was more than one in six. The combination of residential characteristics and crime problems meant that this was a particularly challenging area in which to establish NW successfully, but clearly the potential benefits were needed here more than in any other area examined.

Apart from being within an inner urban zone with a relatively high incidence of crime, the study area was selected for a number of other reasons that made it particularly appropriate for analysis. Firstly, it formed an extensive and semi-continuous zone which enclosed more than 11,000 households and provided a single large sample of offence data. It should be emphasised that this was not an exceptionally large scheme. On the contrary, it comprised over 500 schemes with an average size below 20 households, typical of the situation within Greater Manchester. Secondly, the area was approximately coterminous with two police beats; by February 1987 80 per cent of these beats were covered by NW activity. Given the practical difficulties of establishing whether individual offences were within or outside NW areas, reliance on data aggregated to beats was unavoidable and this coincidence of boundaries meant that the beat data were a good surrogate for scheme figures. Finally, although the first scheme was formed as early as November 1985, the main expansion occurred over a concentrated period in late 1986 and early 1987, facilitating comparison of pre-scheme and post-scheme situations. Almost 95 per cent of the schemes were established in the seven months between September 1986 and April 1987 (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Formation of NW schemes in Stretford and Trafford, Manchester



Identification of a control area with a similar residential environment and crime profile but without NW was not straightforward in Manchester. The area finally selected extends southward from the city centre, including the inner-city districts of Hulme and Moss Side, and stretching out as far as the Manchester City Football Ground, a distance of approximately 3.5 km. It cannot be argued that the two areas are identical. Here, there is greater spatial differentiation between the white-collar and blue-collar workers, a higher proportion of the population are in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, and local authority dwellings account for a larger sector of the housing market. Nevertheless, in terms of location relative to the centre, the total volume of crime, the general status and character of the residential environment and demographic characteristics of the population, there is a good degree of comparability.

The annual totals for the three types of offence for 1985 to 1987 are shown in Table 4.5. The data exhibit some consistency insofar as 1986 totals in each case are higher than 1985 values. In the most recent year, however, the trend for BD and TADA changed and totals were substantially below 1986 levels - although still above 1985 figures - while the number of TFMV offences continued to increase sharply. Given that NW was introduced in late 1986 and early 1987, the BD and TADA data could reflect the beneficial consequences of NW operation, although any benefit has apparently not been experienced in the context of TFMV. To examine this possibility further, it is necessary to look at monthly totals to see whether the trend reversal coincided with scheme expansion and to consider what other factors might have caused such an effect.

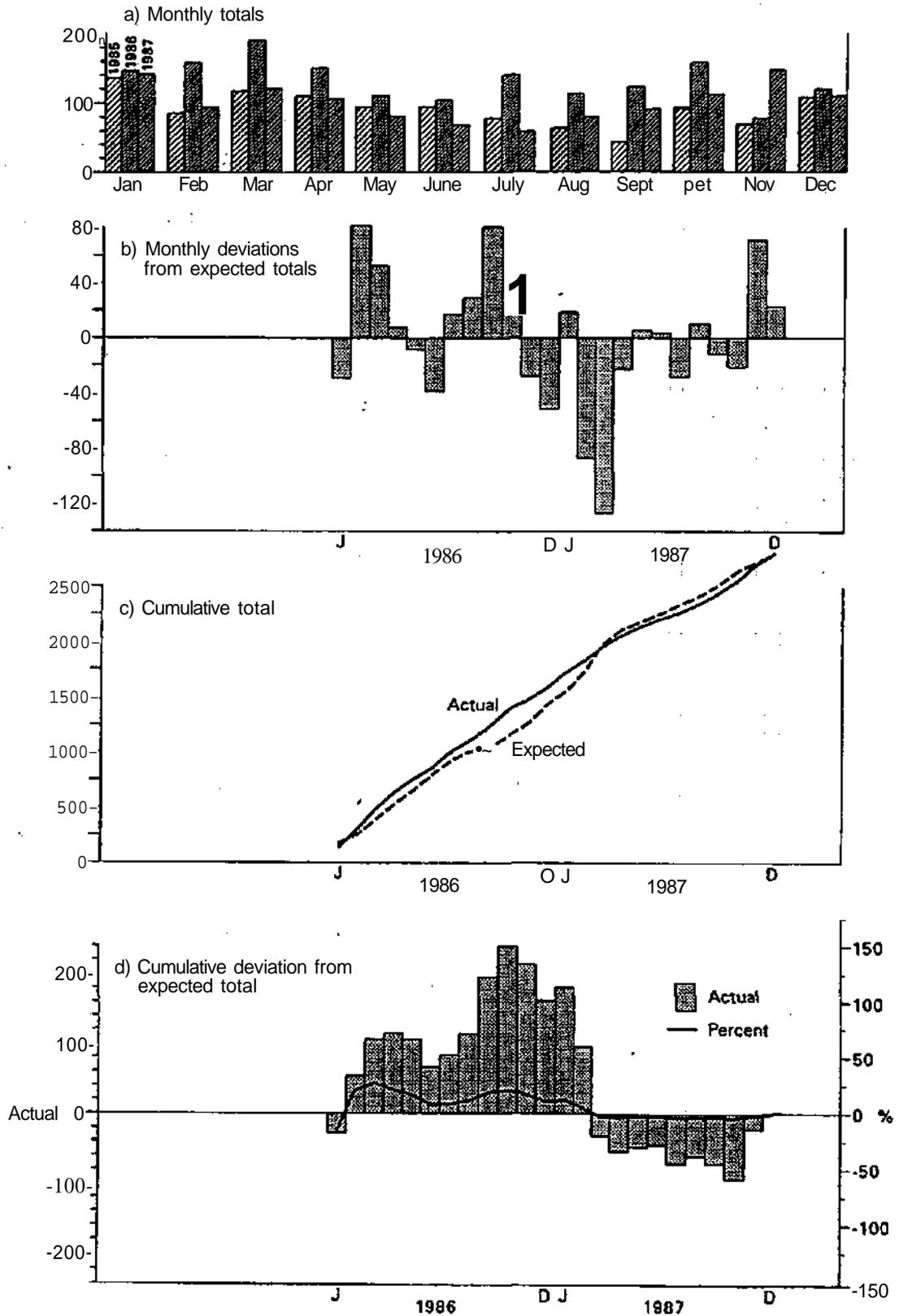
Table 4.5 Annual offence totals for Trafford and Stretford

	1985	1986	1987
BD	1,099	1,598	1,213
TADA	529	601	514
TFMV	616	825	960

Figure 4.7 depicts the monthly pattern of BD over the three-year period. A strong seasonal cycle is evident with winter peaks and summer troughs, although there are exceptions to this pattern. In eight of the ten months from January to October 1986 monthly totals substantially exceeded those recorded in the previous year. In November and December, however, increases were much more modest and in January 1987 a small decrease was registered. Throughout the rest of the year, with one exception (November), the 1987 totals were substantially below those of 1986 and, in several months, below 1985 figures too. It appears therefore that the early pronounced upward trend in the data ameliorates as NW begins and further growth in the number of schemes is accompanied by a decline in burglary levels.

Expected burglary totals for the study area based on the trend in the control area were calculated and the deviations are shown in Figure 4.7. There is no sharp contrast between the pre-scheme and post-scheme situations, insofar as positive and negative deviations are present in both periods. Nevertheless, for much of the period prior to November 1986 the deviations were most frequently positive and, in several months, relatively high. But from October 1986 to March 1987, as schemes become established, there is a period of rapid gradual transition during which

Figure 4.7 BD statistics for Stretford and Trafford, Manchester



large positive deviations become even larger negative ones. Subsequently, the situation in the study area becomes less satisfactory. The gap between actual and expected values closes and some positive deviations are recorded. However, these positive deviations tend to be significantly smaller than the negative values. A final phase appears to begin in November 1987 when larger positive deviations again appear.

The significance of these data are highlighted when their cumulative effect is examined. From January to October 1986 the study area experienced 241 more burglaries than one would have expected, an excess of 21 per cent. Yet in the following twelve months to October 1987 there were 335 fewer burglaries than expected, a reduction of 22 per cent. Even if the final two months of 1987 - when high positive deviations were recorded - are included, the actual number of burglaries is 15 per cent below the expected level.

These data show that development of NW has been accompanied by a significant relative improvement in the burglary rate. Whether this is a causal relationship, however, is a matter for debate. The coincidence between the establishment of schemes and the change in burglary trends can certainly be used to support this view. But the results do not unambiguously show that the change can be attributed to a NW effect and, indeed, an alternative interpretation is possible. It may be that the burglary figures for 1986 were unusually high and that the lower total in 1987 reflected a return to more normal conditions, in statistical terms a regression to the mean. This line of argument is supported by the fact that negative deviations were only recorded in six of the twelve months in 1987 and the cumulative negative total was strongly influenced by two months (February and March) when increases were recorded in the control area. A definitive conclusion to this debate requires a longer series of data than was available for this study but, despite this uncertainty, it is concluded here that the experience in Manchester provides grounds for some optimism that NW can have a beneficial effect on the burglary rate.

The monthly totals for TADA exhibit a much less pronounced seasonal cycle than BD (Figure 4.8). In other respects, though, there is a broad similarity between the two sets of data. In nine out of the ten months to October 1986 the figures were higher than in the previous year, with several substantial rises recorded. However, only two increases occurred in the following fourteen months, and in six months in 1987 the totals were below 1985 values. Once again therefore, a change appears to coincide with the introduction of NW.

Comparison of these data with expected values from the control area suggests that NW may have been instrumental in bringing about an improvement. From January to May 1986 the study area experienced higher offence rates than expected. But this was followed by several months of inconsistency in which negative deviations were more common. Of particular note, however, is the period from November 1986 to May 1987 in which actual values were well below expected totals. Finally, there has been a phase in which smaller deviations - both positive and negative - re-emerge. The most important point to be emphasised here, therefore, is that during the period of scheme formation, and for a short while thereafter, TADA levels were much lower than expected, but in other months the situation has been variable.

The cumulative data are particularly instructive here, revealing longer-term trends not evident in the monthly figures. Despite fluctuations, it is apparent that from January to October 1986 TADA levels were higher than expected. The differences are not large; the excess amounted to 54 crimes or 13 per cent. In marked contrast,

Figure 4.8 TADA statistics for Stretford and Trafford, Manchester

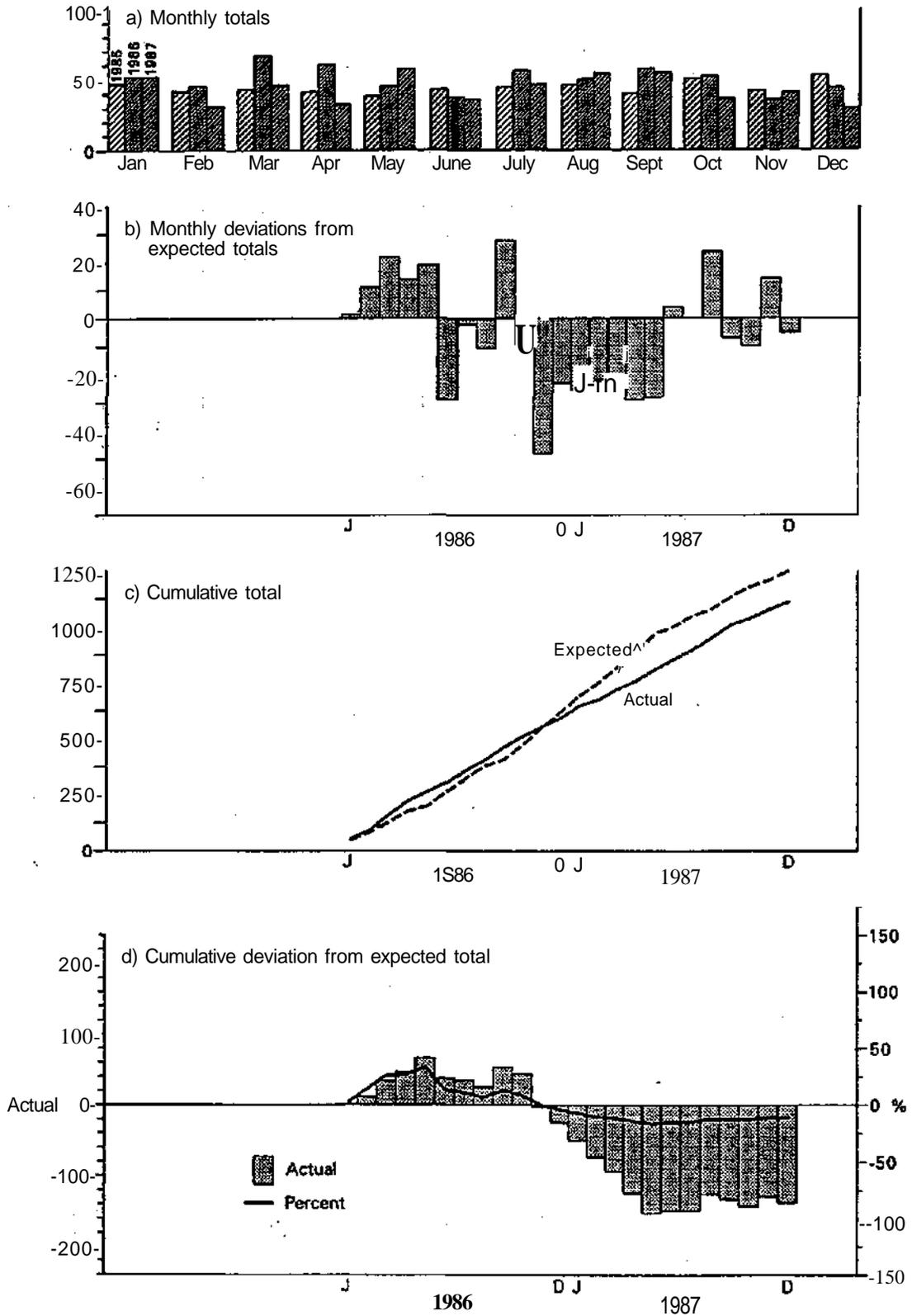
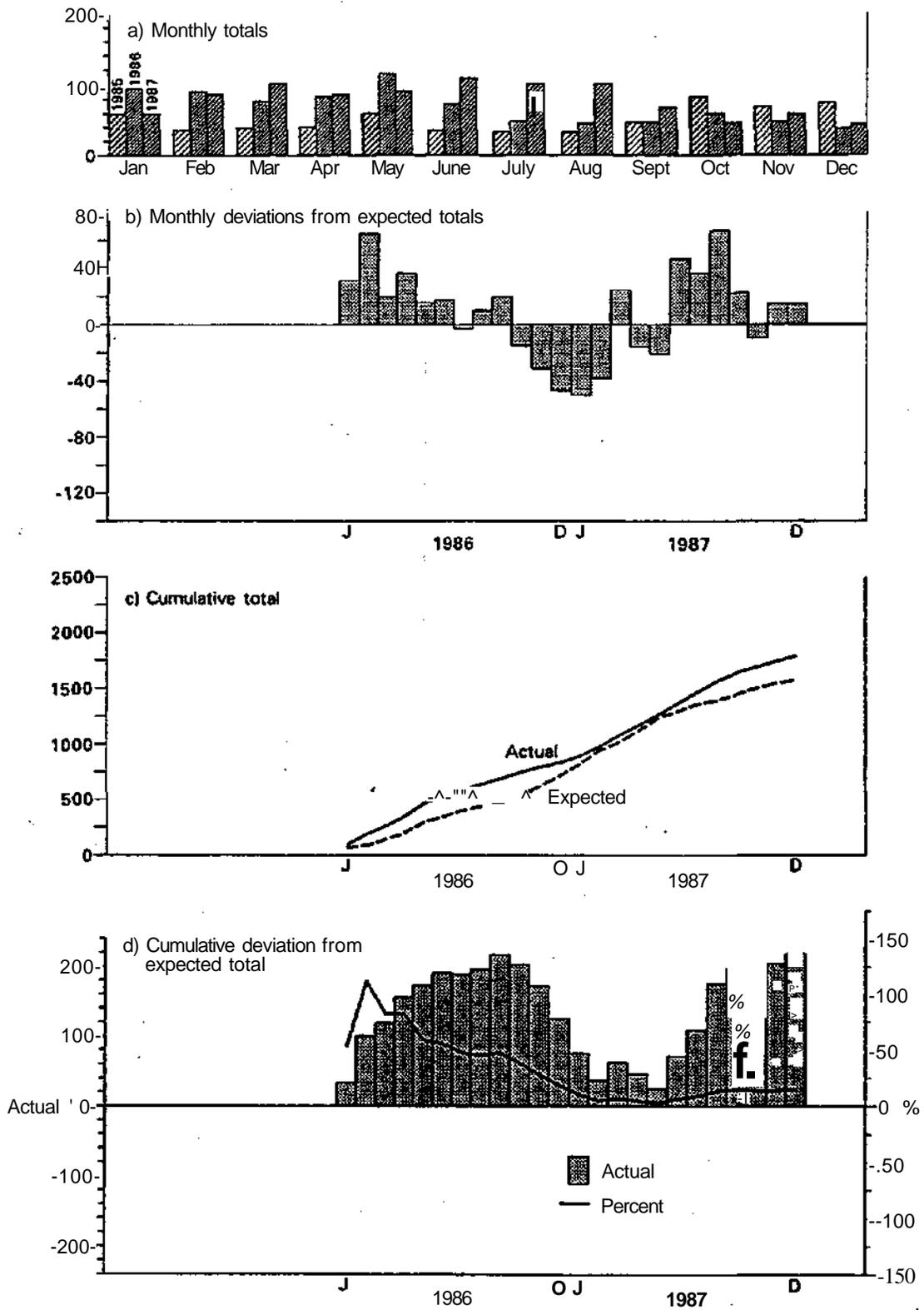


Figure 4.9 TFMV statistics for Stretford and Trafford, Manchester



during the remainder of the study period there were 191 fewer offences than expected, a reduction of 23 per cent. It is important to recognise, though, that this occurred because offence levels were relatively low for a concentrated period, from October 1986 to May 1987. Since then the overall performance of the study area has closely matched that in the control area. Once again, therefore, a dramatic change of trend follows the introduction of NW, but the interpretation of this correlation is subject to the same debate as for burglary.

As indicated above, annual TFMV totals continued to rise in 1987, unlike the previous offences considered, but examination of monthly data suggests that these totals subsume considerable variation within each year (Figure 4.9). Without doubt, the first eight months of 1986 are characterised by very large increases over 1985, but in the nine months from September 1986 only two increases occurred, one of these being minor. In the remaining months of 1987 the sharp upward trend resumed, with large increases evident during the summer months. It can be seen, therefore, that the period of absolute reduction clearly coincides with NW development, but this improved situation has not been sustained. A further complication here is that there appears to have been a major adjustment in the seasonal cycle of such crimes. Whereas in 1985 the highest offence totals occurred in the winter months, the situation was reversed in 1987. Whether this is associated with NW activity is unclear.

Deviations of these monthly figures from expected totals derived from the control area are also depicted in Figure 4.9. An initial period in which the incidence of TFMV was higher than expected was followed by several months in which actual offences were lower and a final phase in which positive deviations again became the norm. The negative values, covering the period October 1986 to May 1987, match well the growth period of NW, but the subsequent reversal is earlier and more marked than is the case for BD or TADA. Some caution must be exercised, however, in attributing the early improvement to NW since it seems to have begun prior to the main phase of scheme formation; the positive deviations appear to decline from the peak of February 1986. Moreover, if one looks at the changing magnitude of deviations and not just their direction, it is possible to argue that the data exhibit a pronounced cyclical trend which cannot at this stage be explained in the context of NW.

The conflict between these alternative possibilities is not easily resolved, even after consideration of the cumulative statistics. These show that from January to September 1986 the level of TFMV was 47 per cent above expectation, equivalent to an additional 216 offences. Between October 1986 and May 1987 the situation was reversed, the shortfall being 192 crimes or 25 per cent. Finally, the deterioration between June and December generated an additional 193 offences, a massive 57 per cent above the level expected during this period. This reiterates that absolute improvements marked by a downturn in the graph began with the expansion of NW. Nevertheless, the upward gradient ameliorates during the previous months, implying a relative improvement at an earlier date.

More generally, though, the evidence relating to BD and TADA in Manchester provide the strongest support yet found for successful crime prevention through NW.

Grange Estate and Moor Nook. Preston

Grange Estate and Moor Nook are two large local authority housing developments on the eastern fringe of Preston and adjacent to the M6 motorway. Although the estates

differ in composition and design, they are in many ways representative of contemporaneous developments that can be found in urban centres throughout Britain. In Moor Nook, the roads are laid out on a formal symmetrical pattern with terraced and semi-detached houses of two or three bedrooms. There is a mixture of brick and steel-framed prefabricated construction; roads are well-spaced and there are open spaces in the design. Nevertheless, the overall impression is one of uniformity, in which the vistas of houses are uninterrupted by trees or other land uses. In recent years the status of the area has deteriorated, a process to which the age of the housing, vandalism and an unattractive physical environment have undoubtedly contributed. Perhaps not surprisingly, few residents have bought their dwellings from the council, although this may change on completion of an improvement programme implemented by the council in 1988.

Grange Estate is to the north of Moor Nook and separated from it by Grange Park. A large part of the estate contains terraced and semi-detached houses almost indistinguishable from those at Moor Nook, although the road layout is more compact. In addition, however, a substantial number of households here live in small blocks of flats. Typical of 1960s construction in prefabricated concrete sections, these blocks rise to only four storeys and each entrance serves only the small number of flats in the block. As in Moor Nook, deterioration of the physical environment - from old age and vandalism - is apparent. There is little evidence of community activities and use of the open spaces is restricted by packs of stray dogs. Overall, there is a prevalent atmosphere here of neglect, isolation and a lack of social cohesion.

At the time of the 1981 Census both Moor Nook and Grange Estate were predominantly occupied by households with skilled and unskilled manual workers. Within these categories, those in employment tended to fill the lower paid positions and unemployment was high. Clearly, therefore, the population of these areas faced a serious combination of social, economic and environmental difficulties. In addition, recorded crime statistics suggest that on both estates in recent years there has been a significant burglary problem. In 1985, for example, the risk of BD was approximately one in nine.

Despite the need for an effective crime prevention strategy, Grange Estate and Moor Nook were not promising locations for the formation of successful NW schemes. Among other considerations, the lack of social cohesion and the physical design of some of the dwellings were not conducive to neighbourly cooperation. Nevertheless, a scheme covering the major part of Grange Estate and enclosing 700 households was formed in March 1987, while a similar scheme in Moor Nook involving 900 households was set up in the following month. Both schemes appear to have become well established, with a high proportion of households continuing to display stickers over one year later.

Assessment of the impact of these schemes is based on analysis of monthly crime statistics for the period from April 1985 to March 1988. Data for the two schemes - which were formed at virtually the same time - have been combined to increase sample size. Because of data constraints, crime figures for the study area also include offences affecting an additional 300 dwellings off the estates which were in a NW scheme set up in May 1986. This mismatch formed a very small proportion of the total area and was not expected to affect the analysis significantly. Only one offence, residential burglary, is included in the analysis, the recorded incidence of vehicle crime being too low to warrant examination. The control areas included those parts of the estates not within NW and other adjoining housing developments which were also predominantly council housing.

There were almost 200 residential burglaries in the study area during the twelve months from April 1985 (Table 4.6), a figure which has fallen in each of the following two years. The onset of an absolute downward trend, therefore, clearly pre-dates the creation of NW schemes.

The quarterly data in Figure 4.10 show, however, that the annual totals conceal a more complex pattern. Regular seasonal variations are difficult to discern, but burglary levels appear to have been exceptionally high in the winter quarters of 1985-86. Moreover, although there was a decline in the second twelve-month period, there were actually increases during the first two quarters before a substantial reversal occurred. Similarly, there was no consistent change in the third data year; the increase in the first quarter was followed by three successive decreases. There is little indication here, therefore, of significant absolute reductions coinciding with the introduction of NW. Indeed, in the second quarter of 1987, immediately after the schemes were launched, the level of burglary continued to rise.

Table 4.6 Burglary totals at Grange Estate and Moor Nook for the year from April, 1985 to 1988

April 1985 - March 1986	197
April 1986 - March 1987	159
April 1987 - March 1988	139

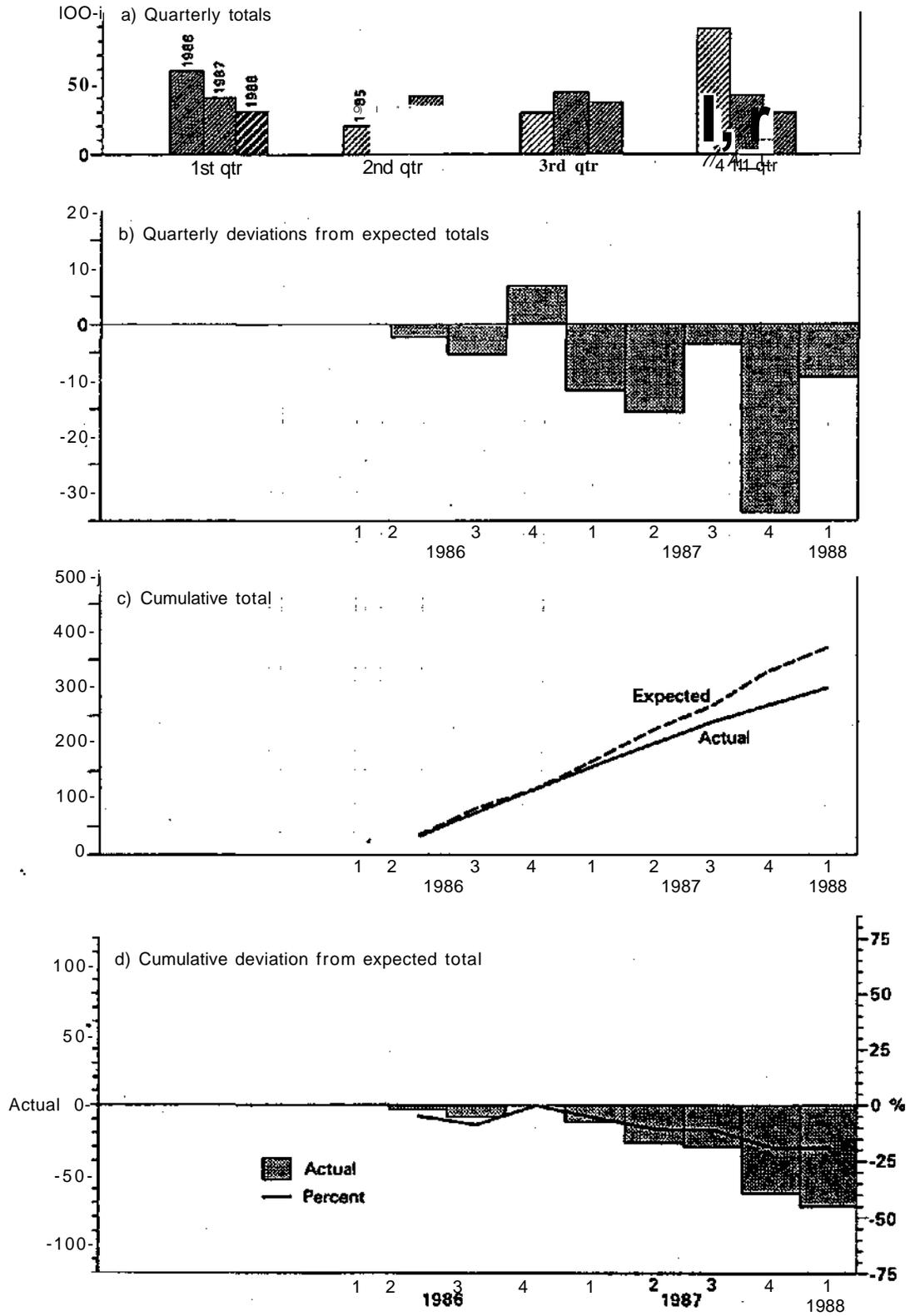
But how does the study area compare with comparable residential environments nearby? In general, the performance was very similar to the control area during 1986; small deviations from expected values - both positive and negative - were experienced. However, in the first quarter of 1987, which included one full month of scheme operation on Grange Estate, the difference between actual and expected burglaries was larger. It increased further in the following quarter when both schemes were functioning, and reached an unprecedented level in late 1987. Smaller differences were recorded in two other quarters, but these were both negative.

A better appreciation of the trend within these quarterly figures is given by the cumulative deviation. From this it can be seen that during the last nine months of 1986 total burglary in the study area reached exactly the expected value calculated from trends in the control area. However, in the following fifteen months of scheme operation there were 71 fewer burglaries than expected, an apparent reduction of 28 per cent. This favourable trend, however, must be interpreted with caution. It has occurred at a time when burglary rates have been stable or declining across the country and the burglary problem here remains a serious one. It also raises the question of possible displacement, since the control area was located close to the NW area. All that can be said on the basis of the evidence available is that, following the introduction of NW in Grange Estate, the incidence of burglary there has fallen substantially relative to a comparable control area without schemes. For the residents here, therefore, NW seems to have been of considerable benefit.

Boldmere, Maney and Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield

The areas selected for analysis lie in the south west of Sutton Coldfield, which itself is located on the north east periphery of the West Midlands conurbation. The

Figure 4.10 BD statistics for Moor Nook and Grange Estate, Preston



residential environment here is dominated by detached and semi-detached owner-occupied houses, but some privately-owned flat accommodation is to be found closer to the town centre. Property values are high and a high proportion of the economically-active population is employed in professional or managerial occupations. Families with children are the predominant household unit, although small local concentrations of one- and two-person pensioner households also exist.

Following the introduction of NW in Sutton Coldfield in late 1984, the number of schemes increased gradually to more than 60 by late 1987, enclosing more than 15,000 households. Almost without exception these schemes were formed in response to public demand, rather than police initiation. Probably because of this, schemes vary considerably in size, with many comprising fewer than 100 households and very few exceeding 500. This structure, combined with the discontinuous spatial pattern of development, meant that identifying areas for analysis was particularly problematical.

The study area does not form a single contiguous scheme area, nor was NW established here at one particular time. The analysis is focused on eleven separate schemes, most of which were formed during a six-month period in early, 1986 (Table 4.7). The size of schemes varies but those involving 200-500 households form the majority. In total, there were just over 3,600 participating households, with virtually all residents within their boundaries at least nominally supporting the initiative.

Table 4.7 Schemes in Sutton Coldfield included in the analysis

Scheme number	Formation	Households
3	March 1985	231
4	March 1985	384
5	May 1985	78
16	February 1986	178
20	March 1986	349
22	March 1986	433
25	May 1986	245
26	June 1986	130
29	July 1986	453
31	July 1986	638
33	October 1986	482

Comparable statistics for a three-year period from January 1985 were collected, providing the precise location and date of individual offences. However, the relatively low level of crime in these areas and small size of schemes meant that analysis of individual NW areas was precluded and aggregation of data was necessary. It was therefore anticipated that, if NW was effectively preventing crime, its impact would become progressively more visible as schemes became operational, with the main effects occurring after the major phase of scheme formation in early 1986.

The selection of control areas was constrained by the fact that NW schemes, many of them small, had been widely established on a piecemeal basis throughout Sutton Coldfield. Comparable areas of adequate size without NW were therefore difficult to

find. However, two beats in the northern part of the same sub-division were eventually selected as a control area. Their location relative to the town centre and their housing environments were considered to match closely the NW areas. Moreover, although not completely without NW, the three schemes established there during the study period were extremely small, covering in total fewer than 250 households or less than one per cent of the total population.

Prior to NW being established the level of crime in both the study areas and the control areas was not a severe general problem. In 1985, for example, there were 85 residential burglaries in the NW areas, representing one in 40 households, with totals for TADA and TFMV being slightly lower. The offence totals, however, conceal considerable spatial variations with certain localities having had consistently higher rates over several years. In particular, the neighbourhoods that subsequently formed schemes 31 and 33 accounted for a high proportion of the residential burglaries. More than 50 per cent occurred here in 1985 and almost 60 per cent in early 1986, even though the areas covered only 31 per cent of households. This concentrated distribution suggests that particular attention should be given to the period following scheme formation in these areas in July and October 1986 respectively.

The annual totals for BD in the study areas show a marked increase during the first two years covered by the survey - from 85 in 1985 to 152 in 1986. In contrast, a decline of similar magnitude is apparent the following year (Table 4.8). Disaggregation of these data into quarterly figures reveals a distinct seasonal pattern, with the total for the winter quarters being markedly higher than for the summer (Figure 4.11). Comparisons between years show that the total increase recorded in 1986 is reflected in a rise in each quarter, in most cases by a substantial amount. The return to lower levels in 1987 is the outcome of falls in three of the four quarters, although the size of the fall varies greatly.

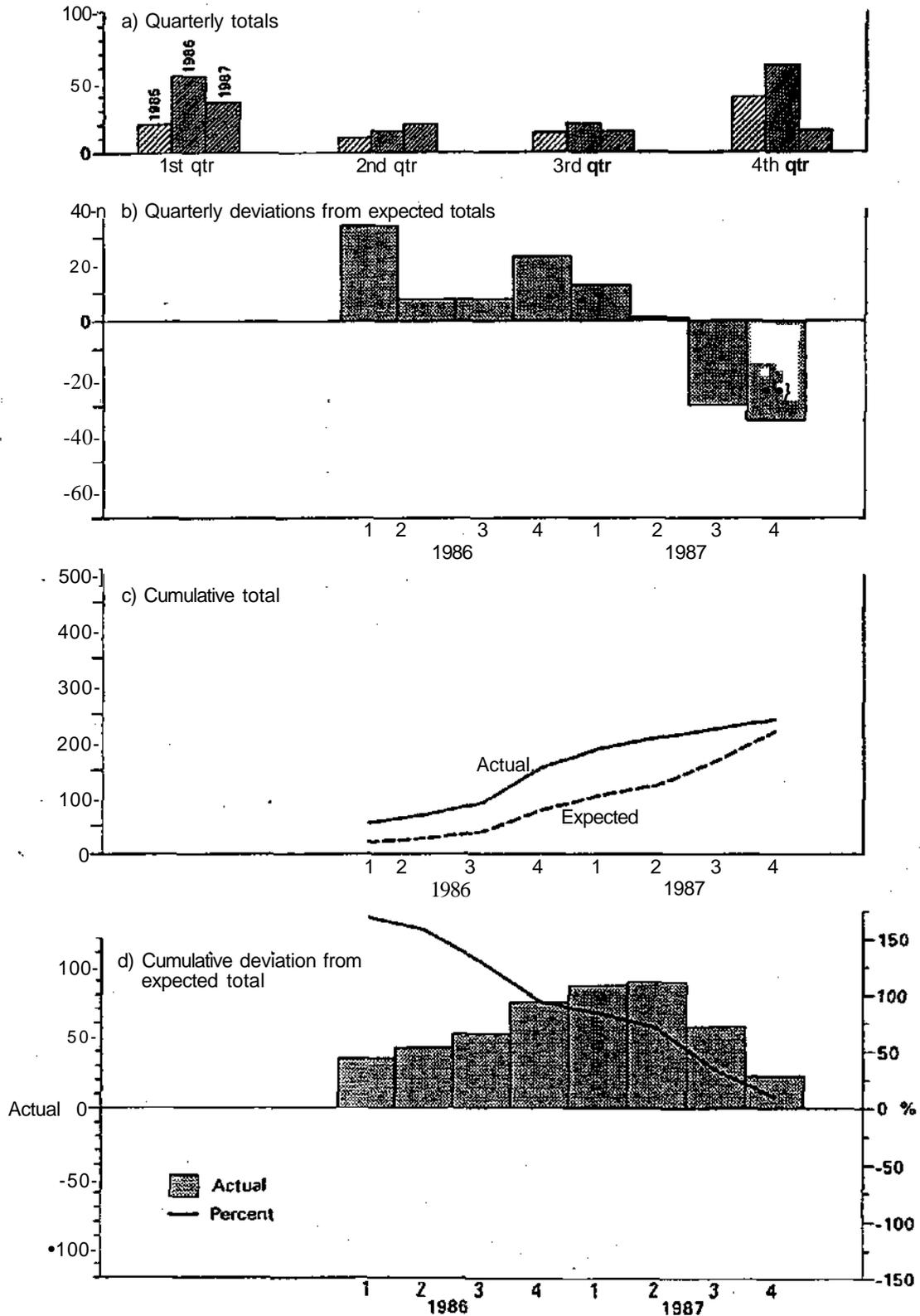
Table 4.8 Annual offence totals for Boldmere, Maney and Wylde Green

	1985	1986	1987
BD	85	152	88
TADA	48	55	68
TFMV	70	58	83

These data do not obviously suggest that NW has been an effective remedy to residential burglary. Whilst the decline in 1987 contrasts dramatically and encouragingly with the increase in 1986, all but one of the schemes were operational by the end of July 1986 and substantial increases occurred in the last two quarters of that year when one would have expected the success of NW first to become apparent. Even allowing for the fact that one scheme area with a relatively high proportion of burglaries did not have NW until late 1986, the decline in burglary does not appear to coincide with the formation of the schemes.

A slightly more encouraging perspective, however, emerges when comparisons are made with the control area. Although positive quarterly deviations from expected values continue into 1987, the situation in the NW areas improves for five successive quarters. This meant that from mid-1986 to the end of 1987 there were actually 21

Figure 4.11 BD statistics for Boidmere, Maney and Wyld Green, Sutton Coldfield



fewer burglaries in the NW areas than predicted, a shortfall of 11 per cent. However, improvement in absolute terms does not begin until long after all the schemes were formed. Examination of the cumulative totals in Figure 4.11 reinforces the point. The gap between actual and expected totals closes from late 1986 and the deviation expressed as a percentage of the expected total declines steadily. There are some indications here that NW may be having an effect, but these are too weak to allow this to be concluded with any confidence.

The statistics for TADA offences show that annual totals increased in 1986 and 1987 over the preceding year (Table 4.8). Examination of quarterly figures reveals that there is little evidence for a consistent seasonal pattern, with peak quarters apparently varying from year to year. Nevertheless, three stages of development can be discerned when comparing figures for individual quarters. The first covers the first half of 1986 when offence totals were lower than in 1985. The next four quarters form the second stage during which substantial increases over the previous year's figures were recorded. Finally, the third stage in late 1987 is marked by a levelling off and then a decline to levels below those of 1986 (Figure 4.12).

Once again, there is little in the data to suggest that NW has brought about an improvement. During the main period of scheme formation offence levels were rising steeply, and the recorded decline only occurs one year later. When compared to the control area, offence levels in early 1986 were lower than expected. But the pattern changed before the end of the year and positive deviations continued throughout 1987. In consequence, the total number of TADA offences in NW areas since the beginning of 1986 was almost exactly as predicted from trends in the control areas without NW. However, since mid-1986 (when virtually all schemes were in operation) the actual total is 42 higher than expected, an excess of 64 per cent. Conversion of these deviations to proportional values does nothing to alter the conclusion that formation of NW has not been accompanied by either an absolute or even a relative reduction in the level of recorded TADA crimes. Indeed, the reverse seems to be the case.

The trend in annual totals for TFMV differs from both BD and TADA, falling slightly from 1985 to 1986 and rising by a similar amount in 1987 (Table 4.8). As can be seen from the quarterly data in Figure 4.13, there is no obvious seasonal variation, but the change in each quarter from year to year appears to reflect the pattern evident in the annual totals, with the exception of the second quarter. As before, there is little evidence here to suggest that NW has lowered the level of recorded offences, and comparison with the control areas does little to alter that impression. Since the beginning of 1986, the trend in NW zones has deviated in an apparently random fashion from the control areas. Moreover, although the cumulative offence totals remain below expected values throughout, the gap gradually closes so that the final total of 141 is almost identical to the predicted figure of 147, the 4 per cent gap clearly not significant.

Figure 4.12 TADA statistics for Boldmere, Maney and Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield

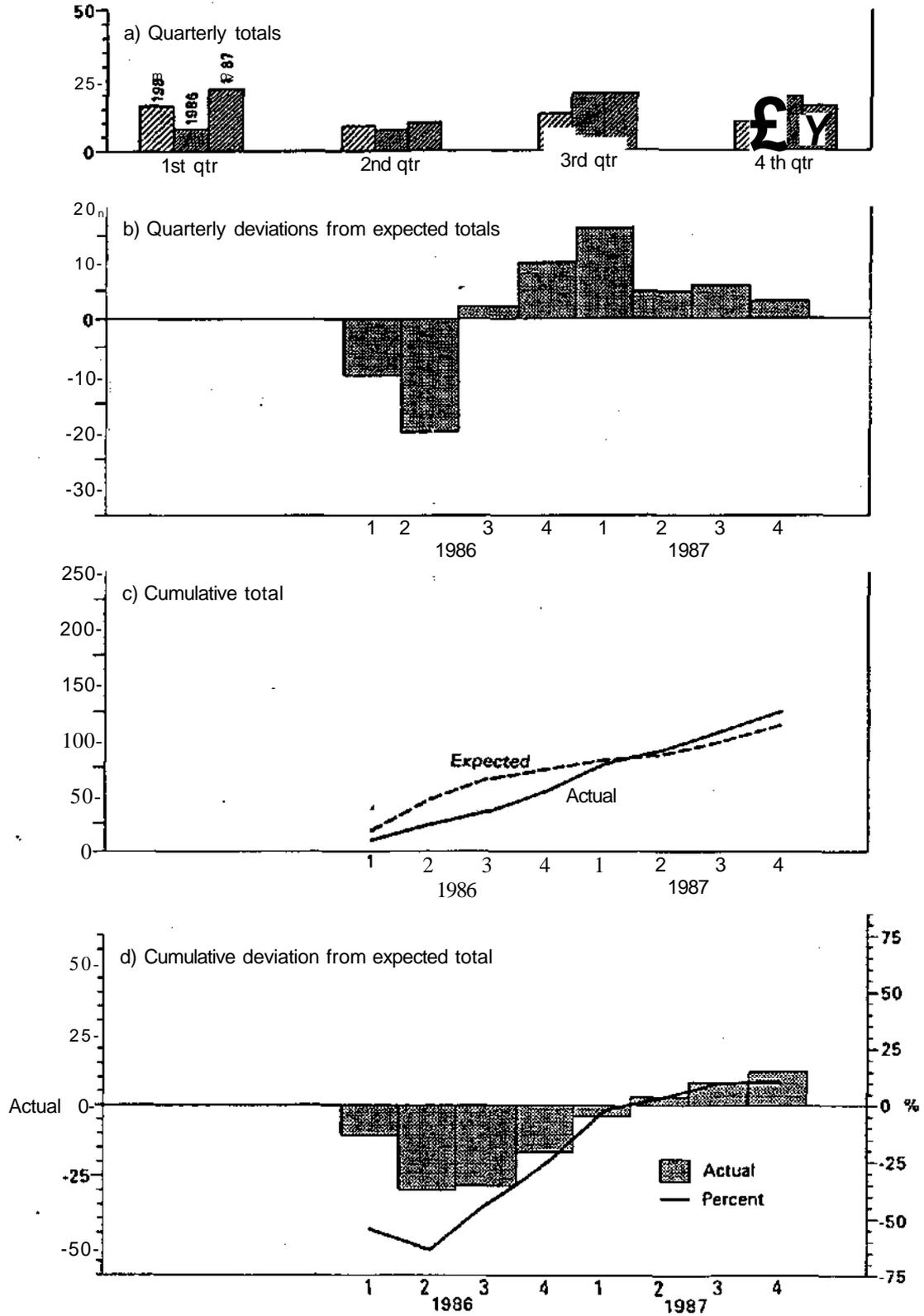
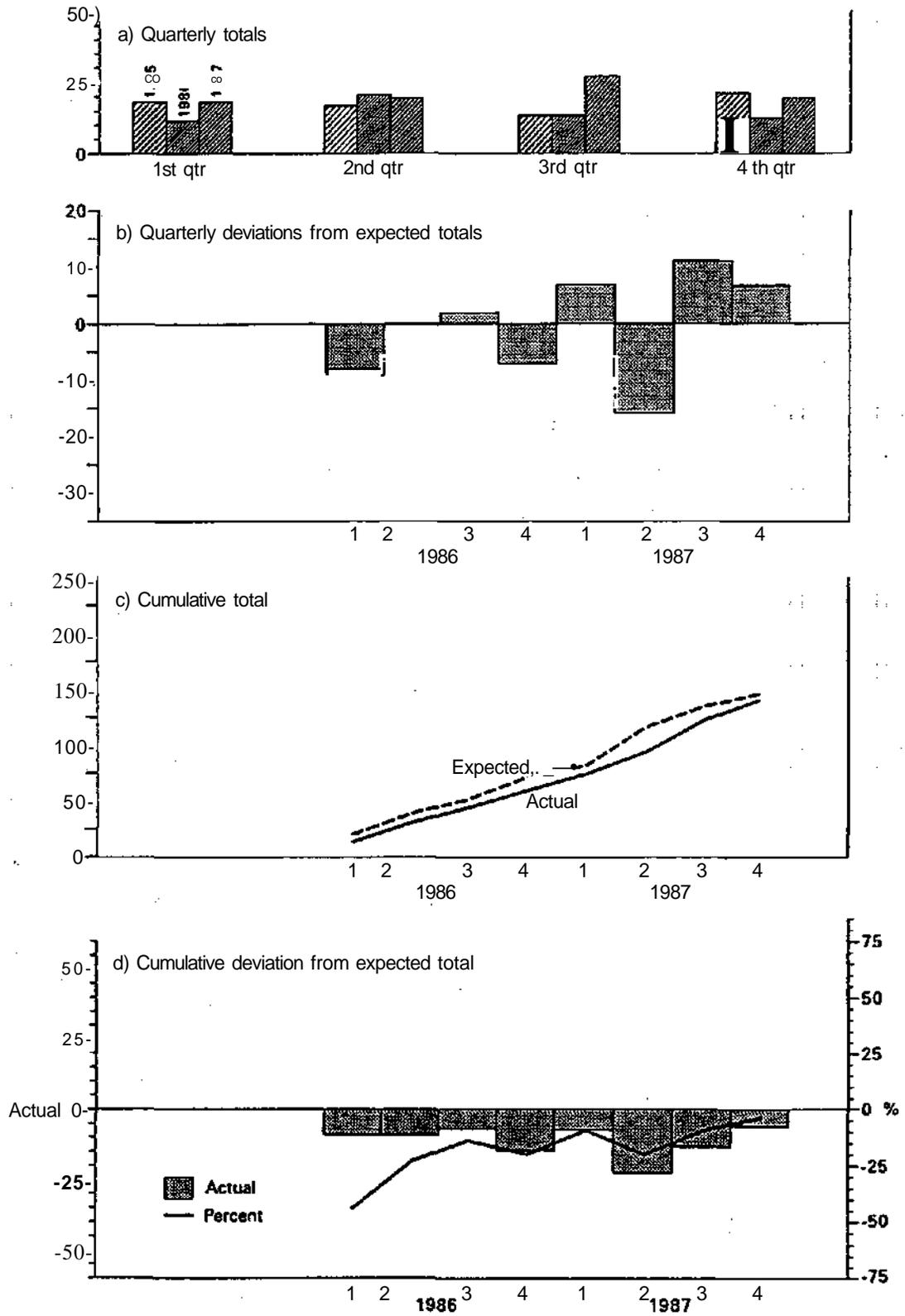


Figure 4.13 TFMV statistics for Bold mere, Maney and Wyld Green, Sutton Coldfield



SECTION FIVE

CONCLUSION

The expansion of NW in Britain has been a remarkable development. It can be explained as a consequence of increased concern about crime, increased emphasis on community-based preventative initiatives, vociferous support from politicians and a willingness amongst the public to adopt the idea. Yet throughout its short history there has been uncertainty about its effectiveness and impact.

In this report it has been argued that, although intuitively NW appears to be a sensible response to the problem of crime and fear of crime, such intuition needs to be confirmed by evidence from evaluative study. Only if this can be provided can continued support for NW be justified and a case made for the allocation of resources for its further development. Previous studies of NW have confirmed its beneficial effects in providing a sense of security and in improving relationships between residents in a neighbourhood and the local police, as well as between residents themselves. Studies of the impact of schemes on crime, however, have not been so convincing. Indeed, the published evidence to suggest that NW can prevent crime is extremely thin. Much of the support has come from references to unpublished analyses of individual schemes, a situation that allows little opportunity for critical examination.

The results presented earlier were the outcome of a study that was designed to extend our knowledge about the relationship between NW and recorded crime. Examination of recorded crime in six study areas was undertaken to ascertain whether NW can lead to absolute or relative reductions in crime and, if it can, what level of improvement can be achieved and what types of residential environment can benefit. The method adopted was intended to overcome some of the shortcomings of previous work in this field which, as has been shown, has tended to be weakened by small samples, short study periods and lack of control. The study was primarily focused on residential burglary because this is the crime that NW is most frequently thought to be influenced by NW. However, where the data allowed, two other offences, TADA and TFMV, were also examined.

Analysis of the data has shown that in three of the six areas the introduction of NW has been accompanied by some improvement in the crime situation. The most significant change occurred in Manchester where dramatic relative and absolute reductions occurred during the year following scheme formation in all three offence categories. When compared with the control area, crime totals here in the pre-scheme period were substantially higher than expected but, once the schemes were functioning, a major reversal occurred. For BD and TADA, the totals were 21 per cent and 13 per cent higher than expected in the ten months leading up to NW. In the following year they were 22 per cent and 23 per cent lower. The importance of this result should not be underestimated. It is not based on a small locality or a single scheme, but on an extensive area with 11,000 houses and more than 500 NW schemes. It is not based on a small number of offences; in the pre-scheme period, for example, there were approximately 1,600 BD offences. In this area, therefore, the relative fall in the level of crime has been widespread and substantial.

Less marked improvements were recorded at two other locations, Saltdean (Brighton)

and Grange Estate and Moor Nook (Preston). In Saltdean, the absolute burglary figures for the months immediately following scheme formation are not encouraging but, compared with the control area, a relative reduction is evident. The situation in Preston is similar. Pre-scheme burglary totals matched exactly the expected figure, but in the succeeding 15 months there were 28 per cent fewer than predicted.

A fundamental question that cannot be conclusively answered is whether there is a causal relationship between the establishment of the schemes and the crime trends. Alternative interpretations of the data are possible but, on the basis of the available evidence, the conclusion drawn here is that NW has been instrumental in bringing about the recorded improvements. Furthermore, it appears that NW can be effective in a range of residential environments. The successful schemes were certainly not restricted to low-crime middle-class suburbia, as has sometimes been assumed. The Manchester schemes operated in an inner-city area with a high crime rate and a population characterised by its economic, social and cultural diversity. Saltdean is a high-status residential situated outside the town of Brighton. The schemes examined in Preston comprise local authority housing of varying ages and styles and have a population that is experiencing a combination of economic, social and environmental difficulties.

The evidence from these areas, however, was not totally supportive. First, it should be remembered that the observed improvements were relative; the study areas performed better than corresponding control areas. Unfortunately, this was not always associated with an absolute reduction in the level of offences studied and any assessment of NW must be tempered by this. Second, the relative reduction appears difficult to sustain. In Manchester, the totals for TAPA and TFMV rose above expected values within less than one year, while the improvement in BD lasted only a few months longer. In Brighton, the situation was similar, but this may be explained by the formation of schemes in the control area removing any advantage that the study area previously enjoyed.

These trends could be easily interpreted as indicating that any benefit of NW is short-lived. Indeed, such a conclusion could be explained in the context of Husain's (1988) evidence of declining interest and enthusiasm for NW after less than a year. However, this is not the only possible explanation. An alternative interpretation of the data is that NW has not just had a deterrent effect on crime within scheme boundaries. It may be that, as it has spread and been publicised, it has begun to have a more general influence on those people tempted to commit such crimes. In this way it may have an effect even in areas where schemes are not operating. If this were to occur, any advantage that NW areas might have initially would gradually disappear, as has occurred in some of the areas examined in this report. In such circumstances, however, it would be quite wrong to dismiss NW as ineffective. Rather, its impact would be more significant than if its effect were noticeable only in the areas where it was operating. From the evidence available it is unfortunately not possible to distinguish between these two possibilities. Future research, therefore, should address the question of whether and why the apparent decline in impact occurs, and whether NW does have 'spillover' effects that extend beyond scheme boundaries.

It cannot, of course, be overlooked that the results from three other areas are less convincing. Although in Handsworth Wood there has been a general downward trend in the absolute numbers of BD and TADA, the downturn begins prior to NW and the trend is not greatly different from that in the control areas. Here again, it is important to consider whether 'spillover' effects could account for this situation.

One possibility is that because of the early and rapid implementation of NW in Birmingham, which was extensively publicised, any deterrent effects were not confined to neighbourhoods with schemes but affected the whole area. In this case, one might expect a downturn in absolute numbers, as has been observed, but there would not necessarily be a difference between scheme and control areas. The same argument could also be applied to Sutton Coldfield, where NW was first introduced in 1984, but there is no evidence at either location to support this hypothesis. One must conclude that the NW schemes examined in Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and Burnley have not had any observable impact on burglary or autocrime offences considered in this report.

It should be emphasised that the results presented can only form part of any evaluation of NW. Given that NW is primarily a crime prevention measure, the impact on crime should clearly be a major element in the evaluative process. But only a limited range of offences has been examined here. Other offences may also be affected. NW may be a successful response to less easily quantifiable problems, such as nuisances and incivilities. The social benefits that schemes can bring to the community are a further potential gain that cannot be overlooked.

It is clearly unrealistic to expect every NW to be successful in preventing crime since schemes will vary in quality and local conditions will influence the potential benefits that can be gained. In this report, three of the six areas examined appear to have experienced a lower level of certain crimes as a result of being within a NW boundary. There is a possibility that this benefit may not be easily sustained, but this is no reason to discard the concept. The success NW has had in preventing crime justifies its continued support and the allocation of resources to promote this initiative further.

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