The Reducing Burglary Initiative: planning for partnership

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Introduction

The idea that crime and disorder, including burglary, can best be tackled by a range of agencies and services working 'in partnership' has had increasing influence in the UK since the early 1980s. However, though partnership is widely and frequently advocated, it often proves difficult to deliver in practice, particularly when undertaking project work. A frequent source of difficulty is that, within the wider project planning and development process, insufficient attention is often paid to partnership issues.

This report draws general lessons for partnership from the experiences of multi-agency projects set up to tackle burglary, and in particular provides a framework which is intended to assist practitioners develop partnership-based projects more effectively. Though the lessons contained in this report derive from an evaluation of burglary reduction projects, they are widely applicable to the development and planning of partnership-based work in all fields of crime reduction.

The report proceeds by presenting good practice tips which summarise the key lessons contained in the main body of the report. The aims of the study are then outlined. The report then goes on to develop a good practice model for effective partnership work. A fuller-length version of this report with more detailed case studies is also available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr0403.pdf.

Home Office Development and Practice Reports draw out from research the messages for practice development, implementation and operation. They are intended as guidance for practitioners in specific fields. The recommendations explain how and why changes could be made, based on the findings from research, which would lead to better practice.

Good practice tips

The tips presented here are organised around a good practice model designed to help practitioners in planning partnership work. The model, which is elaborated over the course of this report, is based on three key elements: 'knowledge' refers to a partnership's understanding of what interventions it is undertaking and why; 'commitment' describes the willingness of partners to undertake work proposed by the partnership; and 'capacity' relates to individual partners' practical capacity to undertake the work proposed.

Knowledge: considering what can work in theory

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

Knowledge: considering what can work in context

- ✔ In developing specific initiatives, take fully into account the commitment and capacity of all partners.
- ✔ Establish the precise boundaries of the area in which the project is to be carried out, and conduct a thorough analysis of the nature and specific characteristics of the crime problem that is being addressed.
- ✔ Examine the extent and impact of other kinds of crime in the local area. Where appropriate (for example to encourage the participation of certain agencies, or to increase support among the general public), consider broadening the scope of the project to encompass goals related to other crime problems and even issues beyond crime that are a concern to local people. However, it is important to avoid a loss of focus. Thus a balance must be struck between engendering broad support for a project and maintaining a systematic, problem-solving approach.
- ✔ In developing the crime reduction strategy, investigate the needs and expectations of local people – taking into account the differing perspectives of different sectors of the population – and ensure that publicity is appropriately targeted.

Knowledge: considering what is working in practice

- ✔ Before project implementation, identify or set up data collection systems to facilitate project monitoring and evaluation (whether internal or external).
- ✔ As part of the monitoring process, examine closely and give credit for the contributions to the partnership made by individual partners, thereby promoting accountability, encouraging their overall commitment to the project, and ensuring that demands made on them remain within their present capacity.
- ✔ Use the findings of monitoring and evaluating the project in a reflexive manner – to build in an informed way upon successes to date, and to make necessary corrections to the project plan where there are failings.

Commitment: overcoming the obstacles

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

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

Capacity: staffing

- ✔ Establish constructive and transparent relations between inter-agency and intra-agency management structures, in order to encourage managers within partner agencies to support their staff in carrying out partnership commitments and hold them accountable for delivery.
- ✔ Ensure that project leadership is undertaken by officers who can dedicate a substantial amount of time to the partnership and have the necessary skills and (formal or informal) authority to direct activities and motivate their partnership colleagues.
- ✔ Consider recruiting a dedicated project co-ordinator, who can provide practical assistance to the project leader by overseeing the work of all partners and facilitating communication between the agencies.
- ✔ Ensure that staff are available within partner agencies with the necessary time, motivation, authority and skills to implement the partnership initiatives.

Capacity: contracting

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

Capacity: practical means

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

Aims of the study

The burglary projects that are the focus of this report were located in southern England, the Midlands and south Wales. They were 21 of the Strategic Development Projects (SDPs) funded by the Home Office Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI). These 21 projects were subject to rigorous evaluation by a research consortium led by South Bank University. The lessons for partnership were drawn both from the findings of the evaluations and from further empirical work involving semi-structured interviews with project personnel at a number of the sites.

The contexts within which the burglary SDPs operated varied widely in terms of the size and types of areas targeted. Several projects targeted individual local authority wards comprising between three and five thousand households, while others were based on smaller areas such as certain housing estates or even a few selected streets. The smallest targeted area consisted of only 583 properties in nine residential streets while the largest comprised four police areas with approximately 11,000 households and some 30,000 residents. Targeted areas also varied widely in terms of their social complexion, with some areas being relatively prosperous and others characterised as deprived inner-city neighbourhoods.

In the original design for the RBI programme it was envisaged that the burglary projects would be run in partnership, ideally under the umbrella of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (sometimes known as the Community Safety Partnership) covering the relevant local authority area. This focus was logical, as the remit of each Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is to develop a strategy to address local crime problems and to oversee its implementation.

In practice, while all but one of the 21 evaluated projects involved some partnership working, the forms that these partnerships took varied greatly. Many projects had tokenistic – and in some cases no – connection with the local CDRP. Some projects formed their own project-specific partnership structures, while some piggy-backed on to existing arrangements (for instance partnerships formed around local regeneration work).

The police played a part in all the projects and in many cases were regarded, formally or informally, as the lead agency; and local authority officers were involved – at least officially, if not always in practice – in all but one SDP. The local authority departments that were most frequently represented on the partnerships were community safety and housing; but environmental health, youth services, social services, sports and recreation and others also played a part. Other agencies involved in the projects included probation, schools, victim support, housing associations and neighbourhood watch.

The variety of partnership working arrangements is perhaps unsurprising in view of the wide range of areas targeted by the SDP projects, and is consistent with the findings of previous research (see for example Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994a). Taking this variety into account, the term 'partnership' is used in a broad sense in this report: namely, to refer to a grouping of different agencies that has a formal basis to the extent that the agencies are represented by a management body, and are named as active partners in a policy document. Such a structure may or may not incorporate a 'lead agency' that has primary responsibility for planning and implementation.

Partnership working was a principle to which projects under the RBI frequently aspired. However, adherence to this principle did not automatically equate with effective planning and implementation of project activities. The quality and strength of the partnerships varied markedly, and many project managers struggled to make token partnership structures meaningful and productive. In particular, two shortcomings were frequently evident in project planning which limited the effectiveness of partnership:

- First, many RBI projects were reasonably thorough when planning the 'what' of project work (i.e. what was going to be done) but were less effective at planning the 'who' or the 'how' (i.e. which agencies were going to undertake the work and through what processes). It proved relatively easy to elicit commitment from prospective partners on paper – but much harder to convert such undertakings into effective action.

- Second, the planning process itself was often conceived as something that stopped at the point at which the project was launched and implemented. Such a perspective failed to account for the need to monitor systematically the work of the project and the partnership on an ongoing basis.

This report draws from these difficulties and also from the evidence of successful partnership working, key learning points for project managers and agency representatives seeking to tackle crime by means of multi-agency initiatives. The evaluation has also led to the formulation of a good practice model around which learning points are structured. This model is intended to assist practitioners in thinking through critical partnership issues when planning project work.

A good practice model

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

This broad question is addressed through the development of a good practice model of partnership that is intended to assist those involved in partnerships to avoid or overcome the kinds of problems that frequently hinder the delivery of multi-agency work. The model is organised around three key elements:

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

It should be noted that these three 'elements' should not be seen as three distinct and separate stages of a partnership development process. Rather, these elements are interdependent and therefore must be established and sustained through simultaneous processes. In a sense, knowledge might seem to come first, to the extent that the initial – pre-planning – stage of a project is likely to be the identification of the problem to be tackled. However, the development of knowledge is an ongoing process, which rapidly becomes intertwined with the processes of establishing commitment and capacity. Moreover, knowledge, commitment and capacity are all dependent on similar mechanisms: in particular, detailed planning, thorough inter-agency consultation and effective project monitoring play a major part in each – as will be illustrated in the discussion that follows.

Knowledge

'Knowledge' here refers to the information a partnership acquires about the crime problem it is addressing, the methods that it can and does use to address that problem, and the outcomes of its work. This is a matter of adopting a problem-solving approach, which is integral to the concept of partnership working (and indeed vice-versa).

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

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

The scanning stage of the SARA process entails the identification of the crime problem or problems to be addressed. It may *on occasion* be appropriate for this to be left primarily to the police (although it cannot always be assumed that the police are able to identify all types of crime problems on their own). However, generally it is desirable for all agencies to become involved in the SARA process at the earliest opportunity.

Following identification of the crime problem(s), the ongoing process of problem-solving entails addressing the following three questions:

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

What can work in theory?

If partnerships are to identify the best means by which to tackle problems, the project planning process should involve a consideration of the full range of interventions that might have an impact. This may entail brainstorming by project staff. The major sources of relevant ideas are likely to be:

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

In many of the SDP projects, it appears that insufficient time was given to this planning process. Interventions were often developed through informal meetings with minimal inter-agency consultation (i.e. consultation between different agencies) or intra-agency consultation (i.e. consultation within agencies). The value of inter-agency consultation is that it can help broaden the perspectives of those involved and may generate a wider range of possible interventions than would have been evident to a smaller number of participants. Intra-agency consultation is critical if the operational feasibility of these suggested interventions is to be properly explored.

However, it has to be recognised that time constraints are always likely to be a feature of project planning. Personnel thus have to strike a balance between, on the one hand, engaging in a reasonably thorough review of crime prevention options and, on the other hand, keeping up the momentum required of any project in its early stages.

What can work in context?

The issue of context does not simply refer to the characteristics of a specific locality. It is about working out the full implications of developing and introducing the various potential responses to the problem. Two sets of questions need to be addressed:

- Are the partner agencies willing to carry out the strategic and operational work that these measures entail, and are they capable of doing so?

- To what extent are these measures suited to the local area, its people, and its crime and disorder problems?

The first question brings to the fore the critical issue of agencies' commitment to the work of the partnership and their capacity to carry that work out. Here one can begin to see the close inter-relationship between knowledge and these other two key elements, as the knowledge-gathering process needs to include an assessment of partner commitments and capacities as part of a wider assessment of context. This is demonstrated by Figure 1, which locates knowledge, commitment and capacity within the four stages of the SARA problem-solving process. In particular, the ways in which they are interlinked within the 'analysis' stage is made clear.

The second of the above questions of context concerns the specific needs of the area in which the project is to be carried out. The process of tailoring solutions to the local area raises a number of important issues for partnership working:

- Defining the precise boundaries of the target area
- Analysing the crime problem
- Responding to the needs and expectations of local people

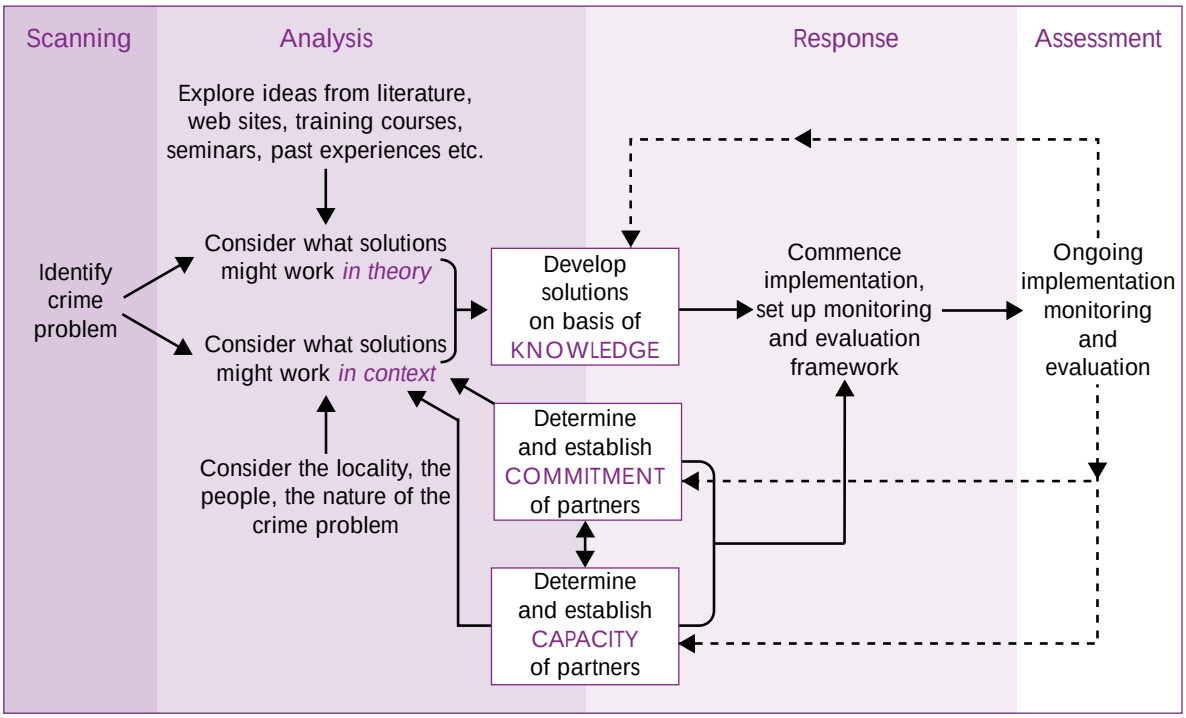
Defining the precise boundaries of the target area

There may be a range of criteria that drive the selection of the target area. A common tension encountered is between a desire to set boundaries on the basis of local crime pattern analysis and a need to work within existing administrative boundaries in order to facilitate the involvement of partner agencies. However, once boundaries have been established it is important to be informed of what other work may be going on within those boundaries that may have a bearing on the project's design and proposed activities.

Analysing the crime problem

It is obviously important that projects are founded upon a detailed problem analysis that includes a consideration of precisely how the proposed interventions will impact upon that problem within the specific context. However, under the RBI there was sometimes a tension between focusing on the problem of burglary and fitting in with the priorities of partners and the local community. If partner agencies and local people have serious concerns about crimes other than that which is being primarily targeted by the project, there is a risk that the project may be viewed as ineffective or one-dimensional. For instance, in one SDP

Figure 1: Problem-solving in partnership



conflict among partners emerged because of the perception of some that the project was focusing on burglary to the exclusion of other more pressing crime issues (namely, drugs). However, one of the interventions of the project – that is, the appointment of 'Rangers' to conduct security patrols in the target area – did appear to impact on the drugs problem as well as burglary.

This points to the need, in developing a project, to strike a balance between two pressures that are apparently contradictory. On the one hand, effective problem-solving may require a systematic focus on a specific problem; on the other hand, in order to engage partners and the community it may be necessary to broaden the focus beyond that single problem. In some cases, this contradiction may be resolved through the multiple benefits of certain, carefully chosen interventions. For example, the installation of street lights may act as a deterrent to burglars, and may also deter car thieves and youths intent on anti-social acts – thereby reducing general anxiety about crime.

Responding to the needs and expectations of local people

The aim of 'engagement' with local communities is not easy to achieve. In order to be successful in this aspect of its work, a partnership must think ahead about, first, how local people are likely to respond to any activities that are proposed and, secondly, how a positive response might be encouraged. In addressing these questions, the project should consider the full implications of the local population's composition. For example, different sectors of a diverse population (in terms of ethnicity, class, age or other factor) may have very different needs and expectations – as might longer-term residents in comparison to transient members of the population.

The evidence from the SDP evaluations is that in many sites not much thought was put into the questions of what local people were likely to want and expect, and how their interest might be aroused. Frequently project staff simply assumed that residents and others would be responsive to what the projects offered. One of the projects, however, proved a striking exception to this rule. Here, project staff decided to broaden the project's scope so as to incorporate a number of issues beyond burglary that were of pressing concern to residents. Project staff believed that the risk that this would lead to project drift was outweighed by the benefits of using this broader focus to mobilise residents' support and their active involvement in the project.

Does it work in practice?

The question of whether a partnership's initiatives are working in practice can be broken down into two subsidiary questions:

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

The process of project monitoring aims to answer the first of these questions, while project evaluation addresses the second. Evaluation is a large and complex subject that cannot be covered in any detail here (for further information see Hough and Tilley 1998; Home Office 2002). However, it is important to note that evaluation is crucial not only because it generates evidence about effective practice, but also because it plays a part in partnership: commitment to a multi-agency project may be enhanced where its success, and particularly the parts played in that success by individual partners, can be demonstrated. And as commitment is strengthened, so capacity may also be enhanced: an agency that is more committed to the work of a partnership is more likely to find and sustain the capacity to continue this work.

Project monitoring is usually carried out by whatever kind of committee has been set up to oversee the work of the project (sometimes termed a 'management board' or 'steering committee'). Adequate monitoring requires the measurement of inputs (resources employed) and outputs (specific tasks carried out) against input and output targets, together with the observation of the day-to-day work carried out by all involved agencies.

However, the effectiveness of monitoring in SDP projects was highly variable, and many projects were hindered in their attempts to monitor progress by poor record-keeping. While record-keeping may seem like a somewhat mundane issue, collecting and collating information on inputs and outputs is a critical and demanding aspect of project work, especially when a project involves multiple interventions and multiple partners. The following are further key learning points with respect to project monitoring which arose from the experiences of the SDPs:

- As part of the monitoring process, agency participants must be called to account to ensure that they are seeing through their commitments to the project. This should not only be a matter of making participants accountable to the partnership management body, but also of ensuring that participants are answerable for project work within their own agencies. Hence partnership goals need to be incorporated within the aims and objectives of individual agencies. In many of the SDPs, however, a lack of accountability within agencies was evident.
- Monitoring can play an important function in cementing partnerships by identifying and giving credit for the contributions made by individual agencies. However, the frequent absence of systems of intra-agency accountability in SDP projects meant that the contribution of project participants often failed to register with their own senior managers.
- Evaluation and monitoring should help to ensure that problem solving is carried out by partnerships in a reflexive way: that is, that the results of implementation continually feed into the design of responses. This allows shortcomings in project design or implementation to be dealt with as they arise and before they become overwhelming. However, in some SDPs the response to implementation difficulties was often to jettison the offending project component without systematically, and in partnership, considering alternatives. Equally, on occasions SDPs would introduce new elements of work without any thorough consideration of their appropriateness to the context or their compatibility with existing project interventions.

The foregoing discussion of monitoring and evaluation points again to the linkages between knowledge, commitment and capacity. As depicted by Figure 1, not only should crime reduction solutions emerge out of the knowledge, commitment and capacity of a partnership, but the monitoring and evaluation of these solutions should in turn feed back into, and bolster, that knowledge, commitment and capacity.

Commitment

Obstacles to commitment

Any multi-agency crime reduction project depends for its success on the relevant agencies' commitment to it and to the very idea of working in partnership. In keeping with the findings of prior research (see for example Crawford 1997; Sampson et al., 1998), partnership work in the burglary SDPs was often characterised by strained relationships between partners and variable levels of commitment. The problems faced by projects revealed four major obstacles to commitment to partnership:

Partners' lack of capacity to carry out the proposed work

As will be further discussed below, agencies may be genuinely committed to working in partnership but hindered by a lack of capacity. This can lead to tension within a partnership, as other agencies may not be able to differentiate between a lack of commitment and a lack of capacity, and may mistake the latter for the former.

Different agendas of partners

Agencies frequently bring different and sometimes conflicting agendas and perspectives into a partnership. For instance, difficulties arose between the police and youth service in one of the SDPs. These were a consequence of the different perceptions of young people and different ways of working within the two agencies. For the youth service, the tendency of the police to view young people as a problem was incompatible with their own view of young people as a client group with whom they sought to build relationships and trust. The police regarded the long-term and seemingly intangible goals of the youth service as at odds with their own pragmatic and direct approach to addressing particular crime problems.

Reluctance of partners to change their ways of working

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

One of the SDPs provided a clear example of how a partner's operational work can be re-orientated as a result of its involvement in a crime reduction partnership. In this case, the participation of the local authority sports and recreation department in the SDP had implications for staff working in the local sports centre. Previously, the sports centre was run purely as a leisure facility for the public; now it was seen to have a role in community safety, in that it provided much-needed diversionary activities for local youths. Thus staff were told that rather than throwing out any young people who caused trouble, they should seek to work with them. As might be expected, this message was not welcomed by all.

Partners' lack of ownership of project initiatives

In some of the burglary sites, there was evidence that lead agencies did not fully recognise the importance of allowing other partners to take on responsibility for the work of the partnership. In such cases there was a tendency for the lead agencies to be critical of the apparent lack of interest or commitment shown by other partners; but the root of the problem may in fact have been the lead agencies' reluctance to share ownership.

The project leaders of one SDP, for example, criticised some agencies for their apparent unwillingness to participate actively in the project. However, it appears that some of the proposed work of the project – for example, a multi-agency initiative to work with prolific offenders – was designed with little or no reference to the views and experience of those supposed partners.

Overcoming the obstacles

All crime reduction partnerships can be expected to confront, at some stage, obstacles of the kind described above. Evidence from the SDPs suggest that projects are likely to be most successful if they adopt the following principles in building inter-agency relations:

Engage all partners from the outset

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

Clarify partners' inputs

It is important for the partnership as a whole to assess and clarify the demands it is making on all its individual members. This can be difficult to do in advance, but a failure to anticipate the resources required from a given partner can lead to that partner disengaging from the project once the expected inputs become apparent. This further illustrates the need for all partners to be involved from the outset, since this enables them to make clear to each other what they are and are not able to contribute to the partnership in practical terms; and to negotiate roles for themselves that they have the capacity to perform.

Allow partners to air grievances

Partnership work in the SDPs was invariably not a case of partners working in a 'cosy' and entirely consensual manner. Project managers came to realise that the development of partnership inevitably involved some amount of 'pain'. Partners bring to the table different functions, cultures and ideologies together with home-grown stresses and concerns. It is important to recognise these differences and to allow them to be openly discussed as they relate to the partnership. Clearly, there is little to be gained where argument is merely constant sniping or so aggressive as to be destructive; but where the discussion of points of difference and even conflict is conducted with the explicit aim of reaching compromise solutions it can produce positive results.

This is partly a matter of getting people with the right working styles and professional skills around the table, since some individuals are bound to be better at

negotiation than others, and more inclined to listen to and take on board the views of those who oppose them. However, no partnership can legislate for the effects of professional skills or working styles: it is simply something that every partnership must work with and around. But the important point is that conflict should be worked through and not buried beneath a façade of harmonious relations. Conflicts that are left unresolved will impact adversely on the work of a project in due course.

Encourage intra-agency consultation

There may be varying degrees of commitment to a partnership at different levels of a partner agency. Within many agencies it might be expected that operational officers will on the whole be less aware of issues relating to partnership than their senior colleagues. If there is to be a genuine sense of ownership of a partnership strategy by the agencies involved there must be effective consultation on that strategy within as well as between the agencies. In particular, if operational officers are given the opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute to current debates, not only will the likelihood of their commitment be enhanced, but the partnership itself will be able to draw on the widest possible pool of expertise in devising actions.

Highlight the benefits of partnership to partners

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

- More resources for and wider recognition of their work. Membership of a partnership may provide an agency with access to additional resources through external project funding or funding that other partners are able to make available for multi-agency community safety work. It might also help to raise the profile of the work carried out by the agency – both among other partner agencies, and in the local area generally – through publicity generated by the partnership.
- Practical support for officers carrying out their jobs. Officers working for agencies involved in partnerships may find that through formal and informal channels their partners can offer them help with specific problems encountered in their day-to-day work. In several of the SDP sites, it was apparent that officers from different agencies, at both senior and junior levels, would call on each other for assistance with greater ease than they had done in the past. This was because they knew each other personally, had wider knowledge of each other's working practices, and had greater expectations of co-operation.
- Improved general conditions of work resulting from the impact of the partnership. Over time any reductions in crime should benefit not only the police but should also bring improvements to the working conditions of other bodies. For example, as crime falls in a particular area, housing agencies stand to benefit from potential spin-offs such as reduced levels of property damage and higher levels of occupancy. Thus 'lead' agencies may have most success in 'selling' the benefits of partnership work to reluctant partners if they are able to 'translate' partnership objectives into a language that is relevant and sensitive to the priorities of those agencies.

Capacity

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

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

- staff available with the necessary time to carry out the strategic and operational work;

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

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

Staffing

In a study of the burglary SDPs, Hedderman and Williams found that the 'personal qualities and abilities of the project manager seems to be the factor which determines whether implementation is successful' (2001: 2). It is therefore critical to retain, wherever possible, a capable project leader in post throughout the life of the project. It is also important that the project leader has sufficient time to commit to the project. A number of SDPs suffered from appointing project leaders who, by the nature of their position within the police (as senior detective officers), were prone to sudden and lengthy periods of extraction from the project.

In several sites where there were concerns about the lack of effective leadership it was suggested that the appointment of dedicated project co-ordinators would have provided much-needed practical assistance to project leaders. In the one SDP which had such a co-ordinator this arrangement was felt to work well. The co-ordinator worked closely with the project leader (a police inspector), who said that the co-ordinator was the project's 'anchor' because she constantly pushed officers to undertake their respective tasks, thereby ensuring that the work was done.

Effective partnership depends not only on the commitment of the project leader, but also on commitment from the individuals who represent their own agencies on steering groups or other partnership bodies. Agency representatives must have the necessary time and support of their senior management to be able to attend meetings regularly. As illustrated by the experiences of some of the burglary SDPs, a partnership may start to fragment without the regular representation of all its core agencies. Moreover, individual partners that are not well represented will find themselves outside the main decision-making processes and hence either marginalized or assigned roles which they are not able or prepared to fulfil.

As applies also to the specific position of project leader, the issue of seniority is highly relevant to steering group membership as a whole. According to Liddle and Gelsthorpe, something to be avoided is any 'imbalance of seniority' among members of a multi-agency group, since this 'can lead to tensions within the group … and can also lead to erosion of seniority among representatives, as participants begin to "delegate down"' (1994b: 4).

If an inter-agency body is to be more than just a talking shop, its members must be in a position to make decisions about the precise contributions to be made to the partnership by their respective agencies, without referring back to more senior colleagues. Seniority is not only about making decisions on behalf of one's agency, but is also a matter of having the 'clout' to see those decisions implemented. For instance, the project leader of one SDP remarked that as a police sector inspector he had been unable to mobilise many of the police officers who should have been involved in the project. Hence he failed to persuade officers in certain departments to utilise the information produced by a new crime analysis system which had been introduced as part of the project.

Ensuring that partnership objectives and commitments are fed through to the level of operational practice is not simply a matter of authority. In many cases, there may

be a need for retraining of ground-level staff to ensure that they fulfil partnership obligations; or indeed the recruitment of extra staff may be required. In other circumstances, where implementation of an initiative entails minimal disruption to the everyday operations of a given agency, there may still be practical implications for staff that must be carefully assessed and communicated by managers.

Contracting

Many of the SDPs involved some contracting out of aspects of project work. The advantage of contracting was that it provided partnerships with access to a much wider skills base and larger staffing resource than otherwise would have been the case. However, the projects often failed to undertake the careful planning required for successful contracting out of work. The experiences of the SDPs in this regard indicate that planning considerations should include:

- The need to identify the precise amount and nature of work required under contract; and contractors who will be able to undertake the work within the desired budget and time-scale. An advantage of partnership is that a supply of contractors of proven quality may be readily identified by pooling information on those currently used by partner agencies.
- Any contract has to be prepared and awarded in accordance with the regulations of the partner agency responsible for it. This can be a complex and lengthy process: in one SDP, for example, the project leader (a police officer) was frustrated with the length of time it took for a contract for installing security gates to be awarded under local authority procurement regulations.
- Adequate arrangements must be put in place for the management of contractors. Close monitoring of the work, regular feedback on progress to the partnership, and comprehensive record-keeping, are essential – not only for the purposes of contract management but also to feed into the overall process of project monitoring and evaluation.

Equipment / Devices

Various initiatives undertaken by a partnership may involve the use of specific equipment or devices, in which case successful implementation will depend on that equipment being affordable, available, and effective. Determining affordability, availability and effectiveness is a relatively simple but crucial task, since a minor oversight in this regard can have significant repercussions for the work that is ultimately carried out.

This is particularly important where a project plans to make use of new technology, as there is always a possibility that the costs of this may be higher than expected, or that the measures may not be as effective as had been hoped. This proved to be a problem in some of the SDPs; as was a failure to check whether innovative equipment was used as had been originally intended. To ensure that equipment and devices are used to optimal effect, it is also vital that officers with detailed knowledge of the operational requirements are fully consulted at the planning stage.

Facilities

As part of project planning, it is important to explore the availability of suitable premises and facilities for project activities. In one SDP the project's failure to provide a room for a detached youth worker resulted in that worker having to operate out of a van for several months. However, many SDPs did access facilities from a wide variety of agencies, including voluntary, community and business organisations. Indeed, many organisations that might not otherwise have the resources to contribute to a project may be able to provide facilities of some kind. This can widen participation in and ownership of a project.

Information

A partnership might need access to specific kinds of information in order to implement certain initiatives. Information is thus a resource which should be considered within this wider discussion of capacity. The sharing of certain types of information may require careful negotiation and consideration (particularly to ensure that this is compliant with data protection legislation). Additionally, the physical extraction or collation of information can be a resource-intensive task. Many agencies are short of personnel with the skills to extract and manipulate data.

Conclusions

The experiences of the burglary SDPs demonstrate that partnership work is complex and demanding. The personnel involved in the evaluated projects devoted a great deal of thought, time, and effort to the work, with the result that much was achieved. But many of the projects also encountered various problems in terms of partnership – which was no doubt inevitable, given the lack of experience of partnership working of some of the staff, the tight time-frame within which the projects were organised, and the challenges inherent in inter-agency work of all kinds.

This report has sought to extract key learning points from the successes and problems associated with the SDP partnerships. These points are intended to provide a framework which will assist future project staff to develop partnership-based projects more effectively and efficiently. Above all else, this framework emphasises the need for thorough, open, informed, reflexive and continuous planning as an integral part of partnership work.

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Reducing burglary initiative evaluation

The reducing burglary initiative

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

The aims of the RBI are to:

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

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

The evaluation

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

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

- the delivery of burglary reduction projects;
- investigating burglary;
- publicity and awareness of burglary reduction schemes; and
- techniques for assessing the impact of burglary reduction schemes.

Published reports

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

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

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

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

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