



Birmingham Community Safety Partnership

Sharing Good Practice

Final Report

◆ **01 April 2005** ◆

Contents

	Acknowledgements	3
	Executive Summary	4
1.	Introduction	7
2.	Methodology	8
3.	Overview of the projects	11
4.	Disseminating the outcomes	14
5.	Evaluating projects	18
6.	Conclusions	20
7.	References	21
	Appendices	
A1	Optima Wardens	
A2	Bournbrook Community Safety	
A3	Safer Neighbourhoods Project	
A4	Youth Inclusion Project	

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Many projects have been implemented across Birmingham, and elsewhere, focusing on crime reduction, community safety and neighbourhood renewal. The managers and staff working on these projects build up a great deal of knowledge about project management, solving problems, building relationships with partner agencies, and through this, develop an understanding about what has worked well and why, and what they would do differently next time. This constitutes good practice, which can be defined as 'using practical lessons from projects and approaches to problems that have been developed and implemented successfully, and shown through evaluation to have been effective in achieving the desired outcomes.' These good practice lessons need to be captured through robust evaluation, setting the context within which a project was conducted, how the available resources were used and the outcomes achieved. Evidence is needed to demonstrate why the methods used are good practice and how they can be adopted into future practice. It is also important that these good practice lessons can be presented in such a way to ensure that others can access this information and use it to inform their own work.

Summary of the projects

Four projects were identified in Birmingham as having demonstrated, through evaluation, as being an example of good practice. These four projects all covered very different neighbourhoods, with a variety of communities, geographical differences and community safety and disorder problems.

- **Safer Neighbourhoods:** Five well-defined high crime areas that engaged the community in setting priorities, decision-making, and getting actively involved in a wide variety of community based projects.
- **Bournbrook Community Safety:** based in a declining area with a high student population living in poorly maintained rented property, the project improved the environment, provided physical security and raised awareness of crime prevention.
- **Wyrley Birch Youth Inclusion Project:** An area of high deprivation with a problem of youth crime, anti social behaviour, and low educational achievement, by targeting young offenders through diversionary activities and developing new skills.
- **Atwood Green Community Wardens:** Based in an inner city area undergoing regeneration, with the most vulnerable residents benefiting from a visible reassuring presence from the authorities.

Problem Oriented Partnership approach

The SARA Process

Scanning: the nature and distribution of the problem, and the context within which it is occurring

Analysis: the source of the problem and potential pinch-points. This includes looking at the immediate causes, the victims, offenders, location, and other risk factors, using information and data from a variety of sources and different partner agencies where this is available.

Response: strategy, tactics and implementation. This looks at the choice of interventions that have been implemented, the principles behind them, the mechanism through which it was expected that they should work, and risks involved (potential unintended as well as intended consequences). This also covers aspects of how the intervention was implemented in practice, and the level of involvement of partner agencies.

Assessment: outputs, outcomes and lessons learnt. This looks at the measures of success for each project and assess the outcomes in relation to the targets set. It covers sustainability, in terms of both implementation and impact, and looks at issues around replicating the work in other areas.

Before the good practice lessons can be disseminated, a firm understanding is needed of why certain aspects of the projects selected represent good practice, with sufficient evidence provided

to demonstrate this. To draw out the lessons of good practice, and present them in a way that may be useful in the development of future community safety work, a framework was constructed to capture the relevant information. The approach we used is based around problem-oriented partnership work, based on the SARA process (see box), and used in many crime reduction projects. Although this is generally used as a project management tool, this can be applied retrospectively to project and case study evaluations to provide an overview of the problem, give a more detailed analysis, describe which interventions were selected based on the analysis, and provide an assessment of the intervention, looking both at the process evaluation and project outcomes.

A variety of methods were used to assimilate the information needed to complete the framework. These included a review of the evaluation reports for each of the projects, along with additional documentation from the project and information from the original funding bids; semi structured interviews with key personnel involved in establishing and delivering the projects; and further crime data analysis from each area where available, to look at the current situation.

Key success factors

These projects were set up in different ways to tackle the individual problems identified in each case, and applying many of the good practice lessons from these will depend on the context of the problem. However, a number of the factors leading to a successful outcome, and the good practice lessons learnt were the same in two or more of the projects, and may well be transferable more generally to other areas and new projects. The key success factors emerging from them are as follows:

Understanding the problem

- Conduct careful analysis of the problem before setting up a solution, to make sure the right problem is being addressed. Consult widely where possible with residents, local voluntary and community groups and other statutory agencies already working in the area.
- Be clear about what your objectives are, and what you are trying to achieve and how you can measure progress towards these objectives.
- Make sure you are aware of unintended consequences that may occur.

Developing a solution to the problem

- Make sure that the solutions and planned actions fit with the analysis of the problem, and that you understand the mechanism through which the project is likely to achieve the intended outcomes.
- Locate the project office in the area where the project is being implemented. This will make the project visible to residents, and easily accessible. It will also give project officers the opportunity to get to know the area well, and gain a full understanding of the problems faced by residents.
- Make full use of existing facilities as far as possible rather than starting from scratch.
- Don't be over ambitious about what can be achieved within the time, money and other resources available – making promises that can't be kept will lose the support of the community. Setting a well-defined geographical area to be covered by the project will help in delivering results.

Engaging with others

- All the successful projects were able to get a high proportion of the target group engaged with activities and projects, and making use of the services provided.
- Most of the problems can be tackled better in partnership, and it is important to engage with partner agencies. Make sure that you are aware of which agencies and groups exist and work in the area, and find out what they are doing that could impact on the planned project.

Evaluating progress

- Put monitoring systems into place to gauge how projects are progressing against the expected outputs and outcomes, and do some form of evaluation, either internally or using an independent evaluator.

- Doing an evaluation of processes, outcomes and costs can help understand what has worked well and what hasn't worked so well, and also highlight further good practice lessons that can be disseminated to a wider audience.

Sustainability

- Sustaining the achievements made during the life of a project can be achieved through bringing in capacity building measures within the community, and providing the skills and enthusiasm to continue to take forward their own projects when a time limited project comes to an end. This can include developing project management skills, along with the information needed to bid for further funds where necessary.
- Problems may arise in sustaining the initiative if the support provided by the statutory bodies to volunteers from the community diminishes, without the infrastructure to enable this to continue.

Disseminating the good practice messages

Alongside this work, additional work was being done to develop a dissemination strategy that would present the good practice work in a way that is easily understood, timely, relevant and easy to access. The audiences for whom this information is intended includes specialist practitioners, generalists, a broader community safety audience and others who need an awareness of community safety issues, for example to comply with section 17 requirements.

A 'design team', consisting of a dozen people with a professional interest in community safety in Birmingham, was brought together for a day to discuss issues around disseminating good practice. They identified what type of information the target audiences would need and how this could be disseminated effectively and efficiently. This highlighted a number of existing networks and channels of communication that were already being used in sharing good practice messages, and the dissemination strategy should link in with these as far as possible. They also discussed the level of information required that would be of most use in their work.

When developing the dissemination strategy, and deciding which dissemination tools will be most appropriate for inclusion in the strategy, the following points were raised that should be taken into consideration:

- Any output should be of good quality in terms of presentation, images, and materials used;
- The use of jargon should be limited – language should be clear, recognisable and relevant;
- Include specific detail about how to implement particular initiatives – provide practical information;
- Include contact details of someone who is willing to be contacted to give further advice;
- Information should be available on what works, and also on what doesn't work. Identifying the critical success factors for each project can help when trying to transfer a project from one area to another;
- The format should be easy to navigate, allowing quick access to the information that is relevant.

A variety of materials are being produced to meet the needs of the target audience including a website, a CD Rom, fact sheets and leaflets. These could be disseminated and publicised through a comprehensive package of activities, including targeted emails; links with conferences, events and seminars; through local delivery groups; and through links with partner organisations and other media outlets.

1. Introduction

Many crime reduction and community safety projects have been carried out in Birmingham over recent years, to tackle a wide range of issues affecting different communities in many different ways. In many cases, much time, effort and resources have been used to evaluate the projects, to determine what impact they have had and understand more about what works in which area to tackle different problems, and understand why this might be the case. Understanding the underlying issues, and disseminating the findings, can promote the use of good practice methods in other similar projects, and provide ideas for getting the best results elsewhere. It can prevent 'wheels being reinvented' and mistakes being repeated.

This project was carried out in response to an invitation to tender from the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership to draw out lessons from various projects that have been evaluated recently in Birmingham and selected as exemplars of good practice. The projects, selected by the steering group, all have some aspects that would be beneficial in the development of other similar initiatives across the city, and should be disseminated in such a way that they are easily accessible, and provide the necessary information for this to be implemented elsewhere.

The **aims of this project** were therefore as follows:

- To contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of community safety interventions supported by the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP); and
- To increase the effectiveness of crime reduction activity in the city through the identification and application of demonstrably effective local intervention.

The **objectives of the project** were to understand and provide evidence around the following points for each of the projects:

- Theory of change;
- Critical success factors or lack of success;
- Measures of success identified for the different interventions;
- Unintended and intended project outcomes;
- Replicability of effective interventions;
- Sustainability of effective outcomes;
- Integration of projects between partner organisations and mainstream services.

Once success factors and lessons of good practice have been determined, with the evidence to demonstrate this, the work needs to be disseminated wider. To facilitate this, three further objectives were set for the project:

- To identify appropriate and varied channels for communicating the findings;
- To produce a dissemination strategy based on the combined findings of the research and the wider consultation work; and
- To develop tools within this strategy to provide practical outcomes and effectively deliver the messages so that they can be readily accessed at all levels.

This project therefore set out to analyse the various aspects of each of the selected good practice exemplars to highlight the main lessons to be learnt, and develop further material for dissemination of these lessons to a variety of audiences who could benefit from this information.

Two previous interim reports covered detailed information about the proposed methodology, and methods of sharing good practice (PRI 2004 & 2005). This report provides details of the methodology used to gather and analyse the information on each of the projects, and presents an overview of the main points emerging from the analysis for each project. It then goes on to describe the work carried out around defining good practice, and around the development of a dissemination strategy. The final section provides further information highlighted during the research regarding evaluation of projects.

2. Methodology

The emphasis of this project was to draw out good practice lessons from community safety projects that had previously been evaluated, and not to actually repeat the evaluation work. The approach taken to this work therefore relies heavily on the evaluation reports and supporting documentation, as well as through gathering up to date material where possible. Building a comprehensive picture of each project in this way determines how effectively the lessons can be understood and applied to other projects. Before the good practice lessons can be disseminated, a firm understanding of why certain aspects of the projects selected represent good practice is needed, with sufficient evidence to demonstrate this.

The evaluation reports provided for each of the projects vary considerably in the methods used, depth, content and amount of evidence provided to draw the conclusions relating to the success of the projects. To provide a more consistent format, we developed a framework template based on the Problem Oriented Partnership approach (Goldstein 1990, Bullock & Tilley, 2003) to capture the information about how the project was set up, the context in which it was based, how initiatives were developed around this information, and how they were actually implemented. Based on the SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) generally used with problem oriented partnership work, a framework template has been created to look at the different levels of information available. The model is usually used as a method for developing and managing projects, although the model can equally well be applied retrospectively to provide a consistent format for presenting project work. A similar approach was used recently by the Home Office to present good practice lessons from the Street Crime Initiative (Tilley et al, 2004). Using the framework in this case has enabled all the relevant information to be collected in a standard format, provide evidence to show what has been effective, and also highlight any gaps that may exist in the evidence.

A standard framework to use with all the projects was developed based on the SARA model, drawing on work from Bullock (2004). The following themes were addressed:

- **Background information:** includes the name of the project, date started (and finished), funding amounts and sources, date of evaluation, and contact details for the project.
- **Scanning:** context of the problem and structure of the initiative: this provides a description of the overall problem and how it was identified, the context of the project and the type of neighbourhood in which the problem existed, lead and partner organisations, level of involvement of partners.
- **Analysis and definition of the problem:** describes the area being targeted, and details of how the initial analysis was carried out, including the types of data used, who held responsibility for conducting the analysis, problems encountered in accessing data, any weaknesses in the analysis, and whether any reference was made to existing good practice. A description of the results of the analysis is also included in this section.
- **Response:** records the stated aims and objectives of the project, and the targets that were set, looking at the extent to which the response fitted the analysis of the problem. This provides a description of each intervention, problems encountered and how these were overcome, lessons learnt during the project, how the project was monitored, including measures of effectiveness, and what outputs were achieved.
- **Assessment:** Outcomes of the Initiative: this looks at the data used to evaluate the outcomes, how the evaluation was carried out, what outcomes were achieved and whether they met their targets, the mechanism through which the project achieved the outcomes, and what the critical success factors were, if there were any non-intended outcomes, and identification of any specific good practice lessons.

- **Sustainability and mainstreaming:** This looks at whether the project is still continuing, and if it has changed at all to enable this, how it is now being funded, and to what extent the activities have been mainstreamed. It covers any updates that have occurred since the project was evaluated, and looks at whether recommendations from the evaluation reports have been incorporated into current practice. Finally it covers issues around whether the project could be replicated in other places, and what considerations would be needed for this to be successful.

The evaluation reports offer some of the evidence needed to fully understand the projects, and be able to draw out the good practice lessons. Further data was gathered to supplement the evaluation reports and to bring the information up to date. A variety of research methods were used to assimilate the required data.

Literature Review

Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Team provided evaluation reports for all four projects. In addition to this, additional information was gathered to supplement this, including original documentation from funding bids, minutes from meetings, internal monitoring reports and press cuttings. The project managers provided examples of documentation created during the project. These included posters and leaflets, funding bids, action plans, audit reports and project management charts. In a number of cases further evaluation reports, and interim reports were provided to the researchers. Also, where the projects had contributed to national evaluation programmes the evaluation reports from these were obtained, to provide additional information regarding the wider context in which they were implemented and further good practice lessons.

A further literature review was carried out into the definition of good practice, and around the best methods of dissemination, in terms of community safety and crime reduction, and also in other fields such as education and business. Much of the information was accessed through the Internet, particularly looking at the approaches currently used by Government departments in sharing good practice messages.

A full list of references used in developing and producing the material presented in this report can be found at the end of the report.

Interviews with key personnel

Semi structured interviews were conducted with a total of 8 people who were currently, or had previously been, involved in the implementation and management of the projects. The primary aim of the interviews was to collect further information to supplement the evaluation work, and fill in any gaps that may have been apparent in the evaluation reports. This covered the background to the project, how it was set up, what analysis was done to understand the problems, what responses had been implemented and the outcomes that had been achieved. The interviews covered any problems that had arisen, and what action was taken to overcome these problems. The main learning points, and good practice lessons were also discussed. These interviews enabled us to understand in detail the current situation post-evaluation, practical issues around implementation and sustainability and also to ascertain what should be done differently if a project was to be repeated. As most of the evaluation work was completed some time ago, the interviews provided the opportunity to get an up-to-date picture of how the projects that were still operational were progressing and if any recommendations from the evaluations were taken forward.

The people interviewed for each project were as follows:

- Bournbrook Community Safety Project: project manager and one project officer
- Safer Neighbourhoods project: Four project managers, one additional youth officer
- Optima Wardens project: project manager
- Youth Inclusion Project: we were not able to contact anyone who had been directly involved in managing the project. However, other respondents were able to provide information about the project from their involvement in other work carried out in the area.

Statistical data analysis

The approach to statistical analysis varies in the evaluation reports, with some focusing very much on qualitative outcomes rather than quantitative measures. Where statistics have been provided in the reports, this has added to the evidence of success, or otherwise, for each of the projects. Further data was provided by project staff for two of the projects. In order to provide some consistency to this, access was provided to the Cosmos database, managed by Birmingham Community Safety Partnership. This contains police recorded crime data for a number of offence types, and can be accessed for a variety of geographical areas, including districts, wards, police beats and OCU areas. Additional police data is provided on the number of incidents, victims, and offenders, with further crime and disorder related data provided by the Youth Offending Service, the Fire Brigade and the Ambulance Service.

Where the data was available, this was used to provide additional, up to date information about current crime statistics for the projects. However, a number of problems were encountered in doing this, meaning that this was not possible in all cases. The geographical areas covered by most of the projects do not fall neatly within a ward, beat or district, and therefore it has not been possible to define a specific area relating to the project activity on the maps in Cosmos. This has meant it is difficult to match up the more recent Cosmos data with that presented in the evaluation reports. Choosing a comparable area within Cosmos also presents difficulties, as no data is available prior to April 2000, meaning no pre-project baseline data can be obtained for some of the projects.

SARA coding framework and overall analysis

The data from all sources was collated in the SARA framework described above for each of the projects. This was used to identify measures of effectiveness for each project and highlight practical lessons for implementation and sustainability based on good practice, in addition to showing gaps in the analysis. Using this analysis tool has also helped to identify good practice relating to cross-cutting themes which apply across projects, such as partnership working and information sharing. The data in the framework provided the basis of the material for use in the dissemination tools.

Developing the dissemination strategy and outputs

Alongside the development of the framework to capture and draw out the good practice lessons from each of the selected projects, work was done through various means to ascertain the best methods and media to use for disseminating the material to the audiences identified. The literature review included looking at methods of disseminating good practice in various fields of interest, and to different audiences. This also included assessing the channels of communication and dissemination currently available to the target audiences. The semi structured interviews conducted as part of this project included questions around dissemination and the needs of each individual in accessing and using good practice information.

In addition to this, a 'design team' was brought together for a day to discuss issues around good practice, and identify what information the target audiences would need for the good practice messages generated through this project to be disseminated most effectively and efficiently. The design team consisted of twelve people with a professional interest in community safety, and who were involved in developing and delivering projects across Birmingham, therefore typical of the audiences to be targeted through this work. The design team meeting was facilitated by Vista, and covered general points about information needs, preferred methods of accessing information, and then concentrated on identifying appropriate tools to be used to disseminate the work from this project. The dissemination tools were developed and produced based on the outcomes from these activities.

3. Overview of the projects

Four projects have been identified by the project steering group as demonstrating some aspects of good practice that would be beneficial in the development of other similar initiatives across the city. Based on the information provided in the evaluation reports, the interviews with project staff and other supplementary documentation, key points about the success of each individual project has been drawn together, along with the cross cutting issues common to two or more of the projects.

The four projects identified as examples of good practice all covered very different neighbourhoods, with a variety of communities, geographical differences and community safety and disorder problems. A brief summary of each of the projects is presented here, with more detailed information provided in the appendices. This includes the project report based on the SARA process, a summary of this drawing out the good practice lessons, and the completed SARA framework for each one.

3.1 Project Summaries

Safer Neighbourhoods Project

The original Safer Neighbourhood Projects were focused on five small discrete areas of Birmingham where specific local crime and disorder problems were identified, such as youth crime, anti-social behaviour, drugs, burglary and vehicle crime. Interventions were developed and implemented at a local level to tackle these problems. Active involvement of the community was vital at all stages of the process, with local residents taking ownership of the responses in their areas. Overall there was a greater decrease in crime in the five project areas than for the city overall, with domestic burglary decreasing by 40%. The success of these projects has meant a second wave of projects based on the same model have recently been implemented, building on the experience gained in the first round of projects.

Bournbrook Community Safety Project

The Bournbrook Community Safety Project focused on a declining area with a high student population, and poorly maintained rented housing, to address problems of burglary and other crime within the area. Improving physical security, increasing awareness of crime prevention, and providing environmental enhancement has been the focus of the project, through close links with the University of Birmingham and local community groups. The project was well used by residents, and a reduction in burglary was seen, with a reported improvement in public reassurance.

Wyrley Birch Youth Inclusion Project:

The Wyrley Birch estate is one of the most deprived areas in the country, with associated problems of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. This youth inclusions project started in January 2000, to target the top 50 'at risk' young people aged 13-16 living in Wyrley Birch. The project aimed to provide ten hours of structured activities each week, such as counselling, help with alternative education, sports activities and a bike club. These were intended to divert young people away from crime and provide them with skills to encourage them to enter training or employment and stop reoffending. The project successfully engaged a large number of young people from the estate, with wider coverage than the top 50, who had not previously had access to such facilities.

Atwood Green Wardens:

The Atwood Green Community Wardens Scheme, managed by Optima Community Association, focuses on an area covering five estates to the South West of Birmingham city centre. The area is undergoing major redevelopment, involving refurbishment of some property, demolition and the building of new mixed-tenure property. The Community Wardens Scheme was introduced in 2001 as part of a package of community safety measures. The Wardens Scheme was designed to help reduce crime and the fear of crime by providing a physical presence on the estates at critical times of the day. The wardens also provide reassurance and advice at a time of great change for the residents, providing help to the most vulnerable residents.

3.2 Learning good practice lessons and avoiding problems

These projects were set up in different ways to tackle the individual problems identified in each case, and applying many of the good practice lessons from these will depend on the context of the problem. However, a number of the factors leading to a successful outcome, and the good practice lessons learnt were the same in two or more of the projects, and may well be transferable more generally to other areas and new projects. The main factors coming out of the analysis of the projects are presented below, with more details in the appendices for each project.

Understanding the problem

- Careful analysis of the problem is needed before setting up a solution, to make sure the right problem is being addressed. Consult widely where possible with residents, local voluntary and community groups and other statutory agencies already working in the area.
- Be clear about what your objectives are, and what you are trying to achieve – and how you can measure progress towards these objectives.
- Make sure you are aware of unintended consequences that may occur – for example, awareness raising about a particular crime may result in increased reporting and increased crime figures, rather than produce a reduction as might be expected.

Developing a solution to the problem

- Make sure that the solutions and planned actions fit with the analysis of the problem, and that you understand the mechanism through which the project is likely to achieve the intended outcomes.
- Locate the project office in the area where the project is being implemented. This will make the project visible to residents, and easily accessible. It will also give project officers the opportunity to get to know the area well, and gain a full understanding of the problems faced by residents.
- Make full use of existing facilities as far as possible rather than starting from scratch. This can cover many types of intervention:
 - Holding events in community centres rather than looking for new venues,
 - Cutting back trees to improve the effectiveness of existing lighting rather than installing new street lights,
 - Working with existing residents groups who may be willing to engage with new projects and have the infrastructure to recruit more residents to assist with delivering action.
- Be realistic about what can actually be achieved. Don't be over ambitious about what can be achieved within the time, money and other resources available – making promises that can't be kept will lose the support of the community. Setting a well-defined geographical area to be covered by the project will help in delivering results.

Engaging with others

- All the successful projects were able to get a high proportion of the target group engaged with activities and projects, and making use of the services provided. This may involve targeted publicity explaining what is happening and how it is going to work, or bringing in specific partners who have access to the target groups, such as working with a university to reach students, or with a local school to target teenagers.
- Most of the problems can be tackled better in partnership, and it is important to engage with partner agencies – usually including the police, housing department, schools and environmental services. Make sure that you are aware of which agencies and groups exist and work in the area, and find out what they are doing that could impact on the planned

project. This will help identify gaps in services being provided in the area, and raise awareness about which other partners need to be brought in.

Evaluating progress

- Put monitoring systems into place to gauge how projects are progressing against the expected outputs and outcomes, and do some form of evaluation, either internally or using an independent evaluator.
- Doing an evaluation of processes, outcomes and costs can help understand what has worked well and what hasn't worked so well, and also highlight further good practice lessons that can be disseminated to a wider audience.

Sustainability

- Sustaining the achievements made during the life of a project can be achieved through bringing in capacity building measures within the community, and providing the skills and enthusiasm to continue to take forward their own projects when a time limited project comes to an end. This can include developing project management skills, along with the information needed to bid for further funds where necessary.
- Problems may arise in sustaining the initiative if the support provided by the statutory bodies to volunteers from the community diminishes, without the infrastructure to enable this to continue.

4. Disseminating the Outcomes

4.1 Defining Good Practice

One of the main considerations for this project was to look at the definition of good practice, and determine what criteria need to be met to ascertain what counts as good practice. Our working definition of good practice for the purposes of this project will be taken to be **'practical lessons from projects and approaches to problems that have been developed and implemented successfully, and shown through evaluation to have been effective in achieving the desired outcomes'**. However, these are very context specific, and it needs to be made clear under what circumstances initiatives were successful.

Much of the information about sharing good practice emphasises the importance of having evidence to support the good practice messages, through either hard statistical data, or more qualitative data providing more detailed, specific information about particular aspects of a project. These criteria may differ depending on whether the good practice is a new and innovative approach to a problem, or whether it results from particularly good use of existing practice, such as achieving results using limited resources, or producing additional benefits through tried and tested methods.

4.2 Developing the dissemination strategy

The development of the dissemination strategy must ensure that the right lessons are being provided to the right audiences, in a way that is easily understood, timely, relevant and easy to find. The strategy builds on finding the most appropriate mode of disseminating the information, using the information from the design team, interviews with key personnel, and assessment of information currently available. Other channels of dissemination through inclusion of workshops in relevant conferences that are already being planned will be used where possible.

Initially three audiences were identified who could benefit from the good practice knowledge produced from the four projects. Further discussion led to the identification of a fourth potential audience. The audiences identified are:

- Specialist practitioners;
- Generalists;
- Broader community safety audience; and
- A wider audience who need an awareness of community safety issues, for example to comply with section 17 requirements.

Meeting the needs of different audiences identified as recipients of the good practice messages is vital if the messages are going to have any future impact on the development of practice and policy within Birmingham. Finding good practice information can be a time consuming process, meaning that the clear messages should be easily accessible, and provide the appropriate level of information. Advice on levels of information for sharing good practice about increasing employment in Spain (Diputació de Barcelona, 2000) is equally applicable to the area we are considering here. They suggest looking at four levels of information:

1. **Title:** be succinct, but provide enough information to indicate whether the project is relevant, and would justify further investigation.
2. **Summary:** the action taken, summarised in a few lines, with the key events mentioned.
3. **Body of information:** more details of the context of the project, the starting point, how the project was implemented, resources used and the outcomes achieved.
4. **Supplementary information:** more detailed descriptions of an area, details about implementation, further documents used, other sources of information and references, and contact details.

The discussions and interviews highlighted a number of existing networks and channels of communication that were already being used in sharing good practice messages, and the dissemination strategy should link in with these as far as possible. They also discussed the level of information required to be most useful in their work. The main points arising were as follows:

- Use of resources provided by the Government Office;
- Use of Internet sites and search engines;
- Developing a network of informal contacts, often through attendance at seminars and conferences;
- Subscribing to mailing lists for regular updates of relevant information;
- Provision of practical information.

When developing the dissemination strategy, and deciding which dissemination tools will be most appropriate for inclusion in the strategy, the following points were raised that should be taken into consideration:

- Any output should be of good quality in terms of presentation, images, and materials used;
- The use of jargon should be limited – language should be clear, recognisable and relevant;
- Include specific detail about how to implement particular initiatives – provide practical information;
- Include contact details of someone who is willing to be contacted to give further advice;
- Information should be available on what works, and also on what doesn't work. Identifying the critical success factors for each project can help when trying to transfer a project from one area to another;
- The format should be easy to navigate, allowing quick access to the information that is relevant.

4.3 Tools for dissemination

Based on the information available from the variety of sources we referred to, a number of tools have been identified that could effectively be used to share the good practice messages. These have been developed with the intention of reaching the different audience groups, and should ideally be tested amongst a sample of each audience group to ensure they are fit for purpose.

- **Birmingham Community Safety Partnership web site for good practice:** the majority of people use the Internet to look for information, making particular use of search engines to find the required material. The BCSP website that exists already does not provide easily accessible information about the projects currently being funded or supported by the partnership, or those that have been in the past. Little information is provided about good practice lessons drawn from previous projects. Developing a new website, containing various levels of information relating to the projects supported by the Partnership will be able to reach a wide audience, if accompanied with appropriate marketing, such as emailing contacts and partner organisations, to alert people to its existence and content. Links to the existing BCSP website, the Cosmos database when this is released, and the website for Birmingham City Council, will help to bring the content of the site to the attention of all the audiences targeted through this, including those who may not consider community safety to be directly relevant to their own areas of work. The web address can be printed on a variety of media (pens, mugs etc) that can be given away at conferences and other events in which there is an element of interest in community safety. A web site needs to be kept regularly updated to be fully effective.
- **Production of a CD ROM.** This can provide all the information around the good practice lessons, and should be easily navigable and interactive enough to enable the different audiences to access the appropriate level of information as quickly as possible, ideally incorporating a search facility. The dissemination of this should be more targeted than the website, as limited number will be produced. This should be aimed primarily at practitioners

and generalists, involved in planning and implementing projects and community safety strategies locally.

- **Links with the events, conferences and seminars** such as the event planned for the launch of Cosmos database, which provides access to local data from the police and other partners. The launch should be targeted at a similar audience to this, at local practitioners, generalists and those with a wider interest in community safety issues.
- **Production of a series of fact sheets and leaflets.** This form of communication can include detailed fact sheets and reports for practitioners, and more general leaflets for a wider audience. Dissemination can take place through targeted mail shots, making the information available to partner organisations, through the local delivery groups, and also made available at events held by Birmingham City Council and partner organisations.
- **Sharing of template documents** that can be adapted for a specific project – this could include monitoring forms, evaluation frameworks, information sharing protocols, letters to residents, or planning applications. This should be targeted specifically at those involved in project management and delivery, on a very practical level. These documents could best be accessed through the website, or the CD Rom, or provided to potential project managers with other documentation about project implementation.

4.4 Dissemination Activity

Preparing the documentation and different media to carry the messages of good practice is only the first part of the process of dissemination – the messages then need to be targeted at the right people. This section discusses potential dissemination activity that could be undertaken to reach the variety of audiences identified, making full use of existing events and seminars to promote the good practice work as widely as possible.

Planned and ongoing activity

A number of activities are already planned to disseminate the good practice work further to a wider audiences, looking at more medium term activity to complement the short term activity through setting up and launching the website and other tools.

- **Workshop at the PRI conference** A workshop looking at good practice and how to disseminate this has been included in the programme for the forthcoming PRI conference in June 2005, entitled 'Working together for safety: lessons from regional research.' This will address issues around identifying good practice for local projects using a problem solving approach, and developing a strategy to disseminate this, which will effectively meet the needs of different audiences. The conference is expected to attract in excess of 100 people delegates from the field of community safety, and has been marketed across the country.
- **Workshop at the Problem Oriented Partnership conference** The annual POP conference organised by the Home Office and Cleveland Police, addresses practical crime and disorder reduction through problem solving partnerships, and aimed at both practitioners and managers in local CDRPs. The event attracts around 500 delegates from across the country. Workshops within the conference cover both practical examples of POP projects, and also aspects of training for those involved in using this approach. We will run a workshop looking at using the POP framework to present and disseminate good practice within a CDRP, and how to go about doing this, illustrated through the good practice in Birmingham, and also through work done through the Street Crime Initiative.
- **Links to other websites.** The website for the Good Practice work, and the BCSP, should provide links to other organisations involved in providing information around community safety, crime reduction and regeneration. Given the importance put onto evaluation of projects to ascertain how well they work, and develop good practice further, links should also be made to

organisations providing advice on evaluation and have the capacity to carry out this type of work. Building links between crime reduction and community safety practitioners, and researchers who can assist in the development and evaluation of projects is important. Equally, in addition to providing links to other websites, this should be reciprocated where possible, so that partner organisations provide direct links to the BCSP web site.

Suggested future activity

During the course of the research, and in particular the Vista design team discussion, a number of other possible channels of communication were suggested, with other activity that could address the dissemination and sharing of good practice in the longer term.

- **Make full use of the existing channels of communication** within partner organisations, such as the police, using their marketing and press office facilities to promote the work, and communicate the good practice messages to wider audiences. Many of the individual projects make good use of local and national media to promote positive messages about the work going on, and this can be important in sustaining community engagement.
- **Targeted emails** to alert community safety managers and practitioners to the existence of the website and the availability of the other tools, both at the start when the site is launched, and periodically after that, especially to alert people to updates and new information.
- **Opportunity for other projects to be added** to the site. Websites that are regularly updated with new information will attract a greater number of visitors. Adding general news to the site, in addition to adding new good practice lessons as they arise will keep it up to date and relevant to changing problems within the city. Projects to be added will need to ensure that the good practice messages are evidenced through proper evaluative methods.
- **A role for the local delivery groups** in keeping local projects informed about what else is happening across Birmingham was also identified as a potential means of communication with local practitioners and managers, and also the wider audience with an interest in community safety.
- **Linking in with other seminars and conferences** can be useful, and a role for the Partnership could be to look for opportunities that will arise where the good practice messages can be disseminated further to the intended audiences.
- **Information exchange fair** – this suggestion would involve organising a lunchtime event that would enable project managers to have a stand providing information about their project, and provide the opportunity to swap experiences and meet other people running similar projects, building on the informal networks that were identified as being very useful.
- **A need for additional training** was identified around many community safety issues, particularly around a basic knowledge about community safety for those entering the field in whatever capacity, and also opportunities for interagency problem solving.
- **Publication through the academic literature** also provides opportunity for the work being carried out locally to reach a wider audience.

5. Evaluating projects

Evaluation is sometimes regarded as an unnecessary burden, as a distraction from the 'real work' of crime reduction and community safety, and is often overlooked. Half-hearted or unimaginative evaluation can be a nuisance for those involved. However, effective evaluation can be of benefit. Put simply, without learning from properly evaluated projects, then success doesn't spread and mistakes are repeated.

The variance in information provided in the evaluation reports for each of these projects demonstrates the differences that can occur in the processes of conducting or commissioning an evaluation. The following checklist provides a broad outline of the sorts of questions that would need to be considered by a community safety manager wishing to conduct an evaluation of a particular project, either internally or through the commissioning of an external consultant.

5.1 Planning the evaluation

- Does the project need to be evaluated?
- Who will have overall responsibility managing the evaluation?
- What resources are available for the evaluation – budget/skills/research staff?
- What are the timescales involved with conducting the evaluation?
- Does the evaluation need to be externally commissioned?
- Which partner agencies are involved and are there any others that should be brought in?
- Are the project aims and objectives clear?
- Are the aims and objectives acceptable to all partners?
- What targets have been set (outputs and outcomes)?
- What analysis has been done to understand the problem?
- What are the measures of success?
- How will unintended outcomes be recognised and dealt with?

5.2 Commissioning the evaluation

- Is there sufficient time to put out to tender in accordance with procurement rules, and to allow potential evaluators to respond?
- Is the purpose of the evaluation, and the intended audience clear in the Invitation to Tender (ITT)?
- Are there clear criteria against which tender documents will be assessed? This could include:
 - Understanding of the problem/project
 - Experience of the research team in evaluation methods
 - Approach to be used in collecting qualitative and quantitative data
 - Approach to be used for data analysis
 - Approach to cost effectiveness analysis
 - Project management and ability to complete the evaluation in the time available
 - Indication of report writing and presentation skills
 - Costs
- Are the responsibilities of project manager and the evaluation team clear, in terms of accessing data, reporting structures and dissemination?
- Are the staff working on the project to be evaluated being kept aware of progress through the evaluation process?

5.3 Collecting the evidence

- Is baseline data available against which to measure project outputs and outcomes?
- Is the evaluation going to run concurrently with the project?
- Are project staff aware that the evaluation will be taking place, and the time commitment this may require from them?

- What methods are going to be used to identify and collect both quantitative and qualitative data?
- Is the evaluation going to cover process, outputs and outcomes?
- Do you need a cost effectiveness analysis as part of the evaluation?
- What data are available for use in the evaluation, and will it be available in the time period required?
- Is additional data required from other partner agencies, and have they signed up to an information sharing protocol?
- Are monitoring systems in place to collect the necessary data for the evaluation?
- Are comparison areas/buffer zones/reference areas going to be used, and if so how are these going to be identified?

5.4 Analysing and interpreting the evidence

- What analysis methods are going to be used?
- Is the necessary analysis software available?
- Is this going to provide a convincing interpretation?
- Is there sufficient evidence to be able to draw conclusions about the success of the project?
- How are the evaluators going to link the outputs to the outcomes?
- If there is little positive evidence to suggest that the project has been successful, have the reasons for project failure, such as implementation or theory failure, been examined?
- How will a negative outcome about a project, should it arise, be managed, and what will the consequences of this be for all those involved?
- Have other initiatives in the area been taken into account that might affect the outcomes of the project being evaluated?
- Is there any evidence of displacement of the problem or diffusion of benefit?
- What was the mechanism by which interventions worked, and were these as expected at the outset?
- What were the critical success factors for the project?
- Were there any unintended consequences?

5.5 Sustainability

- Is the project continuing after the evaluation?
- How will the recommendations and conclusions be incorporated into the project in the future?
- Are there any aspects of the project that should be dropped or changed as a result of the evaluation?
- Is this being integrated into mainstream activity, or replicated elsewhere?

5.6 Dissemination of the findings

- How are the results going to be disseminated amongst partner agencies?
- How are participants in the evaluation going to find out about the results of the work?
- Are there any aspects of good practice from the evaluation?
- Who would benefit from knowing about these good practice lessons – consider this locally, city-wide, regionally or nationally?
- What methods should be used to disseminate these findings to a wider audience?
- What levels of information do different audiences need to know?
- Are you going to have the opportunity to gather feedback from the dissemination exercise?

6. Conclusions

The four projects studied for this study have demonstrated a variety of problems, many of which are context specific, and have developed a range of imaginative approaches to tackling these problems. By applying these approaches and solutions to other projects and problems within the city, it could be anticipated that this would contribute to achieving the targets to reduce crime and fear of crime, in addition to building more cohesive communities and supporting the regeneration activity within the city.

The good practice lessons drawn out here cover both wider, more general issues that could apply to many projects being developed across Birmingham, and also some very specific area of good practice that would only be applicable in defined contexts. This demonstrates the importance of having a thorough understanding of the problem being addressed at the outset to make sure that the right problem is being addressed, and ensuring that the analysis of the problem links directly into the responses that are to be implemented. It has also emerged from these examples that targets and expectations should be realistic, according to the time and resources available.

A key feature of success for many of the projects is working closely with partner organisations and establishing more effective working relationships, which are not dependent on a single individual and could not be sustained should there be a change in personnel. Engaging with the community in the work that is being done was equally important in all cases, as was empowering local residents to take the work forward and sustain the activities implemented. Any further good that emerges from ongoing projects could usefully add to the information and examples already provided.

Conducting an evaluation of projects is often an area that is overlooked, as it is seen to be overly complicated, and taking resources away from the primary aim of delivering the project. However, this needs to be an integral part of the community safety work that is ongoing within the city, to ensure that lessons continue to be learnt and the evidence is available to enable new ideas and approaches to be adopted into mainstream activity where appropriate.

The dissemination of the good practice work is an ongoing process, not just a one-off activity. For the current set of information and fact sheets developed, time needs to be spent identifying opportunities to ensure the target audiences can access the relevant material. Future work will be needed to update the information available, to get feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the information provided, and to keep abreast of the changing needs of the different audiences.

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