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### Citation

Hearnden, Ian; Millie, Andrew; Hamilton-Smith, Niall and Willis, Jane (2004). Action and reaction: Delivering local burglary reduction projects. In: Hamilton-Smith, Niall ed. The Reducing Burglary Initiative: Design, Development and Delivery. Home Office Research Study (287). London: The Home Office, pp. 53–77.

### URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/97332/>

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## 4.

# Action and Reaction: delivering local burglary reduction projects

Ian Hearnden, Andrew Millie, Niall Hamilton-Smith and Jane Willis

This chapter examines the implementation issues faced by projects once work on the ground was under way. First, brief findings on levels of implementation are presented. Project management and staffing – and how varying arrangements impacted on performance – are then examined. Next some of the key generic issues that confronted project managers in developing and steering the ongoing implementation process are discussed. Finally, the chapter looks at how projects monitored their own performance, focusing in particular on their financial management.

### Implementation levels

Under Phase I of the RBI, 20 projects were evaluated by the Southern Consortium. Table 4.1 combines all interventions planned by these 20 projects, with interventions grouped into six main crime prevention categories, devised by the Home Office. For each category, the number of interventions planned is compared to the number implemented<sup>39</sup>.

**Table 4.1: Interventions planned and implementation levels achieved**

	Planned (122)	Achieved (89)
'Stakeholder' (community-based) schemes	36	23
Enforcement	33	21
Target-specific situational crime prevention	18	17
Offender-based schemes	13	7
Area-wide situational crime prevention	11	10
Property marking	6	6
Other <sup>40</sup>	5	5

Of 122 planned interventions, 89 (73%) were implemented to varying degrees. Location-specific and area-wide situational measures were most likely to be carried out, and property marking was achieved by the six schemes that planned it. Stakeholding and enforcement

<sup>39</sup> For fuller information on the composition of each category, and a detailed discussion of implementation assessment, see Millie and Hough (2004).

<sup>40</sup> Victim support programmes; improvements to management; improved inter-agency working.

accounted for over half of all planned interventions but proved harder to implement. One of the 20 sites failed to implement any interventions at all.

Impact appeared greater, and more sustained, when packages of interventions were implemented, aiming at both short- and long-term improvements. This, however, was dependent on the measures in the package complementing rather than conflicting with each other (see Millie and Hough, 2004, for a fuller account).

## **Project management**

Table 4.1 demonstrates a clear gap between what projects intended to implement and what was achieved. The skills and attributes of project managers were found to be especially important in determining implementation success. In terms of generic skills, Hedderman and Williams (2001) have documented the attributes associated with the successful RBI manager. Dogged determination, resilience, flexibility, imagination, diplomacy and an ability to communicate and motivate were just some of the factors noted.

The specialist skills required by project managers could be wide-ranging and complex. However, the varied experiences of RBI project managers show that the task of defining the role of effective management, and the skills required, is not straightforward. In some instances, the manager position referred to someone charged with the day-to-day management of activity on the ground, but who was not responsible for the strategic direction of the project (a role which may have resided with a wider partnership steering group). In other cases the manager's role was largely strategic, with details of daily activity being left to key workers in participating agencies. There was no clear evidence that one structure was better than another, beyond the obvious point that any arrangement needed to suit the skills and experience of the key participants and needed to fit in with existing organisational and partnership structures.

However, projects were not always able to balance staff skills in this way to adequately meet project needs. This is illustrated in Table 4.2 which lists the ten principal skills rated by Phase II managers as being in short supply. These are skills where managers rated their own competence as 'weak', but where they also rated the availability of that same skill from elsewhere as poor<sup>41</sup>. Managers were only asked to rate those skills that they considered were required in the running of their projects.

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<sup>41</sup> As managers were asked to make this assessment at the end of the Phase II funding period, their rating of skill availability was liable to be more optimistic than if the question had been asked at the outset.

**Table 4.2: Principal skills rated by Phase II managers (ten most frequently rated)**

Rated Skill	Skill rated as 'weak', 'available but scarce' or 'not available' (%)
Managing public/voluntary involvement	26
Contracting for project services	21
Thinking through technical/design issues	20
Analysing crime problems using crime data	16
Monitoring progress of interventions	13
Managing project finances	13
Dealing with data protection/legal issues	12
Identifying crime problems and hot spots	12
Forecasting resource requirements	11
Evaluating impact of interventions	11

N = 76 (average response per item = 47)

Thus, although many project managers had some experience in contract development and management, and others were able to turn for support to finance departments in partner agencies, over 20 per cent of projects surveyed here clearly lacked the skills or support to undertake this role. These skills deficits align closely to the major project issues raised by interviewed project managers. But before considering these specific project challenges, we will first examine more generic issues relating to project staffing which may have impacted on the availability of relevant skills and project progress more generally.

### ***Background of the project manager***

The majority of the SDP sites evaluated by the Southern Consortium were managed by police officers. As Table 4.3 shows, in a sample of surveyed projects, the police continued to be the major source for RBI managers under Phase II.

**Table 4.3: Phase II project manager background**

	No.	%
Police	16	50
Local Authority	6	19
Probation Service	2	6
Regeneration/Community project	4	13
Private Sector/Other	4	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Missing</i>	12	

As Crawford has previously noted (1997) police dominance in this context is unsurprising in view of the centrality of crime reduction to their professional role, and in view of the comparative flexibility of police personnel. Previous commentators (Tilley, 1993; Gilling, 1994) have questioned whether the management of projects by police officers might lead to them developing in a way that reflects ideological and organisational values prevalent in the police service. However, the findings from Phase II of the RBI largely support Sutton’s (1996) earlier work on the ‘Safer Cities’ programme which found no evidence of bias in the general direction or orientation of projects resulting from police management. As we discuss later, there were, however, other common implications associated with the appointment of police managers.

***Recruitment and employment status of managers***

The general quality of project management could be affected by the recruitment process and the time which managers were able to dedicate to the role. Table 4.4 shows that under Phase II there was no dominant method of recruitment, though the majority of managers were appointed to perform the role on a full-time basis.

In many cases projects attracted highly motivated and skilled individuals to act as managers. Where managers were inexperienced they usually had to acquire the necessary skills as they went along as systematic training or induction packages for new managers were exceptionally rare.

**Table 4.4: Recruitment and employment status of Phase II project managers**

How did you become a manager?	No.	%	Full or part-time manager?	No.	%
Volunteered	11	27	Full-time	25	39
Applied	14	34	Part-time	29	45
Co-opted/Tasked	13	32	In addition to main job	10	16
Other	3	7			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>
Missing	2		Missing	2	

Managers were more likely to be motivated and positive about their position if they saw the post as a natural continuation of their existing work. For example, in one case the opportunity to lead a Phase II project (Phase 2-42) suited the manager who had previously managed an SDP under Phase I.

*Prior to the project, I had just finished another RBI and was ready for the next step. This project came at the right time. I saw it as an extension of the previous work – it was a joy and I succeeded in it and it was ideal for me.*

Such enthusiasm was not shared by all. For example, the manager of Phase 2-46 applied for the post even though the advert 'didn't appeal'. The manager of Phase 3-1 project that he took the post on as a favour. However, evidence from Phase II shows no simple association between the method of recruitment and the satisfaction – or the performance – of an appointed manager. Rather, interviews with managers suggest that more influential factors were:

- whether the chosen recruitment method was implemented effectively and equitably; and
- a general shortage of suitable candidates.

Effective management also depended on managers being sufficiently available to perform the role. For example, both the Phase 1-18 and Phase 1-11 SDPs suffered because other demands on both project managers left them unable to devote enough time to the project. The Phase 1-18 project benefited towards the end from greater involvement from a sector inspector. In Phase 1-11, the lack of sufficient time meant the SDP received relatively little police support at a managerial level; instead, it was practically managed by the project's steering group. As members of this group were not aware of all the objectives defined in the original

proposal, some implementation was delayed – for example, attempts to boost the participation of residents from minority ethnic groups were only made 18 months after the SDP started.

As Table 4.4 shows, the majority of managers were either part-time, or undertook their role in addition to their normal full-time duties. Consistent with Laycock and Webb's (2003) findings from the Targeted Policing Initiative, RBI managers who fell under this last category often struggled to find sufficient time to devote to project work. However, regardless of employment status, most Phase II managers claimed to have undertaken other non-project work duties during time set aside for their project management role. Moreover, three-quarters of Phase II respondents rated such abstractions as problematic in terms of hindering the progress of their project.

A full-time manager may not be preferable for all projects. Project size, the complexity and number of interventions being delivered, and the degree and strength of support afforded managers all had a bearing on whether a full-time manager was necessary. However, it was evident from the RBI evaluations that the time required for management needed to be suitably ring-fenced and that project management should not simply be added on to existing full-time duties.

Most managers found their post rewarding in terms of their direct work with communities and with other agencies. However, a lack of formal recognition and reward within their own organisation was sometimes a source of discontent. As the manager of Phase 2-30 remarked:

*Once the king is dead, you know it's the next king... Things are quickly forgotten about in the police service, one's achievements are quickly forgotten about.*

### **Appropriate level of seniority**

Effective management also depends on appropriate levels of seniority. When crises arise, it is important to react quickly as well as authoritatively. This has implications for deciding upon the ideal level of seniority of a project manager. Most Phase I projects evaluated by the Southern Consortium were police-led. Within the police, inspectors and superintendents are better placed to direct others. This can work well, as it did for Phase 1-17. Here, a superintendent shared the role of chair of the project's focus group with the head of the local authority housing department. Both had good local connections, and were in a position to drive the project forward as they were able to initiate direct action at the highest level.

Where it was not possible to ring-fence senior officers' time, they were more likely to be redeployed to other duties at short notice. Senior police detectives were particularly at risk of sudden re-deployment. In these circumstances, junior-ranking officers could be more appropriate candidates for ring-fencing, on condition that they possessed, or had the potential to develop, the required managerial skills.

### ***Availability of senior support***

If project management was to be undertaken by sergeants, PCs or similar, support from senior management was a definite advantage. A problem for some RBI projects was that senior support offered at the project bid stage did not materialise into practical support during implementation. Whilst some managers were, through skill and perseverance, able to compensate for a lack of senior support, for less experienced managers such support was more critical. For example, the management team of the Phase 1-9 SDP was quite capable of implementing a programme of situational crime prevention. However, other options were restricted by having little knowledge of intelligence-led operations or of partnership working. The project was run at a relatively low level in the police, by a sergeant and two constables, with minimal involvement from more senior officers. Their lack of senior support meant that any lessons learnt from this project were likely to be isolated within the small group of officers directly involved.

Senior support also provided projects with a better chance of obtaining and retaining resources in the face of competing organisational priorities. For instance, the Phase 2-30 project was intended to benefit from the part-time input of two police officers. However, the realisation of this commitment was largely left to the officers themselves who proved reluctant to get involved. In the absence of proactive senior support the project manager, a police officer himself, felt unable to resolve this situation.

The issue of managers' seniority may also have an effect on the speed with which partner agencies begin implementation. In Phase 1-19, some council officers showed an initial reluctance to deal directly with a police officer of 'only' sergeant rank. They seemed surprised that someone at this level would have full responsibility for such a project. A police officer of higher rank could have made the initial approach. This may have averted delays without diminishing the authority of the project leader.



## **Project partnership and steerage**

The robustness and effectiveness of partnership and broader management arrangements was critical for project implementation. The engine of partnership working and of project management was invariably a steering group or committee.

### ***Steering groups***

Of the 20 Phase I SDPs evaluated by the Southern Consortium, 15 involved some degree of multi-agency work. This required clarity from the outset about who was to fulfil which role. To achieve this, many projects established a steering group. These can work at a number of levels. At a strategic level a group may be constituted by senior representatives of participating agencies whose role may typically encompass:

- Developing the aims and objectives of the project and agreeing how these will be met and by whom.
- Providing steerage through linking and harmonising the work of the project with other partnership and agency work in the locality.
- Providing strategic support in order to resolve disagreements which may arise at an inter- or intra-agency level.
- Supporting agency workers on the project and ring-fencing their time.
- Acting as the accountable body, supervising the progress of the project in meeting its targets and objectives and supervising its financial management.
- Strategically facilitating continuity and sustainability – for instance smoothing over staff departures and ensuring that replacement staff and handover arrangements are in place.

At a less senior level, steering groups typically develop more detailed local proposals and implementation procedures, timetables and budget projections, and provide a forum for steering the operational management of the project. Phase II projects possessed a broad variety of steering group or committee arrangements – although a quarter of surveyed projects had no committees of any type, the majority had at least one committee overseeing project work. The exact structure and remit of project committees varied widely, but there was no simple association between different structures and project performance. What seems to have been important is that the structures that were present were adequate for the type of project in question, and operated effectively. Steering group effectiveness depended upon a number of factors:

1. The nature of the project – Most projects set out to implement a raft of interventions. Seventeen out of the 20 Southern Consortium Phase I SDPs planned programmes of work that fell into at least three of the Home Office categories shown in Table 4.1. As a result, input was needed from a variety of agencies. Phase 1-3, for example, had a steering group which was attended by members of the police, the local authority and a range of local statutory and voluntary organisations. In addition, there was a subgroup that met monthly. In contrast, the Phase 1-9 project team consisted of only one sergeant and two constables. Nonetheless, all had considerable crime prevention experience and were used to working closely together. As much of the project was police-based, it was not felt necessary to set up a multi-agency steering group.
2. The appropriate division of responsibility for each aspect of the project – For the Phase 1-14 SDP, a steering group was formed as a forum for the discussion of progress with the SDP, and to formulate recommendations for future action. The police were keen to pass responsibility for some of the interventions to other agencies that they could easily work with. Both youth diversion and environmental elements of the project were managed by non-police agencies, as it was recognised that they had more relevant experience and skills at managing community projects. This also freed the SDP managers to concentrate on other aspects of the project.
3. Devising a membership based on local knowledge – The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 established partnerships between the police and other statutory agencies. Simply bolting SDP business on to other partnership meetings, however, proved to be insufficient. In Phase 1-1 the most serious hindrance to effective project management was probably the failure of the ‘Burglary Analysis Group’ (BAG) to act as a proper steering group. Part of the problem may have been the lack of clarity over the precise role of the BAG: it was expected to act as a steering group for the SDP, but it also had responsibility for burglary issues across the entire borough.

Steering groups need to include individuals with access to detailed knowledge of the project area to ensure that work is tailored to the local context. The Phase 1-1 steering group, with its broader geographic remit, lacked sufficient knowledge of the project area. This led in turn to the implementation of a range of ‘off the peg’ interventions that were poorly adapted to the characteristics of the target area.

4. Members having the commitment and time to contribute – One precondition of successful steering groups is that members must be committed to their role, and have the time to attend the meetings with the frequency required by the project timetable (Liddle and Gelsthorpe, 1994a). This was a problem for the Phase 1-16 SDP. The local probation service – who were seen as central to this initiative – were not represented at a steering group meeting until six months after the start.
5. Members having the ‘correct’ level of authority – As with project management, care needed to be exercised when deciding the appropriate level of authority for those on a steering group. Too senior, and the individuals were potentially unable to undertake work directly. On the other hand, if group members had no direct resources available, and little likelihood of accessing any, implementation was likely to stall.

### ***The planning and maintenance of partnership***

The task of establishing an effective steering group is closely linked with the broader task of planning, establishing and maintaining a partnership to support and deliver a project more generally. The issues are covered in detail in Jacobson (2003a and 2003b). However, Jacobson’s main findings regarding partnership working under Phase I of the RBI are:

- Projects were more effective at planning their work when they based this on a rigorous consultation with partners, both at an inter- and intra-agency level. This not only assisted projects in developing a better picture of the problem context on the ground, but also helped them establish whether project partners had the commitment and capacity to support proposed interventions.
- Maintaining effective partnership working on an ongoing basis depended on that work being monitored in a systematic and transparent manner. RBI projects often struggled to do this, with managers sometimes having no clear overview of how partners were pursuing their commitments.
- The accountability of partners was best secured when they were answerable to the project management group, and if there were clear lines of responsibility for project work *within* their own individual organisations. Partnership goals needed to be incorporated within the aims and objectives of participating agencies.
- In line with the findings of past research (for instance Crawford and Jones, 1995) Jacobson found that partnership work was often marked by strained relations and variable levels of commitment. Whilst these difficulties often had a variety of

causes (for example through a lack of ownership of project work), they were less likely to occur when projects ensured that partners were engaged openly from an early stage of the project planning process.

As discussed in Chapter Three, whilst most projects were committed to working in partnership in principle, many struggled to translate this into practice. Programme-level attempts to ensure that projects were partnership-based, such as demanding that project bids were countersigned by the relevant senior officers from the police and local authority, and channelling invitations to bid through CDRPs, did not always guarantee that projects were supported by effective partnerships.

## **Project staffing**

Appropriate staff recruitment was often problematic under the RBI. In particular, many projects failed to anticipate or miscalculated the amount of administration required. Ostensibly simple physical interventions such as target hardening households often needed a large amount of administrative support if they were to operate effectively. A third of surveyed Phase II project managers noted that their project lacked sufficient administrative support.

In line with findings from earlier research (Read and Tilley, 2000), projects also suffered from a lack of ongoing analytical support. This was often necessary so that projects could update their initial problem-analysis, to assist them in developing some interventions further, or monitor the impact of their work. For example, the Phase 1-15 SDP crime prevention officer stated that there was little information available on the characteristics of burglars – specifically a breakdown of offending histories, where offenders lived or their patterns of drug use. While he was able to manually check for patterns, this was via a database that would only support fairly rudimentary analysis. There was no dedicated crime analyst on site, the nearest being at police headquarters. The analyst that was available was not able to provide the thorough crime examination required.

The suitable deployment of available staff was also important. In Phase 1-9, for example, the gating of alleyways could only proceed once owners had given written permission. Rather than employ police officers, the project used a Neighbourhood Watch volunteer and a number of Special Constables to track down owners and to send out follow-up letters to obtain agreement. As well as reducing costs, this allowed police officers to focus on other duties that made better use of their specialist skills. An example of less suitable task allocation was in the Phase 1-7 SDP. Here, the police took the lead in developing an

education package for parents. This was aimed at providing support and improving parenting skills, but doubts were voiced about the suitability of the police to take this forward, and the intervention was subsequently dropped.

The background, skills and outlook of workers on the ground can also affect how project work develops. In Phase 2-37 the manager had originally intended that a project-run 'home security' shop would have a significant community outreach and educational role. However, the staffing of the shop with a recently retired police detective led to a change of focus which centred on targeting handlers of stolen goods. The project manager felt that this change was due to this particular individual's background and skills which were ill-suited to the community-centred role that was originally envisaged.

The swift appointment of appropriate staff was often important, as it could subsequently take time for new staff to acclimatise to their role. The Phase 1-5 SDP demonstrates that this can be a particular issue if the post involved is newly created and involves working not just in partnership with another agency but on their premises – see Box 4.1.

**Box 4.1: *Acclimatisation of staff to a new role in unfamiliar surroundings***

The Phase 1-5 project aimed to identify offenders held in custody who funded a drug habit by committing residential burglary, with the objective of referring these individuals to drug treatment programmes. Custody Officers would refer appropriate arrestees to a drug worker funded by the city's Health Care Trust Addiction Services Team. The worker would then aim to refer the drug user to the Community Drug Team or another relevant agency or service.

The first two workers had no previous experience of this type of scheme. Their expectations proved to be out of line with the reality of the job. Initially the project was targeted solely at arrestees in custody for burglary and who lived and offended in a certain part of the city. As nurses, the workers found it hard to prioritise between individuals on this basis. They were also concerned about maintaining client confidentiality, particularly in communications with the police. There were additional discussions of Health and Safety issues over working conditions in the custody blocks.

Partly due to these difficulties, both workers left after six months. Their replacements had very different backgrounds. One was an ex-prison officer, one an occupational therapist and one was a psychology graduate. However, all three had some experience of working within the criminal justice system, and came to the job with open expectations.

### **Staff turnover and handover arrangements**

Retaining staff for the duration of projects was often problematic. Turnover was often damaging, not only because key staff took skills and knowledge with them, but they also sometimes took goodwill and key working relationships with them as well. More damagingly, the departure of specialist staff could result in that programme of work ceasing altogether, as happened with a landlord accreditation scheme in Phase 2-39. Consistent with Liddle and Gelsthorpe's earlier findings (1994a), RBI projects frequently suffered from an over-reliance on key individuals.

Staff turnover seems to have been most marked among project managers. Half of the 20 Southern Consortium Phase I projects changed manager during the implementation period and one changed manager twice. Under Phase II, 21 per cent of surveyed managers (n=75) said that their projects had undergone at least one change of management.

As noted in prior research (see for instance Johnson *et al.*, 1993), police staff, in particular, were subject to being moved with little notice, typically when officers were transferred to other duties. For example, in the Phase 1-10 SDP, the sector inspector – the third project manager during the SDP's lifespan – remarked that '...the organisation we're in creates an environment where people start something and leave halfway through'. Though, as we have seen, such moves were sometimes indicative of the management role not being suitably supported and ring-fenced, they could also conversely derive from managers receiving recognition for good work. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some managers were promoted as a result of their success in submitting an RBI bid. Whilst this was beneficial for the individuals concerned, such promotions also acted as a potential threat to project delivery, as they invariably entailed a move to another area of policing.

A high turnover of senior staff also seems to have been a difficulty. As one Phase II manager observed:

*We've been very fortunate that we've had the same DCI for the period of three years...I think I've gone through three chief superintendents in that time. Each one a new broom to sweep clean. Officers at the sector level have changed and we've got to build programmes that actually cater for these personnel changes, which is extremely, extremely difficult to do. (Phase 2-19)*

Moreover, even if new senior staff were prepared to consider maintaining an involvement in the work of a project, it took managers effort and time to facilitate this transition. As the manager of Phase 2-48 complained, he grew tired of 'constantly having to resell and re-educate new partners about the project'.

Disruption caused by staff departures could be minimised if contingency arrangements were in place. However, only six out of 23 of surveyed Phase II project managers, who identified a need for handover arrangements, judged those arrangements to be sufficient. For example, when the replacement manager of Phase 3-2 came into post, several weeks after his predecessor's departure, it took him some time to physically find the project's relevant budgetary and financial information. In contrast, in Phase 2-56 good information systems were in place, and the outgoing and incoming staff overlapped by two weeks. Importantly, the departing individual remained available to provide advice and assistance on an ongoing consultancy basis.

## **Project development and change**

Staff turnover was just one of a range of contingencies that projects typically had to cope with. Whilst projects needed to be well planned and include interventions that were systematically developed from a rigorous problem-analysis, it was equally important that they were able to adapt to any emerging contingencies. Revision stemmed from:

- a change in the capacities and priorities of participating organisations;
- a project's initial approach being ill-suited to the evolving problem context; or
- a project appearing ineffective in reducing crime.

For example, Phase 1-5 soon widened its referral criteria when it became clear that its arrest referral workers could not work effectively under the original system as it was not generating sufficient referrals. The result was a shift away from targeting those living or burgling in certain areas of the city, towards a project that aimed to refer into treatment all offenders throughout the city.

The need to amend interventions did not necessarily mean that the original problem-analysis was flawed, or that the interventions were poorly designed. Problem analyses are in themselves *interpretations* or *hypotheses*, which attempt to make sense of a given crime problem and the context within which that problem is located. In implementing their interventions, projects were in effect testing their interpretations of the nature of the crime problem and what was needed to tackle it. Inevitably, such testing could expose false assumptions. Consequently, successful projects did not view problem-analysis and intervention development as one-off tasks, but rather as ongoing processes which required monitoring and updating.

The report on the impact of the RBI in the Southern Consortium area (Millie and Hough, 2004), examines in more detail some of the issues and adaptations arising with particular types of intervention. Here, a number of more generic, inter-related issues are discussed which emerged as common factors in the development and adaptation of RBI project work. These are:

- project scope and dosage;
- forecasting demand for project services;
- community consultation and involvement; and
- narrowing focus: hotspots and disaggregated populations.

### ***Project scope and dosage***

In developing their projects, participants often faced hard decisions and trade-offs in terms of determining the appropriate scope and dosage of project activities. By *scope* the range of a project's activities is referred to whether in terms of the issues covered or the activities implemented. Project *dosage* is discussed in more detail in Millie and Hough (2004), but includes:

- 'coverage' (the spread of planned interventions – typically the proportion of a geographic area that a project intends to cover);
- 'intensity' (the numbers involved, for instance the number of households within a geographic area provided with security equipment); and
- 'duration' (the time period covered by an intervention).

Evidence would suggest that scope and dosage are important factors in delivering effective crime reduction. Millie and Hough associate greater levels of impact with projects that employed a mixed and complementary package of interventions. They also highlight the importance of achieving an appropriate balance between coverage, intensity and duration in determining the level of dosage.

Ideally, a project would seek a balance between dosage and scope which delivers the optimal burglary reduction performance. For instance, concentrating interventions in too small an area might restrict the scale of any crime reduction gains. Conversely, covering too large an area – or over-stretching the scope of a project – could limit the intensity or duration of work, and thus result in a 'diluted' crime reduction effort which in turn limits any gains. However, it would be over-simplistic to presuppose that an ideal balance can be specified between these factors which can be applied to any area or type of project. In



determining an appropriate balance, practitioners needed to consider contextual factors such as the particular characteristics of the problem being addressed and the resources available to address it.

In reality, RBI projects faced a range of constraints and evolving issues. For example, most project managers with a limited budget were well aware of the need to make difficult decisions about how they could make those funds 'work hardest'. If enough money was available to target harden 200 houses in an area of 5,000 properties, projects needed to consider whether the money would be better spent if it focused on a specific part of the estate, a particular type of property (e.g. houses of multiple occupation), or a certain group of people (e.g. previous victims). Many SDPs nevertheless struggled to make these decisions on an informed basis. Critical to making informed decisions were the inter-linked tasks of forecasting the likely demand for project work and consulting communities on proposed project activities.

### ***Forecasting demand for project services***

One problem raised by managers was that demand for services was less than anticipated. For instance, the manager of Phase 2-67 described how their target hardening service was under-utilised as fewer households within the target area were burgled than had been expected at the project planning stage. Other reasons for misjudging demand for services were a failure to consult adequately with communities, and managers finding it difficult to estimate likely demand on the basis of pre-existing crime trends. It would seem that errors in forecasting demand on this basis could emerge in a number of ways:

- Demand may be less due to over-estimates of projected crime, based on figures for the preceding year. Figures in this pre-project year were often at a peak in terms of short-term historic trends, and tended to fall back to a lower level during the first year of project implementation. RBI evaluators have put forward different explanations for this commonly observed pattern<sup>42</sup>, but the practical implications were that some projects faced a shortfall of fresh victims to work with.
- In a successful project, levels of victimisation will fall at different points and not simply at the end of the schedule of work. Levels of demand should therefore be assessed post- as well as pre-implementation.
- Some projects, such as one large Phase III project, launched their work during periods of the year when seasonal patterns meant that levels of burglary were at a low point. This was problematic if a project was hoping to maximise its profile at the outset with a high rate of initial activity.

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42 For a fuller discussion of interpreting such statistical patterns see Ekblom and Pease (1995).

Shortcomings in estimating demand also stemmed from the likely market for stolen goods. Phase I projects had a supposed emphasis on innovation. This led to a number of projects such as Phase 1-11 and Phase 1-9 purchasing expensive surveillance or 'tracker' equipment with the aim of catching burglars in the act. The difficulty of operating this type of equipment effectively is that success depended on there being a realistic probability of offenders attempting to burgle the premises in which either surveillance or tracker equipment is installed. As such equipment was expensive, projects could only typically purchase a small quantity and could therefore only target a small handful of properties. Predicting the highest risk households also proved difficult. For instance, in Phase 1-9, the units were used in houses of recent burglary victims – in line with repeat victimisation theory which states that recent victims are likely to further victimised (Pease, 1998). However, no burglaries occurred during the 12 months following implementation at any of the locations at which the units were placed.

One Phase III project invested in four tracker units and placed them in portable electronic items. However, during the project only one of these items was stolen. By the time the police had located this item it had already been sold on, reportedly within 20 minutes of the offence (Erol *et al.*, in preparation) and no offenders were arrested. The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of this sort of approach under the RBI was highly doubtful<sup>43</sup>.

Where demand had been over-estimated some projects adapted their original implementation plans to boost take-up of services. For example, target hardening services were extended from victims to households that were *judged* to be vulnerable. Another adaptation, such as occurred in Phase 2-73 was to offer target hardening to victims on a back-dated basis (i.e. households victimised before the start of the scheme). Findings from the evaluation of SDP projects in the Midlands (Hope *et al.*, 2004) suggest that such adaptations could well be positive. They argue that in the face of insufficient demand from victims, adopting a broader approach to target hardening may be more effective.

### ***Community consultation and involvement***

Accurately estimating demand for project services required insight into the needs and wishes of the targeted community. The Home Office strongly encouraged community consultation as a necessary part of project development. This emphasis was an encouraging contrast to a lot of project work in the past which had been criticised for 'implanting' pre-packaged programmes into distinctive community contexts (Rosenbaum, 1987). Projects

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<sup>43</sup> Whilst there may be other benefits that could justify its adoption (such as a long-term accumulation of intelligence, or having a deterrent value), these benefits were not evident in the projects studied here.

often found this both problematic and time-consuming. However, such consultation was often needed to ensure that proposed interventions were 'suitable' for the communities being targeted. For example, the Phase 1-8 SDP's plans for a high visibility policing operation were shelved after consultation showed that such an operation would be unlikely to have the support of the community due to historic mistrust of the police.

Consultation could, however, provide projects with the opportunity to convince a community that it would in fact benefit from receiving, or actively *engaging* with, a particular intervention. Encouraging communities to participate in projects could not only generate practical benefits in terms of an input of community time and effort, but their involvement could also enhance credibility. For example, the steering group for Phase 1-19 functioned less as a decision-making body than a forum where residents were able to actively participate in the implementation process. This 'worked' in that street representatives<sup>44</sup> contributed much time and effort by attending regular meetings and visiting target households with information on the scheme and advice on crime prevention.

One barrier to community consultation, as noted by the manager of Phase 2-26 was that it could be difficult for projects to identify and engage with 'a community' when in fact their project area covered a population that was highly heterogeneous, transient, and sometimes divided. Managers often found that there was no single route into a given group, although some projects successfully utilised a wide range of existing contacts and networks – often via 'snowballing' methods - to generate awareness and ownership. A commonly expressed desire of managers was to avoid simply consulting with the 'usual suspects' of community representatives.

Other projects favoured holding one-off community events, sometimes offering prizes to attract attendees. The project manager of Phase 2-73 provided a 'comments book' at their community event so that residents, who might not have had the confidence to speak in a public meeting, could express their concerns.

Moving from consultation to getting communities practically involved in the delivery of interventions generated a further set of challenges. Harnessing the momentum of pre-existing community groups was often productive. The manager of Phase 2-75 found that partner agencies were more likely to respond to residents' complaints and concerns if the residents in turn showed a willingness to take some ownership of the problem. For instance, the council agreed to lend additional resources to tackle the problem of litter on the basis of joint 'clear-up' days in which community members also participated.

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44 It is however always an issue how representative such individuals are.

However, projects often found that involving community volunteers in the delivery of interventions on a more routine basis was more problematic. Even if volunteers could be found who were willing to make a more sustained contribution, identifying volunteers who were *suitable* for work that sometimes included visiting vulnerable victims was more difficult. Even if suitable volunteers were found, other considerations could impede their use. For instance, the manager of Phase 2-69 described how her plans to use volunteers to deliver crime prevention advice to burglary victims had to be abandoned when they realised that organisational rules on lone working on this basis, and data protection concerns, made volunteers unsuitable for this work.

More generally, projects appear to have fared better in terms of securing more lasting resident involvement (whether that input was based around practical action or consultation) when they 'piggy-backed' their RBI project onto existing community groups which had a broader remit, such as area regeneration.

Involving different community groups in the development and implementation of a project can be beneficial. However, the Southern Consortium Phase I projects illustrated a tension between the aspiration to involve communities and the desire to implement tightly focused crime reduction projects. In some sites a balance was needed between remaining true to this original focus and taking into account the views of the local community. Phase 1-11 provides an example of how increased community involvement may in fact limit the impact of a project on burglary reduction (see Box 4.2).

Deviation from the original project plan was occasionally unavoidable, but sometimes welcomed by the local community. In Phase 1-10 it was always intended that the project would develop as local problems were identified through community consultation. The project aimed to 'engage, consult and empower the community to work in partnership in the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour'. This meant that, while the proposal mentioned interventions it might employ, it did not specify which ones would definitely be followed. This process informed the resulting strategies and the precise target area.

The manager of Phase 2-49 saw his project as having a broader strategic role than reducing burglary, with a reduction in burglary creating a 'window of opportunity' for stimulating community capacity building. The manager of Phase 2-73 similarly saw the role of the project as contributing to a 'safer and better' estate. In developing the role of the project's community outreach worker, this broader focus was seen not only as desirable, but also practically necessary. This is because the outreach worker could not build any credible relationship with the community if he or she had to restrict their focus to burglary.

Consequently, the outreach worker dealt with a range of broader crime and disorder, social and environmental issues.

**Box 4.2: *The effect of resident involvement on the focus of an SDP***

A main aim of the Phase 1-11 SDP was to encourage more community involvement in crime reduction. As a result, police/council representatives were joined on the project's monthly steering group meetings by up to 15 local residents. Initially, meetings focused on recent residential burglaries. However, they soon developed into a forum for residents to raise other issues they were concerned about, such as street lighting, traffic management and other environmental improvements. The council acted upon most of these issues. This in turn generated more interest among locals who increasingly felt that their views and opinions were listened to. The SDP management noticed these trends relatively early during the course of the project and, as a consequence, were content to see discussions diverge from the principal objective of burglary.

However, insufficient attention was paid to the pattern of domestic burglary. For example, it was unclear whether most occurred during the hours of darkness. Thus the scope of new street lighting in terms of reducing burglary may have been limited. Similarly, a reduction in burglary was not a major motive for the traffic management scheme. Overall, the level of burglary dwelling was only marginally lower post-implementation than it was before.

***Narrowing focus: hotspots and disaggregated populations***

One way of deciding where to focus activity was by targeting burglary hotspots or sub-populations that were thought to be vulnerable and were spread across a larger area. Even where projects were able to get funding for larger areas, they still often chose to subsequently concentrate their resources on smaller hotspots, or sub-populations within these areas. Such approaches could have many advantages. For instance, the characteristics of some hotspots can lead to them becoming enduring crime 'generators' accounting for a large proportion of local crime (Sherman *et al.*, 1989). Concentrating project resources in these areas could be an efficient way of maximising impact.

However, a concentration of resources on hotspots or disaggregated populations could also generate resentment in the wider community. For instance concentration on hotspots could lead to one street being offered free security assistance whilst the next street was not. In an

attempt to combat this, Phase 2-49 sought to manage community expectations by producing two versions of its project information leaflet. One version, targeted at residents living in a crime hotspot, advertised the availability of free project services. The second version offered a more generic description of the project, giving general crime prevention messages and publicising the fact that improvements were happening in the area.

The identification of hotspots or disaggregated populations was also dependent on accurate information from the outset. For instance, one Phase III project which sought to tackle student victimisation, proceeded on the basis of robust problem-analysis which teased out many of the characteristics that made local students particularly vulnerable. For other projects, the required level of analytic support was often unavailable, or was not available beyond the initial stage of bid development. For example, both Phase 2-46 and Phase 2-39 were unable to update the original hotspot analyses, thus leaving them uncertain as to their work's continued effectiveness.

However, even in the case of the Phase III project focusing on students, where skilled analytical support was available, the task of updating information on their disaggregated populations of students was complicated by the characteristics of this population group. Producing a one-off analysis of the aggregate characteristics of hotspots or disaggregated populations to inform a project bid was one thing, but updating this information and putting it into practice can prove less straightforward. For instance, the project was able to identify the population and risk levels of its target 'community' at the project bid stage using council tax exemption records from the previous financial year. However, the highly transient nature of student households made it difficult to accurately update which households were student ones during the project, and the additional difficulty of actually making contact with residents meant that clarifying the status of such households was time-consuming<sup>45</sup>.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The availability of relevant, accurate, and timely information on the progress of implementation and on financial expenditure is critical to effective project implementation. The proper collection and use of such monitoring information is an essential component of effective practice (see Chapman and Hough, 1998), and was a prerequisite for projects funded under the RBI.

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<sup>45</sup> This is unsurprising, for as Hakim (1993) and Ahmed and Sheldon (1993) have previously observed, data tends to be more incomplete and unreliable when one moves away from the traditional client groups and arbitrary administrative boundaries that form the operational focus of official agencies.

The Phase 1-5 illustrates the benefits robust monitoring can offer. The project used a database recommended by the Drug Prevention Advisory Service (DPAS), tailored for the needs of arrest referral schemes. This provided data for the evaluation and for completing the drug misuse database monitoring form for the Home Office.

Monitoring assists practitioners in deciding the adequate levels of resource for an intervention. It also enables evaluators to examine whether or not an intervention is having an impact. If not, monitoring will highlight the need to take stock of the intervention and adjust the project plan accordingly. However, practitioners in some sites appeared to regard monitoring as an optional extra. Where monitoring was carried out, it was often applied to implementation retrospectively rather than reflexively. Many projects also appeared ill-prepared for evaluation, and had not been adequately primed by programme designers as to what evaluation would involve. As a result, many Phase I projects evaluated by the Southern Consortium failed to keep adequate monitoring data. A more detailed discussion of these issues is provided in Jacobson (2003a). However, three distinct monitoring difficulties can be identified here:

1. A lack of monitoring coupled with poor implementation – In Phase 1-18, none of the three interventions that suffered from implementation failure were ever discussed at the monthly project meetings. Some residents and housing managers who attended these meetings were unaware that these interventions even existed as part of the project. Without such consideration, implementation failure was virtually inevitable.
2. A lack of monitoring following full implementation – Some projects achieved high levels of implementation, but were unable to supply sufficient details to determine the effect on burglary levels. For example, the Phase 1-15 SDP fully implemented a programme of target hardening. However, it was unclear to evaluators which individual properties upgraded their security. Therefore the question of whether the intervention reduced burglary remained untestable as no efforts were made to monitor the impact in relation to burglaries avoided.
3. Inconsistent monitoring following full implementation – the Phase 1-9 SDP involved a comprehensive programme of alley-gating. However, there was no routine procedure for checking that the gates were being kept locked as intended. Some residents left gates propped open with bricks to save them from having to unlock them each time. Contingency plans did not appear to have been made in the event of this happening.

There must be clarity about who will collate monitored information. Simple lines of communication must be established between those monitoring information and those who can act upon it. The desired results are a project that is evidence-based, and with a greater accountability of those responsible for the individual components within

## **Financial management and control**

Many project managers also had difficulties in monitoring their projects' expenditure and in undertaking a financial management role more generally. The skills required to perform these tasks were clearly new for many managers. Issues included:

1. Retaining control of expenditure – Managers who either had insufficient control, or lines of communication with partner agencies or contractors, could find that expenditure was being made on their behalf without prior consent. For example, in Phase 2-71 once funding had been announced, partner agencies had started spending against the awarded grant without consultation with the manager. Similar problems could also arise with contractors if sufficiently robust and transparent systems for approving expenditure were not in place.

The difficulties experienced by some organisations in 'housing' the system for spending and claiming RBI grant money into their existing financial systems could also lead to problems. Budgetary control was often complicated by the fact that it frequently rested with more than one partner agency or at different levels within a single agency.

2. Ensuring the timely submission of invoices – Project managers often found it difficult to get partner organisations or contractors to submit invoices on a routine and regular basis. For instance, larger contractors often begrudged spending time drawing up regular invoices for small bits of project work. However, irregular and sporadic invoice submissions weakened systems for financial control and accountability.
3. Exerting quality control over contractors – Limited purchasing power in turn restricted the financial control that managers could exert over contractors. This appears to have led in some circumstances to weak contracts being entered into that did not best serve the objectives of the project. For instance, in Phase 2-70 the contractor hired to install alley gates ceased to do so mid-way through the installation process in order to meet demand from a more established and more lucrative client.



Control could also be weakened by projects appointing contractors on the overly-simplistic criteria that they provided the cheapest quote. For example, Phase 2-73 had an objective to target harden victims to prevent repeat incidents. It has been recommended that, for maximum effect, such crime prevention measures need to be in place within 24 hours of victimisation (Bridgeman and Taylor-Brown, 1996). However, in this case, the contractor's desire to minimise costs led to a typical installation time of seven working days. This was due to the contractor waiting for enough victim referrals to build up so several 'jobs' could be completed on the same day, thus cutting down travel costs.

Many projects found it difficult to identify suitably skilled contractors. A lack of candidates could impede a project's ability to develop a robust contract and to exert suitable control. However, by working closely with partner agencies, additional candidates could be identified (see also Jacobson, 2003a).

4. Formulating and re-profiling budgets – Managers encountered difficulties in developing budget profiles which identified likely periods of peak resource demand. When circumstances changed and managers were forced to re-profile their project targets and budget, they often found it difficult to re-estimate figures appropriately. For instance, in Phase 2-57, target hardening work was scaled back when unit costs exceeded initial projections. However, the manager's adjustment to this proved over-cautious as the demand for target hardening proved less than expected, and the project subsequently underspent on its budget.

RBI managers faced the complex task of accurately profiling budgets on the basis of realistic estimates of demand. Change could not only affect levels of demand, but also the organisational capacity or costs associated with the delivery of interventions. Managers often had only a short period within which to make appropriate adjustments which again highlights the need for robust financial monitoring systems which can be adjusted in response to changes in circumstance.

## Summary

There was a clear gap between what many RBI projects intended to implement and what was achieved. Several factors played a part in determining implementation success.

The task of defining the role of effective project management, and the skills required, was not straightforward. However, ring-fencing the time available for managers to concentrate on project delivery was important. Other aspects to consider when deciding upon project management were the seniority of the manager and the availability of senior support for the manager within the organisation. Promotion of managers in recognition of successful bid submission or project work was a common threat to delivery.

The effectiveness and robustness of partnership arrangements was often critical for project implementation. Partnership working was usually founded upon a steering group or committee. These worked best when responsibility for the various aspects of a project were divided appropriately; when members possessed detailed knowledge of the local area, coupled with sufficient authority, commitment and time to devote to implementation.

The recruitment of appropriate staff was often difficult under the RBI. Whilst the swift appointment of staff was important, it could take time for them to acclimatise to their role. Retaining staff for the duration of projects was also problematic, and handover arrangements were frequently inadequate. Additionally, many projects failed to anticipate the amount of administration that their project would require. Projects also often suffered from a lack of analytical support which negatively impacted on their ability to amend and update their problem-analysis and interventions during the implementation period.

It was important for projects to adapt to emerging contingencies. Successful adaptation should not be based on an unthinking reaction to events, but on an informed and reflexive review of progress. This required projects to monitor their progress systematically. However, many Phase I projects evaluated by the Southern Consortium failed to keep adequate monitoring data. Monitoring of financial expenditure was also an issue, with some managers experiencing difficulty in retaining control of expenditure, and securing value for money from contractors. Other common challenges included: forecasting demand for project services; undertaking community consultation and involvement; balancing project scope against intervention dosage; and effectively targeting hotspots and disaggregated populations.

The complexity of tasks and challenges confronting RBI project staff was often considerable. Many managers demonstrated determination and creativity in acquiring the skills required to overcome these challenges. Moreover, in terms of their own personal development, many found project work stimulating. However, a more timely and substantial investment in addressing shortages in skills and capacity would have reduced the extent of the implementation problems experienced.