

Ideas in British Policing



Policing violent places

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Introduction

A recent spate of murders in London and elsewhere in the UK involving teenage victims has generated much debate about the nature of serious violence in contemporary urban British society. But the concern about violence is not new. This paper offers a strategic approach to the reduction of all violence through a clearer focus on the reduction of serious violence in high crime areas.

The 2008 Public Service Agreement (PSA) between HM Treasury and the Home Office places the reduction of serious violence at the heart of government policy and for the first time is an acknowledgement of the importance

of reducing serious violence in the context of public safety.

This paper outlines five basic principles that can help police identify and challenge the most serious problems of violence in any local area and thereby tackle violence more generally

In this paper we suggest some basic principles that, if followed, should aid police in the identification of the most serious problems of violence in any local area. These principles

also offer an approach to the proactive policing of the people and places causing harm to local communities that is grounded in the public's need for safety.

Violence is not just a problem of individual behaviour, nor is it motivated or triggered by one factor. Its reduction must therefore be harnessed through the actions of a host of individuals as well as agencies. But to reduce violence we must understand that much of it is targeted and often intentional and/or triggered by an accumulation of events. While not all violence can be prevented or disrupted, it is sparked off by a number of factors, each of which, we believe, is an opportunity to disrupt its harm. Whether we wish to prevent or minimise racist violence, or the violence flowing from the illegal drugs economy, it is the commitment to challenge the most serious violence that helps us combine lessons learned from research looking at such topics as domestic violence, gun related violence, prison violence or alcohol-related violence to create key ingredients for managing the risk of harm.

Conventional approaches to policing violence often fail to harness the learning of what 'works' to reduce different types of violence. For example, domestic violence police specialists might adapt lessons from approaches to the prevention of alcohol related violence or racist violence. Any sustainable approach to violence prevention can be undermined by failing

to deal with underlying issues that may trigger and catalyse violence, such as people's lack of resources to escape from the situations leading to violence or lack of ability to move away from a violent neighbourhood. For example, safe houses – an essential ingredient in the prevention of domestic violence homicides – are now being considered for the prevention of gang related violence. Communities, voluntary organisations and other local agencies are key to providing such resources.

Partnerships should begin by concentrating on the 'worst first'

Local people possess vital information about those who are involved in violence and why. Concentrating on places that currently generate reports about the most serious violence – using what we call a flexible '*worst first*' approach assessing place, severity and frequency of such violence – offers an informed and active information base to share in partnership with communities and local agencies to prevent serious violence. Research experience confirms that police crime reports and calls for help show clearly that some people and some places report far higher levels of violence and of serious violence. It is possible to use this information to the advantage of police tactics, police/public problem solving, and as an evidence-base for continuous strategic drive to minimise the most serious violence. We advocate here

that this information should be shared with the public, guiding police tactics, informing police/public conversations, and driving focused problem solving that is recognised locally as a real improvement in the community's quality of life.

Current approaches

Mainstream approaches to tackling violent crime have tended in recent years to be framed by three key themes:

1. Situational crime prevention attempts to disrupt crime by manipulating the environment, preventing the occurrence of crime without an interest in the drivers of violence such as offender motivation or the social and cultural processes underpinning the illegal economy. 'Hot spot' policing that is a common example of this approach, often places a heavy emphasis on visibility and 'reassurance' rather than problem solving and crime reduction. In high-crime neighbourhoods the risk is that not only do these approaches not address underlying problems, but that they also impact negatively on the law-abiding majority and corrode wider police-community relations.

2. Police performance requirements are set centrally. Activity to minimise violence (including intelligence and performance analysis and tactical deployments) is typically bounded by legal definitions of crime categories, such as 'robbery' or violence against the person (VAP) or 'flagged'

offences such as domestic violence. These approaches often fail to identify the dangerous individuals or the dangerous places that drive most harm, most notably where an individual is offending and anti-social behaviour that crosses the boundaries of legal definitions (for example, the domestic abuser who deals drugs and threatens his neighbours) or geographical boundaries (where intelligence is itself physically bounded).

3. Managing risk at an individual offender level, such as targeting the most risky offenders through the Violent and Sex Offenders Register (ViSOR) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), concentrate on violent individuals but often need to harness communities' resources for the reduction of harm. They also tend to overlook the dynamics and risk multipliers of group offending.

We suggest that whilst the three themes above may be appropriately and effectively applied to *discrete* violent crime problems, for example town-centre alcohol-related violence, sexual violence or domestic violence, they are often used in isolation of one another and cannot introduce community based resilience to challenge community-level problems. Police management information often measures success by looking solely at a reduction in the number of offences and crime types. A lack of clear specificity of the complexity of problems in high crime residential neighbourhoods limits the capacity

of public agencies to impact on violent crime. In these neighbourhoods, higher levels of serious violence are related to long term damage from deprivation underpinned by an illegal economy.

We suggest that serious violence can be reduced by a focus on the *problem* it poses to individuals, groups and communities. Importantly, however, it must be recognised that conventional policing approaches may at times do more harm than good if they threaten police legitimacy. Cracking down on crime in some areas may mean that police tactics are blunt and not specifically targeted using best intelligence. By targeting a place and not the criminality, police may spread the net of suspicion wider in order to control dangerousness or escalation of danger. Conventional approaches to tackling violent crime often fail to appreciate (and therefore cannot effectively address) the entrenched and often long-standing nature of violence and its relationship to the local economy and perhaps a fragile community resilience to widespread illegal economies. Moreover, police tactics may be wrestling with an historic problem, carved from legacies of migration, housing policy and the evolution of local conflict. A drop in violent crime may be attributed to a decline in tension between rival gangs, or the arrest of a prolific offender. The challenge for analysis is to demonstrate a discrete and meaningful impact on violent crime problems (*is the community safer for residents?*), rather than a reduction in violent crime numbers (*reported violence is down?*).

Crackdowns may cause more harm than good. In Boston (USA), where the lauded Operation Ceasefire approach was developed, the initial response to escalating youth violence in the mid-1990s was a 'wholesale stop and frisk policy aimed at young black men'. This ultimately resulted in a 'formidable backlash from the black community' (Kennedy et al., 2001:9)

Research suggests that there are two kinds of places where violence is reported more frequently than others: town centres and 'hard pressed areas' (in the UK often, but not exclusively, public housing estates). Management information condenses knowledge about the kinds of problems reported (racist violence, alcohol-related violence, domestic violence and so forth) into numbers. Debates about whether violence is up or down overlook *why* people experience violence and may fail to connect this with why local people feel unsafe. Underlying issues, such as long running (sometimes family) disputes or debts arising within an illegal drug network, might be known to local people. Take an example of a community blighted by illegal drugs market violence, which has been the subject of a police-led enforcement operation resulting in numerous arrests for drug dealing. The consequences of this operation might include (a) a contraction

in the market and a reduction in associated violence, (b) no change as new dealers fill the vacuum left following the arrests, or (c) an increase in violence as the market has been destabilised by arrests and rivals compete to assume control. Tensions that triggered the violence, compounded by a lack of local jobs, truancy or exclusion from school, or a lack of public amenities, can be minimised. The same tactics may, under different local circumstances, resolve the problems, make no difference or, indeed, make them worse. What matters is whether local people feel safer, and the police and their partners need to find effective ways of assessing that (not least by talking to local people). Simply, we need to find a way of asking people whether police tactics *resolve the problems* communities face with local violence.

We need to find ways of asking communities whether police tactics actually resolve their problems

It should be repeated that people in hard pressed and high crime communities do share information about crime, not least by reporting crimes to the police. But how these reports reconfigure public services and community resources is rarely considered. It is in these high crime areas, in particular, that the police need to share their understanding of what kinds of violence people report to them in order to best inform partnership working. There is also likely to be a great deal of

violence in these areas that police do not know about, but the better the dialogue, the better the refinement of challenges to violence that benefit the whole community.

Lister (forthcoming) suggests that the learning accrued over the past few years in the prevention of town centre alcohol-related violence has benefited community safety. By cultivating close working relationships between police and door supervisors in the leisure industry, improvements in transport, crowd control and the identification (and exclusion) of persistent unruly persons have led to a reduction in violence. A better understanding of violent places leads to an understanding of the more violent offenders. Better analysis generates more understanding about those offenders who pose more harm to their local communities. Local people and partnership agencies may also have identified the same individuals as causing the greatest harm in local areas.

Historically, the policing response to violence has tended to privilege police knowledge of both the nature of, and appropriate responses to, local crime problems. Failing to share and discuss this knowledge with communities leads to an inability to develop sustainable solutions to persistent problems. Local people's understanding (whether they are residents, workers or businesses) of the problems of violence and solutions to such violence help cement change in the places where it is needed. Relationships managed

holistically between individuals, communities, crime and policing, contribute to sustainable violence reduction. Where aggressive or poorly targeted police tactics have an adverse impact on the wider community, they have almost inevitably failed to keep the local community in the loop and as such have a knock on effect on police legitimacy, damaging the efficacy of policing as a resource in violence reduction.

The police must share their understanding and knowledge with communities and partner agencies

Tackling violence with community policing

Significant efforts are being made to develop the police's relationships with communities through neighbourhood policing, underpinned by a philosophy of community consultation. 'Ward panels', comprising police officers and members of the local public have been established to help set priorities for neighbourhood police teams and serve as consultants on policing strategies. Early indications from research in the Metropolitan Police Service suggests that there are tensions about how best to identify local concerns that are evidence rather than impression-based. Local residents asked to advise the police on 'local' problems, do not have sufficient evidence about what the overall 'local' problems are (in London neighbourhoods police teams cover areas with

the overall 'local' problems are (in London neighbourhoods police teams cover areas with residential populations ranging from 6,000 to 14,000 residents). Problem solving towards sustainable harm reduction requires proper information about the levels of harm any local area experiences. Genuinely representative⁽¹⁾ community members need to be adequately informed⁽²⁾ by the police about the full range of local crime problems they know about in order to enable police and communities to collectively make informed choices about policing priorities capable of delivering harm reduction.

Violence is geographically clustered. In London, 10% of reported violence occurs in 4% of wards; 10% of murders and GBHs occur in only 2%

Violence is geographically clustered

Official statistics clearly demonstrate that violence is concentrated in clusters. Other research suggests that rates of under-reporting violent crime are likely to be higher in neighbourhoods with an active criminal economy, due to a combination of non-co-operation with the police, threats and intimidation, fear of coming forward, an 'anti-grassing culture', and a preference for personal retribution (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Hales and Silverstone, 2005; Hales et al., 2006). Officially, 'high violent crime' neighbourhoods are likely to be relatively

much more violent than indicated by official data.

Moreover, serious violence appears to be more clustered than overall violence. In London, for example, analysis of police recorded violence in 2006/07 shows that 10 per cent of the total occurred in only 23 electoral wards (3.7 per cent of the 624 wards

in London); however 10 per cent of murders and grievous bodily harm (GBH) occurred in only 13 wards (2.1 per cent of wards). Furthermore, one quarter of all serious violence in London occurred in only 49 wards (less than 10 per cent), and one half of serious violence was reported in just over one in five wards in London.

Case study: Challenged Wards

The MPS Challenged Wards Initiative has used reported crime data to target eight wards where the most violence is reported in London. These are comprised of five town-centre-dominated wards and three predominantly residential wards beset with gun, gang and drug-related crime.

A combination of problem-solving approaches, additional police resources and enhanced partnership working were implemented to identify and tackle violence in the eight wards.

2007/08 vs 2005/06	All violence against the person	Serious violence (murder, GHB, rape, robbery of the person)
Challenged wards	-13.9%	-27.9%
Neighbouring wards	-12.6%	-19.1%
London (MPS overall)	-9.4%	-19.0%

Early results suggest that, despite some implementation problems, this initiative has led to a reduction of serious and less serious violence, with these reductions in the target wards outstripping both neighbouring wards and London as a whole (MPS internal analysis, 2008).

One theme that was clearly illustrated by the challenged ward work, was that high violent crime residential areas pose particular challenges to police and partner agencies, in contrast to town centre locations beset primarily by alcohol-related violence. In most cases, the latter can be 'problem solved' by making common-sense changes to the management of the night-time economy, including licensed venues (holding license-holders to account) and public transport (e.g. relocating and actively managing taxi ranks). By contrast, residential areas seem to require a more detailed understanding of the criminal, social and cultural processes taking place within neighbourhoods, where victims, offenders and other local residents may be well known to each other.

Focusing on the ‘worst first’ gives better results

Recent political debate, particularly the Conservative Party’s policy paper on policing (Conservative Party, 2007), has focused attention on the dramatic fall in violent crime seen across the United States – and particularly in New York – in the 1990s. It is often suggested that we should learn from the US experience.

Although the decline in crime in the US, especially in New York, is not disputed (and indeed has been independently verified, e.g. Langan and Durose, 2004), the causes of these falls are the subject of ongoing, vigorous debate. Whilst broadly agreeing that changes to frontline policing resources, policing strategies and police accountability structures were important (Silverman, 1996), the literature is characterised by sometimes vehement disagreement about the scale of the police contribution (e.g. see Hagedorn and Rauch, 2004; Rosenfeld et al., 2007, and Messner et al., 2007).

While the focus has been on crime falls since the 1980s, few commentators have discussed or sought to explain the dramatic rises in violent crime observed during the 1980s. Where such analysis is presented, accounts tend to focus on changes to illegal drugs markets – particularly the introduction of crack cocaine (Blumstein and Rosenfeld, 1998; Bowling, 1999). It also seems likely that police corruption and loss of morale,

subsequently tackled in cities such as New York in the early 1990s, must also have played a role as policing had lost credibility and public confidence during the late 1980s. Corruption was often associated with the failure to police the illegal economy, and many people living in neighbourhoods where such economies thrived felt unsupported by police. Importantly, neither London nor other British cities have experienced these dramatic rises in crime and are therefore highly unlikely to witness equally dramatic falls.

At the same time, many US cities were implementing civic renewal programmes and targeting the most deprived communities (e.g. Skogan, 2006: 22). Chicago, for example, introduced the Distressed Neighborhoods Program in the late 1990s, through which policing began to focus on the areas of greatest public need (Chicago Police Department, 1999). This was based on three key factors that have clear implications for police, residents and community groups, and public/private agencies:

- *reclaim* the streets from criminals;
- *revitalize* communities and the local economy; and
- *maintain* the gains made.

In New York, the greatest reductions in homicide were achieved in the precincts (neighbourhoods) where homicide rates had been highest in the early-1990s (Bowling, 1999: 534).

Finally, and most importantly, the role of communities has often been forgotten in many of the more mainstream accounts of the fall in violence (e.g. Bratton, 1998), although some studies (e.g. Kennedy et al., 2001) and police policy documents (Chicago Police Department, 1999) clearly state that communities played a central and critical role. Some go so far as to credit communities with the transformations that led crime rates to fall (Curtis, 1998).

In New York, the greatest reductions in homicide in the 1990s were achieved in the neighbourhoods where homicide rates had been highest. Communities played a key role

It is also worth noting that the reduction in violent crime in the US has become less stable recently. Some cities are beginning to experience a rise, and the U.S. police forces' own think tank has begun to explore police tactics used across the U.S. to support better strategic approaches (PERF, 2007).

Characteristics of the 'worst' local areas

Evidence from a considerable and growing body of research literature, including recent qualitative research projects examining gun crime and drug dealing in the UK, highlights the following:

- Significant elements of the criminal economy, most notably drug dealing

and associated criminality, are *embedded within* local communities. As such they are *visible* to local residents, facilitate entry into criminality for some local young people and provide certain benefits to local residents and businesses, including supplementing legitimate incomes (e.g. May et al., 2005).

- The criminal economy is illegal and therefore unregulated in the formal sense. It relies on the development of trust and the threat of violence or actual violence (Goldstein, 1985) to recover unpaid debts, overcome competition and punish police informants. Furthermore, participants in the criminal economy are *less likely* to use formal recourse through the criminal justice system, and as such are vulnerable to predatory behaviour, for example in the form of robberies targeting drug dealers (Jacobs, 2000; Hales et al., 2006: 65). Such participants may use the police when they are victimised, but are generally unwilling to substantiate specific allegations for fear of retribution and because of group norms of non-co-operation (e.g. Bullock and Tilley, 2002).
- The 'experts' on local criminal activity are often local residents. The willingness of residents to co-operate with policing is founded on a combination of personal and community factors, including their own and peer experiences of policing (which in turn relates to confidence in and satisfaction with policing), historical factors (such as

police-community race relations), and the presence of intimidation and other anti-police behaviours in their neighbourhood.

The case study overleaf illustrates the complexity and embedded nature of crime on a single estate in London and, in turn, highlights both the significant challenges for the police, partner agencies and residents and the limitations of thinking narrowly in terms of crime types.

It also highlights the context within which local people report violence in that location: a prevailing criminal culture, anti-police norms and intimidation, and a significant blurring between the criminal and the legitimate/mainstream. This, in turn, regulates the flow of intelligence to the police, which itself is a necessary condition of the ongoing success of the local criminal economy (if people always reported what they knew to the police, the local criminals could not continue to operate).

In such a partially regulated environment, cultures of violence may develop and persist and group dynamics are often important, whether in terms of facilitating criminality, securing 'ownership' of territory, or providing safety in numbers. The literature on gang involvement also stresses a range of social and personal factors such as identity, belonging and status.

Importantly, group dynamics must be recognised by police and incorporated into the

policing process, taking account of factors such as collective honour and responsibility (Hallsworth and Young, 2006). Such factors were instrumental in a number of the youth homicides in London during 2007, not least where rivals or even group 'outsiders' were identified and targeted. Conventional risk management structures (such as MAPPA and ViSOR) fall short in this respect as they focus on the individual (usually sex offenders), rather than key individuals in a group or the group itself.

Group dynamics must be recognised and incorporated into policing and risk management processes

Clearly policing will be most challenging in areas where illegal economies are heavily entrenched. It is essential – and we suggest possible – that the police build community trust and confidence, both through what they should do (listen, consult, solve crimes, bring offenders to justice, use powers carefully and in a specific and targeted manner) and what they should not do (aggressive tactics, racial profiling, wrongful arrests, as these tactics degrade the high level of trust necessary in a context where protection against retaliation is fragile).

The police must build community trust and confidence through their actions

Case study: a London estate

An estate in London has a long-standing reputation for drugs and gun crime. It is also home to an established and, in places, close-knit community, within which well-developed social networks mean that many local residents know who is involved in crime. Importantly, residents almost always know more than the police, and often express a frustration that the police seem to be naïve about what is going on.

At the same time, however, the estate has a strong culture of non-co-operation with the police, and stories are told of individuals who have been driven from the estate in the past for ‘grassing’. Some residents have said that they have ‘nothing against the police’ but that they ‘can’t be seen talking to them’. Others, meanwhile, are openly hostile towards the police and recount stories of police heavy-handedness and even a death in police custody many years previously by way of justification. In turn, the police have often met with great difficulties in their efforts to collect sufficient evidence to proceed with prosecutions in cases that have included murders.

A small but visible minority of young men on the estate are engaged in drug dealing, robbery and other illicit businesses, with new recruits joining their ranks every year, often encouraged by more senior criminals (‘olders’). Importantly, however, many are long-term members of the local community and went to school with their local peers – male and female – with whom they socialise in the evenings and at weekends. The boundaries between criminal and legitimate are constantly

blurred, and successful young professionals will stop and chat to their drug dealing peers (whether friends or just acquaintances) while passing through the estate. Similarly, criminally active young men will fall into and out of relationships with young women who are not themselves criminally active, and may have children by one or more of these young women.

Occasionally violence flares on the estate, and over the last decade there have been several murders on or linked to the estate alongside a much larger number of incidents of serious violence, including a drive-by shooting. Many of these incidents have been linked to the illegal drugs market, most notably when tensions arose because of robberies targeting local drug dealers and a complex series of ‘tit for tat’ violent incidents based on long-running feuds between rival criminal ‘crews’. In some cases, conflicts also stemmed from reputational (‘respect’) issues, most notably relating to relationships with young women. The boundaries between criminal and personal rivalries have often been blurred.

In recent years the nature of the local criminal culture has changed with the emergence of so-called ‘postcode territoriality’ – where de-facto territorial rivalries have emerged based on local postcode areas. This in turn appears to have served to limit the movement of young people around the borough and has engendered a greater – and more generalised – sense of fear and danger, with young people finding themselves being challenged to reveal their home neighbourhood.

Virtuous circles

In challenging environments, such as the London estate described overleaf, it is essential that virtuous circles are established to drive a wedge between the legal mainstream and the criminal minority, by building trust and confidence in the police.

This process should seek to encourage formal processes – such as residents calling the police and reporting what they know about crimes – in place of, and in order to reduce, ‘informal’ processes such as intimidation and retribution. The objective is to deny those operating within the criminal economy the immunity they have enjoyed and to build a sense that the police are on the residents’ side and are able to operate effectively. In turn this should serve to limit the legitimacy of criminal lifestyles while increasing the legitimacy of the police.

The five principles for tackling harm in high crime areas

Five principles should inform the policing of harm in high crime residential neighbourhoods.

1. Focus on the ‘worst first’

A small number of places drive violent crime and should be the primary focus of police attention. Identifying the ‘worst’ neighbourhoods with the highest rates of violence is relatively straightforward using existing technology and data. We know that people are already calling the police for

assistance. While the information gathered in a crime record or a report of anti-social behaviour may not always extend to naming offenders/gangs or more detailed information about the disputes behind the violence, the information they nevertheless contain is vital to taking a focused approach. The identification of the worst places should take place force wide, while tactics should be developed at the local level.

Within the most violent places it is important to identify the individuals and groups that pose the greatest risks to their neighbourhoods, and drive criminality and fear. Crime analysis can provide some of the information required but it is important to go beyond police information and incorporate partner agency and community insights.

2. Understand the drivers of violence and the fear of retaliation

It is important to understand how the local criminal economy may shape crime in any given locale. Tracking crime through crime types often masks the true problem of local violence. Making sense of the relationship between apparently diverse types of crime and how money is made in a hard pressed area is critical to challenging serious violence. Some of the people asking for help may indeed be active within, or benefit, from the illegal economy. The police need to be far more creative about how to offer and provide safety.

3. Put communities first

As the main repository for information about local crime problems, communities need to be at the heart of efforts to tackle violence and interventions should be built from the bottom up, starting with neighbourhood policing and the interface between police and residents. Importantly, this engagement and consultation must include local youths, who in most locations will be closest to the violence. They may also be players within the illegal economy, or those who are avoiding involvement in it.

It is important to understand that even criminally active individuals generally dislike violence and examples from the US show that such individuals can be important factors in reducing violence, just as they may be responsible for perpetuating it. For example, Operation Ceasefire in Boston targeted gang members with strong and credible messages of enforcement combined with ‘last chance’ ultimatums relating to violence, and produced some startling results (Kennedy *et al.*, 2001).

4. Monitor ‘early warning’ signals

In communities where communication between police and residents/the public is problematic, it is essential to monitor other early warning signals of escalating violence, to supplement formal police data. These should include both unreported crime (for example, admissions to hospital) as well as an appreciation of the significance of ‘near misses’, especially serious injuries that could,

under other circumstances, result in fatalities. In particular, this means resourcing police investigations appropriately, especially in Grievous Bodily Harm cases, where ‘tit for ‘tat’ retaliation may lead to fatal outcomes.

Central to this monitoring process has to be open channels of communication between residents, partner agencies and the police, reinforced with visible action on the part of the responding agencies. It should be noted that there is no reason why these communication channels need to be direct, and in some cases, particularly where trust between the police and residents is low, it may be appropriate to explore the use of trusted intermediaries, whether formally in the sense of CrimeStoppers ⁽³⁾, or via more informal means.

5. Rethink police ‘performance’

It is vital to rethink how police performance is measured and monitored and in particular to move beyond crude crime type measures – especially where perverse incentives may be created (for example, the increased policing of minor offences such as cannabis possession to improve detection performance). Greater emphasis should be placed on long-term problem solving at the local level. Its success should be measured through surveys of public satisfaction with, and confidence in, policing – as already happens in London at a BCU level. Performance should be measured by how well police engage at a local level. The Metropolitan Police Public Attitude Survey

confirms that public confidence is linked to how well informed people are about local policing ⁽⁴⁾.

Conclusions

The discussion above demonstrates that serious violence can be reduced by bringing together our knowledge about the nature of violence and its relationship to communities, the criminal economy and policing. A series of 'principles' have been proposed that can be applied to the policing of high crime residential neighbourhoods. These draw upon criminological ideas and research in a practical way and suggest that information the police already hold constitutes the building blocks for a better and more focused way of working.

Community policing is integrally linked with reducing violence. It is suggested here that in high crime areas, such policing should be devoted to the prevention of serious violence. This might mean that the kinds of resources devoted to local policing in some high crime areas have to be increased. Undoubtedly, the proposed approach raises a number of issues relating to problem solving, evaluation and leadership and, in some cases, would require very real and long-standing barriers to communication between communities and police to be overcome. However, as the recent investment in dedicated neighbourhood policing resources enters a period of consolidation, so police forces across England and Wales have an ideal opportunity to put communities at the heart of policing through

the implementation of the five proposed principles.

Community policing should be at the centre of efforts to reduce serious violence

For any of this effort to realise its full potential, the police must engage partners and especially local communities, who after all are more often than not the best informed about local issues. More generally, the principles that are outlined above underline the fact that individuals, communities, violence, policing and the wider criminal economy cannot be seen as discrete issues, but must be addressed holistically. By doing so, real improvements can be made, and nowhere more so than in the most hard-pressed neighbourhoods.

Notes

1. In Northern Ireland neighbourhood panels are comprised of both elected and representative independent members. Elsewhere in England and Wales, local ward police panel membership is not systematically representative of the community.
2. Such information and its analysis must come from the police. This requires adequate staffing to produce the kinds of analysis required for evidence based debate
3. Crimestoppers is a confidential hot line where information can be passed to the police confidentially.
4. See, Bradford, B., Jackson, J. and Stanko, E. (forthcoming)

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