

Applied Crime Prevention Case Studies – Crime Prevention Partnerships

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Introduction

Applying crime prevention knowledge and techniques in a real world context can be challenging. Numerous difficulties can emerge that are not always identified in crime prevention texts. The following case studies provide opportunities to work through a series of steps relevant to applied crime prevention work.

Partnerships

Partnerships are a critical feature of crime prevention work. Many crime prevention initiatives involve multiple agencies and individuals working together. Developing and maintaining these partnerships can be challenging.

Problems with Crime Prevention Partnerships

1. Lack of data sharing or inability to deal with incompatible data sets
 2. A lack of crime audit and consultation expertise
 3. The inability to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound) targets
 4. Reliance on past experience rather than following a problem-oriented solution logic
 5. Over-reliance on single agencies
 6. The reluctance of certain agencies (notably health, corrections, education, welfare) to come 'on board'
 7. Dominance of statutory agency concerns to the exclusion of non-government organisations
 8. A tendency to re-package pre-existing commitments or responsibilities into plans
 9. Inconsistent geographical boundaries for different government agencies
 10. Duplication – numerous partnerships doing similar things
- (Gilling, D. (2005) 'Partnerships and Crime Prevention', in Tilley, N. (ed) *Crime Prevention and Community Safety Handbook*, Willan, pages 735-736)
(NB: I have added the last two points to Gilling's list)

Scenario 1: Alcohol-Related Crime

Crime data analysis has shown that alcohol-related crime (including assaults and malicious damage) is high in and around three licensed venues in the suburb of Sunny Hills. You have been asked to head up a working party to tackle these issues. You know that Friday and Saturday evenings are particularly problematic; there are few transport options for patrons leaving these venues; the three venues are run by separate companies and there has been little communication between each of them; the security services are also provided by three separate companies; and there have been a number of charges laid by police and liquor licensing authorities for breaching responsible service of alcohol provisions.

Exercise 1

1. As Chair of the Alcohol-Related Crime Reduction Taskforce, who would you invite to join the Taskforce?
2. What problems would you anticipate in bringing these agencies together?
3. What arrangements will you need to put in place to ensure that the Taskforce functions effectively?

Scenario 2: Crime Prevention Committees

Many local councils have Crime Prevention Committees. These committees often have representatives from diverse agencies, including police, local business groups, community organisations, local residents and relevant state authorities. One of the few published Australian reports that looked at the operation of these committees suggested that conflict between representatives was often avoided, which was considered detrimental to the exchange of ideas and perspectives (Cherney, A. (2004) 'Crime Prevention / Community Safety Partnerships in Action: Victorian Experience', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, Vol 15, No. 3, pp. 237-252).

Another issue associated with Crime Prevention Committees is the lack of training provided to members. The disparate level of knowledge of committee members can inhibit effective participation of all members and can lead to tension within the committee. If one member feels that others are not contributing effectively, then they may be disinclined to attend future meetings.

Exercise 2

1. How would you ensure that conflict is appropriately managed in running a Crime Prevention Committee?
2. What steps would you take to encourage vigorous debate and exchange between committee members?
3. What measures could be taken to ensure that all committee members have an understanding of relevant crime prevention concepts?

Scenario 3: Working with Police

Police are critical partners in crime prevention partnerships. They will often have access to important crime data and they will have a good understanding of local problems. Despite their importance to local crime prevention partnerships, some research has suggested that police can be difficult crime prevention partners. Sarre identifies a number of potential challenges of engaging police in crime prevention partnerships:

1. The crime prevention role is misunderstood by police
2. Police find it difficult to consult
3. If consultation occurs, police consult only selected groups
4. The police would never allow the 'sharing' of their work
5. Police culture makes progress difficult, if not impossible

(Sarre, R. (1997) Chapter 4: Crime Prevention and Police in O'Malley, P. and Sutton, A. (eds) *Crime Prevention in Australia: Issues in policy and research*, Federation Press).

Exercise 3

1. Why might police misunderstand crime prevention?
2. Why might the police culture make progress difficult?
3. How will you engage and maintain relationships with police?

Key Ingredients of Effective Partnerships

Given the challenges of achieving effective partnerships, Gilling suggests the following key partnerships ingredients:

1. **Mission and purpose** – clear sense of mission and purpose built around a recognition of interdependence
 2. **Leadership** – commit resources, unlock internal blockages, accountability, drive, enthusiasm, 'think outside the box'
 3. **Reliance on past experience** rather than following a problem-oriented solution logic
 3. **Appropriate structure** – strategic management divided off from operational and implementation issues
 4. **Appropriate resources** – time, information (data sharing protocols), financial
 5. **Durability** – continuity in representation, decisions documented to survive organisation churn
- (Gilling, D. (2005) 'Partnerships and Crime Prevention', in Tilley, N. (ed) *Crime Prevention and Community Safety Handbook*, Willan, pages 735-736)