Detecting a Change
Progress in tackling crime

Since 1993, there has been a modest fall in recorded crime – the most sustained for 40 years...
◆ the number of offences recorded by the police fell by 1 per cent in 1993, 5 per cent in 1994 and 3 per cent in 1995
◆ the let-up in the pressure of rising crime has given forces some welcome breathing space

but the overall crime and clear-up figures disguise wide variations both between types of crimes and between forces.
◆ violence against the person continued to rise until 1994 before falling in 1995
◆ burglary of homes reduced more sharply than overall crime
◆ three-quarters of forces improved their clear-up rate for house burglary between 1993 and 1995

Direct links can be made between higher clear-up rates – especially of burglaries – and forces’ new approach to crime management...
◆ streamlining the response to incidents to focus more on identifying and catching offenders
◆ targeting prolific offenders
◆ devolving crime management responsibilities to local units

and crime prevention has had a significant impact on crime in local areas.
◆ forces are putting an increased emphasis on preventing crime
◆ partnership with other agencies is proving successful – for example, joint initiatives with local authorities to reduce burglaries on housing estates

The clear evidence of performance improvements by forces that have changed the most should encourage those that have been slower to change to follow their example.
The Audit Commission

...promotes proper stewardship

of public finances and helps those

responsible for public services

...to achieve economy, efficiency

and effectiveness.
Introduction

1. The police service's approach to tackling crime has been undergoing a quiet revolution. In 1993, the Audit Commission published *Helping with Enquiries: Tackling Crime Effectively*, which set out the need for co-ordinated, intelligence-driven and targeted crime strategies. This was followed in 1994 by practical guidance from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Audit Commission, in the management handbook *Tackling Crime Effectively*, a second volume of which was issued to police forces in 1996 (Box A). Home Office research provided further, detailed advice (Ref. 1). This current bulletin gives a snapshot of the extent to which police forces have taken up these recommendations.

2. The bulletin looks in particular at how better policing is helping to improve detection of certain types of crime. On the basis of follow-up visits to forces that have shown marked improvements in performance, it documents examples of where good practice has made a difference. This progress should encourage all forces to adopt and follow through effective strategies for tackling crime.

### Box A

**Key reports on tackling crime**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Produced by</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Helping with Enquiries: Tackling Crime Effectively</em> (National Report)</td>
<td>Audit Commission</td>
<td>November 1993</td>
<td>Set out findings and recommendations of Audit Commission study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tackling Crime Effectively</em> (Management Handbook)</td>
<td>ACPO, Audit Commission, HMIC</td>
<td>May 1994</td>
<td>Gave guidance to police forces on implementation of crime strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tackling Crime Effectively - Volume 2</em> (Management Handbook)</td>
<td>ACPO, Audit Commission, HMIC, Home Office and others</td>
<td>May 1996</td>
<td>Disseminated further advice to forces on good practice, together with case studies on the implementation of <em>Tackling Crime Effectively</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Changes in Crime and Clear-ups since 1993

3. The mid-1990s have seen the most sustained, albeit modest, fall in recorded crime for 40 years. The number of offences recorded by the police fell by 1 per cent in 1993, by 5 per cent in 1994 and by 3 per cent in 1995. Although it is impossible to predict whether this trend will continue, it has been a welcome change from the previous decade of steep growth: the number of crimes rose by over 70 per cent between 1982 and 1992. The let-up in the pressure of rising crime has given forces some welcome breathing space in which to develop more effective strategies to tackle crime.

4. The causes of trends in recorded crime are imperfectly understood. It should be borne in mind that:

- the recent fall has been in crimes recorded by the police. The two-yearly British Crime Survey, based on victims' recollections, shows that victims report only four crimes in ten, and just over half of these are recorded by the police (Ref. 2). The 1994 survey showed some fall in reporting and recording rates, and a further fall could account for some of the drop in recorded crime. However, what is encouraging is that the crimes that are almost always reported and recorded, such as car thefts, have dropped along with other crimes.

- a small part of the reduction in crime can be attributed to a fall in the number of young people. The birth rate fell by 35 per cent between 1964 and 1977, so young people at the peak offending age (15-19 years) are less numerous than they were in the 1980s. However, the net demographic effect of fewer young people on crime levels is modest when compared with actual fluctuations in offending rates. From 1988 to 1992, demography on its own might be expected to have led to a fall of 5 per cent in the number of offences – in fact, crime went up by 38 per cent. From 1992 to 1995, when crime fell by 9 per cent, demography accounted for a 2 per cent fall (Ref. 3).

5. It is also difficult to determine the exact contribution of policing to falls in crime levels. Changes in society, particularly the growing problem of drug abuse, have contributed to a rise in crime in all developed countries in recent years (although some, like England and Wales, have seen a small reduction in the mid-1990s). Policing is only one influence on crime rates: many other agencies – and individual citizens – have a part to play alongside the police in the fight against crime. The report, Helping with Enquiries, said: 'The police are not responsible for the causes of crime, the roots of which lie deep in society. Tackling the causes requires action on a broad front by both central and local government in fields such as education, training, social services and probation' (Exhibit 1).

6. The overall crime and clear-up figures for England and Wales disguise wide variations both between types of crime and between forces. Although the total number of crimes fell continuously from 1993 to 1995, violence against the person continued to rise until 1994 before falling...
Changes in Crime and Clear-ups since 1993

Exhibit 1
The criminal justice system in context

The police are only one agency with a role to play in crime prevention and detection; there are many other influences – both inside and outside the criminal justice system.

Source: adapted from Helping with Enquiries, Audit Commission, 1993

Exhibit 2
Changes in levels of recorded crime

Crime has not been falling evenly across all categories.

Source: Home Office data

in 1995 (Exhibit 2). Burglary of homes, on the other hand, fell more sharply than overall crime. Even within particular categories, the trend has varied widely between force areas. For example, although the number of house burglaries fell by 11 per cent nationally from 1993 to 1995, it fell by over 25 per cent in a few police force areas and actually increased in others (Exhibit 3, overleaf). A similar pattern occurred for car thefts.
Detecting a Change
Progress in tackling crime

Exhibit 3
Change in house burglaries, by force, 1993-1995

Most forces have seen burglaries drop, but in a few they have increased.

Source: Home Office data

7. In England and Wales as a whole, the total number of crimes cleared up by the police fell slightly between 1993 and 1995, from around 1.33 million to 1.27 million. To obtain a comprehensive picture on clear-ups, the proportion of crimes solved – the clear-up rate – also needs to be considered. This figure has shown a slight improvement; in two-thirds of forces the overall clear-up rate rose between 1993 and 1995, whereas in the previous two years there had been a deterioration in all but six forces.

Effective action against burglars
8. There has been particular progress in improving the clear-up rate for house burglaries, which rose from 20.2 per cent in 1993 to 23.5 per cent in 1995. Performance in solving burglaries is more susceptible to improvement through effective policing than detection of more random forms of crime like assault. Over three-quarters of forces succeeded in improving the proportion of house burglaries that they cleared up (Exhibit 4).
Three-quarters of forces improved their clear-up rate for house burglary between 1993 and 1995.

Source: Home Office data

9. Other things being equal, the proportion of crimes cleared up will improve if the number of crimes reduces, but there was no significant relationship between forces' improvements in burglary clear-up rates and the reductions in the number of burglaries they recorded. (Indeed, over half the forces have succeeded in clearing up a greater number of burglaries even though fewer were committed.) So factors other than a reduction in the volume of crime contribute to the improvement in the burglary clear-up rate. Forces showing the most improvement in clear-up rate included both high-performing ones becoming even better and below-average ones raising their performance above the average. For example, West Mercia cleared up 27 per cent of burglaries in 1993, already seven points above the national average, and by 1995 its clear-up rate had risen still further to 31 per cent. Hertfordshire rose from a low 1993 clear-up rate of 12 per cent to 26 per cent in 1995, three points above the national average.
Changes in Police Methods

10. Changes in the approach to crime had already started in some forces before the publication by the Audit Commission, ACPO and HMIC of the management handbook, *Tackling Crime Effectively*. But the handbook has both speeded up and spread the adoption of good practice.

Police forces responded promptly, partly because the findings and recommendations went with the grain of acknowledged good practice. Auditors found that most forces had moved to implement the main recommendations of the national report (Exhibit 5) as soon as it was published.

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**Exhibit 5**

*Helping with Enquiries: key recommendations*

Three lines of action were proposed in the national report.

**Problems**

- Lack of integrated approach to crime
- Forces are not making the best use of resources
- Focus is on crimes rather than criminals

**Solutions**

- Develop clear management framework
  - make policing priorities explicit
  - clarify priorities within crime management
  - define core role for CID and rationalise the division of labour with uniformed officers
  - integrate all aspects of specialist crime work in a unified management structure
  - clarify accountabilities at HQ and local levels

- Make better use of resources
  - establish crime desks
  - improve quality of first response, to avoid duplication
  - enhance investigation skills and supervision of uniformed officers
  - introduce more teamworking and greater emphasis on supervision
  - streamline administration
  - undertake outcome analysis and develop suitable PI packages

- Target the criminal
  - develop intelligence strategy based on target criminals and communicate this to all officers
  - enhance the intelligence and scientific support functions
  - improve crime pattern analysis capacity
  - build in an element of proactivity to all detective duties
  - encourage the use of informants

*Source: Helping with Enquiries, Audit Commission, November 1993*
During the course of 1994, HMIC noted that most forces had published new crime strategies, or were developing existing ones, that incorporated many of the document’s principles (Ref. 4).

11. Each force has developed its own strategy in the light of local circumstances, but the move towards a more planned approach has been universal. The Police and Magistrates’ Courts Act 1994 has given further impetus to a focus on strategic plans to tackle crime and more robust performance management. It requires every police authority to issue an annual plan (the Local Policing Plan) setting out its priorities and stating objectives against which performance can be measured. These objectives must include the Home Secretary’s five key objectives for policing, three of which relate to crime – detecting more burglaries of people’s homes, detecting more violent crimes, and targeting and preventing crimes of local concern, notably drug-related criminality.

12. The far-reaching changes recommended in *Tackling Crime Effectively* will take some years to become fully established, and it would be premature at this stage to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of their implementation. However, it is already possible to see direct evidence of their impact in certain cases. In particular, the priority given by many forces to clearing up house burglaries – through a more proactive approach to catching persistent burglars – appears to have had a substantial effect on detection rates.

13. In fieldwork for this bulletin, the Commission visited a selection of forces that have improved substantially the rate at which they detect house burglaries (see Exhibit 4). The six forces were selected to cover a variety of geographical areas and force types. In the fieldwork forces as a whole from 1993 to 1995, the number of burglaries fell by 12 per cent (compared with 11 per cent nationally), yet the number of burglaries cleared up rose by 51 per cent (compared with 3 per cent nationally). Moreover, these gains do not appear to have been made at the expense of the detection of other kinds of crime. For example, the detection rate for non-domestic burglaries (including those of shops and offices) rose from 16 per cent to 19 per cent, compared with a fall across England and Wales from 19 to 18 per cent. And all the fieldwork forces matched or, in most cases, bettered, the national improvement in overall clear-up rates between 1993 and 1995.

14. The objective of the fieldwork was to identify specific practices that help account for good performance at force-wide and local level. The fieldwork confirmed that direct links can be made between practice and performance. Although direct links are often highly specific to one type of crime in a very local area, effective policies to tackle crime are also likely to have a wider impact that may not be measurable in the short term.
Catching More Criminals: Four Strategies

15. In taking a more strategic approach to crime management, police forces have adopted four particular types of initiative that directly help them to catch more criminals. These are in line with the approach set out in Exhibit 5 above: some cut across more than one of the three lines of action and others apply mainly to one or two specific recommendations. In summary, forces have been:

- seeking a better balance between reactive and proactive policing;
- improving the management of information and the use of intelligence;
- taking targeted action against prolific offenders; and
- devolving as much crime management as practicable to basic command units.

Balancing reactive and proactive policing

16. A key mechanism employed to strike a better balance between reactive and proactive policing has been the introduction of crime desks and crime management units. A force that processes most reports of crime through a crime desk can then determine the appropriate response to incidents and free up resources to deploy on proactive work. Crime desks can deal with a significant amount of work related to crime investigation over the telephone, and ensure that work carried out at the scene of a crime is therefore more efficient and productive. Crime desks, sometimes expanded into crime management units that incorporate intelligence officers, have been the most common tangible response to Tackling Crime Effectively. By mid-1994, according to a Home Office survey, 30 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales used crime desks or similar systems to manage demand and rationalise the response to reported crime. Half of these had been introduced over the previous year, and most forces without crime desks were planning to introduce them or were reviewing their policy (Ref. 5). Another initiative, stimulated in many forces by the introduction of crime desks, was to streamline scene visits, with the aim of getting the most out of a single visit to a crime scene at minimal disruption to the victim (Box B).

17. Proactive policing is characterised by intelligence-based efforts to identify offenders, a vital supplement to collecting evidence at the scene of the crime. In practice, the level of resources deployed proactively has varied greatly throughout the country and even within forces. In forces that have improved their clear-up rates, proactive policing has tended to feature prominently, together with improved methods of gathering and handling intelligence. A follow-up audit of one force revealed that differences between the methods of policing various divisions were reflected in variations in performance. The more proactive the policing, the greater the impact on both clear-up and offending rates (Box C).
Dyfed-Powys Police has made a concerted effort to ensure that uniformed officers attending crime scenes conduct a thorough investigation, including forensic assessment and evidence-gathering. Officers are given basic training in fingerprint collection: in half a day they can learn to check prints on vehicles, and in two days complete training as a ‘scene examiner’. As a result of this increased awareness and expertise, there have been many more checks for prints at scenes of volume crime such as theft from cars and burglaries, where attendance by detectives and scene of crime officers may not be warranted. In 1995, 90 fingerprint identifications – 23 per cent of the force total – were attributed to uniformed officers. Since each identification leads to the clear-up of an average of 3.7 offences, this initiative was directly responsible for solving around 330 crimes that would not otherwise have been cleared up, and made a significant contribution to providing a quality service to crime victims.

Since April 1994 West Yorkshire Police has been implementing a force-wide crime policy that aims, among other things, to put more resources into proactive work. A recent audit of the force found that this approach has helped improve both detection and crime rates. The division in the force with the greatest involvement in proactive work has seen the sharpest fall in house burglaries and the greatest improvement in their detection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>House burglaries, March – September</th>
<th>% of officers estimating that they had spent the majority of their time proactively in the previous three months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% cleared up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division A</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>1,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division B</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>1,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division C</td>
<td>2,939</td>
<td>2,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force total</td>
<td>24,939</td>
<td>23,898</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improving the management of information and use of intelligence data

18. A second aspect of improvement relates to better management of information about crimes and criminals. This can involve more systematic gathering and use of intelligence; for example, by creating procedures to ensure that the intelligence potential of all incidents is considered, and that intelligence is available to all those who might potentially make use of it (Box D, overleaf). It may also entail more timely use of intelligence. Some forces are finding ways of clearing up crimes by using ‘live’ intelligence – immediate analysis of information following a crime – to help detect crimes soon after they are committed. This approach has the benefit of bridging the gap between reactive and proactive policing, creating a potentially more proactive initial response.
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary has recently implemented an intelligence-driven crime management model (Exhibit D). All incidents are logged on to a crime information system accessible throughout the force. The system is designed to ensure that intelligence is systematically used both in supporting immediate response and in so-called ‘slow time’ investigations (ie, those that are not carried out concurrently with a crime or with the first response to it). A criminal investigation division serving the whole force is able to carry out initial intelligence research before passing the incident to a division, and also to serve as a resource in follow-up action. One benefit has been the prompt action in cases where a person answering the description of a known criminal from one part of the force area commits an offence somewhere else. This has contributed to an increase in the number of arrests of criminals operating away from their ‘home base’.

One great advantage of this system is that it allows intelligence to be dealt with in a timely manner. The force has introduced 24-hour intelligence cover. For 16 hours a day, the control room can refer incidents requiring immediate intelligence work to the central Force Intelligence Bureau; the rest of the time, there is always an intelligence officer on duty in one of the four force crime bureaux. This has helped the force apprehend a number of criminals while still in possession of stolen goods, and adopt a successful targeting approach against known offenders that stops short of expensive full-scale surveillance work.

Exhibit D

Intelligence-based response and follow-up in Devon and Cornwall

Procedures ensure that the intelligence potential of all incidents is considered.
19. Although many forces are moving towards a more systematic use of intelligence and other information, there is still much scope for improvement. For example, a recent study by the Commission of police patrol found a very limited awareness of intelligence needs among some patrol officers (Ref. 6). And some forces still lack integrated systems for compiling and interrogating crime databases. Auditors of police forces found that by 1993/94, over 80 per cent of forces had computerised the recording of crime or planned to do so. But only 11 per cent had an integrated system of crime recording, crime pattern analysis and criminal intelligence, with a further 33 per cent planning to develop such systems. At a national level, the National Strategy of Police Information Systems (NSPIS) is developing the capacity to exchange information more easily across forces.

20. A number of forces have taken up the handbook’s recommendation to make greater use of informants (Box E), a direction encouraged by the Home Office. But evidence from HMIC indicates a continuing need for a more systematic approach to their use, in a way which relates directly to other elements of a crime strategy.

**Targeted action against prolific offenders**

21. The third type of initiative – taking targeted action against prolific offenders – has received considerable press and public attention, due initially to the high profile of Operation Bumblebee. This was a series of linked operations against prolific burglars working in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) area. Using intelligence data, crime pattern analysis, informants, house searches and techniques such as targeting the handlers of stolen goods, the MPS drove down burglary levels and markedly improved its detection rate. Operation Bumblebee has inspired similar operations in many other forces (Box F, overleaf). The most common target has been those who commit large numbers of burglaries and car crimes, but their arrest can also have an impact on other crimes which they commit. HMIC have found that ‘the isolation of persistent criminals can have a profound effect on the level of crime in particular areas’(Ref.4).

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**Box E**

**Informants at the core of intelligence systems**

Hertfordshire Constabulary has made the systematic use of informants a central part of its crime strategy. Every suspect who is interviewed by the police is also approached as a possible source of information on other crimes and criminals. Prison visits are also seen as a prime opportunity to recruit informants. The number of registered informants has tripled to 900 since 1993, even though informants who stop being active are more systematically weeded from the register than in the past. An essential part of the strategy is to encourage uniformed officers to recruit informants – formerly they were the province mostly of detectives. Around two-thirds of informants are now run by uniformed officers – a practice virtually unknown in 1993. Many of these officers have received special training on informant-handling. Intelligence from these sources led to an average of around two arrests per day in 1995, at an average cost in payments to informants of £70 per arrest. (Of course the full cost of informants, including the cost of their handlers’ time, is much higher.)
Lincolnshire Police has made particular efforts to secure the arrest and conviction of prolific burglars. In the 12 months to June 1995, house burglaries fell by 13 per cent in the force as a whole, by 25 per cent in Lincoln, and 33 per cent in West Lindsey, places where significant resources were deployed.

West Mercia’s Operation Bumblebee has resulted in 19 per cent fewer burglaries committed and 30 per cent more detected. Because burglars often commit other types of crime, targeting them has also helped reduce other crimes – notably theft-related offences such as deception, which has fallen by nearly 40 per cent.

Devolving crime management responsibilities

22. In the fourth type of initiative, a number of forces have devolved as much crime management as practicable to basic command units (BCUs), while retaining a force-wide capacity to lead the most serious investigations. By restructuring their divisions and subdivisions, they have created BCUs capable of handling significant investigations and co-ordinating the management of crime at a local level. A crime management model, developed at the University of Kent with support from the Home Office Police Research Group, has been piloted at two sites in Kent and Northumbria (Ref. 7). Local commanders make decisions based largely on intelligence analysis to deploy resources in the most effective way. In Kent, the capacity of local police managers to take on responsibility has been built up over a number of years, influenced by parallel developments in the county council. Some forces with a more centralised managerial tradition, on the other hand, have so far taken only cautious steps towards BCU-based decision-making.

23. In translating national and force-wide objectives into local practice, it is important to ensure that individual BCUs have clear performance targets (Box G). The impact of such devolution on crime can be difficult to identify directly; often it underpins the effectiveness of other parts of the strategy. In some cases, however, improvements can be attributed directly to innovative approaches that have been developed at local level; for example, tailoring the way in which tasks are assigned to officers (Box H).
South Wales Constabulary is developing a new system of performance management in which local (divisional) commanders are set specific targets to raise detection levels for crimes covered by national and force objectives. Improving performance in this area is seen not as a CID responsibility alone but as an objective for the whole division. HMIC recently commended the awareness among front-line officers of the link between individual and force performance, and uniformed constables and sergeants have been prominent in devising local anti-crime initiatives. The commanders meet regularly with the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) to discuss strategies and results, and to share good practice ideas. South Wales, like most forces, has prioritised action against house burglary, with marked success. The clear-up rate for this crime rose from 13 per cent in 1994/95 to 33 per cent in 1995/96. Many of these additional detections were obtained by 'secondary' means such as confessions by people already serving a prison sentence which, though valuable, do not always take active criminals off the streets. By setting targets in 1996/97 for primary detections as well, the force aims to improve this particular aspect of performance.

St Albans, Hertfordshire

Since May 1995, the St Albans Division of Hertfordshire Constabulary has had a pilot strategy for proactive detection effort. The aim is to ensure that all intelligence resources are well co-ordinated and effectively deployed. The key is a daily tasking meeting – up from once a week – at which both long- and short-term tasks are prioritised. The aim is always to be systematic rather than leaving things to chance, and to build in appropriate safeguards against poor practice. Thus, the same experienced officer attends all prison visits, to quality assure the process and make monitoring of the visit process easier. Prison visits have a specific focus – to learn as much as possible about the individual offending techniques of habitual criminals, making it easier to catch them if they re-offend. As well as assigning one-quarter of its detectives to proactive work, the division ensures that there is also a strong proactive element in the course of reacting to incidents. The division has seen a dramatic improvement in its detection rate in a single year: from 24 per cent of all crimes in 1994/95 to 42 per cent in 1995/96, and from 13 per cent to 39 per cent of house burglaries over the same period.

Waverley, Surrey

In the Waverley Division of Surrey, the management team was concerned that the existing system of proactive intelligence work was not delivering sufficient results. The problem was that the work of field intelligence officers (FIOs), uniformed patrol officers and data analysts was not sufficiently integrated, and thus intelligence work lacked direction. The solution devised by local officers was to strengthen the FIO capacity from two to eight officers, working in four pairs across the Division's four geographic areas. Each pair includes one officer with a CID background and one drawn from the uniformed ranks. These teams are able to maintain very good links with patrol officers as well as with detectives and the force intelligence bureau. One of the top priorities for the FIOs is tasking uniformed patrol officers. By the end of the one-year pilot of this approach, the local detection rate had risen from 18 per cent to 30 per cent.
A New Virtuous Circle?

24. Effective policing can directly improve detection rates. Forces can also work with other agencies to reduce offending rates. A targeted approach to crime prevention can yield identifiable results in the reduction of particular types of crime at a local level. Some of the best examples of effective action against crime have come from partnerships between the police and others (Box I). Moreover, benefits can flow from a focus on issues facing young people – the Audit Commission’s forthcoming report on young people and crime will look at the inter-agency action taking place which is intended to address this problem.

25. Closer links between prevention and detection work have proved effective. Some forces consider crime prevention officers to be more effective when they are part of crime management, rather than operating out of a separate department. Integrating their work makes it easier to keep in touch with crime trends and to target efforts accordingly. Surrey Police has gone further, developing a three-tiered response to crime and public disorder: reaction, problem identification and prevention (Exhibit 6). This has contributed to impressive results; the number of recorded crimes fell by 16 per cent between 1993 and 1995, while the clear-up rate rose from 20 per cent to 31 per cent.

Box I
Preventing crime: from council flats to Carmarthen fields

Tackling burglaries on a Sheffield housing estate
South Yorkshire Police developed a series of initiatives with Sheffield City Council’s Housing Department to reduce burglaries on the Norfolk Park estate, where in mid-1995 there was an average of one burglary a day. The most significant scheme was a concierge entry system, supported by closed-circuit television (CCTV), introduced on five of the worst-hit tower blocks. Estate residents were given crime prevention advice, which in many cases led to improved door and window locks being fitted. The force also mounted high-visibility patrols on the estate. The initiative was welcomed by residents, who reported a reduced fear of crime. In the nine months following the introduction of the concierge scheme, there were just 23 burglaries compared with 103 during the previous seven months, while burglary levels across the whole estate fell noticeably.

Reducing bike thefts in Carmarthen
In 1995, Dyfed-Powys saw a surge in thefts of quad-bikes used by farmers to get around fields. Fifty of them were stolen in the Carmarthen division alone. The police worked with young farmers’ clubs, which sent volunteers to record details of these vehicles from their owners, to help identify them in stop-checks. The result was a dramatic reduction in the number of such thefts, and by April 1996 no quad-bikes had been stolen in a period of two months.
Surrey Police tackles crime and public disorder in a single strategy for dealing with conflict, through a tiered, integrated response: ‘reaction’ (police), ‘reduction’ (police) and ‘prevention’ (police and partnership).

The use of CCTV, introduced in many town centres in recent years, shows how prevention and detection can come together to help make communities safer. CCTV also illustrates the close link between crime prevention and multi-agency partnership, since it is often financed jointly by contributions from businesses, local authorities and others. Effective crime prevention needs the active involvement of government, local authorities, businesses and individual citizens – not just the police. This is reflected in the recommendations made in Helping with Enquiries that were directed at agencies other than the police (Appendix). A number of these have already been addressed; for example, identifying core policing tasks (Ref. 8) and reducing administrative burdens. Action on the outstanding issues would be beneficial.

Prevention and detection can interact as part of a ‘virtuous circle’. Falling crime reduces the pressure on immediate response and potentially releases resources for proactive work, which then feeds back into further reduction in crime. Most forces feel that they have not yet entered such a circle, for three reasons. First, the fall in crime has not been sustained for long enough. Second, because renewed efforts to tackle crime can initially mean investing resources in improving training and investigative procedures. And third, because new, discretionary resources are released only by a very sharp fall in crime levels, yet to be seen in most forces. An exceptional case is Dyfed-Powys, where the number of burglaries fell by one-quarter between 1993 and 1995. This reduction has been sufficient to release police resources to tackle other crime problems in the force area before they grow to unmanageable proportions – most notably, drug abuse. Although the circumstances in Dyfed-Powys are not wholly typical, its experience serves to show how a firm grip on crime can be self-reinforcing.
Conclusion

28. The main principles for tackling crime more effectively are now well understood in police forces, and excellent progress has been made in implementing them in the short period since the publication of Tackling Crime Effectively. The fact that crime rates have been static or have fallen in most force areas has given the police some welcome breathing space. With a let-up in the pressure to respond to an ever-increasing number of crimes, there is more scope for proactive policing – that is, co-ordinated work to identify and catch offenders, especially the most prolific ones. The results are starting to feed through into detection and crime rates in local cases, although not yet always at force level.

29. Changes in the structures, competencies and approach being employed by forces cannot all take root within the space of two years. Many forces still have some way to go, especially in building up the capabilities of their BCUs and entrusting them with the management of crime at a local level. Forces that have been slower to implement change should be encouraged to move more quickly by the clear evidence of performance improvement from those forces that have changed the most.

30. By continuing to build on the positive trends identified in this bulletin, police forces can make great strides towards creating effective measures to prevent and detect crime. Other agencies should be encouraged to press ahead with implementing the recommendations still outstanding from Helping with Enquiries. There may be some setbacks along the way, and crime levels may not reduce every year. However, it should be possible to create a virtuous circle, either at force or local level, in which effective crime prevention measures and rising detection rates lead to reductions in crime, which in turn allow detection rates to be improved further, and so on, until crime is brought under control. That is the ultimate prize for society.
Appendix

Summary of recommendations in *Helping with Enquiries* to bodies other than police forces

**For the Home Office**

1. Identify the core functions of policing, reconciling public expectations with what it is feasible for the police to deliver.

2. Consider the need to strengthen multi-agency partnership responsibilities for crime prevention work.

3. Remove the current financial disincentive to civilianise key posts and provide financial or other incentives to scale down top-heavy management structures in forces.

4. Establish guidelines for a standard definition of ‘serious crime’ and better categorisation of crimes generally.

5. Explain to the public where attendance by the police at an incident may not be appropriate.

6. Facilitate the provision of adequate technical support to front-line officers by streamlining procedures for equipment purchasing.

7. Take steps to help reduce the administrative burden upon operational police officers.

**For police authorities**

1. Work with police forces on translating core policing activities into local priorities so that the service reflects local needs.

2. Strengthen the multi-agency approach to crime prevention.

3. Encourage civilianisation to free officers for operational work.

**For other parts of the criminal justice system**

1. If possible, clarify the circumstances in which the identity of an informant is to be disclosed.

2. Review the demands made upon police officers by the requirements of Pre-Trial Issues, specifically the need for full files in all cases where a guilty plea has been entered, the deadlines imposed for file submission, the typing and copying of documents, preparation of taped interview summaries, and location of responsibility for tasks such as witness warning.

3. Ensure that court procedures minimise unproductive waiting time at court by police officers.

**For individual members of the public**

1. Ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to seek crime prevention advice and put this advice into effect, particularly in respect of securing homes and vehicles, joining watch schemes, etc.

2. Adopt a reasonable view of circumstances where attendance by a police officer may be neither necessary nor an efficient use of police time.

(The report made twelve further recommendations to police forces, but these are not reproduced here as the main principles are addressed in this bulletin.)
References

1. The Home Office Police Research Group's five-year programme of research on police operations against crime was launched in 1993, focusing initially on effective measures to tackle burglary. Phase 2 covered repeat victimisation, drugs and crime analysis, while the current programme features work in relation to crimes of violence.


