



Crime Detection and
Prevention Series

Paper 64

Intelligence, Surveillance and Informants: Integrated Approaches

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INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE AND INFORMANTS:
INTEGRATED APPROACHES

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POLICE RESEARCH GROUP
CRIME DETECTION AND PREVENTION SERIES: PAPER NO 64
LONDON: HOME OFFICE

Editor: Barry Webb
Home Office Police Research Group
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

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First Published 1995

Police Research Group: Crime Detection and Prevention Series

The Home Office Police Research Group (PRG) was formed in 1992 to carry out and manage research relevant to the work of the police service. The terms of reference for the Group include the requirement to identify and disseminate good policing practice.

The Crime Detection and Prevention Series follows on from the Crime Prevention Unit papers, a series which has been published by the Home Office since 1983. The recognition that effective crime strategies will often involve both crime prevention and crime investigation, however, has led to the scope of this series being broadened. This new series will present research material on both crime prevention and crime detection in a way which informs policy and practice throughout the service.

A parallel series of papers on resource management and organisational issues is also published by PRG, as is a periodical on policing research called 'Focus'.

ISBN 1-858454-0

Foreword

Certain elements of the police service, including the Regional Crime Squads and specialist units have long made good use of intelligence, surveillance and informants for identifying active criminals and gathering evidence of their activities. Following the Audit Commission's review of crime management 'Helping with Enquiries Tackling Crime Effectively', the Association of Chief Police Officers and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, forces are now encouraging the proactive targeting of criminals on a systematic basis at local level.

This study looks at how some forces have approached the task of making greater use of proactive methods of crime investigation at the local level. The report illustrates the practical difficulties faced by forces in trying to move away from a predominantly reactive approach to crime, and the ways in which intelligence, surveillance and informants can be incorporated into the work of a command unit to make a substantial contribution to policing at the local level.

S W BOYS SMITH

Deputy Under Secretary of State

Home Office

Police Department

July 1995

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Messrs Dick Oldfield and Barry Webb of the Home Office Police Research Group for their support and assistance both during and after the research period.

They also wish to express gratitude to officers in all the forces visited, which are not named in the report. All gave freely of their time and afforded the researchers generous assistance and access to relevant material.

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Executive summary

This report presents the results of a twelve-month study, covering eight police forces (three in depth) and comprising interviews with police officers of all ranks, surveys of criminal investigations, analysis of files and illustrative cases of operations. The main aim of the research was to provide an account and analysis of developments at a local level in the use of proactive methods of investigation, particularly criminal intelligence systems, surveillance and informants.

Examples are given of (a) a subdivision committed to such developments, but as yet without the organisational structure to support them (b) forces which had invested in substantial initiatives in one or other of the main elements of proactivity, though still within an organisational framework geared principally to reactive policing and (c) forces which had 'started again from first principles', introducing radical reforms to produce an integrated, intelligence-driven approach to crime investigation, involving new and distinct roles for most officers.

The main conclusion is that it is only through a fully integrated, strategically informed approach that forces are likely to reach a situation in which proactive work makes more than a marginal contribution to crime control. Without this, officers tend to be diverted into reactive, demand-led activities and there are numerous 'log-jams' and hiatuses in what should be a steady flow of intelligence, crime analysis, preparation of 'target packages' and execution of planned operations.

It is also concluded that the success of such systems depends on strong commitment from senior managers, thorough training, effective communication between specialised units, and frequent review of objectives, outcomes and problematic areas of the system. Problems of 'cultural resistance' and low morale among officers performing less attractive roles (eg in evidence teams) should not be underestimated and require sensitive management.

Finally, although not a focus of this study, it is emphasised that broader social and ethical issues need constantly to be borne in mind, including the risk of less attention being paid to victims, the question of how to involve the public in decisions about priorities, the dangers of malpractice associated particularly with the use of informants, and 'civil liberties' issues surrounding the use of some forms of surveillance.

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1. Introduction

This report presents the results of a one-year study, commissioned by the Home Office Police Research Group (PRG) as part of a major programme of research in the area of crime investigation. The main objective was to provide an account and analysis of developments at a local level in the use of proactive methods of investigation, particularly criminal intelligence systems, surveillance and informants. While other studies in the programme have focused upon individual aspects of such developments, the aims in this project were to consider their use as part of overall strategies of crime control and to raise broader questions about the organisational and cultural changes which may have to occur if the police service is to see a significant shift in the direction of the Audit Commission's (1993) exhortation to 'target the criminal, not the crime'. At the same time, examples were sought of both 'good practice' and apparent mistakes by forces which have begun to go down this route, from which others might profitably draw lessons.

It should be noted that the research brief did not include consideration of the complex social and ethical issues which are raised by this major change of direction in police practice. For example, the intensive targeting of a small, if exceptionally active, minority of offenders almost inevitably means that other offenders, and certain types of crime, will receive less police attention than at present: this raises questions about who, apart from the police, should be involved in strategic decisions about whom and what to target. Again, the creation of the necessary time for officers to concentrate upon prolific offenders will mean less investigation of minor offences reported to the police, raising questions about the quality of service afforded to victims and the future willingness of the public to report crime. There are also serious questions to ask about the ethical limits of methods of recruiting and using informants, about the prevention of abuses and corruption, and about the relationship between certain forms of surveillance and civil liberties.

It should not be inferred that the absence of such debates from this report – which is restricted mainly to a discussion of organisational issues within police forces – signifies that they are considered irrelevant or unimportant by the researchers. On the contrary, it is emphasised, they deserve the closest attention from researchers, policy makers and police forces concerned with the shift to proactivity. (One of the authors has written on this subject elsewhere – see Maguire and Norris 1992; see also Marx 1989). Without legitimacy in the eyes of the public, no police tactic is likely to prove successful in the long run.

Background to the study

The concept of 'proactive' investigation is by no means a new one, having for years been the guiding principle behind the work of many specialist units, from Regional Crime Squads to ad hoc squads set up at force and subdivisional level to tackle particular local crime problems. A central aim is to allow some officers to escape the

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shackles of demand-led policing and to identify and tackle crime problems in a more selective, strategic fashion. Such units often identify ‘targets’ – people known to be frequent or serious offenders, but difficult to bring to justice in conventional ways – and set up operations to observe them and gather information and evidence about their activities, an ideal outcome being eventually to ‘catch them in the act’. They also analyse sets of recorded offences in search of regular patterns of criminal behaviour, with a view to investigating them as a group and preventing further similar offences occurring.

However, the work of detectives in general CID offices has traditionally followed a more ‘reactive’ style, whereby individual reported crimes are allocated to individual officers who attempt, through enquiries at the scene and elsewhere, to establish evidence of the identity of the culprit. While CID officers have always been encouraged to build up a wider picture of the activities of prolific offenders, and on occasion to set up proactive operations against them, the sheer volume of routine reactive work, together with continual pressure to maintain an adequate ‘clear up rate’ of reported offences, has severely limited the extent to which this has been achieved (for accounts of the traditional working practices of CID officers, see Steer 1980; Ericson 1981; Maguire and Norris 1992).

In recent years, however, there has been a great deal of police interest, not only in increasing the use of proactive techniques at a local level, but in developing new strategic approaches to crime control and instigating substantial organisational changes to implement them.

The early 1980s saw wide experimentation with a variety of initiatives aimed at ‘freeing up’ CID officers from administrative duties so that they could spend more time ‘on the streets’ and concentrate upon activities more directly related to the detection of crime, including the cultivation of informants. Among the most common were the establishment of ‘crime desks’, ‘administrative support units’ and specialist proactive squads within local CID offices.

The concept of a ‘crime desk’ was originally associated with ‘crime screening’. Research in the USA (especially Greenwood et al 1975) had shown that, without immediate indications at a crime scene of the perpetrator’s identity, the chances of it being ‘solved’ through conventional inquiries were extremely low. It was therefore argued that ‘unpromising’ crimes should be ‘screened out’ at an early stage, with no investigation beyond initial scene enquiries by the attending (uniform) officer, thus leaving detectives with more time to follow up leads in the more hopeful cases. After experiments in London in the early 1980s (Eck 1983), many British forces adopted versions of formal screening systems, managed via a crime desk (usually manned by a detective) through which all crime reports would pass for classification and decisions about further action. In a number of forces these have now become part of a more

comprehensive 'crime management system', including, for example, systems for dealing with reports of minor crimes entirely over the telephone and for handling all enquiries from victims about the progress of cases (see Section 4).

A second common means of 'freeing up' detectives, in this case from 'paperwork', has been the establishment of an 'operational (or administrative) support unit' (OSU/ASU), whose main function is to take over cases from investigators at the stage of the preparation of case files for the Crown Prosecution Service. In some forces, these have developed into 'evidence teams', which carry out many interviewing and statement-taking functions as well as tape transcriptions and the collation of papers.

A third common development – one which has been employed for many years in some forces – is the establishment of small proactive squads containing officers theoretically 'written off' from their normal duties and given a 'proactive brief'. These may take the form of specialist units (burglary squads, drugs squads, street offences squads, etc) which may be left free to undertake proactive work in any area of criminal activity. They are encouraged to examine patterns of crime, cultivate informants and draw up lists of active offenders, setting up operations to observe particular people or locations, raid houses for stolen property, and so on.

While developments such as crime desks and ASUs are generally agreed to have had some impact in reducing pressure on detectives, it has been a common experience that the time saved is both insufficient and too unpredictable to allow a coherent focus on proactive work. Equally important, 'freed up' detectives need other support – including training, resources and structured supervision – to make new and profitable uses of whatever time is saved.

Similarly, it has often been found that the members of local proactive squads, unless rigorously protected by supervisors and managers, are quickly 'sucked back in' to reactive activities. For example, as soon as a major crime is reported and an incident room set up, they are likely to be taken off the squad to be used as part of the investigative team. Another common outcome is that the squad rapidly becomes a 'victim of its own success': a large number of arrests are made at an early stage, only for the team to become office-bound and tied up with the preparation of evidence for prosecution (for accounts of such problems, see Maguire and Norris 1992; Audit Commission 1993).

Recognition of the above difficulties has more recently led some forces to adopt a more radical approach and to engage in major reorganisation affecting the work practices of most police officers in the station or area concerned. An example will be given in this report of a police station where the daily work of detectives (and, in some respects, of uniform officers) bears little resemblance to those which were

second nature to their predecessors. This is the result of a force plan to make crime investigation 'intelligence driven', with relatively little time devoted to case by case investigation of reported offences: detectives are instead given specialist roles (field intelligence officers, information analysts, informant handlers, interviewers, members of tactical or arrest teams, evidence teams, and so on) as part of a systematic strategy of identifying, targeting and convicting prolific offenders. As yet, it must be emphasised, only a few forces have instituted such radical changes and, for many, the 'shift to proactivity' remains predominantly at the level of rhetoric or of small-scale experiments. Nevertheless, many others see a shift in this direction as 'the way forward' and are actively exploring ways of bringing it about.

The driving forces behind this trend are complex, but one of the most obvious is the inexorable increase in reactive demand over recent years, in the shape of rising numbers of reported crimes without corresponding increases in personnel and resources to deal with them. This has led to falling clear up rates in general and, almost certainly, owing to the lack of time to explore every incident in depth, to reduced effectiveness in arresting the more sophisticated and prolific offenders. Relatively small numbers of such offenders, it is increasingly recognised, can account for a considerable proportion of the total crime problem in any given area (Home Office 1991). The hope is that if they can be systematically targeted and incapacitated (through arrest and imprisonment), crime rates will ultimately fall.

Another factor in the search for new investigative strategies has been a reduction in the number of cases in which the police are able to rely upon interviews with detained suspects as their sole or even primary source of evidence. Until the mid-1980s, it was relatively easy to arrest suspected offenders (or to ask them to attend the police station 'voluntarily') without any strong evidence against them and to subject them to lengthy and robust forms of questioning, in the hope of eliciting an admission. Concern about abuses of such powers led to the setting up of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure in 1979 and eventually to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act ('PACE') 1984. The advent of custody officers (who must be persuaded that the arrest is justified), a right to free legal advice, strict time limits on the length of detention, and tape recording of interviews, has subsequently made it more difficult for the police, should they so wish, to engage in 'fishing expeditions' without any firm grounds for detention, to apply forms of trickery, to make informal 'deals', or to put strong psychological or physical pressure on suspects to 'confess'. There are disputes about the extent to which these reforms protect suspects in practice (see, for example, Brown 1989; Irving and McKenzie 1989; McConville et al 1991; Bottomley et al 1991; Dixon 1992), but they have certainly had the effect of spurring police officers to seek other forms of evidence before making an arrest. At the same time, in the aftermath of the series of highly publicised miscarriages of justice which came to light in the late 1980s, many (though by no means all) of

them stemming from false or coerced admissions, both the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts have become more reluctant to accept uncorroborated confession evidence as sufficient to justify prosecution or conviction.

Given the inherent danger of injustices arising from uncorroborated confessions (Irving 1980; Rozenberg 1992; Gudjonssen et al 1993), it is clearly right that the police should seek other evidence, but in many cases this proves extremely difficult to achieve. Common offences such as burglary often present investigators with a crime scene which yields no eye-witnesses, no fingerprints and no forensic evidence. In such circumstances, the only realistic chance of a detection may lie in a subsequent voluntary admission when the offender has been found guilty of other crimes and wishes to 'wipe the slate clean'. The use of proactive techniques can provide powerful alternative forms of evidence, for example:

- systematic records of targetted suspects' movements;
- financial dealings and associations with others;
- indications from informants about the location of stolen property or the sites of planned offences;
- direct police observation (sometimes photographed or video-recorded) of criminal acts and, though still relatively unusual,
- statements from undercover police officers.

In many cases, such evidence is sufficient to convict without the need for admissions.

Research methods and sources of data

The researchers set out to explore the development of proactive approaches to crime investigation at a local level. The work of Regional Crime Squads was not examined, and relatively little attention was paid to specialist squads based in force headquarters, except where these played a part in divisional operations. The main focus was upon how the 'proactive ideal' was put into practice in local CID offices, with their long-standing problems of diverse and unpredictable demands upon officers' time: into what precise roles were officers deployed; what mechanisms were used to prevent them reverting to reactive patterns of work; what systems were used to gather and sift criminal intelligence and to make the most effective use of it; how could forces avoid hiatuses or 'log jams' in the throughput of cases, ensuring a steady flow of appropriate work for specialist teams such as surveillance squads; and what were the views and practical experiences of officers asked to work to a more

proactive brief? Some attention was also given to the difficult question of how to assess the effectiveness of proactive initiatives.

The wide-ranging nature of these questions made it difficult to collect large bodies of data on a systematic basis. However, as much statistical and documentary material as possible was gathered from all the forces visited by the researchers, and both formal and informal interviews were conducted with large numbers of officers.

It became clear at an early stage that piecemeal attempts to introduce 'proactivity' often had little impact in practice. Particular attention was therefore paid to forces which had made a major investment in more radical organisational change. The bulk of the research was carried out in three police force areas, but shorter periods (usually one or two days) were spent with five other forces. None will be identified in the report.

The main data sources were:

- (a) Formal interviews, using a structured questionnaire, with 32 detective officers, predominantly detective constables, in three force areas.
- (b) Less formal interviews and conversations with many other officers, ranging from senior managers to local intelligence officers.
- (c) Observation of intelligence-related activities and, to a limited extent, of operations in progress.
- (d) Identification, by means of a form completed by the officer in the case, of the principal methods used to investigate a large sample of recorded offences.
- (e) Analysis of records of the circumstances and outcomes of official proactive operations (those given a code name).
- (f) Illustrative cases of such operations, as described by those who conducted them.
- (g) Analysis of samples of informant contact forms, which record meetings between handlers and registered informants.
- (h) Analysis of the kinds of information recorded on intelligence logs and entered into computerised intelligence systems, as well as the sources of such information.
- (i) Previous academic literature, as well as relevant reports, reviews, guidelines and feasibility studies prepared by the police, Home Office or external consultants.

Structure of the report

The report is in six sections. Section 2 provides some quantitative data on the use of intelligence, informants and surveillance in a force keen to develop a more proactive approach, but which, like many others, had as yet gone about this in a piecemeal fashion, relying mainly on individual initiative. It shows how practical, institutional and 'cultural' factors had so far combined to frustrate the ambitions of those most committed to change.

Section 3 describes more focused efforts to increase proactivity, through initiatives and investment in one or other of the three key areas (intelligence, informants, surveillance). These had met with only limited success, it is argued, largely because, not forming part of an integrated strategy, they had simply been grafted on to an organisational structure geared to reactive policing.

Section 4 describes more radical changes made in two forces which had gone beyond ad hoc reform and attempted instead to 'start from first principles', altering their organisational structures and deployment of resources in line with a clear and holistic vision of what proactive, or 'intelligence driven', policing entails. Systems had been carefully designed to facilitate the coordinated use of intelligence, informants and surveillance, with ample time and resources for the preparation and execution of target packages. While these initiatives did not lack problems, it is argued, they represent important, path-breaking attempts to introduce genuinely proactive styles of crime control.

Section 5 considers evidence relating to the effectiveness of proactive investigations. It examines how and to what extent the participating forces monitored and evaluated their own performance in this area, and some inferences are drawn from the research findings about the effectiveness of particular aspects of proactive work.

Finally, Section 6 outlines the main conclusions which may be drawn from the research.

2. 'Proactivity' in a typical police subdivision

In this section, an account is provided of proactive work in a subdivision covering the main town in a small county force, which will be referred to as 'Force A'. This will include a statistical picture of the relative use and significance of proactive and reactive methods and a summary of views expressed by many of the resident CID officers.

The subdivision was clearly a 'productive' unit in terms of arrests and detections, with a clear up rate well above average, although this was achieved mainly through traditional reactive methods of investigation. Both the uniform Superintendent (an ex-CID officer) and the CID managers and supervisors could be described as fairly 'progressive' in terms of personal commitment to a proactive approach to crime investigation, but the force in which they worked had not as yet introduced any major organisational changes to facilitate its development. (Certain changes have been introduced since the completion of the fieldwork, but these are beyond the scope of the report.) The promotion and success of proactive work therefore relied predominantly upon the energy and skills of individual officers and managers, rather than being facilitated and encouraged by the organisational structure. In this, the subdivision seemed to us in many ways typical of police stations in medium-sized towns in most forces across the country.

The CID office was headed by a Detective Chief Inspector with Regional Crime Squad experience who did not need to be convinced of the value of proactive work and encouraged it as much as he could. Although there were no special 'squads', detectives were quite often temporarily released from routine duties to set up small operations, sometimes assisted by uniform officers in plain clothes. On occasion, larger-scale operations based on collated intelligence were set up, and other detectives were borrowed from headquarters (particularly the drugs squad) to carry out mobile surveillance. For the most part, though, such activity had to take second place to the perceived necessity to respond to reported crime. Though there was no formal case screening system, the CID left a large proportion of minor offences to the uniform officers to deal with, thus freeing some of their own time, but the force policy of CID visits to the scenes of all domestic burglaries maintained a considerable burden of reactive demand.

Investigative methods: levels of use

In order to get some idea of the relative contributions of 'proactive' and 'reactive' methods to the investigative inputs and outputs of the subdivision, we conducted a small survey over a period of one month (in Spring, 1994). For the duration of the month, the divisional Superintendent instructed every officer who filed a crime report after completing investigations, irrespective of whether the offence was cleared up, to complete a one-page form designed by the researchers. To ensure compliance, administrative staff were told not to accept reports without a completed

form attached to them. The form covered the methods of investigation used, whether or not a suspect had been identified (and if so, how) and, if a detection had resulted, what had been the key factors in achieving this.

In total, 832 forms were completed in the period. This was close to the official total of recorded offences for the month, which suggests that the somewhat draconian method of data collection was effective. Only 195 of the investigated crimes were described as ‘CID cases’, although CID officers had had some involvement, either as interviewers or by giving advice, in a further 93: thus the majority (65 per cent) had been dealt with entirely by uniform officers.

Respondents were asked in each case to state whether, at any time during the investigation, they had made use of either the intelligence system or of informants; and, if so, whether these had produced any useful information. The results are shown in Table 1.

Resource	Consulted		Positive Result	
	N	% of cases (832)	N	% of cases (832)
Intelligence system/officer	105	(13)	15	(2)
Registered informant	15	(2)	4	(0.5)
Other informant	56	(7)	12	(1.5)

It can be seen, first of all, that in only 13 per cent of cases had any reference been made either to the local intelligence officer (LIO) or to the computerised local intelligence system (LIS). Moreover, although the use of intelligence is often associated with proactive styles of policing, in many of these cases it had clearly been used simply as an extra tool – for example, to see if there had been any sightings in the vicinity of a crime scene – in a predominantly reactive investigation, rather than as the starting point for any ‘target’ based activity. In terms of ‘solving crime’, too, neither the LIO nor the LIS could be said to have had a major impact: in only three cases was either said to have helped to identify the offender or to produce evidence. However, in a further 12, some form of useful information had been obtained, most commonly addresses which helped locate a wanted person, or background information about a suspect’s movements and associates.

Secondly, there were only 15 cases with any indication that a registered informant had played a part, although in a further 56, other ‘informants’, ranging from unregistered criminal informants and co-offenders to local residents, shopkeepers or bar staff, were said to have been consulted. About a quarter of the meetings with

‘PROACTIVITY’ IN A TYPICAL POLICE SUBDIVISION

informants were said to have produced useful results, in most cases the name of a suspect or other ‘leads’ to initiate or progress an investigation. Even so, the numbers remain small in the context of the totality of crime in the area.

If reference was made to the LIO, LIS and informants in only small proportions of crime investigations, how were suspects identified and evidence acquired in the majority? One or more specific suspects had been linked to 327 of the 832 crimes in the sample (see Table 2). These had been identified mainly in one of three ways: by a victim or witness, through someone being ‘caught in the act’, or through a confession by someone being questioned about other matters. The only other means of identification found in more than 10 cases were witness descriptions, suspicious persons seen by a police officer near the crime scene, and recovered property. These findings are in line with previous studies (eg Steer 1980), which show that the great majority of suspects are identified by people present at the scene of a crime (victims, bystanders or police officers), not through physical ‘clues’ such as fingerprints (only six identifications in the current sample were made by Scenes of Crime Officers) or by criminal informants.

Table 2: Methods of identifying suspects

	N	% of all cases (832)
No suspect identified	505	61
Suspect identified	327	39
ID'd by victim or witness	95	11
Witness description	15	2
Caught in act	66	8
Confession	46	6
Seen near scene by officer	14	2
Via recovered property	11	1
Surveillance/observation	10	1
Target operation	4	0.5
SOCO	6	1
MO	6	1
LIO/LIS	1	–
Receiver	4	0.5
Other	14	2
Not specified	45	5
Total cases monitored	832	100
NB. The figures showing how suspects were identified sum to more than 327 because some respondents mentioned more than one means of identification.		

Only 14 suspects had been linked to particular crimes as a result of what were clearly ‘proactive’ investigations. In four cases, reference was made to a target operation and in the other ten, to surveillance or observation (it not being clear whether this was offender based or location based). All but one of these were ‘CID cases’.

A similar picture emerged from responses relating to detected cases (see Table 3). When asked to name ‘the key factors in the detection’, by far the greatest numbers named police interviews, information from victims or witnesses, and the offender being ‘caught in the act’. By contrast, crime intelligence, surveillance, criminal informants and ‘known M.O.’ received few mentions.

It is clear from this exercise, then, not only that genuinely proactive investigations (in the sense of targeting, compiling information about, and watching potential offenders) constituted only a very small proportion of all investigations, but that the main techniques associated with proactivity – the use of intelligence systems, informants and surveillance – played no part in the majority of cases, even as an extra tool in a reactive investigation. No such techniques were applied in over 85 per cent of cases, and they were said to have contributed ‘something useful’ in under four per cent.

Table 3: Key Factors in detections

Factor	N	% of all cases (832)
Police interview	131	42
Information from victim	91	29
Information from eye-witness	61	19
Caught in act	82	26
Surveillance	10	3
Crime intelligence	4	1
Criminal informants	7	2
Known MO	5	2
Total cases detected	321*	100*

* Total sum to more than 100 per cent, as some respondents cited more than one ‘key factor’.

Three important riders must be attached to this conclusion. First, the point should be made that in many cases there is no obvious need for ‘proactivity’: if an offender is caught in the act, and there is no indication that he or she is otherwise involved in wide-scale criminal activity, all that has to be done is to ‘process’ the case in a routine fashion. Secondly, it seems likely from our knowledge of the subdivision that the cases involving proactive work were generally of a more serious nature than the

majority and hence more important to the work of the subdivision than the raw numbers may suggest. Thirdly, the overall figures disguise the fact that, as one would expect, CID officers used proactive methods considerably more than uniform officers. Among the 288 cases in which detectives had played some part, 19 per cent had entailed some interrogation of the LIO or the LIS, and seven per cent had made use of criminal informants; similarly, among the 150 'CID cases' which had been detected, 12 per cent included reference to surveillance, informants or intelligence as 'key factors' in clearing them up.

Nevertheless, even taking the above points into account, the broad conclusion must be that 'proactivity' was a factor in only a small minority of cases and that, despite strong managerial commitment to developing proactive approaches, investigative work in this division remained predominantly reactive in character.

Officers' attitudes and experiences

The main message from the previous section is that managerial commitment to the idea of doing more proactive work is on its own insufficient to alter significantly the overwhelmingly reactive pattern of investigative activity at local level. To a large extent, it was clear from fieldwork observations, this was due to pressure of work: officers were constantly being dragged away from what they were doing to help with an arrest or interview, organise an identity parade, pick up a prisoner from another station, respond to a serious offence, prepare urgent papers for the Crown Prosecution Service, and so on (for similar findings, see Maguire and Norris 1992; Audit Commission 1993). However, it is important to recognise the influence of other factors, particularly a shortage of training and expertise in the use of proactive methods and, indeed, a certain amount of 'cultural resistance' to them among junior officers.

We interviewed 15 operational detectives (ten Detective Constables, three Detective Sergeants and two Temporary DCs) in the subdivision, all of whom were asked about their experiences of, and attitudes towards, informants, intelligence systems and surveillance.

Only seven of the 15 had any informants formally registered in their name and, in three of these cases, all the officer's informants were 'dormant' (or permanently redundant), not having been used for at least six months. On the other hand, all but one said that they had 'casual' or 'occasional' unregistered informants. The main reasons given for not registering them were that the informants themselves were reluctant for this to happen (eg 'They don't want to see themselves as snouts' and 'They see it as a risk to them'), that most gave information only on a 'one off' or very occasional basis, and that most were unreliable anyway. There was also a

commonly held view that registration was necessary only if there was a 'result' and payment was to be made.

The question that brought the most consistent response concerned training in recruiting and handling informants. Only two officers had received more than a modicum of such training, and several were unclear about the proper procedures for registering informants and filing records of meetings, never having read either force or national guidelines on the subject. All but three said that they would welcome more training.

Perhaps linked to this hazy knowledge of formal procedures and safeguards, some ambivalence was evident in officers' general attitudes to the use of informants. On the one hand, most saw them as a productive source of crime detections: a strong majority claimed that at least one of their arrests during the previous six months had been directly attributable to an informant (registered or, more often, unregistered) and four claimed ten or more such arrests. On the other hand, several expressed reservations about their use, including two who did not wish to see it increased. For all these officers, informants undoubtedly fell into the category of 'potential trouble' – 'to be handled with care', as one DC put it. The main problems put forward were their unreliability; their manipulative behaviour (with a danger of 'the tail wagging the dog'); their attempts to play one officer off against another; the danger that they will cross the boundary of becoming an *agent provocateur*, setting up 'jobs' to curry favour or for financial gain; the risk of improper police practice being alleged by defence lawyers; and the waste of police time in following up false information. Particularly strong reservations were expressed about the use of 'participating' informants, which virtually all saw as dangerous and several thought should not be used at all by general CID officers (as opposed to specialist teams with the proper time and resources to handle them).

Attitudes to intelligence systems were more positive, all interviewees claiming to use the LIS regularly and to find it beneficial. However, it was clear that it was used predominantly in a 'reactive' fashion, rather than as an aid to developing 'target packages' for use in proactive operations. Most commonly, the LIS was consulted when an arrest was made, in order to look for background information on suspects, such as their criminal associates or any other addresses used, which could lead to further arrests, admissions or searches for stolen property. It could also be useful in tracing the whereabouts of named suspects. Less frequently, it was searched (on a free text retrieval system) for the identity of people with specific characteristics such as a nickname or unusual tattoo, these having been mentioned by witnesses to crimes. In a sense, then, it was used primarily as a 'reference library' or store of information.

There were some criticisms of difficulties in accessing the system, particularly by officers who were not 'computer literate' and had to rely upon the LIO to conduct searches for them, as the latter worked office hours and was not always available. Other problems mentioned included insufficient terminals, delays in the inputting of recent information, and lack of flexibility and sophistication in the kinds of search that could be carried out. Desires were also expressed for a system that could link LIS data with data from other systems such as crime and vehicle records.

Of course, an effective intelligence system depends not only upon the creative use of the data it contains, but upon the quality and quantity of the information entered on to it in the first place. This subject will be discussed in more depth later, but it is worth mentioning here that several CID officers admitted that they were often lax in passing on information to the LIO for entry on the system (indeed, 'snapshot' surveys of the source of entries in this and another force showed that the great majority originated from uniform officers). The main reasons they gave were lack of time (or simply 'laziness'), unsureness about the value of the information, and a reluctance to share it with others ('human nature', as one put it).

Where surveillance was concerned, there was considerable enthusiasm among the 15 interviewees for using it more, although, again, a number of problems were highlighted. Top of the list again was a lack of training, especially in mobile techniques. Also mentioned frequently were the shortage of equipment (particularly encrypted radios, video cameras and unmarked cars) and the difficulty of getting a team together when it was needed, often at short notice, to carry out a specific job. It was further widely agreed that surveillance failed to produce results more often than it was successful, largely because insufficient 'homework' had been done on the information which had sparked the decision to watch or follow a suspect. The force did not possess a dedicated surveillance team (although attempts were being made, in the face of some high level opposition, to set one up) and it was said that by the time requests to use the part-time headquarters team had been processed, it was often too late to act. Consequently, most surveillance operations used only static observation posts or scaled-down versions of mobile surveillance, which were seen as far less likely to produce results.

The general message, therefore, was that a properly equipped and trained surveillance squad needed to be available permanently and that its use should be integrated with a well organised system of intelligence evaluation and target package preparation.

Conclusions

Many of the findings in this section have echoed the conclusion of previous studies that, despite the rhetoric and good intentions of police managers, crime

investigation at a subdivisional level remains predominantly reactive in character. Although our research spanned only a small number of forces, and the statistical data collected provide only 'snapshots' of activity, the findings are also consistent with accounts given by police officers from many other areas. It can therefore be said with some confidence that, in police stations where the organisational structure of the CID follows broadly traditional lines, proactive methods continue to be used in only very small proportions of all crime investigations (albeit often the most serious), account for only small proportions of the time and resources spent on crime control, and contribute to only small percentages of the total numbers of arrests and convictions.

In the following two sections, accounts will be given of developments in other forces visited in the course of the research, where more determined attempts had been made to change this basic pattern.

3. The development of individual aspects of proactivity

This section considers the experiences of forces which had initiated significant reforms in one or other of the three main elements of a proactive approach to crime investigation: intelligence, surveillance, and informants. However, while going well beyond the traditional ad hoc approaches to proactivity illustrated in the last section, the initiatives in question were still essentially 'bolted on' to, or incorporated into, pre-existing structures and practices, rather than forming part of a fully integrated restructuring of management, manpower and resources. As a result, it will be argued, they suffered from a number of problems which reduced their impact. Section 4 will describe attempts in two other forces to develop a fully integrated and far-reaching proactive strategy.

Criminal intelligence systems

We begin with some general comments about criminal intelligence and the practical problems involved in its collection, storage, retrieval and dissemination. A case study will then be provided of a police force ('Force B') in which a firm decision had been made some years previously to put major resources into the development of a 'state of the art' computerised intelligence system. It had not as yet integrated this with reforms and reorganisation in other areas, but had long term plans in this direction.

General issues

One of the fundamental decisions to be made in the construction of a criminal intelligence system is how much of what kinds of material to record. At a broad strategic level, this demands thought about the nature and purposes of intelligence, while at a practical level it requires consideration of the capacities of the available recording mechanisms (in most forces, now, computer records systems) and of how these will be used day to day by police officers.

Many senior officers we interviewed were keen to draw a broad distinction between 'intelligence' and 'information'. Intelligence, it was generally agreed, has to be 'developed' through the analysis of items of information, usually from a number of different sources. The same point has been made repeatedly in official reports on the use of intelligence. For example, the Baumber report noted:

'Criminal intelligence can be said to be the end product of a process often complex, sometimes physical, and always intellectual, derived from information which has been collated, analysed and evaluated in order to prevent crime or secure the apprehension of offenders.' (ACPO 1975: para. 32).

The primary raw material for this process is the 'intelligence log', an item of information about the activities of one or more suspected criminals, which is submitted to an intelligence officer, usually in the form of a brief written report from

another officer. This is graded for quality and reliability and may then be entered on to the system as a ‘criminal intelligence record’.

The Pearce report drew a broad distinction, in terms of content, between criminal intelligence records and criminal records:

‘For working purposes we therefore define criminal intelligence records as containing inferential and speculative matters about criminals and crime that *do not form part of the criminal record*. It does not preclude the inclusion of some criminal record information such as summaries of convictions where it would be helpful, but we would expect this to be minimal and duplication to be avoided so far as practicable’ (ACPO, 1978: para. 7 – our emphasis).

The implication of this distinction is that fairly tight limitations should be placed upon the types of information to be included in any set of criminal intelligence records. The records should be viewed first and foremost as a source of material for analysis for ‘proactive’ purposes, not as simply an ‘electronic library’ for the quick retrieval of information.

However, in practice, such distinctions are not always as clear as may first appear. While previous convictions are clearly factual ‘criminal records’ available from other sources (and hence not appropriate to intelligence systems), there are many other categories of factual information – addresses, cars driven, personal descriptions, arrests without further action, and so on – which may not constitute ‘intelligence records’ in the strictest sense, but which can be extremely useful to investigators (including those working in ‘proactive mode’) and may not always be immediately available elsewhere. Moreover, in the absence of a strong ‘proactive culture’, and with shortages of the time and expertise required for effective intelligence analysis, many officers have come to regard intelligence systems primarily as an extra ‘library’ of information, useful for purposes such as finding the current address of a wanted offender, or for identifying the driver of a car seen near the scene of a reported crime (this not always being available from records of registered vehicles): in other words, as a tool for traditional ‘reactive’ investigative activity. Indeed, their perceived value in this respect is one of the main factors motivating many officers to continue submitting intelligence logs: if they have found the system helpful, they are more likely to ‘put something back’ to assist other officers in a similar way.

Consequently, one finds a considerable variety between police forces, and between individual intelligence officers, in the kinds and amounts of data entered. Some, for example, include details of arrests and charges. Others, more ‘purist’ in approach, do not include any such data, which are not regarded as ‘intelligence’. Again, one force regarded sightings of known offenders as largely irrelevant and prone to fill the

system up with 'dross'; another saw them as an important contribution to building up a fuller picture of the movements of targets.

The latter difference illustrates the fundamental problem, that it cannot be known at the time a log is submitted whether or not it will eventually have any value. To include virtually every sighting tends to 'clog up the system' and make it difficult to 'sort the wheat from the chaff'. On the other hand, to be highly selective risks the omission of information which could later prove crucial to, for example, disproving an alibi. Similar dilemmas arise in decisions about which individuals to include as nominals: some forces adopt a comprehensive approach, while others aim to narrow the field dramatically – for example, to a 'hit list' of offenders perceived to be particularly active.

Such issues are in many forces decided ultimately by practical considerations, such as the storage and analytical capabilities of the computer system, or the availability of staff to type in reports. However, as they move towards proactive, 'intelligence driven' strategies of crime control, more are beginning to ask fundamental questions about the kinds of records needed to make these effective.

Another general consideration in devising an effective intelligence system is how to ensure a regular 'flow of information', both into the computerised records and out to operational officers. The Pearce Report emphasised that 'intelligence must not be collected for its own sake to be kept in files somewhere, but... must be passed on at all stages to those able to act upon it' (ACPO 1978: para. 10).

A key figure in this process is the Local Intelligence Officer (LIO), who is in most subdivisions the person responsible for the collation and dissemination of intelligence (Force Crime Intelligence Officers, normally based in headquarters, perform similar functions for data on travelling criminals). Part of this responsibility involves grading intelligence reports and inputting them to a computer database, often with the assistance of civilian clerks. Generally speaking, only intelligence officers can authorise the addition of information to the system, so every local report passes through their hands. As a result, they are perhaps best placed of all officers to retain an overview of recent developments in the area. Dissemination may be achieved by regular bulletins circulated throughout the local organisation or, increasingly, through the passing on of promising pieces of information to Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs) for development into 'target packages' with the potential for full-blown proactive operations.

A key factor in maintaining a constant flow of intelligence is for LIOs to communicate frequently with all officers, both CID and uniform, and to foster their commitment to the submission of regular reports. Unfortunately, however, the LIO's role has traditionally suffered from a poor image among other officers. Typically, the

job of LIO has been associated with what one officer called the 'lame and the walking dead' – a low status post given to people unfit for other, 'more important' duties. Although many forces now perceive the need for LIO posts to be filled by more dynamic and progressive individuals, the negative image remains difficult to shake off, and their exhortations to produce more intelligence reports or to read bulletins can often fall on deaf ears.

A case study: Force B

Almost all forces now have a 'nominal' (person) based computer system for storing and retrieving local intelligence. There is, however, considerable diversity in these systems and, as yet, few can be electronically linked with or can interrogate other forces' systems. Those looked at during the research exhibited a wide variety of storage and search facilities and of ways in which the systems were actually used. Some allowed only 'free text' searches (for example, an instruction to 'select all nominal files containing the string "dragon", ' to identify people with tattoos in this form), which can miss important data which are not entered in precisely the words specified. Others allowed more sophisticated cross-tabulation of information from different fields. Some forces, too, had recently invested in special analytical packages such as 'Watson' or 'I2' which, when linked to intelligence databases, can produce pictorial representations of, say, all the telephone numbers, vehicles, addresses and criminal associates of a named suspect, showing their interconnections in the 'ANACAPA' form of a network of lines and boxes. (These are particularly useful in the construction of a profile of a complex criminal enterprise. They can also be printed out and magnified for display as briefing charts for operational teams.)

The most sophisticated computerised system looked at by the researchers had been developed by one force over a period of several years. Rather than being an off-the-shelf package, the system had been custom designed by the force's own computer experts, allowing improvements to be made as the need for them was recognised. A brief flavour will be given of the system's capabilities, followed by some general comments about its relationship to proactive strategies.

One of the key features was the accessibility of a variety of databases from one computer terminal. At one sitting, an operator could access any of the following:

1. General incidents.
2. Alarms.
3. Crime.
4. Road traffic accidents.
5. Wanted/missing from home.
6. Lost/found property.

7. Standing instructions and plans.
8. Fixed penalty.
9. PNC Log enquiry (vehicle registrations).
10. MSS Log enquiry (message switch)
11. Operational intelligence.
12. Firearms.
13. Electoral register.

Most of these databases also had quite sophisticated searching facilities. The intelligence files were split into two tiers – one open, which could be accessed by every officer, and one closed, which was reserved for target operations and could only be accessed by officers given the relevant password. The open tier contained a large amount of general information, whilst the closed tier allowed the intensive collection and collation of specific intelligence on targeted individuals. This in itself was not unusual – all the forces visited were able to set up an operation file, even if only by creating a new file under a fictitious name (the codeword for the operation) in its nominals database. However, in Force B, files could be shared across the two tier system, allowing wide ranging searches to be made. Moreover, updates to the open system could be transferred automatically to the closed, eliminating the need for relevant information to be identified and rekeyed.

Inquisition of the intelligence database could be carried out in several different ways. For example, a variety of ‘person based’ searches allowed investigators to find references to named individuals in any number of separate databases. The ‘information reports’ and ‘vehicle reports’ could also be interrogated separately in search of patterns, and up to ten nominals (persons) could be attached to the search in order to narrow the field to individuals in whom the police were currently interested. It was possible to toggle between the information and nominal files during searches without exiting, hence speeding up the process. Moreover, data could be downloaded for detailed examination through a special crime analysis package (Watson).

Another feature of the system highlighted by officers as being extremely useful was the ‘history of interest’ which was attached to searches on the files. Hence, when an enquiry was made on a particular individual or vehicle, it was possible to see which other officers had been looking at that report. As the Police National Computer was accessed through the same system, the local history of interest was recorded for PNC enquiries as well. This function facilitated the sharing of information and helped to prevent duplication of effort by officers who might otherwise be unaware that they were looking into the same matter.

On the open tier, the force adopted a general policy of inclusiveness: the system contained far more information than any other we looked at. This policy clearly met

with approval among officers of all ranks. Knowledge about, enthusiasm for, and actual use of the system were noticeably more widespread than in the other forces visited. As well as often yielding useful background information about arrested suspects, the sheer quantity of detail available was seen as particularly valuable for purposes such as preparing interviews, if only as a psychological weapon for convincing detained people that the police 'knew everything about them'. For example, a DCI described how the revelation of detailed knowledge about individuals 'puts them on edge', and a PC commented that 'it's very good for interviewing if you've got a list of sightings.'

Universal use of the system was facilitated by the force's investment in over 400 computer terminals from which all the information files can be accessed. The submission of intelligence logs was also made easy by allowing them to be transmitted to LIOs by telephone as well as on forms. There also seemed to be little problem in motivating officers to submit them: several interviewees said that they felt the system to be 'owned' by the whole force, rather than (as in some other forces) being the preserve of a few intelligence officers or analysts who 'take but don't give back'.

Even so, a number of officers were of the opinion that further efforts were needed to encourage even greater use of the system and to increase training in this area. For example, one LIO commented that telephone operators in the control room could use it more, quoting the case of a report from a garage attendant that a man had tried to confuse him with the change from a £20 note. An officer stopped the car and rang in to say that it had only been a misunderstanding over a Scottish note. If the controller had checked the computer system, the LIO later discovered, he would have seen that the man had been involved in a similar fraudulent attempt in a nearby town the day before.

Revealingly, most comments referred essentially to ways of enhancing the reactive potential of the system. This was by far the most common use currently made of it, and the use most widely envisaged as helpful to day-to-day work routines. Indeed, one would hardly expect otherwise in a force which, as in nearly all others, the work routines of most officers, including detectives, reflect traditional approaches to dealing with crime.

Nevertheless, there were some officers who used the system for cold trawling of information ('once something strikes a chord'), and for putting together target packages. One division had set up a small proactive squad which had generally managed to avoid being 'sucked back' into reactive work patterns. The DS in charge described how he regularly 'looked through the crimes on the computer', experimenting with searches, for example, on MOs of recent incidents. He would also trawl the general incidents file, as:

'It's amazing what people have seen before a crime is reported. Then you can go into the intelligence file to see who's wearing the clothes etc, and check the suspects records. [By doing this] the computer should normally give you a starter for ten'.

He gave two or three examples of cases being constructed against prolific offenders largely on the basis of information extracted from the system. One was that of a known 'professional' burglar who had continually succeeded in avoiding arrest. He targeted houses in isolated rural areas and never left any physical evidence. Through collation of all the sightings of him near the sites of such burglaries, the squad laid the foundations for an ultimately successful conspiracy charge.

Such work, however, was relatively unusual at local level. Not only did most other divisions lack permanent proactive teams, but the resources for analysis of the intelligence system and development of packages were limited. One shortcoming frequently mentioned was the absence on most divisions of trained analysts who could research and identify crime patterns or trawl the intelligence database for information about prolific offenders. Several officers expressed the view that 'the information is there, but it's not being used enough', though it was thought that this would change once analysts had been recruited (interviews were being held at the time). There were also few local FIOs with the time and resources to develop target packages through contact with informants. It was a common complaint that, through no fault of their own, they were 'too deskbound': this was partly because they had to help LIOs with tasks such as the grading of logs and the preparation of bulletins, and partly because of long distances to travel in what was a large and predominantly rural force, in which many of the more serious offences were committed by travelling criminals from neighbouring forces.

More importantly, it was pointed out that, even when crime patterns were recognised or good target packages developed, most divisions had minimal resources for taking them further. The lack of permanent proactive squads meant that there was no readily available group of officers to take on the package, and by the time a group could be put together, the opportune moment could have passed. In particular, there was no dedicated surveillance team in the force, so the capability for mobile surveillance – often essential in operations against travelling criminals – was extremely limited. Such missed opportunities (which were particularly common in another force we visited which had greater numbers of FIOs and analysts, but even less operational capacity) not only represent a failure to take full advantage of the intelligence system's potential, but can be damaging to the morale of those who have spent time and effort researching the packages and putting them together.

In summary, the sophisticated intelligence system in this force provided a prime example of a major advance in one aspect of proactive policing, without

corresponding advances in other areas to make full use of the new potential it was opening up. The latter will only be achieved by the allocation of greater resources to analysis, the development of target packages and the provision of surveillance and operational teams. Even so, the system was not without considerable benefits in other ways. The 'open tier', while not used proactively to any great extent, had clearly been useful as a 'library' of information for officers across the force. This being so, it can be argued that, if an intelligence system has the capability for handling vast amounts of data, there is a good case for using this capability, so long as it does not interfere with the primary purpose of intelligence gathering and analysis. Perhaps the main danger is that, with too strong a focus on the 'open tier', most of the intelligence submitted will be of a factual or essentially 'low grade' nature. To avoid this, the force will have to find ways of encouraging CID officers, in particular, to cultivate more informants and to focus their intelligence gathering efforts on the most important and most active offenders.

Surveillance teams

A second 'proactive' tool of investigation in which many forces have recently made substantial investment is that of surveillance teams. A recent police survey found that about 60 per cent of police forces in Britain had already formed one or more 'dedicated' (full time, specialist) mobile teams and nearly all the rest had the capacity to set up surveillance teams on an ad hoc basis. Surveillance thus provides a good example of current efforts to systematise a particular aspect of proactive crime control. In commenting on how it is used in practice, we shall draw on experiences in several forces, rather than using one case study as in the previous section.

All the forces visited either had at least one full-time or part-time surveillance team or had plans to introduce one in the near future. The usual pattern was for the team to be based at force headquarters (or, in large forces, for two or three teams to be located in various divisions) and for other police units to put in requests for its services, ideally in the form of properly researched and formally presented 'target packages'. In some forces, most requests and packages came from FIOs or others working in intelligence offices (often at force level), while in others many came from local CID offices or specialist squads (particularly drugs squads). The two main kinds of task which the teams were asked to perform were to gather further intelligence about particular targets (eg to follow them to see where they were living or with whom they were associating) or, less often, to watch them in the hope of 'catching them in the act' – or, at least, producing photographic or other hard evidence of their involvement in a particular crime. As far as possible, surveillance teams avoided becoming directly involved in arrests, as this could compromise their 'cover' and reveal their methods: if arrests were expected, other officers would normally be close at hand to make them.

Practical issues

The main focus in this report is on mobile, as opposed to static, or 'fixed point', surveillance. The latter can be carried out by small numbers of officers and can be set up at short notice with minimal planning. Mobile surveillance, by contrast, is unlikely to be effective without the deployment of a full team – usually comprising twelve or more people – of trained and properly equipped officers. No details will be given here of the techniques and equipment used – though they obviously include unmarked vehicles, cameras, encrypted radios and the use of special skills. Rather, our interest is in the organisational problems entailed in deploying such resources at the appropriate time and to the best effect.

The first issue to be considered is whether to employ a full-time ('dedicated') as opposed to part-time surveillance team. There was virtually full agreement here among senior officers in all the forces visited. Those with dedicated teams – some of which had been in operation for several years – generally considered them very successful, while those with only part-time teams found them unsatisfactory in several respects. Some of the problems were illustrated by the experiences of Force A, which had set up a part-time team shortly before the research commenced.

The first six months of its implementation were characterised by 'political in-fighting' among senior officers, some of whom perceived the whole idea as a waste of precious resources. The surveillance team was based in the force headquarters, and its members were drawn from a variety of central units, including Special Branch, the force drugs squad and an operational support team (normally used for purposes such as crowd control or extra assistance on major enquiries). The formation of the team immediately caused resentment from some of the officers in charge of these units, who did not wish to lose the services of a considerable proportion of their officers for days at a time. There were days when some of the team simply could not be spared from other pressing duties. There were also many delays and frustrations over the acquisition of vehicles and equipment, some of these due to the lack of unanimity at senior level about the wisdom of the scheme.

A second set of problematic issues revolves around the quality and flow of 'jobs' which any surveillance team, be it dedicated or ad hoc, is asked to take on. Quality issues are of particular importance where surveillance is concerned, as it is one of the most expensive and manpower-intensive methods of crime investigation. The average cost per surveillance operation in two forces examined was estimated in each case at around £4,000, and several examples were found of operations costing over £20,000. One of these forces estimated the annual cost of a team, including salaries, overtime, vehicles and equipment, at about £400,000.

With such high costs involved, there is obviously little sense in following a person simply because he or she is thought to be involved in criminal activity: days may be wasted observing irrelevant activity. The ideal surveillance operation has a clear objective and is based on precise information (for example, from a reliable informant) about what the target is expected to do on a certain date. Consequently, most senior officers involved in managing surveillance squads were well aware of the need to enhance intelligence functions, in order to supply the teams with worthwhile and productive tasks. However, several readily admitted that the quality and quantity of 'packages' put forward were often variable, being dependent upon a range of factors, including the general flow of information coming into intelligence offices, the numbers of LIOs, analysts and FIOs available to work on it, the personal qualities of such officers, the degree of support received from managers, and the systems in place for recruiting and handling informants.

Such factors also affect the 'flow' of packages, which must be sufficient to keep a dedicated surveillance team regularly employed. One force suffered in this respect, owing mainly to a general shortage of FIOs and the abstraction of some FIOs into routine office based tasks rather than the cultivation of informants. However, in most forces with established surveillance teams there was little problem in eliciting sufficient numbers of requests for their services: the problem was to guarantee a regular flow of packages which indubitably merit full-scale surveillance.

This raises a third major issue, that of how and by whom decisions are made on which of the 'packages' submitted to adopt as target operations. A frequent comment from managers experienced in this area was that it is vital to develop clear procedures which allow such decisions to be made in a considered fashion, on the basis of reliable information. At the same time, however, there needs to be sufficient flexibility for some to be made at very short notice.

The experience of Force A was again instructive here. When the surveillance team was introduced, the plan was that any unit or subdivision in the force could put in a written request for its services – ideally in the form of a properly researched and convincingly presented 'target package' – and that decisions about which operations to support would be made by a committee of senior officers at a monthly meeting. As the architects of the scheme wanted to show that it would be operated fairly and to the benefit of all, it was seen as politic to include representatives of all divisions, as well as headquarters CID, on this committee. However, this system soon proved unwieldy and ineffective.

First of all, it was difficult to find dates when all the representatives were available and, even then, meetings often had to be cancelled due to sudden contingencies. More important, it quickly became apparent that some target packages required urgent action, and the long wait for authorisation and prioritisation rendered them

out-of-date and unlikely to yield results. To overcome this problem, senior detectives in headquarters were given a freer hand to select operations at short notice, reporting their decisions at a later date to the committee. While this led to some successful operations, it also caused some parts of the force to complain that the team's services were being obtained on the 'old boy network', with certain areas favoured and others not. (A similar complaint was heard in other forces where the use of surveillance teams could be acquired through a telephone call to their manager, as opposed to through formal consideration by a committee.)

Moreover, relaxation of strict requirements governing requests to use the team meant that some operations were undertaken with little background research and produced disappointing results. For example, an arrested 'good class' burglar told the police that a close associate was currently burgling houses every day. In the hope of catching this associate in the act, before he found out about the arrest and 'went quiet', the surveillance team was deployed immediately to follow him. They did so for two days, but with no result. Such an operation was unlikely to have been prioritised by the committee, who would have wanted to see more intelligence about the burglar's habits, plans, where he stored stolen goods, and so on. The squad's first nine operations produced only one arrest, although some new intelligence was gained which was expected to lead eventually to more arrests. The lesson seems to be that, if single officers are to make judgements quickly about which operations to take on, it is important to devise clear guidelines on which to base their decisions.

A related consideration, which will be left for discussion in Section 5, is the development of reliable ways of monitoring and evaluating the uses made of surveillance teams. Despite their current popularity, unless their 'value for money' can be clearly demonstrated, they could before long become prime targets for cost-cutting exercises.

Informants

The development of informant handling was on the agenda of all the forces visited, but some had moved considerably further than others in terms of systematising this area of work. The most highly organised was Force D, which had instituted a force-wide register of informants, some of whom could be relocated to other parts of the force and 'tasked' with infiltrating particular criminal groups. As this was merely one part of a radical reorganisation of all proactive functions, detailed discussion of that force's practices will be delayed until Section 4. In this section, examples will be given of more isolated initiatives to make better use of informants.

As with the other proactive methods, we begin with a general discussion of some of the practical issues involved. This will be fairly brief, as the topic of informant handling has been covered in some detail by other studies in the Police Research

Group's research programme (eg, Hanvey 1995). Examples will then be given of initiatives to systematise and improve the use of informants.

Practical issues

The main practical issues to be addressed in the use of informants concern their recruitment, handling and the uses made of information they provide. These will be considered briefly in turn.

As noted in Section 2, all the forces visited were aware of a major lack of training in the area of the recruitment of informants. Generally speaking, officers either learned from more experienced colleagues or simply devised their own methods. The most common was to find ways of speaking privately to detained suspects – for example, by continuing conversations after the completion of taped interviews or by offering those released on police bail a lift home – and then asking them whether they would be prepared to cooperate. However, if not skilfully done, such approaches very often failed. They also suffered from a lack of strong incentive to potential informants: the small sums of money they could be offered were seen as poor recompense for the risks they were asked to run, while it was not possible to guarantee recompense through lenient treatment or dropped charges. There was also a widespread perception that the threat of disclosure of their role to the defence acted as a significant deterrent to potential informants, many of whom were well aware of the stricter approach by the courts in this regard. Training to overcome such problems was therefore seen as a priority.

Although official guidelines have existed for many years, in practice the manner in which informants are handled has often been left largely to the preference of individual CID officers. It has also been associated with a culture of secrecy: several of the older detectives interviewed still had reservations about 'sharing' their informants with other officers, or even revealing their existence to supervisors. Among the obvious disadvantages of such an approach are that good intelligence may not be received or acted upon if the officer is on leave or tied up in other duties, information may not be collated with intelligence from other sources and, if a handler changes jobs, the informant may be lost to the service entirely.

In addition to the problem of unrealised potential, unsystematised practices in handling informants have quite often been associated with police malpractice, including corruption, the turning of a blind eye to serious crimes committed by informants, and the use of *agents provocateurs* to encourage people to commit offences they would not otherwise have undertaken.

Where the use made of information is concerned, even if it is passed on to a senior officer (or 'controller' – see below), unless there are proper systems and resources in

place to evaluate it and follow it up – for example, by further research, collation with other material or the setting up of an operation – it may well be wasted. Intelligence from informants frequently only has a short ‘shelf life’ and if not acted upon quickly may lose its value. For example, a tip that a crime is being planned the following day may require a surveillance team to follow the participants, or information about the location of property may necessitate an immediate and well planned raid of premises.

More systematic approaches

In line with the general shift to proactivity, efforts were being made in most of the forces visited to increase and improve the use of informants. Where recruitment was concerned, training was seen as a high priority, although there were as yet few special courses available. In addition, two forces were actively encouraging specialist interviewers to adopt a systematic strategy of broaching with every arrested person (within reason) the possibility of becoming an informant. While this had not yet been particularly productive (partly due to lack of training in how to make approaches and partly to the problem of not being able to offer much as a reward), the very knowledge among criminal groups that it was happening was said in one force to have had a disruptive effect: ‘It makes them nervous: they don’t know who to trust’.

Where informant handling was concerned, there was widespread awareness of the need for more effective systems of registration, monitoring and control. Senior officers were generally in favour of the principles and guidelines currently being promoted by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO, 1990; amended 1994/95) and efforts were being made to follow them, though as yet with variable results.

It was generally agreed that progress was dependent, first and foremost, upon getting police officers (and CID officers in particular) to accept the notion that informants ‘belong to the police service, not the individual officer’ and hence to register them officially and regularly complete records of meetings with them. Two forces had issued local guidelines outlining strict procedures in this respect, but these suffered from a lack of clarity in the working definition of an ‘informant’. As noted in Section 2, CID officers frequently receive pieces of information, from arrested suspects and others, on a ‘one off’ basis, but do not regard the person concerned as worthy of registration. It remained fairly common practice to register people as informants only where payment was contemplated and/or they had already ‘proved themselves’ by producing information of real value. As payment was normally made only after an arrest had resulted, few of the more ‘casual’ providers of information were registered.

Another move aimed at tightening up handling systems was the appointment in some forces of specialist informant ‘controllers’. In the past, the role of controller (who does not normally meet informants face to face, but whose duties include guiding and supervising ‘handlers’, authorising payments and keeping records of meetings) has often been performed by police managers with neither the time nor the particular expertise to do an effective job. This has led in some cases not only to failure to realise the potential of registered informants, but to a feeling among CID officers that there is little to gain from registration, thus perpetuating a culture of individualism. Where, as in one force, a policy was adopted of appointing controllers with significant experience of handling informants themselves, the indications were that other officers had more confidence in the controller, that registrations had increased, that individual informants were likely to be used more often, and that handlers were more likely to pass on full information about their meetings.

Similarly, there was a growing trend towards the use of specialist handlers, usually FIOs. This was seen as a way of ensuring that handling procedures were followed more consistently, as well as of ‘milking’ more information from each informant, due to the special skills, broader remit and more strategic approach of the handlers. It also made it easier to coordinate the collection and use of information, as the FIOs had a better overview of intelligence in the area concerned. However, some argued that all CID officers should develop informant handling skills and that the concentration of these duties in a few hands would lead eventually to a shortage of officers with the necessary experience to replace the current FIOs. One force was considering instituting a policy whereby all informants should have two handlers, one an FIO and the other a general CID officer: this would not only give more officers vital experience, but would also make it easier to maintain communication with informants when one handler was unavailable or on leave.

The problem of attrition in the pool of active informants – illustrated by findings (see Sections 2 and 5) that the majority of registered informants in some areas had not been used for a long time – was also being tackled in some forces by regular reviews of those ‘on the books’ and systematic efforts to ‘reactivate’ some of them. This could be aided, it was said, by getting informants used to the idea, at an early stage, of being met by more than one handler. If informants – and the police force – come to feel that they ‘belong’ only to one handler, it is more likely that their services will be lost to the force when the latter leaves his or her post.

Further initiatives with the aim of maintaining the use of individual informants over longer periods, included the authorisation of ‘sweeteners’ – small payments, in advance of any concrete results, to people who have proved their worth as informants in the past. One force was even contemplating paying regular ‘retainers’ to its best informants, rather than simply payment by results.

Finally, and most importantly, most senior officers interviewed were very conscious that the information gleaned from informants was not always used as productively as it might have been. Rather than informing deeper research into particular criminal groups' activity, it all too often simply led, as one CID officer put it, to 'a few warrants and kicking in a few doors'. While this might produce some charges against individuals, it could spoil the potential for a coordinated operation against a larger number of offenders and for many more – and more serious – charges. In other words, although, as with the developments in intelligence systems and surveillance teams described earlier, more systematic use of informants is likely to bring some benefits, its full potential is likely to be realised only when it forms part of a much broader and integrated approach to proactive crime investigation. This is the subject to which we now turn in Section 4.

4. Integrated approaches

The preceding sections have discussed approaches to proactivity which rely upon exhortations to make more use of particular investigative methods, efforts to 'free up' CID officers, or initiatives to make greater use of one element of the proactive process. Such essentially 'piecemeal' approaches, it has been contended, often achieve only a marginal increase in the extent of proactive work undertaken. They also tend to result in breakdowns or 'bottlenecks' at some stage in the process – in the flow of intelligence, or in the immediate availability of officers for tasks such as surveillance, recruiting informants, developing 'packages', or planning and executing operations.

This section will describe more radical initiatives, using as examples two forces (one metropolitan, the other a county force) which have made a full commitment to proactivity and decided to 'start from first principles', introducing significant changes to the whole structure of their investigative resources, especially the organisation and functions of the CID. In other words, these forces have attempted to systematise and integrate reforms which others have developed more or less in isolation from each other. As will be shown, these ambitious initiatives have not been free of problems, but they offer a valuable 'glimpse of the future' and an opportunity to study early forms of genuinely 'intelligence-driven' strategies of crime control.

Case study 1: Force C

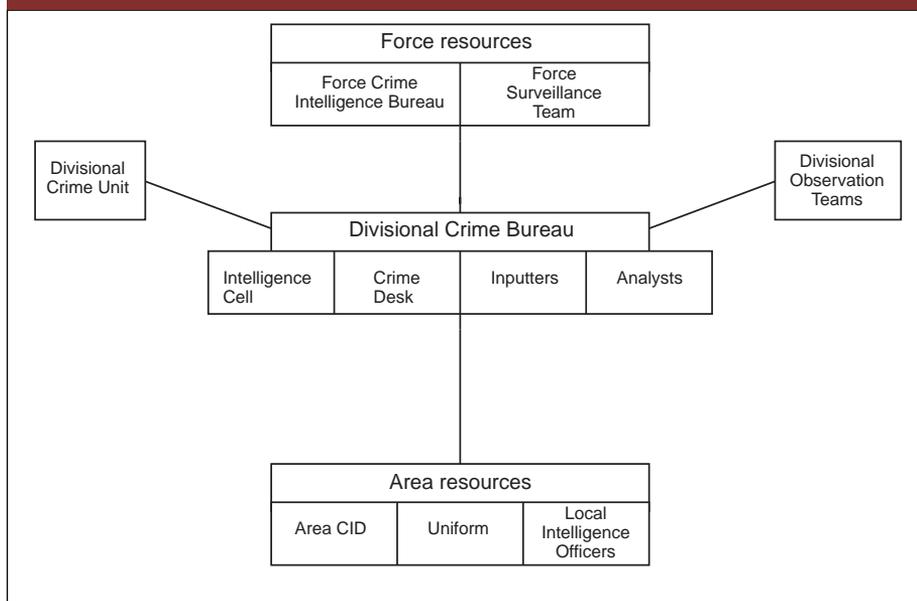
Force C is a large force covering a predominantly metropolitan area. At the time the research was carried out, it was still in the early stages of a series of major structural changes, with pilot initiatives in operation in three divisions. The ultimate plan was to extend the scheme throughout the force, with full responsibility for crime control located at divisional level, under the local Detective Superintendent. The divisions, it should be noted, are very large by the standards of most forces – indeed, some employ more officers than small county forces.

Within each division, the reorganisation will eventually incorporate three important features: the amalgamation of existing subdivisions into larger 'areas'; the introduction of a centralised 'Crime Bureau'; and the reallocation of many detectives from the areas to a large proactive 'Divisional Crime Unit' (DCU). At the time of the research, the second and third of these reforms had already been introduced in the pilot schemes.

The main elements of the new system are represented in Figure 1. Although based in several locations, detectives in the DCUs were centrally managed, and the areas had no control over their deployment. Each area, however, retained its own uniform capability and a small CID unit to service its reactive requirements. Members of the latter not only attended the scenes of the more serious reported crimes, but were

expected, as were the uniform officers, to provide intelligence for the DCU. They also took part, either independently or jointly with the DCU, in some proactive operations in their own areas, although these were normally short term and simple in scope. This clear separation of functions between the divisional and area detectives is one of the key features of the system.

Figure 1: Organisation model – Force C



The centralised Crime Bureaux incorporated a crime desk to screen reported crimes and communicate with victims by telephone. ‘Screened in’ crimes were allocated to area detectives, who normally made only one visit to the scene, working with Scenes of Crime Officers on the same shift patterns. Each Crime Bureau also included an ‘intelligence cell’, a crime pattern analyst, and data inputters for the intelligence system. The centrality accorded to crime intelligence was reflected in the fact that each Bureau was managed by a Force Crime Intelligence Officer. In addition to his or her divisional duties, the latter was responsible for passing on relevant intelligence to the headquarters Force Intelligence Bureau and was expected to play a part in the planning of forcewide and cross border operations. These latter duties, it had already been found, could detract from the overall supervision of the Bureau and consequently it had been recommended that a new Detective Sergeant be brought in to supervise the day to day activities of the staff.

The ‘intelligence cells’ were each run by a Detective Inspector, assisted by four Detective Constables. Two of the DCs each had primary responsibility for any intelligence relating to ‘their’ half of the division (divided into North and South in the pilot divisions). Their main task was to ensure that the intelligence was communicated to front line officers, both in the DCU and the subdivisions (or, from 1995, the areas). Consequently, their work involved close liaison with Local Intelligence Officers, one of whom will eventually be attached to every station in the division. They also helped area officers to set up operations, or carried out checks on their behalf. Hence they were envisaged as a resource to be used by everyone. The other two DCs were specifically tasked as Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs). They had a more direct responsibility to service the proactive DCU – especially through the development of intelligence and cultivation of informants to help set up divisional target operations – and to liaise with the crime assessors on the crime desk. They also provided support for other divisional CID officers in their handling of informants. To further assist the development of the intelligence generated, each Bureau had a (civilian) analyst, who performed crime pattern analysis and ANACAPA functions on the intelligence being generated.

Finally, each division had a divisional observation team (DOT) which carried out foot and static surveillance. Mobile surveillance was the prerogative of three dedicated surveillance teams at force level, whose services could be requested by divisions through the submission of target packages. Such requests were considered and prioritised by the senior officers at headquarters who managed the teams.

Benefits of the system

As noted above, at the time of the research, the scheme had been implemented in a pilot form in three divisions. Two of these pilots had been running for three months and the other for only one month. Consequently, it would be premature to draw any firm conclusions about how successful it has been or is likely to be. Nevertheless, some tentative comments can be offered, together with the views and early experiences of officers with first hand involvement in the experiment. An outline will be given of what appear to be the potential benefits of the system, followed by a consideration of some of the early problems it has come up against.

It should be clear, even from the brief account given above, that the reorganisation in Force C goes well beyond the various initiatives to free up CID officers or to develop individual aspects of proactive work, which have been described in previous sections. This force has made a significant investment of intellectual commitment and financial resources in the creation of a new, integrated system of intelligence-driven crime control. To this end, it has implemented a major transfer of the resources – and of control over the resources – which were previously available for

traditional reactive responses to crime at a local level. This would appear to have a number of clear benefits.

First of all, the tendency has already been noted for proactive initiatives to be 'swamped' by, or to take second place to, a perceived need to respond fully to reactive demand. Under the new system, this problem has been virtually eliminated, primarily by the device of splitting each division's complement of CID officers into two quite distinct groups, one (proactive) managed and controlled at divisional level and the other (reactive) servicing demand at area level, though also allocated tasks by divisional managers. In many other forces, locally-based attempts to divide detectives into reactive and proactive groups have come up against the problem that both are drawn from the same office and controlled by the same managers: as a result, as soon as reactive workloads become burdensome, there is a strong temptation to 'borrow' officers from the proactive group, whose work is seen as 'less urgent'. In Force C, the explicitly proactive, independently-controlled, central unit (the DCU), is not subject to abstractions save under very exceptional circumstances.

Secondly, the integrated system, which provides ready access in one central unit to all divisional intelligence, to data analysts, to experienced informant handlers and to surveillance teams, makes it far less likely that a potential operation will break down due to the absence of a particular link in the 'proactive chain' at the time it is needed. As noted earlier, too, decisions on whether or not to act on a particular piece of information often need to be taken quickly, and the centralisation of management with immediate control over available divisional resources, rather than individuals having to rely upon time-consuming cooperation and negotiation with others, gives the new system a distinct advantage.

In order to illustrate how the system has been used in practice, a brief example will now be given of a successful operation which took place shortly before the fieldwork period.

None of the four offenders in this case had any previous convictions and were unlikely to have been caught so quickly by conventional methods of investigation of the individual crimes. The key features of the operation were the research by the analyst and the surveillance, which led to an arrest during the short time that the stolen goods were in the house.

Practical problems

The obvious benefits of the system, as illustrated above, should not lead one to conclude that it is by any means flawless, nor that it meets with full approval from all those involved. Although we found almost unanimous enthusiasm among the headquarters managers responsible for its implementation, strong reservations were

Example of a successful operation in Force C

It was noticed that a number of armed robberies had occurred in the division in recent months, which appeared to have been carried out by the same gang. By examining local crime records and making enquiries among other divisions, which produced other likely examples of the gang's work, a crime analyst began to put together a picture of the people involved. Eye witness descriptions suggested that there were three or four of them, of Asian or Mediterranean appearance, and that one had exceptionally large buttocks. He also found that one of the stolen cars used in a robbery had received a parking ticket that day. Divisional detectives went to the location where the ticket had been issued and noted that it was close to an Italian restaurant. Discreet enquiries revealed that a number of waiters from this restaurant shared a nearby house. The DOT (foot surveillance team) carried out preliminary observations, and discovered that one of these waiters had a large bottom. Further static surveillance of the house was undertaken for three or four days, until it was reported on the police radio that another armed robbery had occurred. An arrest team was added to the DOT and eventually the waiters returned to the house. A raid was conducted and stolen property from the robbery recovered, leading to the whole group being arrested and convicted.

expressed by a number of officers, particularly those working on the subdivisions involved in the piloting of the scheme. A number of practical problems were also identified. In interviews with a variety of officers (from managers to PCs, and from headquarters to subdivisional staff) four main areas of concern were identified: cultural or 'political' resistance; a sense of isolation at local level from the work of the Bureau and DCU, combined with low comprehension of how the various elements of the system fit together; problems with the flow of intelligence; and shortages of staff at key points in the system. These will be discussed briefly in turn.

One of the most significant problems that had faced all the pilots was resistance to the changes from subdivisional officers, including uniform supervisors and managers. Several of the latter seemed to be opposed to the scheme mainly because they saw it as reducing their autonomy over events in their own part of the city. It has, of course, to be recognised that any major innovation which alters lines of managerial control is likely to be perceived negatively by those who see some of their own 'empire' (in this case, most of their CID staff!) disappearing. Such natural resistance to change was exacerbated here by the fact that an important part of the reorganisation – the formation of areas – had not yet taken place, and the Bureau pilots had been imposed on the existing subdivisional structure: the system is ultimately designed for an area-based system which puts less emphasis upon

geographic territory, and will offer local managers new sets of powers and responsibilities. The headquarters designers of the scheme argued that resistance (of which they were well aware) would be only temporary: once the areas were set up and the subdivisional management tier removed, a more positive outlook would be generated.

There were other negative views apparent among the lower uniform ranks, however, which might not have such a straightforward solution. In particular, reservations were expressed about the effects of delegating control over how local reported offences are handled to a central Crime Bureau. This was seen by several officers as damaging to police-public relations, as the Bureau would be seen as remote and impersonal. Concern was also expressed about a perceived reduction in service to victims through the introduction of a 'one visit' policy for crime scenes.

A second set of criticisms revolved around problems of communication. Many officers – including supervisors – in the subdivisions seemed to have only a hazy idea of the real purposes of the reorganisation, and felt that they had been excluded from any say in the way the changes would be implemented. One described the situation as one of 'mushroom management – keep them in the dark and throw shit at them'. There were also comments to the effect that the divisional CID officers had already become isolated from the other units in the subdivisions – a move running counter to previous initiatives aimed at getting CID and uniform officers to work more closely together.

Linked to the lack of full understanding of the scheme was a problem, evident among both uniform and 'reactive CID' officers, of some confusion about the parameters of their job. For example, the introduction of the Crime Bureau had greatly reduced the numbers of calls to be made to the scenes of crimes. Within one month of one of the pilots coming into operation, one uniform officer actually made a formal complaint that since the new system had been introduced he had been bored and 'had nothing to do', as there were fewer directives coming through from the control centre. While this was an extreme case, it illustrated a widespread sense of being cut off from the 'action'. It was a common complaint that, with officers being tasked to go to many fewer incidents, they felt they had 'lost touch with what is going on'. Similar comments were made by some CID officers, who further felt that their job had been devalued, that they had been cut off from their divisional colleagues, and that they were no longer sure of what they were supposed to be trying to achieve. Such remarks raise important questions about how to maintain a sense of teamwork and how to instil a greater degree of creative initiative among the 'area detectives' when the reorganisation is completed.

The above concerns may well be related to the third major problem identified by interviewees, that of reductions or hiatuses in the 'flow of intelligence' from the

subdivisions into the proactive units. This is clearly crucial to the success of the whole scheme, as although the DCUs and intelligence cells can produce a certain amount of intelligence themselves through the use of informants, they are ultimately reliant on the local officers, both uniform and CID, as their 'eyes and ears'. In one of the pilot divisions, the shortage of useful intelligence had become so severe that, as the DCU was not receiving enough target packages to occupy the attentions of all its officers, its manpower was reduced by half. Divisional managers were convinced that the problem was caused primarily by a failure to appoint sufficient numbers of LIOs. They pointed out that the original force model for the reorganisation had recommended that two LIOs should be attached to each parade station to ensure good communication with the various beats. However, due to a shortage of resources this level of staffing had not been met on any of the pilot schemes. Not only was it impossible for one person to cover all the shifts, but there was often no provision for annual leave, sickness, or other absences, thus limiting opportunities for the establishment of a good rapport between LIOs and front line officers, or for intelligence to be passed on in person.

Important as the shortage of LIOs may be, we suspect that the nub of the problem may lie elsewhere, in the feelings of alienation in the subdivisions. It was suggested more than once that officers in one of the pilot divisions had become reluctant to send good quality intelligence via the LIO to the Bureau as the intelligence cell would only 'sit on it' or would use it to create 'their own jobs'. If this was the case, it clearly represented a breakdown in understanding of, or commitment to, one of the the main aims of the system – namely, for everyone involved to share information openly. It also raises questions about the proper functioning of the intelligence cell, which should be creating or developing packages to be passed on to and acted upon by the most appropriate body of officers.

Finally, two other 'flow' related problems were mentioned. The first, interestingly, concerned fears that the intelligence cells were receiving not too little, but too much, information from the subdivisions. The complaint was that they were being overwhelmed by large amounts of 'dross': some LIOs, it was asserted, were not effectively 'weeding' intelligence reports, but were simply grading them routinely and passing them on to the Crime Bureau. Frequent bottlenecks were thereby being created in the Bureau as the staff struggled to type large numbers of logs, many of dubious relevance, into the computer. In one cell, it was taking a minimum of one, and sometimes more than three, days before items were entered on the system.

The second problem related to the flow of intelligence in the opposite direction, ie from the Crime Bureau to officers working in the subdivisions. The latter's access to the intelligence system was primarily through their LIO: even the CID officers had not been trained to use the computer terminals themselves. Thus if the LIO was out

of the office there was nobody at the parade stations who could immediately provide them with the information they needed. One officer even expressed the view that the old Collator's cardfile system had been more useful, as one could look through the card trays when the Collator was out. Of course, without ready access to computerised intelligence, the locally based officers were less likely to be able to make effective use of the extra time provided by the creation of the Crime Bureau, with the eventual 'knock on effect' of less new intelligence being produced for transmission back to the Bureau. In other words, the ideal circular flow of intelligence was being broken, with potentially damaging effects upon the whole system.

To sum up, Force C has taken significant steps towards the creation of an integrated structure to promote a primarily proactive approach to crime control. However, despite having major advantages over the other less systematic initiatives described in earlier sections, it has come up against a number of problems, most importantly deficiencies in officers' comprehension of and commitment to the system at subdivisional level, deriving partly from a sense of isolation from the 'centre of the action'. It has also suffered in its early stages shortfalls in the desired numbers of key staff, especially LIOs. These problems can have serious consequences for the flow of intelligence, which is the 'lifeblood' of the whole system. Whether they are essentially only 'teething troubles' or are likely to remain for a considerable time, is impossible to say, but the main general lesson to be drawn from them, we conclude, is for managers to take full account of front line officers' concerns and to make special efforts to communicate with them and to 'sell' the benefits of the system to the force as a whole.

Case study 2: Force D

Force D, a large county force, was in a comparable stage of a major reorganisation, having initiated a full-scale pilot exercise in one area, with a view to implementing the scheme throughout the force in the near future. The explicit philosophy behind it, to which the Chief Constable was particularly strongly committed, was to make the day-to-day work of both uniform and detective officers 'intelligence driven'. The model had been developed through a major intelligence review carried out by senior officers in the force, and was set out with great clarity in their report. Of all the police stations visited during the research, the one in which the scheme was being piloted had experienced the most far-reaching changes to routine patterns of work, affecting every officer employed there. In our view, it is an experiment of potentially great importance for the future of crime investigation.

As with Force C, a brief outline of the system will be provided, moving on to discuss its operation in practice and to present the views of some of those involved.

The system

The Area visited by the researchers in Force D, a large county force, was considerably smaller than those in Force C. It covered three small or medium-sized towns and surrounding countryside. Unlike Force C, none of its detectives came under divisional control. They all worked directly under one local management team, responsible ultimately to the Area Commander.

The key feature of the organisational model was the centralisation and rationalisation of all decision-making about crime control in the area. One managerial group – the ‘Tasking and Coordinating Group’ (TCG) – was empowered to direct every operational officer in the Area to carry out specific tasks in accordance with a strategic policy which explicitly prioritised proactive above reactive policing. This group, which met daily, comprised the Area Superintendent, the ‘Intelligence Coordinator’, the ‘Operations Manager’ and the ‘Crime Manager’ (see Figure 2).

In terms of input to the TCG, the most important member was the Intelligence Coordinator, a Detective Inspector, who headed the ‘Intelligence Unit’. This was regarded as the core unit of the whole system and was expected to produce a regular flow of proposals to the TCG on how to deploy the Area’s crime-fighting resources. Its proposals might include anything from full target packages, to strategies for preventing or ‘disrupting’ criminal activity, to minor intelligence-gathering initiatives. All uniform patrol officers, as well as detectives, were regularly given specific tasks by the TCG. Indeed, it was stipulated that, in line with a policy of ‘directed patrolling’, every uniform group would be given regularly a compulsory ‘primary task’ (and sometimes an optional ‘secondary task’), which took priority over all other activity and on which they were required to submit a written report at the end of the shift. Commonly set tasks included arresting named individuals, questioning publicans about who was drinking with whom, and looking out for particular vehicles.

The Intelligence Unit devised such tasks on the basis of a daily sifting of intelligence reports, combined with a longer term strategy of targeting a small number of individuals. Although it was prepared to respond ad hoc to items which seemed to warrant immediate action, it focused most of its attention upon a (regularly updated) list of serious or prolific offenders who were considered the ‘top forty’ targets in the Area. Many of the ‘primary tasks’ allocated to officers were designed to find out more about these offenders. In addition, photographs of and information about selected members of the top forty were displayed in the briefing room, and all officers were expected to look out for useful information about their activities, movements or associates. This gave officers a much clearer idea of the kinds of intelligence logs

The team leader graded intelligence logs, put forward suggestions for the uniform officers' 'primary tasks', and prepared regular bulletins for dissemination to the rest of the Area or, where relevant, other areas. While it contributed to the force's computerised intelligence system, the Area kept its own nominals index and a manual filing system for storing information on a relatively small number of local offenders. A high degree of selectivity was exercised over the recording of this information: files were generally opened only on offenders whom the unit regarded as of current interest and the remaining logs were either sent on to other areas or simply destroyed. As officers were encouraged to focus their attention upon certain named offenders, there was not a flood of diverse intelligence reports coming into the Intelligence Unit, as was the case in some of the other forces, so the Unit was not overwhelmed by routine grading and data storage duties.

The FIOs were expected to develop promising material into target packages. They were aided in this by being appointed as the official handlers of all registered informants in the Area, while the Intelligence Coordinator acted as controller in every case, thus giving him an overview of what was emerging. The force promoted an unusually 'proactive' approach to informant recruitment and handling, encouraging officers at all levels to look out for potential recruits. The Unit also practised a strategy of studying known groups or networks of offenders in order to identify a 'weak link' – someone upon whom pressure might be put to provide information to the police. The FIO handlers were also encouraged to 'task' informants to find out answers to particular questions. A similar policy was being adopted throughout the force, which included the creation of a forcewide database of informants, so that when intelligence was needed about a particular person, activity or location, the database could be consulted to see if there were any informants especially suited to acquiring it. Informants could also be asked to move temporarily to another area where appropriate.

The target packages created by the Intelligence Unit were submitted to the TCG, who decided which to adopt as operations. They then allocated the necessary actions to be taken to one of the Area's 'tactical teams'. The use of the tactical teams, which consisted of a mixture of CID and uniform officers, was entirely at the disposal of the TCG. The teams were able to carry out static observations or other intelligence driven initiatives such as crime disruption. They were also used for arrests at the end of the operation. Mobile surveillance could be requested from the force headquarters, which ran a dedicated surveillance team, although this was 'in competition with' other Areas and, as in other forces we visited, took time to set up and was generally requested only for larger-scale and longer term operations. The Area had put in six requests since the new system had come into operation, only two of which had been granted. Several senior officers saw a need for a more locally

based mobile surveillance team, although the necessary resources were not currently available.

Mention has already been made of two problems commonly experienced by squads involved in proactive operations at a local level: becoming 'victims of their own success' by 'getting bogged down in paperwork' in the aftermath of arrests; and being drawn into reactive work to assist other officers who become overburdened by caseloads. The Force D model guarded against both eventualities by clear separations of functions.

First of all, the preparation of files of evidence was delegated entirely to (mainly CID-staffed) 'evidence teams', who took over cases from tactical teams from the point of arrest. They had the responsibilities of interviewing detained persons, taking witness statements and collating files of evidence for submission to the CPS. The tactical teams were explicitly excluded from these duties except in unusual circumstances. Despite the routine and essentially reactive nature of their work, the evidence teams were also expected to play a part in the production of intelligence. In particular, they were expected, in the course of interviews, to 'sound out' arrested suspects as potential informants and to submit a report on any who seemed likely to cooperate to the Intelligence Unit, whose FIOs would take on the process of recruitment and handling.

Secondly, tactical teams were protected from being drawn into reactive work, except in the case of major investigations, where they might, at the discretion of the TCG, be allocated temporarily to tasks such as door to door enquiries.

Otherwise, reactive investigations were the responsibility of the 'core CID' and of uniform staff. The former consisted of the remaining CID officers not attached to the Intelligence Unit, tactical teams or evidence teams. Their main job was to conduct investigations into 'serious and series' crimes reported by the public. Less serious recorded crimes which were considered worth investigating (see below) were dealt with by uniform officers, particularly a specially trained 'Crime Scene Unit'. The reactive workload of both core CID and uniform staff was kept to a minimum through the operation of a crime desk, headed by the Crime Manager. This dealt with all reports of offences from the public, operating a very strict crime screening policy. As far as possible, reports were dealt with over the telephone: indeed, the notional target was for 70 per cent of all reported crimes to be dealt with in this way, with no police visit at all. Moreover crimes allocated for investigation were dealt with under a 'one visit' policy in all but the most serious cases.

Like everybody else in the Area, those manning the Crime Desk were expected to play a part in the intelligence gathering process, looking out for patterns in the reports which might suggest the work of targeted offenders. The presence of the

Crime Manager on the Tasking and Coordinating Group and of a crime pattern analyst in the Intelligence Unit was seen by the designers of the system as useful in maintaining communication between those engaged in reactive and proactive work and in exploiting the intelligence potential of reported crime.

Before considering the benefits and drawbacks of the above system, one illustrative example will be given of how it was used in a successful operation.

Example of a successful operation in Force D

This case originated from the belief of one FIO, based on discussions with informants, that an increase in burglaries in the town was associated with heroin dealing. With assistance from others in the Intelligence Unit, he produced an ANACAPA chart of links between known heroin dealers and addicts. From this and further research, he noted that one woman with close connections with a main dealer was currently facing the possibility of imprisonment for several unpaid fines. She was targeted as an especially 'vulnerable' member of the network and it was decided to attempt to recruit her as an informant. She agreed, and produced a considerable amount of intelligence about the financing of major drug buys in the area through burglaries, naming not only the dealers (who were already known), but the burglars they were 'running'. The Unit then carried out further research, using the intelligence system, other informants and a tactical team, into the backgrounds and movements of the burglars. A target operation, involving mobile surveillance, was put together, and eventually a series of coordinated raids was made in which sufficient evidence (mainly in the form of recovered stolen property and photographs of meetings between the burglars and the dealers) was obtained to sustain multiple charges of conspiracy, burglary, receiving and supply of drugs. The case was strengthened at this point by admissions from some of the offenders, who provided further evidence against the main dealers.

As the FIO pointed out, 'in the old days' the connections between the offenders would not have been researched in depth before action was taken, and information about a particular individual would probably have led to no more than the obtaining of a search warrant, a speculative raid on one or two properties, and perhaps some fairly minor charges. The current system, he claimed, had enabled the police to 'take out the whole network'.

Discussion

While having in common with Force C the key characteristics of an integrated, 'systems' approach to crime control, with clear priority given to proactive over

reactive strategies, Force D's model differed from the former in several respects. Virtually all crime-related activity was directed from one central point, with a small group of middle-ranking officers (the TCG) given control over the work of large sections of the Area staff. Furthermore, although the TCG made the final decisions, the 'agenda' was largely set by the members of one unit, the Intelligence Unit, which was clearly the 'engine' of the whole system and had a major influence over which offenders were pursued and how. Its officers not only selectively processed all intelligence gathered, but (via the TCG) gave officers throughout the Area highly specific intelligence-related tasks. They also controlled all registered informants and set up all the packages upon which operations would be based. Indeed, it is fair to say that the success of the whole system depended above all on the qualities of the dozen or so officers in this unit.

It may be that the location of such a high degree of control in one small unit is feasible only in relatively small areas like that in Force D. In a large city force, particularly one which, like Force C, directs a major part of its crime-fighting resources from the headquarters of extensive divisions, it is more difficult for centrally-based FIOs and LIOs to 'keep tabs on' the much higher volume of intelligence reports and active offenders which inevitably come to notice, let alone to devise regular tasks for large numbers of officers. The prioritisation of targets (as in the 'top forty' list) would also be more problematic, and it would probably be impracticable to concentrate responsibility for all informants under one Controller with a small number of specialist handlers.

It has also to be recognised that the 'political' problems of instituting radical reforms are likely to be less severe in a small area. Provided that there is true commitment on the part of one or two key senior officers, it is relatively easy to 'impose' a completely new system. It has already been seen how, in Force C, a number of subdivisional officers in senior positions who opposed the reorganisation were able to undermine its effectiveness to some degree. Any resistance to the scheme would have been less disruptive in the Area in Force D, where there were fewer officers with the power to exercise it.

Force D also had the major benefit of a Chief Constable with a strong personal interest in proactive policing and a genuine belief in the proposed reforms. He therefore not only made the necessary resources available, but gave the headquarters staff who set up the scheme full powers to implement it. (In fact, a senior officer from headquarters was seconded to the Area for about three months to oversee the reorganisation.) Once the local Area Commander was 'onside', the changes progressed smoothly and those officers with doubts simply had to accept them. The importance of this commitment at high level cannot be overestimated: as has already been illustrated in Force A, in the absence of a clear lead from the top,

efforts to achieve even the very modest reform of setting up a part-time surveillance squad foundered for months on ‘in-fighting’ between senior officers with conflicting interests.

Nevertheless, some of the general principles behind the Force D model have in our view much to commend them, and could inform alternative models adapted to local circumstances. One of these is the aim of involving virtually all officers in the Area, whatever their primary responsibilities, in proactive initiatives. In Force D, this was embodied, *inter alia*, in the ‘primary and secondary tasks’ system, in the encouragement to evidence teams to identify potential informants among arrested suspects, and in the close working relationship between the Crime Manager and the Intelligence Coordinator. All of these emphasised the point that reactive and proactive forms of crime investigation are not totally separate activities, but can be linked together effectively.

Another important general feature of the Force D approach, not mentioned previously, was that the proactive model should not be restricted to operations against individual offenders, but should embrace the broader aims of crime prevention and reduction. To this end, a ‘Crime Reduction Officer’ was attached to the Intelligence Unit, with a brief, aided by the crime analyst, to identify current or likely future crime problems in the area and to devise preventive or ‘disruptive’ strategies to tackle them. The job description specifically included the aim of working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies in the town, such as the local Council and Neighbourhood Watch, feeding them with as much information as possible about patterns of offending and coordinating police actions with other initiatives launched by such groups. The notion of partnership was also extended into regular exchanges of information and occasional joint operations with other regulatory agencies, such as the DSS and Housing Benefits fraud units, Customs and Excise and the Immigration Service.

As in the other research areas which had introduced major reforms, the changes had not been painless and some quite serious practical problems were identified. The most significant seemed to be the effects upon those working at the end point of the process, the evidence teams. Every member of these teams spoken to felt overburdened by the number of cases he or she had to deal with, and there was a distinct morale problem evident. The early months of the initiative had clearly been successful in terms of numbers of arrests, and the extent of work this created for the evidence teams had been grossly underestimated. Indeed, the problem was so severe that a large proportion of the ‘core’ CID officers had been transferred temporarily into the evidence teams in order to meet deadlines for the preparation of files of evidence. Not only were backlogs of work piling up, but many of the officers working on the files felt resentful at being given what they saw as the most unattractive jobs,

spending most of their time at their desks while those in the Intelligence Unit were engaged in far more attractive forms of police work, with ample manpower and resources at their disposal. There was also a feeling that they were being excluded from knowledge about ‘what was going on’, with frequent accusations of excessive secrecy on the part of those working ‘upstairs’.

The problem of overwork can, of course, be remedied in time with the provision of extra staff to the evidence teams – though there is a general lesson here for other forces, that every aspect of the system should be thought through in advance to avoid predictable ‘bottlenecks’. The problems of low morale and a sense of exclusion are less easily remedied, as there is no doubt that most CID officers, in particular, find casefile preparation an unattractive job and are unhappy to spend more than a few months in this kind of specialist role. Some suggested that postings should be circulated on a regular basis, but it was pointed out by managers that jobs such as that of FIO require special qualities and would not be carried out effectively by many CID officers. This is certainly a problem which needs to be thought about carefully in systems which contain a great deal of specialisation, as personal discontentment can lead to sloppy work and, however good the packages and operations preceding arrest, errors or failures in the presentation of evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service and courts can lose cases and negate everything that has gone before.

A related but more general problem is that, however good the morale of officers, a highly interdependent system such as that in operation in Force D is only as good as its weakest link. For example, some members of the Intelligence Unit expressed concerns about the lack of interviewing experience of certain members of the evidence teams, opining that this could lead to cases being lost or to failures to produce TICs (secondary detections), extract intelligence or recruit potential informants. Similar concerns could apply to any stage of the cycle – be it the provision of intelligence by patrol officers, its grading and analysis by LIOs, the handling of informants by FIOs, or the surveillance carried out by tactical teams – where officers are not performing to the highest standard: one serious mistake and the whole operation falls apart. This underlines the need for constant monitoring of performance throughout the whole system, for comprehensive training in all the specialisms, and for willingness to recognise and quickly ameliorate practical problems experienced by officers at any point in the process: in other words, for exceptionally skilful and sensitive management.

To sum up, despite the practical problems we have outlined, the two carefully designed and coherent systems described in this section, unlike the isolated initiatives described earlier, offer the possibility of a highly significant shift in the direction of genuinely proactive approaches to crime control. In the next section, we

shall consider ways of assessing their effectiveness, and that of individual proactive methods of investigation.

5. Effectiveness and value for money

In this section we offer no more than a few comments about an issue which is likely to become more salient as the shift towards proactivity continues: evaluation of the effectiveness, as well as the 'value for money', of the various investigative methods involved. The study was not designed to look at this issue in depth, but it came up quite frequently in interviews and discussions with police officers, some of whose views are summarised below. A few small sets of data were collected from files which, although insufficient in themselves to make any judgements about effectiveness, provide a useful starting point for debate on this question.

Most of the officers interviewed agreed that the traditional measure of police effectiveness in the area of criminal investigation, the clear up rate, is not a suitable means of evaluating the success of proactive styles of investigation. This is because proactive approaches do not start from a given set of past offences, but set out to intercept possible future offending behaviour by known criminals. Indeed, proactivity often entails deliberately minimal investigation of substantial numbers of reported crimes, in order to allow officers to focus upon relatively small numbers of serious and prolific offenders. It is therefore likely that a significant shift to proactivity will be associated, if anything, with a fall in clear up rates (and particularly in primary detections).

The most suitable broad indicator of success or failure, most interviewees opined, was **movements in the level of reported crime in the area being policed**, especially in the level of reported cases of any specific type of crime targeted over previous months. This was based on a belief in the incapacitative effect of proactive work: that if, for example, the most prolific local house burglars are 'taken out of circulation', the number of houses burgled in the area will decrease.

The recorded crime rate, of course, has problems as an indicator of police effectiveness, not least that it may be subject to variation for social reasons which have little to do with policing methods (see, for example, Maguire et al 1992). It can also be significantly affected by changes in both (public) reporting and (police) recording behaviour, which in turn may reflect changes in perception of the importance of reporting and recording minor crimes. Such changes, indeed, may be caused by the shift to proactivity itself: if people know that minor crimes are unlikely to be thoroughly investigated, they may be less inclined to report them; officers on crime desks, too, may be less inclined to record them. Nevertheless, evidence of sustained falls in crime rates, particularly if supported by local crime surveys, seems to us the best general indicator of the effectiveness of proactive policing over the long term.

Possible alternative measures include **levels of arrests, charges or convictions**, but as several officers pointed out, to put too much emphasis upon quantity in this area could encourage intelligence units and others to 'go for the easiest targets', rather

than the most serious and prolific offenders they should be tackling. It was frequently noted, for example, that static surveillance can produce large numbers of arrests of minor drug offenders on grounds of 'possession', but whether the pursuance of such a policy is likely to have any significant effect on 'the drug problem' is highly questionable. There is already a tendency, it was said many times, for proactive teams to become increasingly involved in drugs-related operations, perhaps to the detriment of those against other forms of crime; to attach too much significance to numbers of arrests could accelerate this trend.

More sophisticated forms of arrest-related indicators can be produced by the inclusion of some measure of **the 'quality' of those arrested**. For example, one force evaluated the work of its surveillance teams by means of a series of scales intended to reflect the seriousness of the crimes and sophistication of the offenders involved. Before a target operation was taken on by a team, its level was rated by the tasking officer (usually the head of the intelligence bureau) using a three-point scale for each of three factors, 'quality of target', 'quality of offence' and 'quality of information'. The ratings were then summed to give an overall score for the quality of the package. On the conclusion of the operation, the surveillance team leader rated (a) the 'degree to which the task has been achieved' (1-5) and (b) the 'difficulty of the subject' (1-3). The quality and outcome of the operation could then be presented in a simple numeric form, ranging from '3-1-1' (indicating the best possible situation, a quality package translated into a successful operation) to '9-5-3' (a poor package with no result). These scores could also be related to the total cost of each operation, giving an indication of the extent to which 'value for money', as well as a successful outcome, had been achieved. While not regarded as 'gospel' by force managers – especially as the cases were rated by officers who could have had a vested interest in demonstrating success – the indicator was seen as useful in judging whether the target package/surveillance operation system was operating broadly as planned.

Another force had devised a system for **evaluating surveillance operations** which was based on giving nominal values to various outcomes (particularly criminal charges, demonstrable intelligence gains and recovered property) and offsetting these on a 'balance sheet' against the financial costs of the operation. 'Bids' from police units for use of the surveillance team had to include a 'budget', estimating both the resources expected to be used (mainly officers' time) and the expected 'output'. The latter was referred to as the expected 'crime value' of the operation. For example, an armed robbery charge was given a base value of £7,763 and a major burglary charge one of £4,517, calculated from the average cost of producing such charges through conventional methods of investigation (as indicated by activity analysis in a previous research exercise). The expected crime value for the operation in hand was then adjusted by a weighting system, taking into account factors such as

the 'pedigree of the target' (based on previous convictions) and the quality of the intelligence available, and adding in nominal values for expected intelligence gains or property recovery.

On the basis of the resulting budget, the head of the surveillance team decided whether or not the task was 'worth' taking on. At the conclusion of each operation undertaken, a balance sheet was prepared, showing debits (actual costs of the operation) and credits (the crime value of the result actually achieved). Thus, for example, a two-day operation costing £4,000 would be deemed 'in profit' if it resulted in burglary charges and property recovery rated at a credit of £5,000. Over time, the surveillance team was expected to remain 'in the black', 'profitable' operations making up for those showing 'losses'.

In fact, the team had performed creditably according to these criteria, always being well 'in credit'. In order to give a more concrete picture of its achievements, we analysed the 'real' outcomes of 326 operations it had taken on over the previous three years. 114 (35 per cent) of these had led to criminal charges and a further 81 to demonstrable intelligence gains. A total of 204 people had been charged and £240,000 worth of property recovered. These results had cost something in the region of £1 million in manpower and equipment.

Of course, to judge the effectiveness of a surveillance team purely in terms of the 'profit and loss' system described, begs some important questions about the relative values of arrests of different kinds of offender for different kinds of offence. Not least, the output values are based primarily upon the costs of police time, rather than on any clear concept of the social value of arresting one type of offender as against another. If the police allowed operational decisions to be determined solely by cost factors, the result might be that some particularly resourceful – and possibly dangerous – offenders escaped attention purely because it was deemed 'unprofitable' to pursue them. Nevertheless, provided that they are used in conjunction with professional judgement (which includes judgements about social priorities), both systems described above seem useful tools for analysing the use made of surveillance teams – one of the most expensive investigative resources – and in particular to compare their 'productivity' (costs and outputs) with that of more conventional methods of investigation.

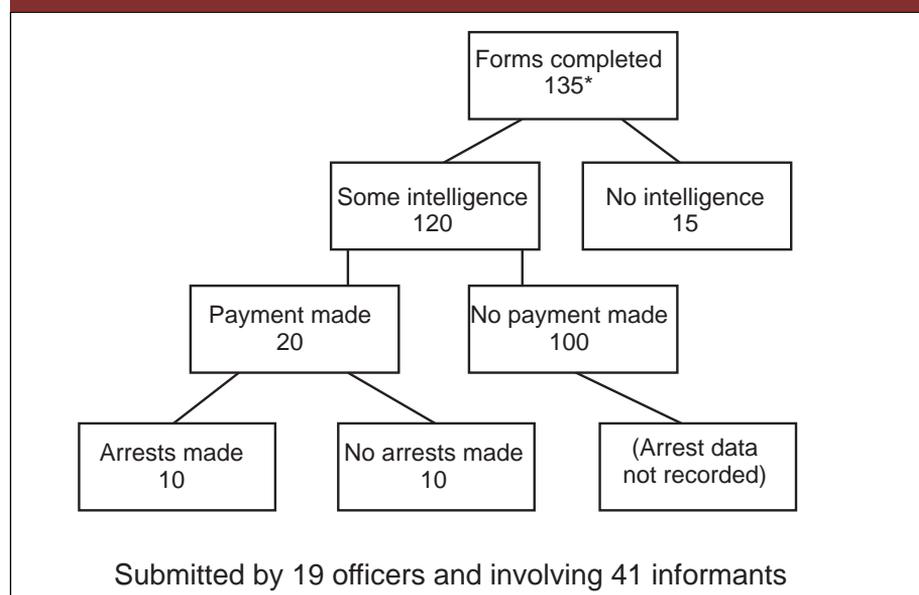
Where **the use of informants** is concerned, none of the forces visited had designed regular systems for evaluating its effectiveness, although some had conducted analyses of the current status of registered informants and some kept track of the numbers of arrests made as a result of payments to informants, together with their average cost. Analyses of records tended to echo the Audit Commission's (1993) findings that many of those listed on registers were rarely used. For example, in one force it was found that of 801 registered informants, only 251 had been contacted

within the last twelve months and only 130 of these were currently 'active'. Moreover, the latter were being 'run' by a relatively small number of officers.

A major problem in evaluating the results produced by information from informants is that outcomes tend to be recorded only when payments have been made. Thus neither the numbers of arrests deriving from informants who do not wish to be paid, nor the numbers of fruitless police actions taken on the basis of false information, are easy to discover. Nevertheless, in order to produce at least a crude picture of the outcomes of meetings, an informant controller in one subdivision was asked to provide a brief summary of the content of each contact form he had received since taking over the job, outlining the nature of the information produced by each informant and, where known, the outcome of any police actions which followed.

Altogether, 135 forms had been submitted over a period of about eighteen months. These had come from meetings with 41 informants by nineteen different officers (nine detectives and ten uniform officers), though as many as 65 of them had been submitted by one exceptionally diligent drugs squad officer who had five very active informants. Moreover, well over half of the 41 informants were primarily providers of drug-related information, although several of these also gave other kinds of information on occasion.

Figure 3: Analysis of outcomes from informant contact forms



The contact forms referred to a variety of kinds of meeting, including some primarily intended to introduce the informant to another handler. However, in 120 of the 135 meetings, some criminal intelligence had been gleaned and recorded (see Figure 3). Much of this appears to have been of a fairly general nature, such as the names of people currently thought to be involved in crime. Highly specific information on which immediate action might be taken, such as the location of stolen property or drugs, or the site of planned crimes, was given in only a dozen or so cases. Payments had been made to informants on 20 occasions, the largest being £250 and the smallest £20. Half of these payments had followed arrests, the rest being rewards for the recovery of stolen property or simply ‘sweeteners’ for future cooperation. It is likely that other meetings contributed eventually to other arrests, although this cannot be ascertained from the records. What can be said is that a modest outlay of about £1,000 over eighteen months led directly to at least ten court cases (some involving several defendants), as well as the seizure of considerable quantities of drugs and the recovery of stolen property worth many thousands of pounds

The above analysis, of course, gives only a very crude indication of the contribution of registered informants to arrests in this particular subdivision. However, if better records were kept of the outcomes of contacts with informants, this could be measured reasonably accurately. It would also make it possible to look more closely at which particular informants had ‘performed’ well (in terms of the reliability and specificity of their information) and to take steps to use them again where possible.

Finally, **the effectiveness of intelligence systems** is particularly difficult to measure, as in most cases there is no record kept of the contribution made by computer databases to arrests or convictions. The analysis provided in Section 2 suggests that this is minimal in areas with a traditional reactive approach to investigation, but one would expect a much higher contribution in ‘intelligence driven’ systems such as those operated in Forces C and D.

Some indirect indicators of the effectiveness of intelligence systems might be derived from analysis of the contents of the files. For example, in one force it was found that, in round figures, 7,400 entries had originated from DCs and 21,000 from PCs, while in another force the equivalent figures were 4,000 and 26,000. Again, there were considerable differences in the numbers of logs being submitted by different divisions. Such differences may alert managers to parts of the force which are not ‘pulling their weight’ in terms of contributions to the system. It is also possible on some systems to compare the numbers of entries relating to different categories of information (eg sightings, reports from informants, notifications of arrest or conviction) which gives a broad idea of the extent to which the system is being fed with ‘intelligence’ as opposed to factual ‘information’.

To sum up, evaluation of the effectiveness of proactive forms of criminal investigation is as yet in its infancy, and many forces appear to have introduced quite significant organisational reforms, sometimes with substantial financial investment, without making any serious provision for gathering systematic information about how they are operating, let alone providing rigorous evaluations of their effectiveness or 'value for money'. The project was not aimed at producing evaluative data of this kind, but a number of areas have been identified in which better information could be collected.

6. Conclusions

The main ‘message’ to be derived from this study is that, while many forces are convinced of the need for a shift to proactivity in criminal investigations, it is only in those forces which have taken the calculated risk of investing in major organisational reforms to support this kind of work that it is beginning to make a substantial contribution to the overall picture of crime control. Neither ‘good intentions’ and ‘exhortations’, nor isolated reforms to enhance the use of individual forms of proactive work, are likely to be sufficient. Without holistic, structured systems in which officers are given clearly defined and protected roles, initiatives are frustrated by constant abstractions to cope with reactive demand, and by blockages and hiatuses in what should be a steady flow of information and actions.

In addition to this central point, a number of practice-related conclusions may be drawn:

- **Major organisational reforms can be successfully implemented only if there is wholehearted commitment to them from the most senior officers in the force.** The contrast between Force D, where the Chief Constable had a strong personal interest in the new system and delegated full powers to headquarters staff to implement it, and Force A, where there was less commitment from the top and senior managers were allowed to engage in counter-productive ‘political’ battles over the introduction of a surveillance team, provides a good illustration of the point.
- **Given the interdependence of different specialist roles within an integrated proactive system, it is clearly vital that every officer understands its overall purposes and expected benefits and their own contribution to it.** For example, if it is decided, as in Force D, to focus upon a restricted set of ‘targets’, it should be made crystal clear to officers at all levels that they should seek intelligence on these suspects, rather than feed in ‘irrelevant’ information on large numbers of others. Ideally, ‘re-education’ programmes would be combined with specialist training to ensure that all individuals are properly equipped to play their part.
- **The possible negative influence of broader ‘cultural’ factors should not be underestimated.** For example, considerable evidence was found of resistance to the registration of informants, to the idea of ‘sharing’ them with other officers and, in some cases, to exhortations to make more use of them. Such problems can only be overcome if officers are convinced that they have something to gain from changing ingrained attitudes and working practices. This, again, requires sensitive and supportive management and efforts to reward officers – if only by official praise – for their own early contribution to operations which are eventually completed by others.

- **Once the system is in operation, it needs to be continually monitored and reviewed.** This is necessary to identify areas in which it is failing, or in which undue pressure is being put upon officers, for example through undermanning or shortage of resources. Similarly, a watch should be kept for failures in communication and measures should be adopted to keep all officers in touch with what is happening. For example, some forces insisted that regular policy meetings and intelligence briefings should include representatives of as many relevant units as possible.
- **The key objectives and strategies of the system should also be reviewed at intervals, informed wherever possible by evaluations of outcomes.** None of the forces visited had yet developed adequate systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of proactive work.
- **Access to resources, such as surveillance teams, which are supposed to be ‘owned’ by the whole force should be seen to be equitable.** Such requests should be considered objectively in accordance with openly known guidelines, rather than being granted on a personal basis through some form of ‘old boy network’.

Finally, although not a focus of this study, it is considered vital for all forces to confront and discuss more openly some of the ethical issues involved in proactive policing, particularly where the use of informants is concerned. Questions about the borderline between ‘participating informants’ and ‘*agents provocateurs*’, about limits to the pressures which can be put upon people in various situations to become informants, and about the recording and disclosure of information, need to be fully addressed, not least to establish at local level clear working practices (preferably in line with those being promoted by ACPO) which officers can follow with confidence, feeling that both they and their informants are well protected.

In similar vein, serious attention also needs to be paid to ways of involving both the public and other local organisations in debates about how scarce resources are to be used, and to ways of meeting their concerns. Among the dangers of proactive strategies are a reduction in services to victims and inattention to apparently ‘minor’ crime problems, which may cause local communities as much concern as others accorded more importance by the police.

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