

# Strategies for crime prevention

A model for devising situational crime prevention programs has been suggested by Marcus Felson (1987) who combines physical design and kinetic management in the fight against crime. Felson sees both criminals and victims as creatures of habit, going about 'routine activities'.

Felson's routine activity approach to crime analysis specifies three elements of crime – a likely offender, a suitable target, the absence of a capable guardian against crime or an 'intimate handler', i.e. a person close to the offender who is able to impose informal social control and prevent him/her from committing an offence. Crime occurs when victims and offenders converge in the absence of a guardian or intimate handler. Crime can be prevented by keeping potential offenders and potential victims apart.

Using this routine activity approach, Ronald Clarke and Marcus Felson (1988) have categorised a number of situational crime prevention strategies thrown up by successful case studies, namely:

*Reduce convergence of targets and offenders by:*

- separating the elderly from teenagers and children in public housing, for example.

*Constrain offenders by:*

- strengthening social controls, e.g. through smaller classes in schools to cut down vandalism and rowdyism;
- restricting access to facilitates or means of committing crimes, e.g. by placing a ban on aerosol paint sprays to juveniles;
- restricting access to disinhibitors such as alcohol which might lead some people to commit crimes, e.g. by banning the sale of alcohol at football games.

*Protect targets by:*

- target hardening through using vandal-resistant materials in public places, installing burglar-proof barriers in taxis;
- restricting access to places where crime could be committed, e.g. by placing entryphones on entrances to public housing to keep out intruders, and erecting barriers at bus queues to discourage pickpockets;
- reducing the value of the target, e.g. by inscribing belongings with identification numbers, and limiting the amount of money in cash registers;
- reducing visibility, e.g. by not undressing in front of a lighted window or by making sure a house looks occupied.

*Enhance guardianship by:*

- increasing surveillance, real or apparent, e.g. through Neighbourhood Watch, illuminating the inside of banks at night;
- assigning responsibility, e.g. by training employees to challenge potential offenders;
- increase the capability to intervene, e.g. through radios for bus drivers.

## Crime Prevention Programs

### **Preventing inner-city youth crime in France**

Following an epidemic of attacks on cars in the ghettos of Lyons and Marseille in the summer of 1981, the new Socialist Government introduced *été-jeunes* – a major program of summer camps and activities for young people – and set up a commission and two committees of inquiry into the underlying causes of youth unrest.

Both committees stressed the importance of improving the physical and social environments of major cities, particularly in depressed neighbourhoods with high immigrant populations, poor schools, high unemployment rates and poor housing conditions.

The report of the commission of mayors – the Bonnemaïson report – went much further and launched a multi-faceted attack on crime and its causes, urging immediate, decentralized state action. While a large number of the committee's recommendations were aimed at discouraging or controlling criminal behaviour, many were

also concerned with housing policies and with protecting valuable sections of the population.

The recommendations were designed to encourage social harmony in the cities, communal life, and support for victims, the young and social outcasts. They were also intended to reduce tensions between races and generations by promoting cultural pluralism and encouraging people to participate in the life and decision-making of their community.

The initiative for setting up local committees was left entirely to local councils. Two-thirds of towns and cities with populations between 9,000 and 30,000 complied.

The summer camps/activities program of 1982 was born out of two different approaches to crime prevention in deprived inner-city areas. The first, associated with children's judges and traditional social work, sees crime prevention as protecting young people from the dangers of their moral and social environment and poor living conditions. The second, a more political response, sees the answer in revitalising the inner cities by restoring community life and improving the physical and moral environment.

The summer camps combined these two approaches: they removed young people from trouble and kept an eye on them; and allowed them to take part in activities which interested them and gave them a positive image of themselves and their society while protecting them – at least temporarily – from their deprived environment. This approach piloted in the summer camps program was later to form the backbone of France's crime prevention policies (King 1988).

Changes to the administrative structure, made law in 1983, ensured that power and funding were devolved to the local level, and that national and local politicians became committed to making the crime prevention program succeed. Though social integration was the main objective, petty crime in all major cities has declined in summer.

### **Community crime prevention programs in the United States**

In the mid-1970s, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funded and published a series of national evaluations of specific crime prevention strategies such as citizen patrols, citizen crime reporting projects, Operation Identification and security surveys. This made crime prevention programs more visible.

Since then, citizen involvement in programs such as Neighbourhood Watch, Operation Identification and Home Security Surveys has become a national phenomenon.

In 1977 the US Government funded a consolidated effort in community crime prevention to the tune of \$30 million with the inauguration of LEAA's Community Anti-Crime Program. The money was to be used to 'assist community organisations and neighbourhood groups to become actively involved in activities designed to prevent crime, reduce fear of crime, and contribute to neighbourhood revitalisation' (US Department of Justice 1978 in Rosenbaum 1986). The Justice Department's assumption was that 'the formal criminal justice system by itself cannot control crime without help from neighbourhood residents in fostering neighbourhood-level social controls'.

Police have also recognised that police and citizens share responsibility for crime prevention. Many police departments are now exploring alternative strategies that encourage police to collaborate with neighbourhood residents, for example foot patrols, door-to-door contacts, store-front offices and security surveys (Rosenbaum 1986).

There have been a number of major American community crime prevention programs:

- The Seattle Community Crime Program was initiated in the early 1970s and staffed entirely by city employees. It attacked the problem of residential burglary with door-to-door organising of Seattle neighbourhoods.
- The Portland (Oregon) Anti-Burglary Program was implemented in 1973 as part of the LEAA-funded Impact Cities Program. It focused on citizen efforts to protect themselves and their neighbours from victimisation.
- An innovative and highly-publicised program to reduce crime and fear of crime in Hartford (Connecticut) in 1973 used a three-pronged approach involving changes in the physical environment, changes in police service, and efforts to organise neighbourhood residents.

Descriptions and evaluations of these and other community crime-prevention programs are available in Dennis Rosenbaum's book *Community Crime Prevention. Does It Work?*

## **The UK's standing conference on crime prevention**

Following a report on crime prevention - by the Cornish Committee, 1965 - a Standing Conference on Crime Prevention was established in the UK Home Office. It carried out a series of initiatives and demonstration projects.

The Standing Conference is an advisory body made up of representatives from local and central government, the police, the voluntary sector, the business community and industry. Its goal is to involve all sections of the community in the prevention of crime.

To address specific crime prevention questions, the Conference holds annual Working Groups drawing its membership from experts in that field.

Working Groups report on such areas as residential burglary, commercial robbery, car security, violence associated with licensed premises and shop theft.

As well, crime prevention programs involving changes to the physical environment of public housing estates have been mounted, for example, at the Hillfields, South Acton and Lisson Green estates. And a major property marking program was carried out in South Wales between 1983 and 1985 with a view to reducing burglaries.

## **NACRO**

In 1975 the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) launched a pilot project in a badly vandalised housing project in Cheshire, and this marked the beginning of the neighbourhood approach to crime prevention. Its distinctive features were consultation with tenants and the involvement of a number of agencies in improving the social and physical environment of public housing estates.

More recently, NACRO has begun to develop a notion of 'community safety', emphasising the positive aspects of community involvement.

## **Local initiatives**

At the local level, Crime Prevention Panels have been in operation in some areas for over twenty years. These groups

comprise members of the public and were originally chaired by police. On the recommendation of a Working Group of the Home Office Standing Conference their guidelines were revamped in 1985 and police were relegated to an advisory capacity.

Neighbourhood Watch was introduced in 1982 and has grown to 42,000 groups.

### Five towns demonstration project

In 1985, in response to requests from local authorities, police and voluntary organisations for guidance in setting up crime prevention schemes, the Home Office established demonstration projects in five towns - Bolton, North Tyneside, Wellingborough, Croydon and Swansea. Funded for eighteen months by central and local government, the initiative was designed to generate public confidence that crime and fear of crime could be reduced. When central government financial support ran out, the results were encouraging enough to attract funding from a variety of other sources so work could continue, and several towns have reported significant reductions in crime (U.K. Home Office 1988).

### Ministerial Group

In 1986 an Interdepartmental Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention was set up, with the first of its seminars chaired by the Prime Minister. In the same year, among other crime prevention initiatives, \$15 million was spent by the Department of Transport to reduce crime and disorder on the underground railway system.

Under the influence of this new crime prevention policy, police training has been revamped, private enterprise managers are increasingly taking account of security at the design stage of production, and insurance companies encourage householders to take security precautions by offering financial incentives.

### Manpower programs

In 1987, 8,000 places under the Manpower Service Commission's Community Programme were specifically allocated to crime prevention work. A number of organisations, public and private, run schemes under this Crime Prevention and Community Programme Initiative, involving protecting people and property and

developing social and community activities. Examples include lock fitting schemes for old and disadvantaged people; improved management in tower block housing; providing support for women victims of domestic violence; youth activities in disadvantaged areas, and crime prevention advice and publicity material.

## Publicity

In 1988 the Home Office launched a major publicity campaign to promote crime prevention throughout the country. It included a glossy brochure/manual – *Practical Ways to Crack Crime* featuring advice on keeping the family, home, possessions, neighbourhood, community and workplace safe, and two-page advertisements promoting the manual in national newspapers.

## Further information

Descriptions and evaluations of crime-prevention programs in the UK can be found in *Situational Crime Prevention. From Theory into Practice*, edited by Kevin Heal and Gloria Laycock (1986) for the British Home Office Research and Planning Unit; and in *Successful Crime Prevention Case Studies* by Barry Poyner and Barry Webb (1987).

## Crime prevention in Canada

The major government support for crime prevention in Canada is provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, and the police are the primary organisers of crime prevention programs. With its national scope and clearly-defined administrative hierarchy, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has well-developed crime prevention policies and provides an integrated core for police sponsored crime prevention activities (Brantingham 1986).

RCMP officers work full time on crime prevention activities and operate a national crime prevention training program. Crime prevention practitioners' associations have been formed so crime prevention officers can develop support networks.

The major Canadian crime prevention activities and programs fall into three categories: community surveillance, most often through neighbourhood or block watch; property marking through Operation Identification; and target hardening.

## **Australian initiatives**

Spurred on by the insurance industry, most state governments have introduced Neighbourhood Watch programs – which include target hardening and property marking activities – and the Northern Territory is in the process of introducing a program. There are also moves afoot to set up Business Watch, in New South Wales a Marina Watch is proposed in a south coast resort, and a Stock Watch is being organised to prevent theft of farm animals in rural areas. A Schools Watch is foreshadowed.

The State Rail Authority in New South Wales commissioned a study on vandalism and graffiti from the Institute of Criminology and is implementing recommendations made in the Institute's report. Telecom, the national telecommunications body, together with the Institute of Criminology and Australia's police forces, is currently examining the problem of telephone vandalism and has already initiated a number of changes including modifications to equipment, relocation of some call boxes and better lighting around phone boxes.

Most recently, in response to community concern about a spate of violent attacks on women in inner- Canberra in 1988, the minister in charge of the administration of the Australian Capital Territory instituted a situational crime prevention program aimed at making the streets safe.

Initially the Government will be looking to upgrade lighting in dangerous parts of the city, and cutting down hedges and shrubbery which can hide offenders and shield car parks from surveillance by passers-by. As well, the government will be examining the inner city closely with a view to modifying the environment, wherever possible, to reduce opportunities for criminal activity.