The story of policy change in the field of crime prevention is considerably more complex than in either of the other two cases considered in this study. That is because crime prevention is potentially a large and varied activity which, although it is one of the primary functions of the police, also involves a wide range of other agencies. Police activity in crime prevention must be seen in the context of crime prevention as a whole. As the level of crime prevention activity increases, and as the different agencies involved proliferate, there is an increasing need to decide what should be the role of the police in crime prevention. Through all the policy developments of the 1980s, that question remained unresolved.

In 1829, the founders of the Metropolitan Police named preventing crime as one of the three basic functions of the new organisation, along with maintaining public tranquillity and upholding the law. They believed that the new police could achieve the objective of preventing crime by patrolling in uniform and on foot. That may have been a reasonable assumption at a time when working class people lived much of their lives on the streets of the rapidly expanding cities, and when the focus of public concern was the disorder, danger, and crime on those streets. Probably foot patrol always had a limited effect as a method of crime prevention, but in any case many of the developments of the twentieth century have made it still less effective: most notably, the telephone, the motor car, and the retreat to private and protected places, such as comfortable and well-equipped houses and flats, shopping precincts, workplaces, and sports and leisure centres. The period since the Second World War during which these developments have gathered pace has also seen an unprecedented rise in crime. Clarke and Hough (1984) convincingly argued that police patrols could not conceivably be an effective method of preventing or detecting most of this crime; and they were able to cite a considerable body of American research to show that increasing the number of police patrols or their speed of response had little or no effect on the crime rate.

The perception that police patrols were bound to be an ineffective way of dealing with the alarming rise in crime led to the growth of other
approaches to crime prevention in the 1980s. The problem for the police service was to find a new role for itself in these changing circumstances, and it seems that the solution has not yet been found.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRIME PREVENTION WITHIN THE POLICE SERVICE
Mollie Weatheritt in her (1986) summary of the development of crime prevention work within the police has argued that two histories can be written. The first is a police-oriented conventional history which consists of little more than rhetorical assertions of the importance and effectiveness of crime prevention initiatives. The critical history by contrast, highlights the marginal position of the specialism, the rudimentary arrangements for the identification and dissemination of good practice in this area, and the virtual absence up to that point of any thoroughgoing analysis of the work of crime prevention officers.

It was made clear in the first instruction book of the Metropolitan Police that ‘every effort’ was to be directed towards the prevention of crime (Emsley, 1983). The manual went on:

The security of person and property, the preservation of the public tranquility, and all other objects of a police establishment will thus be better effected than by the detection and punishment of the offender after he has succeeded in committing the crime. This should constantly be kept in mind by every member of the police force, as the guide for his own conduct. Officers and police constables should endeavour to distinguish themselves by such vigilance and activity as may render it impossible for any one to commit a crime within that portion of the town under their charge.

At the heart of the new force was the uniformed constable – the bobby on the beat – who not only formed the bedrock of the police in the nineteenth century, but who remains central, if only on an ideological level, to modern philosophies of policing (Reiner, 1992:98). The visible presence of the police on the street was seen as the key to crime prevention. More recent evaluations have, however, found that although increased patrols may reduce the fear of crime, crime levels themselves are unaffected (Police Foundation, 1981; Clarke and Hough, 1984). At the same time, a number of developments have destroyed the primacy of foot patrol, and established crime prevention within the police service as a marginal specialism.

Unit beat policing
In August 1967 the Home Office issued a circular that advocated a new system of policing – known as ‘unit beat policing’ (UBP) – that reduced the number of officers on foot patrol, and put them into cars. This would
have the advantage of allowing much wider geographical areas to be covered on a 24 hour basis and, together with personal radios, would enable officers to respond much more quickly to calls from the public. One of the unintended consequences of this reorganisation, it has been argued (Holdaway, 1984; Reiner, 1992), was to highlight the ‘crime fighting’ aspects of police work, and to devalue the ‘service role’ (Punch, 1979). Although UBP is now widely condemned for its supposed effects on police-public relations (Manwaring-White, 1983), it was to remedy just such difficulties (among other things) that the new system was introduced (Weatheritt, 1986).

According to its proponents, UBP would enable a better service to be offered to the public in all the major areas of police work: in the maintenance of public order, in the detection of crime, and in the prevention of crime. Reiner (1992) has suggested that partly as a consequence of UBP, patrol work became transformed into a ‘fire brigade’ service, and that prevention in this system came to mean ‘pre-emption’. In particular, the new emphasis on the collection and collation of low-level information changed the character of surveillance undertaken by the police. UBP, however, quickly fell into disrepute, there being little evidence that the new system was having the hoped-for impact on police-public relations (indeed, successive studies have shown that strong public support for increased foot patrols remains (Smith & Gray, 1983; Kinsey, 1984; Hibberd, 1985). Almost at the same time as the move to UBP, specialist crime prevention departments developed within the police, and the Home Office set up its Standing Committee on Crime Prevention.

**Specialist crime prevention departments**

Specialist crime prevention departments began to grow from a very small number after the publication of the report of the Cornish Committee on the Prevention and Detection of Crime (Home Office, 1965). This recommended that there should be specialist police officers who would be experts in crime prevention technology; that an officer of at least the rank of inspector take the role of force crime prevention officer; and that the police should develop more professional publicity material on crime prevention.

Anticipating a potential problem with this approach, the committee urged that the creation of the specialism should not be allowed to diminish the responsibility for crime prevention accepted by police officers in general. In what has by now become a standard crime prevention argument, it emphasised the importance of building relationships with organisations
outside the police; to this end, it recommended the setting up of ‘crime prevention panels’.

**Crime prevention panels**
Such panels have no formal status and have generally been chaired by the police themselves (Home Office, 1971). Their purpose is to consider crime prevention proposals and to help in the process of publicising campaigns and initiatives aimed at improving security measures (usually physical ones). Because there was no requirement to set them up, and because they lacked formal status, crime prevention panels developed unevenly; following the lead taken by the nascent crime prevention departments within police forces (Home Office, 1971), they tended to focus fairly narrowly on physical security (Gladstone, 1980).

**Crime prevention officers**
In the main, crime prevention is a small-scale police specialism. Crime prevention officers (CPOs) usually represent less than 1 per cent of a force’s establishment (Harvey et al, 1989) and rarely occupy ranks higher than chief inspector. Crime prevention officers are usually located within departments with ‘community’ in their title (community liaison, community involvement and so on) or within CID. Crime prevention work remains fairly marginal. It rarely permeates ‘the force much beyond the designated officers, whatever the line of responsibility upwards’ (Harvey et al., 1989:88).

The scope of crime prevention work within police forces, like that of crime prevention panels, is relatively narrow. An extensive job description for CPOs was provided by an ACPO working party in 1979, listing 68 tasks. This included a wide variety of jobs ranging from disseminating advice about physical security both inside and outside the police service, giving crime prevention advice to designers and planners, inputs into probationer training, collection and analysis of information, supporting the activities of CPPs, and many others.

Weatheritt (1986) believed that the tasks actually undertaken by CPOs have, in practice, been much more limited than implied by this ambitious job description, and recent research tends to support that view. Harvey et al. (1989) found that although a broad range of officers within community liaison departments or their equivalents felt they were engaged in crime prevention work, there was a tendency for force CPOs to make a clear distinction between crime prevention work and ‘community’ work. Particular emphasis, for example, was placed on the need for technical or
hardware expertise, and this ‘bias’ was reinforced by the training CPOs received at the Stafford Crime Prevention Centre.

In a similar vein, research in London (Johnston et al., 1993), based on observation and worksheets, concluded that the majority of work undertaken by CPOs fell into the following ten categories: residential surveys, commercial/industrial surveys, alarm problems, firearms, displays, talks, designing out crime, initiatives, crime panels, and training. Yet the vast majority of CPOs’ time was devoted to only two of these activities: surveys, and meetings about firearms and alarms. The bulk of the work was concerned with target hardening, surveillance, entry/exit screening, and access control – all standard techniques of ‘situational prevention’ (Clarke, 1992).

Thus, the philosophy underpinning the CPO’s actual role is significantly narrower than that implied by the ACPO description. As Weatheritt put it:

‘Community-based’ approaches to crime prevention have not, on the whole, formed a major part of the tradition of specialist crime prevention. Little attention has been given to how best to build up and maintain the kind of contacts and channels of liaison and communication that ‘community’ approaches imply. Whatever the expressed importance of these wider aspects of their role, crime prevention officers have in practice become... primarily physical security experts. [1986:51]

Johnston et al. (1993:5) have argued, furthermore, that because much of the work is of a fairly narrow technical kind most police ‘crime prevention activity (is) largely reactive, responding to the demands of the public to do surveys...or responding to the need of the service in general to try to reduce the time spent of false alarm calls’. The work of crime prevention design advisers was more proactive, but did not arise from local crime problems. They concluded that although the work could be justified as a direct response to public demand, the delivery of the service ‘was not coordinated with the rest of the police service, nor was it necessarily planned to focus on the Division’s main priorities for crime prevention’.

Where more socially-based or ‘community’ initiatives were undertaken, their objectives were generally unclear. Thus, Harvey et al. (1989:90) suggested:

In the plethora of activities initiated and encouraged – soccer, netball, youth clubs, ‘Cops, Kids and Carols’ concerts, shooting [sic], and schools liaison – the common good seems to be the encouragement of friendly relationships between police and juveniles. Work described as crime prevention sometimes appears, in fact, to be principally public relations with no clearly articulated connection between a good press and crime preventive effects.
This was a theme running through many of the initiatives carried out in the study forces.

Community policing
As crime continued to rise, despite the increase in resources devoted to policing in the early 1980s, the police service increasingly emphasised that it could not be expected to carry responsibility for the prevention of crime unaided. Increasing emphasis came to placed upon the ‘community’ both in relation to policing generally and, more specifically, in relation to crime prevention (Willmott, 1987). A strong early impetus to these developments had been given by a Home Office circular (211/1978), which became known as the Ditchley circular. This recommended improved coordination between criminal justice agencies, together with community-based initiatives, in place of what was seen as a piecemeal approach to dealing with juveniles.

‘Community policing’ is most closely associated with John Alderson, at one time Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, who emphasised the importance of close relationships between police and public and, consequently, the broad service role of his constabulary (Alderson, 1979). The emphasis upon community and inter-agency cooperation broadened the scope of crime prevention from its previous preoccupation with technology, target hardening, and opportunity reduction, to the social conditions that provide the context of behaviour defined as criminal, and the organisations that are involved in regulating it. Such an approach has been widely referred to as ‘social crime prevention’ (Clarke, 1981) to distinguish it from ‘situational crime prevention’ (Clarke and Mayhew, 1980; Clarke, 1992); although this distinction is not always helpful (Bottoms, 1990), it nevertheless retains considerable currency within criminology. The changing emphasis within crime prevention was also reflected, for example, in the curriculum at the Home Office Training Centre at Stafford which, according to Laycock and Heal (1989:320), moved away from ‘the previous locks and bars emphasis towards community involvement, crime pattern analysis and inter-agency work’.

Although community-focused policing initiatives were many and varied during the 1980s, little rigorous evidence is available, and there is little to suggest that much success has been achieved. Thus, research on community constables (Brown and Iles, 1985), directed patrolling (Burrows and Lewis, 1988), focused patrolling (Chatterton and Rogers, 1989), neighbourhood policing (Irving et al., 1989) and neighbourhood watch (Husain, 1988; Bennett, 1990; McConville and Shepherd, 1992) has illustrated the difficulties in planning, implementing and evaluating community-focused...
crime prevention measures. It has been argued that most of the problems have stemmed from programme failure (Hope, 1985) rather than fundamental flaws in the underlying philosophy.

Wider developments and the police role

Although crime prevention within the police service had initially been treated as a peripheral specialism of low status and interest when placed alongside crime fighting (Graef, 1989), it became increasingly emphasised during the 1980s and was given considerable publicity to the point that Reiner (1992:99) even felt able to assert that crime prevention departments had become ‘the belles of the ball’. Although this is a considerable overstatement of the position within the police service, there had indeed been a number of significant developments in crime prevention more widely. Bottoms (1990) highlighted the setting up of the Crime Prevention Unit in the Home Office in 1983, the issuing of the 1984 interdepartmental circular on crime prevention (Home Office, 1984; followed by Scottish Office, 1984), the two seminars on crime prevention held at 10 Downing Street in 1986 – one chaired by the Prime Minister the other by the Home Secretary – the ‘Five Towns Initiative’ launched in 1986, followed by the Safer Cities Programme in 1988, and the launch of the charity Crime Concern. To this list can be added the reconstituting of the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, the second Home Office circular which updated 8/84, and the formation of the ACPO sub-committee on crime prevention. Bottoms (1990:5) concluded that:

By any standards, this is a formidable list of developments. The 1980s, we can safely assert, has put crime prevention firmly on the map: a conclusion which is true not only in Britain, but also, at a minimum, in France, in the Netherlands and in the Council of Europe.

However, the intended role of the police in the development of crime prevention remains obscure. In some contexts, central government argues that the prevention of crime should remain a central part of the policing function, but it has also supported other agencies that are active in the field, such as NACRO, has directly initiated its own programmes, such as Safer Cities, has created its own voluntary organisation in the field (Crime Concern), and has tried to ensure that local authorities continue to be involved (as evidenced by the two crime prevention circulars).

Again, the police themselves are quick to support the idea that this area of their work remains fundamental, yet the reality is different. CPOs and the departments within which they work remain marginal within most police forces, and crime prevention work remains a narrowly defined specialism.
The distinction between situational and social crime prevention is relevant to an analysis of the role of the police in this field. The idea of situational crime prevention has its origins partly in what was then the Home Office Research Unit (now Research and Planning Unit). Ron Clarke, its leading advocate within the Home Office in the early 1980s, has offered the following definition:

Situational crime prevention... refers to a pre-emptive approach that relies, not on improving society or its institutions, but simply on reducing opportunities for crime... Situational prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures that are, (1) directed at highly specific forms of crime (2) that involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as specific and permanent way as possible (3) so as to increase the effort and risks of crime and reduce the rewards as perceived by a wide range of offenders (1992:4).

As Clarke himself has pointed out (1992), situational prevention owes a major theoretical debt both to Oscar Newman’s theory of ‘defensible space’ (Newman, 1972) and to the notion of ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ (Jeffrey, 1971). It was Newman’s view that a link could be demonstrated between high-rise public sector housing and increased crime rates. The design of the buildings was such that residents were discouraged from looking after and protecting them. He went on to specify aspects of design, such as unsupervised access points, that contribute to levels of crime. Opportunities for crime could be reduced by correcting such design faults. Newman’s ideas have been influential in many countries, including the UK (see for example, Coleman, 1985). Situational prevention took from Newman the idea that the opportunities for crime arise from the structure of the environment and extended it to a wide variety of areas other than public housing.

In the passage quoted above, Clarke referred to ‘improving society or its institutions’. In doing so, he was drawing a line between situational prevention and ‘social’ crime prevention measures. Critics of situational prevention tend to view it as a superficial response to what they regard as the more ‘fundamental’ causes of crime such as poverty, poor housing, unemployment and inadequate education. As Weatheritt has put it, ‘On this view, it is not the physical environment which needs to be manipulated, but rather the social conditions and psychological dispositions that create offenders in the first place... What is needed, therefore, is programmes of action which will help change people’s attitudes to offending, encourage respect for law and reduce the wish to commit crimes’ (1986:57).
Situational theory explicitly states that crime arises from an interaction between dispositions, perceived opportunities, and perceived risks (Clarke, 1992) and therefore accepts the importance of dispositions. However, the essence of the theory is that, since crime is caused by a multitude of factors, prevention must concentrate on those factors that are easiest to manipulate, namely the concrete aspects of specific situations that influence crime opportunities. Clarke contrasted this modest and piecemeal project with the grander one of ‘improving society and its institutions’, which is sometimes called ‘social crime prevention’. This is an altogether vaguer concept, which does not seem to lead to specific action programmes. It might be used to refer to any programme designed to deal with basic social problems, such as poverty, unemployment, sub-standard education, or family discord, that are thought to be among the causes of crime, but it is better to avoid that usage, because such programmes will never have crime prevention as their only or even their main objective.

More plausibly, the idea of social crime prevention can be linked with a ‘social control’ theory of crime. From that perspective, the starting point is the need to explain why most of the time most people do not commit crimes, not why some of the time some people do. Deviant behaviour is inhibited by informal social controls, and by the social bonds tied by reciprocal relationships. The apparatus of criminal justice only comes into play when these normal controls have broken down. Social crime prevention is a set of programmes for maintaining and reinforcing informal social controls and social bonds. Although this more limited interpretation of social crime prevention is perfectly coherent, specific and concrete programmes that act in the intended way are hard to find.

If social crime prevention is interpreted as reinforcing social controls and social bonds, then it means enabling social units to regulate themselves more effectively. That leads directly to the notion of ‘community-based crime prevention’ which has also been promoted in recent years (see Hope and Shaw, 1988). Community-based crime prevention programmes have tried to involve a range of agencies and to use both situational and social measures to promote crime prevention, fear reduction and community safety. This kind of philosophy was the starting point for the Safer Cities programme that the Home Office launched in the late 1980s.

Indeed, a number of attempts have been made by central government to stimulate this type of activity, notably the 1984 circular which emphasised the need for a partnership approach between the police and local government to ensure a comprehensive crime prevention strategy for a ‘safer Britain’. In encouraging community-based crime prevention initiatives, the Government stressed the importance of broadening
responsibility to the point where ‘preventing crime is a task for the whole community’. What was known as ‘the multi-agency approach’ became the official doctrine underlying a wide range of new projects. These generally aimed to encompass both situational and social crime prevention measures.

Police crime prevention work, however, continues in the main to be dominated by situational measures. Nevertheless, the language of the community-based approach has permeated police discourse about crime prevention, which tends to stress the importance of community involvement and inter-agency cooperation. This is illustrated by the following extract from the submission by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to the Sheehy Inquiry (MPS, 1992):

The prevention of crime is one of the highest priorities of the MPS. For many years the emphasis has been on crime in its micro perspective, which has caused officers to concentrate on detection of offenders. This produces a more immediate measure of success. However, the approach to reduction, prevention and investigation has to be interactive.

The Partnership Approach recognises that in order effectively to reduce crime and reverse crime trends it is necessary to view crime in its macro environment. This is a long term option attacking the socio-economic factors that perpetuate crime and targeting multi-agency resources at the heart of the problem.

References in this statement to ‘the partnership approach’, the ‘macro environment’, ‘the socio-economic factors that perpetuate crime’ and ‘multi-agency resources’ all revolve around the idea that the police are but one agency among many in the ‘fight against crime’. This avowed approach to crime prevention evolved from the realisation first that the police working in isolation had only a limited impact on levels of crime (Burrows and Tarling, 1985), and that situational measures were themselves only of limited utility if not supplemented by other approaches to crime reduction (Matthews, 1990). However, much of the discussion about inter-agency cooperation to prevent crime has been conducted in a largely uncritical manner as in, for example, the much quoted circular 8/84 which claimed that ‘crime prevention schemes are more successful where the police and local agencies work together in a coordinated way towards particular aims’ (emphasis added). Although it is attractive to believe that this is the case, there are few rigorously evaluated examples to prove it.

Neighbourhood watch (NW), which is the best known and most widely adopted crime prevention programme in Britain, can be regarded as a form of social or community-based crime prevention. NW appeared first in Britain in the early 1980s, and was promoted force-wide by the Metropolitan Police in 1983. Sir Kenneth Newman sold the initiative as
something that would involve community or neighbourhood self-help, with the support of the police. Neighbourhood groups would be formed to carry out informal surveillance, thereby deterring thieves, and to feed information back to the police. Subsequent evaluations have indicated that NW has little or no success in achieving its primary objective of reducing crime (Rosenbaum, 1988; Bennett, 1989), although it is argued that the fault may lie in the failure of both the police and the public to put the idea fully into practice. Nevertheless, considerable police resources have been and continue to be devoted to supporting NW.

CHANGE IN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN FOUR PROVINCIAL POLICE FORCES

Crime prevention and organisational structure
As reported above, recent research (eg Johnston et al., 1993) has suggested that crime prevention remains fairly marginal within police forces. That was true of three of the four study forces. The organisational structures varied somewhat between the four forces, although in most cases the crime prevention department was located within a ‘community affairs’ or similar department. In force A, the structure and staffing of crime prevention came under review during the course of the fieldwork. Before this review, community relations activity was divided into two parts: the headquarters community relations branch, and the staff on the territorial divisions and sub-divisions. The community relations branch was part of the Traffic and Operational Support Department, which in turn was headed by a chief superintendent reporting to an ACC (support services). The HQ community relations branch itself was headed by a superintendent, and comprised his deputy (a chief inspector), a force CPO (an inspector), a research and support sergeant, a design advice sergeant, a civilian alarms administrator and a clerk typist. Each of the four territorial divisions had a community relations establishment of one inspector and one sergeant, together with a sergeant and two constables designated as CPOs. These officers were responsible to the divisional commander. Each sub-division had at least one Schools Liaison Officer (SLO), of whom there were 21 across 14 sub-divisions. The SLOs were responsible to the sub-divisional commander.

In force B crime prevention was a more important function accounting for a larger number of staff than in the other three forces. The main responsibility lay with the Community Crime Prevention Department (CCPD). This large department covered situational crime prevention, schools liaison, administration of the force’s employment and youth training schemes, management of the force expedition centre, the firearms
section, race relations, press and public relations, and contacts with the community such as the committee set up to develop victim reception suites. Senior officers thought it important that the CCPD came under the responsibility of an assistant chief constable (ACC) who was also responsible for CID. Thus, prevention and detection were, according to the head of the CCPD, given equal importance by the police organisation in the fight against crime.

The CCPD had its roots in a department put together in 1982 called ‘Community Services’. This covered physical crime prevention and included schools liaison and the expedition centre, but according to the current force CPO, had not laid a great deal of stress on the social crime prevention side. The department evolved gradually into the current CCPD, and became an exact reflection of a model department laid down in an ACPO report. The department was large, with a total staff of about 150 of whom 85 were police officers. At HQ there were 16 officers, including the head of CCPD (a chief superintendent), and two deputies (superintendents, one a ‘situational’ CPO and the other a ‘social’ CPO). There were four chief inspectors, one responsible for race relations, one for youth and employment training schemes, and the other two having territorial responsibility for three divisions each. On each division there was an inspector and a sergeant with responsibility for crime prevention and a number of SLOs and CPOs, apparently working across sub-divisional boundaries.

Crime prevention in force C came under the HQ department called ‘Force Services’. This department was part of the bigger Management Services Department which reported to one of the two ACCs. Force Services was headed by a chief superintendent and divided into three sections comprising community relations, prosecutions, and force solicitors. Crime prevention came under the community relations section which was headed by a superintendent. Below him there were two chief inspectors, one of whom was the force CPO while the other was in charge of the ‘inter-agency branch’ (which dealt with schools liaison and public relations). The HQ crime prevention section consisted of the chief inspector, a sergeant, a constable and some civilian support. Each of the force’s 10 sub-divisions had a CPO who was based in the sub-divisional coordination unit. This unit was made up of the CPO, a juvenile liaison officer, an accident prevention officer, two collators and a civilian support worker operating the force incident recording system. In force D crime prevention was one of the responsibilities of the community affairs department at headquarters. At the time of the research, this department was headed by a chief superintendent, with a superintendent deputy, two
inspectors (the force CPO and the force community relations officer), one sergeant (Architectural Liaison Officer), a constable (technical services), a civilian NW coordinator, and three civilian clerks. The force had four territorial divisions, and on each the community relations complement was one sergeant and six constables (two juvenile liaison officers, two schools liaison officers and two CPOs). This made a total of 34 police officers and four civilians working in community relations.

**Crime prevention and organisational change**

The thinking behind the organisation of crime prevention and community relations in force A was to devolve ownership and responsibility for preventive policing strategies to the local level. The study certainly found differences of approach in different localities. On one division there was a 12-month crime reduction experiment in which the responsibility for crime prevention was shifted to CID with one CPO on each of the four sub-divisions. Another division had two CPOs who adopted a traditional security-based approach to crime prevention. Another division adopted a broader community relations approach; projects were initiated in which, for example, schoolchildren produced small plays with a crime prevention theme, new property recording schemes were promoted, and this was coupled with an enthusiastic approach to obtaining sponsorship from outside the police service. The main organisational change in crime prevention following a force review in 1986 had been a partial devolution of responsibility to divisional level: at the time of the fieldwork on sub-divisions it was up to the divisional commanders how they organised crime prevention (for example, whether they put it under CID or uniform control). This led to some ambiguity about where the main line of responsibility for crime prevention lay. The role of the HQ department was to oversee the strategy of the force as a whole towards crime prevention, a strategy whose central part was the devolution of responsibility for local issues down to the local area. At the same time HQ was supposed to liaise with the Home Office, keep abreast of national developments and initiatives in other forces, monitor local initiatives within the force and disseminate good practice. Within this framework, different divisions appeared to have significant freedom to develop their own policies, and this was illustrated by the difference in approach on the two sub-divisions visited as part of the research.

There were further changes following an extensive review of crime prevention policy in 1990. The review was initiated in response to a number of factors, including dissatisfaction over the role of community relations and crime prevention within the force, and national developments, in
particular the issue of the inter-departmental circular 44/90 which requested forces (and local authorities) to submit reports detailing current arrangements, or proposed arrangements, for inter-agency structures in crime prevention. The review body recommended that a community crime prevention branch should be created within CID; it would be headed by a superintendent, and would comprise a crime prevention unit, a community affairs unit, and a multi-agency unit. The multi-agency unit was to be headed by two chief inspectors, one for each of the administrative counties covered by the force. The activities of the multi-agency unit would be linked with a force-wide chief officers’ inter-agency group, which would comprise senior representatives of police, education, health, probation, and highways from both administrative counties covered by the force. Deciding to go further than the review had recommended, the force command team created a community crime prevention department headed by a chief superintendent (rather than a branch headed by a superintendent). Most other recommendations were accepted, and the sub-divisional CPOs became responsible to the HQ department.

Home Office guidance was a major influence on both waves of organisational change in force A. The first set of changes emerged from a Force Structure Review carried out in response to Home Office circular 114/83. The issue of circular 44/90 was an important impetus to the more recent review of the structure of crime prevention. However, individuals also had an influence. The force CPO had been considering the development of a new structure before the issue of 44/90. Personalities were also important at the local level. The experiment of putting crime prevention under CID in one division was closely related to the personal priorities of the divisional CID head.

Force B had also experimented with changing the organisational structure of crime prevention. As in some other forces, the overall aim appeared to be devolution of responsibility to sub-divisions and spreading ownership of crime prevention within the police organisation. In 1987, the superintendent in charge of crime prevention formulated a policy which gave some responsibility for crime prevention to the deputy divisional and deputy sub-divisional commanders. This was to try to create a local ownership of problems, and to move away from the notion of crime prevention as a headquarters specialism. There was a force-wide meeting of all these deputy commanders with the superintendent CPO to brief them on their responsibility for crime prevention. At the same time, all uniform shift officers and permanent beat officers (PBOs) on sub-division were given a crime prevention manual to enable them to give basic crime prevention advice (mainly on physical security) to the public. There was
no requirement for the deputy divisional and sub-divisional commanders
to do specific things in relation to their new responsibilities. The aim, it
seems, was simply to raise the profile of ‘crime prevention’ in the territorial
units of the organisation. Headquarters was supposed to retain a
coordinating and disseminating function.

The effect of this organisational change was unclear. The CPO whose
responsibilities included one of the sub-divisions we visited complained
that he had too many bosses. Formally, he had responsibilities to HQ, to
the division and to the sub-divisional management. The sub-divisional
commanders reported little change in terms of local ownership of problems
resulting from the organisational developments in the CCPD. The force had
already set up a structure of communication with the chief executives of
the six metropolitan district councils in the force area. This was simply
submitted to the Home Office in response to 44/90.

There was little evidence of any recent major change in the organisation
of crime prevention in force C. However, a report into the force structure
carried out by management consultants in 1981 continued to exert a strong
influence upon the organisational structure. This report had argued for
devolution of responsibility to the lowest possible level, for reducing the
number of divisions and for breaking the force up into 10 smaller
sub-divisions. The report even laid down the exact geographical boundaries
of the sub-divisions, which senior officers were (apparently) still loath to
change. Nearly a decade later, there was still a strong leaning among senior
managers in the force in favour of sub-divisional autonomy, and against the
setting up of specialist units. This may explain why the CPOs were based
on sub-division rather than division. Nevertheless, they had a close
relationship with the HQ crime prevention department although they were
supposed to report to the local commander. A former sub-divisional
commander said that he saw little of crime prevention policy-making when
he was on sub-division, and that policies simply ‘appeared from on high’.

Until late 1988 the community affairs department in force D was headed
by a superintendent. The chief constable wanted to introduce another chief
superintendent post, and in a report to the police authority he asked that the
head of community affairs be upgraded to a chief superintendent post, in
order that the department would henceforth have an input into force
corporate policy deliberations (the force policy group included officers of
chief superintendent rank and above). The first chief superintendent was a
young and innovative officer who was immediately tasked to carry out a
review of the department. The review involved interviews with members
of staff in the department, and visits to outside agencies and to other forces.
It concluded that there was an ambiguity about the aims of the department

The growth of crime prevention
because the staff, who were based at divisional level, reported both to headquarters and to the divisional management. Officers at sub-divisional level had little contact with community relations officers, and were unclear what the department was there for apart from public relations. This suggested one of two courses of action: either centralise the department completely and make all officers fully accountable to HQ; or decentralise to the sub-divisional level. The new head of department chose the second option saying: ‘I wanted the sub-divisional commander to think about crime prevention when he thought about crime detection’. He thought it was a common assumption in the police service that crime could only be tackled by gaining evidence from people after they had been victimised, which meant assuming that there had to be an increase in the number of victims before the problem could be tackled by catching more offenders. He wanted to attack that assumption by re-emphasising the importance of crime prevention as a central force objective.

In 1989, the force set up what was widely referred to as an experiment, which involved the ‘sub-divisionalisation’ of community relations staff on one division. Two sub-divisions within this division were visited during the research. All officers interviewed spoke of the ‘experiment’ in a highly positive light, although there was no evidence of any systematic evaluation of its results. Sub-divisional commanders and CPOs were equally enthusiastic about the CPOs being based on sub-division. In both sub-divisions, the CPOs said that their workloads had gone up, because both the sub-divisional officers and the general public were more aware of the services which they could offer. By workload they meant requests to carry out security surveys, and advice on target-hardening measures. Although they argued that the whole nature of crime prevention was changing, there was little evidence of changes in the kind of work that the CPOs were doing, just the amount. There was no evidence of systematic analysis of local crime trends, although one CPO described this as ‘the thing of the future’.

One consequence of the experiment was a further clouding of the role of the community affairs department at headquarters. The divisional community affairs sergeant was in theory the link between HQ and the sub-divisional officers, but in practice there was little contact. The HQ role was described by the sergeant and his officers as one of coordination and supervision, but little evidence was found of such a role being filled (partly because the experiment was set up on the assumption that crime prevention needed to be a local response to local problems).

It appears that the chief constable was the key influence on the decision to up-grade the community affairs department and create a chief
superintendent post. The sub-divisionalisation experiment sprang directly from the departmental review which was set up by the first chief superintendent in charge of the department. He was a young and innovative officer with strong views about the direction that community affairs should take. Many of the changes in the organisation of community affairs can be attributed to him personally. The departmental review largely reflected his beliefs about the future role of community affairs. These contrasted strongly with the more conservative views expressed by his successor. The police authority in force D had little influence over these developments.

Neighbourhood watch
Force A faced the familiar problem that support for NW tended to stimulate further demands on police time and resources. Also, it was comparatively difficult to establish schemes in high-crime areas where they are most necessary. The force CPO expressed the need for more police resources and encouragement to be put into NW. It was decided to take on 12 part-time NW coordinators, funded by the Employment Training Scheme, who were to liaise with the public and help set up new schemes. However, the coordinators were not allocated from the centre. Instead, after discussions at force management level, it was decided to leave it to each sub-divisional commander to decide how NW was to be supported on that patch.

In one of the two sub-divisions examined, policy strongly encouraged NW. The NW coordinator was enthusiastic about the close working relationship she had with the CPOs. Also, a full-time coordinator has been appointed as a civilian member of the police staff, which was seen as a sign of higher than usual commitment to the NW principle. The NW coordinator evaluated activity by the total number of schemes and the perceived enthusiasm of participants. In the other sub-division, a part-time NW coordinator funded by Employment Training had been brought in (whereas previously there had been no coordinator at all). She feared that once the year’s funding was exhausted there would be a return to the old situation. She evaluated NW in similar terms to the other coordinator. The CPOs in both sub-divisions were in favour of NW and wanted the police to encourage its development, although one was aware that research had found little effect of NW on crime levels. He thought the main role of NW was not crime reduction but raising public awareness of crime prevention and improving police-community relations. He was arguing strongly for the sub-division to fund a full-time NW coordinator.

The main policy initiative taken at HQ level was the decision to take on 12 coordinators funded by Employment Training. As stated above, it was an explicit decision by the force management team not to lay down
policy in this area but to allow the sub-divisional commanders to decide their own priorities, although there was talk of the need to improve the servicing of schemes and to extend them to new areas. In one of the sub-divisions examined, a local decision was taken to employ a full-time coordinator using police funds.

The police authority played no active part in deciding policy, but were kept informed of developments by the chief constable’s reports. The NW groups expected and demanded police support, but played no part in the development of policy about how that support would be provided and what form it would take. They adopted a responsive role and remained dependent on the police.

Force B gave the greatest degree of support to NW of all the four police forces studied. At the time of the research, there were about 2,600 schemes in the force area, and from the early 1980s the force had taken the initiative in setting up schemes. The force CPO’s comments on how NW started gave an interesting insight into the way the idea took hold within the police organisation:

We were aware that it was going great guns in the States, and then we heard that Cheshire police had started the first scheme in this country, and thought that we would try out a couple of pilot schemes here.. both in high crime areas. As always, pilot schemes were successful (or apparently successful!), so guidance was given to the rest of the force in establishing another set of schemes within the sub-divisions.

A review of NW was carried out when the idea became so popular it threatened to become a significant drain on police resources. This led to a set of detailed guidelines for all sub-divisional commanders on how to manage NW (an impressively produced, glossy-covered volume), which suggested that they prioritise high-crime areas and have a single monthly meeting with all coordinators. In 1991, Urban Programme funding enabled three NW development officers to be employed at HQ to oversee the force policy in this area. Each sub-division was given a civilian NW assistant to service the local schemes, and be a point of contact with the police organisation. Also, there was what the force CPO called ‘an ongoing evaluation of NW’ in which specimen schemes were selected each year, and the force research department carried out some survey work to assess the perceived benefits of NW and come up with suggested improvements.

The CPO in force C described the process by which they came to adopt NW as part of its crime prevention policy as ‘policy-making by default’. The approach of the force followed directly from the views of the chief constable. Prior to 1986, the chief had been opposed to NW and the force did not set up any schemes. However, it was clear by 1986 that HMIC
supported the concept as did public opinion in general. Persuaded by this, the chief set up a few pilot schemes in the force area, which were evaluated by the research department. Although this evaluation showed little effect on crime rates, the chief decided to go ahead with NW force-wide. In the view of the force CPO, the chief constable could not withdraw from NW at this stage because of the pressure of opinion from HMIC and Home Office in favour of it. In 1988 the chief issued an instruction to the force that they were not to initiate any more schemes, because those that were being set up by the public were already taking up a lot of police resources. The original idea had been that the NW schemes would be serviced by special constables, but not enough had been recruited. At the time of the research, there were 2,400 schemes in the force area. The force CPO explained that it was very difficult to service them with information about crime and incidents. Schemes received information at irregular intervals, and even then the information was often out of date. The NW schemes were very police-dependent. A permanent beat officer on one sub-division described how he would respond to requests to start NW schemes by circulating and collecting questionnaires; he would then arrange and address the initial meeting, and would try to provide each scheme on his beat with up-to-date information.

NW schemes came to force D fairly late in the day. The superintendent (community affairs) said that this was due to the resources that the force had needed to invest in policing the miners’ strike in the county. The first scheme was set up in August 1985. The chief constable appeared to take a positive but cautious view of NW, and stressed in a report to the police authority that it could not in any way be seen as a substitute for the regular policing of an area. The same report explained that the force had taken on an MSC-funded civilian at HQ to administer NW schemes force-wide. At the time of the research the force area had about 400 schemes of differing sizes. It was quite difficult to identify a tangible force policy on NW. Senior officers talked in somewhat vague terms of the need to enhance community spirit and good neighbourliness. The overall view of NW was quite positive. The force actively encouraged schemes to start up, sending out an information pack and providing funds for signs and stickers if there was enough enthusiasm. The local CPO would attend and give a talk to members at the outset. At the same time, senior officers remained cautious about NW. A number of officers stressed that NW should not be police-led, and expressed concern that more and more police resources would be needed to keep it going. On visiting sub-divisions, the researcher observed both schemes that were highly dependent on the police, and schemes that functioned with almost no police contact.
There was no attempt to evaluate the effects of NW schemes. On this issue there was a vagueness from the top of the department to the bottom. The superintendent (community affairs) said that he had heard of Bennett’s (1990) research, but that things like community spirit and neighbourliness could not be measured. The CPOs talked about the ‘success’ of NW in terms of the absolute number of schemes, but felt that effects on crime rates could not be measured. The CPO at one sub-division argued strongly that it was NW which, through displacement, had led to the increases in autocrime (due to reduction of opportunities for domestic burglary). However, he admitted that this was ‘gut feeling’ rather than a provable contention. The local coordinators appeared to evaluate schemes by the activity of members and the number of meetings held. Overall, all those interviewed saw NW as a good thing, but this was more a matter of faith than demonstration.

This was one area in which the force D police authority did appear to have exerted some influence. The minutes record that in 1984 two councillors visited the Kingsdown project in Bristol and reported back, recommending that the chief constable support the NW principle and introduce experimental arrangements. The chief constable of the time appeared to adopt a policy of cautious encouragement, which allowed police input to vary according to demand. However, this policy led to a degree of uncertainty: NW was regarded as a good thing but people within the force appeared unsure of exactly why. The local schemes were somewhat isolated: there were no local sub-divisional scheme coordinators, so that the chances of coordination between different schemes were restricted.

**Special projects**

**Design advisory services**

All four of the study forces provided some kind of design advisory service with the objective of giving advice to local authorities, architects and building developers about crime prevention implications of design features. The design advisory service was described by one of force A’s CPOs as ‘the biggest change we’ve seen’. The force introduced the project in November 1987, and the service was staffed by HQ personnel. The local CPOs were also involved. They obtained lists of the local building developments in the area from local authority planning applications. These were sent to the Architect Liaison Officer (ALO) at HQ who coordinated the service and took personal responsibility for crime prevention advice to major building developments. The ALO decided which developments could benefit from a crime prevention input, contacted the architect and developer and offered police assistance and advice. This included advice about security hardware as well as the interpretation of crime trends, and
social and environmental factors that might influence crime at that location in the future.

*Secured by Design* was a local regional initiative with which the force A CPO had strong personal links (he was mentioned by name by the force D ALO as promoting the project nationally). According to the project information pack, the project was aimed at ‘actively encouraging the adoption by housebuilders of important guidelines to upgrade the security against crime and fire safety of new houses’. If the developer designed the required amount of security measures into the proposed dwellings (after consultation with the police) then he could use the ‘secured by design’ police logo, which was intended to help sell the properties.

At the local level, CPOs had been working with the local authority for some time, according to the force CPO. The annual report outlined some examples of the CPOs working with the council housing department and technical services department to improve security in local authority housing. The report said that ‘the council architect has put into practice the concept of designing out crime on all new building projects’. On one sub-division, after pressure from the police consultative committee, the local borough council had appointed a secure homes officer to the housing department. In another part of the force area, such developments were beginning to take place at the time of the research. The CPO outlined a project in which they targeted a high-crime industrial estate with the help of the design advisory service in order to make improvements. He also liaised with the local authority and the Electricity Board on a project to improve the street lighting in an area of high car crime. The local council were in the process of redesigning the town centre, and after consultations with the design advisory service a series of recommendations were submitted to the planning department. The CPO felt that the local authority could take more notice of crime prevention advice from the police, and hoped that the introduction of the circular 44/90 would encourage this.

Since 1987 force B had employed two ALOs at headquarters. The first post had been funded through the Urban Programme, although both posts were subsequently funded through the force budget. Both ALOs held architectural qualifications. They attended monthly planning surgeries of all the local authority planners in the force area, which examined planning applications and recommended alterations for reasons of crime prevention and security. A senior officer in the force stated that planners were usually ‘quite happy’ to comply with such recommendations, although there was evidence that this was not always the case. A researcher accompanied the head of the community crime prevention department (CCPD) on a visit to a recently-built retail site. The development had been built in such a way
that it was extremely vulnerable to ram raiders. A few design alterations could have improved the security significantly. When asked what had happened to the ALO input in this case the head of department said he was not sure and would investigate the case.

The ALOs were working closely with the local development corporation, and had made a crime prevention input to its housing, commercial and leisure developments. The CCPD also had a continuing link with the Department of the Environment looking at DoE-funded estate action projects in the force area. The DoE agreed to make local authority consultation with the ALOs a condition of granting estate action funding, to ensure that measures of security are built in.

Unlike some of the other forces in the study, this force was not in favour of the Secured by Design project. The ACPO region was not in favour of implementing the project. The superintendent (force CPO) explained that the project applied mainly to the private housing sector, which was not the main problem area for the force. Even so, Secured by Design reached less than half of private house builders. The main problem anticipated was that the project would be highly resource-intensive for the police. The force decided not to commit resources to it until there was some kind of evaluation that revealed what resource input was needed and what the benefits would be. As in the other forces, discussions with the CPOs in the two sub-divisions showed that the ALO function was very much a headquarters activity, with little involvement from the sub-divisional level.

Force C had also considered the Secured by Design initiative but decided against supporting it for similar reasons. The force had a trained ALO who was a sergeant in the force services department. Two other officers (one of whom was a sub-divisional CPO) were booked to go on training courses at the Stafford crime prevention centre to become ALOs. When the force decided to employ an ALO the policy was that the service be police-driven (the officer would try to influence the planning decisions he thought to be most important) rather than spend time responding to requests for the service.

In force D, there was a single force ALO (a sergeant) at force headquarters. The divisional and sub-divisional CPOs had little to do with the provision of this service: it was almost totally managed and delivered from HQ. The ALO post had existed since 1982 although staff shortages during the miners’ strike, and the ill-health of the previous post-holder meant that little was achieved until 1986. The ALO in post during the study explained that he had no specialist crime prevention experience before coming into post, which had been a significant disadvantage at the outset. A few referrals came from CPOs, but the bulk of the work was generated
by the ALO himself sifting through planning applications to the various
district councils and selecting cases where he felt he could have an effective
input. Because he was the only ALO, the officer had to be very selective
about the cases he took up. He pointed out the contrast with the county’s
large number of fire prevention officers. He had negotiated a crime
prevention input into a course at the local University School of Architecture,
and had established a liaison with the education authority on the matter of
school security (he had persuaded the education authority to set aside a
section of the budget specifically for the security of school buildings).

At the time of the research, force D had yet to become fully involved
in the Secured by Design initiative. The force CPO had met his counterpart
from another police force, who was promoting the scheme nationally. One
of the ACPO regions had agreed to try to obtain sponsorship to start the
scheme, and the chief of each force in the region had agreed to give £1,000
to start things off. Although the force CPO was very keen on the scheme,
the ALO expressed reservations that as the only specialist member of staff,
he would be totally over-run if the scheme started. He was concerned that
he would have difficulty in checking that the required standards were being
met, and claimed that he had heard from colleagues in the other regions that
the scheme logo was being used for buildings that had not actually met the
required criteria.

**Burglar alarm policy**
All four forces reported that over recent years, the amount of police time
wasted in responding to false burglar alarm calls had increased. In response
to this problem, the crime prevention sub-committee of the ACPO crime
committee formulated a national policy to start from January 1990. The aim
was to make commercial central alarm stations (which handled most alarm
calls) bear a greater responsibility for validating alarm signals received
before contacting the police for response. The policy laid down that
following seven false alarms over a 12 month period from a single alarm
source, the police would withdraw response for at least three months, or
until the situation was rectified. The four police forces in the study had all
adopted the ACPO policy.

**‘Social’ crime prevention schemes**
All of the forces were involved in schemes that could broadly be described
as social crime prevention (see the earlier discussion of this rather vague
term). Force A had sub-divisional SLOs, who set up a ‘crime theatre’
scheme by which school children were encouraged to develop short plays
with a crime prevention theme. Force B ran training schemes and a
programme of activity holidays for young people. Force C also ran an activity holidays programme and in addition maintained a coordinated schools liaison programme. Force D gave specific responsibilities to two CPOs on each sub-division, calling them the CPOs for ‘physical’ and ‘social’ crime prevention. The force ran a series of visits to schools.

Senior officers in the community crime prevention department (CCPD) in force B were very proud of the extensive use that the force made of employment and youth training schemes. The chief superintendent who was head of the department explained that although it was not unusual for police forces to employ trainees from government schemes, it was unusual for a police force to be the ‘training managers’ of their own schemes, as was the case in this area. It was certainly true that youth and employment trainees were involved in a wide variety of tasks in the force. The youth training scheme concentrated initially on office administrative skills, and in every police office with an administrative element there was at least one youth trainee. The trainees had four six-month training periods, at least one of which was in a specifically police environment. According to the chief superintendent, there was a high demand for these young people once they had finished the training, not just because of the skills they had picked up, but also because private companies knew that they had not been in trouble with the police, since that was one of the criteria of selection. According to the head of CCPD, over 1,000 young people had been put through the force’s youth training scheme. The force took people on placements for up to 12 months, and 40 per cent of this time consisted of training tailored to individual needs. The researcher saw trainees working in front offices and counters, as crime pattern analysts, and as NW assistants, and giving administrative support to permanent beat officers.

This youth training scheme was clearly seen by senior officers in the CCPD as part of their social crime prevention work. On one level at least the results were impressive. The force was able to offer its permanent beat officers and NW coordinators far more support than in any of the other forces covered by the study. Also, the contribution to local employment prospects was impressive. However, the crime prevention aspect of these training schemes was less clear. For example, the head of CCPD seemed to think that the objectives of the scheme were to break the link between unemployment and crime, and to foster good relationships between young people and the police. But he also said that applicants were closely vetted, and those with criminal records or associates were screened out. This was a point explicitly recognised by an inspector in the CCPD who said ‘some argue that we only get the nice kids anyway, and we could do a lot more in the direction of targeting kids, and I think there is some truth in that’.
Like other forces, force B had a network of specialist schools liaison officers (SLOs). There were about 40 SLOs across the force. Officers in the CCPD explained that the schools programme had in the past been somewhat unstructured, and largely left to contacts between individual schools and individual SLOs about the level and nature of the input. At the time of the research the force was in the process of putting together a more coordinated programme, with a full-time ‘schools adviser’ examining what input the police could have in the curriculum of different year groups. In addition to the SLOs, the force had for many years run an expedition centre, with a police-funded civilian employed as the outward bound instructor. This was used to give children from the inner-city areas the opportunity to have an activity holiday in the country. The emphasis on this kind of ‘social crime prevention’ did not escape criticism from other sections of the force, particularly some of the CID officers who were interviewed. This was perhaps not surprising, as even those who believed most strongly that the police should do this kind of thing seemed rather vague about the crime prevention effects. One of the officers in the CCP department explained that it was not possible to justify such projects on the basis of hard data:

We do work on the social side; our schools liaison teams and the expedition centre. We must put several hundred kids though there every year. A lot of operational police officers would question the value of it, but it’s something you can’t really evaluate. At the end of the day, do you want contact between police and young people, and if you do then that sort of thing is one of the best ways of doing it, allowing them to work together. We can’t prove that it works, the only thing is the response from the kids themselves that go there – we have hundreds of letters of appreciation.

This seemed to sum up many officers’ position on police involvement in such things. There was, it seemed, an acceptance on the part of some senior officers that there were strong arguments in favour of the proposition that such things are not a primary police task, and that perhaps the police should concentrate resources upon those functions that are. However, the force remained committed to such schemes, apparently because of a ‘gut feeling’ that they are self-evidently ‘good’ which overcame any more practical concerns about effective resource allocation.

Senior officers in force C were very proud of a project known as ‘Operation Lifestyle’. This was a scheme intended to provide children of 11-15 with activities during the school holidays. The scheme started in 1989 and was initially sponsored by a local communications company, although a national petrol company provided sponsorship the following year. The scheme involved schoolchildren being encouraged to design and carry out projects in small teams during their summer holidays. The projects were
supposed to benefit the local community or the environment. Each team was supervised by an adult, and at the end of the summer the teams submitted a short report of their activities as part of a competition. The best project would win a holiday in Canada. A promotional video was produced which was shown by neighbourhood beat officers in all the secondary schools in the force area. In its first year the scheme involved more than 9,000 children. Projects included helping the elderly and the disabled, cleaning and gardening, renovation of playgrounds, and recycling of paper and tins.

Privately, even the most enthusiastic supporters of police involvement in the scheme admitted that it could not be justified by reference to direct impact on juvenile crime. During the first year there was an 8 per cent drop in juvenile crime, but police officers volunteered that this was the result of a number of factors, including demographic changes. Despite this private reluctance to link the project with changes in the crime figures, the 1989 Annual Report implied that the scheme had reduced the numbers of juveniles reported to the police for criminal matters by 3 per cent during the summer holidays. The chief superintendent who headed the Force Services Department argued that the project should not be seen primarily as crime prevention at all. He viewed the project as a large and highly successful public relations exercise. Nevertheless, the force’s commitment to the project was shown by the amount of police time devoted to it. Within the inter-agency unit, the inspector in charge of public relations, along with a sergeant and a constable were working full-time on the project. In addition, there was a lot of work for the sub-divisional neighbourhood beat officers, who made the visits to schools to set the projects up, and monitored the kinds of projects that were being implemented. The scheme was very popular with officers at the sub-divisional level, who again saw it as a way of fostering good contacts between the police service and young people.

At the time of the study, the responsibility for schools visits in force C lay with juvenile liaison officers (JLOs) and neighbourhood beat officers helping to set up Operation Lifestyle. The JLOs visited primary schools, although there did not appear to be a coordinated pattern of visits. The force was in the process of developing schools liaison work into a model by which there was a police input into a programme delivered by teachers. In 1989 the force set up a steering group chaired by one of the ACCs including a deputy director of education from the county council, a curriculum design expert, an inspector and a seconded deputy headteacher. The aim was to have a more coordinated approach overall, and to develop a more detailed input into the school curriculum on crime and order issues.
Crime pattern analysis
In 1985 force B made it policy that each sub-division should have a police officer dedicated to analysing the local crime patterns and presenting the information to management and operational officers. At the time of the research, some of these crime pattern analyst clerks used computers, but many just used a paper-based system. Both of the sub-divisions visited had crime pattern clerks in the latter category. Both produced a weekly bulletin of crime figures, picking out the main problem areas and trying to identify patterns. Crime and incident figures were extracted from the force computer and broken down, sometimes to the level of individual footbeats. This information was given to the sub-divisional management, CID and uniform shifts, and also to the NW assistants. Each analyst had a YTS trainee giving administrative support. The information given was from a fairly basic level of analysis, in fact more description than analysis. One of the officers in this role was used in his sub-division as a source of information on performance, and he showed what he called his ‘arrest league table’ which compared the numbers of arrests between shifts. This information was communicated to shift supervisors if the ‘productivity’ of their shift went down. Although this analysis was neither detailed nor elaborate, it was still a way of targeting particular problems. The officers said that when types of crime, time and geographical location patterns had been established, they could respond by targeting patrols and alerting NW coordinators. The crime pattern analyst post was due to be civilianised and merged with the criminal intelligence function.

Crime prevention panels (CPPs)
All the police forces in the study had set up crime prevention panels, most usually one per sub-division. The aim of CPPs was to extend participation in crime prevention projects. Most CPOs felt that the CPPs had some benefits, in particular in terms of helping the police to raise the public awareness of crime problems. But CPPs were not an important part of any force’s approach to crime prevention. Most members were strongly supportive of the police, and enthusiastically promoted low-level publicity and property-marking schemes. However, these were nearly always initiated by the CPOs, upon whom all the CPPs were heavily dependent.

‘Theme of the month’
This was an initiative which formed part of the superintendent’s attempt to structure the approach to crime prevention across force D. In his view, different parts of the force were targeting different things and he wanted a more coordinated effort. The community affairs department (in effect,
either the chief or his deputy) would decide on a theme for the month in question which would then be given to a particular division to promote for a month. This amounted to no more than a public information campaign, with displays, exhibitions and the use of the force mobile crime prevention caravan. The CPOs in both sub-divisions that were studied were somewhat dubious about the usefulness of theme of the month. They felt that the chosen themes bore little relation to their local problems.

In a similar fashion, force B regularly ran force-wide ‘campaigns’ which lasted for 6 months. These were basically public information campaigns on particular types of crime. They involved the production and distribution of leaflets and posters, and public conferences held at force HQ. Also, divisions and sub-divisions were encouraged to respond to the force campaign with specific initiatives. The setting up of an experimental domestic violence unit on one division was apparently part of that division’s response to a force-wide campaign against violence.

‘Light Against Crime’
This was mentioned by the force CPO (force D), although nobody else appeared to know much about it. The superintendent (community affairs) did not mention it, and when asked directly about it, the ALO said he had never heard of it. However, according to the CPO, the project involved a campaign launched by the community affairs department, the local Electricity Board, and a private company. According to the force annual report, the purpose was to encourage householders to reduce crime in the dark winter evenings by increasing the level of lighting around their properties. The police designed an information leaflet funded by the Electricity Board. There was no evidence of any attempt to evaluate the project.

Autocrime prevention
This was a central priority of force D. In fact, the Safer Cities coordinator felt that the police were over-focusing on ‘taken without owner’s consent’ (TWOC) as an offence and exaggerating its significance as part of a political campaign to raise its profile. The CPO explained how he had tried to analyse the patterns of autocrime across the county, but had failed to come up with results which could relate the problem to a particular time or place. They developed a force-wide scheme which involved information leaflets, car stickers and property marking drives. A car company etched windows free of charge for one week, and a local car dealer helped to promote the project. The force CPO evaluated the scheme in terms of the number of leaflets
distributed (apparently, about 100,000 people were covered in a 6 month period).

**Coalition against crime**

Another project mentioned by force B was similar to a programme singled out as an example of good practice in a Home Office circular. The ‘Coalition Against Crime’ was a team of seconded business people whose task was to look at ways of promoting crime prevention. Like Crime Concern, the coalition was a registered charity. The coalition was answerable to a management board serviced by an executive team to which the force seconded a police officer. Member companies and local councils provided representatives to set up and manage crime prevention initiatives. The coalition was responsible for distributing a set of posters featuring a character called ‘Barney the Bloodhound’ who urged the public to ‘take a bite out of crime’.

**Multi-agency work**

One of the elements common to all four forces’ presentation of their crime prevention policy was an emphasis on the ‘multi-agency approach’ – although the strength of the emphasis varied between the forces. Multi-agency work was widely viewed as being either the most or one of the most significant developments in the field in recent years. For example, within force A, it became clear from early discussions at HQ that the policy of crime prevention was regarded as undergoing significant change. Several officers referred to the ‘old school’ of crime prevention, which basically involved traditional specialisms of advice about security and target-hardening measures – ‘bolts, bars and burglar alarms’. This was contrasted with the ‘new school’ which was based on a much broader concept of crime prevention, involving special targeted projects, crime pattern analysis, and an emphasis on joint working with other agencies. Some of the most enthusiastic proponents of this new kind of approach were not trained specifically in crime prevention. The chief superintendent in charge of traffic and operational support at HQ (which covered crime prevention) thought the role of the crime prevention branch was uncertain and tended to be misunderstood in the force. He thought this was partly because there was no crime prevention strategy, and because many police officers saw crime prevention as something narrow and technical, and did not believe it deserved its own resources and structure. In many ways, he felt, it was not regarded as ‘proper’ policing which was widely seen as being about detections and arrests.
The ‘multi-agency approach’ was a term used frequently by officers in crime prevention. The force CPO (force A) repeatedly used it to describe the policy the force was trying to develop: he stressed that the police are part of a wider forum and not necessarily the leading agency in the fight against crime. At the higher levels, this kind of approach was illustrated by the inclusion of the police on the County Council Risk Management Group, which consisted of the chief officers of finance, audit, insurance, education, fire and police. One of the things the group discussed was the design of school buildings. The group was set up at the request of the police after they had had a number of dealings over the previous two years with individual county council departments on crime prevention matters. The force CPO argued that the police simply did not have the resources available to become actively involved with every crime prevention plan, but could help to pilot promising schemes and disseminate information about good practice to raise awareness, with the aim of setting a self-sustaining model in process.

One of the main claims of force B to ‘leading the field’ in crime prevention was based on its self-proclaimed commitment to the ‘multi-agency approach’ in crime prevention. The chief constable emphasised that multi-agency work in the area predated Home Office circulars such as 8/1984. The force CPO (a superintendent) said that ‘the main commitment since 1982 has been the inter-agency aspect of crime prevention and the police role within that’. A complicating factor was that the force covered six different local authority areas, which caused problems of coordination. For example, when the force asked local authorities for advice on policing racial attacks, the six chief executives came back with six different sets of proposals. The force certainly did appear to be operating within a number of ‘multi-agency’ structures, although despite the chief constable’s claim, most of those appeared after 1984 (they may or may not have been initiated in response to the circular).

During interviews with senior officers in force C, there was a ready acceptance that the police were not necessarily the leading agency in crime prevention and the need for cooperation between a number of different agencies was an often-mentioned topic. The ACC who was ultimately responsible for crime prevention felt that the police were falling between two stools. One option was for the police to make crime prevention a much more important part of what they do and use this as a way of getting more resources from the government. The other option was to concentrate their existing resources on their core functions, and leave crime prevention to some other organisation. The ACC leaned towards the latter option, but displayed a similar reluctance to officers in other forces to rid the police of non-confrontational ‘service’ aspects of the job that are so often a part of
crime prevention initiatives. The overall approach of the force reflected this ambivalence.

The term ‘multi-agency approach’ was extremely popular with officers of all ranks in force D, although there did appear to be some ambiguity about what such an approach actually involved. Many of the police officers interviewed as part of the study claimed to be enthusiastic advocates of the multi-agency approach which, in line with officers in the other three forces, they seemed to equate with any work involving liaison with agencies other than the police. At HQ, the perception of senior officers was that the police had fully embraced the principle behind circular 8/84, but it was the local authorities who had failed to do likewise. This was a consistently-expressed view; from the chief superintendent (who said that the various different tiers of local government cannot even work together let alone with the police); his superintendent (who said that whereas the police were compelled to respond to the Home Office circular, local authorities and businesses took it only as advisory); to the ALO (who said that local authority departments were not easy to work with). The Safer Cities coordinator later commented that the police failed to appreciate or understand decision-making processes in other less hierarchical organisations. The superintendent (community affairs) strongly supported the view that the police should be the lead agency in crime prevention, saying: ‘The police should still be the lead agency, holding the reins and promoting enthusiasm’. However, at the sub-divisional level officers were less clear about who should lead. One CPO said that which was the lead agency should depend on ‘the nature of the problem and the circumstances’, a view supported by his sergeant who explained that ‘a real multi-agency approach would have a number of agencies and different ones taking the leading role depending on the situation’.

Safer Cities
Force B, C and D areas all included Safer Cities projects. The schemes were set up with Home Office funding with a remit to tackle crime, the fear of crime, and community safety in general. They represented three of the 16 projects set up across Britain. Each scheme had broadly the same structure including a steering group intended to produce and coordinate a local action plan, about the same number of staff and the same core objectives.

Force B: The Safer Cities coordinator was a seconded police inspector. The project was well supported by the police authority who were represented on the steering group by one of their members. (By contrast, in force D area, the chair of the police authority had complained that the money spent on Safer Cities should have been given to the police authority to spend
on crime prevention.) Apparently, there was only one other Safer Cities project with a police coordinator (the decision as to who coordinated was taken by the Home Office). The steering committee consisted of 14 people: local councillors (including the leader of the local borough council), one police authority member, the chief executive, a senior probation officer, representatives from victim support, Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and council officers. All initiatives funded by the project had to undergo an evaluation for the Home Office, although the coordinator was rather vague about the nature of such evaluations.

The project had given rise to various initiatives, including the following.

- **Estate-based schemes.** Safer Cities worked with the local authority to address the problems on a high-crime estate in the area. A Housing Association was set up which refurbished some properties, removed graffiti and litter, and provided funds to a group of residents who wanted to set up a community centre. The main input into this kind of scheme was not money, but time and coordination.

- **Soccer in the community.** The project arranged special soccer coaching sessions with players from the local league football club for children in three particular deprived areas. These operated during the summer holidays, two or three hours a day. The schemes were very popular, and again were not very costly. The total cost to Safer Cities was about £3000, and over 600 boys participated.

- **Car park schemes.** This was a larger project which involved total funds of £200,000 between Safer Cities and the borough council. The result was improved lighting, target hardening, security patrols, repainting, closed circuit television.

- **Industrial schemes.** One of these involved setting up a Port Users Security Group in one of the cities in the area. After a questionnaire survey, the project helped the group to improve lighting and physical security measures, and advised security officers on systems and methods. Reported crime was reduced by 50 per cent in the first few months.

- **Offenders job-club.** This was led by the probation service, and involved an accommodation support project for homeless young people, a diversion scheme for young autocrime offenders in which they built their own buggies and drove them.

The coordinator explained that the Safer Cities project was trying to prioritise initiatives that had a good chance of continuing after the Home
Office funding ceased. That meant setting up mechanisms, transferring the ownership of initiatives, or demonstrating that something worked in the hope that another agency would take it on after the Safer Cities funding had ended. In spite of these intentions, no detailed consideration had been given to setting up permanent mechanisms of this kind. The coordinator said that the project was seen as the central body to advise, facilitate and coordinate crime prevention initiatives, but seemed unclear about what would happen after the project finished:

The project is widely seen as a benefit to the town, a positive crime prevention input. Most people would say that our work has been of positive benefit and would hope that things would carry on. That is not only political leaders but grass roots as well; at the end of the day the project is an asset. I think that we are leaning towards more provision of central government funding for crime prevention.

This contrasts markedly with other areas, particularly force D, where the coordinator saw the primary aim of Safer Cities as using the temporary funding from central government to set up permanent local structures and mechanisms to support crime prevention activity after the funding had ceased.

Force C: The Safer Cities project grew from one of the Home Office ‘Five Towns Initiatives’. A number of police sources felt that the police authority had been less than encouraging about Safer Cities (along with Crime Concern), and claimed that when representatives from these projects came for an initial visit they were not even met by people from the county council. It was left to the police to look after the visitors. There was some feeling that this was because the chair of the police authority had political objections to crime prevention initiatives being run by central government rather than the local authority, and that was supported by an interview with the chair. His request to be included on the Safer Cities steering committee had been turned down by the Home Office, for reasons that were not made explicit. The leader of the City Council was included. When asked why the chair of the police authority had not been allowed to join the committee, the Safer Cities coordinator said it was because the size of the group had to be kept to a minimum, and because ‘the chair of the police authority has no direct link with what the police do; he might be in favour of something but they might not do it’.

At the time of the research, the Safer Cities project had been running for just over a year. The project had started with a detailed crime profile of the city based on information provided by the police. Crime data by police beats along with some census data had been supplied, but analysis had been held up because the project did not have the necessary computer software.
The coordinator emphasised the problem that no agency provides detailed information about crime in a satisfactory way. The police would perhaps be in the best position to do it, or alternatively local government could take on the task, adding in relevant information about housing, education and other services. Using Safer Cities funding, a number of projects went ahead in the first year. These included improved lighting in the bus station (the main Saturday evening trouble spot), a target-hardening and property-marking scheme in a particular area of the city, and a project against obscene telephone calls (with the aid of a local telephone company).

**Force D:** The visit to the Safer Cities scheme in force D area did uncover evidence of some attempts to set up genuine inter-agency work. Two points in particular stand out. First, the work of the Safer Cities scheme appeared much more suited than many of the police-led projects to the term ‘multi-agency’. Second, very little of what was going on in the Safer Cities scheme was revealed in discussions with police officers: this showed that they were either unaware of the developments or felt that they were too unimportant to mention.

In force D area, the Safer Cities project was established in April 1989, its steering group comprising the chief executive of the city council, the senior community relations officer, the chief probation officer, the chief constable (who in practice sent his head of community affairs), the director of the local Chamber of Commerce, the deputy director of Planning and Transportation, the secretary of the DTI City Action Team, and the director of the local CVS.

The project started with a crime profile of the city, and a survey of public experience of and attitudes to crime. Given that the Home Office funding was time-limited, the broad aim was to develop a corporate planning mechanism for dealing with crime and the fear of crime that would be locally owned and driven once the core funding ceased. This was intended to be primarily located in the local authorities. The first aim was to put a ‘value-for-money’ tag on crime prevention through a crime audit which showed the costs of crime to the city council. This was intended to provide a financial incentive towards development of the hoped-for mechanisms. The scheme targeted in particular three areas of the city: personal safety on a problem estate, a burglary reduction project on a council estate, and a target-hardening programme in another area. Additionally, at the time of the research there were two issue-based pieces of work under way. One was a racial harassment project and the other was a project dealing with women’s safety.

There was police involvement in many aspects of the Safer Cities work. For example, the burglary project was coordinated by a seconded police
inspector, a sub-divisional CPO carried out security surveys and provided advice for the target hardening programme, and the police were represented on the working groups set up to examine racial harassment and women’s safety. Significantly, none of this was mentioned by the head of community affairs. The only mention he made of Safer Cities was in connection with its funding of a crime prevention shop in the city centre precinct. This was a development ‘dear to the heart’ of the chief superintendent (according to the Safer Cities coordinator), although it did not to be appear highly significant compared to the other projects. The chief superintendent did not appear to be very enthusiastic about Safer Cities, and he made critical references to the first chair of the steering group. The attitude of the head of community affairs may have had real effects on police cooperation with Safer Cities. The coordinator said that he was a very different kind of police officer from his predecessor, adding:

The climate has definitely changed since X came along; he wants a higher profile for the police and for community affairs. He is not intuitively in favour of multi-agency crime prevention that is led by other agencies, and he has fairly deep-seated feelings about some of the other agencies that he might be working with. But he cannot entirely set the police policy.

This clearly implies that the coordinator saw successful cooperation with the police as more likely to happen despite the head of community affairs rather than because of him. Other officers in the department had a more positive view of Safer Cities, for example the ALO said of the project: ‘It’s a very useful vehicle, and has opened a lot of previously closed and almost locked doors in the relatively short time it’s been in existence’.

So despite the attitude of senior officers, officers lower down the police hierarchy were participating in Safer Cities projects with more enthusiasm. The coordinator made some very interesting observations about the relationship between police attitudes to inter-agency work and the nature of the police organisation and decision-making structures. Within the police the emphasis is upon quick delivery; it is a task-oriented organisation which demands quick and tangible results. Many other organisations however, do not hold to the same time-scales, and the process of information-sharing and decision-making can take considerably longer.

Overall, the Safer Cities project in force D area seemed to have set up some genuine inter-agency work in crime prevention. That was certainly the view of the coordinator:

It is simply the case that prior to April 1989 there was no history of inter-agency cooperation on crime prevention. There may have been
links with the police working with single agencies, for example the education authorities, but not any genuine multi-agency projects.

Other multi-agency projects
Since 1988 force B had in each division what were known as ‘multi-agency crime prevention initiatives’ (MACPIs). The roots of this development lay in the force’s leading role in one of the Home Office Five Towns Initiatives. In this force area, that project involved police officers working to steering panels of voluntary bodies. It was widely considered to be a success, and in 1987 the chief recommended to the police authority that there should be a similar structure in every local authority area in the force. The police approached the local authorities who were in favour of this, and the MACPIs came into being. The basic structure of each MACPI was the same, with the police providing a coordinator (usually an inspector), working to a steering panel with representatives from the relevant agencies, and administrative staff (often employment or youth trainees on the force scheme). The local authority provided accommodation, as well as some finance and administrative support.

The MACPIs tended not to focus on a whole local authority area but worked instead on a particular high-crime area of a division, an estate or a few police beats. The MACPIs all had similar terms of reference, a similar staffing structure with coordinator and steering panel, and a similar programme of work. All of the schemes carried out crime profiles of their respective areas, including business and residential surveys. All had the same computing facilities and research packages (developed by the force research department). The steering panel of one MACPI was quite a high-powered body with either the director or deputy director from all the main local authority departments, including education, social services, public highways, public works and planning. In addition, there was representation from the local Chamber of Commerce, church groups, and probation service. As the project developed, representatives from the transport executive, local councillors, residents’ associations, and other voluntary bodies became involved.

The MACPI coordinator gave the following account of how the priorities for the project were initially defined:

Initially, so I could give them something to work on I approached the three commanders for the sub-divisions covered by my area and asked each for one or two suggested target areas with reasons why. They each produced suggestions so I put together mini crime profiles on each of the areas and ended up with six of these – really to give the committee members some basic information on why the police thought those areas were suitable for action. It fell upon the panel members to go back to
their own organisation and discuss these suggestions and come back with preferred ones or even other ones. In [one town] there was a fairly unanimous decision to go into the area which was eventually chosen. I think all of the organisations that were involved had problems in that area. It didn’t work out quite as easily for all the initiatives.

It is worth noting that the coordinator clearly felt that the local police managers were the first people to approach when trying to formulate goals for a crime prevention project, although the other involved organisations had the opportunity to raise different priorities. In the event, it seems there was little conflict over the aims.

There was still a strong tendency to see multi-agency structures like the MACPIs as a way of educating agencies outside the police in the true nature of the problems of crime. The coordinator said that they had produced an in-depth crime profile that broke down the local crime statistics for the previous year:

I already knew a lot about the area having been a working policeman there. Putting it down on paper brought it home, but for the others [non-police] involved, we needed to get back to basics and show them what we were talking about, what these offences meant, how many, where, who was committing them.

The coordinator was vague about what the MACPI actually did to address the problems highlighted by the various surveys they had carried out in the early part of the project. He explained that the steering committee tried to coordinate action where more than one agency was already working in a particular area. In response to the problem of residential burglary, the housing department resolved to grant resources to replacing all the back doors of council accommodation in the area with more secure ones. This led to other departments introducing target-hardening measures. The coordinator appeared to evaluate the project in terms of the effects on reported crime in the surveys. For example he said there was a clear effect on the figures for residential burglary. When asked about the lasting effects of the MACPI, the coordinator was unsure that effects like lower rates of burglary would continue. The MACPI was a permanent structure, but moved on to concentrate on other areas and problems within the division. What it had achieved was a much better network of communications within the division between the various agencies involved in crime prevention.

The coordinator was asked directly about his experience of working with other organisations, and his reply supported some of the observations made the Safer Cities coordinator in area D (see above) about the different organisational culture of the police force.
Initially I did [find it difficult working with people from very different kinds of organisation], but I did find some like minds. Working in the police you get used to asking someone to do something and getting a response within a deadline. A lot of the other organisations were not used to working to such tight deadlines, there wasn’t the same sense of urgency.

A more unusual development in force B was the long-standing inter-agency structure on a particular problem estate which included a working group with representatives from management level in the police, other local authority services, and community groups. Below this there was a ‘task group’ consisting of front-line workers from the different agencies. This was an example of a ‘priority area team’ and was based in one of the sub-divisions visited in the study.

Finally, in force C area a working party on inner-city disorder was set up in 1988 following a conference at the local University on crime prevention attended by the force CPO and a sub-divisional superintendent. The commander of the sub-division covering the central city area had favoured a combination of short-term high-profile policing of the city centre area, with a more strategic inter-agency approach. The working group was chaired by a city councillor, and included representatives of the main brewers, licensees, taxi and bus companies, environmental health department, and fast food shops. This had come up with a number of actions. These included reducing the number of times that half-price drinks were offered by pubs in the early evenings, detailed instructions to door staff, and afternoon closure of public houses on some days before Christmas (when in the previous year trouble had been at its highest).

This working party also became the centre of a controversy between the police authority and chief constable over closed circuit television (CCTV). The police favoured installing CCTV in the city centre, but were keen that this should not to be seen as a police initiative. The working party discussed the matter, decided in favour, and applied for funding from the Safer Cities project. Meanwhile, the police authority complained to the chief that the matter had not been discussed with them, and called for a report. A number of police authority members had strong reservations about the civil liberties implications of CCTV. At the time of the study, the matter had not been resolved, but it is an interesting example of how different levels in the system can conflict. The police authority was aggrieved because they had not been consulted about CCTV. However, the chief constable clearly did not feel it was a matter for the police authority, partly because he did not consult about things in general. However, CCTV was supported by representatives of the city council (also Labour-led) and it was a city councillor who chaired the working group. The issue can thus also
be seen as partly about conflict between the city and county council, which according to the police authority chair, transcended party loyalties.

Evidence of a shift towards multi-agency working

In forces B, C, and D there was some police involvement in activities initiated by the Safer Cities Projects, and within force B there was also police involvement in multi-agency crime prevention initiatives. However, the level of police resources devoted to these activities was not substantial, and the police had not fully accepted the principle that they should share responsibility equally with several other agencies. The shift towards multi-agency working in forces B, C, and D was therefore partial and limited.

In force A area there was no Safer Cities project, and even less evidence of a shift towards multi-agency working. The CPOs in one of the sub-divisions appeared dubious about what they called the ‘new school’ of thought in crime prevention, and preferred to concentrate on the traditional approach. While they did not express hostility to the concept of inter-agency working, the examples they gave were simply of contacts with agencies outside the police. For example, they were enthusiastic about the design advisory service, but in reality this only involved giving advice to the borough council. Although the CPO on another sub-division claimed to be a supporter of a new kind of crime prevention, once again he perceived multi-agency work as any liaison with outside bodies and assumed that the other agencies should take the lead from the police. The CPO complained that the local authority did not take on board his recommendations, and was not sufficiently open to police advice. The 1983 Annual Report had stated that ‘locks, bolts, bars and intruder alarms continue to form the basis and main area of the department’s work’. Although there was disagreement about which should be the lead agency, all officers appeared to be united in the view that crime prevention was substantially shifting away from this narrow definition. There were a number of special projects that involved working with agencies and bodies outside the police, but these were isolated and on a small scale. At the sub-divisional level, the officers talked enthusiastically about how the devolution of crime prevention responsibility had dramatically shifted the kind of crime prevention work that they did. In practice, however, the main change appeared to be an increase in quantity of the same target-hardening work they had been doing before.

Thus, where there had been a limited shift towards multi-agency work, in forces B, C, and D, the impetus had come largely from outside the police service, principally from the Safer Cities projects. In force A, where there
was no Safer Cities Project, even this limited shift seemed not to have occurred.

**Reasons for the lack of fundamental change in police crime prevention policy**

The previous sections have shown that there was evidence of a considerable number of crime prevention initiatives of one sort or another in the four study forces, and of some increase in the level of crime prevention activity by the forces over the 1980s. For example, all of the forces had specialist crime prevention officers and central departments; in one the central crime prevention department was larger and better funded than in the others, and had grown over the 1980s. NW schemes had rapidly proliferated during the 1980s, and had attracted considerable policing resources. All four forces had introduced new policies for dealing with burglar alarms following recommendations made by ACPO in 1989. A wide variety of special projects with crime prevention objectives were introduced or supported by the police over the 1980s, including design services, training schemes and organised activities for young people, crime pattern analysis on a limited scale, and participation in specific crime prevention initiatives. The police in three of the areas had been involved in a number of local initiatives launched within the framework of the Safer Cities Programme; in one area they had been involved in multi-agency crime prevention initiatives within each of the constituent local authority areas; in another they had taken the leading role in setting up a working party on inner-city disorder, which had come up with various actions.

In spite of these developments, there was evidence of a wider failure by the police to make substantive changes towards introducing effective crime prevention policies. Except in force B, crime prevention departments remained small and had not grown. Any police contribution to community-based crime prevention schemes was minor. Although there was a huge growth in NW schemes, they were inadequately supported by the police, and were probably largely ineffective. There was generally a lack of resources and expertise within the study forces to support proactive crime prevention; for example, the impact of architectural liaison officers, with their limited knowledge base and small numbers, must have been minimal. Social crime prevention initiatives initiated by the police had tenuous links with concrete crime prevention objectives. There was a general failure of the forces to develop crime pattern analysis or to take an analytical approach to crime prevention strategy. There was little evidence of concrete policy initiatives embodying a major transformation away from narrow target-hardening initiatives and towards the multi-agency approach.
Finally, none of the crime prevention activity by the study forces was adequately evaluated, and there was little evidence that it was effective.

It is important to consider why some limited changes in crime prevention policy occurred, and why more fundamental changes did not.

One over-riding feature is that with the partial exception of force B, the forces did not have an overall crime prevention strategy. In fact, they did not have a policy at all, taking that to mean a tangible set of proposals or objectives, and methods for achieving them. The way the force CPO in area A put it was ‘there are no tablets of stone’. Partly influenced by Home Office circulars, senior officers at HQ in force A had some ideas about crime prevention policy, but the new organisational structure placed the responsibility with divisional commanders. The department could not force policy onto the divisions. For example, the force CPO stated explicitly that the police should not always be the lead agency in crime prevention, and yet at the local level the police did lead the initiatives in which they were involved.

It is possible that the police find it hard to combine a strategic approach to crime prevention policy with the requirement that local initiatives should be a response to local problems, and should be mounted in partnership with other agencies. Certainly the best example of a policy formulated at the centre and implemented locally was the ACPO policy on burglar alarms. In this instance, the problems caused by false alarm calls were similar everywhere, and the police were able to impose their new policy rather than work with other agencies to develop it. This was also interesting as an example of a national policy formulated by ACPO (with the active encouragement of the Home Office) and then implemented with rare exceptions by all police forces.

However, there is no reason in principle why local initiatives should not take place within the framework of a central strategy. Yet police discussion of crime prevention is almost never strategic: it is dominated by the fortunes of particular schemes that become fashionable and talked about for a time, then later fall out of favour. In this process, the Home Office seems to act as a central clearing house. The idea for a particular initiative originates in one force, becomes known by the Home Office, in rare cases is evaluated by the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit, is publicised in a circular, is taken up by other forces, proves disappointing or too demanding of police resources, and falls out of favour. For example, circular 44/90 described a number of case studies of good practice, two of which originated in force A.

At first sight, force B may seem to be an exception. The force perceived itself as leading the field in terms of police involvement in crime prevention,
and certainly, compared with the other three, force B showed a greater commitment in terms of staffing and resources, a wider and more long-standing development of multi-agency structures, and a stronger public commitment to the concept of crime prevention. Yet on closer examination, most of the activities of force B in this field lacked substance in that they were not directed towards achieving concrete and clearly defined crime prevention results.

The large and relatively well-staffed Community Crime Prevention Department was a powerful player in the internal politics of the police organisation. A representative from the force’s research department (Inspection and Development) mentioned that the CCPD was of such high status in the force that it did not need to use the research department to back up its claims for resources. The importance of the department was a fact noted and not always welcomed by other sections of the police force. Informal conversations with CID officers on sub-division gave rise to a number of critical comments such as the following one by a Detective Inspector: ‘Have you come across "Barney the Bloodhound" yet!?... This force has quite a healthy crime prevention department, well resourced. But we’ve still got a 10 per cent rise in this sub-division, it’s hard to see what good they’re doing.’ Then, in response to the question ‘Does the fact that the CCP department and CID answer to the same ACC make any difference substantively’ the DI said:

You tell me. I see the CID and uniform as totally different, they have different rules of engagement. I suppose I’m a dyed in the wool detective. You will find officers on sub-division who during the course of their work feel they need to get in touch with CCP. They will find 17 pages of little venues that guys have dived into away from operational policing, some of it is good and necessary. We must educate the public to take greater care; they seem to think there are thousands of us here. But I saw one thing in particular which annoyed me. Before Christmas there was a crime prevention shopping trip to [a city in a neighbouring county] organised by the CCPD. The idea was to sell tickets on a bus to a new shopping centre in ---. On the way down, officers from the CCPD would give crime prevention advice and show videos. I don’t think they found enough to fill the bus... To hire a bus to --- to tell people about crime prevention is obscene to me, when I’m struggling to resource my detectives to make inroads into crime. The best crime prevention for me is when they’re in... jail... I don’t see much of the CPO, he goes off to factories and does things with Safer Cities. They’ve got a healthy budget, but what the hell they do I don’t know!

There was also criticism from other departments of the way that CCPD was seen to ‘hijack’ responsibility for certain initiatives even when they
were not the obvious choice for such a function, the case in point being that of the experimental domestic violence unit.

Discussions with the main research department in force B gave some interesting insights into the process of policy formulation within the police organisation. The head of the department was quite frank in admitting that the force had a ‘progressive’ image and a chief constable with a high public profile. The problem with this combination was that the force, along with other police forces in the country, was sometimes almost desperate to be recognised as progressive. This led to hasty public statements from the chief constable which were reported widely by the press, and then led to a force working party being set up to investigate the implications of what had been claimed. This, according to the officer, was the wrong way around. He saw the main impetus for many innovations in the police organisation, as the desire to be noticed, on the part of both individual officers eager for promotion, and entire forces eager to impress the Home Office. This often led to policy initiatives being introduced over-hastily, without proper planning, and resources being committed without the aid of an objective and detailed evaluation. Thus, the fact that Home Office circulars had made the issue of domestic violence ‘sexy’ meant that it was very difficult to evaluate critically the effects of a specialist unit. The tendency was to see it as self-evidently beneficial, and worthy of resources. The same problem applied to the introduction of administrative support units and many crime prevention initiatives.

Much of this criticism seems to be justified. Compared with the other forces visited, force B appeared to be more committed to evaluating initiatives and gathering hard information about projects, yet there was still a tenuous connection between the results of such evaluations and decisions on policy. Thus, officers in CCPD said that the domestic violence unit had been a success, and they knew it would be adopted as force policy, even before the official evaluation had been completed. The various initiatives in social crime prevention were not really evaluated at all. Senior officers in CCPD were slightly uncomfortable about this, and were aware of the criticisms, but still supported the force involvement in such projects. The way that the force CPO rationalised the contradiction in this position was to argue that the crime prevention part of policing is one of the most important service aspects of policing; to remove it to other agencies would leave the police with just a repressive function, which would substantially reduce the co-operation received from the public in carrying out law enforcement tasks.

In contrast to senior officers elsewhere, for example in force D, those in force B did not believe that the police should always take the lead in
crime prevention. Both the chief superintendent who headed the CCPD and other officers of the department independently agreed with the proposal that the crime prevention structure should be based on local government, and none suggested that the police should always take the lead because of their knowledge of crime and criminals. However, in practice there were few crime prevention initiatives in which force B had participated on equal terms with other agencies.

It was because of the views of the then chief constable that crime prevention was given a higher priority in force B than elsewhere. In fact, the appearance of a progressive crime prevention policy in force B had been an important influence on national policy. It was partly because of this relationship that national policy, like force B policy, lacked substance. Despite a considerable level of activity in force B, and a number of initiatives that were noticed both locally and nationally, there was little or no evidence of concrete results. Specific initiatives were not evaluated, and at an aggregate level the force experienced higher than average increases in recorded crime levels over the 1980s.

The lack of a crime prevention strategy was particularly clear in force C. The police, as was admitted explicitly by one senior officer, were sitting on the fence. On the one hand, they saw themselves as primarily a law-enforcement agency, and perhaps not well-suited to running a programme like ‘Operation Lifestyle’. They recognised that other agencies might be able to run such projects better and more cheaply, and that they divert resources from the core police functions. On the other hand, officers felt the need to emphasise the service aspect which is so often a big part of these schemes. They felt that such projects improve relationships between the police and the public at large, thus creating the conditions for more successful exercise of the law enforcement function.

Although there was talk of the move to the multi-agency approach in force C, actual developments of this kind were particularly limited. This seemed to stem from a somewhat strained relationship between the police and the county council. The chair of the police authority had strong reservations about the development of crime prevention projects such as Safer Cities and Crime Concern in so far as they took crime prevention out of the hands of the county council. The conflict between the city council and the county council tended to inhibit the development of multi-agency work, as in the case of the closed circuit television proposal.

Discussions with senior police officers in the force gave rise to some interesting comments about the development of a crime prevention structure. Although it was accepted, as in other forces, that the most appropriate agency for coordinating crime prevention would probably be
local government, there were more reservations about this in force C. The chief superintendent in charge of the force services department (which covered crime prevention) had an interesting angle on the police service’s reaction to the AMA’s proposals for development of the crime prevention structure:

A lot of aggro came from the police service. The AMA had got quite a detailed plan on which they would take responsibility for crime prevention, and generally that was rebuffed by the police service. They felt that the budget for it should be centrally funded, but it was highly likely that the budget would come from the police budget which understandably the police service would be against. Also, if it was put out to them, it would no doubt assign it to the chief executive, but that would really mean the chairman of the police committee to do the organisation and direction, and they thought in terms of using police officers to do that... The partnership approach is a response to pressure from the police

On this account, the police service as a whole had resisted the proposal that responsibility for crime prevention should be given to local authorities because this would mean losing resources to local authorities and ceding operational control over some aspects of policing.

During the 1980s there were a number of positive developments in crime prevention taken by the force D. The community affairs department was upgraded by placing a chief superintendent as its head, which was intended to give the department more credibility both outside and within the organisation. It also meant that department now had a representative on the force policy-making team. The first appointment to the post was a young officer with interesting views about the role of the police in the community and crime prevention. He was also willing to experiment and innovate. He completed a wide-ranging review of the community affairs department, and set in motion the project of devolving responsibility for crime prevention to the level of the sub-division.

The force cautiously encouraged NW schemes, had followed the ACPO burglar alarm policy, and had established a design advisory service. It is likely that the idea for the design advisory service came to force D from another force (possibly force A), perhaps through the central clearing house of the Home Office. (Secured By Design was mentioned in the 1990 crime prevention circular.)

But there were a number of factors that may have reduced the positive benefits from crime prevention initiatives. As the force review pointed out, although appointing a chief superintendent as head of department was an important signal, it was not enough on its own to bring about lasting change. The force’s lack of strategy was shown by the replacement of the first head
of community affairs by a more traditional successor, who had entirely
different attitudes and perspectives. The new chief superintendent and his
deputy believed that the police must always be the leading light in crime
prevention. They were suspicious of the ability or willingness of local
authorities to work with the police, believed in the over-riding importance
of autocrime, and tended to see the multi-agency approach as mere
cooperation or liaison with one or two outside agencies. These views were
influential, although they were not replicated throughout the
organisation.

Although responsibility for crime prevention was thought to have been
successfully devolved to the sub-divisions, there was little evidence that
local crime prevention strategies were being developed. Policy-making on
crime prevention was fairly centralised. This applied to NW (which
reflected the chief constable’s views), the devolution of the crime
prevention function (initiated by the department head), and centrally-
administered policies like the design advisory service and the burglar alarm
policy (which had little to do with the sub-divisions). However, in other
senses, policy was diffuse and ambiguous. The sub-divisionalisation
experiment had further clouded the role of HQ, and the Safer Cities project
was beginning to introduce projects explicitly shared amongst a variety of
agencies. In many ways, policy in this area had only just begun to develop,
and a number of officers talked of crime pattern analysis and targeted
projects (which are basic to crime prevention) as future projects. In the
words of the Safer Cities coordinator the police had some way to go, and
at the time were ‘just scratching the surface’. He added that ‘it’s amazing
how much information they have which they have simply not got a clue
how to use’. The Safer Cities project tended to produce a shift in crime
prevention policy away from a narrow security-based and police-led
approach, and towards a more general inter-agency effort. Although the
police claimed that they were the only agency to respond positively to Home
Office circular 8/84, there was little evidence to support this. In general,
police officers tended to view multi-agency work as anything involving
contact with an outside agency, and the chief superintendent’s view that the
police should take the lead in crime prevention was reflected in the views
of a number of his staff. However, the officers who were involved in the
Safer Cities projects appeared to be enthusiastic and committed. The move
to the approach embodied in the Safer Cities project was not, of course,
initiated by the police, nor by the police authority, which had little input
into any shift in the approach to crime prevention.

Taking an overview of all these influences across the four forces, it
seems that the impetus for positive developments in police crime prevention
The growth of crime prevention

Policy often came from outside the police service: in particular, from the Home Office directly, or from the Safer Cities projects established by the Home Office. Where ideas came from other police forces, it was often through the Home Office acting as a clearing house. The development of crime prevention in force B arose from the enthusiasm of the then chief constable, but lacked substance.

The failure to change crime prevention policy in a more fundamental way seems to be tied up with a lack of strategy. The police service was not sure whether this was a function that it should seriously take on. It did not know how to combine a strategy on crime prevention with encouragement for local initiatives launched in partnership with other agencies. It was not under strong pressure to make a fundamental shift (unlike in the case of the response to crimes against women and children). Finally, the police service was unlikely to formulate a viable strategy amid the wider confusion of government policy in the field of crime prevention.

Policy-making at the national level

The lack of a crime prevention strategy at the force level was matched by vagueness and deliberate ambivalence within central government. The department concerned with crime prevention policy within the police service was the Home Office, although the Department of the Environment had also been responsible for launching a substantial crime prevention initiative (the Priority Estates Programme). Of course, a comprehensive approach to crime prevention would require the active participation of all departments, since all government-funded activities have implications for crime and its prevention. However, at the present early stage in the development of crime prevention policy, substantive developments are likely to come from the lead department.

Interviews with a number of senior Home Office officials gave a clear picture of the stages of policy development during the 1980s. The paramount influence was the view of the department rather than that of politicians, and senior officials had the decisive say in forming the departmental view. One senior official thought that the key event was the arrival of a new Permanent Secretary in 1979, and not the coming to power of the Conservative government in the same year. Officials did consider the advent of the new Conservative administration to be an important development, although a strong commitment to change in the field of crime prevention was not part of their initial agenda. Rather, a new administration was likely to be looking for ideas and initiatives which it could pick up and develop. At least initially, it seemed that pressures from elected politicians contributed only indirectly to the development of crime prevention policy.
The then Deputy Under Secretary for the Criminal Department described the influences over development of crime prevention policy as follows:

One was the arrival of the Conservative administration. More important was the arrival of [the new] Permanent Secretary at that stage. The original emphasis on crime prevention was very much [his] own initiative... Originally this was [the] Permanent Secretary looking for and finding a new theme to develop in the Office irrespective of the political administration. It wasn’t until quite a bit later on that the political administration seized on it as an attractive political programme.

This account was confirmed by other senior Home Office officials. According to the then Head of the Research and Planning Unit, discussion within the Unit of the need for a policy on crime prevention had started in the 1970s. During the 1980s the focus of attention moved from a narrow emphasis on situational measures toward broader social or community-based initiatives. John Patten, a junior Minister at the time, had been on an official visit to France and Germany to look at social crime prevention measures and decarceration initiatives. He had been impressed by some of the things he witnessed and a subsequent Green Paper, it was suggested, included some ideas imported from these visits.

Clearly John Patten, the elected Minister, was of key importance in this development. However, in the opinion of senior civil servants he was firmly nudged in the direction in which the officials wished him to go. The policy-making model in operation in this case, according to several senior officials, was one in which policy is largely framed by experts and then ‘sold’ to ministers.

While ministers took a secondary role in the initial development of crime prevention policy, later stages saw a greater assertion of the political agenda. According to Home Office officials, William Whitelaw did not see a major role for crime prevention, and was only marginally involved in the development of policy, although unlikely to interfere with it. (For a discussion of the politics of crime prevention at this time, see Heal, 1991.) Since Whitelaw’s successor, Leon Brittan, was less sceptical about crime prevention, senior officials then took the opportunity to suggest several initiatives. In 1983, the Crime Prevention Unit was set up within the Police Department of the Home Office, which apparently signalled that the police were to have an important role in crime prevention. At about the same time, the Five Towns Project was started. This was an initiative directly managed by the Home Office that aimed to establish multi-agency crime prevention programmes. At about the same time, NW was developing within local police forces; officials and ministers in the Home Office were, in the Deputy Secretary’s words, ‘pleased to seize on it’ as another new idea.
Two years after the issue of the inter-departmental circular 8/84, crime prevention began to receive support from the highest political level. In 1986 the Prime Minister chaired a special seminar on the subject at 10 Downing Street, attended by the Home Secretary and other ministers. This seminar placed a particularly strong emphasis on the need for the business community to support the development of crime prevention measures, and it led directly to the creation of the Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention.

Following the 1987 election, the new Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, decided to make crime prevention a major plank of policy. The Conservatives had made a manifesto promise in the 1987 election that they would put more resources into crime prevention. John Patten, was put in charge of developing a ‘total response’ to crime, and the Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention (consisting of 13 ministers) attempted to coordinate crime prevention initiatives between government departments.

The role of circulars
There have been two major circulars on crime prevention. The first was issued in 1984 (8/84) and the second in 1990 (44/90). The 1984 circular had a long history. According to one senior Home Office researcher there was ‘at least ten years of discussion’ leading up to the publication of circular 8/84. It arose from a developing tradition of research and analysis within HORU about the causes of crime and the feasibility of different kinds of crime reduction policy. Ron Clarke, then Head of the Research Unit, played the central role in the development of this new thinking. Along with a number of American writers such as James Q Wilson, Clarke was critical of theories that concentrated on explaining why some individuals are more disposed towards crime than others. He shifted attention to those factors that increase or reduce the chances that someone will commit a crime in a given situation. He argued that there was more scope for public policy to change criminal opportunities and risks than to influence criminal dispositions. The circular reflected this theoretical position stating that:

whilst there is a need to address the social factors associated with criminal behaviour, and policies are continually being devised to tackle this aspect of the problem, these are essentially long-term measures. For the short-term, the best way forward is to reduce through management, design or changes in the environment, the opportunities that exist for crime to occur.

The circular then outlined (in very general terms) the argument that the police alone could not be expected to deal with crime. It stated that inter-agency cooperation between the police and other local agencies was essential to successful development of local crime prevention initiatives,
and suggested that individuals at chief officer or director level be identified to ensure satisfactory liaison between Departments.

The process of consultation before the issue of the circular is somewhat unclear. AMA representatives said that their association had been sent the circular in draft and had responded formally by setting out their ‘policy stall’. However, their representatives explained that the matter of crime prevention was not only one for the AMA police committee, but also for individual local authorities. The AMA was not asked to coordinate the views of member authorities and reply to the Home Office on their behalf; rather, the draft circular was sent directly to individual authorities.

Whereas the circular 8/84 was a brief outline of the need for agencies to work together in developing crime prevention initiatives, the following crime prevention circular 44/90 was a more detailed statement of the same principles. This time, it was decided (by Home Office officials) to make specific examples of good practice a central feature of the circular, with common themes between them outlined in the text. In February 1990 a draft circular was sent to about 30 organisations including the police staff associations, the local authority associations, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, the Fire Unions, NACRO and Crime Concern. These organisations had six weeks in which to make comments on the draft. An official from the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit (who drafted the circular) said that the comments that came back did not lead to major changes in the final document: ‘We gave them all six weeks to comment. Their views were largely complementary and complimentary... Detail and margins apart, they were happy with the document that was emerging.’ The official responsible for drafting the circular strongly denied that the consultation process had led to major changes of substance in the circular. He did say, however, that the local authorities strongly supported the notion that they should play a central role in developing crime prevention. However, this was not perceived as diminishing the role of the police.

This leads to an important crux in the development of national crime prevention policy. Interviews within the Home Office revealed an ambiguity as to which agency should take the lead in crime prevention. Officials were not prepared to be drawn into saying whether responsibility for coordinating crime prevention should lie with the police, with local authorities, or with some other agencies, perhaps voluntary organisations. This ambivalence comes through clearly in both the circulars 8/84 and 44/90. Many Home Office officials argued that this was a deliberate and thought-through policy. This is illustrated by the answer given by one official from the Home Office crime prevention unit who responded to the
suggestion that failure to put one organisation in the driving seat was simply a way of avoiding the issue by saying:

No, it isn’t, no. No, I’d reject that. We could find ourselves in the position of broker between two sectors that are jockeying for position. That’s not our role. Our role is to foster and develop it first in the police, secondly with the local council... It’s equality. All the evidence points towards a joint effort being the most effective. Now we’re not going to spoil that by suggesting the police should always be in the lead... So it’s not avoiding the issue at all.

This interpretation of the Home Office approach was supported by interviews with officials from F3 division (covering police operations and crime prevention). A senior member of that division said:

In practice we couldn’t possibly have given the Safer Cities money to the police because we would have seriously endangered our relationship with local authorities who expect to have some involvement in this area. If we gave the money instead to local authorities, that would endanger our relationship with the police. The policy is to keep all the players in play. It’s a balancing act. The Home Office can’t decide how it will develop, which agency will play the greatest role. We can only start things off, and act in a Machiavellian way if necessary to keep them going, to keep everyone involved, then wait and see how they develop. We can’t directly control it.

However, the Deputy Secretary in the Home Office at the time explicitly contradicted the views of other, less senior, officials, when he said ‘there is this gap in the structure of who is actually in charge locally, which we have never actually settled. That’s the fundamental weakness of the whole crime prevention programme’.

Special projects
Home Office circulars expounded the general principle of ‘multi-agency’ crime prevention without making clear which agency should be in the driving seat. Another central part of national crime prevention policy during the 1980s was the setting up of centrally-funded local initiatives such as the Five Towns, Safer Cities and Priority Estates projects. The first two of these were funded by the Home Office, and the last was funded by the Department of the Environment.

The Five Towns project was set up by the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit in early 1986. It established local crime prevention projects in five towns, each to last 18 months in the first instance. The areas chosen were intended to represent a wide geographical spread and a range of social conditions. The Home Office funded a project coordinator in each of the towns to oversee inter-agency structures with representation from public
services and the local authorities. The approach first established by the Five Towns project was extended in the Safer Cities project, which started in 1988 as part of the government’s Action for Cities project. However, the Safer Cities programme was carried out on a much broader scale, involving 9 local authority areas in its first year, and with the ultimate aim of including 20 local projects. It was intended to provide a more coherent approach than the five towns project, focusing on the delivery of public services generally and the wider structure of society in a medium- to large-sized local authority area. The local authority had a more central role than in the five towns initiative. Home Office funding for Safer Cities was more substantial, covering the cost of a coordinator and two other staff, accommodation, running costs and grant funds to support local initiatives.

The Priority Estates Project (PEP) is an example at the national level of the ambivalence about who is ultimately responsible for crime prevention. As outlined above, it was an initiative funded by the Department of Environment (it funded the priority area team examined during the research in force B). Although crime and justice are not primary concerns of the Department of the Environment, the DoE interest in crime prevention sprang indirectly from its concern with the effect of vandalism, incivility and crime on the local environment. Both central and local government expressed concern over ‘the declining popularity of many housing estates’ (quoted in Rock, 1988) and in 1979 the Priority Estates Project (PEP) was launched. Its primary aim was to improve housing management and reduce the number of vacant properties in the most run-down housing estates. Thus, although they were run by different government departments, and departments with significantly different priorities, PEP and the Safer Cities programme overlapped to a considerable extent. Of course, they did not directly compete on the same housing estates.

Another important initiative was Crime Concern. According to the Deputy Under Secretary in the Home Office, this was an initiative driven by senior politicians independently of the officials who had taken the lead in other areas of crime prevention policy. Proposals for a national crime prevention body were included in the manifesto for the 1987 election, as outlined by this official:

The Conservative Party had worked up its proposal for a national crime prevention body which featured in the manifesto. That was generated on the political network, and the Home Office didn’t have a great deal to do with it, and I’m not sure we entirely understood what was in politician’s minds in putting it in the manifesto, but eventually it was given effect as Crime Concern, after quite a lot of discussion... about what form this national body might take.
Crime Concern is a curious hybrid, in that it sprang from a pledge in a Conservative Party manifesto, it was established by the incoming Conservative government, it was funded initially by the Home Office, but it is a voluntary organisation. Its initial task was to attempt to improve the quality of life by stimulating crime prevention. The plan in the beginning was to build on what was already in existence: NW, crime prevention panels, and crime reduction programmes like Safer Cities. Crime Concern received three years’ ‘pump-priming’ money from the Home Office, but quickly attempted to engage the cooperation of the private sector in developing good practice models and communication networks. Thus, for example, a consultancy service providing crime audits for businesses was set up early on and this has been followed by a number of initiatives aimed at raising financial support from the private sector. However, Crime Concern did not become financially self-sufficient within the target period of three years, and Home Office funding was extended for a further period.

The Crime Concern model built on earlier experience with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO). This was a genuinely voluntary organisation, in that it was originally established without government support. By the early 1980s its interests were broadening to include crime prevention on unpopular council housing estates. Its Safe Neighbourhoods Unit launched a number of pioneering schemes, increasingly with support from the Home Office and the Department of the Environment.

Other national influences
One method by which the local authority associations can attempt to exert influence over developments at national level is to set up working parties examining particular areas of policy, and disseminate their findings. Following this strategy, the AMA set up a major working party in 1988 tasked with examining the local authority role in crime prevention. The report suggested a three-tier structure for crime prevention based on central government, county councils, and district councils. County and district councillors working together would draw up a corporate plan setting out both general strategy and specific policies. The report recommended that crime prevention be resourced on the basis of a specific grant from central government. A representative of the AMA explained that central government was the main target of reports of this kind: as he put it, ‘the heavyweight stuff is directed at central government more than anyone’. It seems, however, that central government was not moved by these representations. The government made no proposals to give local
authorities either statutory responsibility for crime prevention, or funding to cover it.

By contrast, ACPO had an important influence nationally. A working party of ACPO’s crime committee formulated national guidelines in 1989, and its report set up the model of a community crime prevention department which was later followed by forces A and B. The chief constable of force B was clearly a strong influence upon this working party, and both the CPO from force B and the recommendations of the ACPO report appeared to have had a strong influence on developments in force A. In the report of the review of crime prevention which preceded the creation of a new CCP department, there were numerous references to the ACPO recommendations.

As set out in an earlier section, a senior officer in force C believed that opposition from ACPO had been crucial in dissuading the government from adopting the AMA’s proposals to give the central responsibility for crime prevention to local authorities. Because ACPO declined to participate in this research, this theory could not be tested further, but it seems highly plausible.

The other key national organisation in the development of crime prevention policy was NACRO. It established a Crime Prevention Unit in 1979 and the Safe Neighbourhoods Unit in 1980. NACRO used crime prevention a means of reorienting the emphasis in debates about crime and the treatment of offenders away from concern with punishment, deterrent sentences, police strength and police equipment. This found favour with officials in the Home Office and in October 1982 what one senior civil servant described as ‘the really quite critical seminar’ [to the development of thinking on crime prevention] was held at Bramshill, attended by police, central and local government and Vivien Stern, Director of NACRO. From this point onwards NACRO became increasingly involved in a variety of crime prevention initiatives, particularly on ‘problem estates’. The first schemes NACRO had been involved in had been in the late 1970s in Widnes (Osborn, 1982); by the time that 8/84 was issued in the mid-1980s NACRO had worked on almost twenty estates in London alone (Rock, 1988). By the late 1980s, NACRO was a source of significant practical knowledge about crime prevention, was one of the organisations consulted about the draft of circular 44/90 and eventually was the source of several of the recruits to the new quango, Crime Concern.

**Effect of national policy on police forces**

The preceding sections have shown that the idea of crime prevention as a new field of policy arose among central government officials as the result
of a train of thought which started from the failure of traditional responses to crime. By 1986 it had been taken up enthusiastically by the most senior figures in the Conservative administration. Yet within two or three years, the new policy had begun to run into the sand when no agency had been appointed to run it, and the only budgets assigned to it were for centrally administered initiatives like Safer Cities.

In particular, the police had not been assigned any specific responsibility in the field of crime prevention. Messages from the Home Office about the police role were contradictory: for example, whereas the crime prevention unit was established within the Home Office’s police department, the Five Towns and later the Safer Cities initiative promoted multi-agency work in which the police had an uncertain function; the same applied to Crime Concern. Central government policy was equally unclear about the balance that should be struck between target hardening or physical crime prevention and more broadly based programmes intended to build up the capacity of communities to control and resist crime. Which agencies should be responsible for which types of crime prevention activity remained equally unclear.

This confusion or indecision in central government policy was probably among the reasons why police forces generally failed to develop convincing crime reduction programmes, as set out in an earlier section.

**THE INFLUENCE OF POLICE AUTHORITIES**

There was little evidence of active input into the process of decision-making about crime prevention from any of the four police authorities covered by this study. The police authority in force A was party to quite a high level of information about policing from the chief constable. However, little input was made into the development of crime prevention policy. The chair of the authority suggested that their main role in the development of crime prevention was to appoint the chief constable and then give him support. There was little evidence from the minutes of any attempt by the authority to influence crime prevention policy in a substantive way.

Force B had perhaps the most active of the police authorities studied. The minutes of authority meetings showed that the chief constable was often asked to provide fairly detailed information about what the force was doing in terms of crime prevention, and also the overall strategy and philosophy underlying it. The police authority had set up a specific crime prevention sub-committee, though the chair of this sub-committee did not confirm the impression given by the minutes of active member input into the development of policy. In fact, he appeared to have little time for the concept of crime prevention, and made it clear that he favoured a stronger
Policy of enforcement. Despite the more detailed interventions of this particular police authority, there was no evidence of the authority developing its own ideas on crime prevention and pushing them. The overall impression was still one of the chief constable driving policy, with the authority perhaps taking a greater interest in what was happening than was the case in other forces.

Policy in force C was influenced little by the activities of the police committee. This was despite what were perhaps more strident efforts on the part of the chair to have some real input into policing in the area. The chair clearly felt that it was the local authority that should have responsibility for crime prevention and that the police should take its lead from them. The chief constable, however, jealously (and successfully) guarded his independence. For example, he refused for several years to support NW despite vocal representations from some members of the police authority (and from others).

In force D, leading police authority members’ enthusiasm about the commitment of their force to crime prevention was not matched by their level of knowledge about what was actually going on. Again, their main contribution was to choose the chief constable and give him support. However, in contrast to force C, police authority members had taken the initiative in the matter of introducing NW.

DEMOCRATIC INFLUENCES AND CRIME PREVENTION

Equity

In one important sense an increasing emphasis on crime prevention as a policing task is associated with increased equity in the provision of services. Much of policing – that, at least, which is focused on the tasks of crime control and order-maintenance – is unequally focused on working class or relatively disadvantaged sections of society. These communities are characterised by high crime rates (although there is, of course, more than an element of self-fulfilling prophecy in concentrating policing in ‘high-crime’ areas) and therefore suffer disproportionately from rising crime. A general policing strategy which includes a vastly increased commitment to the prevention of crime in those areas which are most badly hit would, if it were at all successful, have the effect of reducing the disparity between the levels of victimisation in different communities. Undoubtedly, a large proportion of crime prevention activities – especially of the design or target-hardening variety – have been concentrated in such communities. The major exception to this is probably NW.

Of course, crime prevention would only help to achieve the democratic ideal of equity if successful. Although many crime prevention projects have
been evaluated in one way or another, there remains little firm evidence that many of them have had much impact on crime rates. One of the central problems in attempting to measure such effects is the problem of ‘displacement’. It is suggested, particularly in relation to ‘situational’ initiatives, that if opportunities for a particular kind of crime are effectively blocked in one area, then similar offences will be committed elsewhere, or at some other point in time, or in another way, or else offences of a different type will be committed instead. Although displacement would weaken crime reduction effects, it could help to achieve a redistribution of crime victimisation in accordance with the principle of equity. Even if a given initiative cannot reduce the total amount of crime, it may displace crime from one neighbourhood to another – from a neighbourhood with very high crime rates to one with lower rates – and evening out the crime rates in this way would be equitable.

Barr and Pease (1990) have described a policy similar to this as ‘crime deflection’, and Pease (1994:677) has argued that ‘deflection may be a success. Displacement is never referred to as a success. Crime deflection is benign when the deflected crime causes less harm or misery than the original crime.’ Although straightforward deflection would not necessarily result in less harm or misery being caused, it might have the effect of equalising some of the impact.

It should be noted that crimes prevented are not necessarily displaced. Furthermore, Clarke (1992) has argued that there is a complementary phenomenon of ‘diffusion’ whereby crime prevention directed at a particular kind of crime or at a particular area also tends to prevent crimes of a different type or in adjoining areas. However, to the extent that displacement occurs, it may be used to help achieve the democratic objective of equity.

**Delivery of service**

Although crime prevention has been an explicit function of policing ever since the development of the modern service, it is only within the last 20 or so years that resources have been devoted to specialist crime prevention initiatives as opposed to relying on the supposed preventive element in such activities as patrol. Even so, crime prevention activities continue to account for only a very small proportion of overall policing budgets. Pease (1994:684) has observed that ‘those forces with the highest rates of recorded crime tend to be those with the lowest proportion of the force’s strength devoted to crime prevention. It is almost as though crime prevention is a luxury to which forces may devote resources when there are no more pressing demands on their time.’
Despite the problems associated with measuring the success or otherwise of crime prevention initiatives, and the questionable methods used to evaluate some crime prevention activities, nevertheless this area of policing has been regularly scrutinised by researchers. There is now a minor industry of academics and others engaged in the search for successful crime preventive techniques and there have, on occasion, been some successes (see reviews in Clarke, 1992; Pease, 1994). Probably the majority of crime prevention initiatives remain unproven in terms of their success in preventing, reducing or deflecting crime. However, the continued search for innovation together with a trend towards rigorous evaluation is likely to lead to a more effectively delivered service in the longer term.

Responsiveness
Although there is a strong body of public opinion that seeks significant reductions in levels of crime, it is not clear that there is any direct link between public opinion and the developing interest in crime prevention among professionals inside and outside the police. From the evidence presented above, it seems that crime prevention policy has largely been the product of a specific political and administrative élite (this idea is developed further below in relation to participation). Where crime prevention policy has perhaps been most responsive has been in relation to those areas of policing considered in the following chapter: sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse. In each of these areas – though to differing degrees – an increasingly vocal public (or sections of the public) have made policy change within the police almost inevitable. This was much less true of the crime prevention initiatives discussed in this chapter.

None of the four police authorities covered by this study had any significant influence on the development of crime prevention policy. Even where the police authority’s influence was highest (in force B), it expressed itself by requests for detailed information from the chief, and not by actively initiating policy developments. In the other three areas, the influence of the police authorities was markedly less. Thus, developments in crime prevention cannot be portrayed as in any way a response to local representative bodies.

Distribution of power
This is an especially interesting element in relation to crime prevention. The Home Office has been extremely reluctant to place the main responsibility for crime prevention policy in the hands of one agency. This may have happened because a bid by the local authorities to take on the main responsibility was blocked by ACPO, although it is represented by
The growth of crime prevention

many Home Office officials as a deliberate policy of keeping all the players on board (in practice, more or less the same thing). Another factor was that whereas the obvious candidate for lead agency status was the local authorities, giving them more statutory powers would have been in conflict with the Conservative administration’s approach to local government.

The Crime Prevention Unit, the division within which much policy in this area was formulated, was itself part of the Home Office Police Department. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that much of the responsibility for crime prevention has continued to lie with the police. Although in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on inter-agency and multi-agency cooperation, this has not resulted in anything approaching pluralism in this area. The creation of Crime Concern has not changed the balance of power in a significant way, since this apparently voluntary body remains heavily dependent on the Home Office.

Information
In spite of the trend towards evaluation mentioned above under service delivery, and despite the rapid development of crime prevention over recent years, there remains a striking lack of hard evidence about the effectiveness of different kinds of approach. Few of the initiatives within the police forces visited during this study were evaluated in the strict sense. For example, officers in all forces tended to evaluate NW in terms of number of schemes or number of households covered, rather than in terms of real effects on crime. On the other hand, it is possible that NW could provide a structure through which more complete and more pertinent information than is usually available could be delivered to the public. Although this happens only occasionally at the moment, there is no reason in principle why NW should not become an important forum for police-public communication. As in other areas of criminal justice policy, a wide body of research on crime prevention has provided a range of information about the causes of crime and effectiveness of police methods in dealing with crime. However, much of this information is created by the ‘experts’, and is in the main only accessible to them. Public opinion, therefore, is informed only indirectly by such research.

Redress
If the policy is not working, can the wider public bring the decision-makers to account and bring about a reversal in policy? Where geographical communities or communities of interest have resolved that they are being insufficiently protected by the police from increasing crime and incivility, and where this has resulted in an increased emphasis on a policy of crime
prevention, then some redress has been made. This is perhaps true in some senses of NW. As fear of crime has apparently increased so have demands for increased surveillance. Because police resources were insufficient to provide the degree of surveillance required, a police-facilitated self-help programme (NW) developed. What is more, it continued to develop in the face of police and central government scepticism about its value. This is a point at which redress and participation overlap: it is difficult to disentangle what is the development of new policy as a consequence of public participation, and what is the overturning or redirecting of previous policy as a result of public dissatisfaction.

**Participation**

The wider public participated in the development of crime prevention only in a very indirect way. The adoption of the notion of crime prevention became politically attractive to the Conservative Government during the mid-1980s. Crucial in this regard was the fact that despite increasing expenditure on the police and criminal justice in general, rates of recorded crime and survey-based rates of victimisation continued to rise. Law and order increasingly became a hot political issue. The pressure on the government to take some initiative was enhanced by the Labour Party’s reconciliation with the police service and its attacks on the Conservatives’ reputation as the self-styled party of law and order.

Thus in a broad sense, ‘public opinion’ was a crucial factor in giving impetus to the adoption of a new policy initiative. The specific focus, however, was provided by ‘experts’ within the Home Office who had been developing a policy on crime prevention for some time. Public opinion, together with the arrival of a new Permanent Secretary looking for new avenues to explore, provided the political conditions conducive to ‘selling’ such a policy to political masters. Moreover, these political masters were also ‘new’, were themselves looking to make a mark, and were more open to the general philosophy which underpinned crime prevention than their predecessors. In this sense then, the public participation in the broad policy was minimal and indirect, essentially restricted to electing the party whose ministers eventually chose, or were persuaded, to go down the crime prevention route.

But when considering individual elements of crime prevention policy it is possible to discern a greater degree of direct public participation. Thus, although both CPPs and police consultative committees appeared to be largely ineffective public forums, the case of NW, which formed the centre-piece of the crime prevention policies of many police forces during the mid-1980s, provides something of a contrast. It does appear that the
NW initiative was demand-driven, rather than something developed by Home Office officials or government ministers. They were quick to pick up on and support the concept but, initially at least, NW appears to have been largely a grassroots development. The support given to NW both by the Home Office and by nearly all police forces seems to have been related to the perception that this was something which was popular with the public. It presented an opportunity to involve people in crime control initiatives rather than have them rely on the police or other agencies. In that it stressed individual private initiatives rather than state agencies, NW was in tune with prevailing Conservative philosophy. However, interviews with senior Home Office officials, and the experience within the individual police forces suggested that they had increasing reservations about the practical benefits of NW. Within the Home Office there was a sense at the time that the NW experiment was impossible to stop once it was under way. Besides, the perception was that it had police as well as public support.

The train of thought within police forces was similar. There were doubts not only about the efficacy of NW but also about the costs involved. However, there seemed to be significant public support for the initiative and, furthermore, the Home Office still supported it. The rapid growth of NW threatened to become a significant drain on expensive police resources, and research about the effectiveness of NW remained at best equivocal.

Hence, both the Home Office and individual police forces found themselves in the position of responding to public demand by putting resources into NW when they were far from sure that it actually worked. This raises an important question about participation in the democratic system: what balance is to be struck between public opinion, professional opinion and ‘expert’ opinion? The ‘expert’ opinion of Home Office and other researchers was crucial in laying the theoretical foundations for the crime prevention policy that was later formulated. There was perceived to be public pressure for ‘something to be done’ but, perhaps with the partial exception of NW, public opinion did not have a specific focus. The prime movers behind the development of policy were members of an intellectual and administrative élite.