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BURGLARS OR WARDROBE MONSTERS: PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN THE REDUCTION OF CRIME FEAR

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Abstract

The paper argues for the de-emphasis of the reduction of crime fear as a policy objective. The paper rehearses measurement and ethical issues which support such a view. It goes on to report the more nuanced and sophisticated views of community safety practitioners. The paper demonstrates that the abandonment of the reduction of crime fear as an objective would have little effect upon community safety activity.

Key Words: Fear of Crime; Quality of Life; Community Safety;

Introduction

Reducing the fear of crime is included under four of the five priorities of the Government's National Community Safety Strategy 2006-2009 (either directly or under the guise of related concepts of increasing reassurance and creating places where people feel safe and secure). These priorities are reflected in local government where fear of crime forms part of a Quality of Life statutory 'best value' performance indicator. On the basis of these indicators Audit Commission inspections have identified local authorities where safer communities strategies contain no targets to reduce the fear of crime, where fear of crime has been given insufficient priority or where insufficient progress has been made in reducing fear of crime (for examples see Audit Commission, 2005, 2003, 2002).

The paper presents arguments from the literature on crime fear and from a study of New Deal for Communities (NDC) programmes undertaken by the authors, which served to cement our views on the shortcomings of reducing crime fear as a policy issue. The apparent confidence that the fear of crime can and should be reduced, does not entirely reflect academic debate on this issue. A body of research is emerging which questions whether that which is measured as fear of crime is properly called by that name (Girling,

Loader and Sparks, 2000), whether such fear is a social problem of great magnitude (Farrell and Gadd, 2004) and whether fear however measured, is the predominant emotional reaction to crime or the risk of victimisation (Ditton, Farrall, Bannister, Gilchrist, and Pease 1999).

Although the present writers find themselves in sympathy with those finding the theory and measurement of crime fear problematic, this paper has a more practical focus. It seeks to highlight the difficulties faced by community safety practitioners trying to make sense of fear of crime and to translate that into remedial action. We argue that the fear of crime is an unhelpful concept for the direction of community safety policy and practice and that it has worrying political and ethical implications. We conclude that reducing the fear of crime should be abandoned as a policy target while highlighting that this would have little or no effect on current practice, save in redirecting attention to aspects of crime control likely to have greater collateral impact on the quality of life of those whose lives are blighted by crime and its anticipation.

Writing the last paragraph smacks of heresy in the current policy climate, so much so that it seems necessary to clarify what the paper is not doing. We emphatically are not seeking to minimise the impact of crime, both on those suffering it and those aware of their vulnerability to it. Rather we wish that the complexity of that impact on quality of life be reflected in the community safety enterprise, rather than being strait-jacketed into one emotion whose subtext (the mismatch between fear and risk of victimisation) is that fear is irrational and can legitimately be 'spun' out of existence (see Lupton and Tulloch, 1999).

Challenges to the concept of fear of crime are not new, but in recent years they have gathered momentum (e.g. Hale 1996, Lupton and Tulloch, 1999, Ditton, Farrall, Bannister and Gilchrist, 2000, Semmens, 2002). However this momentum has not yet been sufficient to radically change the nature of the majority of fear of crime research, and there appears to be an inverse relationship between the groundswell of academic scepticism and the intensity of interest from policy makers. Consequently community safety practitioners nationwide have been charged with reducing something that research has been unable to define or measure reliably and which bears little relationship to either presenting crime levels or experienced quality of life.

Fear of Crime: Over Worry or Flawed Concept

It cannot be assumed that people are always able, or even willing, to recognise and describe their fears (for example it has been long recognised that men admit to certain fears only with difficulty (Sutton and Farrall, 2005). Furthermore, translating phrases such as 'very frightened' and 'terrified' into degrees on a numeric scale which can inform reductive action is problematic.

Over-simplification of concepts has resulted in an inability to distinguish between different cognitive reactions to and emotions about crime. Perceptions, reactions,

judgements, emotions and even the direct experience of crime are all frequently conflated as 'fear of crime,' by researchers, policy makers and practitioners (Tulloch, 1998). Qualitative approaches have been more helpful in exploring the complexity of fear of crime perceptions (Pain, Williams and Hudson, 2000, Tulloch 2000, Jennett 1998). A minority of quantitative studies have begun to successfully address the subtleties of the crime-fear nexus (Wilcox-Rountree, 1998, LaGrange and Ferraro, 1989, Wilcox, Quisenberry and Jones, 2003).

By failing to refer to specific time periods or behaviour settings surveys imply that people are afraid all of the time rather at specific times or in specific locations or circumstances (Fattah and Sacco, 1996); this is spectacularly unhelpful for crime reduction practitioners who need to know the specifics of times and locations in order to direct action. It can be assumed that most people have experienced at least one crime related event in their lives that resulted in fear, anxiety or distress to some degree, either as a victim of crime or subject to a situation in which they feel vulnerable. Essentially it is not possible to know whether respondents have chosen to answer based upon how worried they felt at the time of the interview, during their normal daily routines or how worried they feel at the times, however rare, when their fear is most extreme. Farrell and Gadd (2004) found asking survey respondents about the frequency of fear demonstrated that those who are afraid of crime are not afraid very often.

Ditton, Khan and Chadee (2005) argue that the cross sectional survey designs traditionally used to measure fear of crime, mask true changes in responses over time and consequently preclude any investigation into the explanations for change, thus providing no reliable intelligence on which to design and implement interventions. Combining a longitudinal survey with qualitative methods Ditton et al have demonstrated the potential to uncover clear explanations, for feelings of safety/insecurity and for changes (or stability) in these feelings over time; explanations that relate to events, circumstances, direct and indirect victimisation. This highlights that there is more to people's concerns than irrationality that currently employed survey methods fail to uncover or explain.

The frequency with which British Crime Survey (BCS) respondents indicate they are angry about crime has been greater than the corresponding number for fear in every sweep of the survey since the question was first posed (Ditton et al, 1999). Fear has remained the dominant emotion linked with crime victimisation by most academics, virtually all policy makers and practitioners.

Further, while fear is not the predominant emotional reaction to crime, crime may not be the most damaging of concerns affecting quality of life. Innes (2003) has argued that fear of crime needs to be understood as 'a component part of a much more widespread and diffuse sense of 'insecurity.' Furthermore, this 'urban unease' (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996) is felt to some degree at some time or other by most members of modern society. The questionnaires most frequently employed ask an indirect question about 'feelings of safety' in order to avoid any automatic fear response triggered by the word 'crime'. However this tactic masks any other feelings of insecurity from the investigation and

allows (or encourages) respondents to channel a range of anxieties and worries through their crime talk (Lupton and Tulloch, 1999). Thus fear of crime has become a 'dump concept' where fear of victimisation is elided with more nebulous anxieties concerning the general state of society.

The notion that disorder breeds crime underpins the broken windows approach within criminology (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and was supported by the work of Skogan (1990). But does disorder breed crime fear? Wilkstrom and Dolmen (2001) and Wilcox (1998) suggest that it does but the relationship is complex and varies for different crime types. Wilcox (1998) found that perceptions of disorder were more important than neighbourhood levels of burglary in explaining burglary fear. However violent crime levels remained an important factor in understanding levels of fear of violence. Wilcox argues that these results suggest that, for some crime types at least, concerns are related to actual levels of crime.

Disorder can be a powerful communicator of an area's state of communal health (Innes and Fielding, 2002) and the cumulative impact of a succession of apparently 'trivial' occurrences may have significant impact upon the local community. Events or incidents carry 'signal values' which provoke different reactions from different individuals/communities. Interpretations of signal vary not as a result of irrational fears or miscalculation of risks, but because of selective attentions to risk. The advantage of the signals crime approach is that it prioritises those factors that disproportionately generate *insecurity* at a local level. Whether the impact on insecurity can or should be measured in terms of 'fear of crime' is questionable, but it can be understood in terms of the impact on wider quality of life. Tackling disorder may not reduce fear of crime but it will improve quality of life and satisfaction with an area as a place to live (Rogerson and Christmann 2004). This raises further doubts over the utility of fear of crime as a focus for policy when there are more practical and ethical alternatives.

The Ethics of Fear Reduction

Treating fear of crime as a problem ignores the role that fear has as a basic adaptive purpose. Too little has been made of the ethical underpinnings of attempts to reduce fear of crime other than as a by-product of crime reduction itself. In a recent television advertising campaign, the comedian Peter Kay is depicted in a restaurant being phoned by his daughter, who says she is frightened by 'wardrobe monsters'.   His reply is that 'It's not wardrobe monsters you want to be frightened of, it's the burglars who get in through the window'. The serious point to be made here is that while the fear of (fictional) wardrobe monsters is properly to be discounted, the fear of real hazards is not. To reduce fear of crime, particularly by understating its incidence and impact, is ethically an extremely problematic tactic. Insofar as fear of crime influences risk-aversive lifestyles, reducing fear of crime without changing underlying probabilities puts people in the way of danger. Further, the demographic groups most prone to characterisation, as 'over-worriers' are those for whom the consequences of crime victimisation would be most severe. Fear of an event of low probability but huge impact is not to be dismissed as disproportionate. None of this is to suggest that lifestyles are typically based on a rational estimation of relative presenting

risks, merely that while the risks exist, persuading people to behave and feel otherwise than they do is to assume a responsibility for any increased vulnerability which may result from their acceptance of the persuader's world view. This is the nub of the problem which this paper addresses. Community safety practitioners, when directed to reduce the fear of crime, are being invited to assume a responsibility that many would prefer not to assume.

Perceptions of crime and our emotional reactions to it are based on our interpretations of what is happening in the world around us, derived from direct or vicarious experience. These interpretations will depend upon our expectations and what we are used to. Repeated exposure to fear evoking stimuli may lead to an increase in fear (sensitisation) or, at other times and in other circumstances to desensitisation. This raises a further ethical consideration. Is it fair to direct interventions towards a community because it is seemed over sensitised to crime or to ignore crime in a community because it has 'grown used to it' and no longer voices its concern?

Characterising people as 'fearful' paints them as passive and helpless. Other emotional responses to crime, (anger, revenge or frustration with the authorities or oneself for letting a crime happen) all have greater potential to be turned into remedial action, either positively by encouraging crime prevention activity or campaigning for change or negatively, for example through vigilantism. Misunderstanding or over-simplifying how people feel about crime will lead to missed opportunities and misdirected attempts to reduce it.

The arguments above are not an attempt to deny that fear is a common and important response to crime. In her survey of crime victims Hodgson (2005) found that 91% had been afraid of a similar offence occurring again. However for all crime types, for men and women and for both first time and repeat victims 'angry with the offender' was consistently more important as the emotion most frequently experienced. What is also apparent from Hodgson's study is the multitude of different emotions felt by victims, with the majority of victims expressing more than one emotion. Indeed one area which remains under-researched is the sequencing of emotions after crime victimisation. Shaw (2002) draws a parallel with the stages following bereavement, an idea well worth developing.

We are not attempting to abandon the central role of perception in the crime reduction landscape. The mechanisms of crime reduction are influenced by perception. For example improvements in street lighting are associated with reductions in crime. What is surprising is that these improvements have their effects in daytime as well as at night (Pease, 1999). It has been suggested that the mechanism through which improved street lighting reduces crime is its impact on residents' perceptions of safety and their levels of community confidence. This sends a strong message to offenders that the area is well cared for and has strong 'informal social control.' Impactive crime reduction schemes often begin to work before the schemes are implemented (an anticipatory benefit Smith, Clarke and Pease, 2002). Again this seems to be a reflection of the offender, practitioner and citizen perceptions of change in an area. These examples suggest that both offender and other citizen perceptions are of primary importance in understanding crime reductive

mechanisms and support Newburn's (2003) assertion that all crime reduction is perception based.

We have highlighted the potential dangers in a concept that allows a range of different perceptions and emotions to be conflated under one emotive term. The result is that although survey research shows social and spatial variations in fear and worry about crime, there is a degree of uncertainty over what exactly has been measured. With this precaution in mind the following section presents a descriptive analysis of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Household survey.

Fear of Crime in NDC Areas

The research described below took place in the context of the National Evaluation of the NDC programme, to which the authors conducted three case studies of the fear of crime (Christmann, Rogerson and Walter, 2003). NDC is a Neighbourhood Renewal Unit programme to tackle the inequalities experienced by those living in inner city neighbourhoods. Across England thirty-nine schemes are managed by local partnerships, bringing together communities and agencies to tackle local problems, including housing, education, employment, health and crime. Our research brief sounded fairly straightforward; to identify the approaches taken to reduce the fear of crime in NDC areas, to understand the problems encountered by practitioners tasked with reducing crime fear and to make recommendations for best practice. However, we came to believe that the more important question could be formulated thus 'Is fear of crime a helpful or ethical concept for the selection and targeting of interventions and the evaluation of their success?'

Each NDC partnership was required to produce a delivery plan outlining its aims and objectives, targets to be met and baseline statistics. A review of these plans revealed that thirty-seven of the thirty-nine NDCs included the reduction of fear of crime as an objective and outlined interventions aimed explicitly, though not exclusively at reducing fear of crime. This is unsurprising given the high policy profile of fear of crime. A concurrent review of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership strategies revealed that fear of crime was similarly pervasive.

From the thirty-nine NDC areas three, Bradford (Bradford Trident), Hackney (Shoreditch Our Way, ShOW.) and East Brighton (eb4U) were selected for more in-depth research. Fear of crime interventions in these areas were representative of the full range of interventions featured across the programme, and almost all fear of crime interventions listed have been adopted by one or more of the case study areas. In each of the three areas, interviews were conducted with stakeholders including project coordinators, residents, police officers and community safety officers. Fear of crime responses to a household survey conducted in the 39 NDC areas between July and October 2002 were also analysed. The survey, conducted by MORI, interviewed approximately 500 individuals in each NDC, selected randomly. The survey covered a range of topics including quality of life, housing, health, employment and crime.

The Nature of Measured Fear of Crime in NDC Areas

Given that analysis of the BCS has shown that respondents living on low incomes, in social sector housing and/or in inner city areas were more likely to state that they were worried about crime (Kershaw, Budd, Kinshott, Mattinson, Mayhew and Myhill, 2000) it is not surprising that concern about crime is greater in NDC areas compared to the national picture. Analysis of the NDC household survey showed that in all but one NDC (Islington) respondents were more likely to feel 'very or a bit unsafe' after dark relative to BCS respondents. Overall 56% of respondents felt either 'very unsafe or a bit unsafe' walking alone in their area after dark, compared to 33% in the BCS. Levels of worry were higher in all NDCs for each crime specific question when compared to BCS responses.

There was significant variation in rates of 'fear of crime' both within and between NDC areas. This variation reinforces the earlier point; that there are clearly genuine differences between individuals and areas but doubts remain over what exactly is being measured. This variation was not adequately explained by either area level or individual level crime. An overall measure of fear of crime was created by summing the responses to each fear of crime question, (see Appendix 1 for list of questions). To provide indices of area crime levels the total number of crime incidents self-reported by respondents in the previous twelve months was calculated. NDC scores on these (crude) crime incidence and crime worry variables have been plotted on the matrix below (Figure 1). The relationship (or lack of it) between fear and self reported victimisation is evident.
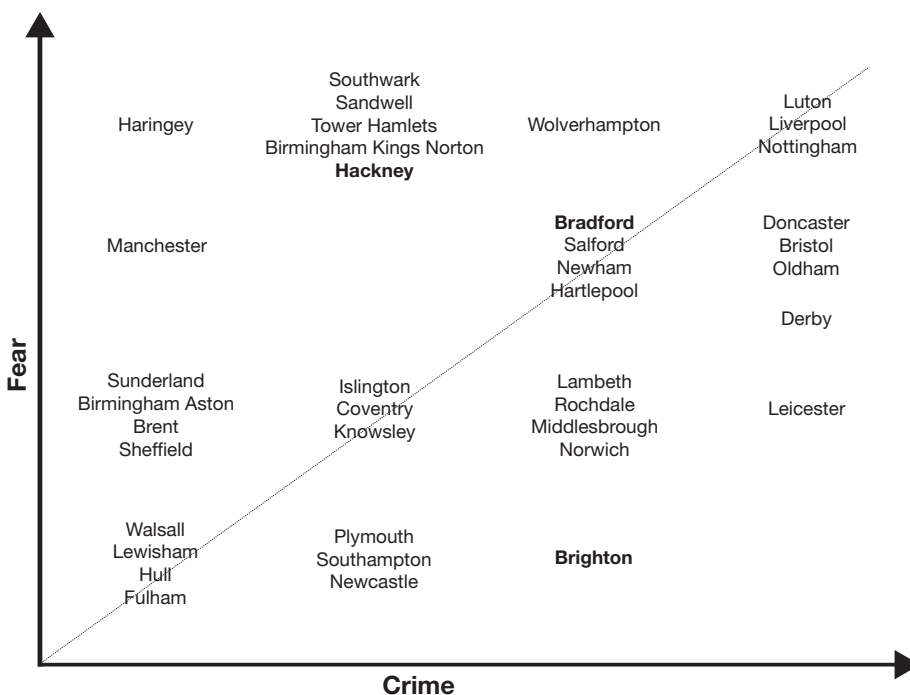

Figure 1. Matrix of self-reported victimisation in an NDC area by level of worry

A perfect relationship between fear and crime would see all NDCs situated along the central diagonal; areas above the line are 'too fearful'; areas below it are 'too sanguine'. The majority of NDCs are not situated along this line. For example Haringey is one of the more 'fearful' NDCs but has amongst the lowest self-reported victimisation. On the other hand Brighton NDC respondents appear to have quite low levels of fear given their level of victimisation. This finding may not be startling, but the matrix can be used to further illustrate that the ethics of striving for fear reduction are problematic. Residents in places like Haringey are more fearful than their area's crime rate might suggest to be appropriate. On the other hand, Brighton's residents characterise those that may not be fearful enough. Is it any less defensible to make the people of Brighton more fearful than to make the people of Haringey less fearful?

This news is of course concerning for practitioners working in these areas. But how do NDC partnerships, and other practitioners, improve their performance in the fear of crime league? As we have seen it is unlikely that reduced levels of fear of crime will automatically follow reductions in area crime rates. Recognition of this point frustrated those whom we interviewed for the case studies. In Brighton it was felt that the fact of crime reduction was not mirrored in residents' perceptions of crime risk. In Hackney, NDC staff reported that fear of crime had increased considerably despite only minor increases in specific crime categories.

Looking to the Home Office Fear of Crime Toolkit, practitioners are advised to devise action based on a classification that (in a similar way to Figure 1) divides areas into four groups: 'high crime/high fear, high crime/lower fear, low crime/low fear and low crime/ higher fear (Figure 2)'. The toolkit recommends that high crime/high fear areas should be the subjects of crime reduction programmes. In high crime/lower fear areas (the learning zone) the focus should be on communication and awareness raising, with the public encouraged to undertake crime prevention measures to reduce crime opportunities. In low crime/higher fear areas the toolkit recommends that 'unrealistic' fears should be targeted. Again the recommended approach appears to focus on irrationality of 'fear' rather than understanding the complexity of the expressed concerns. Further it does not consider that low crime rates might be the result of high fear. Those living in low crime / high fear areas would also benefit from crime reduction campaigns to guard against risky behaviours that may result of increased confidence.

Figure 2: The Fear of Crime Matrix

NB. It is important to note that in Figure 2 areas in the bottom left hand corner are not necessarily 'low crime' or 'low fear' areas, they have lower fear and lower crime relative to other NDCs.

NB. Adapted from http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/fc00.htm (last checked 05/07/2006)

Approaches to Fear of Crime in Practice

As we have seen the majority of NDC partnerships had defined objectives and targets to reduce the fear of crime. The three case study NDCs explained that they had encountered difficulties in defining these targets. Targets to reduce the number of people feeling 'unsafe after dark' had been selected because they could not find a suitable alternative. NDC personnel felt that they lacked sufficient 'concrete evidence' on which to tackle concerns about crime. Generally the practitioners confirmed findings in the MORI survey that key concerns included car crime, burglary and drug dealing/use and added that 'young people hanging around' litter, vandalism, poor maintenance and abandoned cars contributed to the community's anxieties about the area. The visible nature of serious violent crimes and their investigation was highlighted in Hackney. Streets can be cordoned off for several days while evidence is gathered, large police boards appeal for witnesses but at the same time advertise the nature of the crime. The incidence of these crimes is unlikely to affect residents' risk of crime, but it is hard to imagine that these visible crimes will not disproportionately affect how residents feel about the area they live in. Practitioners noted a number of ways in which concerns about crime affect the everyday lives of the community. In Hackney attendance at public meetings has been affected by residents' anxieties about walking through the estates in the evening. Potential residents were reluctant to register for housing within the Brighton NDC. The area's reputation for crime is thought to be a key factor in housing refusals.

Practitioners had developed sophisticated understandings of what were key concerns. They had an acute awareness that insecurities about crime are not limited to fear of victimisation and included:

- Worry about victimisation and of intimidation and harassment.
- Worry about witnessing a crime.
- Fear of reprisals as a consequence of reporting crime.
- Frustration about the authorities' incapacity to tackle crime.
- Worry about health risks from the traces of drug use / prostitution.
- Anger about the young age of some of the girls involved in sex work.
- Anger about what the prevalence of crime signals about the state of the neighbourhood.
- Anger that culprits are 'getting away with it.'
- Worry that children may 'get in with the wrong crowd.'
- Concern and anger about the impact of crime on others in the community.
- Feeling helpless, unable to protect self and family.

The problem was that, for want of a better indicator, these concerns were shoe-horned into feeling unsafe after dark, A review of the 39 NDC delivery plans identified interventions selected to reduce fear of crime. These are summarised in Table 1.

NDC INTERVENTION	NDCs adopting strategy
Extending policing family (e.g. community wardens)	26
Increase police presence	13
Community policing	5
High visibility policing	2
CCTV	19
Alleygating	7
Crime prevention advice	6
Environmental improvements	3
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders/Acceptable Behaviour Contracts	3
Personal safety training	1
Anti-victimisation	1
Target Hardening	17
Youth Programmes	10
Neighbourhood/shop/pub watch	4
Reduction of anti-social behaviour	2
Community capacity	1
Street lighting	15
Designing out crime	4
New housing allocations strategy	1
Communications strategy	1

Table 1 NDC Strategies for Reducing Fear of Crime, Ranked by Frequency of Inclusion in Delivery Plans

NB. The classification of interventions is intended for illustrative purposes only and is limited by the interchangeable use of crime prevention terminology, for example information in delivery plans may suggest that two NDCs are implementing similar interventions when further investigation may reveal that they are actually implementing very different although similarly titled interventions.

What is immediately apparent is that with the notable exception of East Brighton's communications and housing allocations strategies, all of the interventions employed to reduce the fear of crime also include an element of crime reduction. Indeed, if we were to abandon fear of crime as a consideration, the table would be left virtually unchanged. This is due to the commonly stated view among the case study NDCs that the most beneficial way of meeting their fear of crime targets was to reduce crime itself. Hence our conclusion that the abandonment of crime fear policy targets would leave the reality of community safety practice unchanged.

The central point here is that NDCs chose crime reduction as the preferred means of reducing fear. They no doubt know that the link between fear and crime is complex and often tenuous. However, the alternative, in the writers' view is less ethically defensible. For this reason, the position towards which we urge movement involves the primacy of crime reduction, with the attendant obligation to communicate to people the scale and (hopefully) successes of the crime reduction enterprise. If performance indicators are required beyond crime change, one would think in terms of outcomes that relate to the reality giving rise to concerns e.g. the success of communication attempts, witness and victim support initiatives.

Earlier we stated that perception remains important as a central mechanism of crime reduction. The interventions implemented in the case studies demonstrate how a well designed crime reduction intervention can be sensitive to complex perceptions, and can even harness them to positively influence the primary goal of crime reduction. Other examples demonstrate how focusing on perception without tackling the root of those concerns can be counter productive.

Understanding the Community

Community based interventions frequently oversimplify what is meant by a 'community.' It is too easy to assume that threats come from outside the community and that strengthened community networks will be anti-crime. The reality of high crime areas is that neighbours are often offenders, and attempts to engage in crime reduction activity can result in threats and intimidation. Community based crime reduction must therefore recognise these difficulties and address them head on. In Bradford a restyled Neighbourhood Watch Programme entitled Community Watch has addressed these problems: by detaching itself from the police, providing smaller watch groups, with confidential membership where necessary, providing active and confidential support for those who have reported problems and ensuring members receive feedback when their assistance has proven instrumental in successful outcomes.

Reporting and Responding

Neighbourhood Wardens have been introduced into the three case study areas with the aim of providing an important communication channel through which partnerships can inform the public of initiatives operating and their outcomes. Wardens are also in an ideal position to develop an understanding of the wide-ranging concerns held by the public, and provide a link between the Police and the community. They afford an alternative opportunity to report crimes and provide support and information to victims of crime. Wardens in East Brighton visit all new residents with a welcome pack. This is an important step in helping new residents to settle in and helps to avoid feelings of insecurity that may arise from not knowing how problems can be resolved and which agencies to contact. This process helps to build community sustainability and hence community strength.

The introduction of wardens in these areas has raised a number of notes of caution not only because wardens may not be that visible to a large proportion of residents. Further where the definition of warden patrols includes reporting but not responding to problems, the anger and frustration of residents may be exacerbated. East Brighton wardens did not have an enforcement role and consequently do not directly challenge the behaviour of teenagers on the estates. This adds to the perception that these teenagers are beyond anyone's control.   The Shoreditch wardens had achieved a greater level of engagement with young people which including challenging problem behaviour where necessary.

Communication

The pre-emptive use of communication may assert more control over perceptions by leaving less to the imaginations of recipients. 'Good news stories' act as a confidence building measure in the local area and communicate some of the positive gains made in reducing crime. This does not equate to spin. News should include activities, explanations and results. The presence of a police officer is less likely to be interpreted as a sign of trouble if people are aware of what has happened and what the outcome has been. Part of the communications strategy in East Brighton NDC involves informing local residents by letter after enforcement actions have occurred (such as drugs raids) thereby ensuring that local people are made aware that problems are being tackled with successful outcomes. East Brighton made use of both formal and informal publicity, for instance viral marketing: targeting your audience so as to maximise good news stories via others' word

Communication and publicity can cause problems when interventions run into problems. In Brighton and Hackney ASBOs are well publicised but this means that breaches to orders are also well known and this seriously undermines attempts to increase confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Danger of Dependency

The introduction of wardens risks generating overdependence on 'official guardians'. Shoreditch Wardens escort elderly residents home from social gatherings, this initiative has proved popular but is time intensive and reduces the amount of time wardens can give to other parts of their role. It also discourages residents from developing their own networks on which to rely for support.

Conclusion

It should perhaps be evident, but cannot be stressed strongly enough, that practitioners were troubled by the injunction to reduce crime fear. Case study NDCs have struggled to define fear of crime, and to separate personal fears from wider and more general emotions, judgements and perceptions. They were not confident about setting meaningful baselines and targets for the reduction of fear of crime. They have experienced difficulties in setting priorities and defining groups vulnerable to fear. Moreover they lacked confidence in establishing the extent to which interventions have impacted upon levels of fear of crime. We have also highlighted the problematic ethics of fear reduction divorced from crime reduction.

Because lifestyles are adapted to reflect personal vulnerabilities, however imperfectly, the attempt to reduce fear should in our view never be undertaken without an attempt to reduce presenting risk. Given the modest relationship between signs of disorder and crime fear, clean-ups are not justifiable on the grounds of fear reduction. Swift repairs and clear-ups after crime are justifiable on crime reduction grounds, both to reduce levels of repeat victimisation and spirals of area decay. Other clean-ups may well be justified on aesthetic or community building grounds. We feel that a more profitable way forward is to reposition the fear of crime in a wider complex of insecurities that people perceive or experience in certain environments and to place this within a broader quality of life framework.

Abandoning fear of crime as a policy and practice target will make little difference to current practice. It will also carry the additional benefit of redirecting a proportion of practitioners' attention that is currently wasted on attempts to change something that is not within their control towards the more tangible goal of crime reduction.

End Notes

For more information on the New Deal for Communities programme see
http://www.renewal.net

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of NDC personnel.

Appendix
Fear of Crime Variables in the MORI survey.

The crime section of the survey included the following questions relating to the feelings of safety and worry about crime. These were:

How safe do you feel walking alone in or around this area after dark? Would you say you feel:
Very safe, fairly safe, a bit unsafe, very unsafe, don't know.

Most of us worry at some time or other about being the victim of a crime.
Using one of the phrases on this card, could you tell me how worried you are about the following happening to you?

Response options: Very worried, fairly worried, not very worried, not at all worried, don't know

Having your home broken into and something stolen
Being mugged and robbed
Having your car stolen
Having things stolen from your car
Being sexually assaulted
Being physically attacked by strangers
Being insulted or pestered by anybody while in the street or any other public place
Being subject to a physical attack because of your skin colour, ethnic origin or religion
Vandalism to your home or car
Having somebody distract you or pose as an official
Being physically attacked by someone you know

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