

Streets Ahead: A joint thematic inspection into the Street Crime Initiative

The Street Crime Initiative was a groundbreaking new approach to tackling crime which led to an immediate and positive reduction in robbery, according to a joint inspectorate report published today. The initiative brought improved support for victims and witness and revitalised local partnership working. However, the report also highlights the lessons to be learned in order to make the initiative even more effective, in particular the need for a greater focus on the rehabilitation of offenders.

One of the largest ever joint inspections, Streets Ahead was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Ofsted, Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Magistrates Courts Service Inspectorate, assisted by the Court Service, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and the Social Services Inspectorate.

The joint inspection found many examples of good practice and effective partnership working across the criminal justice system. The report also found a lack of shared objectives, insufficient attempts to capture and recycle emerging good practice and no mechanism for evaluation. The need for effective post sentence work, particularly for drug users, was also highlighted.

Streets Ahead contains the following positive findings;

- * the Street Crime Initiative had achieved a significant reduction in street crime and street robbery after six months;
- * victims and witnesses were better supported with improved court facilities;
- * the initiative was well-resourced with an additional £67 million being invested in reducing street crime in the ten areas; and
- * local partnership working was revitalised and energised with a renewed emphasis on delivery.

The report also highlights the following areas for improvement;

- * the lack of a strategy for capturing and recycling emerging good practice resulted in isolated pockets of good practice;
- * the quality of communication both within and between organisations was often poor with evidence of 'silo' mentalities;
- * the short-term nature of some central funding streams created uncertainty over the sustainability of some local projects;
- * street crime was not seen as a high priority by all of the ten police force areas or the local partner agencies, and conflicted with locally agreed priorities in some areas; and
- * there was insufficient focus on breaking the cycle of offending through effective post sentence supervision and rehabilitation of offenders.

Sir Keith Povey, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, said:

"The Street Crime Initiative was a groundbreaking, speedy and robust response to an urgent problem which achieved a great deal. The official figures speak for themselves, a reported 25% reduction in street robbery within six months and the predicted 17% annual reduction was confirmed in the recently published national crime figures.

"A great deal of emphasis was placed on reducing robbery through the arrest and sentencing of offenders. But in order to achieve a sustainable reduction in street crime it is equally important to focus on preventing re-offending through the rehabilitation and resettlement of offender – aided by 'tracking' them properly throughout the criminal justice system.

"The Street Crime Initiative cuts across and involves the entire criminal justice system. Our joint report contains recommendations for change which will not only improve the Street Crime Initiative, but also remove the frictions and blockages which prevent the criminal justice agencies, and other agencies, working together as effectively as they could.

"The report also looked at crime prevention measures in the community, including the role of police in schools and the successes in keeping young people away from crime achieved by youth offending teams and summer holiday activity schemes. The availability of accessible, speedy and effective drug treatment, as a means of helping people break free from crime was also examined, but found to be an area in need of improvement.

"We found many examples of good practice, across all areas and all agencies. But this good practice tended to be in isolated pockets. Once a solution, or an example of good practice has been developed and proved to be effective, this knowledge needs to be shared across the ten areas and with all the various agencies."

Notes to Editors

1. Streets Ahead is available on each of the eight inspectorates websites, including the HMIC website www.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/hic.htm; Media hard copies are available from the Home Office press office, please call 020 7273 2402 to obtain a copy.
2. The figures used in this press notice and the joint inspectorate report, are Government figures unless otherwise stated.
3. The Street Crime areas were inspected between January and March 2003.

4. The joint inspection team recommends that:

- * Future national initiatives benefit from a 'single pot' funding approach to cut down on bureaucracy and ease allocation and that such funding should be identified for medium and long-term projects to assist with planning and recruitment.
- * In planning national initiatives, early consultation should occur between national and regional stakeholders to ensure that locally agreed priorities are balanced with national goals.
- * In multi-agency initiatives common standards for Joint Agency protocols should be established in the early stages and be inclusive of all relevant agencies.
- * In order to ensure offenders are dealt with appropriately, monitoring of case progression should include; specific monitoring of police file quality and timeliness, with measurable actions for improvement; separation of case data by crime type; and the agreement of a common CJS flagging system for tracking cases through the system from arrest to resettlement.
- * A single statutory agency should be identified to take ownership of victims and witnesses and that a national protocol is agreed for witness care with clear assignment of responsibilities.
- * The National Treatment Agency should establish a clear, measurable and achievable standard for the provision of drugs treatment for offenders identified by initiatives such as SCI.
- * LCJBs and LEAs should jointly establish systems to monitor the impact that having a police officer in school has on; the number of exclusions, the incidence of bullying and attendance at the school. National guidelines and a performance framework should be designed to ensure the effectiveness of this initiative.
- * Performance monitoring of any future national initiative should include the overt monitoring of disproportionality of ethnicity.
- * That the Government, through the National and Local Criminal Justice Boards, set clear, cross-agency targets for future initiatives to aid the development of relationships between partners within the CJS
- * That the planned integrated IT system for all CJ agencies be fast-tracked, by the Government, as an urgent priority.
- * A strategy and structure for identifying, exchanging and implementing good practice should be established at the start of any national initiative.