

**Community Safety through
Communication:
Reducing Crime and Fear with
Radio Links**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the use of two-way radio communication as a means of reducing incidents of crime and the effects of participation in such schemes upon user's fear of crime. The research explored the wider social consequences of improved communication between residents on two housing estates in the West Midlands and their interaction with other agencies, in particular the police.

This dissertation, further records the historical development of radio links and through a review of available literature critically examines their effectiveness. The application of radio links is also examined against current criminological theory and where applicable comparisons are made between the practical effects of radio links and such theories.

The aim of this study is to record the 'beginning' of radio links, place them within the context of crime theory and research their practical effects upon participants. It is hoped that this dissertation will encourage wider consideration of radio links by security practitioners and will serve as a useful guide for further research.

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1) Introduction

Community Safety Through Communication

The use of two-way radio communication to reduce incidents of crime, particularly within the retail environment, is now well established in towns and cities across the United Kingdom. Retail staff, security personnel and police officers use these systems, which are called radio links. Participants have small, hand held and inexpensive radios, which share a common frequency. The members of the radio link speak to and listen out for each other and use the system to report incidents of criminal behaviour against themselves and others and where necessary refer them to the police. Evaluations of these schemes within retailing have shown them to be an effective means of responding to the problems of crime and nuisance (see Beck and Willis, 1995; Gibson and Wright, 1995; Kinsley and Neal, 1995). The research indicates that radio links provide cost effective crime prevention benefits, primarily through a decrease in levels of criminal victimisation, a reduction in incidents of personal violence and increased perceptions of safety. Building upon the success of radio links within retailing, the concept has recently been extended to operate in other environments including local authority staff and residential areas. The latter systems are known as CATCH schemes – Community Action Tackling Crime & Harassment – and are based upon local residents using simple inexpensive radios to talk to each other and communicate information to patrolling police beat officers.

The aims of the research were; to conduct a review of available literature concerning radio links, provide an overview of the schemes in operation in particular within the West Midlands Police area and begin to relate any findings to current criminological theories and Best Value. In addition the research sought to assess the practical impact of such residential radio link schemes upon users perceived levels of crime and the fear of crime experienced by residents. The research, utilising analysis of semi-structured interviews asked residents about the impact such schemes have on the dynamics within the community and their willingness to co-operate with each other and with external agencies such as the police and local authority. What became apparent was the impact such schemes have on enabling and empowering local residents to feel able to play a role in dealing with their own problems – developing a sense of participation and providing an opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive in addressing localised concerns about crime.

Crime and the Fear of crime

Crime, its consequences and how to handle the problem of lawlessness remain high on the political agenda not least because of the immense cost of crime, estimated in 1998 by the Association of British Insurers to be in the region of £35 Billion. (Buckingham, 1998). The number of recorded crimes is indicative of the size of the problem for example in 1993, there were 5.5 million notifiable offences recorded in England and Wales – a rise of 70 per cent over a 10-year period (Home Office, 1994a and 1994b). Alongside these official statistics of recorded crime there are an increasing number of victimisation surveys where members of households are asked about their experience of crime, whether or not reported to the police.

The findings suggest that the 'real' amount of crime is up to four times greater than is recorded in the police figures – mostly because a significant proportion remains unreported. The various sweeps of the British Crime Survey (BCS) by the Home Office, which look only at household and personal victimisation, point to a recorded figure of around, three million crimes per year and a total figure of 11.5 million offences (Mayhew et al, 1993 and 1994).

Alongside the growth in actual crime, in recent years it has increasingly been acknowledged that the fear of crime:

... will grow unchecked. As an issue of social concern, it has to be taken as seriously as ... crime prevention and reduction. (Home Office, 1989: ii)

Where the fear of crime is reasonable it can be harnessed to fight the threat of crime; but where the fear gets out of proportion it becomes disabling and counterproductive – to the point where it becomes a social problem in its own right (Rosenbaum, 1988, Williams and Dickinson, 1993). The fear of crime has been seen as the product of an interaction between two variables – an evaluation or assessment of risk and a perception of personalised threat, including the perceived seriousness of the consequences of victimisation (Skogan, 1984). Increasing attention is also being paid to the ways in which the fear of crime can have behavioural consequences. Much of the evidence is to be found in successive reports from the British Crime Surveys.

The first BCS report (Hough and Mayhew, 1983) posed the question of the relationship between fear and behaviour directly and the answer was unambiguous. Between 30 and 60 per cent of women, depending on their age, said that they felt very unsafe when walking alone after dark – and around one-third of all women added that they sometimes avoided going out on foot after dark in their neighbourhood for fear of crime. One in twelve respondents said that they never went out alone on foot at night because of the fear of crime. Continuing work in the same area and using the 1984 BCS, Maxfield (1987 and see 1984) offers data on 'subtle adjustments' in behaviour to counteract the likelihood of criminal victimisation. The general point was that 'fear for personal safety is a major factor in limiting personal mobility'. A report on the 1992 BCS, including data drawn from earlier sweeps of the survey, offers strong evidence of the fear of crime and its relationship to behaviour (Mayhew et al, 1993). The level of concern about being on the streets alone at night was high. One in three of all respondents (32%) said that they felt, or would feel, very or fairly unsafe alone on the streets at night. This was the case for nearly one-half of female respondents (49%) but only 14 per cent of men felt the same way. The elderly were most fearful – 58 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men aged over 60 years felt very or fairly unsafe.

These findings broadly reflected the levels of concern identified in the 1984 survey (Hough and Mayhew, 1985; see also Gottfredson, 1984 and Maxfield, 1984 and 1987). The earlier research also found that one-third of those who felt unsafe did so because they were fearful of being mugged, with a similar proportion saying that they were worried that 'something might happen'. One in five were concerned about being troubled by strange people or gangs.

One-quarter of the elderly said that they never went out after dark for leisure purposes and it was estimated that some 6 per cent of the elderly, and about 2 per cent of all respondents, stayed at home wholly, or in part, owing to the fear of crime. The findings indicate that the fear of crime alone can have real consequences irrespective of the actual risk of victimisation. Maxfield (1987) and others (Box et al, 1988) have also pointed to the ways in which environmental cues can make a contribution to the overall fear of crime. Such cues include incivilities, run-down neighbourhoods and housing and perceptions of a lack of social cohesion in an area. They have the effect of making an area seem crime-prone, which creates unease in residents or visitors. This then may have an independent effect on the fear of crime. Kinsey, Lea and Young (1986) take the argument a stage further by suggesting that these not only contribute to the fear of crime and avoidance behaviour but also give rise to crime itself. Uncongenial and disorderly behaviour if not controlled can lead to a spiral of decline in a neighbourhood – where informal social controls weaken and crime begins to rise. Given this, what options are available for trying to break this cycle and how can members of communities and those agencies responsible for crime control begin to work together to deal with these problems? One option is to create cheap and effective ways by which individuals and groups can communicate with each other.

Radio Links

There exist a number of different radio links. These have been classified in general terms and their titles are associated with the location of the system and the nature of the radio user's crime risk. For example, retail radio link is predominately located in a town or city centre and is utilised in addressing crime aimed at the retail sector. There are four separate systems, retail, community and business radio link and CATCH.

The research conducted into the effectiveness of radio links centred upon user's perceptions of crime and their own levels of fear of crime. What these studies highlighted was the apparent reduction in actual crime and the fear of crime through the '*symbolic reassurance*' offered by the radios. In many respects this is not new and repeated surveys of the public have found that what they want the most, in terms of dealing with crime, is 'more bobbies on the beat' – the visible and reassuring presence of police officers on patrol (Beck and Willis, 1997, Bradley, 1998). However, in this context the individual is a 'consumer' of reassurance symbolised by services provided by others. Arguably, what is much more important is to move away from individuals playing a passive role, expecting others to provide the symbols of reassurance and to move towards '*participative reassurance*', where they play an active role. Radio links, in particular the recently developed CATCH scheme rely upon this principle. The users of the CATCH radio link schemes, for example individuals within a housing estate, participate in activities, such as listening out for or forewarn each other. They also communicate with the local beat officers and pass on information, which might be of use to them.

The research conducted as part of this dissertation will indicate these joint endeavours benefit the other users and the wider community. In some respect this is not new and the plethora of Neighbourhood Watch (NW) schemes is a graphic example of both an effort by government and the police to empower communities to 'look out' for each other but also the desire by individuals to participate in crime reduction partnerships.

The relative lack of success of NW however can be seen in problems of individuals communicating with each other and with the local police. The study by Hussain, on behalf of the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit, identified a number of such problems (1988). The research found that for most schemes, intervals between meetings were at least a month and for many considerably longer. It also found that in poorer urban areas, there was a problem with informal communication channels between co-ordinators and scheme members and the police. The study concluded that a 'dynamic scheme is built on good communication', and respondents felt that '... at present, communication does not occur frequently enough and does not provide enough of the right information' (Hussain, 1988). What radio links attempt to do is overcome this 'barrier' of communication and increase community involvement through better information sharing and active participation.

2) Radio Links – History and Case Study

Introduction

This chapter will through a case study conduct an overview of the development of the four, radio link scheme's, which are or have been in operation, primarily within the West Midlands Police area and review the research into their effectiveness. It will also examine the available literature and research and discuss the extent of current public participation and interest in radio links within its historical context.

Retail Radio Link

This case study of radio links began with an incident during the autumn of 1991, when a violent thief travelled from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, West Midlands and stole clothing from a store. The thief, confronted by the store detective assaulted him and ran off. The store detective, who was by now on his own and operating without the knowledge of any of his colleagues, other retail security staff or the police, pursued him. The thief was eventually cornered on a bus and as a result of telephone calls from local shops and a message from the bus company the police were informed and following a further violent struggle the thief was overpowered and arrested.

The inability of the store detective to communicate with anyone was in stark contrast to the police officers, for should a similar incident have occurred involving the police they would have used their personal radio to summon help. It was clear that there was no reason for retailers not to enjoy such similar benefits. Following representations by the police, the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce secured funding from the Home Office Safer Cities Project to purchase a radio base station and aerial. Individual stores purchased their own radios with the system, entitled 'Retail Radio Link', being launched by the then Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police in December 1992. A 'Radio Link' has been defined as, 'a radio communication system linking members together, ideally with the police'. (Wright and Gibson, 1995)

Initially, the system was used exclusively to tackle incidents of intimidation of retail staff by thieves and their associates. It quickly became obvious that the ability to forewarn retail staff and security personnel of the exact location and description of thieves in the town centre was a major factor in achieving joint staff and police responses to disrupt any criminal activity. The Christmas trading period of 1992 also led to an unforeseen expansion in the use of the retail radio. A number of lost children were being quickly found and reunited with their parents. The full impact of the use of retail radio for this purpose was not appreciated until 1993 with the tragic case of Jamie Bulger. By the early part of 1993 the benefits of retail radio were being widely publicised, with Coventry then Birmingham introducing the same system. In the Metropolitan Police area some of the earliest schemes were introduced in Ilford, Croydon and Woolwich. It was reported in December 1994 that in Ilford one major store, over a three-month period, had saved over £10,000 per week, after having purchased one radio at a cost of £300. (O'Brien, 1994)

In Wolverhampton retail radio continued to develop and a number of interesting features became evident. The reporting of crime incidents became more professional both through participants increased familiarity with the system and post incident debriefing by the police. This increased professionalism saw stores calling for the support of other security staff, CCTV systems and police in affecting arrests or deterring criminals. An additional benefit was that retail staff gained precise intelligence about thieves their clothing on that day and with whom they were associating. This intelligence led to a most useful interface between CCTV and radio link with the ability to monitor thief's activities and co-ordinate arrests following surveillance. The relationship between CCTV and retail radio was explored in a Home Office report published in 1994. The report whilst identifying the benefits through sharing information between retailers and the police and alerting CCTV operators to incidents, also reported upon the 'great co-operation and team spirit that a radio link system can create'. (Edwards and Tilley, 1995)

It became apparent that the participants in the radio link, retail staff, security personnel and police officers, were finding uses for the system beyond those for which it was originally conceived. This was most vividly illustrated in April 1993, when the day before the terrorist attack at Bishopsgate, London a coded bomb warning was received in Wolverhampton. The radio link provided the police with the ability to immediately forewarn large numbers of stores, the two shopping centres and the majority of retail security personnel about the risk they faced. The police gave precise details of the nature of the threat, its exact location and the time limit within which the evacuation had to be achieved.

The, small number of police officers within the town were assisted by security personnel, public address systems and staff with retail radio. These resources, co-ordinated by the police, evacuated the town centre within thirty minutes. Eventually the town centre was declared safe with the recovery phase again being organised by the radio link. Managers and security staff were called to the cordons and escorted to their stores by police search teams. The total evacuation of the town centre was achieved without loss or injury. There has been some research conducted into the development and effectiveness of retail radio primarily centred on the effect of the system upon users. Leicester University, Centre, undertook an in-depth study of an individual system in Leicester City Centre 1995 for the Study of Public Order, (CSPO) on behalf of The Burton Group PLC. (Beck and Willis, 1995)

The research found that in general staff perceptions were very positive with the major benefits being identified as, enhanced information exchange between participants and direct access to the police with some 60% of staff reporting being less concerned about crime. This finding is particularly important not only because it is a feature reported by radio users across the differing systems but also because of the reported link between fear of crime and its adverse effect on health. In a study of the effects of crime upon health it was found that,

'The effects of the fear of crime, rather than crime itself, on the health of individuals and communities, has been largely underestimated. In particular the effect of incivilities on well being is not well recognised.' (McCabe and Raine, 1997.)

The CSPO survey included interviews with six 'City Centre Unit' police officers, which also found they were very positive about the scheme. The advantages identified by the police officers were: increased co-operation and information exchange between the police and retailers; more arrests and recovering more stolen property; reduction in fear of crime and response times to incidents, with the system acting as a good deterrent. The officers also identified a number of disadvantages which were: having to carry another radio, (their own police radio and the retail radio); retailers assuming the police were only there to deal with their problems and retailers misusing the system by not using the telephone to summons a police officer. In addition, officers identified retailers not following radio procedures and their becoming '*too accessible*' (authors emphasis) as problematic. The executive summary of the report identified the radio as being a 'reassuring symbol' within the store reducing fear of crime amongst staff with retail radio representing a 'beneficial and low cost addition to store security'. (Beck and Willis, 1995)

The staff perceptions of the role of CCTV and retail radio was again subject of a study in 1995 by Leicester University's Centre for the Study of Public Order, on behalf of Next Retail Ltd. This study made a comparison between staff perceptions of personal safety between users and non-users of retail radio. It found that whereas 57% of non users believed the radio link would increase their perception of safety, in reality 91% of participants reported an actual rise in staff feelings of well being. The grounds given for this were cited as being a direct link and back up from the police in particular. It noted that as 'Next, who employ a large proportion of women, the safety aspect must be of paramount importance', with all stores with retail radio being positive in their responses. It was again highlighted that the ready flow of intelligence on criminals was considered to be of particular benefit, with one respondent being quoted as saying;

'we get to know who the known groups are now and we prevent them from entering the store. It has reduced crime.' (Kinsley and Neal, 1995)

Consideration of the research reveals that retail radio increases staff's awareness of crime, even to the extent of identifying groups or individual criminals within the vicinity of a store. It would be logical to conclude that this would increase staff's fear of crime. However, use of a radio link appears to increase their willingness to tackle crime, even to the extent of preventing criminals entering the store. This appears to be one of the more significant benefits to retailers, security staff and police working together through using two-way communication. The rapid expansion of retail radio led to consideration of the management, operation and future development of this and other radio communication systems, by those police officers involved in radio links.

As a result of these concerns and deliberations an application was submitted to the Home Office Police Research Group for funding to research the concept of radio links from a police perspective. The application was successful and in 1994 officers visited a number of towns and cities and interviewed both retailers and police radio link users. The research identified similar results to the two CSPO studies for example 48% of staff reported a reduction in their fear of crime. (Wright and Gibson, 1995) Perhaps one of the most significant discoveries of the research was that retail radio links had existed since 1980 in Great Yarmouth and Norwich and had remained as valid and successful in 1994 as the day they were launched.

The difference between the longevity of radio links and the short-lived pager systems was considered. Although no specific research has been conducted to test the effectiveness of paging systems as against retail radio it is thought that the obvious difference between the two systems is that radios allow two-way communications. This fundamental advantage of radios over pagers, especially in cases of personal violence, is considered to be the main reason as to why radio links have replaced paging systems in town centres.

The report included the results of two small studies undertaken in Wolverhampton by the Home Office Safer Cities Project and the Town Centre Association. These showed that some 68% of retailers reported a reduction in stock losses following introduction of the retail radio. In addition 44% of staff reported a reduction in their fear of crime, with one store reporting a 23% reduction in stock loss equating to a saving of £60,000 per annum. This was achieved through the purchase of two radios at a cost of £700, which are still working some six years later. The cost of an average retail radio is less than £400 with the base station and aerial costing about £3,000.

A recent study of a retail radio link in Swindon, Wiltshire concerned an examination of the management of the system and the retailer's perspective of such issues as police involvement and its cost effectiveness. The study also sought to explore any differences between large and small retailer's opinions of retail radio within the town centre. The study concluded that there were two main areas of concern about the operation and management of the system. The first was that with there being neither police involvement nor support for the system it wasn't fully effective and lacked credibility. The extent of retailers feeling about the lack of police involvement can best be summarised by an anonymous retailer who stated, 'We're doing the police force's dirty work for them'. The second major area of concern was about the effectiveness of management 'control' of the system. More specifically these concerned the lack of information from the committee to the radio link participants about such basic issues as the objectives of the system and the identity of other's, particularly new members. It was reported that there was an apparent reliance of smaller retailers, in the absence of police involvement, on the larger stores security staff providing them with a free service, indeed it could be argued the major stores were 'policing' the town centre. (Maguire, 1998)

Community Radio Link

The close involvement of the local authority, especially the Emergency Planning Officer, in the evacuation of Wolverhampton town centre led to a steady increase in the number of council staff, within the town centre who held retail radios. At the same time police officers in Coventry City Centre began to be approached by a number of non-retailers such as the Cathedral and University staff, asking to be allowed to join retail radio. Discussions between the police in Wolverhampton and Coventry about these issues confirmed the need for a separate radio link, which could be used by public and voluntary sector employees across a wider area, such as a Borough or County. This second system was named 'Community Radio Link' to reflect the nature of its membership. Two main difficulties immediately became apparent, firstly who would assume responsibility for monitoring this 24-hour system and secondly how would it be interfaced with the police?

In Wolverhampton the solution to both problems was found in locating the monitoring facility for the community radio within the council's central control room operated by the housing department. This room operated 24 hours a day, staffed by experienced personnel, who were used to monitoring similar communications systems, responding to calls for help and dealing with the public and emergency services. The local police control room provided emergency contact telephone numbers and agreed to have both a retail and community radio thus creating additional links with the local authority. In Wolverhampton, the cost of the individual radios is in the region of £400 with the control room and infrastructure equipment costing less than £10,000.

The technology utilised in the control room and individual radios was significantly more advanced than the retail radio. The community radios have an individual code or identity and personal attack buttons. This is a facility where the radios can activate an alarm alert in the control room which identifies to the operator which participant is in need of help. They also have a 'live mike' facility where the radio microphone remains open for a few seconds after the activation of the personal attack facility even if the transmit button is not depressed. This allows the control room to hear what is being said or what is happening at the time of alarm activation. This facility acts to confirm or verify personal attack activation. The individual radios can be pre-programmed to prevent any audible tones being generated at the time of alarm activation. This is an important feature as in the case of personal attack or a hostage situation such audible tones could escalate the offender's response.

The community radio link also has a telephone interconnect facility. This is operated through the control room, to maintain the systems integrity and prevent abuses, and allows a telephone caller to communicate with an individual or group of radios. Telephone interconnect also allows for individual radios, again through the control room, to link back to a telephone line. The radios also have the ability to select from a large menu of functions, a number of predetermined messages, which are sent in short bursts of data, for example the radio users can book on or off the system. Community radio is based upon a computer controlled management system with a recording device known as a 'voice logger'.

These facilities mean that the computer records each radio activation, such as the user's identity, the data message sent and provides a time date stamp. The 'voice logger' records every conversation made both by radio and telephone. This voice-activated facility provides safeguards for both the radio users and control room staff. Another most significant feature of the computer is its ability to monitor 'lone workers'. The control room staff identifies an individual radio, a group of radios or all the radios on the network and programmes the computer to 'listen out' for them achieves this. If the radios, which have been selected, are not operated during the selected time, from five minutes to three hours, the system initiates alarm activation. An example of this could be where a doctor is due to visit an unstable and violent patient. He or she could inform the control room staff of the address they are visiting, the nature of the risk and request five-minute lone worker checks.

If during the doctor's visit the radio is not operated the alarm is activated and the control room as agreed with the doctor prior to the visit initiates a response. The implications for compliance with the provisions of health and safety and lone worker regulations are apparent.

Business Radio Link

The involvement of a large number of security personnel in retail radio and the absence of any similar system to assist other commercial and business users led to consideration of a third radio link. This was aimed at reducing incidents of commercial and industrial crime whilst offering the opportunity of creating a unique operational link between the police and security industry. This system known as 'Business Radio Link' also faced the same problems of monitoring and interface with the police. The Home Office Safer Cities Project in Wolverhampton was again involved in these early discussions and was able to secure seed funding for a pilot system to operate across the Black Country of the West Midlands. The major shopping centre in Wolverhampton, at that time, employed contract staff from Group 4 who were actively involved in the retail radio. Through their discussions with a senior representative from Group 4 showed an active level of interest in developing the project. It was decided that to co-ordinate the project and provide the requisite level of representation the British Security Industry Association would be approached to manage the project. Following meetings with the then membership liaison manager, additional funding was secured from within the security industry and a series of presentations by the police were made to interested parties.

A BSIA member company, Burns Security, whose midlands control room was based in the Black Country, agreed to allow the independent business radio to be located in a separate office in their building. A further grant of money was secured from the Department of the Environment and the Then Home Office Minister of State, Mr David MacLean, launched the project in January 1995. The original concept was based upon the local police divisional control rooms having a 'desk top' radio networked to the business radio control room allowing them to both receive messages, especially radio alarm activation's and disseminate information. It was envisaged that in the same way as retail radio operates, the police would be able to receive and pass to the security personnel and other radio users, information about crimes in the Black Country. For business radio it was envisaged that the members, such as petrol stations, could in turn report sightings of vehicles and other incidents immediately to the local police stations. The business radio control room would act as a filter between participants and the police, prioritising calls and referring to the police the best available witness to any incident.

The project enjoyed considerable interest from a wide variety of potential participants such as; out of town retailers; security companies; vending machine companies; petrol retailers and financial institutions. Unfortunately for a variety of commercial reasons the level of interest wasn't translated into the purchase of radios, with the system being forced to close through lack of funding.

The last manager of business radio, Mr Mike Olds, speaking in February 1996, attributed the scheme failure to, the absence of a full time sales person, the cost of radios and subscription. In addition he spoke about the, '...lack of a coherent marketing strategy and adequate resources' (Rainey, 1996)

Community Action Tackling Crime & Harassment (CATCH)

The final radio link to be discussed is Community Action Tackling Crime & Harassment, (CATCH). This system utilises very simple back-to-back radios and is currently operating on three housing estates in West Bromwich. (Self, 1998 and Lewis, 1999) In May 1998 the Lyng Lane Tenants and Residents Association, council housing department and local shopkeepers joined with the local police to develop CATCH. The Tenants Association through funding from the West Midlands Police Authority, Sandwell Council and local shopkeepers purchased a number of radios, with further radios being donated by local shopping centres. The system allows residents to rapidly disseminate information about crime and disorder on the estate and seek an early police response to any incidents. The network is able to tackle the fear of crime through raising the confidence of participants who are able to identify any offenders, conceivably their neighbours. This 'participative reassurance' will be contrasted later with the 'symbolic reassurance' provided through provision of uniformed patrol.

The individual radios cost around £120 - soon to be approximately £100 for two sets and for an average of £3,000 sufficient radios can be purchased to begin a CATCH scheme across a whole housing estate. It is planned that other residential areas across West Bromwich will be networked through CATCH thus enabling patrolling police officers to directly communicate with residents and communities with communities. This is an important development especially when used to tackle travelling thieves such as the 'bogus official' offenders who target the elderly.

In addition the implications for police foot patrols and public reassurance is that one officer, through effective communication, can reassure people across a large geographical area. The residents don't need to physically see the one officer; in essence through the 'audible presence' of the officer he or she is present in their own homes. Should an incident occur the network of radio users will be able to direct and target the officer's patrol to effect arrests or disrupt criminal or anti-social behaviour. In line with 'thinking' about the theoretical basis of radio links the importance for 'police discretionary patrol' and 'social exclusion' is yet to be determined but as the number of CATCH schemes expand the potential for community direction of policing activity especially targeting anti-social or sub-criminal behaviour will increase. (Rutter et al, 1998)

If it can be assumed the relationship between residents and the police is altered by their ability to immediately communicate information between each other then what can be inferred about the level of trust?

'...it is clear that effective policing requires the trust and confidence of the general public who are ultimately the founders of this service.

There is no formal contradiction between a police force, which is both accountable and efficient. On the contrary, an accountable and responsive police force is a pre-requisite for the maintenance of a steady flow of information on crime and disorder and for encouraging co-operation and increasing public confidence.' (Matthews, 1994)

And,

‘Traditional forms of crime prevention which were offender-centred have become increasingly recognised as limited; while military style and ‘fire brigade’ policing always provides too much too late. Good policing is dependent upon the flow of reliable information and the main source of that information is the public in particular, the victims of crime. Their willingness to report incidents to the police is dependent upon establishing a degree of trust and the responsiveness of the police to public interests and concerns.’ (Matthews, 1994)

It is perhaps possible to reconsider the debate amongst academics and practitioners about how to, ‘motivate individuals to engage in practices of citizenship and thus community building’. This may be achieved by radio links without fear of the ‘significant tensions...about what sort of institutional arrangements might enable the realisation of such an inclusive and vibrant civil society’ (Hughes, 1998)

Radio Links Overview - Conclusion

The introduction of radio links can be seen to have had an effect in a number of fundamental areas. These include individual’s perceptions of crime but they may also have an increasing effect upon determining the future development of, for example police patrol. Is it that the national debate about crime reduction, public reassurance and police patrol should be reconsidered in light of the introduction of radio links? The speech by Ian Blair, the Chief Constable of Surrey, on the 16 July 1998 to the Association of Chief Police Officers, (ACPO) conference, triggered significant interest and was widely reported. (Locke, 1998). A key feature of the speech was that the police should accept that they are not abandoning a monopoly of patrol but admit they haven’t had one for years. The issue appears to be this, the public ‘requires’ the presence of an uniformed individual to patrol their neighbourhood, to reduce incidents of crime and disorder whilst acting as a highly visible ‘authority’ figure thus achieving public reassurance. The central difficulty for the police is that they are unable to maintain the levels of resources, particularly foot patrol officers, to satisfy the expectations of the public and themselves. Within this ‘vacuum’ of expectation against reality various proposals are being considered, including those from the Prime Minister for local authorities to create uniformed security patrols or ‘super caretakers’. (Hibbs, 1998)

This debate however is flawed for it appears to be based upon the argument that the only means available to reduce the public’s fear of crime is through the ‘symbolic reassurance’ provided by an individual in uniform. The research, which highlights the reduction in fear of crime amongst radio link participants, is of particular importance in that it points to the greater value of ‘participative reassurance’. In addition the same arguments that propose the creation of lower paid ‘auxiliary patrol officers’ by the police or the employment of similar uniformed individuals by the local council is considered to be economically flawed. (Morgan and Newburn, 1997) Any such staff would still have to be paid several thousands of pounds per year, which could perhaps be used to finance CATCH schemes.

The central submission therefore is that reassurance and crime and disorder reduction can be achieved through the introduction of a CATCH scheme or other radio link. Only after communities are safe and less fearful would it be appropriate to assess the need for alternatives to the public police. As proposed by the Police Federation and ACPO, the challenge for the public police is to maintain the central role of the constable in managing this process. This dissertation highlights a number of implications for the police and local authorities especially in light of the Crime and Disorder Act and governments 'Best Value' initiative. Not only are they obliged by statute to reduce the levels of crime and disorder but achieve these in as cost effective a manner as possible. The next chapter will therefore consider in more depth the role of police patrol, 'Best Value' and radio links.

3) Radio Links, Police Patrol and Best Value

Police Patrol and Best Value

The proposed Local Government Bill due to be enacted on the 1st April 2000 will impose a statutory duty on local authorities (including police authorities) to obtain 'Best Value' by securing the delivery of economic, efficient and effective services. Achieving 'Best Value' will not just be about economy and efficiency but also about the effectiveness and the quality of local services. It will demand continuous improvements in service costs and quality. There is no presumption that services must be privatised but there is no reason why services should be delivered directly if other more efficient means are available. What is of greatest consequence is not who delivers but does it work? Is the police service delivering what the people want? What happens if it doesn't?

'Best Value' will involve certification, audit and inspection and in the extreme cases where local communities are not being provided with the services they expect then there is provision for direct intervention by the Secretary of State.

'...[Police Authorities] will be required to act within the best value performance management framework, securing year on year improvements in police services. Intervention powers will be available to Government to tackle serious or persistent failures in police services.' (DETR, 1998)

As police and local authority resources will inevitably always be limited there is an expectation that they will jointly identify how to meet the public's demands and seek innovative solutions to meet them. Radio Links may provide such solutions especially with regard to consultation with the public and participation in joint crime reduction initiatives.

The statutory duty imposed upon police and local authorities to meet the obligations of 'Best Value' will require them to examine all their activities and determine if they fit the 'Best Value' criteria. A fundamental policing activity is 'patrol'. Officers patrol for a number of reasons for example, to reassure the public, detect offences and assist the public. Patrol has been defined as,

'The overt presence, whether on foot or mobile, of a locally accountable uniformed police constable who provides public reassurance; is capable of authoritative intervention and who is approachable and available to ensure an appropriate response from all the resources of the police service, to the needs and demands of the general public.' (Audit Commission, 1996)

The presence therefore of an uniformed officer on patrol or at the scene of an incident will reassure those members of the public who can see the officer. This reassurance is thought to be achieved through the public perceiving there to be a reduction in the likelihood they will be a victim of a criminal act.

This is because a criminal is less likely to commit a crime in the presence of the officer as they will more easily be detected and subsequently punished. Patrol also places the officer at the scene of an incident thus enabling them to detect crimes. The rationale is that the criminal will not forewarn the officer where and when they will commit the crime so the officer has to patrol in the hope of coming across the crime during the time of its commission and therefore it will be detected.

If patrol is subjected to a cost benefit analysis under the financial climate created by 'Best Value' it could be argued that it is a high cost, low return activity. The costs of patrol would include staff pay, uniform, vehicles, and police stations in local areas, call centres and communications equipment. Continuing the financial examination of patrol it can be suggested that each of the costs could be classed as *inputs*, the *activity* would be patrol with the *output* being the prevention and detection of crime and finally the *outcome* being public reassurance. Patrol can therefore be thought to be a high cost activity, for the reasons given above but is it a low return activity?

If the outcome of patrol is public reassurance consideration must be given to essential characteristic of the activity, namely that people must see the officer. How often will that happen if the public's attention is taken up other everyday activities? How many people, roads, houses etc. are there compared to the number of officers?

It has been argued that increased numbers of patrolling police officers would have no discernible effects upon crime figures. (Livingstone, 1996) This should come as no real surprise where, 'a patrolling officer in London can expect to pass within a hundred yards of a burglary in progress roughly once every eight years'. (Clarke and Hough, 1984) It is submitted that the visible presence of officers whilst on patrol or engaged in policing tasks acts as a deterrent to crime. But it has been calculated by the Audit Commission that for every police officer on patrol he or she will be responsible for,

- 18,000 inhabitants
- 7,500 houses
- 23 pubs
- 9 schools
- 140 miles of pavement
- 85 acres of parks or open spaces
- 77 miles of road (Audit Commission, 1996) and,
- 100 prolific criminals (Morgan and Newburn, 1997)

It quickly becomes obvious that the public will rarely see the officer and therefore are unlikely to be reassured by police patrolling. In a report into effective practices in policing problem residential areas it was recommended that less entrenched offending can be disrupted by, '...maximising the police presence.' whilst particular problems could be dealt with through use of high profile targeted patrol. The report adds under the subject of, increased visibility that, 'Practices to maximise public perception of a police presence may be considered a priority in light of the national objective regarding high *visibility* policing.' (Authors emphasis) It suggests that simple techniques, such as officers wearing high visibility jackets, targets for officers to achieve foot patrol time and double crewed vehicles stopping and allowing one of the occupants to walk back to the station will achieve these objectives. (Morris, 1996)

However this dissertation argues the police need to do far more than be seen by the public, they need to communicate with the communities they serve. The police can provide reassurance, as commented upon above, through an audible as well as a visible presence. The public therefore wants the police to be locally based, preferably patrolling on foot, and accessible. They would prefer if they could communicate directly with identifiable officers or better still those who are known personally. Such policing is perceived to be, the 'Dixon of Dock Green' method, with officers able to intervene to reduce crime and disorder problems through local knowledge. The public, it is argued, appreciate the limitations placed upon the police and surveys suggest they are realistic about the ability of the police to solve reported crimes. What the public do expect however is a prompt response, a clear difficulty with foot patrol, officers to be 'interested' when they receive crime complaints and courteous when they stop individuals. (Morgan and Newburn, 1997)

It has been argued that the very fact the public report crime to the police shows its continued trust in the institution of policing. The proposition continues in that it has been argued that in so doing the public are 'specifying' the direction of policing, the ultimate form of police accountability and states that 'reactive' policing is policing by consent. The seemingly attractive benefits of pro-active or intelligence led policing contain dangers in that the police, 'are unaided in determining the priorities'. (Morgan and Newburn, 1997) It can be seen that through the existence of a radio link the public direct or consult with the policing activity within their community.

The concept of 'community policing', or 'policing by consent' was proposed in the late 1970's by the former Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall, Sir John Alderson, and supported by Lord Scarman. This proposed the establishment of local officers with long-term affiliations to specific areas, reinforced the importance of community or inter agency partnerships being involved in crime prevention. The government's flagship crime reduction legislation, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, placed a statutory duty upon the police and local authorities to reduce crime and disorder.

In conclusion, patrol at present is not achieving its outcomes of public reassurance and is a high cost low return activity. Under the proposals of 'Best Value' and the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act the essential policing activity of patrol is failing to meet the needs of the public.

Local Authorities - Radio Links a Cost Benefit Analysis

Because of their perceived effectiveness and partly through the influence of the police and public sector staff involved in retail radio, other organisations have become involved in the development of separate radio links. These organisations are primarily local authorities and community groups such as, Tenants and Residents Associations.

The radio link systems under consideration by these groups, CATCH and community radio link are very much in their infancy both in their development and the fact that only a small number currently exist. It is important to note however that retail radio went from a hand full of systems to being adopted across virtually the whole of the United Kingdom within seven years.

If such an expansion in the number of schemes is to be achieved one of the issues taken into consideration will be the cost of the scheme as against any financial benefit. This cost benefit analysis will have to be considered in light of the proposed 'Best Value' framework. There has over the last year been an increased emphasis by local authorities on supporting effective community safety initiatives primarily because they are themselves substantial victims of crime. Secondly, because of the statutory obligations placed upon them under the provisions of the Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Section 5 of the Act requires local authorities to formulate and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder. (Jason-Lloyd, 1998)

To undertake a cost benefit analysis of radio links from a local authority perspective it is necessary to identify the current savings achieved by similar schemes and the losses currently being experienced by councils. As a consequence it was decided to concentrate upon property related crime such as arson, damage and burglary to council owned or managed buildings and secondly upon violence against council staff. These crime categories were also considered amenable to study as such offences as housing benefit fraud, are not expected to be reduced by introducing a radio link. A secondary reason was that a comparison was to be made between data from studies of retail radio and that of community based systems. It was identified that both retailers and local authorities experienced property crime and violence.

There is currently no available research to determine the benefit factor of community radio and CATCH, for example would they reduce crime and if so by how much? There was some limited research available concerning the impact of retail radio link upon such crimes as customer theft, reductions in stock loss and violence against retail staff. It was decided therefore to project those benefits from retail to community radio link as, this was the only available methodology. Again the use by employees of a radio link in a retail environment can be thought of as exposure to the risk of crime through contact with the public. The public steals from shops and assault retail staff. For a local authority, there exists the same exposure to the, public who break into their schools and attack their teachers. In short an enraged customer could be thought of as being the same embittered client.

A literature review of research enquiring into the benefits of retail radio link showed that a number of had been undertaken. The study completed on behalf of the Home Office Police Research Group consisted of interviews with retail staff in ten towns or cities in England and Wales. The study found that, in relation to levels of crime within their store, 55% of staff reported a reduction. With regards stock loss figures these were analysed as an average figure for the previous four years. This showed that for the year 1993, during which the majority of the, retail radio links were introduced, the percentage losses were 1.9%. This compared to 7% losses for 1992. This amounts to an average reduction in stock loss of 52% for the first year following the introduction of the radio link. Interestingly this same percentage reduction in stock loss figure was reported in 1998 for a store participating in retail radio in West Bromwich. (Wright and Gibson, 1995)

This report also included results of two independent studies conducted in Wolverhampton by the Home Office, Safer Cities, project and Town Centre Association. These found that some 68% of stores reported a reduction in stock loss with 44% of staff reporting a reduction in their fear of crime.

The independent research also found that the average saving in stock loss was some 34% ranging from 15% to 50%. The study conducted by Michael Maguire concerned an analysis of retail radio link in operation in Swindon, Wiltshire. This unpublished dissertation for Leicester University, consisted of analysis of questionnaires completed by retailers who participated in the retail radio link in that town. The study found that 62% of stores believed the radio link had had an impact upon their stock loss with one store reporting that the system had halved their stock loss from 2% to 1%.

The final report is an unpublished British Council of Shopping Centres, Diploma in Shopping Centre Management. In this study managers of a number of shopping centres were contacted and from them the details of any reductions in crime attributed to the introduction of the retail radio were analysed. The results showed; Newcastle a 70% increase in detection's, of offenders and Cardiff a 35% reduction in stock loss (Evans, 1995). Finally a major national retailer was contacted and asked to quantify the impact of retail radio on stock loss. They reported that an average reduction of 25% had been determined. (Fairman, 1998) In general therefore analysis of the available studies, and records from retailers concerning the effectiveness of retail radio found that the system will in the short term, over three years, reduce crime losses by 25%.

The study also involved a literature review of reports of the cost of crime to local authorities. What must be observed is that in general there has been no real collation of data, which identifies the cost of crime against local authorities. In the 1988 Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention report on 'The Costs of Crime' stated that, '...few, local authorities kept detailed information on the costs of crime to them'. In the section entitled Criminal Damage it reported that,

'However it does seem that publicly owned buildings suffer disproportionately. LAMSAC estimate that the overall annual costs of all types of criminal damage and the cost implications thereof, to local authorities amount to some £500m a year'. (Home Office, 1988)

In addition the report states that in 1985 Municipal Mutual Insurance estimated the cost of arson against schools to be £20.6m and of those fires, which cost on excess of £10k about 80% were started wilfully. However, in 1992 when the same company insured some 90% of schools in the UK, the costs of all crime against schools had risen to £120m. The bill for vandalism to schools in Sheffield alone had increased from £179k in 1981/2 to £484k in 1987/8 (Home Office, 1988). The Thames Valley Partnership and Crime Concern in a briefing paper entitled 'Counting the Cost' report that the DFE estimate the cost of theft, arson and vandalism to schools in England cost £53m in 1990/1. In addition the DFE whilst not able to quantify the cost of crimes of violence to teachers and other educational staff, estimate the expenditure by schools on crime prevention measures to be £10m in 1990/1. The same Crime Concern report estimated that local government bears about half the costs of crime. Taking this into consideration and in the light of the recent report by the ABI, which estimates crime to be costing Britain £35 billion per year, it could be argued that local authorities face each year a bill for crime and its prevention in the region of £17.5 billion. (Crime Concern, 1994)

The data obtained from the literature review whilst indicative of the scale of the cost of crime to local authorities, is not current and at best must be considered an estimate of the problem. It can be suggested therefore that; if councils introduced radio links and the cost of crime to local authorities was about £17.5 billion and they were able to reduce crime by 25%, then theoretically there may be a saving of some £4.375 billion over the short term. As to the cost of radio links it can be argued that whatever the cost it will certainly not exceed the potential benefits. Therefore under the statutory obligations imposed upon police and local authorities by 'Best Value' and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the introduction of radio links should be considered as a cost-effective solution to reducing crime.

4) Radio Links - Theories and Practice

Introduction

It is important to determine the 'location' of radio links within current criminological theory. Consideration of the previously described systems will prompt association with a number of established theories, for example a retail radio link can easily be understood within the context of situational crime prevention, for example increased surveillance. It may also be thought of as achieving an actual if 'virtual' defensible space throughout the town centre. Again in the field of social crime prevention there exist elements of compatibility when thinking about radio links. In many regards radio links appear to find some association with a number of established criminological or crime prevention theories but in turn not 'quite fit' as they seem to add value to a number of them. There is naturally an early sense of radio links having to find their 'theoretical feet' but what is however thought appropriate at this time is to accept that radio links appear to be achieving beneficial results, in terms of reducing the costs and fear of crime.

When thinking about crime theories and radio links it is proposed to consider how they relate to each other. It is proposed therefore to identify any association between radio links and certain theories. Extracts have been taken from the original texts to highlight areas of compatibility and where there are similarities or differences to identify any possible addition or conflict with the theories. These include; Defensible Space, Situational and Social Crime Prevention and Routine Activity Theory.

Defensible Space

Whilst Defensible Space is concerned with human problems caused through the physical design of buildings Newman identifies a broader range of issues. (Newman, 1972) He states that, 'It is clear to almost all researchers in crime prevention that the issue hinges on the inability of communities to come together in joint action.'

He defines 'defensible space' as,

'...a model for residential environments which inhibits crime by creating physical expression of a social fabric that defends itself. All the different elements which combine to make a defensible space have a common goal - an environment in which latent territoriality and sense of community in the inhabitants can be translated into responsibility for ensuring a safe, productive and well maintained living space. The potential criminal perceives such a space as controlled by its residents, leaving him an intruder easily recognisable and dealt with.' (Newman, 1972)

'...real and symbolic barriers, strongly defined areas of influence, and improved opportunities for surveillance - that combine to bring an environment under the control of its residents.' (Newman, 1972)

With its emphasis upon the build environment it is natural that the radio link most closely related to a residential community would be CATCH.

Beginning with 'defensible space' it is important to note that the ability to allow individuals to speak to and listen out for each other addresses Newman contention that communities are unable to come together in joint action. The very fact of being able to communicate, to know each other, the sharing of problems and resources and the celebration of success has the potential to create an united coherent community which is already working together, engaging in joint actions, to address the problems and concerns they face.

Can CATCH create the same 'physical expressions of a social fabric that defends itself'? It is suggested that the physical expressions may be closely linked to the theories surrounding 'Broken Window'. The physical appearance of a community; signs of decay and neglect, vandalism, empty boarded up residences, needles and litter, will act as the first and most important indication of residents inability to defend themselves. The evidence from CATCH and other radio links is that participants begin to take note of and care for the environment within which they live or work and prevent its deterioration, even to the extent of placing attacked buildings under surveillance. The 'latent territoriality and sense of community' of CATCH members within such activities is clearly apparent.

Within the inner city urban environments where CATCH is presently operating the issue of the 'potential criminal...intruder easily recognisable and dealt with' is not as simple as first it may appear. For example, the very environment within which such crimes and fears are generated is often the domain of the criminal, their families and associates. The suggestion of Newman is that the criminal's recognition will be reported to the police and other agencies that will based upon the evidence of the residents, deal with them. However the problem associated with the victims and residents being identified through this process by the criminal is simply that they live in fear of retribution and further victimisation. The problems are not really ones of recognition of the criminal for CATCH members live next to drugs dealers and burglars and know only too well who they are. They are only too often related to issues concerning confidence and fear.

These problems however will be entirely different within other communities. It can easily be conceived that within a rural or established suburban environment the residents will know of each other and will recognise 'outsiders' or potential criminals far easier. The ability of CATCH to forewarn such residents of intruders would conceivably be increased as the extent of their community cohesion and levels of confidence would be higher than residents in inner city areas. Newman identified, 'The territorial definition of space in developments reflecting the areas of influence of the inhabitants.' with zones within which residents display proprietary attitudes. These have been defined as a 'Hierarchy of Defensible Space', moving from public to semi public, semi private and private areas. The means through which such areas can be identified is considered to be through the physical makeup of the zone; for example a street has been defined as a public area and the interior of a house as private. In discussing territoriality Newman describes,

'In our interviews with public housing tenants we found that expression of territorial feelings correspond strongly with a concern for the maintenance of law and belief in the possibility of its enforcement.' (Newman, 1972)

He went on to state,

‘At present most families living in an apartment building experience the space outside their apartment unit doors as distinctly public; in effect they relegate responsibility for all activity outside the immediate confines of their apartments to public authority. The question is whether there are physical mechanisms which can be employed to extend the boundaries of these private realms: to subdivide the public space outside private apartment units so that larger dominions come under the sphere of influence and responsibility of the apartment dweller.’ (Newman, 1972)

These physical mechanisms are described in detail by Newman and relate to real and symbolic barriers, which define private areas. The ability of residents to watch over their areas of influence defined, as ‘natural surveillance’ has been closely linked to territoriality. Newman states, ‘...surveillance has a demonstrable effect in reducing irrational fears and anxieties in inhabitants.’

However he warns,

‘...experience has shown that the ability to observe criminal activity will not, in and of itself, impel the observer to respond with assistance to the person or property being victimised. The decision to act will also depend on the presence of the following conditions: the extent to which the observer has a developed sense of his personal and proprietary rights and is accustomed to defending them.’ (Newman, 1972)

Does CATCH effect these observations? It can be argued that the extension of residents influence across housing areas, their shared sense of responsibility and ability to communicate with and direct public authorities has created a semi private community. The resident’s responses quite clearly demonstrate an increased sense of responsibility for their estate. As such their concerns and surveillance of the estate have created a semi-private space. The streets are under surveillance from residents not just when they are at home but when they walk their dogs, collect their pensions or take their children to school. The formerly open or public areas such as children’s play areas or parks can be thought of as the ‘new’ semi private domains of a ‘virtual community’, which exists through CATCH. The resident’s ‘personal and proprietary rights’ will be reinforced where they are frequently expressed and supported by for example, police intervention.

Kirkholt, Community Involvement and Repeat Victimisation

The work of the Kirkholt Burglary Project has been widely discussed, in particular the development of crime prevention strategies based upon studies of ‘repeat victimisation’ by Professor Ken Pease. Examination of the Project and its success in reducing those crimes, which most severely affect housing estates, can again be related to CATCH. The area of community support is specifically relevant in that ‘...we had also found there was a large amount of latent support for community based crime prevention initiatives.’ (Forrester et al, 1988)

The project also developed the concept of Cocoon Neighbourhood Watch, which was based upon approaching neighbours of victims and asking for their support in setting up a 'mini' or 'cocoon neighbourhood watch.' The project was attracted to the concept for; 'it mirrors what happens in well-established communities, where close groupings of dwellings share information and support each other'. In addition it stated '...we felt that at the start that the cocoons may form the beginnings of some organic development, and would grow into home watch schemes.' (Forrester et al, 1988)

It is apparent that CATCH provides such neighbour support in full measure through the exchange of information and confidence building. The 'latent support' can find many expressions and CATCH can literally be thought of as a more technically advanced form of community watch scheme. When reviewing the results of the Project it was stated that,

'It has been important to remind ourselves of the basic decision that, having nurtured the fledgling initiative, the statutory agencies will require it to take wing on its own. There will always be a place for a support service, but community ownership of the scheme, and its future development, is the outcome to which we aspire.' (Forrester et al, 1988)

Community involvement was considered by NACRO when conducting research into a Community Trust in the Borough of Hackney. It was identified that,

'One important theory underpinning the role that the kind of community development embodied in the Trust can play in reducing crime is that, by developing cohesion between its members, the community is sending out signals to potential offenders that the community is strong and therefore resistant to crime.' (Fraser, 1996)

It is argued CATCH has already created the organic community based development aspired to in the Kirkholt and NACRO Project. The extent of ownership of CATCH by its members and the diffusion of benefit through the introduction of other schemes may well be the most useful indication of its success.

Situational Crime Prevention

In his introduction to successful case studies Clarke describes situational crime prevention as departing from most criminology in its orientation. He states,

'Proceeding from an analysis of the circumstances giving rise to specific kinds of crime, it introduces discrete managerial and environmental change to reduce the opportunity for those crimes to occur. Thus it is focused on the settings for crime, rather than upon those committing criminal acts. It seeks to forestall the occurrence of crime, rather than to detect and sanction offenders. (Clarke, 1997)

It seeks not to eliminate criminal or delinquent tendencies through improvement of society or its institutions, but merely to make criminal action less attractive to offenders.' (Clarke, 1997)

An analysis of 'Situational Crime Prevention', by Crawford identifies a shift towards, (Crawford, 1998)

the prioritisation of the *control* of crime through practical measures
an emphasis on the alterations to the *physical* environment
the significance of processes of *informal* social control
the *offence* rather than the offender as the primary focus of attention.

The elements of opportunity reduction have been further, identified as,

increasing the effort involved in crime by making the targets of crime harder to get at or otherwise hindering the commission of crime
increasing the risks, whether real or perceived, of detection and apprehension
reducing the rewards of crime. In some cases this may involve removing the targets of crime altogether defined (Clarke, 1997 and Crawford, 1998)

How then do radio link's apply to situational crime prevention? The first and most obvious relationship is that radio link apply to users, potential victims, as well as non-users in addition to offenders. Whilst there are similarities between the theory and the practices of radio links, for example increasing informal control and risks to offenders there are some differences. The effect upon users appears to exceed those of just environmental changes as it alters their levels of confidence, social cohesion and police public contact. The emphasis upon the built environment is again at odds with radio link as the interaction between people, within relationships and communities is considered by users to be of considerable importance.

For example, a victim of domestic violence could use her radio to report the partner calling at the address or being in the vicinity of the children's school. Equally radio users who live within the locality of the victim could forewarn the woman of the partner being in the area, perhaps in breach of court orders, and report that directly to the police. The interaction between the victim of violence and her neighbours will rely solely upon their ability to communicate and will be entirely separate from any physical changes in the physical environment.

Routine Activity and Opportunity Theory

In his study of the 'chemistry' of crime Felson defines the elements of 'Routine Activity Theory' as consisting of a convergence in time and space of, '...three minimal elements: a likely offender, a suitable person or property target and the absence of capable guardian against a crime' (Felson, 1998). In his analysis of the theory Crawford, identifies the three main elements as consisting of,

'...a likely offender (anyone who for any reason might commit a crime) a suitable target (is an object or person likely to be taken or attacked by the offender) and the absence of a capable guardian against crime (for routine activity the most likely guardians against crime are not policemen but rather neighbours, friends and bystanders.)' (Crawford, 1998)

CATCH creates more 'capable guardians'. Firstly so far as individuals are concerned it is seen to increase their capacity to intervene, through raising confidence, awareness and local knowledge of crime. And secondly by increasing the number of such 'capable' guardians within a locality.

In their broad explanation of "opportunity" theories of crime Felson and Clarke, look to the future benefits of crime prevention policies focused upon opportunity-reduction,

'...the newer policies operate on circumstances much closer to the criminal event and thus have much greater chance to reduce crime immediately. This promise has become more secure in the light of findings from recent research on displacement and diffusion. Displacement rarely, if ever, leads to all the gains being lost from focused opportunity reducing measures. Diffusion of benefits results in crime sometimes being reduced beyond the focus of such measures.' (Felson and Clarke, 1998)

If then CATCH and radio links in general hold out the opportunity reduction promises outlined above it is to be hoped the diffusion of benefit or permanent displacement of crime, would spread far wider than other such schemes. (Cornish and Clarke, 1986) How is this possible? Simply put with the cost of hand held radios now falling to around £50 each there exists the possibility that large tracts of the built environment will house people linked by two way communication. With the possibility of mobile phone communication allowing 'group' calls the opportunity now exists to create similar 'communities' of individuals to those involved in radio links. These communities could be defined by their physical location, for example, within a town centre or by their shared and joint crime risk, for example, doctors or taxis drivers. With half of the UK population expected to have some form of mobile communication within the next few years then based upon the observations of Felson and Clarke it is hoped the diffusion of benefit of crime reduction will extend to the other half!!

Social Crime Prevention

With the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Jason-Lloyd, 1998) we are witnessing a more inclusive, crime reduction partnership between primarily the police and local government. Hughes comments that the 'renaissance of the local?' will be

'...a more expansive democracy in which citizens are not empowered by their ability to 'exit' (as in the customer's option of going elsewhere to 'shop') but rather by the option of 'voice' as citizens make demands on and being heard by their political representatives, and actively participating in the democratic process.' (Hughes, 1998)

It is clear that on estates in the West Midlands the 'citizens voice' is now being heard via a radio link. If that is the case and the public, are becoming 'participants' in the democratic process, including the reduction in crime what are the implications for the 'local' police and council?

Shearing, in a critique of community and problem orientated policing identifies the shift from crime focused policing, the civil police giving priority to 'thief taking', to a '...more prudential problem focused policing'. This process however is not one conceived as being owned by the police but rather changing, '...the location of responsibility for security away from the police to sites where problem solving can take place.' He believes that,

'In this account, the loci of control and assistance are reversed. Instead of the police using communities as a resource, here it is "communities" who use the police to supplement their civil-policing activities. Community policing in this context is given a much more direct and literal meaning. In this narrative, the established role of the police as bandit catchers who use force is not considered as an error in need of correction but as a resource that communities can use when, for example, problem solving does not work or is inappropriate.' (Shearing, 1997)

The creation of re-invigorated communities, better able to articulate not just their expectations but also their demands for policing services, will become a challenge for police forces. The local police officer responding to a communities problems and demands over a radio link will face a level of public direction and scrutiny which they have never previously experienced. In reality a radio link may well develop into a multitude of local networks supporting, informing and directing the security activities of the officer and other local services. This change in the loci of control can conceivably only be achieved through such enhanced communication and may well be feared by some senior officers as an infringement of their operational independence. It may also fly in the face of some forces moves away from local policing. One clear example of this is the closure of local police station's and them being replaced by 'Customer Access Points' or a cash dispenser type hole-in-the-wall advice facility. (Oldfield, 1998; and Jenkins, 1998.)

Broken Window Theory

A substantial project was undertaken in the 1970's in The State of New Jersey, USA, to reduce neighbourhood crime in twenty-eight cities. Part of this project involved police officers patrolling neighbourhoods on foot. It was found that in general police foot patrols had not led to a reduction in crime rates. What was found however was that people who lived in the areas now patrolled by officers on foot felt safer, they thought crime had been reduced and took fewer steps to protect themselves. It was asked,

'...how can a neighbourhood be "safer" when the crime rate has not gone down - in fact may have gone up? Finding the answer requires that we understand what most often frightens people in public places.

Many citizens, of course, are primarily frightened by crime, especially crime involving a sudden violent attack by a stranger. This risk is very real, in Newark as in many large cities. But we tend to overlook or forget another source of fear - the fear of being bothered by disorderly people.' (Kelling and Coles, 1996)

The police officers involved in the project were found to, ‘...know who the regulars were, and they knew him. As he saw his job, he was to keep his eye on strangers, and make certain that the disreputable regulars observed some informal but widely understood rules.’ It was stated that observers should not assume that they, ‘...know how much of the anxiety now endemic in many big-city neighbourhoods stems from “real” crime and how much from a sense that the street is disorderly’ and secondly ‘...at the community level disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked in a kind of developmental sequence’ (Kelling and Coles, 1996). The “developmental sequence” referred to is the ‘broken window’ theory. This simply put is that the visible signs of neighbourhood decay, vandalism and abandoned property, not only signal that no one cares but act as indications of broken community control. As such people modify their behaviour, decide not to intervene and the spiral of decline continues unchecked. How does the practical application of radio links apply to ‘Broken Window Theory’?

It is perhaps useful to consider a housing estate, which has already descended into decline and one on the edge. In the first case a very prominent and high profile policing presence may act against the interests of restoring order. There is evidence from analysis of large-scale public disorder, such as Brixton that there may be a violent reaction from local disaffected people (Benyon, 1993). The introduction of a radio link would join the local population in, determining in consultation with the police how they wished their community to be policed. It is conceivable that fewer officers would be required to be involved, thus reducing costs and the potential for a violent reaction to the policing presence. In the case of an estate on the edge of decline the visible signs such as vandalism could again be addressed through the ability of the radio link to facilitate police public exchange of information.

5) The Research

Introduction

Much of the recent work on evaluating crime prevention initiatives has, quite rightly, highlighted the importance of understanding the context within which a particular initiative works. Tilley in particular has been critical of the rather generalised 'bottom line' question of 'does [it] work?' He has proposed a much more systematic approach and suggests that research should try and find out what works, in what circumstances and why (Tilley, 1993; 1998; and see Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This has been neatly summarised as identifying Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcome Patterns for any given crime prevention initiative, where the context is the conditions within which the initiative operates, the mechanism being the factors which may lead to the initiative generating outcome patterns which are the practical effects produced by the causal relationship between the first two. Taking this framework, it is possible to identify those factors within which research into CATCH may exist.

Context

Given that the research was primarily carried out on residential areas, the following contexts will be important in understanding any possible mechanisms, which might be triggered:

- Types of crime problems currently in the area.
- Demographic profile and cultural traditions of residents living in the area.
- The extent of police activity within the community.
- The attitudes of residents to police officers and the willingness to co-operate and communicate with them.
- The willingness of residents to use the system.
- The degree of existing community 'cohesion' (such as residents' associations).

Mechanisms

Given this context, the research sought to identify whether the introduction of the CATCH radio schemes would trigger the following mechanisms:

- Reduce crime by helping to detect and arrest offenders, which in turn can produce an arrest dividend – reduced crimes by the removal of known offenders from the scene.
- Deter crime on the basis that offenders know that there is a good chance of their actions being observed and reported. This may result in lower crime levels, particularly for more spontaneous types of crime.
- Reduce the fear of crime by providing symbolic and participative reassurance for users of the scheme.
- Increase the confidence of residents to intervene if they believe that they can readily contact other residents and the police.

- Increase the flow of information to the police about suspicious behaviour or criminal incidents thereby helping to prevent crime or catch offenders.
- Increase the flow of information between residents thereby alerting others to possible criminal activity and therefore enabling them to take preventative action.
- Increase user expectations of the ability of the police to respond to calls for assistance to the point where they become [more] dissatisfied with the local service.

Outcome Patterns

Therefore, the practical effects of the introduction of the CATCH radio scheme, given the context within which it will operate and the mechanisms, which might be triggered, could be:

- An increased detection of crime.
- A reduction in the level of crime.
- A greater willingness of residents to help and communicate with the police.
- A reduction in the fear of crime felt by residents.

These factors provide a useful and broad context within which any research into CATCH in particular but radio links in general should be considered. It is pertinent to record that there will be more detailed and extensive research conducted into the effects of CATCH. This future work will utilise the above construction and will build upon the limited research conducted as part of this dissertation into the CATCH scheme's operating on two estates in Sandwell, West Midlands.

How could this future and more detailed research meet the, Context, Mechanisms and Outcome Pattern constructs outlined above? It is envisaged that a number of differing communities and control areas be identified and extensively researched. These may consist of; a high crime inner city housing estate, an established suburban or rural community and an area with an ethnically diverse population. Each group of residents and their control population would be surveyed before the introduction of CATCH and periodically thereafter. Any changes in resident's perceptions of crime and other factors could be explored through differences in resident's replies. The involvement of the police or other agencies such as the local authority or social landlords would also be explored by way of surveys and interviews.

It is clear that such an extensive piece of research would be quite costly both in terms of time and finance, resources not available for the research conducted as part of this dissertation. Notwithstanding it was possible to ask, what does CATCH mean to the residents on the estates and how is it operating?

These rather simple aims could be most effectively achieved by asking the residents directly to answer questions, which sought to explore various factors believed to be involved in the operation and effects of a CATCH scheme. With the small number of persons involved in CATCH, there only being two fully operational and the limited life span of the networks a detailed quantitative research study would have been limited. It was decided therefore to utilise semi-structured interviews.

These were considered suitable in that they would draw out resident's thoughts and perceptions whilst providing some comparative data between the experiences of the two estates.

Semi-structured Interviews

In his consideration of semi-structured interviews Jupp reviewed the research of Bennett and Wright who conducted interviews with burglars. They found that the processes undertaken by burglars when deciding whether or not to commit any crime were not always the same as those assumed to be applicable by crime prevention initiatives and practitioners. His observation upon such research was that,

‘Qualitative research and not just quantitative research can contribute to policy-making although its credibility within the definitions and perceptions of policy-makers may not be as high.’ (Jupp, 1989)

Before considering the results of the research it is finally prudent to comment upon the size and nature of the sample group. Whilst there are only five respondents for each scheme they represent approximately one third of the members of the Lyng Lane and one sixth of the Great Bridge scheme. The respondents were self-selecting in that they volunteered to participate in the research. Finally as the Lyng Lane scheme was introduced on the 8th May 1998 and the scheme in Great Bridge being launched on the 10th February 1999 it is not thought that any of the respondents would have suffered from memory decay or telescoping of recollection. (Coleman and Moynihan, 1998)

The Research – Evaluation of the Residents Responses

Research conducted for this dissertation consisted of semi-structured interviews with residents who were CATCH scheme members, on two housing estates in Sandwell, West Midlands, namely the Lyng Lane and Great Bridge estates. The method by which the responses were obtained were different for each scheme. In the case of the Lyng Lane estate five participants were contacted by phone and asked to answer the questions as outlined. Without prompting their responses were contemporaneously recorded. In the case of Great Bridge the questions were presented in a written format to the residents who replied to the author with their responses. The exact written form has been reproduced. (See appendices A and B)

The Lyng Lane Estate comprises a mixture of high-rise tower blocks, maisonettes and terrace housing. The estate is in a very poor state of repair with a number of premises being unoccupied. It is planned that the estate will be redeveloped and some initial work has been undertaken to demolish buildings and renovate one of the tower blocks. The Great Bridge estate comprises some traditional terrace housing and maisonettes with a few tower blocks. It is located close an urban park and small high street retail area and has a number of active local community based organisations operating across the estate.

The resident's responses to the semi-structured interviews have been evaluated and commented upon by the author.

As the author has been responsible for introducing both CATCH systems it is necessary to state that notwithstanding the fact they are verbatim records of the responses made the residents knew of the author's personal involvement in the scheme's. As such it should be made clear that the research may have been tainted by the authors personal involvement in the schemes.

What then are the views of the residents; what does CATCH mean to them and how is it working? To explore these aims of the research the interviews both began and concluded by asking residents to describe CATCH, how the scheme works and if it has changed their perceptions of crime on the estate, their behaviour and their everyday life. These questions sought to define through the residents responses what CATCH is and how effective they feel the scheme can be in causing any changes in their perceptions of crime, their behaviour and everyday life.

Having sought to explore the effect of CATCH upon themselves the next two questions asked residents to describe any changes in their attitude to other residents and the police. The rationale behind these questions was to explore the effect of immediate two-way communication between residents and then with the police.

Question 7 provided an opportunity for residents to recall the most memorable event involving CATCH. The effectiveness of the scheme in reducing crime and fear of crime may well find some expression through its ability to directly detect or prevent criminality. This question sought to allow residents the opportunity to describe any event involving CATCH that they considered to be memorable and assess the responses against the scheme's crime reduction capability.

Finally questions 8 and 9 asked residents simply to describe what is good and bad about CATCH. These sought to explore in more depth their concerns and support for the scheme.

6) CATCH - The Research Findings

How do residents describe CATCH?

The interviews began by asking residents to describe the CATCH scheme in their area. The Lyng Lane residents tended to praise the system, 'brilliant' rather than describe it whilst the Great Bridge responses tended to provide an explanation of the abbreviation again rather than describe its operation. What is of interest is the comparison of CATCH with Neighbourhood Watch by Lyng Lane resident C and the similarity in responses, 'a group of residents...' by Lyng Lane resident B and Great Bridge resident D.

How does CATCH work?

The second question asks residents to explain how CATCH works and sought to build upon their first answer. The association between CATCH and Neighbourhood Watch is again highlighted with Lyng Lane resident C making regular contact with the police Watch support officer and circulating crime and suspect information to scheme members. There is again a similar response between Lyng Lane resident C and Great Bridge resident D who highlighted the spread of members across the estate '...each in a prime situation...' and '...people at various locations on the estate...' respectively. The same two residents also specified that the scheme involved participants being engaged in the surveillance of activity on the estate, '...observing...' and '...watching...' respectively. Their use of words denoted more than a passive interest in what is happening and tends to indicate an active or methodical surveillance by the residents of their estate. This active surveillance should be considered in the light of the indication that the location of participants appears to have been not so much chosen but utilised to maximise the extent of coverage.

Has CATCH changed resident's perception of crime?

Question three sought to explore resident's perception of crime on their estate and there is a quite specific difference between the two groups of residents. The majority of Lyng Lane residents felt that their perceptions of crime had changed in that they were more informed and knowledgeable of criminal activity after participating in CATCH. This was attributed in the main to an increase in their '...awareness...' of crime. It can be argued that awareness denotes more than just an increased level of knowledge but a heightened mental condition, which is both receptive and informed.

The responses of the Great Bridge residents to question three are in direct contrast to those from the Lyng Lane estate in that the majority, believe their perception of crime hasn't changed. This may be attributed to the difference in length of time of operation between the two schemes or some other reason not being apparent from the research. The responses still highlight some interesting perceptions with resident A believing that whilst CATCH has suppressed criminal or opportunistic activity it hasn't been wholly prevented. The obvious association between this response and Routine Activity theory, the capable guardian is most apparent.

There are similarities between the responses of residents E with both participants believing that local people are aware of CATCH. What is of interest however is that the Lyng Lane resident believes this awareness deters the criminal whilst the Great Bridge resident believes it brings confidence to people. On closer examination both answers may amount to the same response.

Has there been any change in resident's behaviour?

The brief responses from the majority of Great Bridge residents to question 4 indicate that there has been no change in their personal behaviour since CATCH was introduced. What is of most interest is resident A who believes from their experience that CATCH has benefited not just the scheme members but also positively affected the behaviour of '...problem people'. Residents make reference later to a fear of retribution. This single response may indicate that whilst this fear is real for some residents it may not be universal and that CATCH is seen to work in favour of improving social contact. The responses to question 4 by the Lyng Lane residents again indicate their behaviour hasn't changed but the, majority again emphasise the raising of awareness. Resident E is clear their personal esteem and confidence has been positively affected by the extent of public contact. The responsibility of participating in CATCH is seen unequivocally as being a personal benefit to this resident.

Has there been any change in attitude to other residents?

Question 5 sought to explore any changes in resident's attitudes to other residents on the estate. The Great Bridge members felt there had been no change. Resident A agreed there had been no change in their attitude and criticised the local authority for its letting policy. The comment is worthy of consideration as the increased awareness and responsibility felt by residents for their environment may well find expression through a 'flexing' of their democratic muscle. If so, this comment may well be an early indication of residents more active participation in such decision making processes.

The Lyng Lane residents show through their responses a greater willingness to engage with other tenants on the estate. The comments of residents B and D outline how they accept responsibility for others. Resident B states quite explicitly that they feel '...related to...' and '...protective of...' other tenants. The use of such expressions is a strong indication of the personal responsibility felt by this respondent to others on the Lyng Lane estate. Resident D arguable develops this further by inviting other residents to bring problems or concerns to them and disclosing that they are '...in the CATCH...'

This willingness to disclose their active partnership with the police significantly increases their vulnerability to retribution by local criminals who may feel aggrieved. Notwithstanding they have informed other tenants of their participation in CATCH and it appears this has had a beneficial effect upon them in that they are '...happier.'

Has CATCH changed resident's attitude to the police?

The rationale behind question 6 was to explore resident's attitudes to the police. It is reiterated that the responses may well have been affected by the fact the author, a serving police officer, had asked the question. The Great Bridge residents highlighted, quite strongly, what must be one of the main concerns of the police when considering introducing a CATCH scheme, the extent of support they will provide and the clarity of understanding. In this case there is clear evidence from the responses that the police failed, probably more than once, to respond effectively to residents calls for service both when called by radio and by phone. It is apparent that from the response of resident D that they feel a degree of disillusionment with the CATCH scheme because of the poor police response. This is probably because the resident perceives the scheme to be primarily constructed for the benefit of the police who have failed to meet their obligations. Resident A develops this further by being specifically critical of the police control room staff, the controllers. This resident whilst accepting the '...frustration...' felt by officers believes that the CATCH scheme is neither known nor given sufficient recognition by controllers.

In contrast the Lyng Lane residents responses show a higher degree of satisfaction with the police. There is an indication that residents A and C since participating in CATCH have gained a greater appreciation of the work of the police. This understanding is considered to be of benefit to them. In contrast to the responses from Great Bridge, the experiences of the residents of the Lyng Lane estate are that the police respond effectively to calls. The response by resident E of the Lyng Lane estate is of particular interest. It is an objective of the West Midlands Police for local people to know their sector police officer. This objective is an integral part of the sector-policing concept and could be thought of as an ideal measure of the success or otherwise of any officer's efforts to integrate with their local communities. What is thought to be implied by the respondent is that what is important to them as an individual is not that they know their local officer but that that officer knows them. What does this mean? We can easily imagine the personal satisfaction of going to a shop or restaurant and being recognised by the staff. That recognition of ones self by others is a fundamental human experience. In the context of CATCH it may be that local residents seeking to work with the police feel that recognition of them by their local officer is of value and of importance to them as individuals.

What was the most memorable event for residents involved in CATCH?

There is clear agreement between the respondents of both Great Bridge and Lyng Lane that CATCH has provided opportunities for them to participate in crime incidents, which they would describe as memorable. With the exception of resident E from Great Bridge all respondents have provided examples of criminal incidents, vandals damaging windows, burglaries and anti-social behaviour. This is unsurprising given the crime reduction nature of the scheme and its association with the police. What is of interest is the variety of different incidents described by the Lyng Lane residents.

They provided examples of; residents directing the police response to criminal acts, the provision of information which led to the eviction of a tenant who had engaged in criminal and anti-social behaviour and observing gangs of unruly youths. Resident E again provides an interesting insight into the extent of participation and desire of CATCH members to reduce crime. Here they describe their observation of persons breaking into a house.

The respondent must have left their home to follow the offenders whilst remaining in radio contact with other CATCH members who directed the police to arrest them. They finalise their reply by expressing their disappointment at not being able to assist in identifying the offenders who had robbed an elderly lady.

The Great Bridge residents tended to emphasise the one incident where an offender was arrested following causing damage to the windows of a local authority housing department office. The reason may be because they had been operating for a shorter period of time. When you begin to analyse the incident in greater detail it is again apparent that there exists a tremendous commitment to reducing crime within the estate. This is most apparent in the response by resident A who describes the resident's actions in detecting the offence. They describe how they became aware of the repeated damage being caused to the office windows and how there was an incorrect assumption being made, it is assumed by the council, police or other residents, that youths were to blame. As a consequence the residents noted a pattern of the windows being damaged after they were repaired. They had noted that one Friday the windows had been repaired and agreed to keep the office under observation. The residents observed a man damage the window and as we have seen with the responses from the Lyng Lane residents, they left their homes and followed him away from the scene. What is apparent from the detailed reply is that the police were informed by the residents telephoning 999. They highlight the importance of the 'base' in this function. In the case of Great Bridge this person is an elderly and disabled lady whose radio equipment had been modified to allow her to depress the transmit button. The reason for this modification was that she suffers from arthritis and lacked the strength in her fingers to depress the transmit button on the radio handset.

The residents followed the man for some considerable time and over quite a distance until the police arrived to arrest the offender. It can be assumed that such a situation may have given rise to the Great Bridge resident's dissatisfaction with the police response. Resident A again expresses support for the youths on the estate by highlighting the fact the offender who was in his 30's was responsible and shown to be so following the intervention of the CATCH scheme members. The resident concludes his response by highlighting the perceived difference in attitude of some police officers that dismiss the importance of CATCH and that of their local sector officers whose support they enjoy. What is of interest is the resident's belief in CATCH not just reducing crime and restoring people's confidence but in providing '...respect...' for the police. Finally the response by resident D seems to conflict with previous responses by other residents in that it highlights examples of positive police actions.

What do the residents believe is good about CATCH?

Question 8 again provides a quite clear agreement between the residents on both estates of the benefits of CATCH. Resident A from the Lyng Lane estate appears to argue that CATCH provides a simple solution to the problem of social exclusion. There is considerable emphasis placed upon the importance of working together, teamwork and whilst acting as individuals knowing there are others available to assist them.

What do the residents believe is bad about CATCH?

The responses from the Great Bridge residents to question 9 again highlighted their criticism of poor police response to incidents reported by CATCH members. Resident A points out the wasted time and effort incurred by the police and residents when criminals are not arrested. Residents B and D from Lyng Lane and resident D from Great Bridge all highlight the potential dangers of retaliation from local criminals should their membership of CATCH be known.

This fear must be taken seriously when the residents themselves state they could be ...letter-bombed...’ This is where petrol or some other accelerant is poured through a letterbox and ignited. Resident C from Lyng Lane highlights the importance of support from local authority staff in the management and operation of a CATCH scheme.

Has CATCH changed resident’s everyday life?

The final question sought to determine if the resident’s membership of CATCH had affected their everyday life. In many ways the responses show the residents haven’t changed their life styles through participation in CATCH. Whilst resident E of the Lyng Lane estate is clearly very involved and committed to CATCH the majority of Great Bridge residents have been unaffected. There appears to be agreement between residents D of both estates that whilst CATCH is accepted by them it should not become an obsessive involvement. This must surely be the appropriate response as an over involvement in the scheme could lead to the potential for it becoming a fear generator or promoting vigilante reactions by residents. Resident A from the Great Bridge scheme again highlights the positive social benefits in that they act as ‘ambassadors’ for the scheme and promote its introduction on other estates. The same resident appears to have become a point of contact for local youths and has helped them in receiving assistance from the local authority. The personal satisfaction they feel through accepting this responsibility is apparent as they state the local youths ‘...respect me for my work and talk over their problems.’ The final comment, which appears to summarise the responses from the interviews is that of resident B who, states

‘...I’m more aware of where I’m living I don’t think it’s a terrible place, when we first started we were more operational but we are much quieter now, that’s good its brought the estate closer together.’

Notwithstanding the above in reality the research has not unequivocally determined how these effects have been achieved nor why CATCH appears to enjoy such public support. This is clearly an area ripe for additional and detailed research, which would assist in answering the above dilemmas.

7) Conclusion

The Future

The widespread use of radio links by a variety of participants, from shop assistants, teachers to residents of housing estates is a reality. The integration of such schemes can be achieved at little real cost when compared to the financial and personal burden of crime. The total package of radio links represents a significant commercial opportunity for the communications and security industry, which is waiting to be explored or exploited. When the value of both being and feeling safer is compared to the £50 cost of a radio, the rise and rise of radio links is confidently predicted. What though of the future?

This dissertation has concentrated upon the use of two-way radio communication known as 'Private Mobile Radio' (PMR) The majority of users of the radio spectrum would be more familiar with Cellular Phones in particular the GSM networks utilised by the four major telecommunications networks. The experience of recent years however is that there are significant advances in the development of technologies which are designed for use by the general public. For example, the rapid development of personal computers linked to the expansion in the Internet. What is the future of mobile two-way communication?

The only real certainty is that there will continue to be significant and increasing use of two-way and networked mobile communication by both individuals and organisations. The importance of personal safety will ensure that any such technological development will include within it the capability to reduce the individual's risk of criminal victimisation. For example, how many mobile phones have individuals or organisations purchased on the basis of personal safety? But communication is just one facet of the risk reduction equation. The real commercial opportunity is not in just facilitating communication but providing a monitoring and response capability. Simply put, reassurance comes from knowing there is someone, out there interested in you, with whom you can communicate and is prepared to help.

The Internet again provides a number of useful comparisons in that the method of communication is perhaps less important than the facilities it offers. The company or organisation that harnesses the 'listening out for' and response facility will be well placed to profit from the development of radio links. If there is a commercial opportunity, then it is more likely that radio links will be developed. What security company would not be interested in talking to people who wish to be safer? What communication's company would wish to ignore networks of people who want to continuously exchange information? It is important to record therefore that there is evidence that radio links will become a significant crime prevention feature in the future.

If that is assumed to be the case then it can also be argued that at this time radio links are the 'Cinderella' of crime prevention. Known about, but not allowed to go to the ball.

The recent government CCTV grant of £170 million equates to some 3.4-million £50 CATCH radios. That is, 3.4 million people who could potentially have been safer, each day.

Radio Links and Control

If the argument is continued that radio links will continue to develop, that the number of systems will grow and that the technologies of communication and information will merge, into potentially 'personal communicators' then who will be in control? There has been some concern expressed over abuses of the Internet and CCTV with calls for greater control over both, often amounting to demands for more effective 'policing' and legislative direction. The future may well be that similar arguments will be made for forms of control over the use of radio links. The experience of recent years is that radio links develop faster than other more expensive crime prevention systems, involve more people and achieve benefits that are personally important to individuals. It is submitted that with the commercial opportunities apparently available acting as a driver for the development of radio links and the potential for their number to rapidly expand then consideration of the implications of such growth should be made now, not later.

If it is that government, police forces and local authorities will begin to seriously consider radio links then the issue of control will no doubt be raised. It is hoped that within those discussions there will be an appreciation that ultimately individuals will be deciding upon what 'safety' services they require. There shouldn't be any limitation placed upon who should benefit from those services nor should there be any constraints placed upon local communities rights to decide the manner in which they use their radio link. Is this an appeal to anarchy? The research shows that people involved in CATCH in particular but also other radio links accept responsibility for not just their own safety but that of others as well. That display of maturity should be respected and as it is the public themselves who participate in and benefit from the system then they ultimately will decide their own future.

The Research

This dissertation can be viewed as being a 'beginning' a record of the development and present condition of radio links and an indication of what may be in the future. The literature review shows there exists enormous potential for further research, hopefully by people not as involved in the systems nor with the radio users. The benefits hinted at in the research, conducted to date need to be investigated in depth and authoritatively quantified. The overview of current crime prevention and criminological theory initially appears to indicate that there are similarities between the practices of radio links and the theories discussed. After due consideration however it could be argued that radio links may require additional theoretical consideration. This dissertation could therefore be considered to be a 'call to arms' for academics, security practitioners and criminologists to visit their nearest town or city.

The importance of 'Best Value' and the implications for police and local authorities has been considered in the light of radio links. The importance of patrol has been considered as has the costs of crime to local authorities.

It has been argued that radio links have the potential to provide a cost-effective solution, to achieve 'Best Value' and reduce the costs of crime. And finally the interviews with residents involved in CATCH provide a graphic account of how the simple medium of communication can benefit people and their community.

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