



Department of Psychology
& Speech Pathology

Interpersonal and Organisational Development Research Group

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Report of Feasibility Study of a Community Witness
Support Scheme for Heartlands, North Town

The need for witness support

Carolyn Kagan, Sue Caton and Amisha Amin

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Interpersonal and Organisational Development Research Group, Manchester
Metropolitan University

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Summary of Overall Findings

1. The overall brief for the feasibility study was to:

examine if need for a community witness support scheme exists in Greenwood, Copvale and Harley, districts of Heartlands. The study was to examine how a project could go beyond existing victim support services by encouraging people to come forward and supporting witnesses at the very earliest stage of witnessing acts of crime, nuisance and disorder, as well as providing a support service for witnesses called to attend magistrates' courts.

2. Evidence from local people supports a proposal to develop a witness support scheme. A variety of people were consulted, including those who have acted as witnesses to incidents prior reporting, after reporting and after going to Court, as well as from active community representatives, local non-active residents, and people working within agencies in the area.
3. A number of barriers to acting as a witness were identified, including personal fears of retribution; actual threats and intimidation; being known locally; being isolated; not knowing about legal procedures; not seeing the point of reporting; and lack of confidence in police attitudes and practices.
4. Supports included personal qualities, good local networks and reliable community representatives; understanding the seriousness of an incident; the work of the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team and the Court based witness support scheme.
5. Currently, barriers outweigh supports.
6. The context is one of a large amount of regeneration activity; general perceived lack of confidence in the police; some strong community organisations, but also some insularity and isolation; strong perceptions of 'outsiders'; and a relative lack of involvement of young people in finding solutions for the area.
7. A locally sensitive witness support scheme might contribute to breaking the cycle of negativity wherein lack of confidence and trust, combined with the limited impact of community structures in supporting witnesses, leads to low levels of witness activity. To do so, it would have to incorporate a number of features, including:
 - working in close liaison and partnership with residents and other projects;
 - involving local people and basing a scheme on their issues;
 - being able to influence policy and practice;
 - being independent from but linked to the police; being able to build bridges between local people and the police;
 - being able to influence police policy and practice; giving information and being able to challenge custom and practice in the legal processes;
 - building on local strengths and neighbourhood characteristics; being inclusive; working in participation with local people to build and strengthen local networks;
 - incorporating young people;
 - being able to influence inter-generational understanding.
 -
8. It is recommended that a witness support project is established with two key tasks at the outset: *Individual Support* and *Organisational Development*.
9. The recommendations were not accepted at this point in time

Introduction

There are a number of factors which influence the confidence with which people will report incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder they have witnessed, and further, whether or not they will proceed through the Courts as a witness. These are linked to two crucial aspects of their lives. Firstly, their past experiences, (including the things that would enable them to report and those that hinder their involvement), affect their feelings of confidence and trust in the system. Secondly, the context in which they live provides opportunities for the development of enabling professional and community organisations, within which they can feel supported and safe. Figure 1 illustrates the connections between current experience, social context and witness behaviour in general.

Figure 2 shows how negative experiences, leads to strong barriers and weak support, and thereby lack of confidence and trust. Features of the context lead to opportunities not being taken to develop enabling community structures. These two things combined result in low feelings of community safety and low levels of witness behaviour. A *cycle of reluctance* to come forward and proceed as a witness is established.

This report will outline issues arising from both current experiences and social context, and will outline the level of local support for a Witness Support Scheme. It will be argued that the need for, and support for a Witness Support Scheme exists. The potential effect of a Witness Support Scheme in breaking the cycle of negativity will be outlined, and some of the features which will have to be included in any such scheme will be presented.

Direct Experience

Over the past year there were approximately twelve thousand reported crimes in the Regeneration area. One thousand of these ended in a successful prosecution, with witnesses being prepared to give their testimony and contribute to all stages of the proceedings. Thus, residents in Heartlands have not only witnessed high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and general nuisance, some have experience of reporting incidents to the police and some have been to Court. Residents have reported intimidation at all stages: at the witness stage, the reporting and the Court stages.

Experience of Witnessing

People that work in the area have witnessed a range of different things from criminal activity, through to vandalism and graffiti. One resident-worker, whose work takes him around the area told us of the range of things he has seen:

I see so much, so much going on its unbelievable. ... I seen some boys about 18 or 19 years old put a car on fire and there was a woman still in it. The same boys I've seen them put the back of a building on fire. ... people getting beaten up - there's a lot of muggings in the area. ...'cos there are so many shops around here they'll come along 'cos they will target them coming out of shops. ... I've seen cars being stolen, houses being robbed, the street signs taken off. ... I've seen so much that I don't know what's left.

Figure 1: The Links between direct and indirect experiences of acting as a witness, social context and witness behaviour

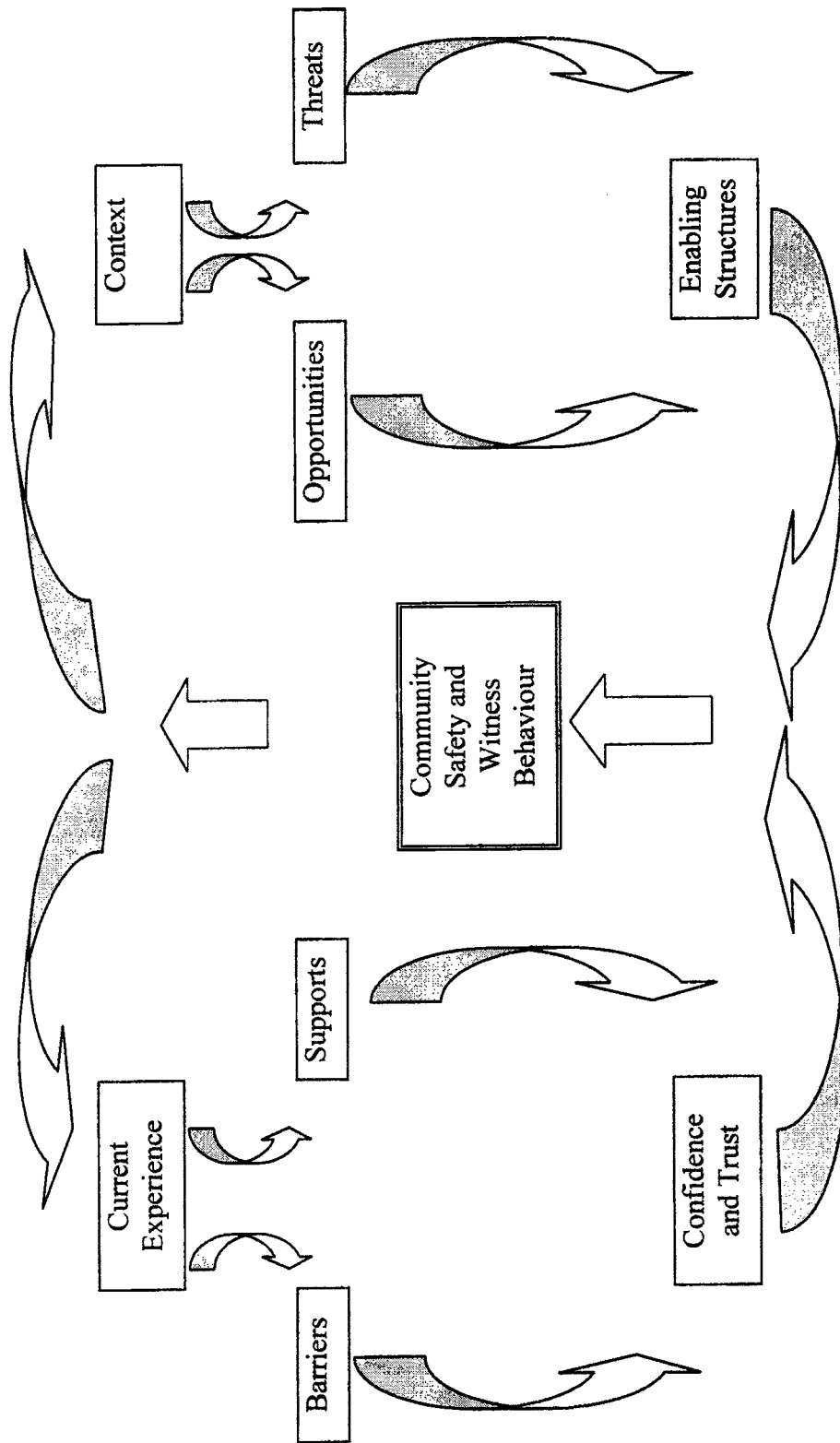
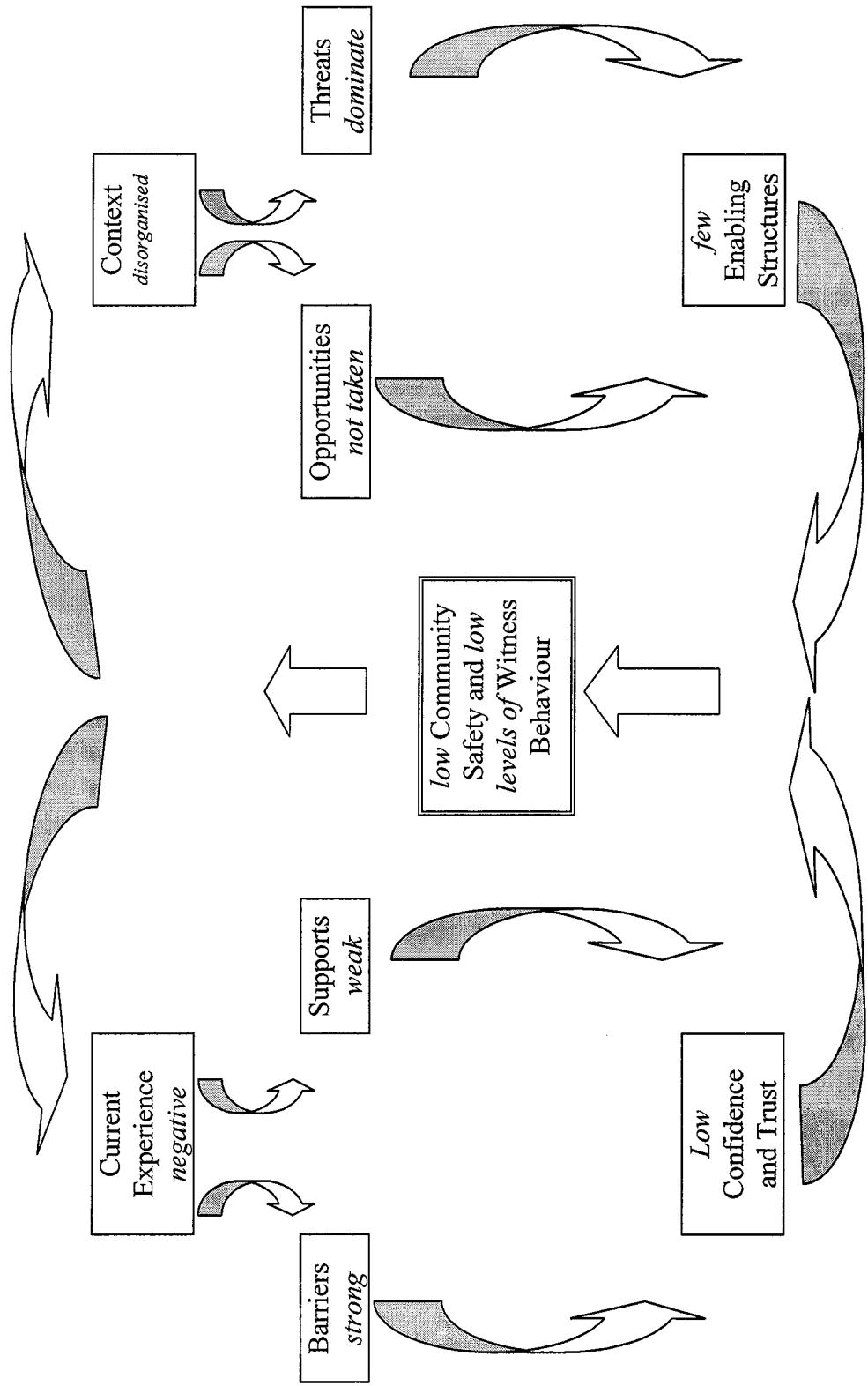


Figure 2: The Cycle of Reluctance to come forward and proceed as a witness: the current situation



Someone who works within a building that is open to the public has seen considerable levels of anti-social behaviour.

Teenagers will come in and verbally threaten employees or the other people (in the place), and there is no reason except to frighten them to death and make them feel powerful. ... The thing that upsets me most ... is the children ... who get caught up in crime with the older people. ... I've seen ... a group of kids who're pushing the younger kid, about 14 into the house so that he could open the front door and let them in to rob the place. This kid (comes in here) ... he's very bright and he told me that his brother forces him to do this stuff.

A shop worker, who is also a resident has viewed from his shop window robbery, fights, drug dealing and property damage.

I've seen car thefts ... assaults right outside (the place of work). I've seen houses that are being robbed on this street. ... I've seen a bunch of kids breaking into (shops) they've thrown rocks at the window. They've broken my windows in the kitchen as well. ... I've seen drug dealing going on around the corner.

A similar catalogue of activities has been seen by someone else who lives in the area.

I've witnessed loads of things - cars being torched, cars being stolen, people being assaulted, rocks being thrown at windows to break them, young kids vandalising street signs or stealing them, people's houses being robbed.

The very act of witnessing violent crime can have long-term effects, as a resident has found. The events she saw have been followed by high levels of intimidation, and the family is seriously thinking of moving from the area.

(After witnessing a serious assault) I was a wreck.; I couldn't sleep. I was an absolute mess. I was frightened and scared all the time. ... I can't go out alone, I'm in the house all the time. I don't leave unless (family members) are with me. I become so isolated 'cos of this and I know that it is them and I shouldn't let them do this to me. But I can't leave the house without feeling afraid, and very afraid. ... We are now at the point that we are moving out of this house 'cos we know what will happen if they get charged. It will come right back to us and this will never end. They will take it out on us, get us back for what the police have to do.

Experience of Reporting

It is one thing to have witnessed crime, disorder or nuisance behaviour, but not everyone goes on to report what they have seen to the authorities. In one part of Heartlands, the co-ordinator of a Homewatch Scheme thought people were willing and supported in reporting what they had witnessed. People understood why they should report to the police, in order to get action taken (and not just for insurance purposes).

They'll report anything in this area, they'll report anything... I think it's the Homewatch background. In a way, 'cos they realise if you need special attention on police time and police resources. If you report then it gets noticed - it doesn't mean to say that they're going to do anything at that particular time, but it gets noticed. ... People will only report it if they're going through their insurance in many areas .. (but) if you don't report is then you don't get any special resource. ... if you've got a particular problem in a particular area and it's constant, people tend to report and report and report. ... no, people round here aren't reluctant to phone the police.

Nevertheless, even with supports after reporting, the actual or anticipated personal costs for individual residents can be high.

You see such horror stories. We've seen horror stories. You know, where people have been run out of their properties. And even with all the support they've had with cameras, officers, alarms and what have you, they've still lost.

Experience of Intimidation

Witnesses report having been intimidated at every stage. One resident told us of her friend who is being harassed by private landlords who she thinks want to get her to leave the street.

There are 2 private landlords) who are intimidating, they are harassing, they are doing everything possible to force the private owner occupier out and drive her to distraction, so that they can buy that house and turn it into a hostel. And she is basically at her wits end. ... She is literally terrified. She has to pay somebody to come and sit in her house if she has to go shopping or visit somebody or anything. ... so that the house is safe for when she comes back. ... she's had graffiti, she's had faeces put through her door, she's had, oh, everything done to her. (even a member of the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team who visited her said) 'It's the only time I've been with a police officer in broad daylight and felt very intimidated walking down the street'. She's at her wits end.

Before witnesses have a chance to report anything, intimidation can start. One person who had directly witnessed a serious incident summarised the fears:

I seen other people get intimidated and threatened all the time. Blokes will threaten ladies 'cos they have seen what they did. And so they scare them so they wont report it.

Although residents are sometimes willing to confront the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour directly, there is a danger of further intimidation, leading to even victimisation.

(Two women asked neighbours to lessen the late night noise). The man who lived there wasn't too bad about it, he said 'OK, I'll do that', but the woman came flying out of the bedroom and assaulted them. She head butted (one) and broke her front tooth, well loosened her front tooth,, (the other) is disabled ... and walks with sticks, sometimes a wheelchair, it depends on the day, but she was assaulted as well. And they're both prepared to go to court and they don't need any witness support as far as I know. ... This was middle aged people, and alcohol, not youth.

This type of experience leads to a reluctance to appear in Court, even if independent evidence against the perpetrators is obtained.

There had been a family living on the street - constant anti-social behaviour. It started with parking cars all over the street. When residents were asked to move their cars, there were threats - 'if you come near me, I'll cut your throat'. Flower boxes were destroyed an so on. The threats got worse. The police and Neighbourhood Nuisance Team moved in with hidden cameras and a peep hole of one house. Residents were happy to give statements, but this was a big extended family and residents would not go to court.

The general culture of intimidation, sometimes between 'rough elements' has made people feel insecure and reluctant to report what they see.

The whole area around here is intimidated. Yesterday we heard that we've got a few tinker families over the other side of the road that moved in. And there's quite a rough element over that side. And there are some other families that are equally, um tough. And they've got a reputation. ... We hear there was somebody caught breaking into one of the ruffian's houses that's got a reputation of 'don't mess with me'. And they caught him doing it. Now then they took a pick axe to his legs. So he couldn't get away. So, you know, It's the law of the jungle that's creeping in. And people are thinking, 'even if I saw it, I'm saying nothing'.

Intimidation does not stop at threats, and a witness may be turned into a victim.

... they have threatened me with things you can't imagine. What they will do to me, and what they will do to my family. They threatened to burn my house and they have done, you know....I was absolutely terrified they would do something. I was so frightened. ... Their threats and violent acts scared me and I didn't know what they were capable of. ... I want to charge them and the police encourage me, but I don't want to go through all of it. I can't go to Court. ... I can't deal with it anymore.

Experience of Court and its Aftermath

Even if people go as far as appearing in Court, they do not feel safe and supported. The very experience of being in court made this resident feel like a victim.

I went to court once as a witness and I was right, I knew I was right. I couldn't sleep for a week ... if someone had walked up to me and said 'You've committed a murder', I would have said 'Yeah' 'cos I was that frightened. I was petrified. ... But it made me think, would I ever do that again? ... because the lawyer made me feel like a criminal .. and all I was doing was telling the truth about what happened. Having said that, I can't stand the law being broken by people like that, so I think I would.

Whilst there is pressure on residents not only to report incidents, but also to follow this through with the willingness to appear in Court, there is a view that the consequences of doing this are sometimes too great. The consequences for local people who had successfully participated in the granting of an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) was perceived by a resident onlooker to have been great.

I think if the ASBO people knew the consequences, at the end of the day that they were going to lose their homes, probably break up a family (which it came to, very nearly breaking up a family - luckily they've worked through it), and the trauma they went through, (they might not go through with it). Then again, do you know before you go through it? However much someone tells you how horrendous it can be, do you know until you actually go through it? Do you know you're going to sleep downstairs with your clothes on because you're frightened to go to bed? That's the realities of it, and if you told somebody that, they'd say 'Hang on a minute, not going through that, it's not worth it, let someone else do it.' ... She lost her home, lost her friends, and things like that. And for what? The community gained and she lost.

Some of the Court procedures, themselves make it particularly difficult for witnesses.

I went to Court ... I didn't meet the Crown Prosecution Service until the day before and if we could have got together with them or with the other witnesses then we could have helped each other, supported each other, rather than it be so nerve racking and afraid.

Community Safety

Knowledge of the real, lived experiences of local people, as well as locally repeated stories, which may or may not have become distorted in the telling, have contributed to a general feeling of lack of safety. Someone who lives outside the area, but works in Heartlands, highlights the consequences of constant, mostly low level crime.

Here the crime is small scale and constant and very much undermines the quality of people's lives.

Worse than that, direct experience of intimidation as a witness can lead to a deterioration in living conditions for particular people.

I used to work but 'cos of (the intimidation) I don't anymore. That's how bad it got, that I couldn't work.

Some people have virtually become prisoners in their own homes due to fear of going out, reflecting the general decline in safety of the area.

(Our neighbours), they're both old. ... they've had all sorts of things happen to them ... Now they don't open the (back) door, they keep the door shut. People lock themselves in, they don't want to know, and I don't think you're going to change that attitude. ... Basically, people either want to shut their doors, go in and don't want to get involved, or they are involved (in crime) and they wouldn't want to know people like you or me.

People do not, themselves have had to have had direct experience to be afraid to go out.

A middle aged housewife, interviewed in the street said that although she had never herself witnessed anything personally, she and her children do not go out of the house in the evening - even to the chippy at 7.00pm. She does not consider it safe. Her daughter has been badly bullied by other girls if the boys they are with 'even look at her'. She, herself has not witnessed an act of crime or anti-social behaviour. Although she has lived in the area a long time, and knows lots of people well, she still does not feel safe.

Some activities in the area have been organised in part around people's feelings of lack of safety.

There is only one church in the area with an evening service because elderly people (church goes) are too scared to go out at night

Young people are widely considered to be the major cause of problems in the area, although this is not universal.

The estate is stable - not a high turnover of population. People have known each other for 30 years so just know they would get back up from each other. Trust is high. ... There are a lot of young people on the estate. At (regeneration) meetings there is a lot of talk about youths and noise and nuisance from youth, but we don't have this on the estate. There is a young population - we have 'children nuisance'!

Some residents report that whilst people used to take responsibility for reporting what went on, this has declined recently, mainly as a result of the attitude of the police.

We had a lot of strong people that was reporting crime, but they just wont report it anymore and I can't blame them. And even though I've said to them 'Well, if you don't report it how're they gonna know?' and they say 'What will they do if I do

report it? ... Well, nothing, and if they do come out they've got a negative attitude, and we don't need that'.

In the street interviews, 66 % of people reported that children being out of parental control was something they disliked about the area. This was endorsed by other residents who feared for some children's safety. Children outwith parental control was an indicator of lack of community safety.

Things are going downhill. There's a local kid who is 7 years old who is always outside walking around - both parents are junkies and he doesn't want to go home. Walks down back entries and alleys ... if someone offered him a bag of sweets he would go with them. (This) has been reported lots of times to Social Services, but nothing seems to happen.

Housing policies were sometimes linked to anti-social behaviour, and people's fears are not always assuaged by convictions, or in the case of anti-social behaviour, evictions.

In a street interview, an elderly man said he did not like some of the people who move into new houses, especially when they are young girls with boyfriends who create havoc. One set were recently evicted, but they returned and set fire to the house.

The general lack of perceived safety, and real as well as perceived fear of intimidation and retribution leads to unreported crime, as well as well as to restrictions on people's lives.

There's loads more unreported crime on the estate than reported. Particularly men as victims - not reported because of fear.

The general state of decline was reflected in a story a resident told us of an elderly man unwilling to ask children to stop playing football against his wall.

I was out the front the other day when we were painting and spoke to a chap. I've known him for years and years, since I was a little girl. really nice, he's nearly 80- now. He only lives a few streets away and he asked me if I could do something about children playing football opposite. They keep banging on his window with the ball, and some elderly people's property facing him, ... they are frightened of going out and tackling the children because they're so aggressive and the intimidation he would get back. ... Now for a person of nearly 80 who's lived there as long as 40, nearly 50 years to be frightened to go out and say to a youngster who is playing football - you know 'cos of the repercussions. It's in a bad way.

Long-standing residents compared the past with the present, with sadness, and concern, particularly for children growing up in the area.

I've lived here for over 20 years and it didn't used to be like this. It was a very fortunate and lively part of the City and you didn't have to worry about (such) crimes. But now it is unrecognisable. Sometimes I can't believe it's the same place. I do get scared seeing all this crime that once was practically non-existent in our community ... My children are grown and have children. I'm lucky they turned out so well. But it's me and my children I worry about getting involved in these kinds of things, 'cos you don't know what children are doing when they are out.

As a consequence of the general decline in the area, people were reluctant to come forward as witnesses. A general state of despair, and lack of hope was reported.

...they've been neglecting our area for a long time, and it's gonna take a long, long time to get people's hopes up, and certainly a hell of a lot longer before anyone would be a witness ... about 5 years, come back.

Despite the perceived and real lack of safety, as we have seen, people do come forward as witnesses, and sometimes proceed with a case through the courts. Their experiences highlight the existing supports and barriers to acting as a witness.

The decision to report incidents witnessed, or to go ahead with proceedings after reporting, is based on a complex cost-benefit analysis, which is different for different people. So, for instance, the costs of proceeding if a family member is being (or fears being) threatened may be too great for some but not for others; the costs of proceeding if a person's house is damaged (or they fear it may be) may be too great for some and not for others; the benefits of proceeding if someone has been (or fears they may be) hurt may outweigh personal costs for some but not for others.

Nevertheless, some general features of the supports that enable people to proceed, having witnessed an incident, as well as the barriers that prevent them, can be identified from the stories local people tell. The extent to which they are based on 'fact' is irrelevant - it is the impact they have on a particular person that is important.

What enables people to act as a witness?

Courage

Some people's feelings of outrage at law breaking, or notions that they 'have nothing to lose' leads them to be prepared to proceed as a witness. Some (but not all) people we interviewed in the street said they **would** be prepared to go to court.

I would always report what I saw and would go to court if necessary.

Perhaps without being put to the test, it is easy to be courageous.

I have always been outspoken - some people would say too impulsive. But I would always speak up. I think. I've never really had to, and I do know of people who have been intimidated. I don't think it would affect me.

Perception of the Seriousness of the Crime

Most people were not so sure about their willingness to come forward. They may only have been prepared to come forward in relation to some crimes. The more serious the crime, the more likely they said they would be to report and proceed.

In a street interview, a young shop worker in Harley says she would not consider reporting graffiti and the like, but would report muggings.

The perception of a crime against the person, rather than towards property would determine the extent to which some people would report.

If someone is seriously injured or hurt then I would report it. You know, things like vandalism or graffiti, I think are too small to report. ... Where people get hurt it's serious 'cos it can happen again. Street signs are replaceable, and graffiti can be painted over, but a person is not replaceable.

The seriousness of the crime is linked to the anticipated response from the police. Some people would not report an incident they thought would receive no response. As one resident witness put it:

If it is serious I will report it. But I know that if it's not serious the police aren't going to do anything anyway. (If) I call them up and tell them that a bunch of boys are throwing rocks at my window, ... it's a waste of time, they won't do anything about it.

Good local Networks

In the street interviews, we found that middle aged and elderly people generally know a lot of people, whereas younger people tended to know relatively few. Not surprisingly, this was often linked to the time they had lived in the area. General levels of community safety were higher for those we stopped in the street, and did not seem linked to the number of people known. Nearly everybody had somebody they would turn to in a crisis, with family members and neighbours being the people most readily turned to. Only 6 people said they had no-one to turn to, and of these, two people were wanting to leave the area. Active and inactive residents talked of the support they got from family members, for example:

Neighbours support each other - small blocks of people look out for each other.

In addition to these informal networks, other residents described more formal support arrangements, such as telephone 'trees', although confidence can be undermined by careless police response.

When there has been an incident in the park, we have a little network. ... I phone Y and someone else; they phone someone else and everybody phones the police. ... We all ask for a log number. What the police have done in the past is given us one log number for every call. They've actually given my name out 'Oh I'll give you X's log number'. Now it's a good job it was a friend...

Community representatives

The development of more organised Residents' Associations and Homewatch Schemes, has also contributed to feelings of greater confidence.

The area has cleaned up a lot in the last three years - all due to the Tenants' Association

These groups also offer direct emotional and practical support to people, as illustrated by what a resident witness told us.

...in our community we let one another know that we are there for each other 'cos a lot of the times people do need to talk about what has happened to them, whether they're victims or witnesses. ... The two elderly ladies .. who were robbed at knife point. They are alone and I ... let them know that if they need anything, you know, that they have support, 'cos they need to know that. For them, ...that is a scary thing to go through

It is not only emotional support that is provided by residents' associations. They are also able to help with the reporting of incidents and the procurement of resources.

(The residents' association reports everything. The local police station has an answer phone that I call to report any anti-social behaviour for which we do not require a police officer. For example, if the previous night there had been music blaring from one house on the street, it is reported on the on the phone. If we need a police officer, we have another number. The police are really good - much better than in (another area of North Town)!

One Homewatch Scheme works in close conjunction with the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team.

(Muggings and burglaries were increasing ... we set up a Homewatch.) We set up neighbour nuisance diaries, and basically recorded what was going on at different spots round the estate. ... (one neighbour) was causing a nuisance to the people next door, just by making a noise in the night, basically ... we'd complained to

Neighbourhood Nuisance Team about it and she didn't get her tenancy renewed, so she moved out. At the same time there was a young girl (16) with a baby ... and boyfriend who was a drug addict (he and his friends) were bringing stolen cars onto the estate, causing mayhem. ... a lady in her 80's lived next door to this, completely alone in the world, no family, no back up nothing. We found out about her and did neighbour nuisance diaries on that as well and the girl ended up losing her tenancy. So .. getting new people in, it stabilised the estate.

Advanced knowledge of prospective neighbours who might be moving in to the area was thought to be helpful, but the need to ensure that newcomers were made to feel welcome was also recognised.

(Another) estate does vetting before a new neighbour comes in and (the residents' association) was recently upset that someone moved in that they didn't know about. I also think new neighbours need to be welcomed more than at present - we should go and talk to them.

Those people who were members of residents' associations or Homewatch schemes, sometimes used committee members as channels through which to report.

Q. What sort of things do people come and tell you about? *A.* Oh all sorts, from litter in the streets to a child of three shitting in the entry, to neighbour nuisance, to dealing with anything.

This readiness to tell a local representative was in part because they were well known and inspired confidence, but also seemed in part as a means of avoiding responsibility themselves, to the frustration of local committee members.

They know me, they'll talk to me. ... I have blank Incident Reports behind me door and if I think somebody is strong enough, like some of them come and complain, and I'll say to them, 'Look, here's an incident report, fill it in and send it back. You don't have to put your name on it, just either put it through my door and I'll pass it on, or send it through to Regeneration's Neighbour Nuisance.' I mean 'cos sometimes I get very tired. I get bogged down with other people's problems, and these people are strong enough to sort them out by themselves. I'll do it for the elderly, I'll do it for anyone that's vulnerable, but as for people who are quite strong enough to do their own (they just would rather complain to me than complain to anyone else), then no, I won't deal with it.

Community representatives of this sort were, then, seen as important supports for vulnerable people, including those who were frightened. Some had also been in a position to build up strong relationships with the police, as illustrated by this community representative.

We do know people, not ourselves, but we do know people, quite a few people who say 'I've seen such and such'. 'Well, have you reported it?' 'No, I'm not doing it, do you want to do it?'. They won't do it, they're frightened. ... if it is still going on, you know, if it is still in progress when they phone us - or if they phone anyone on the committee - then we automatically phone the police. We don't hesitate with that. And we do have a good working relationship with the local community officer.

Being Unknown

The anonymity of being unknown to perpetrators gave some people the confidence to report incidents, especially serious ones.

When I see that someone is hurting or causing harm, then I would report it, 'cos I don't want that person to get hurt. I think it is easier to do 'cos they don't know who I am if I report it. ...I can call and say what I see outside (my work) and not have to worry about someone having to threaten me or come after me or my family.

Similarly, anonymity at the reporting stage was seen as helpful, even for someone who was a community representative.

I don't mind defending people if I don't need to give my name and address, telephone number and things like that. If I've got to give any of these details then it doesn't happen.

The difficulty that this anonymous reporting creates for the police was recognised, and Crimestoppers, a national crime reporting telephone line, was seen by community representatives as a useful, anonymous reporting channel. (None of the people we stopped in the street had ever reported anything to Crimestoppers. This may highlight a difference between active and inactive residents in terms of levels of knowledge and understanding).

But the police have got their hands tied behind their back ... He's got to have someone who goes to Court with him and say 'Yeah, I saw that'. And if you're not willing to stand up and say 'I saw that' then it was a waste of time me telling an officer who did it. You should always tell the officer what you saw because if it comes up again, if it's logged then, well ... they may get him on another crime. That's the beauty of Crimestoppers - people will come forward with the names and information and they can hide behind being anonymous. But then officers have to gather evidence to support what the person has told.

Positive Police Response

A strong police presence fed in to overall feelings of safety. Some residents have noticed an increase in policing recently, as reflected in a comment during a street interview.

I think there have been more policemen walking about recently - they are more noticeable now. That's good

In addition to police presence, physical aids such as alarms were thought to give people support, even though they were not always easy to get, as this public service worker reports.

I had to get a panic button, and I had to really fight with the police to get this ... and that made such a huge difference. I mean it is so much better now 'cos if they come in and threaten or intimidate or cause trouble they know the police will instantly be there. ... We had to fight and fight, it took an awful lot of shouting but it got done. So it (i.e. improvement) is happening, but it is slow.

Emotional support at the time of reporting an incident, helps people through this stage, especially where there is intimidation. Even so, the support is not always sufficient to enable people to go to the next stage, of giving evidence, as this resident shows.

(the police) were good to us. They were more supportive than I thought they would be. I think they understood our position and even though they encouraged us to report it or make a statement they would not look down on us or think it was

stupid of me to not reporting this. 'cos they support me in my not wanting to do it. The police officers came round dressed in normal clothes, you know, without uniform to come and check on me and how things were. And that did mean a lot 'cos you think sometimes that well, to the police, you're just a statistic or another person involved in a crime. But they took the time out to look out for me and that meant a lot.

Neighbourhood Nuisance Team

The work of members of the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team receives widespread acclamation. Its presence and the work it has undertaken has boosted the confidence of some local people.

(the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team worker) that works for our area, ... he's tackled certain issues that have never been tackled by the police, although they've known about it for years. ... I don't know how he's done it, but he has, and I've got a lot of faith in him...I just hope the police are working with him as much as he's working with them. I just hope it's a partnership, and that they consult.

Not everyone, however, knows about the team and what it can do. The majority of people we interviewed in the street did not know about the team, and not everyone involved in associations used the team directly, as a community representative told us.

We're trying to get more people to report to the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team. We know the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team wouldn't turn up at the house in uniform. It's still proving difficult to do it.

Even in the context of a growing cynicism about resident participation in the regeneration work more generally, the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team was valued.

(One of our representatives) has given up going to groups as he feels they are just 'talking shops' - We are a strong association and we want to get things done. ... (The agency) people don't live in the area and therefore don't really know what is going on - they can have an idea but not really know. ... (The agencies) don't like residents voicing concerns or 'throwing verbal missiles' in meetings. However the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team is a good idea and working well.

Although new, the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team is thought to be useful in preventing the escalation of problems.

The Neighbourhood Nuisance Team is very good and the idea of nipping anti-social behaviour in the bud is a really good one. For example, a kid kicking a ball repeatedly against someone's wall isn't a crime, it's just annoying. The Neighbourhood Nuisance Team deal with this.

A cautionary note was raised by a community representative, about the danger that people would be moved on and out by the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team and then reappear in some other part of the area.

(Harley) is not really that bad an area. I think we have to be careful with this Neighbour Nuisance thing as well, we have to be really careful in a sense that they're not just pushed out of the area into someone else's back yard. I think we should look at other ways of dealing with things, 'cos I think sooner or later it'll just come round full circle and end up back here. They can't get pushed on everywhere, can they?

Court Witness Support Scheme

The existence of the Witness Support Scheme in the Magistrates' Court, run by Victim Support, was known to some, and was reported to be useful. Not everybody, though, liked the idea of it for themselves.

(Someone I know's) actually used Witness Support. 'cos she had trouble with a neighbour, and she took him to Court. She got CCTV installed 'cos of this neighbour, who was abusing her. And she actually got him done under the Neighbour Nuisance scheme. So when she went to Court, he was pleading not-guilty until the morning he got to Court, as they do, then pleaded guilty. But we went in the Witness Support from there, and they were very, very good. They were very good - but I wouldn't have bothered.

Whilst some of the people we spoke to knew a lot about resources and projects available locally, there were many who had little idea of what was available locally. Some had taken part in information gathering more widely.

Education and Information

Those residents who sat on regeneration committees had gained information about other types of projects. Some had been to visit other schemes. One group had visited a street warden project in Amsterdam.

Our Group has been to Amsterdam to see community schemes, especially Neighbourhood Wardens. Based on shopping areas. Seemed to work, but Wardens said their worst problem was dealing with people riding bicycles on pavements! This was organised by Groundwork.

Visiting other projects helped residents see that things could be done differently, including the methods of policing. One community representative described the experience:

I saw (the police actually doing something) on the Pennywell Estate in Sunderland. It's a 1400 council houses in the middle of that estate and they had a run down community centre ... The first thing they did (with SRB funding) was ... put these two policemen in two houses - not the same policemen, but the police were there. They gave out a number to 'contact us and tell us what's happening in your area'. First week they was there they got one call, but that one call, ... they went out and dealt with the issue that that lady had phoned about, they phoned her back and said 'dah-de-dah'. Nobody knew she had phoned, but she knew when she saw action being taken against that family that she was the one that instigated it. She passed it on to a few of her friends and within 18 months they got that whole estate back, except one major drug dealer. ... Boards were coming off and people were moving back in.

A group of local people had recently visited the local police control station. Whilst this was intended to help residents understand the police procedures, it had the unintended consequence, certainly in one instance, of raising and dashing expectations.

... a neighbour of mine phoned up. Now she's only in her fifties ... and she's out and about, she's not disabled or anything like that, ... she's not intimidated or timid. And we had a walk round Copvale Brook Control the other week, and he said 'Keep sending your calls in and we'll know what the area's like', and 'the more that phones, the more we realise how bad it is'. and things like that. She phoned last night. Big fight going on in our street ... so she phones the police and the police turned round and said to her 'No, we don't deal with neighbour nuisance

anymore, you've got to go through your Council'. ... She was told it was now police policy ... I told the local (community police) and he said 'I'll have to look it up 'cos I never heard about it'. ... You just can't trust them.

Summary

Supports for acting as a witness were linked to the person themselves (courage, and being unknown); social support (good local networks and the work of community representatives); their understanding of the 'system' (their perception of seriousness of incidents and education and information); and action (positive police response, the work of the neighbourhood nuisance team and the courts based witness support service).

What hinders people from acting as witness?

Fear of retribution, and actual threats were important barriers to reporting incidents. In addition, experiences of poor responses and attitudes on behalf of the police made it less likely that people would report in the future. Lack of knowledge about, and experience of actual court procedures, too, made it difficult for witnesses to give evidence.

Fear of retribution

Whilst there did not seem to be a 'no grassing culture' in general, there appeared to be one for young, streetwise men, and possibly for others. A man in his early 20's, interviewed in the street summed it up.

There's no way someone like me would ever 'grass' - I'd be done for. House would be daubed, names called, threats. ... I would never go to Court - there'd be intimidation. If they got convicted then you'd be looked for. I deal with things myself - anything I can't deal with I just get a bigger friend!

For most people, the fear of retribution of some kind, particularly family members put people off from being a witness, even if they had been one in the past, as this witness told us.

(normally I would still report things) It was different when it was my family... 'cos I was scared for my family and they were threatening and intimidating us.

The seriousness of the incident again, affected people's willingness to act as witness, if a family member might get hurt.

You don't want to risk your family over a nuisance neighbour - you just want it sorted out.

It is not only the evidence stage that would be avoided by feared retribution to a family member, but also the reporting in the first instance.

If it involved my family I'd not report it. ... if they were in danger 'cos I had witnessed something and they may get hurt or threatened, I'd not report it. Family comes first. If reporting a crime were to put 'em at risk, then I wouldn't think twice about not reporting it.

In the context of physical damage already being done, the reputation of large families who might have enacted a vendetta against family members (rather than an actual threat) was enough to discourage this resident-witness from appearing in Court (although in the event it was not requested).

I've had the car done twice and bricks through the window. ...Would like to think would have gone to Court if necessary, but person concerned part of a (big extended family) clan, so would have been wary - I have a wife and daughter to think about, and ...would have needed more confidence in seeing people going down (in sentencing).

The reputation of large extended families, some reputed to be of Irish descent, leads to fear, as reported by this community representative. This reputation appears to have taken on something of an 'urban myth' status, as most people we talked to in the street did not mention it, but active residents and agency workers did.

What would discourage me from reporting? I don't scare easily, but I wouldn't tackle the tinker families on the estate - no-one would. If they don't get you, they'd get another member of your family.

Fear of retribution, whilst widespread, was not universal. One resident thought such acts were constrained only to certain families, and that ordinary residents had little to fear.

Retaliation only really happens between 'Scrot' families (bad families), if one grasses on the other. They are TANGOs (Tenants Association No Go's)

Fear of what might happen, linked to reputations and stories that abound is one thing. Quite another is the fear that comes from actual experiences of verbal and physical threats and attacks.

Actual Threats (verbal, physical)

Verbal threats range from threats to a person or people, to property or animals. Despite police claims that there is little evidence that threats are carried out, residents report that they are. One resident told us:

...they would come round here and throw rocks at my window, but they stopped doing that 'cos they seen that my windows have those bars on them...if I went outside they would be around the corner, they would say things like 'better watch your back' or 'we're gonna get to you, we're gonna burn your house, we're gonna get your boy'. ... They just hang around the house...they've left a dead rabbit at my door. ... They've made us suffer so much.

Equally physical threats, often against property, have been carried out.

I've gone out to tell the boys who were throwing rocks (at next door) to stop and I would call the police. What did I get for it? They broke my windows the next day. So what can you do? Nothing. I call the police - they can't do anything anyway.

It is reputed not to be such a problem when there is only an individual perpetrator, but more so with gangs, groups, and extended families. It is the latter that local people say leads to the threats being carried out.

If you stand up to individuals (maybe fear of retribution is more imagined than real). But we're talking about these groups, big groups of lads there, or especially, like you'll get the named families, big names, where they kind of all look after each other. And if you speak up against them they will turn up, they will turn up and will give you problems, there's no two ways about it. I've seen it happen so many times.

Sometimes being a community representative, such as co-ordinator of a Homewatch scheme, is sufficient in itself to be seen as a target for intimidation, as this community representative told us.

At one time I was actually warned, third hand, by some of the ones that sell the drugs that I have too many coppers in my house; I'm too friendly with the police and I (must be) video-ing them. ...No-one tells me who I can and Cannot have in the house. ... I thought any minute I'm gonna get one at the door, but he never came back to me. But it just shows you, ... they think if they tell you this you'll be intimidated.

The distinction between being a witness and being a victim is not always an easy one to maintain, especially regarding the carrying out of threats. A resident-witness described how 'witness' became 'victim'.

One night I heard trouble on the front ... a lad had urinated through the door ...the door was kicked in. I ran downstairs, phoned the police, then went outside ranting and raving, swearing and whatever. They threatened that if I went to the police I'd 'have it, me family'll get it, and me house'll get it'. ... When the police arrived I wouldn't give a statement because I was too scared. ... The police woman said ' I could go and pick them up now, but they'd be out in the morning, and it's you that's got to live here' - she was honest!

This resident was grateful that the police woman had not given her a false idea of what might happen if she pressed charges. However, other residents voiced concern about what they considered to be negative police attitudes, discouraging them from reporting incidents.

Negative Police Attitude

The attitude that there is nothing that can be done, and that residents should just move out of the area, infuriated residents. For example, one told of one such dismissive attitude she had experienced.

There were some youths laying by the plant pots I've got on the shed, so I go out and scream at them and (my husband) got on the phone to the police right away. ... the next few minutes the police turn up, quite sharp really ... and said 'You know, you ought to put some more barbed wire on' and got in his car. ...Didn't even go to see (the boys who were in the next street). They've even said to us 'Why don't you move?'

Another resident reflected a similar concern.

They'll turn up and tell you that 'you live in a shit area, and if I was you, I'd move'. They're very positive that way!

The local police sometimes have to counteract what other officers say about the area.

There was an Inspector, chief police inspector, in the paper, did an article blaming Deepdale's crime rate on the Regeneration area. He said that we had exported our criminals to Deepdale. ... Anyway our Super' down here, he said 'Crime knows no boundaries, there's always been criminals from down here that have robbed in Droyelsdon and vice versa. You can't turn round and say that their rising crime up there is anything to do with what's going on down here and the regeneration process'.

It is not only the attitude of the police that discourages reporting, but sometimes their response when a report is made.

Lack of Police Response

Residents find it particularly irksome that the police response is, what seems to them, slow, even when the incident is close to the police station.

When I saw the boys puttin' the car on fire, the first thing I did is help the elderly lady out of the car, then I called the police. You know they are about 50 yards from here and it took them 15 minutes to get here. Those boys did it right in front of the police station and still got away. They had come after the lady 'cos she had reported them to the police a week before and they in turn retaliated, to frighten and threaten her to never do it again ... and it worked. Hell, it frightened me! So you call the police but nothing can be done which is very upsetting and it makes you frustrated.

We heard several stories about the police showing a reluctance to follow up an incident, but urging the resident to report any future trouble. As one community representative told us:

Some fella walked in to my cousin's...he wasn't invited into her house ...she's trapped her face and arm in the door. She got the police but they said 'If there's any more trouble with him, we can pick him up.' What do you do in that situation? ... The fact is we're not talking about future trouble, we're talking about this man has come into her house and marked her. ... They say they want people to work hand in hand with the police, well then the police have got to do something about the situation.

Furthermore there is a perception that some crimes, such as drug crimes, are ignored by the police as being brought upon by the people themselves.

Drug related crime, police stay clear of. For example if a user is beaten up by a dealer, then it's their fault for being a user, so the police wont get involved.

Clearly such a response takes little account of the quality of life for those living nearby . Telephone reporting mechanisms were not always helpful. Furthermore, not everyone has access to full use of a telephone.

I tried to phone Crimestoppers once about drugs, but it was closed at night time. I was told to contact local police station, but I can only phone Freephone numbers on my phone, so couldn't.

A community representative told us that when people did call in to the police station, they were disappointed at the way in which log numbers were issued, preventing the police to get an accurate indication of incident 'hot spots' affecting residents.

(When several people reported the same incident) Y was refused a log number. He said 'You cannot refuse to give me a log number' and they said 'Tough!' ... Statistics are collected per incident, not per number of call in order to identify hot spots.

These accounts touch the tip of the iceberg of negative community feeling, expressed by active residents, about the police and policing. Non-active residents who were contacted through the street interviews did not express the same strength of feeling. The majority did not mention policing at all, and they did not know about some of the policing initiatives (such as Operation Zenith). Four people thought there were more police around recently, eight thought the police had responded appropriately to incidents reported by others. Twelve people interviewed in the streets had some idea that the police response to incidents had been poor, but were unable to be specific. To the young men we interviewed,

police were irrelevant to the handling of incidents, as they would be dealt with them by themselves or their friends.

Family Pressure

Family members put pressure on some residents. One woman suggested it was easy for her husband, who was away from home and had not been threatened, to discourage her from seeking support.

My husband didn't want me going (for support), he was absolutely against it. He didn't want me to talk about it to anyone. To him, it was done, just let it go. There is no point going over and over it. See he doesn't understand 'cos I have seen these things and been threatened, intimidated. He's at work so he doesn't understand, that's it.

Although she had reported and given a statement, after thinking it through she was unable to go through with Court proceedings.

Reliance on other people

A local resident who had witnessed crime described how when a number of people had witnessed the same incident, sometimes there was a tendency to assume others will report it.

I call the police if it's serious, but there are other people around that will report it, so I don't report it. I was not the only one that was there (when two elderly ladies were robbed) I didn't make the call, someone else...

At other times, though, residents said they did not know where and to whom to report incidents.

Lack of Knowledge - Who and Where to report

A housewife interviewed in the street, although she knew a lot of people, said she did not know where to report any concerns. She therefore tends not to bother.

I ignore things that go on - for peace's sake. I wouldn't know who to report things like (bullying of daughter) to anyway.

Community representatives, too, thought some of their members would not know how to report an incident. There was a general lack of awareness and understanding of Crimestoppers.

Being Local

Living or working locally, and possibly knowing the perpetrators of incidents, and the perpetrators knowing the (potential) witnesses, was a large barrier to some people. One resident who lived in one part of the area and worked in another, said he would be comfortable reporting at work but not at home, partly because there would more likely be other witnesses available..

Most of the crime that I have witnessed has happened more where I work than where I live. So I report it where I work, but I'd say I'm more likely to report it in a public place (like at work) 'cos there are probably other people that have seen it as well.

Another resident thought having to live in the area in which she had witnessed incidents would prevent her reporting.

If I wore a uniform and lived in a different area I would probably stand witness to an awful lot. I go home, my home is here, I can't go anywhere.

The pressure not to report local people is even stronger for young people, partly through the 'no grassing' culture, but partly because of living in the area.

Young people are unlikely to act as witnesses against other people in the group. There are some who are on the fringes of the group - so they possibly would. But lads who are in the group would never report others from the group. It's like an unwritten code. And fear as well, they have to live in the area.

If weighing up the potential risks of being known as a witness deters some people, weighing the likelihood of a positive outcome also acts as a deterrent to reporting.

What's the Point?

The judgement that there is often little point in reporting, is partly linked to the actual or anticipated experience of police response.

(People don't report) 'cos they've got no faith. What's the point when the police don't do anything?(A man) held a woman and her son at knife point, trying to rob them. managed to do a 999 call and the police took three and a half hours - they couldn't find it in the A-Z. So what's the point, They turned round and said 'Waste of time phoning the police'. Could have been dead.

A low paid worker, does not consider the hassle he would be likely to get if he did report an incident he witnessed, worth the pay he got for the job.

I wouldn't consider reporting what I've seen, or confronting anyone - at £4.25 an hour, I'm not going to risk my neck for it!

Reluctantly a resident told us she no longer reports less serious incidents, as they are low down on the police's priorities, even though they cause residents major concerns. It is not worth her time and effort.

When it's just nuisance, or teens, or they are just causing trouble, the police will not come for that, ... it wont be priorities. ... it is more a waste of my time to call them and tell them, 'oh you know there are boys stealing a street sign or writing on the wall. ' I don't want you to take me wrong, its not that I don't care about them, 'cos they are crimes, (but...) there is no point to report it 'cos nothing will be done. ... I'm sick of calling the police. I just don't do it any more 'cos it's wasting my time and energy, and if they don't want to do anything or they don't want to take it serious, then why do I call?

Low priority, anti-social behaviour raises dilemmas about to whom and how it should be reported, even for an active resident who understands the system.

Yesterday, 4 young lads, the eldest was about 15, 16. Now he might have been old enough to drive, but I don't know. And he spun around this corner, parked outside my front door ... back out, skidded out. And I thought, 'well, if I phone the police, what do I say? 'A car's just skidded in me close?''

Even with more serious crimes, a resident who also works in the area told us he no longer reports what he has witnessed, as he no longer sees the point when nothing has been done in the past.

Last week I witnessed a woman getting mugged by two boys and I didn't report it. I went out to scare them off, but I left it up to the lady. If she wanted to, she could

have done, but I didn't. You know 'cos in the past I've reported it and nothing's been done, then I don't see the point in doing again. 'Why go through the hassle?' I think.

Court Procedures

Most local people we spoke to have not been to Court to act as a witness. However, as we have seen above, attending Court is not always easy. Other related procedures, too, if residents do not fully expect them, can lead to them feeling vulnerable and angry, as illustrated by this active resident.

I was attacked by a guy with a knife, and when I got this Court thing back, they informed that this guy was in Court. I didn't have to go but they gave me his full name and address, and I think my name and address was on there as well. So if he really wanted to he could turn up at my house, you know, and put bricks through window. ... I think there's got to be a big more secrecy. You know, if people are going to stand up in Court, they shouldn't be publishing names and addresses for the perpetrators ... to go around and threaten them.

Rumours about the court procedures, combined with the actual knowledge of the minority of people, lead residents to be cynical.

(the) Judicial system constrains people and stops them reporting.

Sentencing outcomes, too, do not always encourage people, and they weigh up the costs of reporting with the likely outcome.

Short sentences don't encourage people to report.

Summary

The barriers that prevent or make it difficult for people to act as a witness include personal things (fear of retribution; threats and intimidation; victimisation and being local); social support (family pressure and isolation); understanding the 'system' (lack of knowledge; lack of purpose) and action (negative police attitudes, lack of police response and court procedures). The barriers are, currently stronger than the supports, contributing to the cycle of reluctance, identified in Figure 2.

Figure 3 summarises these factors and illustrates that a witness support scheme would have to strengthen and increase supports whilst at the same time weakening and decreasing barriers.

Whilst the evidence for the need for a Witness Support Scheme is there, no scheme could work without local support.

The Extent of Support for a Witness Support Scheme

Most people interviewed in the street did not know what might help people report anti-social behaviour or crime, or what might support them once they had reported it (90%). When asked directly, (76%) thought some kind of volunteer support scheme might be useful, as long as the volunteers were local. Younger people did not think such a scheme would work for them although they could see that elderly people may benefit from a support service. Nobody said categorically they would use such a scheme if the circumstances arose, and no-one said they would be willing to act as a volunteer.

Figure 3: Barriers and Supports for reporting incidents and proceeding as a witness

SUPPORTS		BARRIERS	
Personal:	⇨	⇨	Personal:
Courage	⇨	⇨	Fear of retribution
Being Unknown	⇨	⇨	Threats and Intimidation
		⇨	Victimisation
		⇨	Being local
Social:	⇨	⇨	Social:
Good Local Networks	⇨	⇨	Family Pressure
Community representatives	⇨	⇨	Isolation
Understanding:	⇨	⇨	Understanding:
Seriousness of incident	⇨	⇨	Lack of knowledge
Education and information	⇨	⇨	Lack of purpose
Action:	⇨	⇨	Action:
Positive police response	⇨	⇨	Negative Police attitudes
Neighbourhood Nuisance Team	⇨	⇨	Lack of police response
Court Witness Support Service	⇨	⇨	Court Procedures
current likelihood of acting as a witness: barriers outweigh supports:	↑	future likelihood of acting as a witness: supports outweigh barriers	↑

⇨ with witness support scheme, supports strengthened and barriers reduced: greater likelihood of acting as a witness

Those who have acted as witnesses, are well placed to say what would have made it easier for them to report, or to proceed through the Courts. Residents and people working in the area, who had themselves witnessed serious crime were supportive of a Witness Support Scheme. Most thought it would be extremely useful: women were certain it would, although men were more cautious. One advantage of such a scheme, identified by

someone who had acted as a witness, would be that it might bypass the police to a certain extent.

...It would make it easier and make them more confident to report it to the support services 'cos they don't want to go to the police. And even after that, if they have to go to the police, then there is someone to go with them to get through the process. So it would be good if the support service could be in a community building of some kind ... even if the police officers could come to the support service and take a statement, that may make them feel more comfortable and encourage them to talk or report crime in the future.

A resident who **had** appeared in Court and given evidence, was in no doubt of the value of a scheme in supporting witnesses throughout, but only if it was presented to people in an appropriate way. Such a scheme should be separate from, but linked to the Police.

I think (a support service) would be helpful. In my case when I went to Court, I think that would have been very helpful ... If there was some way to have a support service working with the police I think that would make a huge difference in the way witnesses respond to crimes. ... (but) it has to be presented to (local people) in the right way so they don't feel they are victims when they are witnesses. ... They may not go if they feel like it is for weak individuals or those who need help, and that it is not part of the police strategy. They need to know that it is there to get support ... but not like they need it 'cos they are vulnerable somehow, but they can get information and knowledge about these kinds of things.

Equally, a resident who had reported serious and traumatic crime and intimidation, but was personally unable, in the end, to go to Court, thought a scheme would help people like her. Again, a scheme that was separate from the police would be beneficial.

Yeah, definitely, I think witnesses need all the support they can get.... If you have a support service people can go for support, they have to feel that they are protected somehow, that it will be OK. You know, they have questions and concerns that no one can answer. Police, they don't go to, so who will answer it for them? Sometimes police aren't qualified to answer them, not in the way a person who can support them and comfort them ... (the police) can't emotionally or mentally be there for witnesses. (It would have to be) a place where people can go at any time, 'cos people are witnessing things at all times. ... It would have to be flexible. ... witnesses need to be encouraged and supported. If they feel less afraid then it changes what actions they take when witnessing a crime.

Both these witnesses saw information-giving as well as support, as key to a Witness Support Scheme. This combination of education and counselling is what appealed to one of the male witnesses, although the other was more sceptical.

Oh yeah (support is needed) there is no support (now) at all, there is total segregation. ...They should be told what to expect, there should be support for witnesses and it should fit with what they've witnessed. They should be kept in touch with the operation and what will happen if they go to Court and how the system works. ... There needs to be programmes of education and counselling, those two things are very important. There should be a contact number as well .. it has to be active all the time, 'cos if they know that there is someone there, that there is a service there whenever they need it, then it can make them feel secure, it can encourage them to report crime. It comes down to knowing they have total support.

Another male witness was doubtful about the value of such a scheme for himself, but recognised the value it might have for others, particularly in liaison between witnesses and the police.

Well I don't need the support. I think it would be useful, there are other people who might use it. I mean as I said, if it was serious that I'd witnessed, then I would go, but it's nothing I can't cope with on my own. Most of the time it is just frustrating that nothing is being done. But a support service would be a good idea, it could be helpful to victims in the community as well. ... they would have to come up with solutions on how to better the service between witnesses and the police 'cos a lot of witnesses don't go to the police, be 'cos they're scared or they have no confidence in the police to do anything. ... the service should counsel witnesses and guide them on what to do in case (of intimidation), encourage them to seek the help they need.

The separation from, but connection with the police (particularly in the promotion of the scheme) was a view supported by the a regeneration worker.

Police should be involved in promoting a witness support scheme - no firm link with the police.

Amongst community representatives, there was a degree of cynicism about whether a Scheme could be made to work.

There is a big need for witness support - but I can't see how it would work

And:

May be worth setting up a Witness Support Scheme, purely for the PR benefit, if people feel that is what is needed. ... but we need to spend the money on things that will really work.

However, on the whole, active residents, who were often in a position to know about other people's fears and concerns, thought the prospects of a scheme were good. It would be particularly useful at the earlier stages of having been a witness.

I think it would benefit everyone. Especially the elderly 'cos we don't know if the elderly have seen things or not. And they're thinking 'Who do I approach here' and a lot of them live on their own and say 'No, I'll leave it. It's not worth the hassle. I'll just stay inhere and pretend I've not seen anything'. ... I think it's at the time when you're feeling intimidated that you need witness support. I don't think its afterwards - it's then and there, like 'Who can I go to now?' when they are feeling a bit frightened and alone. I think it's then they need the support.

It was recognised that having confidence in any scheme would be crucial.

Brilliant idea. I think it would be a God-send to be honest, because there is so much, so many problems ... I do think if people were sure of the safety aspect of reporting a crime, they would do it, 'cos at the moment they feel too threatened to report a crime ... People would need to have faith in it to come forward.

There was a view that for a scheme to work, it should have a local emphasis, and that an area-wide scheme would not work. Some residents knew of an earlier proposal for Victim Support to provide support for witnesses in the community, and thought this would be a good idea.

It's a brilliant idea. People need to be encouraged and to have the confidence to report a crime. ... anything that is 'user friendly' for people to feel they can

approach. One person - or one team from the local community. Need to be known to Homewatch co-ordinators. One Scheme for the whole area is not a good idea. Extending Victim Support could be a good idea as they are familiar with the same kind of work.

The practicalities of setting up such a scheme, at this point in time troubled an active resident, who gave cautious support to the establishment of a Witness Support Scheme.

Witness support? I'm sorry but I can't see it working. ... Although maybe someone to explain procedures (when cases take a long time) would be useful. ... A Witness Support Scheme may give people a bit of courage - someone to talk to. ... It would be hard to get people involved and to get the message through about what is available - lots of people don't seem that interested.

Furthermore, the extent of participation in a scheme was questioned, particularly if it were to be closely associated with the Police. One community representative thought that some groups of people, particularly those from ethnic minority groups, might not use a Witness Support Scheme.

(A Witness Support Scheme) is needed but I don't think you'd get any help around here. People just think the police are hopeless, and it follows a Witness Support Scheme. I think they would feel it's attached to the police. ... No, I can't see witness support at all being any use here. ... but... if you have a different system of witness support ... if you could link up with the police and go round and see people after, and say you were sent by the police, and support people that way, - may be do a little counselling - ... I think it could be fruitful... It might work for the like of me and my daughter... but the black people (who live nearby), they've been abused, with being black, never bothered reporting it. They will get one of their nephews who's big, to come round and threaten anyone who's threatened them

Not everyone thought the time was right for a scheme to be fully operative, because of all that was currently going on. A community representative suggested that some people might not want others to know they had reported incidents.

I can't see the climate being right for a long time yet, maybe even five years from now. There's an awful lot of changes to the area before we go for things like that. (However) I think the time is right to look at it and look at the funding for it and maybe earmark the funding and getting the baselines there, but I can't see it being needed at this particular time. ... Victim Support is well established in the area and a lot of people don't use Victim Support ... Victim Support do run a witness support at the Court and my understanding was that they would actually extend that support to home before court. ... I'm not too sure (people who have reported something) would want their name referred to another organisation. Because there are some people who would want to say 'Right, I want to keep it quiet' and at the eleventh hour will back out. I suppose it might stop people backing out, but I'm not too sure they'd want another third party to know.

Doubts were expressed about whether people would actually use a Witness Support Scheme.

I'm just not interested (in setting up a Witness Support Scheme) at all. I just know. I can't expect people in my area to do something I'm not prepared to do myself. ... We all look after each other to a certain extent ... and I wouldn't need a Witness Support Scheme anyway if anything happened to my family. No, no I wouldn't.

Those professionals already supporting witnesses in the community or in the Courts were in no doubt that support for witnesses was needed. Many victims are also witnesses to their own victimisation, and Victim Support has seen the need for support, and developed ways of supporting them during and after court proceedings, and to a lesser extent prior to court proceedings. In Salford and Bolton, *Safer Salford* operate a witness support scheme, mainly for witnesses at and after the point of reporting. In Salford and Bolton last year 6192 witnesses were offered support with a 15-20% take-up (2,095 in Salford), clearly indicating a project, once in existence in an urban area, is used. Similarly the *Witness Cocoon* project in Leicester experienced rapid take-up of the project once it was in operation.

Some other criminal justice agencies, however, were more cautious in their appraisal. There was some suggestion that more community development needed to take place, particularly helping local people to expand their understanding of crime and alternative ways of working with perpetrators at local level, before a witness support scheme would have any impact. There is no reason, however, why a witness support project could not also contribute to community development, but such a project is likely to look rather different from those currently in existence.

People stopped in the street were almost unanimous in their support for a witness support scheme.

Police statistics do not give any insight into the likelihood of whether a witness support scheme is needed or not. Information is collected on reported crime: this is not tracked through to witness statements and legal proceedings. It would be necessary to know the current drop-off from reporting to statements, and from statements to proceeding as a witness, if any statistical basis for the need for witness support as a means of securing an increase in prosecutions were to be demonstrated. People certainly told of a reluctance to report in the first instance.

Summary

In summary, the weight of opinion was that a Witness Support Scheme would be useful, especially if it combined education with emotional support, **particularly at early stages of being a witness**, but also through the Courts. The Witness Support Scheme should be separate from, but linking with the Police, and should reflect a local emphasis rather than being area-wide. Doubts were expressed about whether people would in the event, actually participate in a Witness Support Scheme.

Alternatives to the Development of a Witness Support Scheme

In the street interviews, as well as supporting the development of a Witness Support Scheme, people suggested other things that might make it easier for people to report incidents, and even reduce the number of incidents - particularly of nuisance or anti-social behaviour. These included:

- facilities for young people to use;
- places for young people to meet;
- changes in housing allocation policies so that people with problems (like drug taking and young single mothers, for example) were not housed close to each other;
- more employment in the area;
- a crackdown on criminal activities in pubs;
- environmental improvements (more greenery);

- greater parental control over their children;
- greater involvement of young people in the changes going on;
- and more visible policing.

A number of alternatives to a formal Witness Support Scheme were discussed by active residents. Some of these suggestions could be incorporated into a Witness Support Scheme, rather than be seen as separate from it.

Community Solidarity

There was a lot of interest in ways in which people might help each other, and ties between people might be strengthened. Not only would confidence be raised in acting as a witness, but people's isolation would be reduced.

I think a lot of people in the community feel very isolated. ... Where I live we're scared to go out of the house, ... but we always try and work round it so there's always someone in the house. Yet when it's not possible we go out the house waving 'See ya!' ... And I think if people stand up together, if you get individuals or one or two people who stand up to these groups, then they don't have a lot of power. But if you get a whole street or community doing it, then it makes a big difference. ... (Nevertheless) it will be difficult to get people working together in the community. Over the years people have got used to keeping themselves to themselves.

A practical suggestions about how low cost supports might be encouraged was made, drawing on networks based on peoples houses.

People could go to each other's houses as meeting points for witnesses to report to the police - to prevent the police turning up at witnesses houses (kids can spot an unmarked police car and plain clothes police!)... It would be a vast change if more people were aware that they can come to other neighbours for support.

An alternative to basing a network on people's houses would be to link it to the Regeneration activities, thus taking the responsibility off local community representatives. The importance of having local people, with knowledge of local resources to talk to, though, remained..

we (have suggested) it be set up as a network within Regeneration. So that some residents and some officers, but mainly residents from one area supports people from another area where they're not known. So people from, Say Higher Harley would support an area in Greenwood. And people from Copvale could support over here. So if you go and visit, it's just, oh it's somebody that you now visiting. They (criminals) don't know. Whereas if they see local committee members or local people that are active in the TA going backwards and forwards, ... they know something is happening. ... and the thing is the residents from the associations that would be ideal for this, have a lot of knowledge of the people they can contact which can deal with problems. ... (people) would be more inclined to speak to somebody like ourselves (rather than professionals) that are having the same sort of problems and are trying to deal with them in the same way they're dealing with the. And initially gains some confidence that things can be done for them - things can help them.

People from one area, supporting people in another, was also raised as a possibility.

People could support each other from different area, for example someone from Copvale could support someone from Harley, as they would not be known there. There is the danger, though, of getting too emotionally involved in someone else's problems.

This kind of arrangement, would, however still need some co-ordination. Whilst there would be advantages to local people volunteering informally, the limitations of this were pointed out by a regeneration worker, with the advantages of having at least one paid worker.

Residents could support each other - which they already do to some extent. residents would need to be trained to deal with this - there would need to be an appointed officer for this. There may be difficulties with volunteers - even if they were committed and dedicated, it is a big commitment for them to have to listen to people's harrowing tales, often late at night. If someone was employed to do it they couldn't really complain about being asked to give support, often at irregular hours. Volunteers would need to have the same levels of skills to pass on to the other residents. If one resident needed more training, it would be difficult to implement this, when they were a volunteer.

She concluded that there would need to be professional people involved, perhaps teamed with volunteers. The view that people supporting witnesses should be trained, and themselves supported, was widely held by members of professional agencies.

Part of a co-ordinated approach

The importance of co-ordination between different projects for increasing the confidence and support to local people was emphasised by an active resident, including the use of professional witnesses when required.

I think independent witnesses are brilliant if you had independent witnesses. Not independent witness support. There's different issues ... there's really serious neighbour nuisance ... that you put independent witnesses to assess the situation. ... and that's different from supporting at Court. ... Any Witness Support Scheme would need to be linked to the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team - all needs to be linked together, victim support, witness support, Neighbourhood Nuisance Team.

More generally, the co-ordination of witness supports with the development of other community supports was thought to be important.

An active community house, with lots of advice and support for local people on different issues (such as debt counselling, local councillor, social services community police etc.) could be linked to a Witness Support Scheme

An inclusive approach

Two main groups of people were thought to cause the most anxiety amongst local people. These were youth, and large (traveller) families of Irish descent. Focusing on young people in terms of activities was widely thought to be a good idea, and one that had proven benefits, a youth worker pointed out.

We've got this group of lads in the youth club now that are causing major problems in the area ... basically causing mayhem at times. But they've started to come to the Youth Club now, and they're like 15 plus. And when they come to the Youth Club, they're as good as gold, it's amazing. ... And they come now every week.

They don't mess about, they don't cause any problems. Just come for something to do really.

Education of young people, too was thought to be important.

We need to target young people to change attitudes - need to go into the schools to educate youngsters. There are no facilities for youth - they need a club, a building.

The importance of treating young people with respect, and not as problems, was recognised.

Youth need to be treated with respect. There is no such thing as a problem child, it is a child with a problem. Although this theory doesn't work for all - youth clubs would not penetrate the hard ones, ... and other kids seem to respect them.

Apart from comments from youth workers, there was little mention of young people as witnesses and victims themselves, who may have an interest in increased community safety. One active resident who did discuss this highlighted young people interests in improving their area.

We need young people's involvement - lots of young people in Harley feel very strongly about high crime levels in the area, especially cars screaming round the estates. ... A few look up to the trouble, but most want to see the end of it.

There was less discussion about the families perceived to be problems in the area. One resident did, however, stress the importance of finding out about their concerns, from their perspectives, and of trying to engage them in some of the regeneration activities. A project at a local University is endeavouring to do this.

(A local) University is doing some research with travelling families - to highlight problems for traveller point of view. ... If some of their problems were solved, the maybe a lot of crime will be too.

Wardens

Neighbourhood Wardens are about to appear in the area, and residents had mixed views about the role they might play in witness support.

Their potential role as professional witnesses was mentioned.

Wardens could possibly be used as professional witnesses.

There was a feeling they too, could be turned into victims.

If they were just normal local people, I don't think I'd feel safe, because they (criminals) would turn on anyone you know, even police officers. I don't think Neighbourhood Wardens would stop it.

Perhaps later on, when some of the other regeneration activities had begun to take effect, Wardens could be useful as sources of witness support.

Further down the road, when things are less violent, it could work to have Wardens, but not now. .. Wardens would be targeted - thought of as a busybody.

Neighbourhood Agreements

Whilst neighbourhood agreements have existed within some housing projects for some time, they are being introduced on a local basis. Some active residents think that any attempt to introduce them would lead to intimidation. Others, however, are more positive,

in terms of the contribution they might make to general feelings of well-being. As one community representative said:

We're setting up a community agreement - there's a meeting coming up to finalise it. Includes things like 'I believe that people should be able to live in peace', 'If I have any trouble with my neighbours, I will try to talk to them about it' etc. Not officially enforceable, but intends to highlight the fact that you are neighbours and you are a community.

Confidential telephone lines as a connection with the police

The value of a confidential telephone line, to which people could report incidents but not leave their names and addresses was emphasised. This could be an answerphone.

People think they are wasting police time so a general answerphone number for non-urgent anti social behaviour would be a good idea. Need to separate a) information for police; b) need a police officer, non urgent; and c) 999. The answerphone needs to be well known .

One young man, age 21, interviewed in the street, who was ambivalent about the value of a Witness Support Scheme for young people, did think a telephone line, staffed by a local person would be a good idea.

Confidential phone lines where names and addresses need not be left; phone number that everyone has; someone to talk to not just an answerphone; facility to report but not provide a statement; private place to report things; supports useful for some people - but they should be local people. Others don't know how it works, if they're not from round here. It's important they're at your own level, not dead posh and that.

No one mentioned Crimestoppers except one active resident who had tried to phone the number but had been referred back to a local number she could not access from her telephone.

Throughout discussions with people, the concern for better policing was evident.

The police are the ones that have got the ability to cut this cancer out and they're not doing it. ... You can't take the law into your own hands, you can't get up vigilante groups, you have to rely on the law, you've got to go by the law. ... You've got a right ... to expect the law to protect you, to protect your property and to protect your environment. ... And they're not doing it.

Summary

A number of alternatives actions to the development of a formal Witness Support Scheme were suggested. These included building on and strengthening existing networks and developing facilities locally. Tying witness support closely into existing projects was suggested. These suggestions were nearly all, in one way or another, linked to the development of trust and the development of the ability of existing organisations (professional and community) to support witnesses.

There are, too, some particular features of the current context in Heartlands which will be important to take account of in the implementation of any Witness Support Scheme.

Context

Heartlands is part of North Town and faces many of the same issues as all large urban areas. However, there are also some specific features of the area which distinguish it from other districts, and that will influence the development of supports for witnesses.

Regeneration

Discussions about the establishment of a Witness Support Scheme are taking place within the context of a complex and large scale regeneration project in Heartlands. There are many projects in their infancy, all of which may influence community safety and reluctance to come forward as a witness. Yet at the time of the feasibility study, there were signs of a lack of social cohesion (which is part of what underpinned the regeneration project in the first instance).

In undertaking street interviews, irrespective of the time of day, time of week or place, we found people reluctant to talk about the area - they were in a hurry, or would rather not have a discussion, even for a few minutes. (This is unusual. Parallel projects with which we are involved elsewhere in North Town and on a run down estate nearby, have not found the same reluctance to stop and talk.) People declined to talk, even before knowing we were interested in crime and community safety, so we do not think it is through fear of intimidation of any sort.

Involvement and commitment

Of those people we did interview, two thirds of whom were not working for one reason or another, 78% said they did not know about the different projects going on locally. Some did, and thought there was more local involvement in the Regeneration projects than ever before, and were pleased that local people were having a voice in the regeneration of the area. Some people were unsure what regeneration was going on, and said they knew nothing of the Regeneration projects. During the course of the project, we received 2 calls from local people who had trouble with neighbours, and they did not know where else to turn.

It was evident from the meetings we attended, that sometimes even people who were involved enough to come to the meetings were not aware of all that was going on.

There seems to be an assumption that information fed into regeneration consultation groups, or steering groups, will cascade through the locality via information networks. Not everyone is, however, a member of an organised group, and even amongst those who are, knowledge is patchy. This is not a criticism of attempts at strategic and neighbourhood levels, to inform people, but more a reminder that it will clearly be difficult to ensure that everyone knows about whatever supports are available for witnesses in the future. It also reveals a large gap in information and education amongst local people.

We spoke to other residents who are actively involved in regeneration projects, mostly co-ordinators of residents' associations and Homewatch Schemes. There is some indication of fatigue in trying to get people involved, as illustrated by a Homewatch co-ordinator.

I'm losing heart with this regeneration work. I've knocked on so many doors to try and get people involved. There's a general lack of interest and of visible results. Everyone has a strategy for this and a strategy for that, and in the meantime we are going downhill.

Some residents are reluctant to become involved with any of the projects, but still pressurise their representatives. One of the representatives said:

You can't do right for doing wrong. You're all right when you're doing something for them ... if they've got a problem and you sort the problem out you're the bees knees. Then maybe two weeks after that they want something to happen and you say 'no, that's not possible' ... then you're the biggest baddie walking. So you can't win (as a representative) at all. They build you up to knock you down with everything. And yet they say 'we back you 100%'.

There is a degree of cynicism about the extent to which some of the newly formed residents' associations have an overall sense of priorities for the area, and are committed in the long term to participation in regeneration.

Lots of community groups are appearing now that there is money to be spent. ... Started off with 10 residents' groups, now have 32, but how many of the 32 will still be here when the Regenerations go away? I mean they're jumping on the bandwagon now, and getting hanging baskets - and I mean hanging baskets, for God's sake, you know what I mean, the streets are bloody falling apart underneath their feet and they've got hanging baskets!

There is cynicism, too, about the extent to which regeneration projects are truly grounded in residents' views and priorities.

(Regeneration agencies) do not seem to be working for what residents want. They are supposed to be service providers and therefore local residents are the customers - but we aren't getting what we want. (Everyone) worked really hard when they were trying to get the funding - but now they have it they are sitting back and not getting things done. (They) want to do things their own way despite the fact that residents have told them what they want done.

One person drew a distinction between consultation and involvement.

Residents are being consulted much more now - but we need to get away from the term 'consulted' - local people need to be involved, not just consulted.

Whilst some people may be more ready to report incidents to the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team or contact the Regeneration offices, this is not always linked to strengthening of communities.

And they'll call Regeneration's team now, and I keep thinking the people that are calling them are people who'll sit on their backsides and expect everyone else to do something for them. Never go to a meeting, just stand on a corner 'cos they've nothing else to do and just make up stories. ...it's having to dispel rumour after rumour, after rumour. ...they don't listen. If you tell them, you're not telling the truth, so why bother?

Despite this, greater confidence was shown in the Regeneration ways of working than those hitherto of elected representatives. One appreciative community resident said:

Councillors don't do much - may as well sack them! ... since Regeneration, the councillors don't really get involved as they were never very good at involving residents. Regeneration take on residents' ideas and act on them. resident involvement is 100%

Whilst we found lack of involvement and knowledge about what was going on, we also found tremendous enthusiasm and commitment to restore the quality of life in Heartlands. This was evident, not only from those active residents who we spoke to in detail, but in those attending meetings connected with the Regeneration and in people working for development projects in the area. Local people we contacted in the street, who had lived

in the area for some time said the thing they like best about the area was the people. Those who had recently moved to the area did not have such strong ties to others locally.

Housing issues were one aspect of regeneration which impinged upon issues for witnesses.

Housing Policies

It is not within the scope of this study to comment extensively on housing policies. There is an active programme of development and regeneration in relation to housing in the context of the Government's recent housing White Paper, and local residents are being consulted over these developments.

However, housing matters do affect feelings of safety and issues to do with being a witness. One story related at a meeting on housing concerned an empty property.

Near us was a derelict warehouse. The police were called lots of times. The local police told us we must report everything we see. So at the weekend we rang up and reported lads in there making lots of noise. They said 'Are you seriously reporting a building? Don't be silly, I've got better things to do than listen to you reporting a building.' That night the warehouse was burnt down, the fire brigade came and the building was said to be unsafe.

Another major source of concern for local people, in terms of intimidation, concerns private landlords. This concern was summarised by the following account:

There's one house he (private landlord) owns ... and its got planning permission for 2 flats. (When he was refused planning permission for multiple occupancy) he's really annoyed ... and he's losing money after he's bought the property. And to wind up (a local resident) he's saying 'I'm opening it up, I'm putting 10 in each flat, and if you don't like it, sell your property. ... (the resident) went down to the planning at the Town Hall and they said 'Well, he owns the property. If he wants to put large families in one flat and another large family in another one, then that's his choice.' (The resident said) 'Well I've got a good mind to burn the house down, with me in it, 'cos I can't take any more'. And the reaction from the planning department is 'You might be headlines today, but you're only tomorrow's chip paper, so it don't matter what you do'.

More generally, the different types of housing in the area, with a mix of types of tenancies, are thought to be linked to anti-social behaviours.

There's a difference between council estates ... and the older type terraces (renting from Housing Associations, renting from Private Landlords). Where people are renting they are less likely to care and there is no control.

North Town Mediation's remit in the area has recently been extended: nevertheless, any potential Witness Support Scheme would have to work in close liaison with housing agencies and with private landlords, if it is to contribute to overall feelings of confidence. Furthermore, the bridging role that a Witness Support Scheme might play, not only with the police as mentioned above, but also with different council departments, was stressed. This would enable agencies to learn more fully the consequences of insensitive dealing with residents' concerns for readiness to act as a witness. Thus a Witness Support Scheme could play an organisational development role.

Whilst there was enthusiasm for the strength of personal networks, and for participation in regeneration, most active residents were less supportive of police attitudes and procedures.

Lack of Confidence in the Police

Three people we interviewed in the street thought levels of crime had reduced recently and more police seemed to be in evidence. One of the active residents, also agreed.

General crime is not as bad as it was three years ago. Drugs are still bad.

A more widespread view was of a police force generally detached from the interests of local people, and detached from detailed knowledge of the area. One residents' association had a meeting recently about community safety which was well attended, illustrating the interest people have in the matter.

(Our residents' association) had a meeting on Crime and Safety where 150 people attended (a normal meeting would normally have approximately 20 people). The difference shows people are scared. The police took a battering.

Local community officers were generally thought highly of: it was more general policy and practices that were criticised.

Seen less police officers in estate since Zenith started. Police Officers don't know the area and don't have a clue. Dog patrols and motorway police come to 999 calls. ... It takes an hour and a half for a response to a 999 call. (The Local officer) is great ... fantastic. (As local officers get moved on) I assume they'll get someone inexperienced (as a replacement) who doesn't know the area.

The time taken to respond to calls was criticised, both in interviews and in public meetings.

A (member of our association's) son got mugged in the park one night and it was about quarter past ten when the police were phoned. And it was the following morning about half past eleven, lunchtime, when they came.

Whilst this may be a legitimate criticism, it is also likely that little is known about how the police are required to prioritise different claims on their time, pointing the way for further information and education again. No amount of knowledge, though will overcome the fear existing alongside a perceived low police presence.

The thing is, with such a low police presence, there's no confidence for anyone to come forward and say 'I've seen this' or 'I've seen that' 'cos there's no support behind them and they know that there can be retaliation on them. And it's very, very frightening.

A recent community policing project, Operation Zenith, has, according to the police been generally well received by the public and by most of the officers involved, offering the opportunity to develop better relationships with local residents. However, according to some residents, it has not lived up to expectations.

I think people expected from Zenith that there would be a marked visual presence on the streets of police at all times of the day and night, and there hasn't been. And they've got an answerphone that everyone has complained until they're blue in the face that they can't get through on, they can't get a response from. ... People want contact. ... If they're having a problem, they want somebody they can speak to who can deal with it there and then.

Part of the dissatisfaction with the project appears to lie in the gap between what was provided and what residents had said they wanted.

Operation Zenith is £180,000 that's been given to the police for one year to carry out special operations ... It's not paying for extra officers, all it's paying for is overtime for them to come out when they should be off duty. Now, it's not what we really want and it's only paid for 12 months. Now we're not going to get any

results and make an impact straight away with what we're doing. Are we going to pay for another 12 months, then another 12 months, just for them to come out and do overtime?

Opinion is divided though. Whilst some small improvement in police-community relations has emerged, the attitudes and approach of Zenith have not been integrated into mainstream policing. We heard a briefing was given to the local station about 'spreading the word' of Zenith, and its merits, highlighting some of the negative perceptions held of police officers in general. However, there appears to have been no monitoring or evaluation of the impact Zenith has had on general policing. From what residents report, both to us in interview and at meetings, it is limited.

Police attitudes are generally thought to be poor, with both residents and police officers reporting stories of residents being told, on reporting an incident, 'What do you want me to do about it?'; 'What do you expect if you live round here, why don't you move out?'. There is a common view that the police view the area as consisting of either criminals or victims of crime, and that it is thus less deserving of the same kind of service as other areas.

Communication channels between Regeneration projects and the police are open, and information is fed through. The more long-term residents' groups, too, generally let the police know when there are issues of concern. During the course of this study, some residents have met with the Chief Constable and with the deputy Home Secretary to air their concerns. One problem with relatively good communication, is that when relatively little seems to happen, dissatisfactions are increased.

There do seem to have been some attempts to build bridges between the community and the police, and to acknowledge the importance of celebrating positive results that have arisen from information given by local residents, and of helping people understand police and legal procedures. However, there does not seem to have been a strategic approach to public education as there has in other areas, and initiatives seem to be left to Divisional and Sub-divisional levels. Nor does there seem to have been a parallel development of attitude change and education within the police force themselves, and a relatively simple approach to community policing is in evidence. For example, although there are youth development and school liaison officers, there are few initiatives undertaken with and for young people, underpinned by the view: 'We try not to do what other agencies do: working with young people is the job of the Youth Service'. This is not usually what is meant by inter-disciplinary or partnership approaches.

One particular bone of contention expressed in interviews and at meetings is the apparent double standard being promoted by the police. On the one hand, the police encourage local people to stand together and confront nuisance and anti-social behaviour. On the other hand local people see the police themselves failing to confront the same kinds of nuisance and anti-social behaviour. This has had a damaging effect on confidence in the police.

There appears to be a great deal of work to do to strengthen bridges between the community and the police and to encourage more direct partnership approaches to community policing alongside other agencies. As witness support is also about confidence building in the community and between the community and the police, any prospective Witness Support Scheme might take a proactive role in developing this. There would, of course, have to be a commitment and willingness to change throughout the police service, encouraged from the top.

Legal Procedures

Some of the residents, as well as members of the police service and workers within the Witness Support service in the Courts, have drawn attention to the legal processes that are in place to protect defendants, and make things more difficult at times for actual and potential witnesses. These include the need for witnesses to make written statements and to appear in court; the requirement (and the practice in civil cases) of advanced disclosures of evidence; the setting, breaking and relinquishing of bail conditions; adjournments and delays in court appearances; changes of plea from not-guilty to guilty at the last moment; court layout (in waiting areas and the court itself); and lack of knowledge about the likelihood of there being other witnesses.

Witnesses do not always know of the possibilities and restrictions of legal processes and of why they are as they are. Some aspects of the processes, and ways in which they can be made to work more effectively for witnesses are highly technical. Nevertheless, there would be a role for someone to work with the police, the courts and local people to agree ways of working that maximise confidence for witnesses.

Victim Support, currently running a Witness Support Scheme in the Magistrates' Court, would have useful insights into how to support people throughout the court processes. Equally, residents who have been through the process, might also have useful contributions to make.

Just as there is a lack of knowledge at times, and misunderstanding at other times about police and legal procedures, there are varied perceptions of how the different districts in the Heartlands area have fared in regeneration generally and community safety in particular.

The Perception that other districts are better off

Comparisons were readily made between different parts of the area in terms of general problems and facilities.

Copvale actually got more regeneration money than Greenwood and Harley but still gets a bit left behind. All three have different problems - same basic problems but slightly different. For example, Greenwood has no community places for kids at all. Lots of places such as CAB have closed down within the last couple of months.

Mobility between districts has been thought to underpin changing patterns of crime.

I got accused the other day of, the words were 'you've shifted all your shit out of Greenwood and it's in Copvale and Harley now'. So I went and made enquiries to see if there had been movement of people from our area which would account for what they were saying. ...one family had moved from the whole of Greenwood ... and they wanted to go and live near relations.

Residents perceive inequities in the ways different districts are allocated resources.

It feels like Greenwood and Copvale have lots of plans in the pipeline, but there is nothing for Harley. ... We need a community centre ... the Council has given a house, a... a small terraced house to be our community house. feels like we're being treated as second class citizens. There is no library. Harley market is a joke - a dirty, filthy dilapidated hole. Without a car people are stuck and have to shop in Kwik Save or die!

The official crime statistics reported by police reveal differences between districts, as illustrated by a community representative.

Vehicle crime has been reduced in Greenwood by 44%, it's been reduced in Copvale by 15.7%, Bradford and Ancoats 7.7%. It hasn't reduced at all in Harley. ... Burglaries, in Greenwood there was 46, 8 this year, so an 82.6% reduction. Harley, there was 104 last year (that's against 46 in Greenwood): this year we've still got 56. This is only on what's reported. A lot of people round here don't bother reporting it. Copvale there was 91 last year, 71 this year, 22% reduction. Bradford and Ancoats, no reduction. They are figures provided for the police by the police.

Official crime statistics especially those based on reported crime are, of course, notoriously tricky to interpret. Perceived differences, too, in general policing have been reported.

... you can see a visible (police) presence in Greenwood, that's increased. A visible presence in Copvale, that's increased. But Harley, nothing.

The perceived differences between localities are not just between districts, they are also between individual estates.

This is the only estate in Greenwood that was down. It was a disgrace, you know, everything from the local kids, to the traffic speeding, vandalism you know. You just felt intimidated all the time.

Different estates were seen to have different problems with different levels of confidence of local people to report incidents.

(The other side of the road) is a nicer area with mainly good condition houses ... They do not have too much trouble. Most crime is related to gangs of youths hanging out in the park. ... (Those) residents will report to the police.... On (this) side of the road, they are mainly 2 up 2 down, with entire streets empty. ... Crime is much worse - more violent crimes and drug related. ... Residents will not report crime. They don't think the police will do anything if they report.

These differences are of great local importance and there is a feeling that regeneration agencies do not always appreciate this.

There is a difference between Lower Harley and Higher Harley. They are not one district and don't like being discussed as 'Harley' - each have their own problems and feel that things going on in the other area are nothing to do with them. The agencies are not picking upon this.

Certainly, it would seem that any Witness Support Scheme would have to take account of local differences (real and perceived) in general community safety, as well as in the strength of social networks.

In general we found a culture wherein people were most concerned to identify territorial distinctions, both in terms of problems, but also in terms of their importance for people's identities. Whilst this may reflect strong social cohesion within districts, it reflects a lack of overall cohesion across Heartlands. These territorial distinctions were linked to more general cultural issues.

Perception of 'outsiders'

Whilst there are advantages of identifying strongly with a particular locality, especially in terms of social cohesion, there may be disadvantages in a tendency to be inward-looking.

In the street interviews, more established residents identified people new to the area, or from outside the area, as those most likely to cause problems. As one active resident put it:

Harley has a bad name, but another reason why a Homewatch Scheme was set up was because it wasn't Harley kids who were causing the problems - it was youth from elsewhere.

Being new to the area might last quite a long time, and the perception of who is an 'insider' and who is an 'outsider' influences who is to be trusted with information about incidents witnessed.

They'll go to (another member of the residents' association) not necessarily me. I've only been here 6 years. I'm a new-comer. They trust (her), she was born and bred here.

The same insider-outsider distinction was made by a community representative in relation to who should be allocated tenancies, where particular 'outsiders' are seen as potential trouble makers.

We have meetings with (the Housing Association) quite often. We still have to keep reporting bad people they keep putting in. Irish families are coming in, tinkers. Even people from (a nearby town) who have been thrown out of other areas get thrown in here. And we can name who the bad landlords are, we know who they are, but we can't get the vetting implemented. That's the problem.

Protests had been made about proposals to house such 'outsiders' in a particular district.

North Town Housing had allocated a lot of vacant houses in Lower Harley for Irish Travellers. A huge protest meant they changed their minds, but travellers got allocated homes in Copvale - which has led to Copvale going downhill.

The reputation of large families of Irish descent was negative. The first anti-social behaviour orders to be issued in North Town were in relation to children belonging to families of this kind. We heard from active residents, from workers and from people in the street about the fear of intimidation by members of these large extended families. There is also a perception that members from some of these families have contributed to the destabilisation of the area in other ways. For example, an active resident told the story of a protection racket in local pubs.

You've got groups of traveller families around here that run the pubs now. They go and say 'Give me £50 a week or your pub'll be smashed up' and a lot of landlords are paying, paying for it. You know it does go on, I know for a fact it goes on. (One pub), I think he turned them away, and he's had nothing but trouble. He'd had people firing guns through his windows and bricks through the window and all sorts. (Another) ... got burned down. They petrol bombed the place 'cos he wouldn't pay up.

Another story was of people shoplifting, told by a security guard in a supermarket.

Last week, for instance. A group of women with Irish accents all come in together and scatter round the shop. I can't watch them all at once. ... a young girl (was) putting stuff over her head into an open rucksack - just filling it up. ... It's worse when travellers that still travel visit those who're settled. Then everyone keeps out of the way.

Whilst particular families were seen as being problems, there was also recognition that to date little had been done to involve members of the families in the regeneration activities

in the area. This active resident echoed the point made earlier about the extent to which they had not been included in the decisions about local developments.

Traveller families are not involved in the consultation process - they feel excluded and no-one has made a point of inviting them (although it is open to everyone). They keep themselves to themselves. It would be worth the effort to try and include them some more.

One of the active residents drew our attention to some of the difficulties the families encounter, and suggested a way forward would be to try to work to resolve some of these difficulties.

When kids are put in schools people will hear the last name and leave the kids in the back of the class with colouring books as they will leave soon anyway. Lots of kids are leaving school at 13 or 14 and can't read or write - so no wonder they cause problems. Social services don't go out to them, no health visitors. If these problems were solved, maybe a lot of crime would be too. (More effort needs to be made to highlight and sort problems from their point of view).

The extent to which such 'outsider' perceptions are based on fact or reputation is in some ways irrelevant. The perceptions exist and any Witness Support Scheme would need to be able to begin to address them, as well, possibly as encourage different ways in which people new to the area might be welcomed and incorporated more positively.

Perceptions of perpetrators of crime, nuisance and disorder.

There were different views about who it was that perpetrated crime, nuisance and disorder, in addition to members of the large ex-travelling extended families, and people new to the area.

Some people we interviewed in the street thought problems were caused by isolated individuals, often late at night after drinking.

Problems are caused by people, mostly 'out of their faces' and with no respect for anyone. ... It's street robbery and acts of violence (mostly late at night).

Further:

It's not gang stuff - if it were it would be easy to deal with. It's just scum bags working on their own, thieving all over.

A community representative, thought that, in contrast, it was the idea (if not the reality) of gangs that contributed most to fear.

Gangs are a problem and lead to real fear. Stories also cause feelings of intimidation - even when people may be harmless - so need to be constantly cautious.

In some areas, the constant levels of nuisance and anti-social behaviour, has led to people not even noticing it happening any more, influencing their readiness to report incidents - even active residents:

I go into that area blinkered, and come out blinkered. I don't want to see anything, I prefer not to see anything. I would only worry about it if I did see it. Like last night with the noise, you know I wouldn't dream of phoning the police, because that to me is an everyday occurrence.

High levels of incidents may be one of the things that has contributed to the judgements people make about what activities should be reported. Distinctions are made about the gravity of different kinds of crimes. A local witness told us:

I don't view property crime as important as violence against people. I think violence against people, intimidations against people or threats against them (is important). I think it has more to do with human rights, civil rights. So I think everyone has the right to live without being physically or mentally intimidated or harmed ... regardless of their post code.

Sometimes these judgements are overlain with judgements about who can and cannot afford (either personally or financially) to carry the consequences of crime.

I think for example, if someone has stole a car from a showroom that is insured, where nobody has got hurt, apart from the fact that everyone has to pay higher premiums, or if they rob a bank, that doesn't bother me. What does bother me is treating children, old people, people trying to make a living, people trying to survive their lives, you know, average people everyday who have their car stolen, or they are physically assaulted or harmed in some way, or they get intimidated in some way. Getting their windows broken, and being scared and more scared. They become afraid. You know it doesn't particularly concern me when multi-national corporations or large corporation or large shops get ripped off 'cos they have structures to protect them - it isn't directed towards an individual who has been intimidated or physically harmed. It's those that are powerless to do anything or weak - they shouldn't have to be put through that.

Clearly these kinds of judgements will influence what it is that people will report to the authorities, and what they will not. Whilst it did not appear from what the majority of people were saying to us that it was so, one active resident considered that the local culture was one of lawlessness.

It's a culture that's dead against the law abiding way of life'.

Throughout the study residents (active or not), workers and the police all agreed that any such drift to lawlessness had to stop. A Witness Support Scheme would be able to contribute to such a change in values, but only if it were able to work with all parties in ways that strengthened the common bond of living in Heartlands, and decreased (as one worker put it) signs of xenophobia.

An inclusive approach to increasing people's confidence in acting as a witness, would also include young people.

Youth

People in the street interviews were virtually unanimous in saying that provisions for young people should be improved if overall satisfaction with living in the area were to improve. One of the middle aged women we talked to believed strongly there is nothing for young people to do, except go to pubs - mostly for socialising, but then they get drunk and after that trouble starts. There are no sports facilities. She said

With all these empty properties you would think some could be turned into a gym or something. I would like to see places where young people could meet - I don't know cafe-bars or something. They're OK for the City Centre, but there aren't any round here..

A National Sports Centre is on the doorstep, but this was thought by an active resident to be inaccessible for local people.

There's not a lot for local people to do - velodrome events are much too expensive for most people, although they have reduced the price a bit for local people recently.

During the summer, an extensive programme of activities was available. These were mostly based in existing community buildings, which may have meant that some young people may have been reluctant to attend. Certainly they did not seem accessible to all, as an active resident suggested.

Boredom of kids is the greatest cause of crime in the area - there's nothing for them to do this summer. I've taken my son to a playscheme, but outside of the area.

Younger people interviewed did not think young people had any influence over what happens locally. Certainly, in most of our discussions with people, young people were often identified as a large part of the 'problem', but rarely seen, except by youth workers, as essential parts of any solution.

One active resident, however, reflected on how regeneration resources had not been directed at young people, and acknowledged that they, too were victims of the local crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

Young people were involved in consultation days, about what to do with the money. They mainly asked for cheap things - a place to go, a wall they can bounce balls against. We were absolutely gob smacked when the money was announced. Most was to be spent on crime, getting rid of crime, some on housing, you know what I mean, but mostly it was on crime. And these kids are victims as well as being perpetrators aren't they?

Whilst the lack of facilities for young people were identified, the lack of facilities more generally was considered by a community representative to be an important part of the context of living in Heartlands.

There are no facilities in the area. Cart Street School was like a community centre, the whole community revolved around it - but it was knocked down. The area was decimated.

There was wide agreement that many of the problems of nuisance and anti-social behaviour would be reduced with more facilities and more for young people to do.

Further information is needed on young people as witnesses and the supports they might need, especially as those young adults we spoke to in the street, did not think young people (certainly young men) would use a support service. Close liaison with youth projects and with young people themselves would be an essential part of a Witness Support Scheme. There is scope for an approach which not only contributed to education and emotional support for young people, but also contributed to the development of intergenerational understanding. A Witness Support Scheme would be ideally placed to include, not separate young people from the change process.

These different aspects of the context present both threats and opportunities for a prospective Witness Support Scheme, as summarised in Table 1.

Summary

Aspects of the context, including the amount of regeneration work (local participation and housing); lack of confidence (in police and legal procedures); and local identities (linked to locality; perceptions of outsiders, perceived seriousness of crime, nuisance and disorder

and youth) will all limit the effectiveness of an individual support scheme for actual and potential witnesses. Any witness support scheme will have to work to strengthen the context as well as to support individuals.

Table 1: Current Context: Opportunities and threats for the prospects of a witness support scheme

Aspect of the Context	Opportunities	Threats
Regeneration Policy and Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local involvement • Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enthusiasm and commitment • strong ties in some areas • consultation over developments • work with private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some lack of awareness and involvement • participation fatigue • empty properties • attitudes of landlords
Lack of Confidence in the Police <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some positive changes seen • local officers valued • channels of communication open • awareness of need for positive results • awareness of local differences • experience of supporting witnesses in court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negative attitudes throughout the force • lack of change in attitudes in mainstream policing • priorities not always shared with residents • limited vision of collaborative working • perceived double standards • lack of knowledge and understanding
Identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locality • Insider-outsider • Seriousness of incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder • Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commitment and enthusiasm for change • commitment to the locality • some awareness of local differences in confidence • strong local networks • recognition that each group of residents has its own problems that need to be worked through • diversity of views about impact of incidents • crimes against the person drive people to report • it is recognised that young people want to participate in local improvements • energy and commitment of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perception that others are better off • some areas particularly sparse in terms of facilities • some people do not have strong ties • reputations spread and fuel negative attitudes • some people have ceased to notice incidents • the impact of apparently less serious incidents is unknown • youth seen as a problem not a solution • little inter-generational work • limited facilities

These different features of the context have implications for how a Witness Support Scheme might operate, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Current Context and its implications for the operation of a Witness Support Scheme

Aspect of the Context	Implications for a Prospective Witness Support Scheme
Regeneration Policy and Practice: Local involvement Housing	Must work in close liaison and partnership Must involve local people and base a scheme on their issues Must be able to influence policy and practice
Lack of Confidence in the Police Legal Procedures	Must be independent from but linked to the police Must be able to build bridges between local people and the police Must be able to influence police policy and practice Must give information and be able to challenge custom and practice
Identity: Locality Insider-outsider Seriousness of incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder Youth	Must build on local strengths and neighbourhood characteristics Must be inclusive Must work in participation with local people and build and strengthen local networks Must incorporate young people Must be able to influence inter-generational understanding

Prospects for a Community Witness Support Scheme

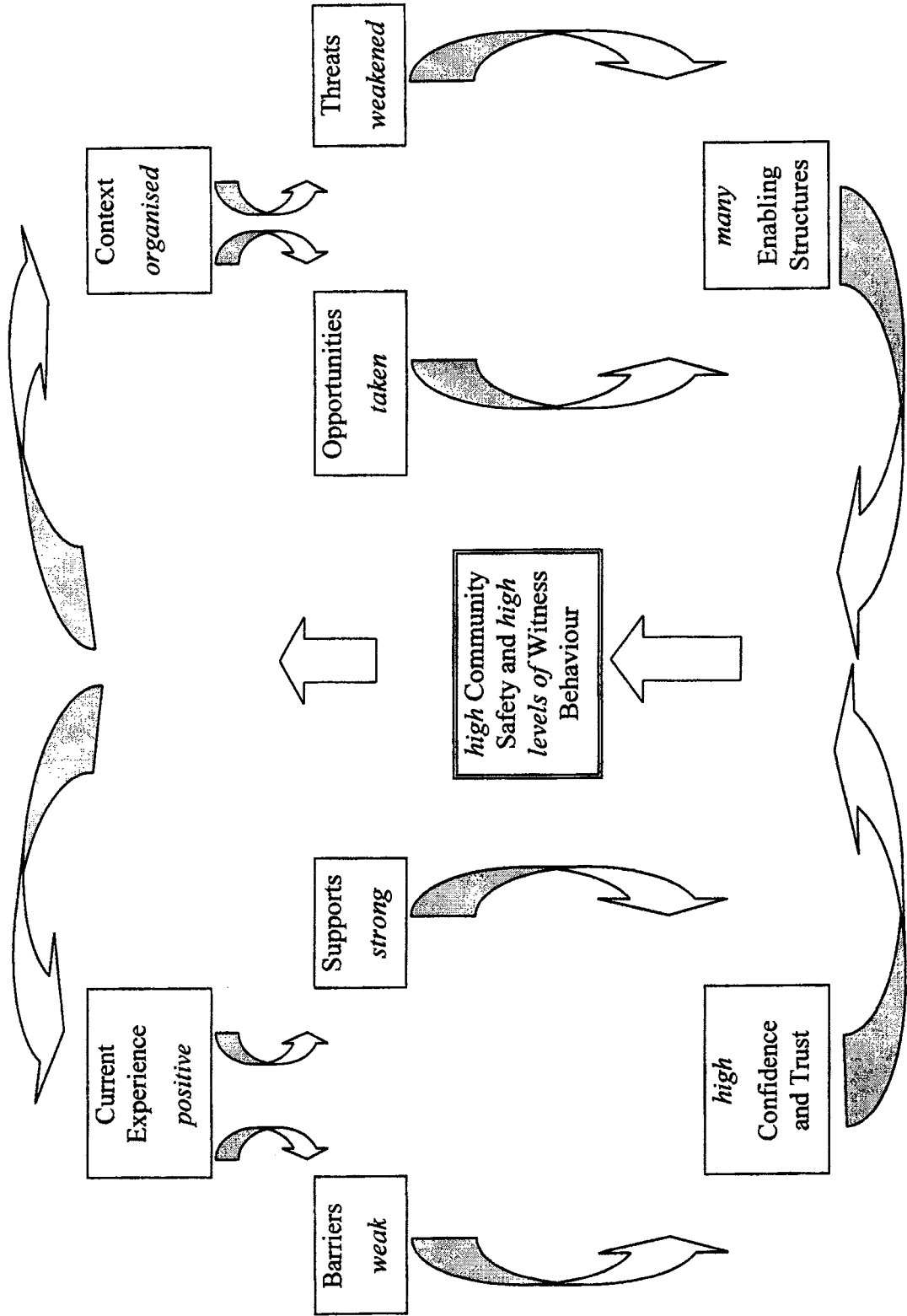
As we can see, there was general support for a Witness Support Scheme. Widespread support was given by people stopped in the street, some community representatives and members of most professional agencies consulted. Some community representatives and a minority of professionals expressed reservations. The context is one of change, patchy social cohesion and insular identities. Taken together, the picture is one, at this early stage, of a number of potential advantages and disadvantages which can be identified, each with implications for the development of a Community Witness Support Scheme, as seen in Table 3.

If these potential problems could be overcome, a locally sensitive Witness Support Scheme, with an emphasis on education, personal support, as well as with the development of local community and professional organisations, building bridges between different parts of the community could be established. It might then be possible to turn the *Cycle of Reluctance* and negativity into a *Cycle of Determination*, - one that positively connected feeling of confidence and trust with strong, supportive community and professional organisations, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of a Witness Support Scheme with implications for the operation of a prospective Scheme

Advantages	Disadvantages	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By pass police • Increase people's confidence • Increase people's feelings of protection • Increase knowledge and understanding • Provide emotional support • Decrease people's fears • Improve police-community relations and trust • Good public relations • Especially good for the elderly • People will feel they are not alone • Reduced pressure on community representatives • People will feel understood • Local ties will be strengthened • Community will have back-up • Decreased isolation • Will be able to build on existing community organisations and develop new ones • Good links with Regeneration • Decrease people's embarrassment • Improve perceptions of other parts of the neighbourhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and other parts of the community may not make use of it • People may feel inadequate if they are in need of support • Some men will not think they need support • May make no difference to feelings of confidence and trust • May be hard to get people involved • People may not want other local people knowing their involvement with an incident • Volunteers may find it harrowing • Lack of availability at anti-social hours • Volunteer supporters may be targeted for intimidation • More pressure exerted on community representatives • May not involve everyone • Local people may get emotionally involved • Co-ordination will be needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people must have confidence in the scheme • Independent from but linked to and promoted by the Police • People must not be made to feel like victims • Education should be combined with emotional support or counselling • Supporters must be in touch with all that is going on in the area • Should have an local focus, not area wide • Should work in close collaboration with the Neighbourhood Nuisance team, Homewatch Schemes and other community organisations • The process should be one that involves local people, strengthens and extends local networks • There should be a local, low key base for the project • Young people should be involved both as witnesses, and potential supporters. • Work will have to be done with schools and youth projects in order to develop greater inter-generational understanding.

Figure 4: The Cycle of Determination: a potential future situation



During the course of the feasibility study, a number of options for the delivery of a Witness Support Scheme presented themselves, each with advantages and disadvantages.

Options for the delivery of Witness Support in Heartlands

The options for development of a Community Witness Support Scheme vary from low cost use of existing community networks, to medium cost co-ordination of a support scheme attached to existing community networks, to higher cost provision of a dedicated witness support project. Such a project may be free standing (as in, for example the model developed in Salford and Bolton, delivered by Safer Salford, or the Witness Cocoon Project in Leicester), or built onto an existing project (as for example in the provision of Witness Support in the Magistrates' Courts by Victim Support), or built onto existing professional practices.

We have argued in the report that any scheme should strengthen individual confidence and trust and at the same time build enabling structures of support in professional and community organisations. Each option can, therefore, be appraised¹ in terms of how it will strengthen confidence and trust and weaken barriers to confidence and trust. Unless support structures are strengthened at the same time, a project focusing on individual support alone, is likely to have a limited impact on both community safety and willingness to act as a witness.

Option 1: Use Existing Networks

Existing residents' associations and Homewatch schemes could be linked so that they provided support for residents, in their own homes, from each others' schemes. Residents from one locality could be linked to residents from another, and would visit when the need arose.

Advantages: raise the profile and importance of residents' associations; would be local; supporters could be anonymous locally; may increase local ownership and responsibility; may strengthen people's ties if there is wide participation.

Disadvantages: relies on goodwill (difficult in unsociable hours); may be harrowing; increases the burden on local people, and probably disproportionately on community representatives; uniformity not possible; inconsistent level of activity in groups at the moment; would be low profile and difficult for people to know about; co-ordination role still required; availability would be linked to willingness to participate.

Option 2. Develop existing networks

Local community organisations would develop local community resource centres (for example in a community house) which could include a witness support service providing both encouragement to report incidents and support for individual witnesses. Local police officers could regularly attend the centre to pick up information.

Advantages: local; good interagency links; high visibility and local ownership and knowledge; may strengthen and broaden local ties between people; links with other agencies and their resources in the centre; may hook in more people; anonymity preserved as the centre could be multi-function.

¹ The advantages and disadvantages were offered for discussion only and should not be taken to represent detailed evaluation of each option.

Disadvantages: centre itself could be targeted; burden remains with local people; anonymity may be compromised; relies on goodwill; need for co-ordination and support for local people involved; unlikely to be 24 hour availability.

Option 3: Rely on Street Wardens

Street wardens are being introduced throughout the area, and they will get to know local people. They may also witness events and be on hand to offer individual support.

Advantages: able to maintain personal distance from events; paid; out and about and able to gather information; may be able to act as professional witnesses; known by local people

Disadvantages: may be outsiders; may be seen as an arm of the police; could be targeted; would do little to strengthen local ties between people; lack of 24 hour availability; street wardens are very new.

Option 4: Build on Neighbourhood Nuisance Team

Neighbourhood nuisance team would extend aspects of witness support in their work. More use of mediation and reparation practices may be possible.

Advantages: emphasis on different localities; good reputation and trust; paid; good interagency links; working links with the police; get to know of incidents where there is a reluctance to report; could act as professional witnesses

Disadvantages: saturation - would need more resources; potential conflict of interest; may do little to strengthen ties between people

Option 5: Develop Existing Work Practices

Methods of working would evolve so that the police worked more in participation with local youth workers, NNT and residents' associations to support people who had witnessed events and to publicise the consequences of any reports that were made to them. Mediation and reparation practices could be developed.

Advantages: trust in local police officers could be extended; would strengthen collaborative working and pooling of resources; may increase confidence in policing; may help develop inter-generational understanding

Disadvantages: police attitudes and lack of trust in police may be difficult to overcome; would need extensive interagency training; may not reach everyone in need; local networks may be unaffected; little slack in the system at the moment

Option 6: Build on Victim Support

Building on the structures and practices of Victim Support in both the community and the courts to support witnesses who may not be direct victims. It would be advantageous to have resources directed at the different localities

Advantages: local project already exists and local volunteers involved; knowledge of the police and court systems; experience in supporting volunteers; experience of supporting people who are fearful; good interagency links; experience of challenging different parts of the criminal justice system; infrastructure in place;

Disadvantages: Not known and trusted by everyone; perceived to be too close to the police; people may come to think of themselves as victims; may not include many young people.

Option 7: Extend other Witness Support Projects

Safer Salford operate a Witness Support service in Salford and Bolton. They support people from the point of reporting, to after any court appearance. Most referrals come via the police

Advantages: infrastructure there; experience of supporting witnesses practically and emotionally; individual confidence and trust in proceeding as witness likely; volunteer supporters would be local; good links with the police and courts; experience of challenging different parts of the criminal justice system; experience of tailoring schemes to local needs; experience of strategic policy development around the needs of witnesses.

Disadvantages: distrust at what may be perceived to be the import of a scheme from elsewhere; uniform approach; few local links at the start; difficulty accessing people prior to reporting; likely to have little impact on strengthening local ties.

Option 8: Do nothing

There are currently several regeneration projects in progress, some including community safety issues, and most of which are relatively new. Furthermore the 'Operation Zenith' has yet to be completed. It may be that the projects in place at the moment will have an impact on people's confidence and trust enabling them to come forward as witnesses, as well as on strengthening support structures locally.

Advantages: no cost; would prevent duplication and fragmentation; may ensure witness issues remain on the full regeneration agenda;

Disadvantages: it will take time for information to be available about the impact of existing projects; aspects of confidence and trust to act as a witness and the strength of local structures to support witnesses may not emerge in evaluations of existing projects; may not reach those not active in their communities; community education in relation to witness procedures may be limited; a failure to respond to local concerns may be perceived.

The Way Forward

All the options presented above have emerged from discussion held with local people, professionals and those operating similar projects, as well as from an understanding of what has worked elsewhere. A key to the effectiveness of any project is the extent to which it is accepted locally. Local residents and professionals were invited to discuss the merits of the different options, and identify the way forward to offering support for witnesses. Four meetings were held and the following issues raised in discussion:

- the only people who will be able to turn the community around are the community;
- the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team has had some success in finding ways of getting people to come forward as witnesses;
- the police can only be effective with local people's support;
- finding ways of getting people to report is a priority (this need not be to the police – anonymous information can be passed on by anyone);
- any project will need to have someone with good links to the community and also to the police;
- there is real interest in trying something new and a recognition that residents' representatives do not have the capacity to take on a lot more;

- the different options address different parts of a three stage process: reporting incidents – supporting witnesses – support through the Courts;
- in the immediate future it may be most useful to do two things together: (i) increase the capability of agencies and community groups to work with witnesses (in a similar way to work done on racial harassment) – this would focus on strategic policy development; and (ii) provide support for individuals;
- such a project should provide mediation between potential and actual witnesses and the police;
- wheels should not be re-invented – existing witness support and victim support projects have developed mechanisms of supporting people that work well;
- staff on any project must be trained and co-ordinated.

As a result of these discussions, it is considered premature to prioritise (and cost) specific options, and relevant outcome indicators linked to them. Instead, these options should be explored further in course of the development of a witness support project.

Recommendation to the Crime and Community Safety Task Group

A community witness support project is established in Heartlands with two key tasks at the outset: *Individual Support* and *Organisational Development*.

Individual Support

To provide information and individual support to people who have witnessed crime or anti-social behaviour in whatever course of action they decide.

This would usefully include:

- Skilled practical and emotional support to people who have witnessed crime, and anti-social behaviour;
- Mediation between police and other helping agencies as appropriate;
- Preparation of information and advice sheets;
- Community education in the form of talks and training events for local people about crime and safety, police and court procedures, and citizenship and crime.

Organisational Development

To increase the capability of existing organisations and community groups to support potential and actual witnesses to crime, and anti-social behaviour.

This would usefully include:

- Strategic policy development and training with formal organisations (police, social services, health services etc.);
- Compilation of information about the range of community groups and individuals who support people who have witnessed crime;
- Identification of the relative merits of different means by which individual supports might be delivered (taking as a starting point the various Options identified above

- Community education in the form of talks and training events for professionals and community representatives about witness' fears, experiences of police and court procedures, and citizenship and crime.

Decision of the Crime and Community Safety Task Group

The recommendation above was discussed at the Crime and Community Safety Task Group (January 2001). A number of points were made in the discussion, most of which had been made during previous stages of the feasibility study.

Forthcoming Changes in the Context

There are changes being made within Victim Support, who have received national funding to expand their resource base in North Town and surrounding boroughs. It is possible there may be developments in supporting witnesses in the community. It is also possible that the local Victim Support offices may relocate to Greenwood precinct, a more central base for Heartlands.

The need for agencies, including the police service to become more aware of the needs of witnesses remains, and re-training will still be required.

There are different development projects starting in different parts of Heartlands, and it is not known the extent to which they will have an impact on social cohesion and individual confidence and trust in the system. To date, it was suggested that Heartlands is not ready to enable individual witnesses to feel secure in coming forward, and that people are still reluctant to act as witness. This reluctance is understandable insofar as little has changed in reducing (perceived) crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in some areas.

'Operation Zenith' is to be extended to December 2001, and will overlap with the start of the Street Warden provision.

North Town Mediation had been contracted to extend their services.

Current Context

It was suggested that there had been insufficient improvements in perceived safety to warrant community witness support scheme at this point in time. It was noted that projects elsewhere had found that once the project was in place, people used it.

A further survey, to be undertaken by the police later in the year, may provide useful information as to whether there were improvements in people's feeling of safety and intolerance of crime, disorder and nuisance in Heartlands or not.

It was pointed out that a community witness support scheme might usefully deal with the pre-reporting phase of witness experience, and should be as concerned with anti-social behaviour as with crime. Furthermore, that different parts of Heartlands may be more or less 'ready' for the development of a support scheme.

Nearly all indicators of *reported* crime in Heartlands have dropped during the last 8 months, compared with figures for the force and for the same period during the previous year. There was no discussion about whether this could be due to fear and reluctance to report, nor as to what the fall off between reporting crime and giving statements might be.

It was noted that some families with young people who experienced intimidation were trying to move out of the area, and that there was real violence perpetrated towards young people.

There was some discussion as to whether building a witness support scheme onto the work of the Neighbourhood Nuisance team, capitalising on the effective work they had already undertaken would be useful (see Option 4 above). This Option would have the advantage of being a local base to which people could drop in for advice and discussion.

Alternatively, the possibility of encouraging people living in communities to look at different ways of doing things (unspecified) was discussed, although it was recognised that a growth in community based facilities would also be needed if this was to happen.

Conclusion

It was agreed to:

- 1) await the findings of the police survey, in order to throw light on the extent of changes within Heartlands and whether or not the time was now 'right' for a community witness support scheme; and
- 2) explore the possibility of developing closer links between the Neighbourhood Nuisance Team and Victim Support, especially with regard to broadening referral routes for witnesses of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

The consequences of this decision are that in the short term, for individuals:

- there will be no additional skilled practical and emotional support to people who have witnessed crime, and anti-social behaviour in Heartlands, particularly at the pre-reporting stage;
- there will be no specific mediation between police, other helping agencies and witnesses at any stage of their experience, but particularly at pre-reporting and reporting stages;
- it is unlikely that specific information and advice sheets for witnesses will be prepared;
- there will be no additional community education in the form of talks and training events for local people about crime and safety, police and court procedures, and citizenship and crime.

Furthermore, in terms of the development of professional and community organisations with regard to witnesses, in the short term:

- there is unlikely to be any strategic policy development and training with formal organisations (police, social services, health services etc.);
- information about the range of community groups and individuals who support people who have witnessed crime will not be collated;
- there is likely to be little progress made in the Identification of the relative merits of different means by which individual supports might be delivered in the future;
- there will be no additional community education in the form of talks and training events for professionals and community representatives about witness' fears, experiences of police and court procedures, and citizenship and crime.

Appendix 1 Project Brief

North Town 's Regeneration for Communities (RC) area is Greenwood and Harley (population 11,231), an area which borders on Copvale and which is within the Heartlands regeneration area. As the delivery plan for the Regeneration for Communities project notes¹,

“Heartlands and, in particular Greenwood and Harley rank amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged areas in the country, suffering from a wide range of problems on a scale that has created deep-seated deprivation and instability.”

Population turnover is high, housing is poor, there are many derelict areas, work is in short supply, school absences are high and facilities in the area are declining. An area analysis², raised significant issues in relation to crime; education; health and well-being; worklessness; physical environment; local services; and community capacity and cohesion. Within the consultation exercise undertaken as part of the Regeneration plan, crime emerged as the most significant concern for residents. These can be summarised as follows³:

- 72% of residents rate their area as unsafe and 47% think the area is less safe than it was two years ago;
- The RC area comprises approximately 2.7% of North Town population, but comprises 8% of burglaries from dwellings, 8.7% of criminal damage and 14.6% of arson;
- Fear of crime is higher than crime itself;
- There are high levels of crime that impact on the whole community, such as vandalism, breaking into empty properties, abandoning stolen cars;
- 57% of elderly will not walk in the area after dark and 25% of people feel unsafe at home alone after dark;
- 58% rate the support from the police as fairly or very bad;
- 63% identify lack of police presence as a problem.
- There is a general perception that minor crime is tolerated, leading to a decline in the confidence in enforcement and targeting of the area by criminals living within and outside the area.
- Repeat victimisation is high;
- anti-social and neighbour nuisance are major concerns for many residents;
- 40% have suffered from unreasonable noise in or around their home, and 35% have suffered frequently from abusive language;
- teenagers and young people are felt by 77% to be the main cause of problems;
- racial harassment is not thought to be a problem, although 8% of ethnic minority groups have suffered frequently;

The outcomes planned as a result of the RC, in relation to crime, include the following⁴:

- residents' confidence in their area will be improved so that the fear of crime becomes the exception not the norm;

- by the end of year 10 there will be a 50% decrease in those classing the area as unsafe and less safe than two years ago;
- a culture of rights balanced by responsibilities will prevail so that criminal and anti-social behaviour is recognised as unacceptable and dealt with as such by residents and agencies;
- by the end of year 10 crime will have been reduced to at or below the City average;
- by the end of year 10 the proportion of those wanting to move out of the area will have been reduced to 20%;
- to reduce those who feel they cannot get involved in their community because they ... find the area unwelcoming or suffer from harassment by 30% by year 3 and 50% by year 10;

A Crime, Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour task group is one of six task groups to have been established to oversee developments, and be responsible for delivering the outcomes of the RC. Each group works closely with other strategic developments (such as Health Action Zone, Education Action Zone and so on). The task group includes GM Police, GM Probation Services, and Victim Support. Local residents, voluntary and statutory agencies have been asked to submit initial project ideas for funding within the RC, and which identify sources of matched funding⁵. In addition, the Crime, Community and Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group has been informed by the development and production of the City wide Crime and Disorder Strategy, and a local Crime and Disorder strategy has been developed to mirror the City wide one.

In the short term, plans to increase policing have been outlined. In the longer term, a number of crime prevention strategies have been identified, along with other measures, the approach being to

“cut across youth issues, social issues and community capacity building to focus on building confidence and empowerment within the community and changing behaviour, rather than policing/prevention. The outcome of reduced crime will reduce the stress level within the community and improve the general level of well-being”⁶

Amongst the proposals, plans to introduce neighbourhood wardens have been suggested. The RC Delivery Plan⁷ notes that:

“To be successful in Heartlands as neighbourhood wards service would need to provide more than security patrols and would become the eyes and ears of a community, reporting crime as well as vandalism, repairs, rubbish etc. It would need to develop very close links with the community.”

However, the Delivery Plan goes on to state:

“Many residents are too frightened or intimidated to directly support police action. There is a reluctance to give personal details when reporting incidents let alone police statements. Lack of evidence severely hampers police investigations and perpetrators often escape prosecution. In order to support and encourage witnesses to come forward a project is to be considered which would complement the existing victim support scheme and witness support services provided at court. Such a service would provide an independent service to encourage and support members of the community to provide evidence. Much of the work would be carried out by volunteers in a similar way to the victim support service”

It is unlikely, according to the Delivery Plan, that the proposed projects would be wholly funded by RC.

It is in this context that the Regeneration for Heartlands has asked for a feasibility study that will examine if there is a need for a witness support scheme in Greenwood, Harley (and Copvale), and if so, what form it should take. Part of the feasibility study is research based, with a need to gather more detailed information from stakeholders in the community, and part is to prepare operational costings of proposed new projects, as identified. A proposal for the research element of the study is outlined below.

The overall brief for the feasibility study was to:

examine if need for a community witness support scheme exists in Greenwood, Copvale and Harley. The study will examine how a project might extend existing victim support services by encouraging people to come forward and supporting witnesses at the very earliest stage of witnessing acts of primarily nuisance and disorder, but also of crime, as well as providing a community based support service for witnesses called to attend magistrates court.

Aims

- A. provide independent information about the perceived need for a community witness support scheme in Greenwood, Harley and Copvale;
- B. provide information from the perspectives of different stakeholders in the community about how actual and potential witnesses might best be supported in the future prior to and after reporting crime, nuisance and disorder;
- C. to identify relevant options for, outcomes and performance indicators of a potential community witness support scheme
- D.

Following the research component, and linked to the findings of the research, two further aims, not strictly research aims, will be addressed:

- D. to outline ways in which the different project options could operate and would be managed;
- E. to identify potential and acceptable costs of the different project options, including a standalone scheme if preferred.

Specifically, the research would aim to:

1. seek the views of local people about the existing supports and barriers to reporting, and coming forward as witnesses to, crime, nuisance and disorder, and identify options for a community witness support scheme;
2. consult with residents, Police and relevant officers from RC and other voluntary and statutory agencies about the relative advantages of different types of community witness support schemes for Heartlands;
3. identify human resources available, and potential partners for the scheme and their possible contribution to a community witness support scheme;
4. identify ways in which a community witness support scheme might encourage greater participation from residents of Heartlands in the reporting of incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder;
5. identify possible outcomes, outputs and performance indicators of a community witness support scheme over time and to identify monitoring and evaluation options.

¹ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p.5

² *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p. 37-42

³ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p.37

Local Residents' Survey, 1999 **cited in** *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council

Police, 1999 **cited in** *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council

⁴ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p.42, 46

⁵ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p. 49

⁶ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p.53

⁷ *Regeneration for Communities: Delivery Plan* (1999) North Town, North Town Council p.51

Appendix 2: Scope of the Feasibility Study

We used a combination of different kinds of interviews and questionnaires. We undertook planned interviews with:

Residents or people who worked in the area who had recently witnessed acts of crime, nuisance and disorder and had proceeded to different stages of the prosecution process (N=8);

Residents who were active in regeneration activities, participating in Regeneration task groups, the Crime and Disorder Task Group, Housing and Neighbourhood Management Task Group and the Local Area Panels (LAPs). These residents nearly all held positions in community organisations, such as Chair of residents' associations or Homewatch schemes (N=12);

Professionals working in the area or on witness support projects elsewhere (N=14).

The planned interviews with residents all covered the same ground, but different experiences arose for discussion with different participants. See later in the Appendix for interview topics. The interviews with professionals were more open, addressing any relevant aspects of witness behaviour, experience and support needs as well as aspects of the criminal justice system and community development affecting witnesses and offenders.

We also conducted ad hoc street interviews (N=100). These were shorter interviews with people who were stopped in the street at different times during working hours. Equal numbers of participants were gained from Greendale, Higher and Lower Harley and Copvale. Equal numbers of people under 35, 36-45, 46-60, and 60+ participated. All street interviews followed the same sets of questions (see Appendix 3).

Once options had been developed, four discussion groups (including residents, agency workers, police) met to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option and to identify future strategies.

A final recommendation was put to the Crime and Community Safety Task Group.

Appendix 2: Questions for Detailed Interviews with Community Representatives

Association

- 1) Name:
- 2) Association:
- 3) How many members does it have?
- 4) What size of area does this residents association cover?
- 5) How long has it been set up for?
- 6) Why was it set up?

Views of Witness Support Scheme

- 7) What are your initial thoughts about the need to set up a witness support scheme?
- 8) Why is one needed?
- 9) Do you have any ideas about the sort of scheme do you think would be successful? (Safer Salford, Homewatch, Victim Support, neighbourhood wardens – paid? Volunteers?)
- 10) What sorts of informal supports are already in existence?

Personal Experience of Being a Witness

- 11) Have you ever been the witness of any crime, nuisance, disorder or ASB?
- 12) If yes, what happened?
- 12a) Did you, or anyone else report the crime to anyone – what was the outcome?
- 12b) If it wasn't reported, why not?
- 12c) Did you proceed further as a witness? (Why or why not? - expand)
- 13) If no – If you were ever to witness some sort of crime, do you think you would be likely to report it? (Why or why not? – expand)
- 14) Do you think some things are more likely to be reported than others? (Expand)
- 15) What would encourage you to report crime that you had witnessed?
- 16) What would discourage you from reporting crime that you had witnessed?

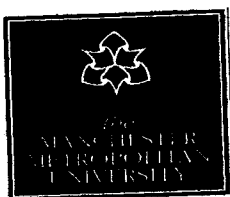
Knowledge of Other Witnesses' Experiences

- 17) Do you know anyone who has been a witness to a crime?
- 17a) What happened?
- 17b) What made it possible or difficult for them to report it and proceed as a witness? (Expand)
- 18) Do you know any witnesses we can talk to?

Follow Up

- 19) Is there anyone else you could recommend we spoke to? Or anyone who may be interested in getting involved?
- 20) Are there any further points you would like to make about witnessing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, or about support for witnesses?

Appendix 3: Street Interview Questionnaire



Department of Psychology
& Speech Pathology

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH TEAM

We are conducting a survey of what it is like to live round here. We are particularly interested in your experiences of witnessing acts of crime, nuisance or anti-social behaviour. We would like to hear your ideas about what might help people feel less intimidated about what they have seen or heard. There are no right or wrong answers and it is your views and opinions that are important. Please answer all questions honestly.

Location:

Date:

Female

Male

1. How old are you?

.....years

2. What is your occupation? if not working, for how long and what was your work?

.....

3. What street do you live in and for how long?

.....

.....years

4. How long have you lived around this area?

.....years

5. Who else lives in your household?

?
?
?
?

6. Do you belong to a residents association, homewatch or a residents' consultation group (e.g. New deal), or use a community centre? if so which, if not, why not?

Yes
.....
No

7. How many of your neighbours would you say you knew

well?
to talk to?
to nod to or by sight?

8. If you had a crisis who would you turn to?

family?
neighbours?
friends?
other?

9. What kind of involvement do you think people have over the changes that are going on here?

10. What do you like about this community?

11. What would you like to see changed in this community?

9. Have you, or anyone you know, ever witnessed a crime or act of nuisance or disorder?

10. What did you, or they do?

11. A lot of people fear intimidation if they report what they see. What kinds of help do you think

a) would encourage people to report what they see?

b) would encourage people to help secure a conviction?

c) should be available after people have acted as a witness in a court?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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