Inform, persuade and remind

An evaluation of a project to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System

Lawrence Singer and Suzanne Cooper

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Implications

- Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) are required to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by engaging effectively with staff and the community. Providing information to the public will form a key part of this work, and LCJBs may consider replicating the approach or the learning principles reported in this study when planning and targeting their communication activity.
- Communication campaigns, where appropriate, should focus on local evidence relating to crime levels and sentencing severity, so that the gap between what is perceived to be happening and is actually happening can be closed.
- Messages should be attention-catching and presented in accordance with the inform, persuade and remind methodology. LCJBs will wish to consider how to enhance the content of the booklet by tailoring it to the needs of the target audience, using numbers as well as percentages, providing information which spans the CJS process from, for example, arrest to conviction, and including cameos of people and projects to maintain human interest.
- In order to make the most of promoting local evidence, LCJBs should consider pooling the expertise of various staff, for example, Communication Officers and Performance Officers.
- A key finding of this study relates to the impact which the method of delivery has on public perception of the information contained in the booklet. LCJBs may maximise the impact by making use of local CJS personnel to distribute and explain the booklet.
- Consideration should be given to producing booklets in foreign languages for those whose first language is not English.
- To get the most from any communications campaign, LCJBs should monitor the impact upon the targeted population.
Summary

When delivering initiatives to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), criminal justice departments and agencies face both theoretical and practical challenges. On the one hand, the idea of confidence in the CJS is defined and measured in a variety of ways. On the other, in addition to the CJS performing effectively, it is also necessary to be perceived by the public to be performing effectively. The available evidence suggests that the public perception of the CJS is influenced by a range of factors or drivers of confidence. Attempts to improve confidence in the CJS must, therefore, be based on a broad strategy. The project reported here was designed to test the effectiveness of a specific intervention that might impact on one key, specific aspect of confidence.

The project aimed to test whether providing the public with information about the performance of the CJS with particular reference to bringing offenders to justice would improve their confidence in it. Public confidence in the CJS has been measured through seven questions asked as part of the British Crime Survey (BCS). The headline measure that formed the basis of the Public Service Agreement target for the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR) and the Home Office was whether the public think the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice. Nationally, a significant improvement has been achieved: between the year ending March 2003 and March 2008, survey data show a six percentage point increase in public confidence. However, in spite of this improvement and the fact that the number of offences brought to justice has steadily increased over the last five years, the majority of people continue to lack confidence in the effectiveness of the CJS in bringing people who commit crimes to justice.

Drawing on the theory and evidence of communications, criminology and marketing disciplines, OCJR mounted a randomised controlled trial (RCT) in a Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) area where public confidence was relatively low. The trial involved providing people with a professionally designed public information booklet containing key facts about crime and the criminal justice system at the national and their local level.

The research aimed to answer two questions.

1. If we provide people with facts about crime rates and sentencing in the form of a professionally designed booklet, are they likely to become more confident that the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice?
2. Does the way in which we deliver information on the CJS to people have an impact on their confidence?

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1 Spending Review 2004 to be achieved by March 2008. Improving confidence in the CJS forms part of a new Government Public Service Agreement covering the period April 2008 to March 2011.

2 A significant change is meant here to mean that, using objective statistical tests, the change recorded has not occurred by chance.
To find answers to these questions, a random sample of just under 3,000 members of the public was recruited via random digit dialling and allocated to one of four groups.

- Group 1 – No CJS Information booklet provided (control group)
- Group 2 – CJS Information booklet posted
- Group 3 – CJS Information booklet handed to people in person
- Group 4 – CJS Information booklet handed to people in person along with an explanation.

A telephone survey including BCS questions was used to establish levels of public confidence before the booklet was distributed. When levels of public confidence were measured for a second time, one month after the booklets had been delivered, it was found that people given booklets were generally more positive about the CJS compared with those who had not received the booklet.

After the survey had been completed, a series of focus group interviews was conducted involving 49 participants. The aim of these follow-up interviews was to provide an insight into why people’s confidence did or did not change during the experiment for both recipient and control groups. Feedback was also sought regarding the content of the booklet and how best it might be delivered.

The key findings were as follows.

- A significantly higher proportion of those receiving the booklet, compared with those in the control group who did not, demonstrated greater knowledge of crime levels by five percentage points. Similarly, booklet recipients also estimated the average sentence length for a serious sexual offence more accurately than non-recipients by nearly four percentage points.
- Booklet recipients were more likely than non-recipients to think that current sentence lengths were appropriate. A significantly higher proportion of those receiving the booklet were positive at the follow-up stage regarding sentences being ‘about right’ by a difference of between five and six percentage points.
- Compared with controls, those receiving the booklet increased their level of confidence by a margin of nearly five percentage points in response to the question whether they thought the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice.
- With regard to delivery methods, it was found that the proportion of people who were confident in the effectiveness of the CJS in bringing people who commit crimes to justice, the group handed the booklet in person increased by six percentage points more than the control group.
- Although there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate conclusively the superiority of one particular delivery method over the others, the survey findings coupled with the feedback from the focus groups suggest that personal contact, especially from persons in positions of identifiable authority, will be more effective than a postal approach.
Notwithstanding the success of the booklet, improvements to the original design were suggested by and supported by all focus group participants. Specifically, the use of numbers alongside percentages to avoid accusations of spin; the provision of information relating to the whole CJS process rather than discrete (and potentially biased) aspects of it; reference to failures as well as successes to lend credibility; and finally, the use of cameos to maximise human interest.

With these key findings in mind it is possible to return to the two questions addressed by this study. In posing them it is important to bear in mind that effective communication is one of several drivers relevant to improving public confidence and all drivers of confidence will be influenced by the actual as well as perceived performance of the CJS.

1. If we provide people with facts about crime rates and sentencing in the form of a professionally designed booklet, are they likely to become more confident that the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice?

   Yes, providing people with a professionally designed information booklet containing national and local statistics about sentencing and crime rates can have a positive impact on public confidence.

2. Does the way in which we deliver information on the CJS to people have an immediate impact on their confidence?

   Yes, personally handing a booklet to people, either with or without providing an explanation, appears to make it more likely they will read the booklet as well as increase their confidence in the CJS, compared with sending the booklet through the post.
1. Context

Raising public confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is one of the Government’s key Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for the period 2008-11. Improving the level of public confidence can provide an indication of the perceived legitimacy of the criminal justice delivered and potentially encourage more active engagement with it on the part of, for example, witnesses and jurors. Furthermore, monitoring levels of public confidence provides an opportunity for measuring the quality of services provided by criminal justice agencies and testing whether improvements made to the CJS are recognised.

However, the aim to improve confidence in the CJS faces both theoretical as well as practical challenges. The theoretical challenge derives from the difficulty of having to deal with the different meanings given to both the concept of confidence and what constitutes the CJS. Recent research has found that, when the public think about confidence, the criteria range widely from crime levels and sentencing severity to CJS contact with victims and police visibility. Similarly, when the term ‘Criminal Justice System’ is mentioned, the majority of people interviewed identified the police and the courts, with only a very small proportion being able to identify the Crown Prosecution Service, Prisons or Probation (Smith, 2007).

Whether one adopts a narrow or broad set of concepts, there remains the additional and practical challenge of actually securing or improving confidence in the CJS. This challenge stems from the requirement to not only perform effectively but also to be perceived to be performing effectively. In turn, perceptions can be influenced by a range of factors or what have been described as confidence drivers. These include:

- knowledge of the CJS (Chapman et al., 2002; Salisbury, 2004; and Page et al., 2004);
- the quality of user experience (Ringham and Salisbury, 2004);
- responsiveness to local communities, particularly by the police (Dalgleish and Myhill, 2004);
- media coverage (Page et al., 2004); as well as
- a range of demographic and lifestyle characteristics (Allen et al., 2006).

Given this broad range of drivers of confidence in the CJS, any study evaluating the effectiveness of improving it through a single measure must avoid over simplification. It is important to emphasise that current policy is based on a range of measures, including improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CJS, providing better support for victims and witnesses, and addressing disproportionality in the service provided to different minority ethnic groups. In particular, work to increase public confidence focuses on engaging more effectively with communities so that local people are informed about the performance of the system and consulted and engaged about their priorities so that they can be confident that the system is fair, effective and meets local needs.
For the Spending Review period ending in March 2008, public confidence in the CJS was measured by several questions in the British Crime Survey (BCS). The headline measure that forms the basis of the PSA target was the percentage of people who are very or fairly confident that the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice. This headline measure served as the specific focus for evaluating the concept of confidence. Latest data, in the year to March 2008, found that 44% of the public were very or fairly confident on this measure. Although this result has achieved a significant improvement upon the March 2003 baseline and the PSA target has been met, less than half the public are confident and so there remains room for improvement.

Similarly, with regard to the various drivers of confidence, the evaluation concentrated on knowledge of the CJS. It is known that the media are an important source of public information about the CJS. In a public survey, people cited TV news/documentaries, newspapers (broadsheet and local), or the experiences of friends and family as their most common and trusted sources of information about crime (Page et al., 2004). There is also evidence from BCS research which suggests that people who are better informed about crime and the CJS tend to rate the system more highly (Mattinson and Mirrlees-Black, 2000). Furthermore, research studies have found that giving people access to accurate information about crime and the CJS can improve knowledge and increase confidence in at least some aspects of the CJS (Chapman et al., 2002; Salisbury, 2004).

The intention of the study was to test the effectiveness of an intervention based on these findings about the importance of information and communication for public confidence. The study aim was to see whether increasing information about actual practice in the CJS could improve the public’s perception of how well it was bringing offenders to justice. The plan was to follow the principles of National Statistics with particular reference to the quality and integrity of data. Accordingly, the experiment was governed by the need for the data presented to the public to be “fit for purpose and of a high quality” and derived “using objective and transparent methods” (National Statistics, 2002).

**Aims of the research**

Building upon previous research, the study aimed to test out the short-term impact of a targeted communication activity upon public confidence in the CJS with particular reference to bringing offenders to justice. Furthermore, to conduct an experiment with members of the public within an everyday setting by implementing an approach that could be applied by practitioners.

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3 A nationally representative face to face household survey (England and Wales).
4 Spending Review 2004 to be achieved by March 2008.
5 A significant change means that, using objective statistical tests, the change recorded has not occurred by chance.
Research questions

There were two key research questions.

Question 1. If we provide people with facts about the CJS via a professionally designed booklet, will they become more confident in the CJS?

An information booklet containing key facts about the CJS was chosen as the key medium of information, for several reasons. Firstly, previous research by Chapman et al. (2002) found that an information booklet, compared to other methods (a video and seminar) was the most cost-effective way to reach the widest cross section of people. Secondly, it provided a tangible communication activity that could be provided to members of the public in an everyday setting (as opposed to an artificial test environment) whilst being robustly evaluated. Thirdly, it offered an approach that could be replicated by practitioners.

Question 2. Does the delivery approach make a difference?

Informed by marketing theory, this research study aimed to deliver the booklet to members of the public via three different delivery approaches in order to explore the extent to which the method of distribution would impact upon public confidence in the CJS.

The booklet

The booklet was developed from evidence of a perception gap whereby the general public tend to over estimate the level of crime and under estimate the severity of sentencing (Allen et al., 2006; Nicholas et al., 2005). Moreover, the usefulness of focusing on crime rates and sentencing statistics was endorsed by further analysis of the BCS data which revealed that two of the four factors most strongly associated with perceiving that the CJS is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice were: a) thinking that sentence severity was too tough or about right, and b) thinking that the level of crime in the country over the past two years had stayed the same or decreased (Allen et al., 2006\(^7\)).

Knowing that you can improve confidence in the CJS by providing information about it still begs the question of how best to provide this information. Whilst evidence from criminological research was helpful in pointing to the value of addressing the perception gap by using an information booklet, marketing theory was additionally helpful in determining the design and delivery of the booklet.

Effective promotion, as Evans and Berman (1990) point out, needs to inform, persuade and remind the consumer.

With new products, customers must be informed about the items and their attributes before developing favourable attitudes toward them. For products that have a level of consumer awareness, the promotional thrust is on persuasion –

\(^6\) The whole of the booklet has been reproduced in Appendix 6.
converting product knowledge to product liking. For well-entrenched products, emphasis is on reminder promotion – reinforcing existing consumer beliefs.

(1990 p. 454)

Promoting the performance and progress of the CJS carries the unique challenge of requiring all three strategies. Whilst for many, knowledge about the system is second-hand, not a day passes without the broadcast and print media carrying stories about crime and justice. Accordingly, it was agreed that the booklet needed to contain facts and figures that were not only informative but were presented in a persuasive way. Moreover, an overarching theme had to be created and reinforced so that the reminder function could challenge and overcome second-hand stereotypes about performance and progress received from the media.

A twenty-page A5 booklet printed in colour and on heavyweight, matt-finished paper was produced with the intention of conveying to the recipient that this was a quality product worth looking at. On the first two pages the aim was to arouse attention and establish the reminder theme that ‘Things aren’t always what they seem’ (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Eye-catching graphics were employed to both inform and persuade the reader that in their LCJB crime was actually going down and prison sentence lengths were getting longer (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4). The data used were all based on official statistics and are sourced for further reference.

Having designed the booklet, the research team needed to test the most effective way of delivering it. From a marketing perspective this relates to determining the appropriate ‘promotional mix’ (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2004). This refers to the set of tools that can be used to communicate with consumers. Broadly speaking there are five tools: advertising; public relations; sales promotion; direct marketing and personal selling. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) reports that research shows that people need to see an advertisement at least seven times before it starts to mean anything to them (ibid.). For this reason it can be very costly and was not considered appropriate to use in combination with a mail drop. For the same reason the public relations and sales promotions approaches using, for example, a news or a press release prior to a mail drop were also discounted. This left the direct marketing and personal selling approaches as potential tools to adapt to the particular needs of this project. As CIM point out, direct marketing is an effective tool because each letter distributed can be personalised which improves response rates greatly. However, most effective of all is the face to face contact of personal selling. As CIM state:

This is the most effective form of promotion because it allows your approach to be tailored to the needs of an individual customer … Face to face, a sales person can build a relationship with the customer – understanding their needs and feeding back this knowledge to the business

(ibid.)
Applying this knowledge to the delivery of the booklets, three methods of delivery were determined. The first method, in line with the direct marketing approach, involved posting the booklet in a personalised envelope to the individual. The second and third methods involved personal contact but entailed either limited interaction through handing the booklet to the individual or more extensive interaction by explaining it to the person. The purpose of using these different delivery methods was to gauge the extent to which over and above the booklet’s content, attempts to encourage active rather than passive attention and interest would be influential. (Parrott, 1995).

**Figure 1.1: Front page of the booklet**

![Front page of the booklet](image1)

**Concerned about crime? Unclear about sentencing?**

**Figure 1.2: The reminder theme to challenge stereotypes**

![Reminder theme to challenge stereotypes](image2)

**Things aren’t always what they seem**
**Figure 1.3: Crime levels in Northamptonshire**

This is what crime looks like in your area...

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Between 2004/05 and 2005/06 Northamptonshire had:

- 8% reduction in recorded crime
- 4% reduction in violent crime
- 12% reduction in burglary
- 13% reduction in theft of and from vehicles

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**Figure 1.4: Actual and perceived prison sentencing statistics**

Our surveys showed that you are concerned about the issue of sentencing.

- **63%**
  - Sentencing statistics from January to December 2004 showed that 63 per cent of men convicted of house burglary (aged 21 and over) were given a prison sentence.
  - The public, however, perceived this figure as only about 40 per cent.

- **98%**
  - Sentencing statistics from the same year showed that 98 per cent of men convicted of rape (aged 21 and over) were given a prison sentence.
  - The public, however, perceived this figure as only about 58 per cent.

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1 Police recorded crime data. Recorded crime means the number of crimes that have been reported to and recorded by the police.

4 British Crime Survey data

5 Sentencing data

6 British Crime Survey data

7 Sentencing data

8 British Crime Survey data
2. Methodology

The methodology employed two phases.

Quantitative data collection

The research employed a randomised controlled trial (RCT) design within one Local Criminal Justice Board area which had relatively low levels of public confidence in the CJS and where there was scope for improvement. Households were selected using a random digit dial telephone methodology and a member of the household aged 16 years or over was selected and recruited to participate in the research. People were then randomly allocated to one of three intervention groups (receiving the booklet via different delivery approaches) or to the control group (no booklet received). See Table 2.1. Telephone panel surveys were used to collect information about people’s knowledge and confidence in the CJS, before and after receipt of the information booklet. The research took place over a three-month period in the first quarter of 2007 and involved approximately 3,000 people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel survey 1</th>
<th>Random group allocation</th>
<th>Booklet delivery</th>
<th>Panel survey 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Control; no CJS booklet</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intervention; CJS booklet posted</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intervention; CJS booklet handed to people in person</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intervention; CJS booklet handed to people in person along with a brief verbal summary of the facts explained</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An RCT design was chosen as it provides a robust study and enables cause and effect data to be obtained. If there were any major news stories in the area over the duration of the study then everyone would be exposed to these, including people in the control group. The process of random allocation equates people on all known and unknown factors meaning that any changes in public confidence between groups at the end of the research can be attributed solely to the intervention (i.e. the information booklet).

Table 2.1: Randomised controlled trial design

Telephone panel survey

Upon recruitment at the first survey, people agreed to take part in research and provided their name and address details. However, to ensure that people did not give undue attention

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8 Ascertain by examining year ending June 2006 BCS confidence data for the PSA2 measure and short-listing areas in which there was no significant change from the baseline period (2002/03) and where there was no significant change or decrease in performance compared to national average. Other selection criteria included selecting an area where there were no major communication activities or additional OCJR support planned during the research period.

9 Random digit dialling telephone samples are generated by randomly generating the last four digits of a telephone number; the first set of digits (usually 7) remain the same as these relate to a geographical area.

10 To comply with the Data Protection Act, people were informed that the initial survey was part of a programme of research.
to the booklet, they were not told exactly what the follow-up research would consist of and did not know that they would receive a CJS Information booklet. The telephone survey interviewed the same individuals from all groups on two occasions. The second interview was conducted, on average, four weeks after the first. The interview schedule, informed from previous panel surveys (e.g. Chapman et al., 2002), contained questions about knowledge and awareness of crime rates and sentencing, and confidence in different aspects of the CJS, as asked in the British Crime Survey. The second survey largely asked the same questions as the first, but there were a few differences. At the second survey, people who had received the booklet were asked if they had remembered receiving it, if they had read it, and if so what they thought about it.

The analyses focused upon changes in people’s knowledge and confidence, by comparing changes in the intervention groups (pre- to post-test) to see if these were significantly greater changes than in the control group.

**Booklet distribution**

Whilst adhering to data sharing protocols, the names and addresses of people interviewed for the first telephone survey were passed to a communications delivery company. People in group 2 were then sent the information booklet in the post. For people in groups 3 and 4, trained staff of the delivery company handed over the booklet on the doorstep. Upon ringing the doorbell, the deliverers introduced themselves, showed identification and followed a script: a short script for group 3 and a full script, providing a verbal summary of the booklet, for group 4 (see Appendix 2). The deliverers presented the booklet only to the named person participating in the research. Where there were any questions, either from them or another member of the household, these were answered from a pre-prepared Question and Answer list (see Appendix 2).

**Sample sizes**

Overall, 3,667 people were interviewed in the first survey and 2,846 (78% of those initially interviewed) in the second. Prior to the start of the research, it was estimated that a minimum of 1,600 people – 400 in each of the four groups – were needed to respond to the second survey in order to detect significant changes in public confidence. Therefore, the research initially over-recruited to take account of expected drop out. However, a lower rate of attrition was achieved. Table 2.2 shows the sample sizes and drop out through the different phases of the research.

Due to various constraints, including the number of printed booklets and the time and resources available to deliver these, the delivery company did not attempt to send booklets to all people interviewed at the first survey. For groups 3 and 4, the main reason that booklet deliveries were attempted but not successful was where contact could not be made with the required person following three attempts (see Appendix 3).
Table 2.2: Sample sizes and attrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Panel 1 interviews</th>
<th>Attempted booklet delivery</th>
<th>Successful booklet delivery</th>
<th>Panel 2 interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,667</td>
<td>2,452</td>
<td>2,026</td>
<td>2,846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a People were called back seven times during the two-week interview period
b A minimum of three delivery attempts were made within the three week delivery period
c In addition to the control group, people who had an attempted booklet delivery were contacted for a second interview. Here, people were called back seven times during the four-week interview period.

In order to examine any potential bias in the demographic characteristics of people involved in the research, the profile of people interviewed was compared with the profile of those within the LCJB area as drawn from the 2001 area Census data (see Appendix 4). This shows that the sample included a slightly higher proportion of older people and females than the average for the area, a fairly common finding in terms of the types of people who agree to participate in such research. However, most importantly the profiles did not vary considerably across the four groups, indicating such biases affected each group to a similar extent. Furthermore, when investigating if there were characteristics of Phase 1 respondents who were most likely to participate at Phase 2, no differences were found both overall or across the four groups, indicating that non-response bias did not differ across the groups. Taken as a whole, this means that the analysis is able to make comparisons across the four groups. When conducting the quantitative analysis, the researchers compared the four sub-groups irrespective of whether or not the person received and read the information booklet. In other words, an Intention to Treat Analysis was mounted rather than a Treatment Received Analysis (Lee et al., 1991).

Qualitative data collection: focus group interviews

At the end of the second survey, respondents were asked if they would be prepared to participate in a follow-up focus group. Subsequently, a selection of people were contacted and invited to participate in one of eight focus groups which took place over the summer of 2007. The groups were organised by age group (over or under 45 years), group allocation during the research (intervention or control), and the direction of change in confidence (positive or negative and no change (see Appendix 5). Overall, 49 people participated in the focus group interviews.

It is recognised that the views of people attending the focus groups are not necessarily representative of all interviewees. The main aim of the focus groups was to further explore the use of the information booklet as a source of information about the CJS and to discuss any improvements that could be made, as well as to obtain further insight into what can influence people’s confidence in the CJS.
3. Results

Closing the perception gap

In spite of the fact that the number of offences brought to justice has steadily increased over the last five years (Smith, D. and Singer, L., 2007), evidence from the British Crime Survey indicates that the majority of people continue to lack confidence in the effectiveness of the CJS in bringing people who commit crimes to justice (Kershaw, C. et al., 2007). This is associated with what, for convenience, can be described as the perception gap: specifically, the tendency for members of the public to over estimate the level of crime and under estimate the severity of sentencing.\(^{11}\) To close this perception gap the booklet had been designed to present local and national facts and figures about crime levels and sentencing in an informative and persuasive way. Did it make a difference? To answer this question, a description will be provided of the pre- and post-intervention scores for each of the four groups. The statistical analysis simultaneously tests whether the change in the proportion of people providing positive responses from pre- to post-intervention, differed significantly between the experimental and control groups. This parametric test,\(^{12}\) The Dobby Test, previously used in the National Reassurance Policing Programme evaluation (Tuffin et al., 2006) is described in Appendix 1.

Crime levels

Respondents from each of the four groups were asked to assess whether they thought there is more crime, less crime or about the same amount in the country as a whole over the past two years. Because there has actually been a reduction in crime, ‘more’ and ‘same’ responses were treated as negative and a ‘less’ response as positive. The results are given below in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>% positive response</th>
<th>% point change</th>
<th>% point gain over controls</th>
<th>p(Z) one tailed Exp. vs. control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Total Experimental     | 4.9                 | 11.1           | 6.2                        | 5.0                             | 0.0000 ***
| Posted Exp. Group      | 4.0                 | 8.9            | 4.9                        | 3.8                             | 0.0046 **
| Handed Exp. Group      | 3.6                 | 10.9           | 7.3                        | 6.1                             | 0.0000 ***
| Explained Exp. Group   | 6.8                 | 12.7           | 5.9                        | 4.7                             | 0.0006 ***

The term positive response is used in the text where there is a significant positive difference when comparing the results for experimental and control groups. The convention employed in tables throughout this report is to denote one of three levels of estimated probability by one to three asterisks. Thus p = < 0.05 is represented by one asterisk and means the probability is that the result has not occurred by chance in 95 out of 100 cases; p = 0.01 is represented by two asterisks and means the likelihood of this being a random finding is 1 in 100 instances; finally p = < 0.001 represented by three asterisks means 1 in a 1,000 cases.

\(^{11}\) See Lovbakke with regard to the general public over estimating crime levels in Nicholas et al. (eds.), (2007) and Smith (2007), Confidence in the Criminal Justice System: What Lies Beneath? on sentencing being perceived to be inconsistent across courts and lacking sufficient severity. See also Allen et al., (2006) and Nicholas et al., (2005).

\(^{12}\) The Wilcoxon rank sum test was deemed unsuitable due to the large number of cases, the small range of possible change scores and that it would not be possible to detect ‘no change’ pre- to post-test nor directly compare changes in the two groups. Due to the large sample sizes it was possible to carry out a parametric test using normal approximations and this led to greater statistical power.
As can be seen in Table 3.1, the responses from all those in the experimental groups performed five percentage points better than those in the control group. This statistically significant result indicates that, overall, the booklet was successful in improving people’s understanding that nationally crime has been falling over the last two years. Furthermore, each of the delivery mechanisms employed was effective in improving people’s knowledge, although the handed and explained approaches were more effective than posting the booklet this was not a statistically significant difference.

During the group interviews the problem with delivering the booklet by post compared with the ‘personal touch’ of handing or explaining it to the recipient was often mentioned. One postal recipient observed:

*I prefer* the personal touch … *I mean a lot of mail, most mail now is junk. Most mail is junk mail, isn’t it? And I’ve dropped stuff in the bin probably without even looking at it in the past. This just caught my eye, I suppose, because it’s slightly bigger and bulkier. But I think if they actually handed it to you and explained what it’s about, you’re more likely to look at it.*

**Prison sentence lengths**

Along with over estimating the level of crime, the public also tend to under estimate the severity of sentences made by the courts. To measure the impact of the intervention on this aspect of the perception gap, the sample was invited to estimate the average length of a prison sentence for males aged 21 or over convicted of rape. Based on the latest sentencing data covering January to December 2004, the correct answer is seven years. Answers were invited in months and grouped into twelve-month clusters. Those estimating between 84 and 95 months were considered to have provided a positive response. The findings are reported in Table 3.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2: Proportion correctly estimating sentence length for rape</th>
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<tr>
<td>% positive response</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
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<td>Pre-</td>
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<td>Post-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Experimental</strong></td>
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<td>Post-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Posted Exp. Group</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Handed Exp. Group</strong></td>
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<td>Pre-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Explained Exp. Group</strong></td>
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<td>Pre-</td>
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<td>Post-</td>
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</table>

Once again, those in all three of the experimental groups did significantly better than those in the control group. As one focus group interviewee stated:

*I surprised me. I said five because I knew it was quite low. I was even thinking it could be two years.*
Although there were no statistically significant differences between the delivery mechanisms, the greatest improvement was noted for the people who had the booklet delivered and explained to them. Here a difference of over five percentage points was found in comparison with the controls.

**Sentencing severity**

To gauge whether the booklet had changed attitudes toward sentencing, answers were invited to the question whether the sentences handed down by the courts are too tough, about right or too lenient. The analysis focused on a shift from tough or lenient to about right. Accordingly, a rise in the proportion of those thinking sentences were about right was regarded as a positive response. Details are shown in Table 3.3 below.

| Table 3.3: Proportion stating sentences given by the courts were about right |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                             | % positive response | % point change | % point gain over controls | p(Z) one tailed Exp. vs. control |
| Pre-                        | Post-               |                |                              |                                |
| Control Group               | 20.3                | 20.3           | 0.0                          | n/a                           |
| Total Experimental          | 20.1                | 24.9           | 4.8                          | 4.8                            | 0.0030 ** |
| Posted Exp. Group           | 17.9                | 22.8           | 4.9                          | 4.9                            | 0.0141 *  |
| Handed Exp. Group           | 19.5                | 23.8           | 4.3                          | 4.3                            | 0.0197 *  |
| Explained Exp. Group        | 22.1                | 27.4           | 5.3                          | 5.3                            | 0.0074 ** |

Whilst there was no change registered by the control group, all three experimental groups registered improvements in attitudes towards sentencing severity by approximately five percentage points.

**Confidence in the Criminal Justice System**

The headline measure used by the Government to judge whether it is meeting its commitment to raise public confidence in the CJS relates to the proportion of people who think that it is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice. The responses made are summarised in Table 3.4. Without exception, those receiving the booklet recorded a greater positive response than those not receiving it. As one of the respondents later remarked during the follow-up interviews when asked if their views had changed:

> Well, mine did, I guess, because I would have underestimated the amount of people that they would have brought to justice before and then, when I read the booklet, then I was quite surprised of what I read. So, yes, I guess my opinion probably improved after I read the booklet.

Changes were noted for all groups suggesting a degree of volatility in confidence in the CJS. However, although when their scores were aggregated all those who got the booklet registered in aggregate an overall 11.4 percentage point positive change, which was 4.7 percentage points higher than the positive change registered by the control group. The difference between...
the posted group and the control group was not statistically significant, but the differences between both the handed and explained groups and the control group were.

Table 3.4 therefore provides evidence that, so far as improving public perceptions about the headline target is concerned, the booklet is an effective medium but the mechanism of delivery is also very important. Whilst some information may be effectively conveyed by post, for example, on crime levels and sentence lengths, as well as certain attitudes towards sentencing influenced, for example, on sentencing being about right, this is not true for general confidence in the CJS. Accordingly, careful consideration needs to be given to the type of delivery mechanism employed to maximise the potential of the booklet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.4: Proportion saying they were confident that the Criminal Justice System was effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% positive response</td>
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<td>Control Group</td>
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<td>Explained Exp. Group</td>
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The results described in Tables 3.1 to 3.4 provide evidence that both knowledge about and attitudes toward the CJS can be improved using a booklet delivered in different ways. This is particularly noteworthy given the substantial challenges faced by any communications campaign. As previous research has pointed out, three-quarters of people mention the television and radio news as their main source of information about crime and the CJS. Television documentaries, local and tabloid newspapers are cited by half the people sampled whilst broad sheet newspapers are an important source for about a third (Mirrlees-Black, 2001). However, as Hough has observed, these sources tend to be negative rather than neutral.

*Media portrayals of crime and justice do seem to be particularly perverse. News stories about soaring crime and judges who are soft on crime and soft in the head are good for circulation, but bad for justice – when the headlines bear so little relation to reality.*

(2008)

Or as one of the participants in the group discussions said:

*I think the overwhelming impression you’re left with from everything you hear is just that figures are going up, police are no good, nobody’s doing what they should be doing, it tends to be the bad news that sells papers, the bad news, the headlines on the news, every teenager’s a thug.*
There is also the additional challenge of public mistrust of official statistics. In a survey undertaken on behalf of the Office for National Statistics, Goddard reports that only 37% of people agree that official figures are generally accurate compared with 31% who disagree and 32% who are unable to give an opinion (Goddard, E. 2005). Moreover, only 17% of people believe that official figures are produced without political interference and only 14% say the Government uses official figures honestly.

The design and credibility of both the booklet and delivery mechanism is therefore crucial if it is going to capture the attention of members of the general public so as to inform, persuade and remind them about its key messages.

The first hurdle to be overcome is to get people to read literature of this sort. During the post-intervention stage of the survey, those people who had been given a booklet were asked how much of it they had read. Of the 1,545 people who recalled receiving a booklet, 43% (669N) read all or most of it. However, the delivery mechanism appears to have been influential, with the likelihood of reading all or most of the booklet linked to the type of delivery mechanism. Thus, those getting it through the post had the lowest proportion of 36.1% saying they read all or most of the booklet, those handed it 44% and those delivered with an explanation 48%. Those who had been handed the booklet were significantly more likely to read it than those who had received it in the post.13

Amongst the 1,219 people who stated they had read the booklet, 62% found it very easy to read with a further 36% finding it fairly easy to read. Nearly nine out of ten of the readers said they had learned something from the booklet and just under half (49%) said that at least one item in the booklet had surprised them. Top of the list of surprises – and directly relevant to the perception gap – were the facts that the level of crime had decreased and that the percentage of people sentenced to prison had increased.

These findings are consistent with the booklet’s content needing to both inform and persuade. In the follow-up focus group interviews the consensus, reflecting the overall results from the survey, was positive if surprised.

I was surprised. I was surprised at the numbers that were quoted because it didn’t sort of tally with my perceptions… I thought the book was well done, and I thought the printing and everything was fine, and I thought the way that you’d gone about it was good. It was just that the numbers didn’t sort of tally in my head.

I remember reading through that and I thought after the first call – this came in between the first call and the second one – this isn’t quite what my perception was and I was actually quite positive because those statistics looked good.

The chi square test was used and the value 9.98 derived giving a probability value of one in a hundred that the finding was the result of chance i.e. $x^2 = 9.98$, 2 d.f. $P = < 0.01$. 

13
The equal importance of the reminder function was however suggested by another focus group interviewee with regard not only to the design of the booklet and the need to contain repeated message reinforcement but also reinforcement through other communication channels.

*I think it gives you confidence when you read it but then, to be fair, if you listen to the local news and you see the free papers that come around and you read about crimes, this really fades into insignificance. So, at first glance you think this is really impressive and then through personal experience perhaps and, like I say, hearing things locally, you do question what you see.*

In spite of this important rider, the booklet does appear to have proven to be a successful medium that was able to overcome the challenges presented by the broadcast and print media.

*Well, I read it, I suppose, so it must be reasonably useful, because I did actually read it, whereas if it was on the news, I might not have paid attention to it quite so much. It would have been in one ear and out the other. So I think this is quite good, actually, this.*

*I've not seen a booklet like that before. The thing is with the media... I read the paper most days but the facts would be there but they'd only be very small, at the end of a great big story about what happened. The sentencing would be maybe one or two sentences. So, you wouldn't necessarily take it in whereas, obviously, the booklet was all about statistics and sentences and all that type of thing. So, you could see it much more clearly in black and white whereas if you just read the paper, you get bogged down with the nitty-gritty of the actual event rather than the sentencing.*

In addition to lessons relating to the design of the booklet, the group interviews were also useful in learning about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the different delivery mechanisms. Ironically, because the postal method is a popular and relatively inexpensive way for organisations to communicate with large numbers of people, there is a serious risk of material being consigned to the oblivion of junk mail.

*Somebody putting something through my letterbox, to me it would probably be like a pizza pamphlet, it would just be coming straight in and straight into the recycling bin.*

Two complementary lessons emerged from the group discussions relating to the value of using personalised envelopes – as distinct from addressing ‘The Occupier’ – and the importance of investing in high quality paper and presentation.

*It was a good thing it was in an envelope because I’m afraid it would have gone straight into the bin. So it was a good thing it was in that envelope and not just shoved through my letterbox because I doubt we would have picked it up and looked at it.*
I got mine through the post. My mum usually sorts my junk mail out for me. It kind of went on the pile with the junk mail and it’s only when I walked in the door and said, oh, what’s this then, but otherwise, if I hadn’t noticed it, it would have just gone straight in the bin. I wouldn’t have read it. Really, I flicked through it. But if someone had delivered it to me, I probably would have paid a little more attention to the detail in it.

There is no question, however, that personal contact, whether handing out or explaining the booklet, carried the added value of creating a sense of interest or obligation.

Can I just say that I was impressed with it being delivered and that made me read it. I get so much junk mail that I don’t even look at that comes through the letterbox and that goes in the bin. Because somebody actually knocked on the door and handed it to me, I thought, well, I better read it.

He gave it to me at the door and then, because I’d taken it, I looked at it. Mine was handed to me by somebody that came to the door which puts more of an emphasis on it. It’s more meaningful because somebody’s actually given you this. They’ve gone out of their way to come to your door and give it to you. It means something rather than a person just popping it through the door like all the other junk. So, all of a sudden it’s independent from all your junk mail. It’s something different and somebody’s gone out of their way. So, why don’t I sit down, have a cup of tea and look through it? They’ve had the decency to deliver it. The rest of the junk mail goes in the bin. Don’t get me wrong. If this had come in with junk mail, it would have gone straight in the bin.

These views were further supported by the responses to the survey. A fifth of those receiving the booklet (20%) said that their confidence had increased after receiving it. However, the proportion of positive responses was found to relate to the delivery mechanism with only 15% of the posted group saying their confidence had increased in contrast to 21% for the handed and 22% for the explained groups. When these responses were divided into their respective delivery groups and whether after receiving the booklet confidence had increased, remained the same or decreased, the association between personal contact – as distinct from postal contact - and an improved positive response was found to be statistically significant. Thus, whereas the number of instances where confidence was reported to have risen were less than expected for the posted group, the reverse was true for the other two groups.

A final lesson learned from the follow-up interviews extends our understanding of the importance of personal contact by highlighting the value of who the personal contact actually comes from. A uniformed and/or official person was preferred because they either commanded attention by virtue of the trustworthiness symbolised by the uniform or signified that they were more likely to know what they were talking about.

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14 The chi square test was used and the value 9.87 derived giving a probability value of five in a hundred that the finding was the result of chance i.e. $x^2 = 9.87$, 4 d.f. $P = < 0.05$. 

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You’re more likely to take notice of somebody in uniform than the numerous people from charities and health insurance companies that you normally get.

Someone who’s more official, who can actually answer it. You might have a question to ask them. You don’t want some dolly bird just giving it out to you, who’s got no idea what it’s all about. You want somebody who’s actually got some idea of what they’re giving out.

Suggested improvements to the booklet and delivery methods

Based on the survey results and feedback elicited from the follow-up interviews with groups of respondents, the booklet and various delivery methods were very effective in improving understanding of and attitudes toward the CJS. This is not to say that further enhancements could not or should not be made. Having employed marketing theory in the design of the booklet, a ‘Test Marketing’ approach was also used to check perceived strengths and weaknesses of the material and methods used (Evans, J. and Berman, B., (1990).

The booklet

During the post-intervention stage of the survey, people receiving the booklet were invited to suggest improvements to it. Of the 1,545 who received it, the majority of respondents thought it was fine/good/very good as it was (22%). A slightly larger proportion stated that they either did not know or could not think of anything that should be changed (28%). Of those respondents who did suggest improvements, 13% of them said that it needed more detail or information and 9.3%, in line with mistrust of official statistics, said it could be improved by addressing the perception of it being a distorted view through being more open and honest.

In the focus groups there were two main areas of improvement which were frequently mentioned. The first echoed the findings from the survey and the scepticism about official statistics and the problem of ‘spin doctoring’:

They are certainly true figures. This is the beauty about it. They’re totally true figures but it’s how they present it. You can do that with figures. That’s the beauty about it. They all say statistics, statistics and lies. Statistics you can put any way you like. You can say 95% this and everything else. Well, okay, there’s 5% still left. You can highlight that 5% and make it sound bad. We’ve reduced burglaries by 59%. 41% of burglaries were domestic. You can put a different spin on it. You can imply that you’re going to be the next one, depending on how you present it. So, the figure itself isn’t the crucial bit, it’s how it’s presented. That’s what gives confidence. And if you produce a book where it’s all good news, then you think, well, was it ever that bad because it’s now so good and then you sort of listen to the news and you think, actually that’s very good. So, a year ago I was lucky to be alive. It’s how you look at the figures.
"I'm very suspicious of figures. You can actually make figures present anything you like, really.

To address this problem it was suggested that telling the CJS story in numbers as well as or instead of percentages would prevent figures from being used to create a spurious impression. Whereas percentages were seen to be open to manipulation, including the actual numbers they are based on would reduce the scope for presenting the figures, as one interview stated, “Any way you like”.

Similarly, and in line with the suggestion from a number of survey respondents, providing a more detailed picture of the CJS process – as distinct from discrete events within it – was seen as a useful way of making the story behind the statistics more transparent and credible.

"I'd like to know the full range as well, I'd like to know just how many arrests and charges the police have made, how many of those have gone forward for prosecution to the CPS, how many of those prosecutions were successful. Let’s start getting some real statistics on the whole of the process.

Lastly, with regard to addressing scepticism, it was suggested that instead of presenting information that only contained positive statistics, it would be more plausible to include some negative figures so as to make it “More a balanced view”.

The second area of improvement related to the type of information provided. In the survey only a small proportion said that the information provided needed to be more local (3.2%). However, in the focus groups, opinions were divided equally with strong opinions being in favour of providing more local information and being concerned about the risk of negative consequences from providing too much detail:

"I think you have to keep it local. If it’s national, then I don’t think people relate to it. If it’s local, your town, your area, then you’re going to be more interested and more likely to read it.

You have to be careful on how you break it down because if you break it down too much, you’re going to start alienating some areas. So, if you had 10% of the crime in Northampton and nine of the ten crimes were committed in one area, everybody’s going to leave that area.

The provision of a combination of both local and national information may be a fruitful compromise to explore. Whilst local area level data are of immediate interest, national data, as one interviewee helpfully pointed out provide a valuable baseline “So you can compare, is my local area worse than the national?”.
Another type of information suggested which was supported by the majority of interviewees related to providing cameos that, so to speak, put some flesh on the bones of the statistics and met the human interest angle. The following exchange in one of the groups illustrates this point.

A: *It helps to have that human interest, because I think we become a bit jaded, I think, with everything that goes on. You get so used to hearing about crime’s up, this is up, that’s up, and perhaps crime’s coming down because the police and everybody else is focusing on crime of the month, but you do tend to lose the human side of what’s actually going on.*

B: *It might not necessarily be with this, he was a bad ‘un, so he got 20 years. It might be someone who did something wrong, did so many hours of community service, painted an old lady’s fence, that sort of thing, and now has got a good job, and all that sort of thing.*

C: *It would be nice to know the aftermath of the people who’d committed the crime, Did their rehabilitation work? You do hear about repeat offences, but the positive story. You’d like to know if the sentences do work, if community service does work.*

In the last part of this extract the dynamic nature of the criminal justice process is acknowledged along with the expression of a wish that this type of information is also provided. This is consistent with and complements the earlier point about the wish to “Know the full range”. As well as referring to particular individuals, similar comments were made about particular projects involving offenders doing some form of community service.

The last improvement to the booklet suggested in several of the group discussions related to providing an explanation which could sit alongside the facts presented. This would not only demystify what for many is a remote and obscure system but also help to address various concerns about why particular sentence lengths are made and prisoners released earlier than the sentence lengths given.

**Alternative media**

In looking for a way to provide the general public with informative and persuasive information about the CJS the use of a booklet is an obvious choice. Apart from the initial set-up and subsequent distribution costs, it can be a relatively inexpensive communication tool. Because the experiment was looking for a way that could be replicated across the country by Local Criminal Justice Boards, the use of seminars or videos (Chapman *et al.*, 2002) was not considered either financially or practically feasible. In the follow-up interviews suggestions for alternatives were, however, invited. A number of useful suggestions were made and merit further consideration.
One person suggested that doctors' surgeries and Accident and Emergency departments could be a useful setting to provide information in pamphlet or poster format because people need something to distract them – especially when all the magazines have gone! This prompted others to suggest parish councils as a valuable amplifier and filter of local information. Another thought that advertising, possibly in the local press, would be a good way of letting people know about the positive accomplishments achieved through community punishments.

*If you put out some sort of advert somewhere that said ‘Last month so many hours of Community Service were done in this town. We did this patch, painted this fence, scrubbed this graffiti’, that sort of thing, and you could actually see it for yourself, that’s when you’re going to start believing it.*

It was also recommended that consideration be given to emulating or piggy-backing the practice of local authorities who provide annual statements to rate-payers which include details of the proportion of the budget dedicated to police services.

Whilst this last suggestion proved quite popular the additional suggestion that supermarkets should be targeted along with billboards located in public areas proved more controversial. Some thought supermarkets were ideal because of the high volume of people using them whilst others disagreed saying they would be too frazzled with the shopping to concentrate on the material provided. Similarly billboards similar to those used on the highway to warn drivers of road casualties were popular with some as a means of conveying key facts and figures about the CJS while others felt this would backfire and end up making people more fearful.

Although this study is not able to assess the efficacy of these suggestions, one can nevertheless be clear that the use of a professionally designed booklet delivered through a personalised envelope or personal contact is a very effective way of raising public confidence in the CJS.
4. Conclusion

This study has built on evidence from criminological research which indicates that currently the more knowledgeable the general public are about the performance of the CJS, particularly with regard to actual crime levels and sentencing severity, the more positive their attitude towards it will be. The study also built on the evidence from communications and marketing theory whereby effective promotion of products or services requires high quality media based on the three-fold function of informing, persuading and reminding. Against this background the aim of the study came to focus on two questions. First, if we provide people with facts about the CJS via a professionally designed booklet, will they become more confident in the CJS? Second, does the way in which the booklet is delivered make a difference? To answer these questions a large-scale and robust methodology was employed involving a randomised controlled trial of a representative sample of approximately 3,000 people and follow-up focus group interviews with just under 50 of those participating in the trial.

The results from this experiment have been positive. They not only demonstrate the efficacy of the booklet in raising awareness of the CJS but also in improving attitudes towards it. For example, there was a five percentage point difference in knowledge about crime levels between those who received the booklet compared with those who did not. Similarly, there was a four percentage point improvement in the accurate estimation of the average sentence length for rape for recipients compared with non-recipients. Improvements in knowledge about the CJS were also matched by an increase in positive attitudes towards it. For the national target based on the proportion saying they were confident that the CJS was effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice, booklet recipients did better by just under five percentage points. All of these findings were statistically significant.

Because the findings were achieved in a fairly low-confidence area, it is reasonable to assume that similar results can be obtained from other low-confidence areas. Whether the same scale of improvement can be achieved in high-confidence areas cannot be answered by this research. It is also important to bear in mind that, given the different definitions of both confidence and the CJS as well as the variety of factors influencing confidence levels, a focus on bringing offenders to justice with particular reference to communicating accurate information on crime levels and sentencing severity may be a necessary but insufficient basis for an overall improvement in public attitudes.

The answer to the second question relating to the effectiveness of different delivery methods, while equally positive, was not as clear-cut. When the results for each of the three delivery methods were compared, personal rather than postal contact appeared to be more effective. A statistically significant likelihood of reading all or most of the booklet was noted for the personal rather than the postal method. Similarly, a statistically significant relationship was also found in relation to confidence in the Criminal Justice System increasing for those who received the booklet personally rather than by post.
Although there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate conclusively the superiority of one particular delivery method over the others, the survey findings coupled with the feedback from the focus groups suggest that personal contact, especially from persons in positions of identifiable authority, will tend to be more effective than a postal approach but that attention to personalising letters is more likely to lead to the booklet being read rather than dismissed along with a lot of other junk mail.

The study was not designed to consider the duration of effect and how long positive attitudes were sustained. Nevertheless it is important for CJS practitioners seeking to replicate the approach described in this study to recall the importance of the reminder function and the likelihood of attitudes changing if there is no repeated communication. Similarly, because the analysis has focused to-date on the efficacy of the project rather than the impact on the people who participated in it, it is not yet possible to say to whom the booklet and different delivery methods can best be targeted.

Feedback from both the survey and focus groups was also useful in identifying strengths in the design of the booklet as well as improvements which could usefully be made to improve it. The decision to opt for a high quality active-attention catching booklet designed according to the marketing theory of informing, persuading and reminding appears to have been vindicated by the survey findings that: a) over 40% who recalled receiving the booklet read all or most of it; b) over 97% of those who read the booklet stated that it was very easy or fairly easy to read; and c) nearly nine out of ten of the readers said they had learned something from the booklet with just under half stating at least one item had surprised them.

During the focus groups and in the spirit of Test Marketing the strengths and weaknesses of new products (Evans and Berman, 1990), participants were invited to suggest improvements to the booklet and the delivery methods. Five practical and potentially useful suggestions were made. The first four related to the content of the booklet, namely:

- to avoid accusations of ‘spin’, use numbers as well as percentages;
- provide information relating to the whole CJS process rather than discrete (and potentially biased) aspects of it;
- provide a balanced picture of failures as well as successes; and
- use cameos to maximise human interest.

The final set of improvements suggested related to additional opportunities available for delivering this type of information and included making use of parish councils and doctors’ surgeries.
It is not possible to comment on the relative usefulness of these alternatives to a home delivery scenario as they were not tested in this research. However, CJS practitioners may wish to explore these and other alternatives based on the evidence from this study that the booklet, by informing, persuading and reminding, was able to increase both understanding of and confidence in the CJS.
References


Appendix 1: Technical note

The analysis of the survey results needed to determine whether there was a positive change in the experimental groups, how large the change was compared to change in the control group and whether this change was statistically significant (unlikely to be due to chance). Variables were created to assess change for each respondent. The numbers of respondents who had changed their views from negative to positive or from positive to negative where then calculated. No weighting was applied in the analysis for this report.

The size of the positive effect achieved by the intervention was calculated by comparing change in the experimental groups (whether aggregated together or analysed separately) to change in the control group. A formula was written to test for the statistical significance of the change at the 95% level, that is whether the reader could be confident, 95 times out of 100, that the results found were not due to chance.

For all the analysis undertaken, statistical significance is shown by p-values. The p-value is an estimate of probability that provides a way of deciding whether to reject the null hypothesis. With particular reference to this project, p-value enables the researchers to decide whether to reject the hypothesis that the interventions had no effect. The level of probability used to decide when to reject the null hypothesis and identify an intervention effect can vary from project to project but a p-value less than 5% or less is customary. The term ‘positive response’ is used in the text where there is a significant positive difference when comparing the results for experimental and control groups. The convention employed in tables throughout this report is to denote one of three levels of estimated probability by one to three asterisks:

*  p = < 0.05  
** p = < 0.01  
*** p = < 0.001

In estimating the probability that the null hypothesis is true, an alternative hypothesis should be considered. A typical null hypothesis would be that both experimental and control groups would show the same results, so A=B. The alternative might be that experimental groups would have better results than the control group, so A>B. This hypothesis results in what is called one-tailed test because the choice is then between A=B or A>B. If the alternative is that the experimental and the control groups will have different results but it is not clear which will do better, so A≠B. This hypothesis results in a two-tailed test because the choice is between A=B or A<>B. All of the significance tests used on the survey data were one-tailed because previous research suggested a strong hypothesis as to the direction of movement of the indicators.
Calculating statistical significance of effect size for the survey findings

This technique, referred to as The Dobby Test, was successfully employed in the valuation of the national reassurance policing project (Tuffin et al. 2006)

The variable we are interested in is the one which takes the value 1 if the respondent says they are very pleased or pleased with something and 0 otherwise and there are four different situations in which this variable might be observed: – experimental before, experimental after, control before and control after.

Our model would be $X_{GT} = 0$ with probability $1 - p_{GT}$

$1$ with probability $p_{GT}$

where $G$ takes the values E (experimental) or C (control) and $T$ takes the values B (before) or A (after)

We want to test whether $[(p_{EA} - p_{EB}) - (p_{CA} - p_{CB})]$ is significantly different from zero

$\text{VAR}[(p_{EA} - p_{EB}) - (p_{CA} - p_{CB})] = \text{VAR} [(p_{EA} - p_{EB})] + \text{VAR}[(p_{CA} - p_{CB})]$ because the experimental and control group observations are independent

If we define $Y_G$ as $X_{GA} - X_{GB}$ (which we can do because we have panel data for both the experimental and control groups) then $Y_G$ takes the values $0$, $1$ or $-1$

If $n_{GRS}$ is the number of cases in group $G$ who score $R$ before and $S$ after, and $n_G$ is the number of cases in group $G$, for $G = E, C$ then $n_G = n_{G00} + n_{G11} + n_{G01} + n_{G10}$

By definition $\text{VAR}[X_{GA} - X_{GB}] = E[(X_{GA} - X_{GB})^2] - E^2[X_{GA} - X_{GB}]$ where $E[X]$ represents the expected value of $X$

$X_{GA} - X_{GB}$ takes the value $0$ with probability $(n_{G00} + n_{G11})/n_G$, the value $1$ with probability $n_{G01}/n_G$

and the value $-1$ with probability $n_{G10}/n_G$

Since $0^2 = 0, 1^2 = 1, (-1)^2 = 1$

$E[(X_{GA} - X_{GB})^2] = 0^2(n_{G00} + n_{G11}) + 1^2.n_{G01} + (-1)^2.n_{G10} = n_{G01} + n_{G10}$

and
\[ E^2[X_{GA} - X_{GB}] = \left[ 0.(n_{G00} + n_{G11}) + 1.n_{G01} + (-1).n_{G10} \right]^2 = \left[ n_{G01} - n_{G10} \right]^2 \]

So, \[ \text{VAR}[X_{GA} - X_{GB}] = \frac{n_{G01} + n_{G10} - [n_{G01} - n_{G10}]^2}{n_G} \]

\[ = \{p_{G01} + p_{G10} - [p_{G01} - p_{G10}]^2 \} \]

where \( p_{G01} \) is the probability that in group \( G \) the respondent will score 0 before and 1 after and \( p_{G10} \) is the probability that in group \( G \) the respondent will score 1 before and 0 after.

Since \( p_{GA} - p_{GB} \) is the mean of \( X_{GA} - X_{GB} \)

\[ \text{VAR}[p_{GA} - p_{GB}] = \frac{\{p_{G01} + p_{G10} - [p_{G01} - p_{G10}]^2 \}}{n_G} \]

If the null hypothesis were true, the expected value of \( [(p_{EA} - p_{EB}) - (p_{CA} - p_{CB})] \) would be zero and so

\[ \sqrt{\left\{ \frac{(p_{E01} + p_{E10} - [p_{E01} - p_{E10}]^2) + (p_{C01} + p_{C10} - [p_{C01} - p_{C10}]^2)}{n_E n_C} \right\}} \]

would be a standard normal variate (for sufficiently large \( n \)’s) and provide our test statistic.

We can estimate \( p_{GRS} \) by \( n_{GRS} \) for \( G = E, C \quad R = 0, 1 \) and \( S = 0, 1 \)

\[ p_{GA} \text{ by } \frac{(n_{G11} + n_{G01})}{n_G} \text{ for } G = E, C \]

\[ p_{GB} \text{ by } \frac{(n_{G11} + n_{G10})}{n_G} \text{ for } G = E, C \]
Appendix 2: Script for booklet distributors and prepared questions and answers

Script for booklet distributors – group 3: knock and drop

Introduction
Knock on the door and identify yourself:

“Evening my name is …………… I am from Media Outcomes [SHOW ID] a company working with Ipsos MORI. Please can I talk to …………… (participant’s name)?”

Scenario 1: Participant is home

“Evening my name is …………… You might remember a phone call you had a couple of weeks ago from Ipsos MORI, the research company, about crime and attitudes to crime. I am from Media Outcomes [SHOW ID], and we are working with Ipsos MORI. I would like to give you a booklet which gives you some more information about sentencing and crime rates.”

Scenario 2: Participant in not available

“When will ……. be in?”

Await response.

“Thank you for your time we will call again on …..”

(Record date and time).

Scenario 3: Participant is available but does not want to take the booklet

“May I ask why you do not want to take the booklet?”

(Record answer).

“Thank you for your time. Good night.”

Script for booklet distributors – group 4: knock and discuss

Introduction
Knock on the door and identify yourself:

“Evening my name is …………… I am from Media Outcomes [SHOW ID] a company working with Ipsos MORI. Please can I talk to …………… (participant’s name)?”
Scenario 1: Participant is home

“Evening my name is …………… You might remember a phone call you had a couple of weeks ago from Ipsos MORI, the research company, about crime and attitudes to crime. I am from Media Outcomes [SHOW ID], and we are working with Ipsos MORI. I would like to give you a booklet which gives you some more information about sentencing and crime rates. Sometimes news headlines are more about selling newspapers rather than reporting on how things really are. This booklet gives you the information. For example did you know crime is at its lowest since 1981? [Wait for response/reaction]

“In Northamptonshire violent crime is down 4%, burglary is down 12% and theft of and from vehicles is down 13%. I will leave the booklet with you to go through at your leisure. If you want more information there are some useful websites at the back. You can also call ………. Thank you for your time. Have a nice evening.”

Scenario 2: Participant in not available

“When will ……. be in?”

Await response.

“Thank you for your time we will call again on …..”

(Record date and time).

Scenario 3: Participant is available but does not want to take the booklet

“May I ask why you do not want to take the booklet?”

(Record answer).

“Thank you for your time. Have a nice evening.”

FAQ:

Q: Is this about the telephone interview I did about this?
A: Yes when Ipsos MORI contacted you, you agreed to take part in research. This is part of that research.

Q: How did you get my name and address?
A: We are working with Ipsos MORI and your details were provided by them as part of the research

Q: Why can’t I just hand the leaflet to XXX for you?
A: Thank you, but I have been asked to hand it only to the named contact who took part in a telephone interview conducted by Ipsos MORI a few weeks ago.
Q: What is the point of all this?
A: We are getting factual information to people in Northamptonshire about sentencing and crime rates.

Q: Why are you wasting time talking to me? Put more police on the streets.
A: There is a drive towards neighbourhood policing and police community support officers. The aim of the booklet is to give you the facts about sentencing and crime rates.

Q: Where can I get more information?
A: If you have internet access, a list of useful websites is listed at the end of the booklet. For more information about the research project please call Ipsos MORI (xxxxxx). For more information about the leaflet please contact OCJR on xxxxxx.

Q: What/who is the Office for Criminal Justice Reform?
A: It is a government organisation that works to get Criminal Justice Agencies such as the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, the Probation Service to work together to improve the Criminal Justice System

Q: Where can I get more information about what is happening in Northamptonshire?
A: From your Local Criminal Justice Board. Their website is http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Northamptonshire/home_new.html or contact Kath Hardwick on xxxxxx

Q: What is a Local Criminal Justice Board?
A: The local version of OCJR. The Northamptonshire Criminal Justice Board brings together the work of all the local criminal justice agencies to improve the Criminal Justice System locally.
Appendix 3: Reasons why booklet deliveries to groups 3 and 4 were not successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for unsuccessful delivery</th>
<th>Number unsuccessful deliveries&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 3: CJS booklet handed to people in person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with required person at address (e.g. out/no answer at door)</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address not found</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property vacant, derelict, demolished</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person away during field work; not followed up at second survey</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy refusal at door</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn from research; not followed up at second survey</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person couldn’t come to the door (e.g. ill); not followed up at second survey</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booklet refused at door</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-residential address</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to gain access to block</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Number of unsuccessful deliveries, where three delivery attempts were made.
## Appendix 4: Profile of respondents interviewed at both surveys compared to 2001 area Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work full time</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 16-34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5: Composition of focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Changes in confidence from first to second survey</th>
<th>Intervention/ control group</th>
<th>Age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Under 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Over 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative change</td>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Over 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative change</td>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Under 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
<td>Intervention group</td>
<td>Over 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Positive change</td>
<td>Intervention group</td>
<td>Under 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Negative change/ no change</td>
<td>Intervention group</td>
<td>Over 45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Negative change/ no change</td>
<td>Intervention group</td>
<td>Under 45 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: The booklet
Concerned about crime? Unclear about sentencing?
Things aren’t always what they seem
With sensational headlines and dramatic news reports, it’s easy to think that crime rates are on the rise and that prosecuted criminals are being given sentences that are far too lenient.

**But you’d be wrong.**

The fact is that the risk of becoming a victim of crime has fallen from 40 per cent in 1995/96 to 23 per cent in 2005/06.¹ This means that the UK now has over six million fewer victims of crime.

We know that policing and sentencing is not just about crime figures. We know that we need to tell you what we are doing and how we are doing it. It’s about giving you confidence in the system and making you feel safer.

With facts and figures that tell you the real story, this leaflet gives you the big picture.

Because things aren’t always what they seem…

¹The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a large survey of a representative cross section of people in England and Wales. It asks about people’s experiences of crime and their perceptions. It provides the most reliable measure of the true extent of crime and of national trends over time as it is not affected by whether the public report crime or by changes to the way the police record crime.
How you think and feel...

We wanted to understand your thoughts and feelings about crime and sentencing, so we can look at the issues through your eyes.

Based on surveys\(^2\) conducted in 2005/06, 63 per cent of people believed that the crime rate in the country as a whole had increased in the previous two years. Also in 2004/05, 76 per cent of people felt that sentences were too lenient.

In fact, the chance of being a victim of crime is at its lowest since the British Crime Survey began in 1981.

Of the crimes that have been committed, 74 per cent of it falls into the ‘least serious’ category – a good indicator that crime levels are not only falling but the nature of the crime that is committed is less serious.

\(^2\)British Crime Survey data
Worried about vehicle crime?
Vehicle crime has fallen by 60%

Things aren’t always what they seem
The facts are...

Statistics from the British Crime Survey give you a comprehensive view of criminal patterns and trends.

Since peaking in 1995, crime levels have fallen by 44 per cent.

- There have been 8.4 million fewer crimes.
- Domestic burglary has fallen by more than half (59 per cent).
- Vehicle crime has fallen by more than half (60 per cent).
- Violent crime has fallen by almost half (43 per cent).
This is what crime looks like in your area…

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Between 2004/05 and 2005/06\(^3\) Northamptonshire had:

- 8% reduction in recorded crime
- 4% reduction in violent crime
- 12% reduction in burglary
- 13% reduction in theft of and from vehicles

\(^3\) Police recorded crime data. Recorded crime means the number of crimes that have been reported to and recorded by the police.
Worried about domestic burglary?
Things aren’t always what they seem
Domestic burglary has fallen by 59%
The seven steps to sentence:

1. A crime is reported to the police
2. Police investigate and identify a suspect
3. Police either arrest suspect or summon them to appear before a court
4. Police pass their evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service

Sentences are given according to the following categories:

Less serious crimes

Discharges and fines
ncing

→ 5
A Crown Prosecutor decides whether there is enough evidence to prosecute, and if it is in the public interest to do so.

→ 6
Offender appears in court before a magistrate/judge.

→ 7
If the offender is convicted, the magistrate/judge decides on a sentence, assisted by expert help from probation staff.

95 per cent of criminal cases are heard in magistrates’ courts, but serious cases go before a judge at a Crown Court.

More serious crimes
Community orders

Very serious crimes
Prison
Principles of sentencing

The sentence given to an offender depends on how serious their crime is. It must also:

★ punish the offender;
★ protect the public;
★ reform and rehabilitate the offender;
★ allow the offender to make reparation (to put something back into their community or make amends directly to the victim of their crime);
★ reduce crime in the future.

The court makes the sentencing decision and follows legal guidelines set out by the Sentencing Guidelines Council.

Judges and magistrates are advised in their task by probation staff. These are people skilled in assessing the risks posed by offenders and how to help rehabilitate them.
Our surveys\(^4\) showed that you are concerned about the issue of sentencing.

63% Sentencing statistics\(^5\) from January to December 2004 showed that 63 per cent of men convicted of house burglary (aged 21 and over) were given a prison sentence.

The public, however, perceived this figure as only about 40 per cent.\(^6\)

98% Sentencing statistics\(^7\) from the same year showed that 98 per cent of men convicted of rape (aged 21 and over) were given a prison sentence.

The public, however, perceived this figure as only about 58 per cent.\(^8\)

\(^4\)British Crime Survey data and Sentencing data \(^5\)Sentencing data \(^6\)British Crime Survey data \(^7\)Sentencing data \(^8\)British Crime Survey data
Take a look at the facts

LENGTH OF SENTENCES

★ The average length of a prison sentence for a man (aged 21 or over) convicted of rape is seven years.

★ The total percentage of people sentenced at the Crown Court to immediate custody increased over the last ten years from 56 per cent to 60 per cent.

20 crimes out of every 100 involve violence resulting in injury, including sexual offences, robbery, Actual Bodily Harm (ABH)

9 Sentencing data
★ Sentencing is tougher. Over the last ten years the number of people sentenced to life in prison has increased from 273 (1995) to 625 (2005).

★ To give you an idea of current lengths of sentences, the average sentence length in months for people sentenced to immediate custody at the Crown Court (2005 in England and Wales) by specific offences (excluding life and indeterminate sentences) is:

- Violence against the person 24.5
- Burglary 24.7
- Sexual offences 44.4
- Robbery 38.0
- Theft and handling stolen goods 12.8

Men out of 100 (aged 21 or over), convicted of robbery, were sent to prison.
Useful websites

For up-to-date information on the work of the Criminal Justice System, please visit www.cjsonline.gov.uk

For up-to-date information and access to recent publications about the British Crime Survey, please visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html

Sentencing data is part of the Home Office Court Proceedings Database and for more information please visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimstats05.html and www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hosb1505.pdf

Crime reduction: www.crimereduction.gov.uk
National Probation Service: www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk
Victim Support and Witness Service: www.victimsupport.org
Crown Prosecution Service: www.cps.gov.uk
Crown courts: www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk
HM Prison Service: www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk
National Offender Management Service: www.noms.homeoffice.gov.uk
Ministry of Justice Research Series 15/08
Inform, persuade and remind: An evaluation of a project to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System

This report summarises the results of an experiment in communicating information to members of the public. The experiment was designed to test the impact of a targeted communication activity on public confidence in criminal justice services. Building on previous evidence relating to communicating information about the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and drawing on criminological, communications and marketing theory, a booklet was designed and delivered to over 2,000 members of the public in three different ways. The booklet focused on the gap between what is perceived to be and what is actually happening in the CJS. Knowledge of and attitudes toward the CJS with particular reference to crime levels and sentencing severity were tested before and after receipt of the booklet and the results compared with a control group not given the booklet. The experiment provides powerful evidence, based on a rigorous research methodology, that effective presentation of national and local crime statistics and other information about the CJS can have a positive impact on public confidence. The findings also demonstrate that the delivery mechanism for the information is also important, with a greater movement in public confidence levels achieved through face to face delivery (without or without an introductory script) than through postal delivery.

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