**Small Grant Award**

Community Policing and the development of Safer Neighbourhood Teams in Lothian and Borders

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**Dr Simon Mackenzie** University of Glasgow / SCCJR
**CI Tony Beveridge** Lothian and Borders Police [currently Tayside Police]

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**Introduction**

The Scottish Government published a set of 'community policing engagement principles' in April 2009, following the extensive review of community policing in Scotland that had been carried out by the Justice Committee the previous year. Police forces around the country are in the process of reviewing their community policing and engagement activities in the light of this publication.

Lothian and Borders A-Division established a Community Policing Project to review their current practice and make recommendations about how it might be developed in order to fully implement these principles. The project examined the design and organisation of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in England and Wales, as well as the evaluation research that assessed its impact. It then proposed to establish a new model of community policing in A-Division that drew lessons from this experience. The new model of community policing in A-Division will involve merging existing community policing capacity (Community Beat Officers - each working a single, specified beat in the Division; Neighbourhood Action Units - currently composed of local authority funded officers; and School Link Officers) into more integrated groups of officers who will retain close links with specified local communities. They will be designated as Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The University applicants (Henry and Mackenzie) are entering the second year of a three year AHRC-funded knowledge transfer fellowship on community policing in ADivision of Lothian and Borders. Over the first year of the project they conducted focus group meetings with the senior command team, chief inspectors and sector inspectors with responsibility for CBOs, and with virtually all of the CBOs in the division. The proposed reform of community policing has, unsurprisingly, been a key issue on which officers at all levels of the organisation have expressed views. The police applicant (Chief Inspector Beveridge) has facilitated much of the knowledge transfer activity of the AHRC project and will also be coordinating the implementation of prototype Safer Neighbourhood Teams in the south and east Operational Command Area from 1 March 2010. It is currently envisaged that the SNT model will then be rolled out through A-Division by 30 September 2010.

This application to the SIPR Small Research Grant Competition is being made in order to support a small-scale, but in-depth, scoping exercise into the development and implementation of the prototype Safer Neighbourhood Teams (matched funding is being sought through SCCJR's capacity building fund). It is proposed that this exercise would be carried out by Diarmaid Harkin, a recent graduate (with distinction) of Edinburgh University's MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice programme. The outputs of the exercise will be fed back to the coordinators of the pilot (through CI Beveridge) and will be further disseminated through (and will inform) Mackenzie and Henry's KT activity. It is also hoped, subject to funding, that the exercise will form a starting point for a longer-term study of community policing in A-Division through Harkin's proposed three year PhD research.

**Proposed activity: scoping the implementation of SNTs in A-Division**

The scoping exercise would involve the researcher being placed with the prototype SNTs in the south and east Operational Command Area for 1.5 days per week over a period of 3 months (to be extended if matched funding becomes available, see below). Henry and Mackenzie would provide supervision and academic support and Beveridge would facilitate access arrangements. Review of policy documents, and more formal interviews with chief inspectors and sector inspectors, will be used to inform the initial stages of the exercise. This work will document the strategic objectives behind the Community Policing Project and, in so doing, will provide the researcher with a context for the rest of the exercise. However, it is envisaged that the bulk of the research activity will be ethnographic in nature and will focus on how officers acting within the new SNT structures experience the process of reform. This will involve observation of the work and training of SNT officers and informal interviews with them, as required.

The primary aim of the exercise is to document the reform process and provide some assessment of how the strategic objectives have been implemented. In pursuit of this overarching aim the following specific issues will also be explored:

* The cultural and organisational challenges faced by SNT officers as community policing is reorganised in A-Division.
* How SNT officers have valued the training and preparation they have received for their new roles and whether they have identified gaps in training that could be plugged before the whole programme is rolled out.
* The nature and character of problem-solving partnership work undertaken by SNTs and how this might be supported through knowledge exchange activity with academics.
* How the work of community policing and community engagement might be captured in 'soft' performance measures (i.e. not crime statistics) that allow it to be assessed and managed effectively but sensitively.

[**Final Report**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141218233249/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Harkin_report_2011.pdf)

[**SIPR Research Summary**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141218233249/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Research_Summaries/Research_Summary_9.pdf)

[**Community Policing, knowledge exchange and the Edinburgh Police Research and Practice Group**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141218233249/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/AnnRep2011/Community_Policing.pdf) (SIPR Annual Report, 2011)

**Please follow the following links for further information on current Research Opportunities**

* [**SIPR Post-Doctoral Research Assistants (PDRAs)**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141218233249/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/research/PDRA.php)
* [**SIPR PhD Studentships**](https://web.archive.org/web/20141218233249/http%3A/www.sipr.ac.uk/research/PHD.php)
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