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# **Policing Drug Hot-Spots**

*Jessica Jacobson*

Police Research Series  
Paper 109

# **Policing Drug Hot-Spots**

*Jessica Jacobson*



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### **Policing and Reducing Crime Unit: Police Research Series**

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRC) was formed in 1998 as a result of the merger of the Police Research Group (PRG) and the Research and Statistics Directorate. PRC Unit is now part of the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate of the Home Office. The PRC Unit carries out and commissions research in the social and management sciences on policing and crime reduction, broadening out the role that PRG played.

The PRC has now combined PRG's two main series into the Police Research Series, continuing PRG's earlier work. This will present research material on crime prevention and detection as well as police management and organisation issues.

Research commissioned by PRG will appear as a PRC publication. Throughout the text there may be references to PRG and these now need to be understood as relating to the PRC Unit.

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## Foreword

The Government strategy on drugs, *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain* emphasises the importance of tackling drug-dealing at the local level. This report builds on an earlier PRC study of local drug markets, which examined the scope for situational prevention methods for dealing with local drug markets – an approach which has proved effective in dealing with more conventional local crime problems.

Drawing on studies and evaluations from both the USA and Britain, this report identifies six elements to successful initiatives aimed at disrupting local drug markets. It also highlights the importance of effective co-operation between the police and other agencies, supporting the emphasis on ‘partnership’ within the Government strategy on drugs, and reinforcing the role of Drug Action Teams, which have responsibility for co-ordinating action at a local level.

**Gloria Laycock**

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March 1999

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### **The Author**

The author is a member of the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

## Executive summary

The subject of this report is the application of situational crime prevention methods to the policing of local drug markets. In the context of the report, the term 'drug market' is used to refer to a location at which illicit drugs (of one or more kinds) are bought and sold; and 'situational crime prevention' refers to measures taken by the police and other agencies to modify the social and physical features of drug market sites in order to make them less attractive to dealers and users.

The report considers four key themes relating to the situational policing of drug markets. First, it discusses the necessity of **identifying and analysing drug hot-spots**, as a first stage of any operation. The implementation of situational initiatives is dependent upon thorough knowledge of the geographical locations and spread, and the major social and environmental features, of the markets that are being targeted. The data used for the purposes of mapping and analysis can derive from many sources, including intelligence records, arrest and crime reports, emergency calls for service and public surveys.

Secondly, the relevance of **police crackdowns** to situational initiatives is considered. Situational prevention is frequently undertaken by the police in conjunction with locally-based enforcement initiatives. Low-level enforcement at drug market locations can involve any combination of a number of elements which inhibit drug transactions by increasing the risks of arrest and general inconvenience faced by buyers and sellers. Enforcement strategies most commonly take the form of covert surveillance, test-purchase operations, highly visible patrols, police raids, and sweeps.

Thirdly, the report looks at the various strategies of **place management** which can be employed in order to modify the environments of drug-dealing sites. These strategies are most effectively carried out by the police in partnership with other agencies operating in the local areas. Multi-agency action at drug market locations can encompass a wide range of measures to tackle such problems as lack of surveillance, weak management, the presence of potential customers for drug dealers, and the presence of facilitators for buying and using drugs.

Finally, there is an examination of the potential problem of **displacement**. Displacement is said to occur when a situational initiative at a drug market location has the result of changing the patterns of, rather than eradicating, illegal activity. Displacement may, however, have benign effects: as when a movement from overt to covert dealing results in a reduction in forms of anti-social behaviour associated with street-level markets. A reverse process to that of displacement can

also be a consequence of situational initiatives: a ‘diffusion of benefits’ occurs when the positive effects of a strategy have an impact upon an area or a form of crime that was not directly targeted.

The themes outlined above are discussed with reference to the findings of a number of studies of policing initiatives at drug market locations. These include an assessment of a crime analysis programme used in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to identify addresses at which there was repeated drug activity; a study of the effects of New York City’s Tactical Narcotics Teams, which carried out short-term, intensive narcotics enforcement in designated areas; and the case of Operation Welwyn: the police contribution to a multi-agency crime prevention initiative in King’s Cross, London.

It is concluded from the literature reviewed by this report that there are six crucial elements to successful multi-agency, preventive initiatives against local drug markets:

- **Appropriateness of intervention** Analysis of a drug market site, prior to the design of a preventive strategy, should entail careful examination of the parameters and nature of the local problem. Consultation with residents and community groups can enhance sensitivity to any unique features of the site.
- **Intensity of intervention** The use of proactive enforcement tactics in combination with alternative methods of crime prevention permits the weaknesses of certain approaches to be counter-acted by the strengths of others.
- **Leverage** Situational policing of drug markets requires the creative use of levers by the police as they seek to persuade other agencies to work with them. In some cases, this will primarily be a matter of encouraging potential partners to recognise that they have common interests and goals. In other cases, the police may have to draw on civil laws and regulations in obliging place managers to take actions against drug dealers and users.
- **Sustained action** The likelihood that the beneficial impact of many initiatives will be eroded over time must always be borne in mind. Preventive strategies should incorporate components that will have at least some long-term effects upon drug market sites, and should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing patterns of behaviour among drug dealers and users.
- **Sensitivity to community relations** Crime control initiatives that exacerbate existing tensions within neighbourhoods may be counter-productive. When local residents and community organisations are involved in the development of strategies, efforts should be made to incorporate representatives of as many segments of the population as possible.



- **Evaluation** Thorough process evaluations of initiatives should bring to light design and implementation problems as and when they arise, and may therefore assist with their resolution. Evaluations should also allow early mistakes to be avoided and achievements to be built upon in later phases of operations, and facilitate interchange concerning good practice between agencies and regions.

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# 1. Introduction

## Situational crime prevention

The term 'situational crime prevention' refers to measures taken by the police and other agencies to reduce the opportunities for, and potential rewards of, crime committed in specific places. These measures focus on the nature of criminal **events** and the **settings** within which they occur, rather than on the motivations and profiles of offenders. Hence this is a highly pragmatic approach, which 'seeks not to eliminate criminal or delinquent tendencies through improvement of society or its institutions, but merely to make criminal actions less attractive to offenders' (Clarke, 1997: 2).

The rationale for situational methods arises from a recognition that criminal activities of all kinds are not evenly distributed across towns, cities or regions, but tend to cluster in particular localities. Crime statistics tell us that even within neighbourhoods known for their high crime rates, substantial areas are likely to be relatively free of crime, while certain places may be heavily exploited by offenders. This simple fact informs the key hypothesis put forward by advocates of the situational approach to crime prevention: namely, that 'if we can prevent crime at these high crime places, then we might be able to reduce total crime' (Eck, 1997: 187).

The implementation of situational crime prevention measures involves the identification and then modification of whatever physical and social features of high-crime locations - or crime 'hot-spots' - encourage criminal activities. These features can be many and varied, and may include, for example, a lack of formal or informal surveillance, poor management, easy access, and the presence of inadequately secured valuable items (Eck and Weisburd, 1995). In short, 'crimes are created by the interactions of potential offenders with potential targets in settings that make doing the crime easy, safe and profitable' (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1995: 5).

Situational crime prevention techniques are generally applied to places which are small in area: a given location may comprise no more than a single building or a few addresses or street sections; at most, it may stretch to a block or housing estate. Some situational initiatives may be oriented towards entire neighbourhoods or communities, but the various components of such initiatives are likely to be narrowly focused on specific localities within the wider area.

A vast range of strategies can be employed by the police and other agencies in the effort to make high-crime locations less inviting to offenders; the chosen strategies will depend, of course, on the specifics of the crimes committed and their settings.

## INTRODUCTION

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Clarke (1997) has proposed a model for situational prevention which incorporates 16 techniques of reducing opportunities for crime (see Table 1). These are classified according to the four aims of:

- increasing the effort associated with crime;
- increasing the risks of crime;
- reducing the rewards of crime; and
- removing the excuses for crime.

<b>Increasing Perceived Effort</b>	<b>Increasing Perceived Risks</b>	<b>Reducing Anticipated Rewards</b>	<b>Removing Excuses</b>
1. <i>Target hardening</i> Fake coin rejector devices Steering locks Anti-bandit screens	5. <i>Entry/exit screening</i> Automatic ticket gates Baggage screening Merchandise tags	9. <i>Target removal</i> Removable car radio Women's refuges Phonecard	13. <i>Rule setting</i> Customs declaration Harassment codes Hotel registration
2. <i>Access control</i> Parking lot barriers Fenced yards Entry phones	6. <i>Formal surveillance</i> 'Red light' cameras Burglar alarms Security guards	10. <i>Identifying property</i> Property marking Vehicle licensing Cattle branding	14. <i>Stimulating conscience</i> Roadside speedometers 'Shoplifting is stealing' 'Idiots drink and drive'
3. <i>Deflecting offenders</i> Bus stop placement Pub location Street closure	7. <i>Surveillance by employees</i> Pay phone location Park attendants CCTV systems	11. <i>Reducing temptation</i> Gender-neutral listings in telephone directories Off-street parking Rapid repair	15. <i>Controlling disinhibitors</i> Drinking-age laws Ignition interlock 'V-chip' for TV sets
4. <i>Controlling facilitators</i> Credit card photo Gun controls Caller-ID	8. <i>Natural surveillance</i> Defensible space Street lighting Cab driver ID	12. <i>Denying benefits</i> Ink merchandise tags PIN for car radios Graffiti cleaning	16. <i>Facilitating compliance</i> Easy library checkout Public lavatories Litter bins

Adapted from Clarke (1997)

The very earliest forms of crime prevention involved the modification of places in order to make offences more difficult to commit (Eck, 1997). It is since the late 1970s, however, that situational crime prevention has become a focus of criminological research, and has played an increasingly significant part in crime control strategies in Britain and the USA.

Situational techniques have often been used as elements of a broader problem-oriented policing (POP) strategy. Like the situational perspective, the POP model

has had considerable influence over the past two decades, particularly in the USA. It is associated above all with the work of Goldstein (1979, 1990; see also Leigh *et al*, 1996). Whereas the traditional police response to incidents has been to deal with the symptom but not to tackle the underlying causes, the basic idea of POP is that policing should be refocused on the cause. POP involves a rational, problem-solving approach, and has significant implications for police organisation and management. It involves four key stages:

- **scanning**, or recognition of the problem;
- **analysis**, whereby the causes and extent of the problem are explored, and the key actors identified;
- **response**, the nature and scope of which will be determined by the nature and scope of the problem;
- **assessment**, which must be carried out in a comprehensive manner if new problem-solving initiatives are to build on previous successes.

### **Situational policing and local drug markets**

This report examines the application of situational crime prevention methods to the policing of drug markets. The term 'drug market' is used here to refer to a location at which illicit drugs (of one or more kinds) are bought and sold; and 'situational crime prevention' refers, following the above discussion, to efforts to modify the social and physical features of drug market locations in order to make them less attractive to dealers and users. The importance of tackling drug-dealing at a local level is highlighted by two of the four aims of the new Government strategy on drugs, **Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain** (1998): to 'protect our communities from drug-related anti-social and criminal behaviour' and to 'stifle the availability of illegal drugs on our streets'.

The police frequently undertake situational prevention in conjunction with locally-based enforcement initiatives. Operations which combine situational crime prevention with what is often referred to as 'low-level enforcement' (see, for example, Lee, 1995) have sometimes followed dissatisfaction with the expense and seemingly poor results of attempts to disrupt wholesale trafficking (Uchida and Forst, 1994). While several agencies may be involved in implementing situational strategies against drug-dealing, the police usually take the lead role in these, and responsibility for the co-ordination of multi-agency activities.

Drug-dealing is not always carried out in fixed locations: where markets are 'closed', that is, confined to participants who are known to each other, dealing can occur at any convenient place. On the other hand, 'open' markets, which are accessible to

all potential customers, tend to be place specific (Edmunds *et al*, 1996). Eck (1995) describes the dilemma faced by retail buyers and sellers in illicit markets who recognise that they face fewer risks of being cheated or of being apprehended by the police if they deal only with people they know, but would welcome the far greater access to goods and customers that dealing also with strangers permits.

By definition, the majority of 'situational' crime prevention strategies applied to drug-dealing have relevance only to geographically fixed markets. However, it should be noted that some tactics that can be described as situational - in the sense that they fall under Clarke's heading of 'controlling facilitators' of crime - can be employed with respect to mobile markets. Most obviously (as discussed by Natarajan *et al*, 1995), controls can be exerted over the use of telephones, including mobile phones.

There are four major issues to be considered with regard to the situational policing of drug markets:

- the necessity of **identifying and analysing drug hot-spots** , as a first stage of any locally-based preventive strategy;
- the relevance of **police crackdowns** , or low-level enforcement, to situational initiatives;
- the various strategies of **place management** which can be employed by the police, in partnership with other agencies, in order to modify the environments of drug-dealing sites;
- the potential problem of **displacement**: that is, the possibility that situational initiatives will produce changing patterns of, rather than net reductions in, crime.

These four issues will be discussed in turn in the sections of the report that follow, and will be illustrated with reference to case studies. It should be noted that although a substantial amount of research on situational crime prevention in general has been carried out in Britain, there is a limited amount of British material on situational initiatives that have been applied to drug markets. In the USA, in contrast, a number of evaluations of situational operations against drug-dealing have been conducted; hence most of the case studies to be examined in this report are American. An interesting and significant British case that will be considered here, however, is that of Operation Welwyn at King's Cross in London.

## 2. Identifying and Analysing Drug Hot-Spots

Clearly, the successful implementation of situational strategies at drug markets depends, in the first place, upon thorough knowledge of the geographical locations and spread of those markets. Some drug markets, especially if they operate at street level and are long-established, may be in locations that are well-known to offenders, the general public, and the police. In other cases, in contrast, the very task of identifying major drug-dealing sites may require a fairly sophisticated level of crime analysis. The process of mapping drug markets - like the mapping of other kinds of crime hot-spots - can be greatly aided by current and rapid developments in information technology. The data used for the purposes of analysis can derive from many sources, including intelligence records, arrest and crime reports, public complaints, emergency calls for service (as in Case 1, below), community meetings, and public surveys.

### **CASE 1: Mapping drug markets in New Bedford, Massachusetts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994)**

As part of an assessment of a new crime analysis system known as the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), researchers working under the auspices of the United States' Bureau of Justice Statistics analysed a set of automated, incident-based data on drug problems collected by the police department of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The primary aim of the analysis was to identify addresses at which there was repeated drug activity.

The data used in the analysis derived from the department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system, and comprised details of all drug-related incidents in the city from January to September 1990. Drug-related incidents were defined as those where the dispatch was to a drug offence, the officer found drugs to be involved in the incident to which he was despatched, or the call was for a drugs raid. It was found that during the period in question, there was a total of 1,326 drug-related calls from 578 addresses.

Significantly, eight per cent of these addresses were the source of five or more calls each, accounting for 42% of all incidents; further, four per cent of addresses produced ten or more calls each, accounting for 31% of the total. These figures strongly suggested that it was most cost-effective for proactive police strategies to be targeted at that small minority of addresses responsible for the highest number of calls. This conclusion seems clearer still if it is taken into account that once any given address had produced five calls, the probability of there being subsequent incidents at that location was as high as 0.87.



In considering possible means of disrupting drug activity at the problem addresses, it would be inappropriate to treat those addresses as if they existed as isolated sites. The analysis of the New Bedford data included an examination of the geographical clusters of drug incidents, and it was discovered that drug activity was most intense in three areas of the city. Knowledge of the positions of these clusters should, again, assist the strategic planning of the police (for example, two schools were located near one of the clusters: a fact which could be of particular concern to law enforcement agencies). Such information could also inform decisions made about the boundaries of tactical drugs units, as was suggested by the chief of the New Bedford police department.

The analysis of drug-dealing locations prior to the development and introduction of any preventive strategy should entail more than simply identifying the whereabouts of the sites. All the key characteristics of a given market will have major repercussions for the choice of strategy, and must be thoroughly examined. The kind of site in which the market is located is perhaps the first factor that must be considered - given that dealing can take place in sites as various as residential properties, abandoned properties of one sort or another, open streets, pubs or bars, restaurants, and so on. Most crucially, as far as those interested in situational strategies are concerned (and as is illustrated by Case 2, below), the question of which environmental features make the site appealing to buyers and sellers must be addressed. Police strategists will also want to know which drugs are being dealt at the site, and about the kinds of people who are buying and selling: whether or not they are locals, for example, and to what extent they are known to each other.

### **CASE 2: An examination of crime in and around abandoned buildings in Austin, Texas (Spelman, 1993)**

Strategists interested in situational crime prevention techniques must address the following question: what are the environmental characteristics of a given crime hot-spot that attract criminals? In some cases, part of the answer to this question may lie in the fact that the hot-spot is located in or near an abandoned building which is a convenient 'hang-out' for offenders. Indeed, this applies to some of the drug market locations analysed by Weisburd and Green (1994) (see Case 3, below).

Spelman sought to test the hypothesis that abandoned buildings attract criminals, including drug-dealers and others, by conducting a study of crime in a

low-income neighbourhood in Austin, Texas. He compared crime rates in 35 'case blocks' containing one or more abandoned buildings (defined as residential buildings that had been vacant for at least three months or for less than three months but were already uninhabitable) with crime rates in 24 'control blocks' that had no abandoned buildings but were otherwise similar to the case blocks.

The data on crime rates used by Spelman were derived from records of police calls for service (classified as violent calls, property calls, or drug calls) that resulted in the dispatch of an officer and the creation of a crime report, and from inspections of abandoned buildings for evidence of illegal activity. It was also noted whether or not vacant buildings had been secured.

One of the findings of the research was that there was evidence of drug use in 19% of the abandoned buildings. Spelman suggests that these were safe places for drug users and dealers, since activity was rarely visible from the street, and offenders were unlikely to be interrupted by the police or others. On the broader question of relative crime rates in the case and the control blocks, it was found that the former had about twice as many drug and theft cases, and gave rise to 1.3 times as many violent calls.

Whether or not the abandoned buildings in a block had been secured proved to be a highly significant factor: when crime rates were compared between the blocks containing unsecured vacant buildings (which numbered 16) and all other blocks (that is, the 43 blocks that contained secured vacant buildings or no vacant buildings), it was found that the crime ratios were 3.2 for drug calls, 1.8 for theft calls, and 2.0 for violent calls. An obvious conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that the identification and securing of abandoned buildings can play a major part in crime prevention.

Another question to be considered in the analysis of drug market locations is whether, where dealing takes place over an extended area, it is most appropriate to treat this as a single site or several, smaller markets; this is one of the issues discussed by Weisburd and Green (1994) (Case 3). What Green (1996) refers to as the 'temporal dimensions' of drug activity at any given site should also be examined: that is, it should be remembered that many of the routine activities taking place at a drug market location will be legitimate, and that the illegitimate activities are bound to occur at certain times rather than continuously. It is also important to note the extent to which drug-dealing at a particular location is associated with other forms of criminal activity (as is quite commonly the case),

and whether any preventive strategies are therefore likely to have a disruptive effect on crimes other than those which are drug-related.

### **CASE 3: Defining street-level drug markets in Jersey City, New Jersey (Weisburd and Green, 1994)**

Weisburd and Green were involved in the mapping of street-level drug markets in Jersey City, New Jersey, as the first stage of an evaluation of a new enforcement strategy called the Drug Market Analysis Program (DMAP).

Information about drug market locations was gathered by means of an analysis of police data on narcotics arrests from June to November 1990, a phone-in (members of the public were requested to call the police anonymously to give details of drug markets in their local areas), and a large-scale community survey. It was found that some degree of drug activity was in evidence at 322 out of a total of 4,404 street intersections and street segments in Jersey City.

In order to assist the police with the implementation of the DMAP system, Weisburd and Green sought to identify, among the 322 street locations at which there was drug-dealing, discrete areas which could be labelled as 'drug-markets'. Taking into account the fact that - as was reported by the police - dealers tended to operate in fixed locations and to specialise in particular drugs, the researchers drew boundaries around areas in which there was evidence of ongoing, similar drug activity. A total of 107 drug markets were identified in this way; some of which spanned several active street intersections and street segments, and others of which were much smaller.

The characteristics of the drug markets were then examined. It was found that almost a third were in Jersey City's South District: an area with the largest number of residents from low-income and ethnic minority groups. On the other hand, about a quarter of the markets were located in the primarily white and middle-class North District. Another finding was that a large number of the South District market areas contained abandoned buildings and vacant lots. Altogether, the results of Weisburd and Green's mapping exercise illustrate the importance of focusing enforcement strategies on specific geographical areas, and of recognising the diversity of markets: for example, in terms of size, clientele, drug type and physical features.

### 3. Police Crackdowns

As has been noted above, an intensification of enforcement activity is frequently a concomitant of situational crime prevention strategies at drug market locations. A police 'crackdown' has been defined as 'an abrupt increase in police activity, especially proactive enforcement, which is intended to increase dramatically the perceived and/or actual threat of apprehension for specific types of offenses in certain places or situations, and so to produce a general deterrent effect' (Worden *et al*, 1994: 95).

A crackdown aimed at drug markets can involve any combination of a number of elements which inhibit drug transactions - and ultimately, it is hoped, drug use - by increasing the risks of arrest and general inconvenience faced by buyers and sellers. Enforcement strategies may include a period of covert surveillance and a series of test-purchase operations leading to a high number of arrests; a later stage of the crackdown may involve the introduction of a large and highly visible police presence in the form of frequent patrols. Police raids of drug market locations are another enforcement option: these are 'visible and sometimes violent demonstrations of police power' (Dorn *et al*, 1992: 97). A similarly overt method is the 'sweep', where police move through an area known to be heavily used by drug-dealers in order to search for drugs (and maybe weapons) and carry out - often in a predominantly unselective manner - large numbers of arrests.

Levels of drug-dealing at a given location may drop rapidly or even immediately following the launch of a police crackdown. Edmunds *et al* (1996) found that drug users at various street-level drug markets sites in London tended to be highly sensitive to what they knew or perceived to be police activity. Forty-four per cent of respondents reported that risk of apprehension was a key factor in their decisions about which markets to use. Police enforcement tactics were a frequent topic of discussion and rumour among the users. It appeared that perceptions of risk did not, however, dissuade the users from seeking to buy drugs at all: an observation which raises the problem of displacement, to be discussed below.

Since an increased police presence is almost invariably a feature of crackdowns, an operation at a drug market site should ideally lead to a decline in other forms of crime and a decline in fear of crime, in addition to inhibiting dealing activity. The police crackdown is often presented and perceived as an effort on the part of the police and law-abiding community to 'take back the streets': to 'claim' or even 'liberate' public spaces which have become the domain of drug-dealers and others who threaten public order (Zimmer, 1990). Zimmer found, in his study of Operation Pressure Point which targeted drug-dealers in one part of New York City in the mid-1980s, that crackdowns can in this way make a contribution to the gentrification of a formerly run-down area.

However, problems can arise if the development and promotion of enforcement strategies are informed by simplistic notions of a clear-cut distinction between the needs and wishes of a respectable 'community', on the one hand, and the disreputable intentions of a collection of local 'undesirables', on the other hand. Writing about the police anti-drugs project in King's Cross known as Operation Welwyn (to be discussed further below), Lee (1996) questions the working assumption made by the police that an external and transient problem population could be easily distinguished from a local and stable population with relatively homogeneous interests.

In practice, the fact that there are bound to be conflicting interests and concerns within any 'community' will have repercussions for public perceptions of police strategies. For example, opposition may be voiced to police tactics such as raids or sweeps that are believed to target disproportionately members of ethnic minorities (Lee notes that, according to police statistics, over 60% of arrestees in King's Cross were black) or, more generally, to be over-aggressive and to infringe civil liberties.<sup>1</sup> Any such opposition may hinder not only the implementation of crackdown strategies, but also wider attempts to link enforcement with multi-agency, situational initiatives which, as we shall see, are by their nature dependent upon good relations between the police and other sectors of the local population. Even when there is little overt opposition to police tactics, evident disunity within a local community can inhibit the emergence of grass-roots neighbourhood associations able to support enforcement efforts, as was found by Sviridoff and Hillsman (1994) (Case 4).

<sup>1</sup> See Popkin et al (1995) for an account of the legal controversy surrounding the implementation of a drug elimination programme, incorporating sweeps, in public housing developments in Chicago

### **CASE 4: A multi-method study of the effects of New York City's Tactical Narcotics Teams (Sviridoff and Hillsman, 1994)**

An evaluation of the community-level effects of the Tactical Narcotics Teams (TNT) in three Brooklyn precincts was initiated in 1989. The TNT units were developed by the New York City Police Department in order to carry out short-term, intensive narcotics enforcement in designated areas.

The TNT enforcement activity was mainly focused on street-level crack cocaine markets, but some operations targeted interior dealing (for example in vacant buildings and the lobbies of apartment blocks) and sellers of powdered cocaine and heroin. TNT primarily employed buy-and-bust tactics with the aim of generating rapid arrests, but also engaged in co-operation with agencies seeking to improve the general social and physical conditions of the neighbourhoods in which the drug markets were located.

The evaluation of the TNT operations sought to uncover their impact upon levels of drug activity, drug-related property crime, and fear of crime. It employed a quasi-experimental methodology, and involved a comparison of two TNT areas with an area designated as a future TNT site. Information was gathered before, during and after the implementation of TNT, by means of household surveys, analyses of statistical record data, in-depth interviews with community leaders, residents, and drug users and sellers, and operational analysis of TNT.

The preliminary findings of the research, reported upon by Sviridoff and Hillsman, suggested that the TNT operations had mixed results. In the first target area, 1,000 arrests were made over a 90-day period, approximately half of which involved felony-level drug sales, generally of crack. In this area, it appeared that over the course of the enforcement period street-level dealing generally became less visible, and was virtually shut down on one block. However, there was evidence to suggest that a **growth** in drug activity occurred in some locations, and that the overall volume of dealing remained steady throughout the enforcement period. TNT thus seems to have primarily had an impact upon patterns rather than quantity of dealing, with some markets moving from the street to indoors, and certain locations experiencing an increase and others a decline in drug activity.

Among the community leaders interviewed by the researchers, some scepticism was voiced regarding the outcomes of the enforcement activities, although there was support for TNT's presence, tactics and goals. TNT did not appear to have the effect of promoting community-based anti-drugs efforts; the community leaders tended to explain this in terms of the general lack of local community organisation and solidarity, and the existence of ethnic and economic conflict.

As far as the police are concerned, the most pressing problem associated with crackdowns on drug markets may be the fact that these are, by definition, highly resource-intensive and therefore cannot be sustained over long periods of time. It must always be borne in mind that any beneficial effects of a crackdown can fade rapidly once the enforcement measures are scaled down (although in some cases efforts are made, following crackdowns, to maintain a heightened police presence: see, for example, Case 5). After all, just as dealers and users may respond swiftly to a perceived increase in police activity, their response to a decrease in activity may also be rapid. However, problems arising from the scaling-down of enforcement

activity can be at least partially overcome if the police and/or other agencies are able to introduce a set of environmental crime prevention measures. Appropriate and long-lasting modifications to the places at which dealing takes place should have the effect of consolidating whatever positive results have been achieved by short-term enforcement strategies.

### **CASE 5: The Jersey City Drug Market Analysis Experiment (Weisburd and Green, 1995)**

Following the mapping of street-level drug markets in Jersey City, reported upon by Weisburd and Green (1994) and discussed as Case 3, an experimental evaluation of a new enforcement strategy was carried out.

Fifty-six 'hot-spots' of drug activity, identified by the mapping process, were evenly divided between experimental and control cases. The new strategy, which was applied to the experimental cases, required the assignment of specific officers to specific hot-spots, and comprised three stages. First, officers collected information about the hot-spots for which they were responsible by conducting surveillance, meeting with local residents and business owners, and reviewing the mapping data. Secondly, officers sought to shut down drug activity through enforcement measures tailored to the characteristics of the specific sites. These measures culminated in intensive crackdowns which usually lasted a few hours but sometimes led to further actions over the following days. At the third stage, officers made efforts to maintain the gains they had achieved, by increasing levels of surveillance and police patrols.

The effectiveness of the strategy was measured by looking at the numbers of emergency calls for service made at the hot-spot locations during the seven months before and the seven months after implementation. Comparisons were made with the numbers of calls over a similar period at the control sites, at which enforcement continued to take the same arrest-oriented, unsystematic form that it had done prior to the experiment.

With regard to narcotics calls, there was no initial evidence of a consistent improvement at the experimental as compared to the control sites. However, when calls from two-block **catchment areas** around the sites were compared, it was found that the new strategy had a major impact. Calls from the experimental catchment areas decreased from 1,184 to 1,037, while those from the control catchment areas increased from 887 to 1,395. One possible

explanation for the fact that a decrease in calls was observed in the experimental catchment areas but not in the experimental sites themselves is that overall narcotics activity (in both the hot-spots and their catchment areas) did decline, but this improvement was masked in the hot-spots because the intervention also had the effect of encouraging local people to report those incidents that did occur.

The new strategy did not appear to have an effect upon emergency calls for violent or property offences. With respect to calls for disorder, both the experimental and control sites recorded an increase in the post-intervention period, reflecting seasonal conditions. It was found that this increase was significantly greater in the control sites (3,559 to 4,270 calls: an increase of 20%) than in the experimental sites (3,257 to 3,513 calls: an increase of 8%), thereby demonstrating that the new strategy had a strong effect.

**CASE 6: An assessment of the results of police raids on crack houses in Kansas City (Sherman and Rogan, 1995)**

Sherman and Rogan sought to assess the effectiveness of a series of police raids on crack houses carried out by the Street Narcotics Unit (SNU) of Kansas City. The broad aim of the raids was to reduce crime in the residential blocks within which the crack houses were situated, since crack and other drug markets are frequently associated with high levels of crime in their immediate environments. As a highly visible enforcement strategy, the raids were intended to have a general deterrent effect on crime and disorder, whether or not they produced arrests.

Typically, a raid on a crack house by the SNU followed the purchase of drugs by an undercover police officer or an informant, and the issuing of a warrant. The raid itself would be constituted by the serving of the warrant by a squad of heavily armed officers who would enter the house by force, secure it, search it for drugs and weapons, and bring most or all of those in the house to a police station for questioning.

The evaluation by Sherman and Rogan took the form of a randomised, controlled experiment, carried out from November 1991 to May 1992. Court-authorized raids were conducted at sites on 98 blocks (the 'experimental' blocks), while a further 109 blocks were not subject to raids and were treated as controls. The impact of the raids on levels of crime and disorder in the



experimental blocks was measured by comparing the numbers of offence reports and calls for service made during the 30-day period prior to the raids with those made over the 30 days following the raids. The numbers of calls for service and offence reports emanating from the control blocks over a similar period were also calculated.

Over the course of the evaluation period, a decline in crime rates was evident in both the control and experimental blocks, but in the latter cases the decline was steeper. Taking the control group into account, the net reduction in calls for service from the experimental blocks was eight per cent, and the net reduction in offence rates fourteen per cent. Sherman and Rogan warn, however, that this apparent success of the SNU strategy was modest, given the large investment of officers' time that it demanded. Moreover, when the daily impact of the raids was measured, it was found that the deterrent effects decayed very quickly: indeed, within two weeks of the raids, the effects had virtually disappeared.

## 4. Place Management

The defining element of situational crime prevention is its focus on the modification of the environments within which crime is carried out. The development and implementation of environmental measures at drug-dealing locations is carried out most effectively when the police cooperate with other agencies working in the local areas. These other agencies, which can be described as ‘place managers’, include housing authorities, housing associations, landlords, residents’ and tenants’ associations, local authority departments, local businesses, and planning authorities.

The recognition of the importance of multi-agency work as a facet of crime prevention at drug market locations reflects a wider emphasis on ‘partnership’ within the Government strategy on drugs. The 1995 White Paper **Tackling Drugs Together**, as its very title implies, had partnership as one of its central themes. A key initiative launched by the White Paper was the establishment of multi-agency Drug Action Teams with responsibility for co-ordinating action against drugs at a local level. The new Government anti-drugs strategy **Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain (1998)** further strengthens the role of Drug Action Teams and again stresses that it is only through partnership that progress can be made towards realising its four aims of helping young people to resist drug misuse, protecting communities from anti-social and criminal behaviour, providing services to enable people to overcome their problems, and stifling the availability of drugs.

In devising environmental measures for the disruption of place-specific drug markets, the police and their partners must address three fundamental and inter-linked questions about the sites in question:

1. What are the social and physical characteristics of the drug market locations that make them attractive to those who buy and sell drugs?
2. How can those ‘attractive’ characteristics be modified or eradicated?
3. What social and physical characteristics can be introduced in order to make the locations unattractive to buyers and sellers?

The kinds of answers that will be put forward to these questions are dependent, first of all, on the basic parameters of the drug markets in question: on whether they are situated in open-air locations (such as streets or parks), abandoned buildings (which may be in residential or non-residential blocks), private homes (which may be owner-occupied or, alternatively, rented from private landlords, housing associations, or local authorities), commercial premises (for example, pubs, restaurants, night-clubs), or lobbies and other common areas of public housing estates or other building complexes.

Places can have four key features which, singly or in any combination, invite drug-dealing:

- lack of surveillance;
- weak management;
- the presence of potential customers;
- the presence of facilitators for buying and using drugs.

Below, I shall discuss some of the practical measures that can be taken in order to modify or counter the effects of each of these features. This discussion will be followed by the presentation of three case studies which illustrate the application of multi-agency, environmental strategies at drug market locations. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of some general issues relating to multi-agency interventions.

### **Surveillance**

Drug markets in public places of various kinds may flourish when there is little or no surveillance: that is, when the buying and selling of drugs is not visible or noticeable to individuals who are not participants in the transactions. Surveillance can take different forms, including **formal surveillance** conducted by the police or security guards. The introduction of CCTV and/or regular patrols by police or security personnel are the most straightforward means of enhancing formal surveillance and thereby increasing the risks of apprehension perceived by dealers and users. As noted above, these strategies are frequently employed as elements of locally-based enforcement operations against drug markets.

**Informal surveillance** is carried out by employees who do not have a specific security role at the premises at which they work, but may nevertheless be on the look-out for drug-dealing, drug-taking or other illegal activities taking place. Caretakers, restaurant staff, park attendants and so on can be trained to spot suspicious behaviour, and either to take measures to prevent it themselves, or to inform security guards or the police.

**Natural surveillance** occurs when members of the general public who are simply going about their day-to-day business take note of any criminal or potentially criminal behaviour of individuals they come across. There will be a lack of natural surveillance at a public place which is poorly-lit, obscured by barriers of one kind or another, or perhaps simply tucked away. Places that are perceived as dirty or dangerous may likewise be subject to little natural surveillance, as law-abiding individuals may be inclined to stay away from them. Conversely, surveillance by

the general public may also be inhibited at places which are especially busy: if a great deal of activity of all kinds is occurring at a particular location, suspicious behaviour may fail to attract attention.

A wide range of measures can be taken to increase effective natural surveillance at public places used by drug dealers. Improving lighting, cleaning up rubbish, removing abandoned cars, and regulating parking, for example, can all play a part in making open-air sites more conspicuous or accessible to the wider public and consequently less attractive to dealers (see the 1993 Bureau of Justice Assistance report for some examples of 'problem-oriented policing' in several American cities which encompassed these kinds of tactics). Knuttson (1997) describes the case of a successful police crackdown on drug use and dealing in a public park in Stockholm, Sweden, which coincided with efforts made by the park authorities to enhance natural surveillance. Thus, hedges were trimmed around the part of the park at which drug activity was most common, and a 'dog toilet' was introduced in order to encourage legitimate park users to frequent the area.

Natural surveillance will have little deterrent effect on drug-dealing when dealers believe that members of the general public are unlikely to take steps (either directly or via enforcement agencies) to prevent it, even if they notice that it is taking place. Such apparent lack of concern might be a result of intimidation of ordinary people by local criminals, a widespread sense that nothing can be done about high rates of crime, including drug-dealing, at the location in question, or a generalised resentment towards or mistrust of the police. A number of academics in the United States have argued that poor design of public housing can contribute to residents' feelings of helplessness or apathy with regard to crime. Among the suggestions made are that public housing residents are more inclined to feel a sense of solidarity with one another and to be intolerant of crime committed near their homes if they are housed in relatively small-scale complexes, with few and overlooked points of access, and extensive neighbourhood facilities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Management**

When drug-dealing occurs in private homes and abandoned buildings, this may partially be a consequence of weak management of the properties. Drug activity may be (unwittingly) encouraged by property owners who - whether they are public housing authorities, housing associations, or private individuals or agencies - fail to secure abandoned buildings, or do not seek to exercise control over criminal behaviour among their tenants. Properties which are losing value or are encumbered with debt may be particularly prone to use by drug-dealers, since in these cases landlords may simply not have the financial capacity to take action

<sup>2</sup> *The concepts of 'crime prevention through environmental design' (Jeffery, 1977) and 'defensible space' (Newman, 1972) have been particularly influential within this field of research*

against offenders (Eck and Weisburd, 1995). By screening potential tenants, evicting tenants who are known to be drug dealers, liaising with police engaged in local enforcement efforts, and renovating or at least securing empty premises, landlords can take steps to inhibit dealing at their properties.

Weak management may also be a feature of bars, fast-food restaurants, and night-clubs in which drug-dealing and using is taking place. This may simply be a matter of a failure on the part of staff to carry out informal surveillance; or, more seriously, corrupt staff may actually facilitate or promote dealing at their premises. Morris (1998) has highlighted ways in which some doormen at dance venues in the UK are involved in drug-dealing at the premises they are charged to protect. This involvement takes various forms: doormen may turn a blind eye to dealing activity, perhaps as a result of intimidation; or they may receive payment from dealers in return for allowing dealing to take place; or they may act as primary dealers themselves. Problems arising from poor management at commercial premises can be resolved through close supervision and training of staff, liaison with the police, and increased awareness of the forms and extent of local drug activity.

### Customers

Drug markets may be located at places where pools of likely customers already exist. For example, street-level markets frequently emerge in areas known for prostitution, since many prostitutes are heavy drug-users. Edmunds *et al* (1996) found that prostitution was well-established at - and probably pre-dated - four of six drug markets they examined in London. The relationship between drug-dealing and prostitution is likely to be complex: drug markets can promote prostitution and vice versa, or both can arise simultaneously as a result of certain environmental factors. The association between drug activity and prostitution suggests that police and local authorities' efforts to disrupt the one should also have an effect on the other. The introduction of high-visibility police patrols, for instance, may inhibit both drug and sex-work activity; and efforts to close down hotels frequented by prostitutes and their clients, and block off streets used by kerb-crawlers, may have a knock-on effect on drug markets.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For detailed discussion of the links between sex and drug markets, and the potential benefits of integrating the policing of both, see Mayet al (forthcoming)

Edmunds *et al* (1996) also point out that drug dealers may benefit from housing and planning policies which have the effect of bringing together large numbers of individuals likely to be already involved in, or susceptible to the temptations of, the local drug scene. Where possible, temporary accommodation such as hostels and bed-and-breakfasts should not be located at or near places associated with drug-dealing. Similarly, housing associations should do their best to avoid housing vulnerable tenants in such areas. Careful thought should also be given to the

locations of such facilities as needle exchanges, health services and prescribing chemists. Planning decisions should also take account of the fact that drug nuisance places are frequently found near to bars and off-licences (Green, 1996).

The emergence of the 'dance drug' scene within contemporary youth culture has produced many new and lucrative sites for drug-dealing. It has already been noted, above, that dealing at dance venues - which include night-clubs, pubs with dance floors, and large warehouses - is sometimes even carried out with the willing or unwilling support of door supervisors. In the case of drug-dealing at dance venues, enforcement and preventive strategies can hardly aim at the dispersal of the customer base - except when unlicensed 'raves' held in warehouses or the open air are deemed illegal and are broken up by the police. Otherwise, effective prevention is, as we have seen, largely dependent on strong management, which is encouraged by the recently introduced powers contained in the Public Entertainment Licences (Drugs Misuse) Act 1997. This allows licensing authorities to close down a club immediately when there is a serious problem of drug misuse.

Drug markets situated at street locations or in public areas of building complexes will operate only if there is good access to them: users and dealers must be able to get to and away from the sites easily and quickly. Thus access control is sometimes a component of situational prevention: for example, walk-ways on housing estates may be blocked off. However, the issue of access is not easy to address: **inaccessible** locations may attract dealers because of the lack of natural surveillance; and enforcement efforts by the police can be hindered if there is limited access to a drug-dealing site. One small element of a problem-oriented policing strategy implemented against drug-dealers in two public housing communities in Atlanta, Georgia, was the removal of clothes lines which had been strung between buildings at shin and neck height in order to trip police officers in pursuit of offenders (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1993).

### **Facilitators**

The control or removal of facilitators of crime is often regarded as an important part of situational crime prevention. With regard to drug markets, however, there are not a great many facilitators to be considered; the telephone is perhaps the most obvious of those that do exist. When deals are arranged over public telephones, these may be removed, or positioned within direct view of place managers. Alternatively, calls can be monitored, and incoming calls barred.

Cash is another crucial facilitator for drugs transactions: hence markets may be located near to bank cash-points or to post offices at which Giro cheques can be

cashed. It is unlikely that such facilities would be shut down as part of a preventive strategy. A measure that is more easily contemplated is the location of cash-points within lobbies which have controlled access, since this can reduce opportunities for theft of cash (Edmunds *et al*, 1996); however, there is a risk that individuals withdrawing money may be intimidated inside lobbies.

Drug markets may be situated at places where there is ready access to equipment for drug use - such as syringes, citric acid or lemons, water, and foil. In many cases little can be done to limit access to the most basic equipment; but restaurants and bars commonly used as meeting sites may be advised to avoid the use of foil ashtrays, and, as has already been suggested, the locations of needle exchanges require careful consideration. As Edmunds *et al* (1996) point out, efforts to reduce availability of drug equipment can have negative repercussions for the health of users: a lack of syringes can lead to the sharing of needles, and when citric acid cannot be obtained, lemons may be used as a more dangerous substitute.

### **CASE 7: The Specialized Multi-Agency Response Team in Oakland, California (Green, 1996)**

The Specialized Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART) approach was set up by the Oakland Police Department in 1988. SMART officers target places - including both business and residential premises - at which drug or general disorder problems have given rise to emergency calls for service, narcotics arrests, or specific requests for SMART intervention from community groups.

SMART officers employ a range of tactics. Typically, the first stage of intervention is a visit to the site in question, where officers set up a working relationship with local residents, landlords and business-owners in order to raise awareness of the issues of concern, promote confidence in the police, and encourage reporting of problems. SMART interventions frequently involve the implementation of environmental crime prevention strategies: landlords may be requested to remove graffiti and refuse; and planning authorities may be asked to erect street barriers to disrupt traffic. SMART officers offer a landlord training programme, which covers issues such as tenant screening. A key component of most interventions is the site visit by a team of city agency representatives - which can include, for example, officers from the housing, fire, and public works departments - who will enforce city regulations. Where there seem to be intractable problems at a site, officers will use civil law in requiring property-owners to take action against offenders: landlords can themselves be fined, have

their properties closed down, or be forced to sell their properties if drug use is taking place. If appropriate, traditional law enforcement measures, including surveillance and arrests, are also carried out as part of SMART interventions.

Green's evaluation of the Oakland SMART programme examined the impact of interventions at all 321 locations targeted in 1991. There were two parts to the study. First, the numbers of narcotics arrests, emergency calls, and field contacts (i.e. cautions) made at the sites prior to intervention, during a six-month intervention period, and during a six-month post-intervention period were calculated, and compared with the monthly averages for arrests, calls and contacts across the city. Secondly, changes in the appearances of the targeted sites were assessed: photographs were taken of the exteriors and interiors of the buildings before and after intervention, and were rated according to whether there was evidence of general improvement. The findings of the study were encouraging. Between the pre- and post-intervention periods, narcotics arrests per month declined by 34%, field contacts by 59% and emergency calls by 4%; the equivalent figures for the city as a whole were a decline of 19%, a decline of 21%, and a rise of 10% respectively. Of the 321 sites, 123 showed evidence of improved internal physical appearance, compared to 32 which had deteriorated; the figures for external appearance were 119 and 25 respectively.

As the SMART locations were highly heterogeneous in terms of the problems associated with and tactics employed against them, Green also analysed the relative impact of several different features of the interventions. Among her findings were that the greatest improvements were made when traditional enforcement strategies were employed in combination with alternative strategies; and that SMART interventions were most effective at highly visible business premises - presumably because business owners had the most to lose by not co-operating with police efforts to solve problems.

**CASE 8: A study of the Community Oriented Problem Solving initiative in St Louis, Missouri (Hope, 1994)**

Hope presents three case studies of problem-oriented policing which were part of a study of the 'Community Oriented Problem Solving' (COPS) initiative, launched in St Louis in 1991. In each of the three cases, police activity aimed to reduce general levels of crime and disorder at locations associated with drug-dealing, and was primarily focused on a specific problem address. In order to assess the impact of the strategy, the numbers of calls for police service to the



address, the block in which it was situated, and the surrounding area were analysed over three periods (spanning June 1990 to August 1992): the twelve months prior to special police activity, the nine-month period of intervention, and the six-month post-intervention period.

The policing initiatives involved various combinations of a number of elements, among which were the following:

- increased enforcement against drug activity (in one case, this was part of a 'zero tolerance' approach to all forms of criminal and disruptive behaviour);
- liaison with the local community, for example through convening meetings at which residents' concerns could be aired, and supporting a neighbourhood association's series of anti-drugs rallies;
- arranging for the appropriate city agencies to clear up rubbish outside run-down properties, and to board up vacant buildings;
- liaison with social workers who were able to relocate certain tenants living in problem properties;
- co-ordination with a landlord who was encouraged to evict a tenant known to be involved in drug-dealing, and to sell the property to a responsible developer;
- liaison with a finance company with which a mortgage on a problem property was held, with the result that the property's owner-occupier was persuaded to leave the property voluntarily.

In two of the cases, several of the above actions involved close co-operation with the area's designated 'ConServ Officer': a city official with responsibility for working with local residents on the delivery of city services, neighbourhood planning, and housing development.

The outcome of the police activity was found to be generally positive. In all three cases, there was an increase in numbers of calls for police service to the problem addresses during the intervention period - seemingly reflecting a greater willingness on the part of the public to make calls when they were aware of heightened police activity. In the follow-up period, all three addresses experienced a sharp decline in police calls: most strikingly, in one case a total of 88 calls was recorded for six months of the intervention period, and no more than three over the following six months. In two of the cases, a decline (in one case, of 70%) in calls to the remainder of the block in the post-intervention period was also recorded; furthermore, the declines in calls to the blocks were found to be exceptional when compared to call trends in surrounding areas. In the other case, however, calls to the remainder of the block increased by over 200% in the post-intervention period, suggesting that the police strategy had had the effect of shifting rather than eliminating local drug activity.

**CASE 9: Operation Welwyn in King's Cross, London (Lee, 1996; Perera *et al.*, 1996)**

King's Cross, situated just to the north of central London, is an economically deprived area, at the heart of which is a large main-line railway station. Much of King's Cross is non-residential - containing, for example, large numbers of fast-food restaurants - and there is a substantial amount of temporary accommodation in the area. Since the mid-nineteenth century King's Cross has been associated with prostitution; and from the early 1990s it also gained a reputation as a site of street-level drug-dealing, with heroin and crack being the major drugs sold and used.

Operation Welwyn was launched in 1991 by the Metropolitan Police Service as an enforcement-oriented response to the local drugs and related problems. Over the course of Phases I and II of the Operation, in late 1991 and early 1992, 174 suspected dealers and buyers were arrested (Lee, 1996). However, among both local residents and the police there was a widespread sense that any gains in terms of general crime reduction were short-term, and that the underlying problems of the area required a more broadly based response. Hence late 1992 saw the establishment of the King's Cross Partnership, involving the police (Phase III of Operation Welwyn was to be the police input into the initiative), Camden and Islington Health Authority, Camden and Islington Councils, Islington Safer Cities Project, voluntary organisations, and businesses. The police described their aim, within the partnership, as being: 'to improve the quality of life for the residents, commuters and people who work in, or pass through, the King's Cross area by reducing crime (drugs, prostitution and associated criminality), and reducing the fear of crime'. The King's Cross Partnership, and Operation Welwyn, continue to operate at the time of writing.

Some of the partnership activities to which the police have contributed are the evictions of tenants involved in drug-dealing; the limiting of opening hours of fast-food outlets (in order to break the 24-hour cycle of street activity); the launch of a free newspaper providing information on local developments; the 'designing out' of places at which drug-dealing and using could take place (for example by sealing off alleys and railway arches, boarding up derelict buildings, constructing fences, and removing bus shelters); the improvement of refuse collection and street lighting; the organisation of a new service for clearing up discarded syringes; and the local councils' application for the Government's Single Regeneration Bid.

Vigorous enforcement has accompanied the police involvement in the above kinds of preventive activities; as in the earlier phases of Operation Welwyn, this has entailed targeting, intelligence gathering and surveillance, together with high-visibility patrolling. According to police statistics, 2,000 individuals were arrested or cautioned between 1993 and 1994 for various illegal activities; within the same period, a total of 4,000 stop and searches were recorded (Lee, 1996). There continues to be concern among the police, however, about the short-term impact of their enforcement measures; and interviews with dealers and users likewise indicate that the disruption caused to drug-dealing tends to be temporary, especially since the supply of drugs to the area has hardly been affected (Perera *et al*, 1996). No full evaluation of the impact of Operation Welwyn has to date been conducted; but Lee concludes on the basis of research she conducted on the initiative that its achievements have been 'more apparent in stimulating social and environmental improvements in a deprived area rather than in containing the drug trade in King's Cross' (1996: 49).

### Conclusion

Cases 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the very wide scope of multi-agency crime prevention at drug market locations. Table 2, below, summarises the major elements of partnership work in this field.

Many partnership initiatives at drug-dealing sites can be described as examples of 'third-party policing': this term refers to situations where the police persuade or coerce non-offending parties (such as property or business owners) to take measures to prevent or disrupt criminal behaviour. Successful prevention or disruption frequently depends upon the third parties' use of civil law to impose non-criminal penalties on offenders. Such penalties may be more quickly imposed, and with more direct consequences, than criminal penalties (Green, 1996). This kind of civil enforcement was employed as part of an anti-drugs strategy applied to the Kinglake housing estate in Southwark, south London (reported upon by Lee, 1995). Here, the local council, in conjunction with the police, used civil injunctions to evict tenants known to be involved in drug-dealing, and also to exclude from the estate non-resident drug-dealers. Civil enforcement was also a major feature of many of the SMART interventions described by Green (1996) (Case 7).

The expansion of third-party policing of this kind exemplifies the increasing complexity of the 'policing division of labour', to which Lee (1995) has drawn attention. One further aspect of the new division of labour has been a rapid rise in

**Table 2 Multi-Agency Initiatives Against Local Drug Markets**

Police partners	Actions
Housing authorities Housing associations Landlords	Board up or renovate vacant properties Clean up litter and graffiti Control residents'/tenants' behaviour (e.g. through evictions, tenant screening) Block off hidden alleys and corners within housing estates Limit access to housing estates
Owners/managers of leisure facilities, pubs and restaurants	Alert staff to possibility of drug activity Train staff in dealing with drug activity (e.g. through citizen's arrests, notifying the police) Design premises so as to inhibit dealing and using (e.g. keep all activities within view of the staff; install CCTV in toilets)
Planning authorities Health authorities	Locate health services, needle exchanges, temporary accommodation away from areas associated with drug-dealing Erect street barriers to disrupt vehicular traffic Regulate parking Improve lighting Install CCTV
General public Tenants'/residents' associations	Conduct research on perceptions of local drug problems Convene meetings for discussion of problems and possible responses Co-opt representatives from community organisations on to decision-making bodies Organise 'Neighbourhood Watch' schemes

the use of private security companies for crime control. As public demand for visible policing intensifies, and resource constraints make it ever more difficult for forces to meet that demand, growing numbers of private firms are being employed to carry out patrols and surveillance in semi-public areas such as housing estates.

Notions of 'community' are central to much strategic thinking about multi-agency work at drug market locations. The very idea of partnership presupposes that the police, local residents and local organisations have (at least some) shared aims, and can therefore work together in seeking to achieve them. A general concern with the interests and priorities of communities is reflected, Lee notes, in the restructuring of the police service which followed the 1993 **White Paper on Police Reform**, a major element of which has been 'to devolve routine policing to self-contained local command units, focus managerial power on the division, and, theoretically, make it responsive to local communities' needs' (1995: 385). A focus on communities is apparent in both the previous and the new Government drugs strategies: one of the key aims of the former was 'to increase the safety of communities from drug-related crime', and, of the latter, 'to protect our

communities from drug-related anti-social and criminal behaviour'. However, as was noted above in the discussion of police crackdowns, it can by no means be assumed that within any area there will be a unified, community response to drugs problems. The success of any multi-agency initiative will always partially depend upon its sensitivity to the social and economic divisions and tensions that exist within the neighbourhood.

## 5. Displacement

The problem of displacement is a matter of concern to those who promote situational crime prevention of any kind. Displacement occurs when enforcement or prevention initiatives have the effect of shifting crime from one place to another, or persuading offenders to engage in alternative modes of criminal behaviour. A situational crime prevention initiative at a drug market location results in displacement if the dealers move to another site, alter the times at which they deal, change their mode of operation (for example, from dealing at fixed, street-level sites to arranging transactions and deliveries over the telephone), or even take up new, similarly criminal money-making ventures. Any situational strategy that produces close to 100% displacement might be considered of little value, since the level of total crime within the community will have remained more-or-less constant. Hence the measurement of displacement is often seen as a crucial element of crime prevention evaluations.

However, the task of measuring displacement is fraught with difficulty, since the forms that displaced criminal activity can take are so various. Furthermore, even when a particular strategy is known to cause displacement, assessing the overall effects of that displacement is by no means straightforward.

For example, where rates of crime fall in a high-crime area and simultaneously rise in a traditionally low-crime area, some have argued that there is a net benefit to society from this more 'equitable' distribution of crime (Clarke, 1997). And where preventive strategies lead offenders to undertake new forms of criminal activity that are ultimately less profitable than those in which they previously engaged, this may lead, in the long term, to a fall in crime. Some preventive strategies have been found to lead to a reverse process to that of displacement: a 'diffusion of benefits' occurs when the **beneficial** effects of a strategy have an impact upon an area or a form of crime that was not directly targeted.

The complexities of the subject notwithstanding, it remains important that any consideration of the value of situational crime prevention takes account of the potential for, and possible nature of, displacement and diffusion effects.

There is some discussion of the subject of displacement in several of the case studies that have been presented above. Relevant findings are:

- The Tactical Narcotics Teams in New York (Case 4) appeared to shift the sites of drug-dealing rather than eradicate them: a decrease in drug activity at certain places was accompanied by an increase at others, and some markets moved from street-level to indoor locations.
- The Jersey City Drug Market Analysis Experiment (Case 5) found that

intensive enforcement at a number of hot-spots of drug activity led to a decline in narcotics-related emergency calls for service in two-block catchment areas around the sites. The final stage of the research involved a replication of the mapping procedure by which the drug hot-spots had originally been identified: this showed that a certain amount of new drug activity had emerged in the post-intervention period, suggesting that there had been some displacement. However, this new activity was not extensive, and it was impossible to assess how much of it was linked to the experimental strategy.

- Sherman and Rogan's assessment (1995) of police raids on crack houses in Kansas City (Case 6) found evidence of a diffusion of benefits: the raids appeared to reduce general levels of crime in the residential blocks in which the crack houses were situated. However, the declines in crime rates were limited, and the effects of the raids decayed rapidly.
- One of the findings of Green's assessment (1996) of Oakland's SMART programme (Case 7) was that in the post-intervention period there were declines in narcotics arrests and field contacts in over 75% of two-block catchment areas around the sites targeted by multi-agency action. In only six per cent of cases was there evidence of displacement: in these cases, improvement at the SMART locations was accompanied by deterioration in the catchment areas.
- The multi-agency Community Oriented Problem Solving initiative in St Louis (Case 8) had mixed results as far as displacement is concerned. In one of the cases examined by Hope (1994), the targeting of a problem address led to an increase in crime in the remainder of the block, while in the two other cases, there was a diffusion of benefits, as crime fell both at the problem addresses and in the whole blocks.
- There is some evidence that drug-dealers have countered Operation Welwyn (Case 9) by moving to sites outside King's Cross, including Earl's Court and nearby Euston Station, and operating in a more covert fashion within King's Cross. Perera *et al* (1996) found that some local residents were experiencing new problems as a result of the movement of drug activity from the streets into housing estates.

It is difficult to reach general conclusions about the risks of displacement from the cases outlined above since not only are the situations and policing strategies they describe highly variable, but there is also much variety in the ways in which the researchers have conceptualised and sought to measure displacement. For example, in Cases 6 and 8 the analyses of displacement/diffusion effects were highly localised: that is, the researchers were primarily concerned with the relationship between changing levels of crime at particular addresses and changes at the blocks

in which the addresses were located. In other cases, in contrast, the analyses were somewhat broader in scope.

Nevertheless, when one considers the findings of the case studies as a whole, and the wider literature on displacement, four key points become apparent:

1. Risks of displacement will rarely be so great as to invalidate entirely situational initiatives at drug-dealing sites. In many cases, displacement may occur to a limited extent only; and even when it does occur its effects may be at least partially off-set by a diffusion of benefits.
2. The most likely form of displacement arising from low-level enforcement and surveillance is the transformation of open markets into closed ones. Changing technology - such as the increasing availability of mobile phones - can facilitate this process.
3. Displacement may have certain benign effects: for example, a shift from overt to covert drug-dealing can make it difficult for novice users to gain access to a market, and should lead to a reduction in forms of anti-social behaviour associated with street-level markets. (However, it is important to remember Perera *et al's* observation [1996] that in King's Cross the movement of dealers into housing estates caused its own problems for residents.)
4. It is clear that there is much need for further research to be carried out on the subject of displacement. Evaluations of situational initiatives should always encompass analyses of displacement and diffusion effects; ideally, such analyses should be conducted over the long term, since the effects of any operation are likely to be modified in one way or another over time.



## 6. Conclusion

This report has considered what can be learnt from existing studies, and particularly US evaluations, of situational crime prevention initiatives at drug hot-spots. The potential benefits - and potential difficulties - associated with these kinds of initiatives are likely to receive increasing attention in the UK, given that the new Government strategy on drugs emphasises both the importance of community-level, partnership approaches to tackling drug problems, and the need to target and disrupt drug-dealing at a local level.

From the findings of the studies reviewed by this report, it can be concluded that there are six crucial elements to successful multi-agency, preventive initiatives against local drug markets:

- **Appropriateness of intervention** Analysis of a drug market site, prior to the design of a preventive strategy, should entail careful examination of the parameters and nature of the local problem, and the environmental features of the location. Consultation with residents and community groups can enhance sensitivity to any unique features of the site, and should further ensure that the intervention is tailored to the specific needs of the situation.
- **Intensity of intervention** The use of proactive enforcement tactics in combination with alternative methods of crime prevention permits the weaknesses of certain approaches to be counter-acted by the strengths of others. A willingness to consider, without prejudice, the full range of options available to the police and other agencies is thus often a feature of successful initiatives.
- **Leverage** Situational policing of drug markets requires the creative use of levers by the police as they seek to persuade other agencies to work with them. In some cases, this will primarily be a matter of encouraging potential partners to recognise that they have common interests and goals. In other cases, the police may have to draw on civil laws and regulations in obliging place managers to take actions against drug dealers and users.
- **Sustained action** The likelihood that the beneficial impact of many initiatives will be eroded over time must always be borne in mind. Preventive strategies should incorporate components that will have at least some long-term effects upon drug market sites, and should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing patterns of behaviour among drug dealers and users.
- **Sensitivity to community relations** Crime control initiatives that exacerbate existing tensions within neighbourhoods may be counter-productive. When local residents and community organisations are involved in the development of strategies, efforts should be made to incorporate representatives of as many segments of the population as possible.

- **Evaluation** Thorough process evaluations of initiatives should bring to light design and implementation problems as and when they arise, and may therefore assist with their resolution. Evaluations should also allow early mistakes to be avoided and achievements to be built upon in later phases of operations, and facilitate interchange concerning good practice between agencies and regions.

The task of deterring localised drug-dealing is, clearly, only one of many drug-related objectives that any police force will be concerned with. However, it is to be hoped that this report has gone some way towards highlighting the significance of this particular task, and some of the most effective means by which it can be approached.

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