UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Business Crime Reduction Schemes:

An examination of operation, management and best practice

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Acknowledgements:

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Overview

This report presents the findings of a study into the operation of groups of commercial organisations which come together to reduce the impact of theft, violence, anti-social behaviour and other crimes and associated behaviours on their businesses.

We refer to such groups as Business Crime Reduction Schemes (Schemes), a term used in this report to include Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs), shopwatch schemes, pubwatch schemes, schemes provided by shopping centres for the benefit of their tenants, and other similar operations.

The report draws upon data gathered through a national survey of Scheme managers conducted between October 2018 and January 2019 to consider the design, focus, management, governance, membership and collaborative activities of Schemes and identify the key characteristics, achievements, challenges encountered and points of best practice concerning their activity. These are presented as key findings throughout the report and as a series of guiding principles for such Schemes included in the Executive Summary.

Summary of findings

The majority of survey respondents represented either a Business Improvement District (BID) or shopping centre/mall with its own crime reduction scheme, or an independent Scheme such as a BCRP, shopwatch or pubwatch.

In most instances, respondents were the managers or coordinators of the Scheme with which they were affiliated or of the BID or shopping centre with responsibility for managing a Scheme. Most Schemes in the sample allowed retail shops to be members, but there were also Schemes that were only for shops, that were only for day time economy traders or night time economy traders, or that were broad multi-sector BCRPs that allowed members from all commercial sectors and economies. Most Schemes received funding from individual member subscriptions. The majority of Schemes employed a sanction policy (such as a banning or exclusion scheme), used a radio system, provided training to their members, used an online reporting system to provide current awareness information to its members, and described these services/functions as valuable.

Most respondents conducted their management role full time, and either combined their duties with other related activities or solely conducted this role. A board of management or steering group oversaw the activity of almost all the Schemes in the sample. The majority of respondents stated that their Scheme's performance was measured, but very few respondents stated that they were using surveys or gathering feedback from their members as part of this. There were a number of different organisations, frameworks and sets of regulations that respondents were consulting to ensure that their Schemes were operating appropriately.

Respondents stated that collaboration and information sharing were key to their Schemes' success. Close working among members was the factor most commonly associated with this. Respondents stated that personal visits, word of mouth and police encouragement were the most effective ways of attracting new members, and that regular visits, meetings for members and communication updates were useful means of retaining members and encouraging their engagement. Excessive membership fees, vacant high street units and high occupancy turnover, businesses assessing risk as low and concerns surrounding information sharing and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements were all identified as factors that can impact negatively upon member recruitment, retention and engagement.

Almost all respondents in the sample stated that their Scheme worked with their local police and that police support was of great importance to them. Police support tended to consist of the police attending a Scheme's briefing meetings, engaging in systematic information sharing, and having access to a Scheme's radio network. There were concerns among members that insufficient police resources left the police unable to support the activity of Schemes. This materialised as low levels of police attendance at Scheme meetings, a lack of police support with the issuing and enforcement of exclusion orders, and a reduced level of information sharing on the part of the police.

Roughly half of the sample stated that their Scheme shared information about offenders with other crime reduction schemes, and this was reported to help identify unknown offenders. Most Schemes collaborated with their local council, with a local CCTV department, or with a community safety initiative. Schemes in the sample were also involved in broader efforts to tackle offending behaviour such as Restorative Justice programmes, drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes, early-intervention programmes, and other social or community projects.

Those in the sample viewed the Scheme approach to tackling business crime as highly successful. The large majority of respondents reported that their Scheme had succeeded in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in its location, with 65% of respondents scoring their Scheme's success in this regard as either '4' or '5' out of five (on a scale of '1' – '5', where '5' indicates the highest rating of success). Those Schemes which self-rated their success as high tended to have a board of management, have performance measurement methods in place, have members that worked together closely, participated actively and met regularly, and worked closely with the police, with other crime reduction schemes and with drug/alcohol abuse or early intervention programmes. It is clear from this research that Business Crime Reduction Schemes are an essential part of modern-day crime control. With the police and other formal criminal justice agencies increasingly absent from this space, their presence and leadership in efforts to tackle crimes against businesses are indispensable.

Guiding principles for Business Crime Reduction Schemes

Drawing upon the findings presented in this report, the following guiding principles and points of best practice for Business Crime Reduction Schemes have been identified to assist those designing or managing a Scheme.

Scheme design, focus and funding

- When designing or running a Scheme, those involved should consider carefully the most appropriate way to position a Scheme and whether the interests of the public and specific stakeholders will be served best by a Scheme that is part of a BID, affiliated with a particular group of businesses, or is an independent entity.
- When designing a Scheme, and at regular points following its creation, assessment and consultation should be conducted concerning the needs of a community and the issues that it is affected by and wishes to tackle, and whether these are best served by a Scheme for day time economy traders, for night time economy traders or for businesses that operate during either or both trading periods. A more complete understanding of offending activity in a location can come from involving all types of businesses in a Scheme.
- Business Crime Reduction Schemes should charge their business members a membership fee that is both affordable yet sufficient for its operation and the provision of adequate services. Articulating and demonstrating the value of Scheme membership will help ensure that members view their membership fee as an effective use of capital. Although funding for Business Crime Reduction Schemes is limited, combining income from multiple sources, such as local authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners and membership fees, can help sustain activity.

Management and governance

- When recruiting a Scheme manager, careful consideration should be given to both the remit and duties of the post as well as to the skillset and background of the candidates. This specialist position, which most undertake as a paid full-time role, requires knowledge of the criminal justice and business sectors as well as the skill and ability to work with individuals from either sector.
- Schemes should be accountable to an appropriate governing group. The involvement of a board of management or steering group is an important part of Scheme accountability and governance and can provide the opportunity to draw upon input from key stakeholders and independent parties.
- Schemes should ensure that they are adhering to the BCRP National Standards produced by the [National Business Crime Centre](). Accreditation from the Centre will help ensure that a Scheme is operating appropriately and adhering to relevant frameworks and legislation, such as GDPR and data protection laws, providing essential assurance.
- Scheme performance measurement is essential for indications of effectiveness and for Scheme improvement. Measurement should include key metrics concerning incidents, offenders and victims as well as feedback from members concerning their views on the Scheme's performance and their experiences of being involved.

Scheme members: recruitment, engagement, and information sharing

- Business Crime Reduction Schemes should provide their members with simple and effective platforms for information sharing. This can be achieved by using a radio system, by using an online reporting system that provides current awareness information to Scheme members, and by providing training to members on their use.
- For Scheme managers recruiting new members, personal visits, word of mouth and police encouragement can be particularly effective. Advertising the Scheme and articulating and demonstrating the value of membership will also help with this.
- Close working among business members is crucial for a Scheme's success, and this can be facilitated through regular visits and one-to-one meetings between members and Scheme managers, through meetings for all members, and regular communication updates. These activities can also help with member retention.

Working with the police and other stakeholders

- Business Crime Reduction Schemes should work in partnership with the police. Information sharing, joint meetings, police engagement with Scheme members and promotion of the Scheme, shared radio networks, online reporting/information tools and shared enforcement of sanctions are all part of this.
- There can be multiple crime reduction schemes operating within an area or within close proximity of each other. Collaboration through information sharing and meeting attendance can help identify unknown offenders and generally improve collective crime reduction efforts.
- Schemes play an important part in wider community efforts to tackle crime. Collaboration with local council, PCC departments, CCTV departments and other community safety initiatives through meeting attendance, information sharing, and generally supporting agendas and promoting involvement can lead to improved understanding of crime and offending and enhance wider efforts to tackle crime.
- Scheme's should, where appropriate, help support broader efforts to tackle offending behaviour such as Restorative Justice programmes, drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes, early-intervention programmes, and other social or community projects. This can help support and rehabilitate those who have committed offences but also help tackle some of the issues that might lead to offending behaviour.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and report purpose

A business that operates in a town or city can be the victim of a unique range of crimes. Not only can this include incidents of theft and vandalism that are committed against a business, but also acts of abuse, harassment and violence that employees can fall victim to or that can take place on the premises of a business. These types of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) are often regarded as 'low-level', but the volume of these incidents can be far greater than that of other crimes regarded as more serious or severe, and therefore more likely to be addressed directly by police.

An analysis of incidents reported through the Disc crime reporting information platform (see *Addendum*) which is widely used by retail and night-time business communities in towns and city-centres throughout the UK shows that the most common type of crime and ASB managed through such schemes is theft (34%) followed by begging (12%), verbal abuse (5%), harassment/threatening behaviour (4%), assault/violence/affray (3%) and others as shown in Figure 1 below. While this only represents a portion of all crimes committed against businesses, this data offers insight into the type of crime and anti-social behaviour experienced by Scheme members and that Schemes are working to tackle.

Figure 1: Proportion of types of crime and anti-social behaviour committed against businesses based on data from Disc platform, January 2015 – December 2018
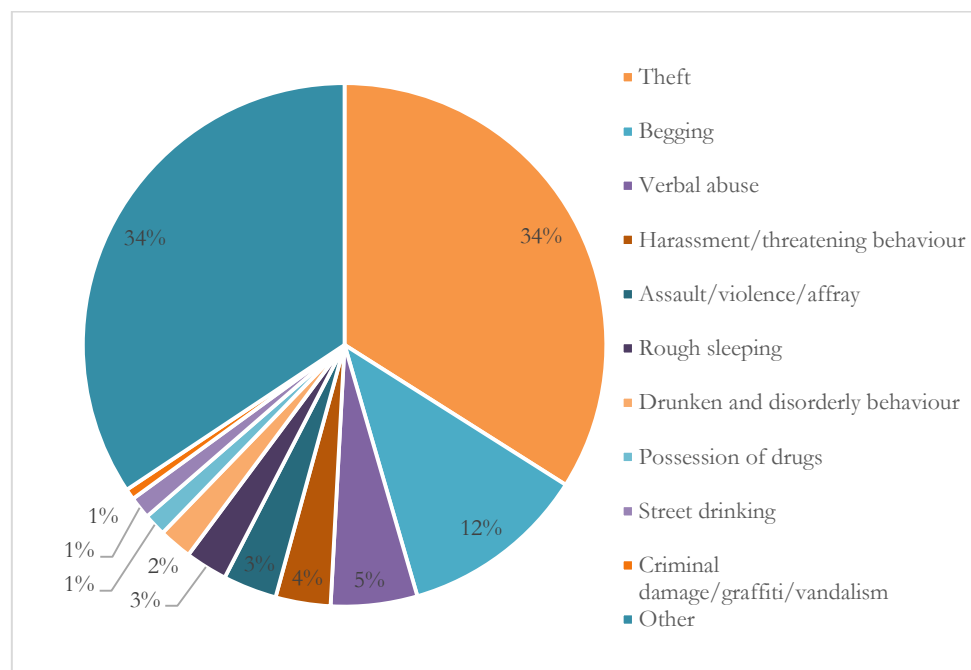
Efforts to tackle these crimes and the behaviours associated with them most commonly materialise as Business Crime Reduction Schemes which include Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs), shopwatch schemes, pubwatch schemes and other similar operations. Such Schemes can be found in urban areas across the UK and bring together businesses from many different commercial sectors, including retail, entertainment and licenced traders, to tackle the crimes and associated behaviours that impact upon them.

However, despite this being a common approach to tackling crime against businesses, there is a noticeable lack of research into the design, operation, management and activity of such Schemes. It is here where this report makes its contribution.

This report presents the findings from a study into the operation of Business Crime Reduction Schemes in the UK. It is presented as both an account of current business crime reduction activity and a resource for those managing or designing such a Scheme. The report considers the design, focus, management, governance, membership and collaborative activities of Schemes and draws upon the views of those involved to identify the key characteristics, achievements, challenges encountered and points of best practice concerning their activity. These are presented as key findings throughout the report (summarised at the start of each section) and as a series of guiding principles for Business Crime Reduction Schemes included in the Executive Summary section.

## 1.2. Understanding the report and the approach

The following information is included to help the reader understand the way in which the information in the report is presented and the approach employed to conduct the research.

- This report draws upon data gathered through a national survey conducted between October 2018 and January 2019 of managers of Business Crime Reduction Schemes and others with similar roles.
- The survey was organised in eight parts. It began with questions about the structure, type and function of each respondent's Scheme followed by questions concerning the respondent's role, the activity, achievements and management of their Scheme, the Scheme's members, and its work with police, other stakeholders and the wider community.
- Questions required respondents to select the response option that best described their experience or their organisation's activity, or to rate the extent to which something applied or had been achieved on a scale from '1' to '5', where '1' was the lowest ranking and '5' the highest.
- The survey was completed by 243 respondents, all of which managed or represented a Scheme. Some questions in the survey applied only to respondents that managed their own Scheme, comprising a sub-sample of 167 respondents. The survey required respondents to answer only those questions which were relevant to them, so the number of responses received for each question varies throughout this report.
- Where respondents are quoted directly, their statements are displayed in italics followed by a unique respondent reference number in square brackets. This is a number between '1' and '243' and was allocated to respondents when they completed the survey.
- The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire platform and respondents were invited to complete the survey via personal email.

1.3. Overview of the sample

The majority of respondents represented either a Business Improvement District (BID) with its own or with a close association with a crime reduction scheme (42%, 101/243), a shopping centre/mall with its own or with a close association with a crime reduction scheme (28%, 68/243), or an independent Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) including shopwatch or pubwatch (26%, 63/243). This is illustrated at Figure 2. In most instances, respondents were the managers or coordinators of the scheme with which they were affiliated or of the BID or shopping centre with responsibility for the scheme.
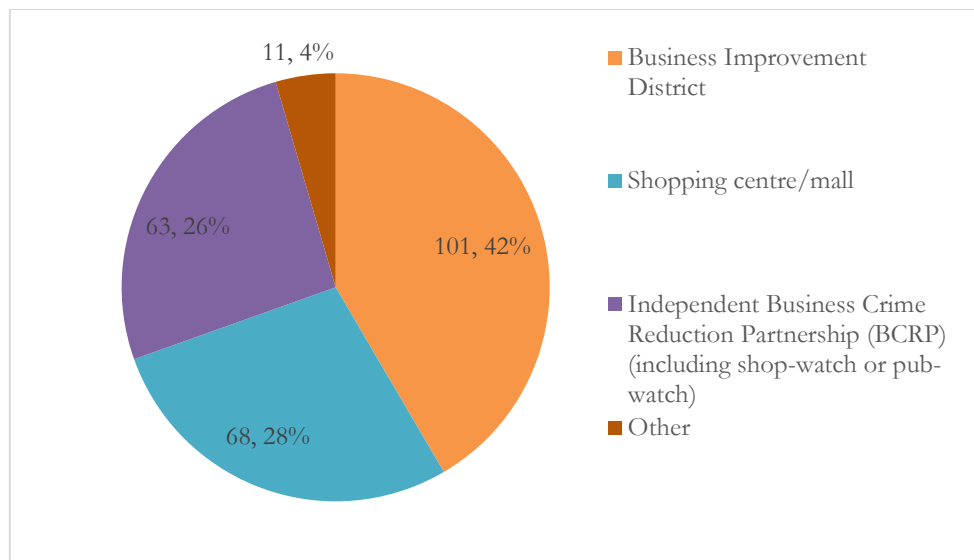
Roughly two-thirds of respondents (69%, 167/243) represented an organisation with its own Scheme. As much of the survey required respondents to comment on aspects relating to their experience of managing a Scheme, it was these 167 respondents that completed the most questions in the survey. Of the remaining third (31%, 76/243), 34 respondents represented BIDs that did not currently manage a crime reduction scheme, 13 respondents represented shopping centres/malls that did not manage a crime reduction scheme, and 2 respondents represented other types of organisations that did not manage a crime reduction scheme.

1.4. Overall Scheme success

Those in the sample viewed the Scheme approach to tackling business crime as highly successful. This was measured through one question on overall levels of success at tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (discussed here) and through analysis of other factors that respondents associated with the success and achievements of their Scheme (discussed throughout the report).

A large majority of respondents reported that their Scheme had experienced success in its efforts to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in its location, with 65% (108/167) of respondents scoring their Scheme's success in this regard as either '4' or '5' out of five (where '5' indicates the highest rating of success). Only seven respondents scored their Scheme's success in this regard as '1' or '2' out of five. These findings are illustrated at Figure 3.

Figure 3: Respondent views on how successful their Scheme has been at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in their area (167 responses)
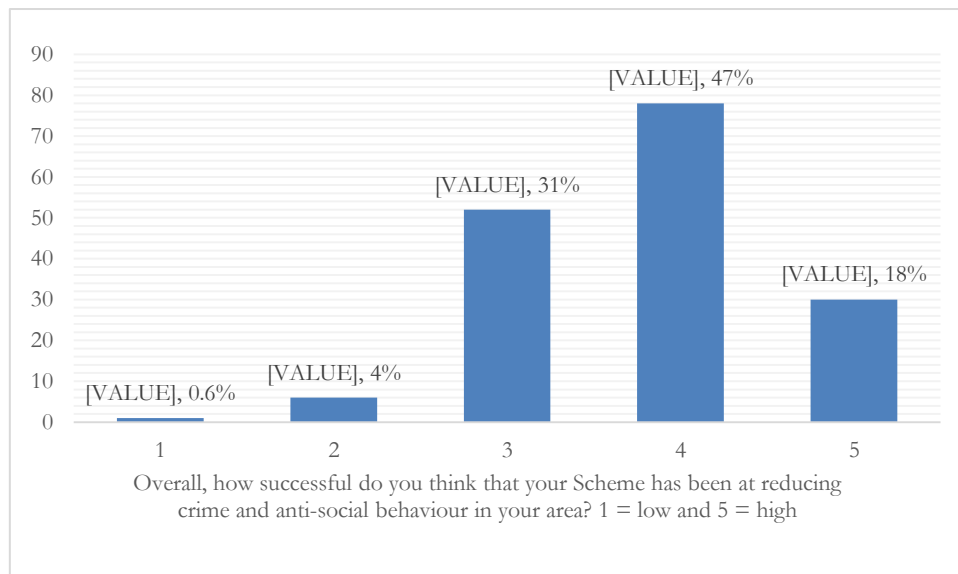
2. Scheme design, focus, funding and services

2.1. Section summary

This section examines the design, focus, funding and services provided by the Schemes in this sample.

There were noteworthy similarities and differences in the operation and activity of these Schemes, some of which had implications for achievements:

- The relationship between Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and crime reduction schemes varies. There were BIDs that managed crime reduction schemes on behalf of their members and non-members, and others that either managed schemes only on behalf of their members or did not run a scheme at all. Shopping centres/malls in some instances were part of Schemes run by other organisations and in other cases were part of Schemes run only for their tenants. A larger percentage of respondents that represented BIDs or independent BCRPs rated their Scheme's success as high than those who represented shopping centres.
- Most Schemes in the sample allowed retail shops to be members, but there were also Schemes that were solely for retail businesses and shops, that were solely for day time economy traders or night time economy traders, or that were broad multi-sector business crime reduction partnerships that included members from all commercial sectors and economies. A larger percentage of respondents that represented Schemes that were solely for businesses that traded during day time economy trading hours rated their Scheme's success as high compared with those who represented Schemes for businesses solely trading during the night time economy or that included all types of businesses.
- The majority of respondents stated that their Schemes received funding from individual member subscriptions. There was awareness among respondents concerning the necessary balance between an affordable subscription fee and a service for members of sufficient quality and coverage.
- The majority of Schemes used a radio system, provided training to their members, used an online reporting system to provide current awareness information to its members, employed a sanction policy which banned individuals who offend in members' premises, and described these services/functions as valuable. Some Schemes also employed enforcement officers to support their activities.
- Respondents who reported that their organisation did not run their own Scheme put this down to a lack of human or financial resources or a lack of information on how to establish a Scheme.

2.2. Scheme design and representation

Business Crime Reduction Schemes come in different shapes and sizes. Operating in an environment where local authorities, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Police and Crime Commissioners and the police can all have varying levels of involvement and offer varying levels of support and funding, Schemes, although often appearing to have similar aims and objectives, can be designed and operate differently in different locations. Some BIDs will operate a Scheme exclusively for its levy payers, whereas others will run or support a Scheme that is open to all businesses in a location including non-levy payers. Other BIDs might not run or have a direct affiliation with a Business Crime Reduction Scheme, leaving this responsibility to an independent organisation or to a shopping centre or other party. While any of these arrangements could be present in the makeup of a successful Scheme, there were some trends, commonalities and points of best practice concerning these issues that were reported by the sample.

Respondents were asked questions about the design of their Scheme and on whose behalf it operated. Of those who answered these questions, 101 represented a BID and 68 a shopping centre or mall. The majority of respondents (44%, 44/101) who represented a BID stated that their BID managed a crime reduction scheme on behalf of its levy payers and other non-levy payers. The remaining respondents who represented a BID stated that their BID either did not manage a Scheme (34%, 34/101) or that it managed a Scheme only on behalf of its levy payers (23%, 23/101). These findings are illustrated at

Figure 4. Respondents from BIDs that did not currently run their own crime reduction scheme provided a range of reasons for this, including 'insufficient human resources' (10 responses), 'lack of information about how to establish a Scheme' (10 responses) or 'insufficient financial resources' (8 responses).

Figure 4: BID management of crime reduction schemes (101 responses)
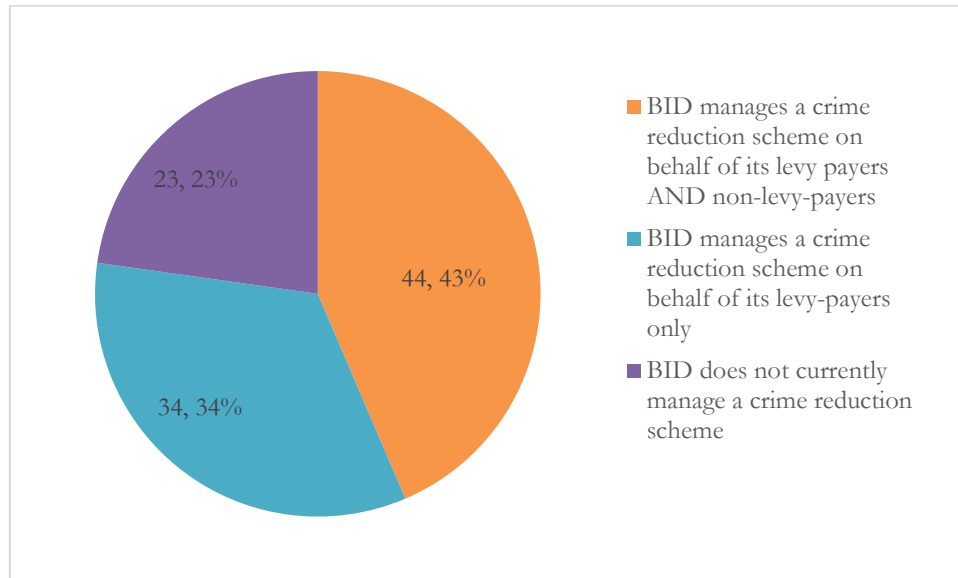
The majority of respondents (37%, 25/68) who represented a shopping centre or mall stated that their establishment was part of a crime reduction scheme that was run by a separate organisation (for example a shopwatch scheme, a BID or a BCRP). Other shopping centre respondents managed a crime reduction scheme on behalf of their tenants only (28%, 19/68). These findings are illustrated at Figure 5. Respondents from shopping centres/malls that did not currently run their own crime reduction scheme provided a range of reasons for this, including 'insufficient human resources' (4 responses), 'insufficient financial resources' (3 responses), 'lack of information about how to establish a scheme' (2 responses) and 'concerns over legal compliance' (2 responses).

Figure 5: Shopping centre/mall management of crime reduction scheme (68 responses)
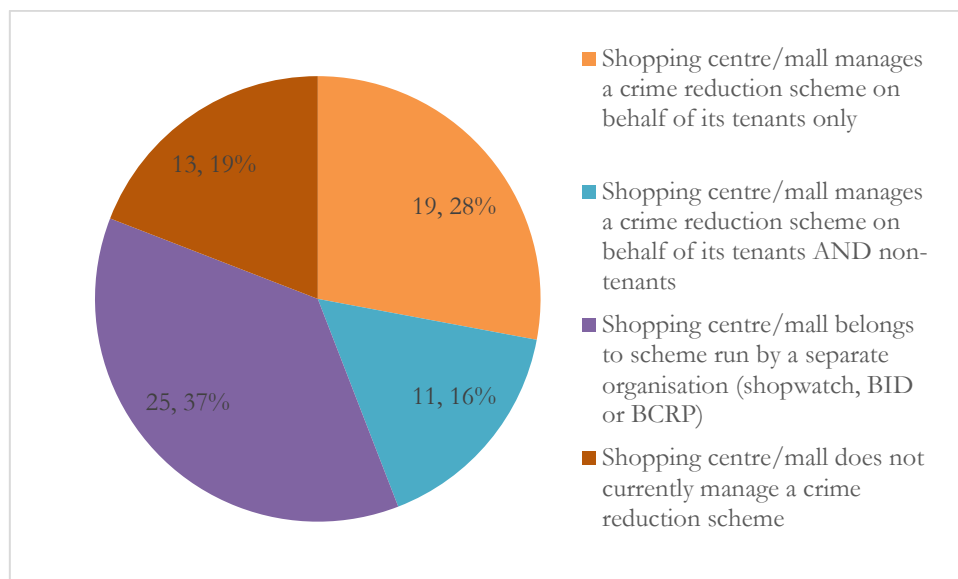
Comparing the perceived level of success reported by members of these Schemes revealed some noteworthy differences. A larger percentage of respondents that represented BIDs or independent BCRPs rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (67%, 45/67 and 68%, 43/63, respectively) compared to those who represented shopping centres (57%, 17/30).

2.3. Scheme focus and remit

Business Crime Reduction Schemes can vary in terms of the categories of crime, disorder and associated behaviour that they seek to address. Almost all Schemes in the sample had been set up to target shoplifting or retail crime and anti-social behaviour. Some also focused on alcohol-related disorder, violence and crimes committed during the night time economy trading hours. A small number of Schemes in this sample comprised only licenced traders and were focused exclusively on alcohol-related crime and disorder.

Within this sample, almost all respondents reported that their Scheme allowed shops as members (92%, 154/167). However, some Schemes were solely for retail businesses and shops, some were only for day time economy traders or night time economy traders, whereas others were broad multi-sector Business Crime Reduction Partnerships that allowed members from all commercial sectors and economies. In other research by the author (Stafford and Hobson 2018), the multi-sector model has been shown to provide further insight into offending activity in an area than other models as some offenders do not only operate during the day time or the night time or only target one type of business. Schemes that include all types of businesses from the day and night time economies are better placed to construct a full picture of the activity of such offenders than those which only include some of the businesses in a location.

Comparing the perceived level of success reported by members of these Schemes revealed some noteworthy differences. A larger percentage of respondents representing Schemes that were solely for businesses that traded during day time economy trading hours rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (79%, 30/38) than those representing Schemes for businesses trading solely during the night time economy (50%, 2/4) or Schemes that included all type of businesses (61%, 76/125).

2.4. Scheme funding

Funding arrangements for Business Crime Reduction Schemes can also vary. The majority of those that responded to the survey's questions concerning funding reported that their Schemes received funding from individual member subscriptions (91%, 57/63). A small number of Schemes received funding from their local council (11%, 7/63) or their Police & Crime Commissioner's Office (11%, 7/63).

There were respondents who reported that a lack of available funding was causing issues for their Scheme. As one respondent noted, *'My partnership has limited resources and I need to extend its reach to give a better service to a wider membership base' [193]*. There was awareness among respondents concerning the necessary balance between an affordable subscription fee and a service for members of sufficient quality and coverage. A second respondent stated that *'we could do with more money to [provide additional services] but fear that increasing membership fees will cause members to leave' [168]*.

2.5. Scheme services

There were several core services and functions that the majority of Business Crime Reduction Schemes in this sample employed and offered to members. Most Schemes used a banning/exclusion sanction system (83%, 139/167), a policy whereby an individual who commits an act deemed as unacceptable by a Scheme is excluded for a period of time from the premises of all Scheme members. Other research by the author (Stafford 2019) found this approach to achieve noteworthy success. The approach and findings of this study are summarised here:

- Research conducted by Stafford (2019) concerned the activity of the 'Gloucester City Safe' Business Crime Reduction Partnership. This BCRP employs a two-tier warning and exclusion sanction system. A first offence results in a warning and a second offence results in a 12-month ban from all the members' premises.
- The data analysed consisted of 4,935 offences occurring between September 2014 and August 2018 committed by 2,080 individual offenders at 115 business locations. During this period, 1,303 individuals received warnings and 329 received exclusions.
- High levels of desistance were observed following the receipt of these sanctions. Following a warning, 76% (996/1,303) of offenders committed no further offences. Following an exclusion, 37% (123/329) of offenders committed no further offences and 63% (206/329) reoffended.
- Displacement of offending activity was also observed. Most of those who continued to offend following receipt of a warning or exclusion did so only at business premises away from where they received their sanction. This was the case for 70% (215/307) of those who continued to offend post-warning and 66% (136/206) of those who continued to offend post-exclusion.
- This study also examined variation in post-sanction offending behaviour according to offender age and sex, offence time and whether the offence concerned theft, violence or alcohol. A larger percentage of male offenders continued to offend post-warning and post-exclusion than female offenders. The highest rates of offending displacement were observed among those who committed theft offences. Further insight into post-sanction offending behaviour is provided in the study, which is available through the University of Gloucestershire's research repository.

Most respondents (80%, 133/167) reported that their Scheme made use of a personal radio system. Such systems facilitate the immediate sharing of urgent or important information concerning offending activity and can help members protect themselves against victimisation. For most Schemes, it will mainly be the businesses involved who make use of the radio network, but further benefits can be realised when local CCTV operators and local police also have access to, and make regular use of, a Scheme's radio network. This can boost efforts to tackle offending activity but also provide a valuable platform for other information-sharing concerning occurrences of lost property or persons, for example.

The majority of respondents (79%, 132/167) stated that the businesses involved in their Scheme receive some form of training as part of their membership. Training will often concern practical and administrative aspects of membership, such as how to use a radio network or an online information sharing platform, how the Scheme's policies and practices function, and what types of information are most important to share and engage with for members. Such training can be used to inform members of best practice and of what is expected of them as members, to install a positive and cohesive culture among members, and to boost levels of understanding, information sharing and engagement.

Most of the respondents (75%, 126/167) reported that their Scheme uses an online incident reporting system. Such systems enable:

- a Scheme to record and make available to its members information on all the incidents of crime, disorder and associated behaviour committed in or near to its member's premises;
- members to view up-to-date information on offenders and increase their awareness of offending activity in their vicinity;
- the sending of regular communication updates to members, which inform them of the most recently added offence and offender information;
- current awareness information and messages to be passed from the Scheme manager to members.

The importance of such a system was recognised across the sample. For example, one respondent noted that its system *'enable[s] us to work with businesses far more effective[ly] and quicker in raising news alerts and information that is relevant to our BID businesses operating in the city centre'* [14]. Other research by the author (Stafford and Hobson 2018) found that members of a BCRP that have access to such a system felt highly

informed about offending activity in their area and reported high levels of perceived safety and community cohesion as a result of the proactive approach to information sharing that was possible through their system.

Several respondents reported that their Scheme was supported by the work of enforcement or protection officers. Often funded by BIDs, but also by local authorities or Police and Crime Commissioners (or a combination of all three), civilian officers can help to enforce Scheme sanctions, support Scheme members and offer a visible presence and deterrence in the Scheme's operating area. In some instances, Chief Constables have accredited such persons with specific powers through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). When describing the success and achievements of their Scheme, one respondent noted that *'The scheme itself is - for the most part - good. However, it is the person resource (our Rangers) that is the most useful' [23].* Their affiliation to a Scheme rather than to a shopping centre or single business is what distinguishes them from other security guards or wardens.

3. Management and governance

3.1. Section summary

This section examines the management, governance, performance measurement and wider accountability and accreditations of the Business Crime Reduction Schemes in this sample.

Although activity in these areas was found to be robust and appropriate in the large majority of instances, there was a noteworthy absence of mechanisms in place to capture the views of Scheme members as part of performance measurement processes, and there were calls for further progress to be made concerning national accreditation and operating standards for Business Crime Reduction Schemes:

- Almost all of the survey respondents were Scheme managers. A majority of respondents conducted their role full-time, and either combined their Scheme duties with other related activities or solely conducted this role. These roles require specialist skills and experience and are vital in this era of community crime reduction through partnership.
- Almost all of the Schemes in the sample had a board of management or steering group overseeing their activity. A larger percentage of respondents that represented Schemes with a board of management/steering group with the sole function of governing the Scheme or with additional responsibilities rated their Scheme's success as high compared to those representing Schemes with other governance arrangements.
- The majority of respondents stated that their Scheme's performance was measured. However, the survey also revealed that the performance of almost a third of the Schemes in the sample was not being measured at all. Very few respondents stated that they were using public surveys or gathering feedback from their members. A larger percentage of respondents who stated that their Scheme's performance was being measured rated their Scheme's success as high compared to those who reported that their Scheme's performance was not being measured.
- There were a number of different organisations, frameworks and sets of regulations that respondents consulted to ensure that their Schemes were operating appropriately. As a result of this, it is conceivable that operating practice and standards may vary between different Business Crime Reduction Schemes, as at present many Schemes are not affiliated with and/or accredited by an agency that provides comprehensive guidance in this area.

3.2. The role of the manager

A Business Crime Reduction Scheme manager is pivotal to a Scheme's success. As one respondent noted, *'Most important [to a Scheme's success] is an effective crime manager [who can] unite the business community, bringing them together to prevent crime' [222]*. To achieve this, however, managers need sufficient time, support and resources at their disposal. Almost all of the respondents were managers of the Scheme for which they had completed the survey. A large majority of respondents conducted their role full-time (64%, 106/167) with others conducting the role part-time (29%, 49/167) or in other capacities. Almost all respondents were paid to fulfil this role (88%, 147/167), but a noteworthy minority worked on a voluntary basis (8%, 14/167). Most respondents either combined their Scheme management role with other related activities (42%, 70/167) or solely conducted this role (30%, 50/167). These findings are illustrated at Figure 6.

Figure 6: The role of the Scheme manager (167 responses)
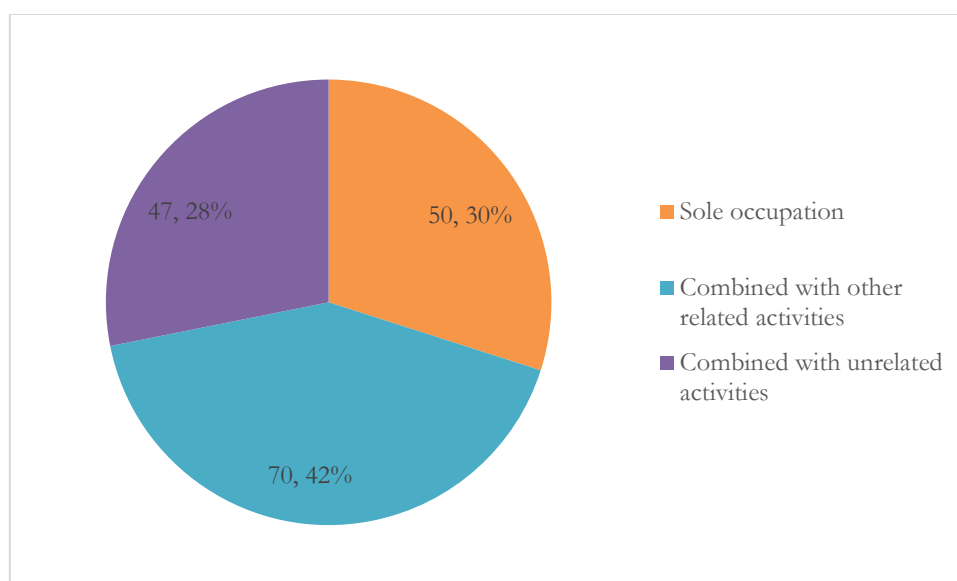
These findings suggest that the importance of the manager is widely recognised. The fact that the majority of these roles are full-time and that managers either conduct them as their sole responsibility or alongside other related activities is a noteworthy statement concerning their significance. Bridging the space between the business and criminal justice sector, as the Scheme manager is required to do, requires specialist skills and knowledge as well as appropriate resources. Business Crime Reduction Scheme managers need to understand the concerns of the business community they serve, the risks and types of victimisation that businesses can encounter, and the systems and processes that businesses can employ to protect their employees and goods. Managers also require knowledge of the criminal justice system, police procedures, law and relevant legislation and of the role and remit of local authorities, BIDs and other key stakeholders. This is a specific experience and skill-set, and it is essential that funding for such posts is preserved and recognition of their importance sustained.

3.3. Board of management

Respondents were asked about their Scheme's management arrangements and structure. The majority of respondents (55%, 92/167) stated that their Scheme had its own board of management or steering group or came under the remit of a board/steering group with responsibilities in addition to the management of the Scheme itself (21%, 35/167). Various other management arrangements were mentioned by the remaining respondents, and only one reported that there was not a board of management or steering group with oversight of their Scheme. Most respondents stated that their Scheme's board of management or steering group met quarterly (41%, 59/145) or monthly (33%, 48/145). A larger percentage of respondents that represented Schemes with a board of management/steering group with the sole function of governing the Scheme, or with additional responsibilities, rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (67%, 62/93 and 74%, 26/35, respectively) compared to those representing Schemes with other governance arrangements (59%, 13/22).

3.4. Measuring Scheme performance

The majority of respondents (71%, 118/167) stated that their Scheme's performance was measured. Responses also revealed that the performance of 29% (49/167) of the Schemes in the sample was not being measured at all. The most common measures used by respondents were numbers of members, incident reports, warnings, persons banned, and businesses using the Scheme's online reporting system. For the majority of respondents, these metrics were captured and analysed through their online incident

reporting platform. Respondents also measured Scheme performance through figures for stock loss and by using police crime statistics. Very few respondents stated that they were using public surveys or gathering feedback from their members as part of their performance measurement processes. A larger percentage of respondents who stated that their Scheme's performance was being measured rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (72%, 85/118) compared to those who reported that their Scheme's performance was not being measured (47%, 23/49).

3.5. Governance and national accreditation

Some respondents described broader governance arrangements or means of accountability that applied to their Scheme. Some Business Crime Reduction Schemes were accountable to a BID or local authority and others were part of the services funded by a Police & Crime Commissioner's office. However, the responsibilities of these governing organisations were often wide-ranging, encompassing many things other than the management of the Scheme. Some respondents described various other forms of more specialist accreditation, affiliation and guidance that they would seek or secure for their Scheme to ensure that it was operating under the correct frameworks and acting in line with relevant procedures and regulations. Exactly what this entailed varied. Although there appeared to be no tier of accountability for the Schemes in the sample beyond that of the organisations that fund and/or govern them, there was a number of different organisations, frameworks and sets of regulations that respondents consulted and drew upon from elsewhere. As a result, it is conceivable that operating practice and standards may vary between different Schemes, as at present the majority are not affiliated with and/or accredited by an agency that provides comprehensive guidance on these subjects. As one respondent noted, *'I have been involved with this work for 14yrs. There needs [to be] proper governance to encourage and support businesses to participate in schemes through the establishment of proper legally strong standards'* [71].

The National Business Crime Centre, an initiative created as a result of Home Office Police Transformation Funding, is seeking to address this issue. In 2017, the NBCC published a set of BCRP National Standards and designed an application process for accreditation against these standards via approved bodies. If embraced widely by Business Crime Reduction Schemes, this will help ensure that Schemes across the UK are operating appropriately and in line with relevant policies, procedures, laws and legislation, and will encourage more confidence in interworking between such Schemes, their members, the police and other relevant partners.

4. Scheme members: recruitment and engagement

4.1. Section summary

This section examines the recruitment and retention of members by Business Crime Reduction Schemes, and explores issues relating to levels of member participation in Scheme activities and information sharing.

There was consistency among respondents concerning the most effective ways of growing membership and concerning the issues that can impact upon member engagement:

- Respondents stated that personal visits, word of mouth and police encouragement were the most effective ways of attracting new members, and that regular visits, meetings for members and communication updates were useful means of retaining members and encouraging their engagement.
- Excessive membership fees, vacant high street units and high occupancy turnover, businesses assessing risk as low, and concerns surrounding information sharing and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements were all identified as factors that can impact negatively upon member recruitment and retention.
- Close working among business members was the factor most commonly associated with Scheme success. One-to-one meetings with members, online communications and face-to-face group meetings were reported to be the most effective methods of achieving this. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their members met face-to-face on a regular basis to share information rated their Scheme's success as high compared to those who reported that their members did not do this.
- Levels of participation by members varied. Different experiences of victimisation, quantities of stock loss or vandalism (coupled with different policies concerning acceptable volumes of these things), and different degrees of staff turnover and staff willingness to engage with a Scheme impact upon this. However, the highest ratings of Scheme success were reported by respondents who also had the highest proportions of their members activity participating in the Scheme in a typical month.

4.2. Member recruitment and retention

Business Crime Reduction Schemes need members in order to operate. The high street or shopping/entertainment district in an urban area will accommodate some businesses with a longstanding presence and others that come and go or move premises, and recruiting and retaining membership from such businesses requires a Scheme manager to take a proactive and inclusive approach to engagement. Respondents stated that conducting personal visits to members (65%, 108/167), word of mouth (59%, 99/167) and police encouragement (54%, 90/167) were the most effective ways of attracting new members. Following recruitment, regular visits and member meetings as well as routine communications and updates were identified as effective in keeping members involved and engaged.

However, respondents also described issues that can impact negatively on member recruitment and retention. As noted previously, although some respondents reported a need to secure additional funding and resources for their Scheme, they were conscious that doing so through increased membership fees risks lower levels of recruitment and reduced retention. One member noted that '*City centre retail decline has led to a reduction in members and therefore income, reducing the capacity of [our] scheme*' [186]. Indeed, vacant premises, high occupancy turnover, or businesses that see themselves as at low risk of victimisation on the high street may well result in fewer members for a Scheme, which in turn can mean limited income and lower levels of information sharing and crime related intelligence. Other respondents noted that member recruitment challenges arise from concerns among businesses regarding information sharing and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As one member noted, '*GDPR seems to have scared [some businesses] off using anything other than what their own company provides*' [16].

4.3. Member participation and information sharing

Business Crime Reduction Schemes rely on the contributions of their members. Without a proactive approach to incident reporting and information sharing from members a Scheme cannot understand fully the offending activity that is occurring in its location or take the steps required to tackle it. Member engagement and participation in Scheme activity was consistently noted by respondents as the factor most closely associated with the success of their Scheme. Not only did a majority of respondents (53%, 89/167) put the success of their Scheme down to close working with the local businesses who are members, but a number of respondents (34%, 56/167) also noted that closer working with local businesses who were members of their Scheme was the single factor which would most improve their Scheme's success.

Several different methods were used by respondents to facilitate members working together. One-to-one meetings (65%, 109/167), online communications (64%, 106/167) and group meetings (58%, 97/167) were the most effective means for engaging with members. Almost all respondents (85%, 142/167) reported that their members meet face-to-face on a regular basis to share information. The most common frequency for such meetings was reported to be monthly (49%, 70/142), with the majority of other respondents reporting that their members would meet less frequently than this. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their members met face-to-face on a regular basis to share information rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (66%, 94/142) compared to those who reported that their members did not do this (56%, 14/25).

Levels of participation among Scheme members varied. Roughly one third of respondents (32%, 53/167) reported that 21-40% of their members actively participate in their Scheme, and a quarter (24%, 40/167) that less than 20% of their members actively participate. These findings are illustrated at Figure 7. Some members reported varied levels of engagement among the members of their Scheme. For example:

> *'The assumption that members join a Scheme like this and use it is flawed. Some just join and give it lip service, some just to tick a box. Our most pro-active/engaging members are the ones achieving the best results (best performing stores in the country and region) and yet we still have members who do not engage at all, and yes they have poor shrinkage and attitudes to match in the reduction of crime' [72].*

Several factors were presented as explanations for varied levels of engagement among members. For example, every business will experience different volumes and combinations of crime, different quantities of stock loss or vandalism, and different degrees of staff willingness to engage. The way in which these factors combine and are viewed by Scheme members will affect their level of engagement with a Scheme. Turnover among members of staff and management was also reported to impact upon engagement levels. Although members are often concerned with the safety of others, if they are never victimised themselves, or see a particular volume of stock loss as inevitable or as acceptable under company policy, then they may be less likely to see the need to engage frequently with a Scheme. As one respondent noted:

> *'The biggest problem we have is apathy from our members who basically accept that business related crime occurs and particularly [with] national chains there is an "acceptable" loss of around 10%, and unless it goes above that or they have a particular issue there is little interest in our scheme. Crime reduction or prevention is not an issue of any priority, as I see it, for national chains who are the main targets for shoplifting in our town' [42].*
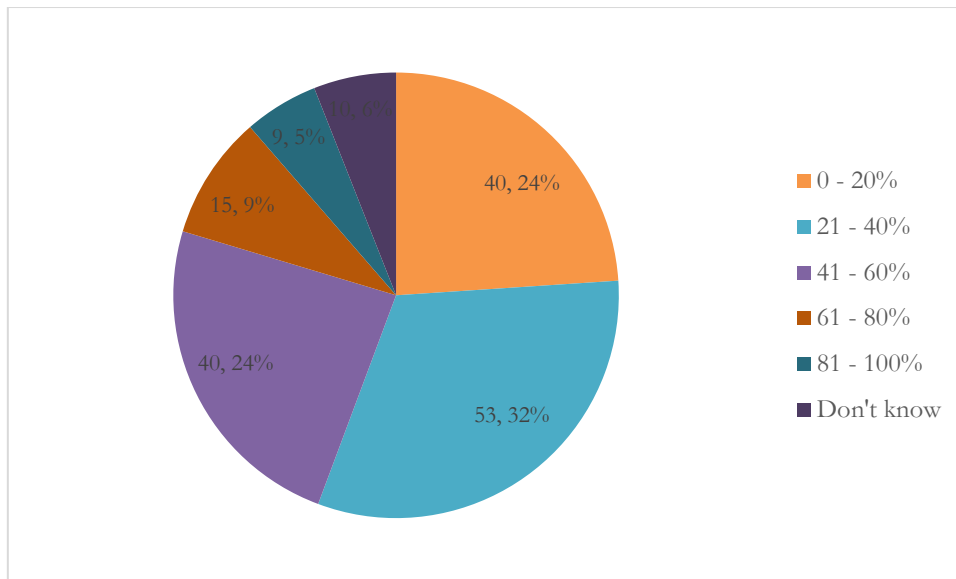
The highest level of success was reported by respondents of Schemes where higher proportions of members actively participate in a typical month. All of the respondents (9/9) who reported that more than 81% of their members actively participate in their Scheme in a typical month described their Scheme as very successful (i.e. ranking its success as '4' or '5' out of five), compared to 38% of respondents (15/40) who stated that less than 20% of their members participate actively in a typical month.

5. Working with the police

5.1. Section summary

This section examines the extent to which and ways in which the Business Crime Reduction Schemes in the sample work with the police.

Police support was viewed as essential and comprised many different activities, but its absence, where reported, had problematic implications:

- Almost all respondents in the sample stated that their Scheme worked with their local police and that police support was of great importance to their Scheme. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme worked with the police rated its success as high than those who reported that their Scheme did not. Closer working with local police was the single factor that many respondents noted would most improve their Scheme's success.

- Police support tended to consist of police attending a Scheme's briefing meetings, engaging in systematic information sharing with a Scheme, and having access to its radio network. Most Schemes reported sharing current awareness information and images/names of convicted persons with police. Members also noted the value of police efforts to engage with business members, promote the Scheme as an effective means of crime control, and support the issuing of exclusion sanctions.

- There were concerns among members that insufficient resources left the police unable to support Schemes. This materialised as low levels of police attendance at Scheme meetings, a lack of police support with the issuing and enforcement of exclusion orders, and a reduced level of information sharing on the part of the police.

5.2. Working with the police

Business Crime Reduction Schemes need to work in partnership with police. Police support is important to ensure that a Scheme's crime reduction efforts are regarded as an extended part of the criminal justice system, are perceived as legitimate and are operating appropriately. The police need the support and cooperation of those involved in such Schemes to ensure that crimes against businesses are reported and that offenders are apprehended and charged. As one respondent noted: *'The information we provide to the police increases their ability to target offenders and helps provide a truer picture of the level of criminality in an area'* [184]. Working in partnership in this way not only enhances a community's crime reduction efforts but provides a platform for other types of communication. As another respondent noted when describing the activity of their Scheme:

> *'We act as the communication channel between the police and business community for any events or major incidents. This can be anything from disruption caused by road closures or protests, all the way up to major terrorist incidents … Without us the police would struggle to communicate with [businesses]'* [173].

Almost all (96%, 161/167) respondents in the sample stated that their Schemes work with their local police. Almost as many (95%, 153/161) stated that police support was of high importance to their Scheme, and some that their Scheme's success was attributed to close working with local police (33%, 55/167), or that closer working with local police was the single factor which would most improve their Scheme's success (42%, 70/167). A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme worked with the police rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (65%, 105/161) compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not (50%, 3/6).

5.3. Police support activity

Respondents were asked about the level and type of support that their Business Crime Reduction Scheme received from the police. Responses indicated that the quantity of police support received can vary. For example, responses were mixed concerning whether police interworking with Schemes had increased or

decreased over the 12 months prior to the survey, with 33% (53/161) of respondents stating that it had decreased, 26% (42/161) stating that it had increased, and 41% (66/161) stating that it had not changed. The majority of respondents (83%, 133/161) reported that police physical presence in their area had decreased in the last 5 years, and that it had decreased in the 12 months prior to the survey (67%, 107/161).

The nature of police support received consisted of police attending the Scheme's briefing meetings (73%, 118/161), engaging in systematic information sharing (64%, 103/161), and having access to the Scheme's radio network (60%, 96/161). Over 60% of respondents reported that their Scheme shared current awareness information (100/161) and images/names of convicted persons (97/161) with police. The extent to which police use this information was reported as relatively high, with almost all respondents rating the volume of use as either '3' (31%, 50/161), '4' (30%, 48/161) or '5' (29%, 46/161) out of five. Other police activities that members noted as useful included: *'face to face communication with businesses' [82]*, *'promot[ing] the scheme as an effective aid to support the business' [35], 'visibility' [26]*, and *'supporting in the issuing of exclusions [and] obtaining Criminal Behaviour Orders' [104]*. Members also appeared to recognise and value the responsive nature of the support provided by police. As one member noted, *'we have Police officers that are directed by the BID Company to respond to the needs of our Members for non-urgent matters that allows our businesses to continue operating …effectively' [19]*.

5.4. Issues with police support

Members were asked to describe the things that the police could do better or do more of to aid their Business Crime Reduction Schemes. Of particular concern was police ability and willingness to support the activity of these Schemes. There was a view among respondents that police resources for the provision of such support were insufficient. As one respondent noted:

> *'Unfortunately [the police] are under-resourced and business crime is not a priority. Therefore, they do not have the resource to patrol town centres or attend even when a shoplifter has been detained, and the business ends up having to let them go which makes the businesses less likely to engage in the scheme' [57].*

Similarly, another respondent noted that *'These schemes are so important because the police can't/don't focus on these issues anymore' [29]*. There were also reports that levels of police commitment could vary depending on the extent to which individual officers and constabularies view these issues as a priority. As one member noted:

> *'The police town team was disbanded two years ago with the consequence of increased crime and antisocial behaviour experienced by all our members. We have recently had a new police commander, who thinks retail crime and antisocial behaviour should be tackled and is reinstating a local town centre policing team and re-engag[ing] with the retail business community' [131].*

Police attendance at Scheme meetings was viewed as important. These provide a valuable forum for face-to-face information sharing, and police absence can directly undermine a Scheme's effectiveness. As one respondent noted:

> *'The police support is poor. An officer only attended three out of eight meetings in 2017 citing other commitments. This weakens a Pubwatch Scheme because if Licensees feel the police are not interested they tend to feel it is not worth attending meetings' [123].*

Concerns were raised by respondents regarding the extent to which police would support the issuing and enforcement of exclusion orders. Only 27% (44/161) of respondents stated that the police serve exclusion orders on behalf of their Scheme. Not only can a lack of police support in this area undermine the legitimacy of an exclusion but enforcing an exclusion without police support can in some instances

compromise the safety of a member employee. Many respondents also called for police to share more information and to make greater use of information provided by Schemes. For example:

> *'With GDPR and Data Protection, and also changes to criminal justice responses, the police have taken a step back from providing data and images of offenders which is the biggest issue that needs to be addressed locally and nationally. We need to find a way for the Police to revisit this aspect of information sharing' [20].*

Respondents noted a number of other areas in which improved or greater police activity would be beneficial. Among these were calls for the police *to 'be visible on the street' [3]*, to *'increase their Town Centre policing involvement' [28]*, to employ *'greater use of criminal behaviour orders' [9]*, to *'prosecute persistent or motivated repeat offenders' [92]*, and *'to be active in encouraging premises to join [Schemes]' [123]*.

6. Working with other stakeholders

6.1. Section summary

This section examines the extent to which, and ways in which, Business Crime Reduction Schemes in the sample worked with key stakeholders beyond the police, such as other crime reduction schemes, local council and public agencies, and relevant others from the wider community.

Responses indicated that the Schemes in the sample are working with a wide range of stakeholders and that this collaborative activity offers many benefits:

- Roughly half of the sample shared information about offenders with other crime reduction schemes, and this was reported to help identify unknown offenders. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme shared information about offenders with other crime reduction schemes rated their own Scheme's success as high compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not share information in this way.
- Most of the Business Crime Reduction Schemes in the sample collaborated with their local council, with a local CCTV department, or with a community safety initiative. This activity usually comprised of attending meetings, ad-hoc or systematic information sharing or generally supporting the Scheme's agenda and promoting involvement.
- The large majority of Schemes reported that their level of interworking with the council had stayed the same or increased over the 12 months prior to the survey. Scheme engagement with elected council members, Police & Crime Commissioners and local Members of Parliament was also reported.
- Schemes in the sample were involving themselves in broader efforts to tackle offending behaviour such as Restorative Justice programmes, drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes, early-intervention programmes and other social or community projects. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme participated in drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes or in early intervention programmes rated their Scheme's success as high compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not.

6.2. Working with other crime reduction schemes

Business Crime Reduction Schemes can operate within close proximity of each other. In some towns and cities there can be more than one Scheme and the same offenders can be active in more than one Scheme location. To understand and identify patterns in offending activity and to tackle this activity at district and county levels, it is crucial that neighbouring Schemes share information about offending and offenders. Within this sample, 51% (85/167) of respondents stated that their Scheme shared information about offenders with other crime reduction schemes. Those that shared information reported that this had helped with 'identifying travelling offenders' (85%, 72/85), 'identifying prolific offenders' (85%, 72/85) and with the 'identification of unidentified offenders via images' (68%, 58/85). Roughly half (52%, 87/167) of respondents reported that their Scheme was part of a group of crime reduction schemes. A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme shared information about offenders with other crime reduction schemes rated their success as '4' or '5' out of five (69%, 59/85) compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not (60%, 49/82).

6.3. Working with local council and public agencies

Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning collaborative activity with local council and other public agencies (excluding police) in their area. Responses indicated that 84% (141/167) of the Schemes in the sample collaborated with their local council or with another public agency, and 85% (120/141) viewed this collaboration as important for their Scheme (rating this importance as '4' (25%, 35/141) or '5' (60%, 85/141) out of five).

Responses also indicated that 83% (117/141) of Schemes worked with a CCTV department and 76% (107/141) with another community safety initiative (such as an anti-domestic violence programme). This collaboration usually consisted of representatives from agencies attending the Scheme's meetings (64%, 90/141) or conducting ad-hoc (50%, 71/141) or systematic (40%, 57/141) information sharing with agencies. The information that is shared most commonly consists of current offender details and is aimed at increasing levels of awareness. The majority of respondents rated the level at which their collaborator uses this information as either '3' (32%, 45/141), '4' (31%, 43/141) or '5' (18%, 25/141) out of five.

When asked which activities conducted by these agencies were most useful to their Scheme, respondents noted the following: *'support and information sharing' [12]*, *'regular meetings for passing info both ways' [6]*, *'encourag[ing] members to submit incidents' [28]*, and *'support[ing] our agenda and push[ing] the scheme to businesses across the city' [137]*. One respondent noted that the local *'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Team work[s] closely with the Scheme and support[s] a range of applications such as Community Protection Notices/Injunction and Criminal Behaviour Orders where appropriate and [where] civil arrangements have failed' [35]*.

Respondents were asked about the level of support received from, and frequency of contact with, these agencies. The large majority of Schemes reported that their level of interworking with the council had stayed the same (55%, 78/141) or increased (31%, 44/141) over the 12 months prior to the survey, and that two-way interactions occurred with elected council members about once a month or more often (43%, 61/141) or once a quarter (26%, 37/141). The majority (79%, 127/161) of respondents stated that their Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) was aware of their Scheme. Levels of interaction between Schemes and PCCs varied, with 32% (40/127) reporting this as occurring less frequently than once a year, 13% (16/161) about once a year, 21% (27/127) once a quarter and 15% (19/127) about or more often than once a month. Most respondents (80%, 133/167) reported contact with their local Member of Parliament within the 12 months prior to the survey.

6.4. Working with the wider community

Respondents were asked about their involvement with other community groups, with criminal justice organisations or with other social interventions or enterprises. It was apparent from responses that Business Crime Reduction Schemes are involving themselves in broader efforts to tackle offending behaviour than simply focusing on tackling situations in which offending takes places. For example, one respondent stated that their Scheme was *'increasingly looking at early intervention/employment opportunities to divert criminal/anti-social behaviour becoming an issue that the Scheme then has to deal with' [48]*. Responses indicated that 25% (41/167) of Schemes were involved in Restorative Justice programmes, 22% (37/167) in drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes, and 30% (50/167) in early-intervention programmes. Of those who were involved in such a programme, the majority viewed their involvement as valuable. Responses also indicated that 32% (54/167) of Schemes were involved in other social or community projects. These programmes concerned homelessness and rough sleeping, dementia or mental health awareness, or other social and community issues, and involvement in each was reported as valuable.

A larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme participated in drug/alcohol abuse and dependency programmes rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (81%, 30/37) compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not (60%, 78/130). Similarly, a larger percentage of respondents who reported that their Scheme participated in early intervention programmes rated their Scheme's success as '4' or '5' out of five (72%, 36/50) compared to those who reported that their Scheme did not (62%, 72/117).

7. Conclusions

This report has examined the activities of a sample of Business Crime Reduction Schemes in the UK. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from this examination and various implications that should be considered by those involved in such Schemes and by other stakeholders.

The first of these concern Scheme design, operation and resources. Although there are operational implications arising from a Scheme's affiliation with a BID, a shopping centre, or another organisation or collective, each arrangement can provide an appropriate platform on which a Scheme can function. Schemes that involve solely day time traders, solely night time traders or multiple types of commercial businesses all serve valuable purposes. Although respondents who were involved in Schemes that catered solely for those trading in the day time economy viewed their Schemes as particularly successful, a more complete understanding of offending activity in a location can come from involving all types of businesses in a Scheme. Particular value and effectiveness can arise from Schemes using a radio system, providing training to their members, and using an online reporting system that provides current awareness information to members. However, all of this activity requires resourcing, and at a time when funding is limited, the majority of this often has to come from membership fees.

Management, governance and performance measurement play an important part in Scheme success and effectiveness. Across the sector, appropriate recognition appears to have been given to the importance of Scheme managers. Their unique role and significant knowledge of the criminal justice and business sectors, and of approaches to crime reduction make them a vital part of modern-day crime control efforts. A board of management or steering group is also an important part of Scheme governance and operation. Performance management and improvement arises from appropriate measurement, and information concerning incidents and offenders and feedback from members are key parts of this. Aligning governance and activity nationally is the next challenge for the sector, and continued efforts are required to ensure that Business Crime Reduction Schemes across the country maintain the same principles and draw upon the same standards, frameworks and legislation.

Collaboration and close working practices are vital for Business Crime Reduction Schemes. One of the most important factors in a Scheme's success is the extent to which its members work together and share information. However, levels of participation can vary widely across Schemes and a wide range of factors can impact negatively upon member recruitment and retention. Moreover, collaborative activity does not concern only those directly involved in a Scheme. Working closely with police is essential for both a fuller understanding of crime and offending activity in an area and for the recruitment of members, the issuing and enforcement of sanctions and for a Scheme's perceived legitimacy.

Many Schemes are not working as closely with police as they feel they could be. This was often blamed on insufficient police resources and resulted in police absence from Scheme meetings, lack of support with sanction issuing and enforcement, and reduced information sharing. Collaborating with other key stakeholders beyond local police is also important. Working with other crime reduction schemes, local council, local CCTV departments, MPs and PCCs, community safety initiatives and rehabilitative or early intervention programmes can all offer benefits such as further information sharing and more cohesive and collaborative crime reduction efforts.

An underlying issue here, however, concerns the factors that can limit the extent to which information is being shared both within Schemes and between them and other organisations. In an era where the collection, retention and use of data is heavily regulated through GDPR and data protection legislation, organisations can become reluctant to share information, either due to the administrative time and effort required to do so in a manner that adheres to these regulations, or due to fear of breeching these regulations. This has implications for the effectiveness of Business Crime Reduction Schemes and of

other crime control efforts. This highlights the important role of organisations that can advise Schemes on these matters and ensure that they are processing information appropriately and acting in line with standards set out by the [National Business Crime Centre](#).

Overall, those consulted through this research viewed Business Crime Reduction Schemes as successful and a vital part of modern-day crime-control efforts. The Schemes of those who self-rated their success as high had a number of features in common: a board of management, performance measurement methods in place, members that worked together closely, participated actively and met regularly, worked closely with the police and with other crime reduction schemes and with drug/alcohol abuse or early intervention programmes. It is vital that Schemes continue to operate and grow and to refine their activity in these areas, as a range of indicators suggest that the importance of such organisations is likely to increase in years to come. As one Scheme manager neatly summarised:

> *'We deal with more than just business crime and the term "Low Level" trivialises what ourselves and other Schemes do. We are slipping into a niche vacated by the police through lack of resources and often deal with crime that is serious in itself such as violent assaults, bulk thefts, intimidation and harassment or crime that wears down businesses and people, damaging livelihoods as well as mental and physical health. The information we provide to the police increases their ability to target offenders and helps provide a truer picture of the level of criminality in an area. As demands on police resources increase, the role of crime reduction partnerships in urban and rural locations will continue to expand'* [184].

Further research in this area, therefore, will be crucial to enhance understanding of the way in which Business Crime Reduction Schemes and their managers operate, and to identify, understand and share best practice. The survey that underpins this report will be repeated in future years to contribute towards this and to exploring how the factors identified in this report change and evolve with time.

Addendum

This report is based on results of an online survey hosted on behalf of the author by Littoralis Limited, developer of the Disc secure, online information-sharing system designed for crime reduction schemes.

Disc empowers communities to 'self-manage' low-level crime and ASB, and enables police to work with them to deliver a new kind of effective, joined-up community policing. It is implemented by crime reduction schemes across more than 450 towns and cities throughout the UK, as well as by shopping centres, major retailers, sports venues, security companies and police forces.

Disc implementations are autonomous and configured to suit the needs of the individual communities they support. However, all can link to each other for cross-Disc sharing of current-awareness information and the identification of travelling offenders. Linking in this way is subject to peer-to-peer agreement between each participating Data Controller.

Disc aligns with all obligations of the Data Protection Act 2018 (including the General Data Protection Regulation) and has been designed in accordance with the principles of 'data protection by design and default'.

For more information about Disc visit www.discagainstcrime.com or contact enquiries@littoralis.com

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