Community, intelligence-led policing and crime control

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between community policing, intelligence-led policing and crime control. Whilst community and intelligence-led policing have developed as distinctive reform movements within contemporary UK policing there have been calls for the two to interact in practice. In particular, aspects of community policing are operationalized through the frameworks of intelligence-led policing. This article unpicks the structures and processes of (community) intelligence processes in detail. It focuses on the nature of information generated from community policing; how analytical products are constructed; and the nature of the officer tasking and briefing process. It is argued that community policing was conceived, at least in part, as an alternative to traditional reactive policing styles which coalesce around patrol, rapid response to incidents and enforcement of the criminal law. However, as community policing has evolved in practice it has become firmly embedded in conventional police-centric notions of 'efficiency', law enforcement and crime control.

Key words

Community policing, intelligence, analysis, efficiency, crime control

Introduction

Since the turn of the century two policing styles have come to prominence in UK police practice: community policing and intelligence-led policing. Certain attempts have been made to see that they interact in practice. This article starts by introducing community and intelligence-led policing and sets out how, in principle, the two approaches should interrelate in contemporary UK police practice. It then sets out the results of an empirical study which examined this interaction focusing on the structures and processes of (community) intelligence systems. Implications for the relationship between community policing and crime control are set out in the conclusion.

Community and intelligence-led policing

Community policing has been an important reform movement in policing in the UK and around the world. For some decades it has stood for a mechanism to legitimise the relationship between the police and communities. Originating as a means of improving police/minority-ethnic community relations, contemporary manifestations of community policing have extended this remit to police/community relations more broadly (Fielding, 2005). Community policing represents a break from bureaucratic styles of policing which stress crime control, limited public interaction, random (motorised) patrol, shift work, coordinated central dispatch and territorial organisation of responsibility (Manning, 1997 [1977]: 11). Instead, community policing has sought to broaden the police mandate from a narrow crime fighting one to one that addresses

wider issues – such as fear of crime, social and physical disorder and neighbourhood problems – and to provide a means through which police officers work can with residents to identify and solve problems which are priorities for them (Trojanowicz et al, 1998). The practice of community policing has evolved over time and has varied across both time and place. It has involved the assignment of officers to specific geographical areas for extended periods of time in order to build up relationships with residents; the establishment of systems through which the police can consult with communities to understand their priorities and preferences for policing; and attempts to encourage the community to take greater responsibility for crime control (e.g. the establishment of neighbourhood watch) (Fielding, 2005).

Over the last ten years a variant of community policing, termed ‘neighbourhood policing’, has been developing in the UK. Reflecting the discourse of community policing, neighbourhood policing seeks to orient policing services around the themes of ‘visibility’, ‘accessibility’ and ‘familiarity’ with a focus on problem-solving in co-production with communities and partner agencies (Innes, 2005; Quinton and Morris, 2008). Organised around highly localised geographical areas, usually wards, neighbourhood officers have been expected to spend significant amounts of time conducting activities – especially patrol – to promote visibility. Residents should be able to access named police officers and as such neighbourhood teams have been expected to publicize their contact details along with the times and locations of community engagement events (see Casey, 2008 and Bullock, 2010). A feature of neighbourhood policing is the establishment of public meetings,ⁱ organised by neighbourhood officers, which offer an opportunity for residents to express their

preferences for policing priorities and, in principle at least, to work together with the police service (and other agencies) to tackle those problems.

Intelligence-led policing shares with community policing a desire to reform police practice. However, police reform is conceived in terms of improving the efficiency of existing processes and practice rather than wholesale reform of the police vision.

Wood and Shearing (2007: 55) put it like this: '[intelligence-led policing] does not re-imagine the police role so much as it re-imagines how the police can be smarter in the application of their unique authority and capacities'. Pinning down the contours of intelligence-led policing is not straightforward. However, the generation and use of crime analysis and criminal intelligence to identify and orient police resources towards tackling the most serious and prolific offenders/criminality has all been stressed:

Intelligence-led policing is a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through both strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders (Ratcliffe, 2008: 6).

Of course, there is much devil in the detail and I will unpick aspects of this definition in the course of this article. Again reflecting community policing, intelligence-led policing is an evolving concept (Ratcliffe, 2008). At the time of writing, the National Intelligence Model (NIM) is the dominant apparatus through which intelligence-led policing operates in the UK. While the National Intelligence Model is 'entwined with

intelligence-led policing' (Ratcliffe, 2008: 107) it should be stressed that it is 'not synonymous with the notion of intelligence-led policing' (Ratcliffe, 2009: 178). The National Intelligence Model instead provides a framework through which intelligence-led policing can operate (Ratcliffe, 2009). It is an information-led deployment system which requires that the police service develop and use analytic products to coordinate the allocation of police – and potentially partner agency – resources. Thus official guidance stresses that the aim is to: 'Ensure that policing is delivered in a targeted manner through the development of information and intelligence. It is used to prioritise issues and allocate resources to deal with them' (ACPO Centrex, 2007: 6). The National Intelligence Model operates at different organisational levels of the police service. Level one operates at the basic command unit or small force, level two at the force or region and level three at the national or international level. Analytical products feed management groups which operate at these different levels making decisions about how and where to allocate resources. The whole process is 'governed' by codes of practice and minimum standards to which police services should, in principle at least, adhere (see ACPO/NCPE, 2005; ACPO/Centrex 2007).

The interaction of community and intelligence-led policing

There are certainly conceptual differences between the two policing styles. We have already seen that the two approaches have different rationales: community policing stressing legitimacy and a rejection of reactive methods and intelligence-led policing the more efficient deployment of police resources. Ratcliffe (2008:72-73) and Tilley (2003: 325-6) both further describe how the orientation, assumed benefits, criteria for

success, means through which outcomes should be achieved and the implications for the police organisation all might also differ. Community policing should be organised around identifying and tackling concerns identified by residents; seeks to improve confidence and satisfaction with policing; stresses informal social control; and requires the development of mechanisms to engage the community in setting priorities for police practice and participating in crime prevention initiatives. In contrast, intelligence-led policing tends to focus on identifying and disrupting criminal groups and the most prolific offenders; stresses arrest and ultimately incapacitation of offenders; and requires the recruitment and training of analysts and the development of processes to generate and analyse information.

Whilst conceptually these two approaches may seem worlds apart there are points of similarity and commentators have noted moves towards conceptual integration of contemporary manifestations of community and intelligence-led policing (McGarrell et al, 2007). One view is that is that both approaches are dependent on two-way communication between the public and the police (McGarrell et al, 2007).

Community policing may offer the promise of reconnecting the police to the public and in so doing improve the flow of information between citizens and the police service (Ratcliffe, 2008: 3). Indeed, where community policing is justified in terms of improving the flow of information between communities and the police there is an analytic connection to draw between community and intelligence-led policing (Fielding, 2005). Another view is that the ‘compatibility’ of the models depends on how broadly intelligence-led policing is conceived, as well as how the processes are developed and implemented in practice (Maguire and John, 2006). Certainly, in the UK intelligence-led policing has evolved into a business model with *potentially* much

wider scope than its origins in criminal investigation and specialist police operations (John and Maguire, 2003) and with a focus on interagency problem-solving (Ratcliffe, 2008) (and see McGarrell et al 2007).

Indeed, as community and intelligence-led policing have developed in the UK overlap and interaction between the two are clear. As we have seen, neighbourhood policing has been the dominant version of community policing. Through focusing on high visibility patrol and addressing community concerns neighbourhood policing seeks to improve confidence in policing and offer reassurance to the public. However, there has also been an expectation that there will be a relationship between the National Intelligence Model and neighbourhood policing practice. So, the guiding principle is that the National Intelligence Model should drive neighbourhood policing deployment and resources: 'Neighbourhood policing should be driven by information that has been rigorously analysed, and by the disciplines of multi-agency tasking and co-ordination at appropriate levels' (ACPO/NCPE, 2006: 14). However, neighbourhood policing should in turn drive the National Intelligence Model. Neighbourhood policing should act to generate information and that information should be incorporated into and help fuel the National Intelligence Model process. Guidance has drawn attention to how information may be generated from communities in different ways. This may include the observations of members of the public; information obtained by officers in the course of their duties within neighbourhoods; and information derived from other public sector workers such as teachers and doctors (ACPO/Centrex, 2007). Doing so has been assumed to increase knowledge of risk and vulnerability; improve opportunities for community engagement; and increase community confidence (ACPO/NCPE, 2006: 26). Additionally, as we have seen, one

aim of neighbourhood policing has been to proactively identify and tackle crime problems which are priorities for local communities. Police officers should view these priorities as ‘intelligence’ and incorporate them into National Intelligence Model systems: ‘Intelligence assessments will identify public concerns as intelligence issues so that they can be assessed and profiled, providing a basis for strategic and tactical decision making (ACPO/NCPE, 2006: 14).

At the level of discourse then, there is a symbiotic relationship between neighbourhood policing and the National Intelligence Model. Information generated from communities should fuel the National Intelligence Model and in turn the National Intelligence Model should drive neighbourhood policing deployment of resources. Of course, this represents an ‘ideal’. Less is known about how neighbourhood policing and the National Intelligence Model align in practice and what impact local priorities determined through neighbourhood policing will have on the operation of the National Intelligence Model (Maguire and John, 2006). This article makes initial attempts to fill this empirical gap.

This article

The themes pursued in the remainder of this article are based on the accounts of some 25 interviewees based in one local intelligence unit situated within a county police service in Englandⁱⁱ. They comprised a range of roles including sworn and unsworn neighbourhood policing officers, field intelligence officers and analysts. The neighbourhood police officers (N= 10) generally had many years of experience working both as neighbourhood officers and in the police service more widely. They

were then in a good position to reflect on how neighbourhood policing has been developed and delivered in practice as well as how the framework fits into the policing environment more broadly. Neighbourhood teams are plural teams. Civilian Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are heavily used throughout neighbourhood policing. Accordingly, some ten PCSOs were also interviewed. The PCSOs appeared to have slightly different experiences than the sworn officers. Although there was some variation, overall the PCSOs were less experienced than the sworn officers and their awareness of the broader processes of the policing environment limited. However, PCSOs had a great deal of knowledge of and experience of working with their communities. The remainder of the participants comprised a mixture of field intelligence officers and intelligence analysts working at both the local and force level.

This force allocates in the order £3.5million – out of a police service budget of some £220m – to the ‘intelligence function’. This level of investment – about 1.5% – is reportedly in keeping with the national average. Of course distinguishing between those officers and civilian staff who comprise part of the intelligence structure and those who do not is difficult since, as will be explored in more detail shortly, very many warranted officers and police staff contribute through either submitting information and/or using it to shape their decision making and activities. However, at the time of writing some 230 officers and civilian staff were *directly* employed in ‘intelligence activities’ based either at the force level or in one of three local intelligence units. Each local intelligence unit comprises a team of intelligence professionals incorporating a senior analyst, intelligence analysts and researchers as well as field intelligence and briefing and tasking officers. These teams conduct

activities from proactively generating information, processing information and conducting research and analysis.

Drawing on the themes derived from the interview data, the remainder of this article is concerned with unpicking the structures and processes of contemporary intelligence practices. It considers how neighbourhood policing operates to generate information and the social and organisational processes which frame the construction of intelligence. As Innes et al (2005: 42) argue, understanding the processes through which the police service manufacture and use intelligence is ‘pivotal in terms of understanding both the theory and practice of contemporary policing strategies’. Having considered how (community) intelligence is constructed by officers this article moves on to explore how structures and processes of intelligence practice come to mould the operation of neighbourhood policing in particular kinds of ways.

The process and structure of (community) intelligence systems

Intelligence processes comprise cycles of officer tasking, data collection, collation, analysis, dissemination and feedback (Ratcliffe, 2003). Information about the policing environment circulates both formally and informally. Whilst, as Manning (1992: 363) notes, most information about the policing environment ‘is briefly stored, resides in the memories of officers dispersed in time and space, has no uniform format, and can therefore rarely be retrieved’ under certain conditions, the nature of which I will turn to shortly, certain information is formally entered by officers on to an intelligence system and formally processed. Indeed, the police service in which this research was conducted handles significant amounts of information submitted by officers. On

average some 4,500 intelligence reports a month are generated and processed by sworn officers and civilian staff. In the UK the so-called ‘5*5*5’ process is the national information/intelligence report through which the police service should seek to ‘record, evaluate and disseminate information’ (ACPO/Centrex 2007: 26). These records should be formally documented, include an assessment of the reliability of the source of the information, the nature of the information submitted, a ‘handing code’ (which informs the way that information should be disseminated) and may also include a more comprehensive risk assessment (ACPO, 2007). Some information will be acted upon immediately. The rest will be assessed, ‘sanitised’ⁱⁱⁱ and potentially entered onto the intelligence system to be used together with other data sets (recorded crime, calls for service) by force and borough level analysts. In turn, the outputs of the analysis – a variety of analytical products – should be used to fuel the tasking process at the different levels of the national intelligence model (neighbourhood, borough, force and region). The following sections explore these processes in practice focusing on the mechanisms through which neighbourhood policing generates information; the characteristics of that information; the nature of analytic products; and how they are used to influence neighbourhood policing.

Generating (community) information

Communities have been viewed as ‘repositories of information’ (Tilley, 2008: 96) and, as we have seen, an underlying principle of neighbourhood policing has been to extract that information and to use it to interpret the policing environment, prioritise problems and direct police resources. Officers interviewed as part of this study saw the neighbourhood policing role as a wide ranging one. However, they certainly believed that through being available and visible to residents and through ‘gaining

people's trust and confidence' (PC/05) information, that might not be available through other mechanisms, could be generated:

I think we're key players in the intelligence model, because we do get more contact with the community than the response team who turn up and they're either dealing with a victim who to all intents and purposes it's too late when they become the victim, or the offender who's not really going to tell us much. Where we're on a day-to-day almost social basis with these people they're more likely to tell us stuff and the stronger those links become, the more sort of juicy the [intelligence is] going to be, for want of a better word. (PC/06)

Officers accounts demonstrated that a range of information – from reports of low level disorder and environmental problems, to expressions of residents' worries, perceptions and fears, to more specific information about unusual behaviour, risks, crimes and criminals – is relayed to or observed by neighbourhood officers in the course of their day-to-day activities: 'Stuff they wouldn't automatically call the police and report they might come and tell us about' (PC/01). Whilst officers reported that they routinely submit information for formal processing – '(it) never stops' (PCSO/03) – it is quite clear that only certain observations are submitted. The neighbourhood policing milieu is interpreted by officers and information filtered before it is formally processed. Any information that is formally captured in police intelligence systems inevitably represents only a proportion of the information that *could* be used to interpret the policing landscape. Commentators have drawn attention to how the decisions that police officers make when submitting information 'is the root source' of information formally processed and so comes to shape command

decisions (Manning, 1992a: 328) and that the processes through which information is shared are implicit and embedded in the culture of police organizations (Seba and Rowley, 2010: 611). Indeed, participants in this study drew attention to how officer's decisions to submit information are founded in an interaction between what police officers believe represents important police 'knowledge,' organisational features of the police service and the structure of the intelligence system itself. The following sections consider these factors, returning later to a consideration of the nature of information derived from neighbourhood policing and its limitations.

Police 'knowledge'

Accounts drew attention to two themes which shape how officers come to understand neighbourhoods and structure their decisions to submit information to the intelligence system. Firstly, reflecting Cope (2004), officers reported that they value knowledge that they believe will be useful for facilitating the enforcement of the criminal law, as this officer demonstrates: 'Yeah, anything that was of a criminal or possibility of being useful in a criminal investigation, anything like suspicious vehicles, things like that, anything suspicious like that I would put that in' (PC/08). Secondly, the notions of 'common sense,' 'knowing your patch' or 'experience' were strongly embedded in police officers accounts of how they come to understand neighbourhoods:

Just by knowing your area, knowing the nominal that you're speaking to, knowing the member of public that you're speaking to, hearing, you know, you've got your ear to the ground in neighbourhoods, you hear things in neighbourhoods because people trust you as a police officer, which is good, that's what you want (PC/3).

The importance that police officers attach to experience is well documented (see Bayley and Bittner, 1984). Manning and Hawkins (1989: 150) argued that for police officers valid knowledge is contextual, substantive and grounded in social life as experienced by officers on the streets and needs to be learnt over time: ‘reality is street reality.’ Similarly, Cope (2004: 199) argued that police officers work on the basis of ‘constructed experiential knowledge’ which frames how crime and offending comes to be understood. As we will soon explore, there are limits to police officer knowledge of their environment. However, this crime-centric lens, coupled with the importance placed on constructed, experiential knowledge within police practice, comes to filter assessments of information and ultimately shape the nature of the information incorporated in intelligence systems, as elaborated in the following sections.

This outlook influences the nature of the problem types about which officers submit information. It follows that officers reported being more likely to routinely submit information related to crime problems than information related to other forms of police-relevant problems such as disorder, antisocial behaviour and traffic. It also determines the kinds of people who are represented on intelligence systems.

Criminologists have long argued that the police tend to focus on the ‘usual suspects’ (Fielding, 1995a: 64). Indeed information submitted onto the systems reportedly centres on the routines and behaviour of offenders who are already known to the police (‘nominals’), as indicated in the quote from PC/3 above. The risk, to which Cope (2004: 199) draws attention, is ‘policing-led intelligence’ where information starts to converge on certain people who are routinely drawn into the system rather

than problems more broadly conceived. This perspective also has an effect on officer's perceptions of the timeliness of information. The officers drew attention to how 'real time' information that can be acted on immediately was valued. As Fielding (1995a: 162) notes 'The insistently practical focus of police interest in information prioritises short-term content with a direct pay off.' Historical information, which *may* be useful for building up pictures of crime problems over time, is not viewed to be as valuable as information which allows officers to act immediately by officers: decisions 'are in the here and now' and 'immediate' (Manning and Hawkins, 1989: 150). This perspective also comes, at least in part, to frame how officers make assessments of the reliability of the sources from which information is generated. When considering the reliability of sources of information officers often drew attention to the importance of experience and intuition: 'I will have a hunch about whether it is true' (PCSO/02). However, the crime-centric perspective is also evident in shaping assessment of reliability. Echoing Innes et al (2005), participants drew attention to how the observations of police officers and informants – both strongly embedded in a criminal environment – are viewed to generate reliable information about crime and offending. That said officers also valued information derived from other professionals such as housing officers, teachers, doctors and prison staff. Even so, there was a tendency for officers to prefer specific information about people already known to the police. For example, participants in this study drew attention to how information generated from HM Prison Service regarding when known offenders were to be released from prisons was especially useful. In contrast, information generated from residents was often viewed by officers to be less useful than that generated from the aforementioned sources. This perspective seems to be founded in officer's perceptions that most residents – and especially those residents who

routinely engage with police officers through the neighbourhood policing apparatus – do not have access to the information that they perceive to be most valuable and, more broadly, that most residents are unlikely to be known to officers and so are not ‘trusted’. These points are elaborated in later sections.

Organisation and structure

Organisational and structural aspects of the police service come to interact with police officer knowledge in shaping the nature of the information ultimately submitted to intelligence systems. Organisational and structural characteristics of the police service orient officers towards submitting certain kinds of information, underpinning and reinforcing the assessments described above. Particularly evident in officers’ accounts were the role of police service priorities and the configuration of the information processes, considered in the following sections.

Police service priorities frame the nature of the information submitted to intelligence systems, to some extent at least. Officers drew attention how they are directed to orient the information they submit in terms of particular problems and people that mirror police priorities. These are most likely to comprise the more serious crime problems such as Class A drug dealing, burglary and vehicle crime. It should be stressed that there is some complexity here. Police service priorities are unlikely to be framed exclusively in terms of the more serious crime problems. Given the focus on reassurance policing together with the requirements to consult with communities that has been evident in England and Wales over recent years, priorities may well also include broader issues such as satisfaction with and confidence in the police service as well as forms of disorder and antisocial behaviour. Priorities also vary depending on

the organisational level of the police service. So, whilst at the force level efforts may well be concentrated on understanding and disrupting the activities of serious prolific offenders, at the local level the landscape may be very different. Accordingly, this analyst described how issues of antisocial behaviour and disorder may be drawn into the intelligence systems at the neighbourhood level:

I mean obviously a lot more emphasis these days on antisocial behaviour, graffiti, you know, dog muck and all of that kind of thing. We do get, if we get the intelligence in on that sometimes it's set up as a neighbourhood issue by the neighbourhood team, we can record and link the intelligence to that. And then they target that specific issue. We can put out products to support. It doesn't just have to be a crime. We do produce problem summaries, problem profiles on a particular area that's experiencing lots of antisocial behaviour. Or if there's a group of, recently we had it in the [named area], a group of offenders, young boys who were causing a massive issue for their neighbourhood. They hadn't committed any crimes but they were just hanging out drinking and it was becoming a big issue for the neighbourhood so, the people living there, so we produced a document that showed the type of crime that they were involved in, gave it to the neighbourhood team who could then go out at certain times and interrupt their actual hanging around in the park and which parks it was, where the home addresses, all of that sort of fed in from our intelligence and are looking at all those incidents.

That said, in practice officers may well submit information on people and problems wider than those officially prioritised by the police service. This is especially so

where officers are unclear about how the intelligence system should operate or where police priorities are shifting over time.

The configuration of information technology – which provides the mechanism for collating, storing and managing information – is of importance in shaping decisions to submit information. Police intelligence technologies are, of course, designed to facilitate the capture and storage of police-relevant information but ultimately that configuration will come to shape the nature of the information captured and formally processed. Although this system was quite capable of storing wide ranging information, there was a sense amongst officers that the system was geared towards capturing information about those already known to the police:

But the problem is there's certain intelligence, cos if you, if that officer put that information on a five-by-five it's feeding into the intelligence system, then if there wasn't a nominal, if they weren't already criminally, or known to the police for some reason and on our systems there'd be nowhere for the intelligence system to hang it on. (PC/04)

There is also a relationship between officer's assessments of the credibility of sources of information and the configuration of National Intelligence Model processes. As we have seen, sources of information are formally assessed, using national guidelines, and rated before they are submitted for processing. Information generated from residents – who are generally unknown to officers – accordingly receive an 'unreliable' or 'untrusted' rating and the result, according to participants in this study,

is that the information will not be acted on unless verified by other sources of information.

The nature of (community) intelligence

The above discussion has implications for the character of information generated from neighbourhood policing, which is considered in the following sections. As has been stressed, the nature of intelligence is inevitably shaped by the mechanisms through which it is generated. As set out in the introduction, the processes through which neighbourhood policing is presumed to generate information are broadly threefold: through the observations and actions of neighbourhood officers embedded in neighbourhoods; through the observations of residents relayed to officers in conditions of greater understanding and trust; and through the more formal public meetings and consultation events organised by neighbourhood officers.

Accounts demonstrated that the bulk of the information submitted to the intelligence system generated through neighbourhood policing is the result of neighbourhood officer's own observations of and actions within communities. A minority is generated from direct police interaction with residents. That information which does originate from direct police and community interaction is, according to officers, usually derived from the formal police-community engagement mechanisms rather than, for example, informal encounters during routine patrol. This no doubt reflects, at least in part, the above discussion of how knowledge and structure interact to render information generated from residents less reliable than that generated from other sources. However, it is contended that it also reflects some inherent difficulties within

the mechanisms through which neighbourhood policing is presumed to generate information, to which I now turn.

Limits to the ‘all knowing, all wise’ officer

Reflecting Manning and Hawkins (1989) and Cope (2004) I have suggested that for police officers themselves valid knowledge about the police environment is contextual, grounded in social life as experienced by officers on the streets and needs to be learnt over time. However, as Manning and Hawkins (1989) go on to argue, this view is actually somewhat incongruous as this knowledge is not in the gift of many officers. Indeed, developing officer knowledge about communities through facilitating the development of relationships between police officers and residents over time has been an aim of community policing. In particular, community policing discourse has drawn wistfully ‘on a golden age of police-community relations, often epitomised as the village bobby, all knowing, all wise and perfectly in tune with the temper of his local community’ (Weatheritt, 1986: 88). However, if the representation of the ‘all knowing, all wise’ bobby was ever an authentic one, officers drew attention to how certain organisational and administrative features of neighbourhood policing function to limit what officers can possibly know about their communities, points which are elaborated in the following sections.

Contrary to the stereotypical image of the community officer, neighbourhood officers do not spend their whole careers coming to organically understand the community within which they work. In fact, many officers move on to different roles within the police service relatively quickly^{iv}. Officer accounts drew attention to two primary issues which come to determine how long officers remain in one neighbourhood.

First, officers discussed the nature of the promotion process. On the one hand, interviewees drew attention to how those officers who wish to progress through the rank structure need to gain experience in a range of different operational roles. On the other hand, officers suggested that – perhaps reflecting the resources committed to neighbourhood policing in recent years, coupled with a strong organisational drive to implement this form of policing – neighbourhood policing roles have themselves been seen by officers as way of securing promotion in recent years. Either way, the result is relatively rapid movement around the organisation. Second, participants drew attention to how the length of time spent in the neighbourhood role is influenced by officer's perceptions of what the police role should be. Whilst many neighbourhood policing officers interviewed noted that they enjoyed their role – 'it's the best job in the world' (PC/03) – they drew attention to how more broadly officers preferred the 'exciting' 'blue light' policing roles (such as rapid response and reactive investigations) which are more in tune with the reasons why they joined the police service in the first place. In short, community policing roles contrast with the image of officers as 'crime fighters'. Indeed, officers participating in this study drew attention to how neighbourhood policing is invariably represented as 'drinking tea with the elderly' (PCSO/4) and the role is viewed by some officers as 'soft' (PC/01), 'pink and fluffy' (PC/02) and a 'doddle' (PCSO/4). Whilst certainly 'we should not equate community policing with a 'social service' and fast response, dispatched patrol with 'crime control' (Fielding, 2009: 6) there clearly remains a sense that officers themselves make this distinction and prioritise fast response crime control in terms of their careers.

Resources

Resource constraints further influence the extent to which officers understand communities. In short, whilst investment in neighbourhood policing since the turn of the century has certainly been considerable, resources are clearly finite. Two interrelated themes dominated officers' accounts of this issue. Firstly, the geographical size of neighbourhoods. As noted, the unit around which neighbourhood policing is organised is usually a ward, which is certainly a relatively small subsection of a police service. However, officers noted that the geographical size of some neighbourhoods limits how much of that could realistically be patrolled on foot: 'I am walking, but you know, there's only one of me and I need to be clever with where I'm at. If you haven't got an issue then you probably won't see me walking up your street' (PC/05). A further consequence is that despite guidance, which has stated that officers should spend significant amounts of time patrolling on foot, many officers reportedly still resort to their cars to move around their neighbourhoods. This removes officers from their immediate environment and limits the extent to which they are potentially visible and available to residents. Secondly, officers drew attention to population density. The number of neighbourhood officers available coupled with large and diverse communities influences the extent to which officers can realistically organise (or otherwise attend) community engagement events in the name of getting to know residents.

Assessing the value of information

Reflecting Innes et al (2005), officers participating in this study drew attention to how a consequence of inexperience and limited training is that some officers find it difficult to assess the value of information before they submit it. Officers noted that this can result both in too little *and* too much information being submitted for

processing. A significant problem, noted by many commentators, is ‘information overload’ which results where the amount of information generated outweighs the number of staff to deal with it (Sheptycki, 2004). Whilst officers participating in this study gave examples where seemingly innocuous bits of information became important in building cases they were also very aware that submitting too much information leads to delays in processing it. This is potentially problematic since officers, oriented towards information which facilitates law enforcement outcomes, tend to value timely information, as discussed earlier in this article. As such in certain circumstances delays in processing information may lead to analytical products based on it being viewed by officers as less useful. Officers also reported that it causes wider difficulties for the management of the system. When the system becomes overloaded officers are encouraged to stop submitting information only to be encouraged to start again once the system has more capacity. Ultimately, slow data processing, along with this ‘stop-start’ approach, may minimise the incentive for police officers to submit information in the first place.

The structure and organisation of neighbourhood policing

Lastly, the structure of the community engagement mechanisms embedded in neighbourhood policing shape the nature of information generated. We have seen that public meetings form a mechanism through which information generated directly from residents may become incorporated into intelligence systems. Drawing this information to the National Intelligence Model process to provide ‘a basis for strategic and tactical decision making’ is certainly in the spirit of neighbourhood policing which, as set out in the introduction, seeks to incorporate neighbourhood priorities as ‘intelligence issues’ (ACPO/NCPE, 2006: 14). However, this is a narrow

form of information which reflects the experiences, perceptions and priorities of the residents who attend the meetings. Reflecting the findings of many other studies officers reported that attendance at these meetings is generally low and non-representative of communities. Reflecting the above discussion, an additional issue for officers themselves is that these public meetings were viewed as unlikely to generate the types of information which they valued most which, as we have seen, tends to be information oriented towards the disruption of known criminals generated from sources close to these activities and people. Indeed, drawing on the aforementioned notion of ‘drinking tea with the elderly’ officers were concerned that they may spend too much time in meetings with the ‘nicer villagers’ (PC/07) and not enough time building relationships with those people who have more direct access to the information about offenders and offending that they value – those engaged in offending themselves:

How many safer neighbourhood teams would be, have been to see the local [prolific offender] for a cup of tea? And getting information from places that are slightly more challenging. So it's a lot comfier and easier to maybe go to the village hall and have a cup of tea than maybe visit the [prolific offender] or visit the chap that's been released from prison. So I think we're maybe not engaging enough with the right community groups. (PC/07)

The construction of analytical products

It is the role of analysts to construct pictures of crime problems to inform police decision making. The nature of the analytical products is strongly influenced by the organisational context in which they are being used. Reflecting official discourse

analysts and officers drew attention to how analytical products feed into the different levels of the National Intelligence Model from force (and region) to neighbourhood level. Similar data are used at all levels but the products they generate are different and, in turn, they are used in different ways. The following sections consider the construction of the analytic products, before returning to how they are used.

Analytical products are constructs derived from sources strongly embedded in the social organisation and administration of the police service. Two primary data sources are reportedly used by analysts in this police service. Firstly, information derived from the intelligence system, the nature of which has been discussed in detail above. We have seen the processes which shape this information towards that which officers view as central to crime control. Information submitted to the system is also generated from Crimestoppers,^v proactively generated from surveillance teams or covert human sources ('informants') and 'technical' information (such as CCTV). Secondly, analysts draw on information derived from administrative data sets routinely collated by the police service such as recorded crime and calls for service data. These data themselves are strongly embedded in the police administration and practices of police officers and their limitations well documented and will not be repeated here (see Maguire, 2007).

In principle, data sets collated by agencies other than the police could be used in developing analytic products. Whilst much has been made of the benefits of generating information from partner agencies, such as the health and social services, for the purposes of community and intelligence-led policing the analysts in this police service noted did not routinely use data-sets generated from non-police agencies at the

local level. Whilst data sharing problems have been explained in terms of cultural differences between agencies – often expressed as concerns about the confidentiality of certain data (Phillips et al 2002) – difficulties in data sharing here seemed to stem primarily from technical problems. Analysts drew attention to how different agencies generated information in different ways and in different format. The consequence may be that data are not directly comparable and may not be subject to the same checks and balances as police data are which makes them difficult to use, as this analyst notes: Cos they didn't have the, you know, checks that we have with our data with crime. Cos they unfortunately, they have a lot big chunks missing, some inaccuracies and that kind of stuff. It's not as easy to use. (Analyst)

The nature of analytic products are inevitably shaped by the types of information from which they are generated and so it is not surprising that analytic products are generally used to understand crime – rather than other forms of police-relevant – problems. However, this statement should be qualified to some extent. This crime focus is most apparent at the force level where, reflecting the National Intelligence Model structure, focus is very much on understanding the activities of those viewed as the most prolific and dangerous criminals who may be committing offences over wide geographical areas. In contrast, analytical products generated for use at neighbourhood level *may* focus on lower level antisocial behaviour, disorder and environmental problems which are often drawn to the attention of neighbourhood officers by residents, as indicated in previous sections.

Come what may, accounts demonstrated that products themselves become oriented towards understanding problems, people and places in particular kinds of ways. In

principle, analytic products could be constructed in different ways. They could, for example, be composed in terms of understanding the social determinants of victimisation (or offending for that matter). Or they could be constructed in terms of understanding the features of environments that facilitate the development of crime and other problems. However, participants – both officers and analysts – were very clear that the primary objective of developing the analytic products was to disrupt offending (or antisocial behaviour) through enforcing the criminal or civil law. One analyst noted ‘We’re not going to reduce crime or detect crime if we don’t catch people, it’s as simple as that.’ The central purpose of creating analytical products then is to provide officers with information to inform the deployment of resources to the ‘right people’ and the ‘right places’ in order to ‘catch people red handed.’ So analysts create products which seek to illustrate the spatial and temporal organisation of crime and the habits and routines of offenders. The ultimate aim is for these to orient the deployment of police resources towards those people and places:

Yes, yeah, it’s about catching people red handed, that's what it is, that's what intelligence is all about. It’s building up pictures about what’s happening and it’s apply the resources and then that can be overt and covert, it doesn’t matter – it’s employing the right resources at the right time in the right place to catch people. (Analyst)

A final feature of the analytical products in this police service is that they do not provide detailed recommendations about the nature of the resources, interventions or tactics that might be employed to address problems. This is left to police officers to determine through the National Intelligence Model tasking and briefing process, to

which I return shortly. Analysts – at both force and borough level – did not believe that they had the operational experience and knowledge to make detailed recommendations^{vi}. If they did suggest tactics they would do so in collaboration with officers. Again, this view seems to reflect the importance placed on experiential knowledge within the policing environment which comes to shape not only how analytical products are constructed but potentially how they are viewed by analysts and officers. There was certainly no evidence that analytical products intrinsically ‘lack credibility’ with officers because they are not founded in experiential knowledge gained ‘working the streets’ (Cope, 2004: 200). However, analysts and officers alike certainly believed it was not the remit of analysts to make detailed recommendations for police practice. There has been debate about whether analysts should, or should not, provide tactical recommendations for police officers (see Evans, 2009). The result is that planning is left to police officers, with implications for how (and indeed if) products are used to shape police decision making, discussion of which comprises the final sections of this article.

The nature of the tasking process

Accounts – of both officers and analysts – demonstrated that the role that analytical products play in shaping neighbourhood policing decision making is very variable. The role is framed, at least in part, by the organisational context in which products are being used as well the officer’s position and role in the organisation and his or her understanding of and attitudes towards analysis. In conceptualising the role played by analytical products in shaping officer decision making there is, at the very least, a distinction to be made between ‘policy’ level decision making about the broad allocation of resources – characterised by Manning and Hawkins (1989) as reflective,

centralised and general – and individual officer decision making on a day-to-day level – characterised by Manning and Hawkins (1989) as practical, immediate and non-reflective.

In this police service, ‘policy’ decisions about the nature of the people and problems on which to concentrate neighbourhood resources in the short to medium term are made at management meetings, held at regular intervals, and in the more immediate term at daily briefings for neighbourhood officers. Both are primary sites of neighbourhood policing decision making. According to the accounts of analysts their role within them has, in recent years, ‘been pushed more and more’ (analyst).

According to analysts and police officers, analytic products certainly feed into both areas of decision making^{vii}. However, in determining what problems on which to concentrate neighbourhood policing resources there was acknowledgement that managers are influenced by a range of issues of which the products of analysis is only one. The factors which may influence decisions are variable and include the availability of resources, force priorities and targets along with external pressures from, for example, local politicians, the press or members of the public. As Ratcliffe (2003: 4) notes ‘even good intelligence has to compete to influence decision-makers’.

Analytic products are one of a number of factors which determine which problem types to allocate resources but they may also play a role in determining *how* problems are tackled. As we have seen, the products tend to provide detailed information about the temporal and spatial distribution of crime and the routines of ‘nominals’. Analysts drew attention to how their products are used to help determine how, where and when neighbourhood policing resources are deployed. Most obviously officers are pointed

towards patrolling particular places at particular times of the day. Shift patterns may indeed be re-allocated to facilitate this. Officers may be briefed to arrest certain individuals, or otherwise visit their homes or to collate more information about problems. Come what may, the analytical products tended to be constructed in terms of the efficient allocation of neighbourhood policing personnel. This analyst explains how products may be used by police managers:

This is the offending, these are the days, I'm going to get my team to change their shift pattern cos it's all over night. And the neighbourhood inspector will say right, I'm going to change my team's hours to go out overnight on Tuesdays and Thursdays cos that's what the document's telling me. And the intelligence says that it's likely to be this guy using, you know wearing these clothes. So I'm going to circulate that photo to my team. That's what the neighbourhood inspector will sort of say. And then all of his resources will be targeted from that. (Analyst)

Whilst it should not be assumed that analytical products shape policy decisions in a straight forward way, participants in this study drew attention to how the role played by analysis in shaping individual level police officer practice is even more complex. Neighbourhood officers were asked to reflect on the role that data and analysis played in shaping their day-to-day routines and practices. Responses demonstrated that officers make varying use of analytic products. There was a spectrum of responses. Some officers reported that they made little or no use of analysis – over and above being directed towards certain people, places and problems by the aforementioned tasking process – and who claimed they had little or no knowledge of analysis and the

National Intelligence Model (other than submitting information): ‘We don’t have any sort of dealings with that kind of stuff, yeah. We just do our paperwork and then it goes through the process’ (PCSO/1). However, in contrast, other officers described how they incorporated data into their day-to-day activities, analysed data themselves and indeed proactively asked analysts for additional data with which to inform their decision making and work with communities.

Conclusion

This article has examined the structure and process of an intelligence system focusing on the relationship between neighbourhood policing and the National Intelligence Model. In so doing, factors which shape how (community) intelligence is constructed have been identified. These can be found in a relationship between officer conceptions of knowledge and the organisational and structural features of the police service. This serves to remind us that whilst crime analysis technologies appear to allow for the development of ‘objective’ or ‘scientific’ policing, the processes involved in their manufacture are subjective and interpretative (Innes et al 2005: 54). However, I conclude this article by considering how the call for neighbourhood policing and the National Intelligence Model to interact has implications for how the two approaches should be understood.

As documented in the introduction of this article, community and intelligence-led policing styles may well be viewed as somewhat conceptually distinct. Whilst community policing has been concerned with (re)legitimising the police/community relationship intelligence-led policing has been concerned less with comprehensive

reform of the police vision and more concerned with the efficient allocation of police resources. However, contemporary policing discourse in the UK has called for the two approaches to interact and this article has examined how aspects of neighbourhood policing are operationalized via the National Intelligence Model. By institutionalising aspects of neighbourhood policing through National Intelligence Model processes, it is contended that the former has become embedded in the notions of efficiency and in conventional notions of law enforcement and crime control that have more commonly been associated with the latter. The relationship between neighbourhood policing, the National Intelligence Model and crime control is borne out in a number of ways, which are summarised in these concluding sections.

Neighbourhood policing serves to generate information rooted in notions of crime control. The social and structural organisation of policing moulds the generation of information in particular kinds of ways. For officers themselves legitimate forms of knowledge coalesce around experiential understanding of their social world grounded in and generated from what officers observe on the streets. The information submitted to intelligence systems is further filtered by a crime-centric and law enforcement standpoint. This interacts with organisational characteristics and the structural configuration of National Intelligence Model processes to orient the information submitted towards 'real time' information about crimes and 'nominals' generated from the actions and observations of officers themselves and those who have close association with the criminal world.

In unpicking the nature of community intelligence some significant contradictions in the discourse of neighbourhood policing are revealed. Firstly, we need to question the

assertion that neighbourhood policing can generate the information about communities which it purports. The notion of the ‘all wise, all knowing’ officer is quite clearly a misleading one. A range of organisational, administrative and resource constraints limit what officers can possibly know about their communities. Secondly, much has made of generating information from residents in order to interpret the policing environment and to help frame police priorities in terms of what is important to and relevant for them. The assessments that officers make about information come to render information generated from residents as less valuable than information generated from other sources. In turn, information generated from residents is less likely to be submitted, processed and ultimately used to shape police practice.

A relationship between neighbourhood policing and crime control is further founded in the nature of the analytic products generated. Analytical products should quite clearly be understood ‘as an artefact of the data and methods used in their construction, rather than providing an accurate representation of any crime problems’ (Innes et al, 2005: 39). The data used to construct analytic products are founded in a law enforcement perspective and in the administrative processes of the police service. Products tend to be focused on crime rather than any other form of police-relevant information. The extent to which this is so is in fact shaped by the level in the organisation at which they are being used. Reflecting the structure of the National Intelligence Model, at the force level (and beyond) analytic products are strongly framed in terms of understanding and disrupting the activities of the most serious offenders. This focus is tempered at the neighbourhood level where issues such as anti-social behaviour, which tend to be prioritised by residents, may well also be considered by analysts. In this sense, through operationalising neighbourhood

policing through the National Intelligence Model the traditional focus of intelligence-led policing on serious and prolific offenders, noted in the introduction, may have been diluted somewhat. Even so the crime control qualities of these products can be illustrated in other ways. The primary objective of developing analytic products is conceived in terms of disrupting offending through arresting offenders and enforcing the criminal law. As such the products become constructed in terms of the temporal and spatial organisation of crime problems along with information about the routines of offenders and detailed tactical decision making is generally left to police officers.

The relationship between neighbourhood policing and crime control is a result of the character of the tasking process. In principle, the National Intelligence Model tasking structure should drive neighbourhood policing deployment and resources. There is quite clearly complexity here and the role played by analytical products in shaping police practice may be framed, at least in part, by the position, role and function of officers within the organisation. It should certainly not be assumed that officers will draw on the products of the intelligence system to shape their practice. Nevertheless, where used at all police managers use analytical products to more efficiently direct neighbourhood policing resources to where it is assumed they will have most impact in terms of crime control. This is comes to be understood in terms of conventional policing tactics such as high visibility patrol, disruption, arrest and enforcement of the criminal law.

Community policing was born from a reaction against conventional reactive policing – focused on control of crime through response, deterrence and apprehension, law enforcement and crisis response – and in contrast stresses community order, peace

and security, crime control as a means (rather than an end) and preventative as well as reactive policing (Fielding, 1995a). However, I suggest contemporary manifestations of community policing in the UK are, in fact, embedded in and reinforcing those very conventional notions of crime control.

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ⁱ These meetings have different names. Casey (2008) showed that at least 15 different names were in use from Panel Meetings to Neighbourhood Action Panels to Community Action Meetings to PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings. The aims and structure of the meetings are nevertheless similar.

ⁱⁱ It is also based on informal discussions with senior police officers and observations of the intelligence systems in practice.

ⁱⁱⁱ Attempts are made to protect the source of the information.

^{iv} Guidance suggested that neighbourhood officers should spend in the order of three years at least in one neighbourhood.

^v A charity sponsored telephone line through which members of the public can leave anonymous information.

^{vi} Although reflecting (Cope, 2004) analysts often pointed to the benefits of being 'nosey' and having and 'investigative mind'

^{vii} And observation of the tasking process clearly demonstrated the presence of analytical products