

DEVELOPING AN EVIDENCE-BASE FOR LOCAL POLICING IN SCOTLAND

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Summary: This briefing paper summarises knowledge exchange activity, funded by SIPR's IMPAKT programme, relating to developing an evidence base for local policing in Scotland. This has involved the development of the Scottish Local Policing Evidence Database. Evidence presented relates to the policing principles enshrined in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, i.e. community engagement, crime reduction and partnership working. In terms of methodology, sources may be conceptual, based on non-experimental research, or experimental in nature. Key messages from relevant sources (including SIPR research as well as journal articles) are included in the database and these can then be linked to summaries of the original material.

BACKGROUND

Local policing is both the front-line of police work and the foundation of all other policing activity, as much in the eyes of the public as in the structures and practices of the police. Some aspects of local policing have received considerable attention in recent policing literature. Community policing, in particular, has been the focus of much academic research both nationally (Donnelly 2010) and internationally (Mackenzie and Henry 2009). However, local policing covers a multitude of activities in which the police in Scotland are expected to engage. These include: response policing; policing the 'night-time' economy; roads policing; volume crime investigation; maintaining order at major public events; executing warrants and other criminal justice-related duties; dealing with local disorder and anti-social behavior; and some aspects of public protection.

This knowledge exchange project was funded through SIPR's IMPAKT (Improving Police Action through Knowledge Transfer) programme as an extension of the research undertaken in a previous SIPR post-doctoral research study on Local Policing in Scotland (Aston and Scott forthcoming). The new project was designed to build on this material by providing research support to the reform process in Scottish policing, in particular the work carried out by the Local Policing Workstream. The aims of the project included:

- identifying research relevant to local policing;
- making it accessible to those responsible for developing local policing within the new Police Service of Scotland; and
- relating the findings of current research in Scotland, the UK and further afield to the development of policy and practice in local policing in Scotland.

With the appointment of the new chief constable, and the creation of a senior command team, decisions on local policing structures began to focus very rapidly on putting in place the operational requirements for Day 1 of the new force on 1 April 2013. The scoping activities, however, generated by the initial research overview identified some longer-term possibilities for using research evidence in ways which could both contribute to the emerging themes within local policing, and provide a basis for the development of new models and practices in local policing for Police Scotland.

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING

In recent times there has been an increasing tendency for academic policing research to focus on the production of evidence for policing practice. As Manning (2010:106) has described it, police studies has become 'for the police rather than of the police, a field of enquiry orientated to "what works" and "what can the police do"'. This has been encouraged by a greater interest in research by police organisations themselves, and indeed by the involvement of police officers in both formal and informal research activities of their own (SIPR 2012).

Within the academy, a considerable debate has arisen over the nature of evidence in police research and the role of a robust scientific methodology in validating the results of such studies. In particular, there is a growing interest in the process of experimentation. 'Some,' writes Laycock (2008: 150) 'recommend randomized controlled trials as the gold standard for experimental methodology in our field. While fully supporting the empirical approach, others suggest that there are equally, if not more effective and appropriate ways of determining what works.' Studies employing experimental methods have been particularly prominent in the United States. However, in the UK the Society for Evidence Based Policing is an example of an organization which not only embraces the randomized-trials approach, but is also largely led by police practitioners (<http://www.sebp.police.uk>).

One of the major pieces of evidence-based work carried out in the United States is by Cynthia Lum and colleagues at George Mason University. They have produced the Evidence-Based Policing Matrix (Lum, Koper, Telep 2012), a conceptual framework for identifying 'what works' in policing by providing insights into the most effective police strategies. This is achieved through an evaluation of research studies which are then mapped onto a three dimensional matrix, the dimensions of which are: X = individuals/groups/microplaces; Y = general/focused; and Z = reactive/proactive/highly proactive. The outcomes of each study are rated in terms of being highly significant, non-significant or mixed. The fundamental hypothesis emerging from Lum, Koper and Telep's (2011) review is that proactive, place-based, and specific policing approaches are more promising than reactive, individual-based, and general ones, although there is a tendency for police strategies to focus on the latter.

We believe that a matrix-style approach offers something of value in building an evidence-base for local policing in Scotland. However, there are some significant adjustments that need to be made in order to apply this concept to local policing here. In particular, there are three factors which would be appropriate to developing a Scottish equivalent:

- a wider range of policing priorities than crime reduction;
- a wider range of research methodologies than the experimental;
- a greater emphasis on key ingredients.

SCOTTISH LOCAL POLICING EVIDENCE DATABASE

The model developed for analysing research evidence related to local policing in Scotland is shown Appendix I below. It contains two dimensions.

The Y-axis is POLICING PRINCIPLES. Section 32 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 specifies how these may operate in pursuit of the main purpose of policing, 'to improve the safety and wellbeing of persons, localities and communities in Scotland'. The policing principles involve:

- 1) Community Engagement – 'is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities';
- 2) Crime Reduction – 'promotes measures which prevent crime, harm, and disorder';
- 3) Partnership Working – involves 'working in collaboration with others'.

The X-axis is METHODOLOGY, i.e. the types of research methods used, and these fall into three categories:

- A) Conceptual – theoretical discussions, literature reviews and information from policy documents or other documentary sources;

B) Non-experimental – evidence from non-experimental studies i.e. research based primarily on interviews, focus groups and survey data;

C) Experimental – evidence from randomized controlled experiments, experimental pilots and action research.

The database has been populated with information from a wide range of key sources. In particular, these include the considerable number of research studies supported by SIPR and described in the SIPR Annual Reports, Briefing Papers and Research Reports. In England and Wales, the NPIA had begun to publish a number of documents on 'What Works in Policing' and this work is being carried forward by the new College of Policing. From the United States, the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Systematic Reviews have proved exceptionally useful sources as they are based on a robust experimental approach. A five-year review has also been carried out of a number of academic journals which have a particular focus on policing initiatives and police practice. These include: *The Journal of Experimental Criminology*; *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*; *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*; and *Policing and Society*.

The Database contains a series of short, 'headline' messages arising from these sources, which are linked to summaries of the original material, and, as a further development as necessary, linked back to the original sources in full. To date, the Database contains information from around 100 studies, with considerable potential for expansion. Appendix II contains some examples of key messages.

The main task now for the Scottish Local Policing Evidence Database is to test its value to Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and community partners as Scotland's policing landscape moves from one of structural merger to one of ongoing police reform and continuous improvement.

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APPENDIX 1: SCOTTISH LOCAL POLICING EVIDENCE DATABASE

P R I N C I P L E S	(A3) Conceptual Partnership Working	(B3) Non-experimental Partnership Working	(C3) Experimental Partnership Working
	(A2) Conceptual Crime Reduction	(B2) Non-experimental Crime Reduction	(C2) Experimental Crime Reduction
	(A1) Conceptual Community Engagement	(B1) Non-experimental Community Engagement	(C1) Experimental Community Engagement
M E T H O D O L O G Y			

APPENDIX 2: SCOTTISH LOCAL POLICING EVIDENCE DATABASE – EXAMPLES OF KEY MESSAGES

<p>(A3) Conceptual Partnership Working</p> <p>Problem-solving often requires the police to work in partnership with local people and other organisations (e.g. local authorities, criminal justice agencies, charities) to put in place sustainable solutions <u>(Bullock, Erol and Tilley 2006)</u>.</p>	<p>(B3) Non-experimental Partnership Working</p> <p>Officers identified improved relationships with partnership agencies and communities as one of the positive outcomes of the Community Engagement Model <u>(Hunter and Fyfe 2012)</u>.</p>	<p>(C3) Experimental Partnership Working</p> <p>In disturbing street level drug markets both problem-oriented policing and community-wide partnerships are more effective than law enforcement-only interventions so police should focus on forging productive partnerships with third parties <u>(Mazerolle et al. 2007)</u>.</p>
<p>(A2) Conceptual Crime Reduction</p> <p>Problem-solving is most successful when it is focused and when there is a strong organizational commitment to its principles <u>(Read and Tilley 2000)</u>.</p>	<p>(B2) Non-experimental Crime Reduction</p> <p>Effective crime reduction strategies need to appreciate the interconnectedness of processes that give rise to crime and disorder issues in the night-time economy and these strategies need to be tailored to specific locations and venues <u>(Davidson 2009)</u>.</p>	<p>(C2) Experimental Crime Reduction</p> <p>Geographically focused policing initiatives (highly visible and active officers targeting specific crimes and/or offenders) were associated with significant reductions in crime and disorder with 'diffusion of benefits' being more likely than displacement <u>(Bowers et al. 2011)</u>.</p>
<p>(A1) Conceptual Community Engagement</p> <p>Community policing engagement standards include information being provided regarding how the police consult communities and the identify of local officers and how they can be contacted <u>(Scottish Government 2008)</u>.</p>	<p>(B1) Non-experimental Community Engagement</p> <p>Increase in stop and search in Scotland increases negative attitudes by young people towards the police <u>(Murray 2012)</u>.</p>	<p>(C1) Experimental Community Engagement</p> <p>Investment of police resources in making information available to the public is worthwhile, particularly when integrated within a broader neighbourhood policing <u>(Quinton 2011)</u>.</p>