



# MODES OF PREVENTION:

A Framework for Cutting Crime

THE  
POLICE  
FOUNDATION

The UK's policing think tank

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The Police Foundation is the only independent think tank focused exclusively on improving policing and developing knowledge and understanding of policing and crime reduction. Our mission is to generate evidence and develop ideas which deliver better policing and a safer society. We do this by producing trusted, impartial research and by working with the police and their partners to create change.

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**POLICE**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper argues that contemporary crime challenges cannot be addressed effectively through reactive policing and criminal justice alone. Drawing on the Police Foundation's Strategic Review of Policing, it contends that crime prevention must become a central, systematised feature of public policy, involving a broad range of actors beyond the police.

The authors trace the evolution of crime prevention in England and Wales, showing how ideas and practices have accumulated but remain fragmented, conceptually ambiguous and weakly institutionalised compared with other prevention-focused domains such as public health. While recent developments - notably public health approaches, Violence Reduction Units, and renewed political interest - signal momentum towards prevention, progress is constrained by short-termism, cultural attachment to ideas of deterrence and personal responsibility, and a lack of a clear organising framework.

We propose that, to avoid conceptual sprawl, crime prevention should be anchored on proscribed harmful behaviour (crime), while deliberately "setting aside" adjacent areas such as safeguarding and offender management. Prevention efforts should be problem-oriented and be grounded in empirically informed diagnoses of specific crime problems, and explicit theories of change.

Building on and extending situational crime prevention, the paper proposes four broad, complementary modes of prevention that together form a more comprehensive framework:

- 1. Make crime behaviour more difficult to undertake** by limiting access to targets, tools, information and skills, and by disrupting criminal pathways and markets.
- 2. Amplify legal deterrence** by increasing the perceived certainty and salience of sanctions through visible policing, focused deterrence, surveillance and reduced anonymity.
- 3. Reduce crime-prone propensities** by addressing longer-term factors such as trauma, stress, and skills deficits through evidence-based interventions and support.
- 4. Promote social connection and inclusion** by strengthening pro-social relationships, legitimacy, procedural justice and community resilience.

Together, these modes offer a coherent way to organise diverse prevention activities and guide future policy, institutional design and investment. The paper concludes that achieving a meaningful "preventative turn" will depend on embedding this framework within a more formalised crime prevention system capable of sustained, adaptive and coordinated action.

**“There is no feasible strategy that addresses the range, volume and complexity of the public safety challenges of the twenty first century through the work of the police alone... what is required is a broad social response to crime and harm based on a more explicit and institutionally anchored public safety system...a system of actors and institutions whose aim is to promote safety and prevent harm.” (The Police Foundation, 2022)**

# THE RED QUEEN IMPERATIVE

Any creature serious about surviving long enough to pass on its genes to successful progeny needs a set of strategies for avoiding predation and protecting access to essential resources. For many animals, threats to safety come both from rivals of their own kind as well as other species, and in some cases, the methods employed are communal and co-operative as well as solitary endeavours. As Farrell (2000) notes, these adaptations often bear striking similarities to what we modern humans think of as crime prevention. Think, for instance, of the co-ordinated surveillance and alarm raising performed by meerkats or baboon sentries, or of dogs and big cats ‘property marking’ their territory with information-laden fluids, or of the impenetrable ‘safe room’ of a badgers sett, or even the ‘collective efficacy’ (mutual reliance in the actions of others) exhibited by an elephant troupe surrounding its infants in case of danger – all have obvious parallels within the modern crime prevention toolkit and discourse.

Crimes, of course, and the laws they transgress, are uniquely human constructions. Indeed (on a Hobbesian view at least), it was to alleviate the perpetual, ‘animal’ competition of all-against-all that societies came to vest responsibility for aspects of safety provision and redress in the hands of all powerful ‘Leviathan’ lawmakers. None-the-less, in modern societies, just as in animal evolution, safety maintenance needs to be seen as ‘continuously adaptive enterprise’ (Tilley, 2024 pp.228). Just as predators and prey have co-evolved in a perpetual dance of innovation and adaptation, so the public safety strategies and crime prevention measures put in place by governments, businesses and private citizens, need to continually adapt and improve, both as criminals learn to circumvent previous protections

and as changes in the wider environment tip the balance in favour of one side or the other.

This process of constant, energy-intensive co-adaptation has been dubbed Red Queen evolution (Van Valen, 1973; and see Tilley, 2024 for its application to crime prevention), after Lewis Carroll’s Red Queen who told Alice that in her country it took ‘all the running you can do to keep in the same place’ (Carroll, 1871).

The analogy aptly resonates with one of (perhaps the) key conclusion of the Police Foundation’s 2022 Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales. This was that, in the context of the radical social transformations being wrought by technology, environmental crisis and complex social change, the default mode of societal crime control, which remains principally reliant on reactive policing and deterrent criminal justice, is becoming increasingly inadequate. We are, in terms that Alice (and many chief constables) might recognise, running as fast we can but starting to go backwards, and what is needed now (to riff on the Review’s report title, itself borrowed from Peel) is not just to pick up the pace, but a New Mode of Propulsion.

As reflected in this paper’s opening quotation, the Review concluded that the much-needed impetus could only be provided by a radical ‘whole society’ reorientation towards prevention. It did not argue (of course), that significant crime prevention activity was not already taking place, nor that a broad spectrum of actors, including individuals, state agencies, private companies and third sector players, are not deeply engaged in various kinds of preventative work (it acknowledged, for instance, that dramatic falls in burglary and vehicle crime experienced internationally since the mid-1990s

were likely the result of improvements in home and vehicle security (Tseloni et al., 2017)). Neither did it claim that policing and criminal justice mechanisms cannot have deterrent and other preventative effects (although such processes can also be criminogenic (e.g. Petrich et al., 2021) or are not socially important for other reasons.

Rather, the deficits identified were ones, first of priority: in policy making, budgeting, social commentary and culture we habitually default to ideas about personal responsibility and the need for retrospective correctives, while neglecting a wider set of crime causes and potential pre-emptive interventions. And second of systematisation and co-ordination: in comparison to the (retroactive) criminal justice system, and to preventative arrangements in other sectors (such as public health, health and safety at work or aviation safety), crime prevention remains ad-hoc, under-designed, theoretically fragmented (even tribal!) and lacking the institutional and professional underpinning evident in other domains of public policy.

To bring about the required step-change, the Review advocated a new national Crime Prevention Agency to devise and deliver a cross-departmental Crime Prevention Strategy; a new general legal duty on big businesses to prevent crime; a review and redesign of local public sector partnership structures; an expansion of the coverage and remit of Violence Reduction Units and the appointment of local Directors of Crime Prevention.

Since the Review's publication, a new government has come to power with ambitious crime reduction goals, including halving knife crime and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within a decade, and doing more to cut shoplifting, antisocial behaviour and fraud (Labour, 2024). It has also criticised the lack of attention paid to crime prevention by previous governments and pledged to make prevention a prominent feature of its police reform programme (Home Office, 2024). Most recently, the long-awaited government VAWG Strategy and Action Plan has been published (Home Office, 2025) including a substantive preventative component covering online regulation,

in-school education programmes and bolstering community resilience and support. The policing White Paper (2026) expresses preventative aspirations but scant details of how these are to be realised.

The conditions for achieving a meaningful 'preventative turn' in crime control policy, therefore, appear (tentatively) to be improving, not least because the inadequacy of the alternative – continued reliance on a crisis-ridden criminal justice paradigm – is becoming increasingly patent.

The barriers to such a shift, however, remain significant (and have been rehearsed before): political short-termism, fragmented policy making, a lack of cashable savings, gaps in the evidence base, wariness around regulation, and – in particular – the cultural and political potency of ideas about human agency and personal responsibility, all stand in the way of radical change (Muir, 2021).

The key contention of this paper is that there is a further, perhaps even more fundamental, barrier to the required step-change: the lack of an adequate conceptual framework for thinking about crime prevention in the contemporary context. Across both crime control policy and practice, efforts to stop more crime are hampered by the absence of a clear consensus position on what crime prevention is, what it is not and about how best to approach the task of organising its disparate components into a more comprehensive and systematic programme of activity.

We begin our discussion by providing a brief history of British crime prevention before describing the conceptual ambiguities that have emerged from it. We then suggest a route through these, drawing on aspects of existing theory, by 1. 'setting aside' some routinised areas of policy/practice, 2. retaining a focus on proscribed behaviours and emphasising 'problem' orientation. We conclude 3. by sketching out a mechanistic framework, which might act as a conceptual anchor to future policy and practice development.

**THIS IS A**



**NEIGHBOURHOOD  
WATCH**

**AREA**

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF CRIME PREVENTION

As we have already seen, sophisticated safety maintenance strategies pre-date laws, crimes and even the human species. As modern societies emerged and states assumed a prominent role in order regulation, legal systems, backed by enforcement regimes, justice procedures and deterrent punishments developed to supplement these 'natural' mechanisms and ameliorate their more brutal consequences. At the birth of modern policing in 1828, and for at least 120 years afterwards, the deterrent function of regular uniformed patrolling and (subsequently) retrospective crime investigation (alongside the threat of punishment attached to both) remained by far the most dominant formal crime control logic – although Peelian notions about the police preventing crime by securing willing public co-operation, reflect a long-standing interest in more nuanced modes of social regulation.

Crime prevention, as a distinctive set of para-judicial practices, began to develop during the mid-20th century, in particular following the publication of the Cornish Report of the Committee on the Prevention and Detection of Crime (Home Office, 1965) and the emergence, albeit on a small-scale, of specialist police crime prevention officers and local crime prevention panels, both rather narrowly focused on physical security measures (Newburn, 2002). Wider momentum began to build, however, during the late 1970s and 1980s, in response to rising crime rates, a crisis in confidence in the prison and rehabilitation system (Martinson, 1974) and the growing political salience of 'law and order'. With Conservative economic policies leaving little room for addressing criminogenic social conditions through welfare-based reforms, the context was set for a more pragmatic focus on 'situational' crime prevention to take centre stage.

Championed by the Home Office, and in particular by the head of the Research and Planning Unit, Ron Clarke, situational crime prevention placed

emphasis on reducing opportunities for crime, (rather than modifying the dispositions and propensities of potential offenders), through managerial and environmental modifications (Tilley, 2002). With a strong research focus and embracing ideas about 'partnership' and 'community', situational thinking began to supplement criminal justice responses within the crime control agenda, and momentum built behind crime prevention as a field of intensive policy innovation. Among other developments, the 1980s saw the resurrection of the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, the publication of influential Home Office circulars and research papers, seminars in Downing Street, the formation of an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) crime prevention sub-committee, and the foundation of the Crime Concern charity, as well as the Five Towns and Safer Cities demonstration projects (Tilley, 2002; Newburn, 2002). Closer to the ground, initiatives to fit burglar alarms and mark property gained momentum, more than 35,000 Neighbourhood Watch schemes sprang up (Laycock and Heal, 1989) and the Kirkholt burglary reduction project sparked interest in repeat victimisation and how it might be prevented.

The Safer Cities project, in particular, represents an important step towards crime prevention 'breaking out' of Home Office incubation and becoming routinised into locally delivered partnership activity (Tilley, 2002) – a process further catalysed by the Morgan Report (Home Office, 1991). Although Morgan's recommendations were not immediately influential, the report paved the way for New Labour's Crime and Disorder Act in 1998, and the creation of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) – later rebadged as Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) – through which police and local authorities (working with others) would discharge their joint duty to formulate and deliver local strategic plans to tackle crime (Loveday, 2000).

As the names suggest, these arrangements saw crime prevention subsumed within broader (and perhaps more nebulous) crime ‘reduction’/ community safety endeavours, in which ‘tactical’ police law enforcement and disruption of public-space acquisitive crime and ‘quality of life’ issues, often played a prominent role alongside local authority investment in CCTV. Although hailed as a paradigm shift, CDRPs/CSPs are often judged to have under-delivered on ambitions. A 2004 Home Office review raised concerns about poor engagement from key agencies and a lack of public visibility and accountability, while perennial issues around information sharing, cultural and priority conflicts, budget protection and over-reliance on transitory informal relationships, hampered their effectiveness (Crawford and Cunningham, 2015).

With varying degrees of overlap, the period also saw roll outs of ‘Intelligence-led’ and ‘Neighbourhood’ policing (both providing potential vehicles for preventative problem-oriented/problem-solving work), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Persistent Priority Offender (PPO) schemes for managing potentially problematic offenders, and development of the CONTEST (counter terrorism) strategy – the Pursue and Protect strands of which (along with Prevent) might arguably be subsumed within a broad definition of crime prevention.

The 2010s saw a confluence of factors: public sector austerity, changes in police governance, historically low crime rates and high-profile revelations around ‘hidden’ forms of abuse, shift the focus away from crime reduction and community safety towards the management of risk, harm and vulnerability. Operational policing became increasingly reactive and subject to ‘triage’. Neighbourhood policing was eroded and hybridised (Higgins, 2018). A swing away from managerialism (and performance targets in particular) saw interest in crime prevalence and patterns recede. Preventative attention (although it was rarely articulated as such) was largely reframed around various forms of individualised ‘casework’ and safeguarding, often with a multi-agency flavour. While there is some evidence of CSPs reorientating towards this new ‘vulnerability’

agenda (Menichelli, 2018), they did so within a more crowded local partnership landscape (operating alongside Local Safeguarding Children Boards/Partnerships (LSCB/Ps), Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs), Health and Wellbeing Boards, (HWBs) Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and the Troubled Families programme etc.) – and with diminished resources, as local funding was handed over to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to deliver their Police and Crime Plans over larger geographies. Although the Conservative government published a Modern Crime Prevention Strategy in 2016, outlining six crime ‘drivers’ (opportunity, character, criminal justice system effectiveness, profit, drugs and alcohol) for attention, there was little in the way of central interest in tackling these, beyond the wider policing and criminal justice reform programme otherwise put in place.

The more recent re-emergence of interest in (crime) prevention from the ‘alphabet soup’ of case-management arrangements, has had several catalysts.

First, a self-referential focus on service ‘demand’ and the way fire-fighting acute risk was doing little to alleviate pressures, provoked efforts to reinvigorate ‘problem-solving’ as a methodology for achieving more sustained, ‘demand-reducing’ solutions (Sidebottom et al., 2019). Although led from within policing, growing recognition of the weight of ‘non-crime’ police demand (College of Policing, 2015) meant such efforts often had a strong partnership focus.

Second, the cut-through of research evidence linking Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE’s) to negative life course experiences, including perpetration of violence, drug and alcohol use, and incarceration, led to interest in how childhood trauma and its impacts might be better prevented, mitigated (or at least not exacerbated) through ‘trauma-informed’ practice and early intervention programmes (Hughes et al., 2017; Bellis et al., 2023).

Third (overlapping with the above), from around 2016, a marked and media resonant increase in

knife crime elicited additional government funding, both for 'Surge' (later, 'Grip') police enforcement activity and the creation (in 2019), of 18 (later expanded to 20) Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) to "lead and co-ordinate a preventative, whole-system approach to violence reduction" (Home Office, 2023). With the emphasis on multi-agency, data driven, community-engaged and evidence-based commissioning and delivery, VRUs have initiated a range of universal and more targeted preventative interventions focused on young people, ranging from mentoring and sports programmes to focused deterrence schemes, cognitive behavioural therapy programmes and hospital navigators. The trajectory of impact has been described as 'encouraging' (Home Office, 2023).

These developments form part of a more general rise in 'Public Health' approaches to police (and police partnership) business, including – but extending beyond – crime prevention/reduction, into addressing a wider set of harms, negative outcomes and acute crisis demand. Although somewhat elusive, the movement is characterised by an emphasis on data and evidence-led identification of population-level risk factors, and interventions targeting the 'upstream' determinants of a range of harms (the, so called, 'causes of the causes') (Christmas and Srivastava, 2019). The approach has produced some advances in data-sharing and innovative efforts to mitigate identified person-level risk factors, such as parental incarceration, through early-intervention and targeted social support.

Finally, it is worth noting that several initiatives have been undertaken over recent decades, to embed prevention within police agencies as a transformational, 'first principle' idea (for instance in New Zealand (New Zealand Police, 2012) and Hertfordshire Constabulary (College of Policing, 2023)). In such cases, 'prevention' has tended to stand for a wider 'progressive' shift in philosophy, embracing innovation, police legitimacy and organisational culture change, while leaving the more mechanistic business of preventing crime (arguably) under-theorised.

To conclude this brief (and inevitably partial) history of English/Welsh (crime) prevention, it is worth

emphasising the cumulative nature of the ideas, structures and practices that constitute the field. Innovations and philosophies come in and out of fashion, but rarely disappear entirely: nearly 200 years after the introduction of a uniformed police presence on London streets, preventative police patrols are still widely practised (and increasingly optimised with predictive hotspotting algorithms), alarms and CCTV are ubiquitous and have become 'smarter', Community Safety Partnerships remain on the statute despite their diminished role, 'problem-solving' is perennially championed as essential practice for community policing teams, security is frequently 'designed in' to building planning processes and many frontline practitioners now know more about trauma and its effects. Crime prevention accretes. And with each new phase, the nature of the whole becomes more complex, ambiguous, difficult to pin down and therefore difficult to grip and deliver programmatically.

Recalling the Red Queen, however, we must never stand still. Crime control requires constant adaptation, and it is reassuring that policing's most recent mobilisation of science and technology has made crime prevention a major focus: the first issue of the *Policing Tomorrow* magazine, published by the Office of the Police Chief Scientific Advisor (in September 2024), takes the subject as its theme and provides a useful informal snapshot of the 'state of the art'.

The first striking thing about the publication's coverage (summarised in the box below) is the sheer range and diversity of activity currently taking place under the broad and inclusive 'crime prevention' banner. We should consider this a healthy sign: evolution requires innovation and variation. The second, however, is the related complexity of organising this vast spectrum of disparate activity into a coherent field of policy and practice, such that it can be delivered in a more concerted, targeted and systematic way. It is the greater systematisation and institutionalisation of crime prevention that (as is argued in the Strategic Review) will be needed to bring about the required evolutionary step-change. Doing so, however, will need some firm conceptual foundations to be put in place.

## CONTEMPORARY CRIME PREVENTION ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIONS HIGHLIGHTED IN POLICING TOMORROW, ISSUE 1

- Development of a Digital Fingerprint Capability to automate, speed up and improve the identification of fingerprints collected at crime scenes.
- Police adopting a 'Public Health approach' to working with partner agencies to prevent crime and non-crime demand and cost, by focusing on the most intensive concentrations.
- The Secure by Design initiative for embedding crime prevention into planning processes and building standards.
- The provision of 'sanctuary' safe rooms for high-risk domestic abuse victims.
- Regulation prohibiting use of default passwords on domestic 'Internet of Things' devices.
- Foresight processes for anticipating and heading off 'crime harvests' created by technological innovations.
- Using AI to trace the origin of knives used in crime, in order to identify retailers who can be targeted through responsabilisation schemes.
- Reducing organisations' exposure to 'insider risk' by a combination of cultural maintenance, staff welfare approaches and risk monitoring.
- New techniques to retrieve biometric information from fingerprints left at crime scenes.
- Using multi-agency, data-led approaches to identify risk and protective factors for violence and putting targeted interventions in place.
- Responding to the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as parental incarceration, with targeted support.
- Police hotspot patrolling.
- Developing strategies to maximise public vigilance and reporting around potential terrorist threats without generating unnecessary alarm.
- Responsibilising technology companies to do more to block content, verify user age and deny offenders anonymity, in relation to online Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).
- Chatbots that engage online pornography users with support resources when their search activities indicate an interest in CSAM.





# WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CRIME PREVENTION?

As the *Policing Tomorrow's* coverage (above) illustrates, crime prevention means many things to many people. For some it brings to mind door locks, car immobilisers, bike marking and strong computer passwords. For others, it is synonymous with the deterrent presence of police on the beat. Others still, might think about offender rehabilitation work, or drug or alcohol treatment programmes. Alternatively, youth work, that keeps those 'on the cusp' of crime out of trouble, or community building schemes, to bolster resilience and vigilance in crime-prone areas, might spring to mind – and there are many more examples besides.

Additionally, there are a range of overlapping categories of activity that often come up in 'fuzzier' conversations about crime prevention. Proactive law enforcement, for example (let's say, local police executing a set of search warrants at premises suspected of involvement in drug supply) may be undertaken to suppress crime rates in an area, and may well be effective, at least in the short term. As we saw earlier, this activity might be best lodged within a hybrid category of crime reduction, but equally – especially if undertaken as part of a Problem-Oriented Policing intervention, or a Clear, Hold, Build strategy (Home Office, 2025)) might be thought of as a contribution to crime prevention.

Then we have the eclectic and expanding practice of crime 'disruption', involving activity to frustrate and impede organised criminals (Skidmore, 2023): should we count this as crime prevention? Or Integrated Offender Management work (IOM), that brings partners together to better supervise 'risky' individuals: is this crime prevention too?

If so, what about the wider criminal justice machine? We might think of prisons as being largely about punishment (as an end in itself), but they also incapacitate and seek to rehabilitate offenders, while probation services manage the risk of

reoffending in the community, all with the intention of preventing additional crime.

Further still, how should we think about safeguarding: the vast, police and multi-agency undertaking of protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm (including crimes of neglect and abuse)? Does this come under the purview of crime prevention?

Even further from the sector, Sure Start Centres (to use the classic example), which provide area-based support for under-fives and their families, have demonstrated a wide spectrum of social benefits including reducing the risk of later involvement in youth crime (Carniero et al., 2024). Should a crime prevention strategy concern itself with this type of provision too? If so, surely any education and social security investment that ameliorates the conditions in which crime can flourish might be rolled in for good measure?

As should be clear from the above, any attempt to better design and systematise crime prevention first needs to attend to what is, and is not, in scope: without some conceptual bounding, the whole endeavour risks dissolving into an infinitely expanding mess of wicked solutions, which could (in theory) envelop vast swathes of social policy.

A further layer of ambiguity is added by recent interest in 'Public Health approaches' (as described in the previous section), illustrated by the way 'prevention' has increasingly become untethered from 'crime' within the policing (and partner) discourse. The NPCC's National Policing Prevention Strategy (2022), for instance, gives prominence to harm, demand, offenders and victims but makes almost no mention of 'crime', while the national police Crime Prevention Portfolio (which was responsible for co-ordinating crime prevention matters across police forces) has been elevated to

the status of a national Co-ordinating Committee, but lost its 'crime' specifier in the process.

The shift in language reflects a growing recognition that many of the causal determinants of crime/criminality/criminalisation (and to some extent criminal victimisation) are also causal factors for other forms of individual and social need, harm, negative life-outcomes (and demand on police and other services). One US study (for instance) vividly illustrates the point by combining city-level police and health data, to reveal extensive overlaps between frequent police arrestees and those regularly attending hospital emergency departments. As the authors note, this small cohort of individuals:

*"have an enormous and disproportionate impact on the health care and criminal justice sectors, neither of which is designed to address the underlying problems they face: housing instability, inconsistent or insufficient income, trauma, inadequate nutrition, lack of supportive social networks, mental illness, and substance abuse disorders. These unaddressed social determinants of behaviour appear to drive a cycle of repeated arrests and hospitalizations." (Milgram et al., 2018).*

The implication here is that dealing with the array of harms and costs experienced and generated by this group requires a holistic programme of 'preventative' needs-based social intervention (ideally delivered 'early' and encompassing housing support, social security, employment education and skills, physical and mental health care etc.) – and that a response framed solely in terms of crime control/prevention (or indeed, any other siloed category of harm) is myopically misconceived.

The corollary seems to be that 'crime prevention' as a policy ambition and field of practice is either misconstrued and should be subsumed within a more holistic agenda to promote 'community wellbeing', 'social flourishing', or some such similar public good (recalling the joke about the city dweller asking directions in the countryside who gets told "Well, I wouldn't start from here!") – or else should be limited in scope to situational improvements to security and deterrence.

In the remainder of this paper, we argue for the continued value of crime prevention as a useful frame for a field of policy and practice encompassing both 'opportunity-based' and 'propensity-based' dimensions. Drawing on features of the existing theory-base, we argue:

- First, that the field can be helpfully contained (conceptually), by 'setting aside' well-established, overlapping policy fields (most notably criminal justice).
- Second, that a retained focus on proscribed harmful behaviour (i.e. crime) can provide a much-needed anchor point.
- Third, that the field can be well served by an emphasis on producing empirically informed descriptions of crime 'problems' (expanding on the tradition of Problem Oriented Policing).
- And fourth, that codifying an expanded set of crime preventing mechanisms might helpfully structure the organisation of efforts, at both strategic and operational levels.

## SETTING BOUNDARIES

The most commonly used crime prevention definitions are of little help when it comes to fixing the scope of the field, and in fact come close to tautology. Other than centring future-oriented notions of risk and cause, the UNODC's formulation (below) does little more than confirm that crime prevention involves...efforts to prevent crime! The European equivalent (also below) adds caveats around ethics, evidence-based practice and public good, but hardly sets useful conceptual limits or directs the focus of policy and practice towards a contained set of logics, processes or activities.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, no date)

*"Crime Prevention comprises strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes".*

European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN, 2012)

*“Ethically acceptable and evidence-based activities aimed at reducing the risk of crime occurring and its harmful consequences with the ultimate goal of working towards the improvement of the quality of life and safety of individuals, groups and communities”.*

More assistance comes from various attempts to arrange the crime prevention field into meaningful categories.

As noted already, segmentation approaches often begin by distinguishing situational from developmental/social crime prevention. Situational prevention focuses on reducing opportunities for crime, created either by aspects of the physical environment and objects within it, or by patterns of social organisation (Mayhew et al., 1976), while developmental/social approaches are concerned with the individual propensity to commit crime and the way this is shaped by (particularly early) life experiences.

Tonry and Farrington (1995) refine this distinction further, with a four-part model comprising developmental approaches (such as early intervention); community activities (designed to strengthen social capital); situational prevention (focused on reducing criminal opportunities) and criminal justice mechanisms, activated through deterrent law enforcement and punishment.

The key feature of this framework (for us) is that it acknowledges the potential preventative contribution of ‘mainstream’ criminal justice, but then largely sets this to one side as part of the ‘ambient’ context within which the other three modes might be further developed. Put another way, given that laws are already institutionally enforced, and punishments routinely dispatched – but still crime occurs (and would likely still occur even if these things were done more intensively) – what else can be done? Taking this approach, crime prevention becomes largely about the ‘what else?’ – or ‘what differently?’

In the contemporary context, we suggest that it might be appropriate to explicitly set aside further categories in this way, such as (but not necessarily limited to) crime ‘disruption’, safeguarding and

offender management (as well as less proximate fields like education, social welfare etc.). We can acknowledge that these things contribute to the desired outcome of less crime but, given that they are already relatively well routinised and/or have other imperatives, concentrate our attention on how these can be supplemented or optimised for best effect.

## CRIME AS BEHAVIOUR

The other prominent vein of typology borrows from the public health tradition, to distinguish primary, secondary and tertiary forms of (crime) prevention. While resonant with the current convergence of policing and wider health/wellbeing agendas, and helpful in shining a spotlight further ‘upstream’, there is some lack of clarity about how the framework should be applied to the crime context.

In its first application, Brantingham and Faust (1976) equate primary prevention to the modification of criminogenic social and environmental conditions (i.e. the situational and some aspects of the social categories identified in Tonry and Farrington’s framework); secondary prevention to intervening ‘early’ in the circumstances of potential criminal offenders in response to identified risk factors (i.e. developmental approaches), and tertiary prevention to curtailing recidivism.

van Dijk and de Waard (1991), however, take a different view, cross-cutting the three public health ‘levels’ with the three major foci of Routine Activity Theory: offenders, locations (or situations) and victims (Cohen and Felson, 1979). The resulting nine-cell configuration recognises that situational/environmental modifications can be implemented either pre-emptively (primary), as risk factors emerge (secondary), or in response to more chronic problems (tertiary) – and that victims, not just offenders, can provide an important focus for preventative activity.

More recent presentations (perhaps unhelpfully) blur the distinctions between people and situations by referring to ‘problems’ (although not obviously in the sense of Problem Oriented Policing) which can be managed pre-emptively, spotted early or mitigated once entrenched (Christmas and Srivastava, 2019).

All of these applications tell us more about the 'where' (conceptually) of crime prevention than the 'what' or 'how': they map out levels and sites for potential intervention, but say little about what might be done at those points (or 'why' it may be effective). We return with a more mechanistic attempt at organising the crime prevention field in the final part of the paper.

Of most importance for us here, is the demonstration that embracing aspects of the public health paradigm (including recognising the importance of upstream intervention and addressing criminal propensities and victim vulnerabilities, not just crime opportunities) does not need to de-centre crime from our thinking – or set us on an unbounded upstream quest to promote social wellbeing or reduce myriad forms of harm.

van Dijk and de Waard's formulation rests on a definition of crime prevention as: "the total of all private and state policies, other than the enforcement of criminal law, aimed at the reduction of damage caused by acts defined as criminal by the state". While suggesting (as above) that additional categories of routinised intervention (not just law enforcement) might also be 'set aside', it is our key contention that a focus on crime as behaviour (and, for reasons that will become clear, we prefer behaviour to acts) provides a useful conceptual anchor for efforts to build a more systematic, preventative response to an important subset of social harms.

Wortley and Tilley (2018) provide a set of tenets that can assist with thinking about how and why crime acts occur (reproduced opposite). While offered as a theoretical underpinning for (specifically) situational prevention (and as a corrective for the inadequacies of the Rational Choice Perspective) these serve to highlight the complex interplay of situational and individual factors in the causation of crime acts, but (by themselves) offer no rationale for privileging the former approach over the latter. We suggest that they provide a useful theoretical platform for exploring interventions of both kinds.

### **Wortley and Tilley's Ten Tenets Underpinning Situational Crime Prevention**

1. The potential to commit crime is widely distributed in the population.
2. There is variation in the potential to commit crime across individuals.
3. The potential to commit crime varies over time for the same individual.
4. The likelihood that an individual will engage in crime varies across situations.
5. The relationship between an individual and the situation is bi-directional and iterative.
6. The likelihood that a situation will activate a criminal response varies across individuals.
7. Individuals enter situations with varying degrees of readiness to commit crime.
8. Situations affect an individual in multiple ways across moral, affective, cognitive and behavioural domains.
9. Individuals are only partially aware of the ways in which situations affect their behaviour.
10. Situations constrain what crimes an individual can commit, in terms of the availability of crime opportunities and the resources he/she can draw on to commit crime.



## PROBLEM-ORIENTATION

'Crime' then provides a useful conceptual tether, keeping us focused on efforts to curtail harmful and proscribed human behaviours, but it is less helpful for dividing and delineating crime prevention into meaningful units or programmes of work. No one method or 'mode' of prevention can adequately deal with 'crime' as an undifferentiated category (this is the error made by the habitual default to law enforcement and deterrent punishment) and even within its legal sub-categories (burglaries, assaults, fraud etc.) there are no category-wide fixes (the well documented failure to replicate the carefully crafted success of the Kirkholt burglary reduction project, stands as the classic case in point: burglary in other places just did not have the same causal context (Tilley, 1993)). In other words, legal crime categories corral similar acts together, but not necessarily acts with the same or similar amenable antecedents.

This observation resonates strongly with the Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) paradigm, developed from the work of Herman Goldstein (1979). POP is a strategy for doing applied crime reduction/prevention, that emphasises careful study and description of – and causal hypothesis building about – specific, 'naturalistically' framed crime phenomena (or 'problems'). A single 'problem' might manifest as crime incidents of various legal types, while crimes of the same legal type may be products of multiple different problems.

Often operationalised into a four-part process of Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (Eck and Spellman, 1987), POP has proved to be an effective strategy across numerous applications and experimental tests (see Hinkle et al. (2020)). Although developed for (and generally applied to) the management of 'local', public-realm, crime issues (and often with a situational leaning), we suggest that many of its foundational principles – analytically informed problem diagnostics, theory building and testing, bespoke intervention design, evaluation and adaptation – can also have more general and strategic resonance, and can equally

include 'propensity-side' factors with a longer time horizon.

Regardless of whether the scope is local, national or international; whether the phenomena is geographically concentrated, dispersed or non-spatial; whether pertaining to the public, private or virtual domain, or whether relating to short, medium or long-term processes – all crime prevention efforts require a Theory of Change based on an empirically informed problem diagnosis about how and why crime is occurring (or is likely to occur in the future, based on 'foresight' analyses of emerging or anticipated conditions, such as new technology (Bowers and Johnson, 2024)).

Such problem diagnoses, or at least the priority assigned to some 'problems' over others, will inevitably be subject to political/ideological influence – and given that crime prevention can involve the curtailment of freedoms and use of public resources, this may rightly be so. What matters is that problem statements are made explicit (i.e. that authorities work to explain how and why crimes are occurring, or are likely to occur, as the basis for their interventions) and that these theories and diagnoses are subjected to empirical study and refinement, in the face of new evidence.

We suggest therefore, as a foundational principle, that societal efforts to boost and better systematise crime prevention need to include provision for more formalised and distributed study. This includes describing and diagnosing crime 'problems' across multiple levels and embracing various theoretical frames and perspectives - but beholden at all times to the evidence. This observational, investigative form of empirical enquiry is at least as important for the crime control endeavour (and as 'scientific') as the experimental evaluation of interventions prominent within the 'Evidence Based Policing' paradigm (Sparrow, 2011).

# A WORKING MECHANISTIC FRAMEWORK FOR CUTTING CRIME

With our sights firmly trained on well-described crime ‘problems’, this section begins to sketch out a working framework for thinking through the types of mechanism that might be activated to alleviate or mitigate them.

We take as our starting point the Twenty-five Techniques of Situational Prevention, outlined by Cornish and Clarke (2003) (reproduced, in summary form below). While many will be familiar

with this framework due to its regular inclusion in police problem-solving manuals (e.g. Clarke and Eck, 2003; Sidebottom et al., 2020), fewer will be aware that it is the product of the partial accommodation (into an earlier model, more purely grounded in the Rational Choice Perspective) of Wortley’s (1998) assertion that environments can provide, not just crime opportunities but ‘precipitators’ (features that activate or ‘ready’ offender’s motivations to commit crime).

## Cornish and Clarkes’ (2003) Twenty-five Techniques of Situational Prevention

Increase effort	Increase the risks	Reduce the rewards	Reduce provocations	Remove excuses
1. Target harden	6. Extend guardianship	11. Conceal targets	16. Reduce frustration and stress	21. Set rules
2. Control access	7. Assist natural surveillance	12. Remove targets	17. Avoid disputes	22. Post instructions
3. Screen exits	8. Reduce anonymity	13. Identify property	18. Reduce emotional arousal	23. Alert conscience
4. Deflect	9. Utilise place managers	14. Disrupt markets	19. Neutralise peer pressure	24. Assist compliance
5. Control tools	10. Strengthen formal surveillance	15. Deny benefits	20. Discourage imitation	25. Control drugs and alcohol

Thus, while the first three categories of techniques (Increase the effort, Increase the risk and Reduce the rewards) evoke the idealised, calculating offender, the addition of the latter two (Reduce provocations and Remove excuses) begins to acknowledge that the would-be offender’s decision making is subject to more complex affective (even psycho-physiological) and social/moral imperatives, which may be available for manipulation.

The divergence from opportunity theory here is, however, limited. Cornish and Clarke are at pains to keep away from the developmental ‘blackhole’ (pp.85) of seeking to curtail criminal motivation

and are reluctant to stray far from the immediate circumstances of the crime ‘moment’ (something they arguably fail to do at points, for instance by suggesting that advertising campaigns that neutralise peer pressure (technique 19), or controls on violent pornography (listed under technique 18) – both of which are surely pre-situational – might be considered).

In the modern context, we argue that there is good reason to further loosen the situational grip on the scope of amenable crime prevention mechanisms.

This is first because of the intervening shift in salient crime issues, in particular the way ‘course of conduct’ crimes (coercive control in relation

to domestic abuse, fraud involving prolonged periods of (often online) deception, (online) harassment, stalking, grooming, exploitation etc.) that do not have a single crime ‘moment’ or static environment, have come to the fore. As we move away from the idea that crimes and their situational contexts are temporally precise (hence our preference for ‘behaviour’ over ‘act’), it seems increasingly acceptable to consider precipitating environmental factors that impact on offender’s propensity/motivations for crime prior to their legally defined ‘onset’.

Second, evidence has emerged in the interim indicating that the motivational ‘black hole’ identified by the authors may not be as dark as previously thought. ‘Focused deterrence’, for instance – an approach that targets potentially ‘risky’ offenders with a combination of enhanced deterrence signalling, offers of social support and community messaging has garnered positive evidential support (Braga et al., 2019). This is best framed as a motive/propensity, rather than opportunity-based, intervention. Moreover, evidence continues to mount about the effectiveness of various developmental interventions for children and young people for reducing later offending/problematic behaviours – for instance in relation to mentoring (Tolan et al., 2013), sports programmes (Jugl et al., 2021), social skills training (Losel and Beelmann, 2003) and parenting programmes (Gaffney et al., 2021). These all point to potentially valuable longer-term mechanisms, that it seems important to include within a holistic, flexible crime prevention toolbox.

What follows then, is an attempt to ‘build out’ from Cornish and Clarke’s situational framework in a way that recognises that crimes result from a complex interplay of offender-situation/propensity-opportunity, and that potentially valuable levers are available on both sides of the hyphen.

## MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT (OR IMPOSSIBLE) TO DO

The first family of mechanisms maps loosely onto Cornish and Clarke’s Increasing Effort category, however, rather than suggest an emphasis on making crime behaviours more arduous, to the

point that (at least less committed) offenders conclude it is not worth the time/energy/resource, we instead frame the category in terms of making the criminal ends more difficult to achieve, limiting their certainty of success, or putting them beyond the capacity of many potential offenders, such that they cease to become options at all (a criminal choice, whether ‘rational’ or otherwise, only comes into play if there are viable options on the table). In doing so it also pulls in some of the techniques listed in the original framework under ‘increasing risks’ and ‘reducing rewards’.

As in the original, this first family subsumes what we might think of as environmental security/target hardening (locks, immobilisers, two-factor authentication etc. – technique 1.); the separation of potential offenders from their targets e.g. via access controls, alley-gating (Sidebottom et al., 2015), crowd management, street closures and target removal (techniques 2,4,12), but also, for instance, disclosure checking protocols for those working with children or vulnerable people etc, and the control of tools/weapons (firearms licensing, introducing shatter-proof glassware etc. (Florence et al., 2011; 2014) (12)).

In the contemporary context, we suggest this last ‘tool control’ technique would also include targeting the provision of Crime-as-a-Service access to ransomware kits, phishing templates, ‘suckers-lists’ etc. which provide less experienced/knowledgeable offenders with the ability to engage in otherwise more sophisticated cybercrimes. This also highlights the way crimes are made possible/less difficult for offenders, not just by having access to tools, but also by having the information and skills necessary to commit them.

Restricting access to information is referenced (obliquely) by Cornish and Clarke under their concealing targets technique (11), which includes putting valuables out of sight (or moving bullion in unmarked vans), and thereby keeping information about crime opportunities out of potential offenders’ hands/heads. Similarly, this sub-category could include maintaining strong cybersecurity and digital hygiene, to deny offenders access to information that could subsequently be used to commit crime. Provisions that keep the

whereabouts of at-risk victims of domestic abuse secret from their abusers, would also come into this category.

In relation to skills acquisition, there has been long standing criminological interest in the way crime is 'socially learned' by association with others (Sutherland, 1947; Burgess and Akers, 1966). While such general 'peer effects', fall outside the scope of this category, there does appear to be potential value in attending to the way specific criminal skills (particularly in relation to cybercrime or the manipulation of vulnerable fraud victims, for instance) are acquired, and how these processes might be interrupted.

With this category reframed around 'difficulty' rather than 'effort', and with an expansion of the temporal frame to embrace, not just the crime 'act', but the wider 'course of behaviour' (a shift, incidentally, that Cornish explores elsewhere his attention to procedural 'crime scripts' (1994)), it can also accommodate techniques listed elsewhere. Most notably under the 'decommodification' aspects of reducing rewards: property marking and registration (13) and market disruption (14) are all part of making the behavioural end (monetary gain in these examples) more difficult to achieve.

## AMPLIFY LEGAL DETERRENCE

Cornish and Clarke's second category (Increasing risks) rests largely (but not entirely) on the saliency of the risk to potential offenders of being identified, apprehended and legally sanctioned. Although earlier (while conceptually framing the field), we set law enforcement and its potential for deterrent efficacy 'to one side', we also recognise it as part of the 'ambient' context in which crime prevention efforts takes place. Thus, interventions that seek to curtail crime behaviours by supplementary measures that amplify the perceived risk of legal sanction, to potential offenders, are squarely within scope – and indeed are some of the most frequently applied and best evidenced crime preventing interventions.

This category includes the focused deterrence approaches referenced earlier, that generally comprise a strong 'consequences messaging'

component (although these are probably best viewed as hybrid interventions, activating several mechanisms simultaneously) (Braga et al., 2019). It also includes visible police patrolling, whether 'general' (Weisburd et al., 2024) or especially when concentrated in 'hotspots' (Braga et al. 2019) and use of CCTV (Piza et al., 2019) (9). The mechanism also, at least in part, underpins, the potential for Neighbourhood Watch (Bennett et al., 2008) or similar amplified/optimised natural/community surveillance schemes to be impactful (6,7), as well as private security guards and alarms (10), on the basis that these ultimately all have relatively direct recourse to formal legal agencies and process. The inclusion of "reducing anonymity" (8) is particularly salient in the context of addressing internet enabled fraud and harassment etc.

As a caveat, it is worth considering whether the ultimate reliance of many of the above 'amplifiers' of an underlying legal risk, implies the need for a 'baseline' level of police/criminal justice functionality for them to operate, and if so, at what level of erosion these mechanisms cease to be effective. If offenders come to the view that the consequences of being apprehended by a store security guard or caught on CCTV, are unlikely to materialise, then their impact surely seems unlikely to be optimal.

## REDUCING PROPENSITY

So far, we have collapsed 'classic' situational prevention into two types: the first involves (broadly defined) environmental modifications that make crime behaviours more difficult to undertake and/or their ends more difficult to achieve; the second relates to 'para-judicial' action to amplify legal deterrence against such behaviours.

Next, we divert from the paradigm to suggest that a more comprehensive crime prevention programme needs to embrace, not just the 'provocations' that may be present in the immediate crime situation, but also those (non-genetic) factors that contribute to potential offenders' propensity for crime behaviours over a longer period. We suggest that introducing notions of frustration, stress and arousal into the crime prevention equation (as Cornish and Clarke

do in techniques 16 and 18), leads necessarily to questions about how differential susceptibility to immediate ‘precipitators’ develops, and whether this can be countered and reversed.

Recent interest in bio-psychosocial explanations of crime and the interconnectedness of human brains, bodies, behaviour and environment, provide perspectives on these processes (Posick et al., 2022). The field highlights evidence about the way factors such as chronic stress, head injury, environmental toxins and childhood trauma can all produce physiological changes linked to antisocial behaviours (including those considered crimes) and/or lead to coping behaviours (such as drug and alcohol misuse) that are potentially criminogenic. It also provides the basis for several veins of potential preventative intervention activity.

There is evidence, for instance, that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (including cognitive restructuring and anger management techniques), can be effective at reducing criminal reoffending especially among ‘higher risk’ child and young adult offenders (Lipsey et al, 2007). Structured social skills training programmes aimed at young people (particularly those with a CBT component) can also reduce antisocial tendencies (Losel and Beelman, 2003). Programmes for interrupting intergenerational transmission of trauma have also been developed (Baker, 2016).

More broadly, this perspective provides one basis for understanding why forms of social support, that relieve the stressors on those living precarious lives, and who are ‘at risk’ of committing crime, should be considered part of the expanded crime prevention toolkit. These include various forms of criminal justice diversion, where formal sanctions (which may add to the strain on individuals) are set aside on condition of behaviour agreements and/or referral to support services that can improve life conditions and chances (Harmon-Darrow et al. (2022). Prison education programmes have also shown positive effects and may work through similar mechanisms (Davis et al, 2013).

Such considerations expand the range of interventions that can be called on to prevent crime, without implying that the entire paradigm needs to be abandoned in favour of a more whole-scale overhaul of social policy.

## PROMOTE SOCIAL CONNECTION AND INCLUSION

Several of Cornish and Clarke’s techniques, notably alert conscience (23) (listed under remove excuses), neutralise peer pressure (19) and discourage imitation (20) (under reduce provocations) suggest social dimensions to crime prevention/control which, (we suggest), require more explicit attention. In fact, while the situational paradigm is strongly attuned to monetary reward (and also acknowledges the affective rewards of e.g. joy riding or graffitiing), and the risk of criminal sanction, it is much less explicit about the social risks and rewards of crime behaviours and the way these might be manipulated to prevent crime.

Humans are fundamentally social creatures attuned to the relational consequences of their own and each other’s actions. What we do (and don’t do) creates identity, conveys status and forges allegiances and oppositions. Criminological theory has considered the way crimes may be socially learned (Akers, 2009; Warr 2002) and how bonds with others (family, peers, community, society etc.) can constrain tendencies to commit crime (Hirschi, 1969) or reinforce community resistance (Sampson et al., 1997).

In terms of preventative potential, it is notable that mentoring programmes (which involve extended interactions between an ‘at risk’, usually junior, mentee and a more experienced mentor) have established an evidence base for reducing delinquency (Tolan et al., 2013). While the underlying mechanisms may be complex, ‘role modelling’ and positive reinforcement of prosocial behaviour are likely to be relevant here.

Similarly, interventions that involve delinquent/at risk young people in positive, meaningful group activities, such as sports programmes (Jugl., et al) and wilderness challenges (Wilson and Lipsey, 1999) have proven effects, most likely based on the way they replace criminogenic peer relationships with more prosocial ones.

More broadly (and as we noted early in this paper) the idea that the police can prevent crime by securing citizens’ willing compliance with laws, through the way they signal social inclusion and

shared group membership (by demonstrating impartiality, courtesy, public service and minimal use of force) is a key feature of the 'Peelian' model of policing (UK Home Office, 2012)).

Over recent decades, researchers have sought to understand such processes, with particular interest given to the way 'procedural justice' – a quality of citizen-authority interaction characterised by respect, neutrality, transparency and provision of 'voice', or by fairness and decency (Tyler and Blader, 2000) – generates legitimacy, and how this, in turn, leads to compliant, co-operative and prosocial public behaviours (Tyler, 1990; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Jackson et al., 2012). While the theory remains contentious (Worden and Mclean, 2017; Nagin and Telep, 2020), several real-world applications demonstrate promising outcomes, for instance in relation to the wording of traffic fines (Bates et al. (2023), recidivism (Liu, 2024) and beat officer training (Weisburd et al. (2022). We suggest that procedural justice factors require serious consideration within thinking about how to prevent crime.



# CONCLUSION

The impact of crime on today's Britain is nothing short of catastrophic. Although volumes have fallen dramatically over the last 30 years, (largely as a result of better crime prevention, (Farrell, 2013)) this belies the way new threats, such as internet enabled fraud, cyber stalking and the sharing of child sexual abuse material, have emerged and grown exponentially. It also obscures the way techno-sociological shifts have precipitated an 'epidemic' of violence against women and girls (NPCC, 2024) and how a sharp rise in retail crime, as well as various forms of criminal exploitation, counterfeiting and immigration crime, signal the increasingly pervasive impact of international organised crime. Far from being a problem in retreat, today's crime challenge is as insidious, complex and 'wicked' as it ever was. Recent econometric analysis suggests (Rockey et al, 2025) suggests a 'hedonic' value on the absence of crime that, if extrapolated, would appear to far exceed traditional cost of crime estimates. Crime 'severity scoring' (ONS, 2016) indicates that the total 'weight' of recorded crime in England and Wales is equivalent to the annual unlawful killing of the inhabitants in a large town. These are harms we cannot afford to confront from a retroactive footing.

We have argued here – and previously – that meeting this challenge requires an evolutionary leap: the development of a New Mode of Prevention – or rather, of a new crime prevention system able to operate and co-ordinate across preventative modalities.

Among other barriers, such an enterprise is hampered by the conceptual ambiguity that currently surrounds the field. Given that the causes of crime are so intricately enmeshed into the social fabric, where should we draw the line around crime prevention as a field of policy and practice? Given that crime shares co-determinants with many other social ills, is it even helpful to think of it as a distinct field at all?

In this paper we have set out what we consider to be some useful foundations. We suggest that crime prevention needs to keep a focus on proscribed behaviour as its conceptual anchor; that it can be eclectic in its scope, but benefits from 'setting aside' established fields of adjacent practice, (such as law enforcement and safeguarding); that it is well served by articulating empirically informed problem statements and that, in addressing these, there is scope to operate across four main modalities. These are best encapsulated by four questions:

- 1. How can we make crime behaviour more difficult to undertake?**
- 2. How can we amplify the deterrent potency of our law enforcement?**
- 3. How can we help people avoid developing crime-prone tendencies and arriving in crime-prone circumstances?**
- 4. How can we promote social inter-relationships that support prosocial and law-abiding behaviours?**

The next task is to consider the kinds of institutional resources and arrangements required to apply these questions more systematically to the pressing crime problems of the day and that can deliver meaningful programmes of intervention, based on the answers.

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