Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Gloucestershire	
Unit of Assessment: UoA 21 Sociology	
Title of case study: Business crime reduction: Transforming policy, practice and training	
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2019	

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Andrew Stafford	Senior Lecturer in Criminology	Sept 2016 – Jan 2020
Dr Jonathan Hobson	Associate Professor of Social Sciences	Sept 2005 – present day

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-2019
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact

Research produced by UoG researchers has been used to transform policy, practice and training at national and local levels concerning crime reduction in urban retail and entertainment locations. Examining business crime reduction partnership activity, and working alongside national organisations, police forces, crime prevention practitioners and businesses, UoG researchers identified principles of effective crime reduction partnership design and for increasing communication, community cohesion, feelings of safety, and information sharing practices within partnerships. The researchers used these principles to fundamentally reshape national and local public policy, practice, services and training and secure funding for business crime reduction, bringing demonstrable benefits to thousands involved in UK crime reduction schemes and to the countless others using and working in the businesses involved.

2. Underpinning research

Prior to the authors' work, there had been a distinct lack of academic study in the UK and internationally concerning:

- The occurrence and impact of crime and associated disorder affecting businesses in urban retail and entertainment districts;
- The offending behaviour of those who commit these offences;
- The approaches being employed by business crime reduction schemes to tackle these issues and the operation and management of such schemes.

As a result of this, UK national guidance on best practice for business crime reduction was not underpinned by rigorous academic evidence and was lacking in numerous areas. Identifying this shortfall, Stafford and Hobson, both experts on community crime reduction through partnership approaches, conducted the following body of research. This comprised:

qualitative analysis of 149 interviews with businesses involved in the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) Gloucester City Safe conducted between 2014 and 2017 (output 1); inferential and regression analysis of business crime data (c.5000 incidents) between 2014 and 2018 (output 3); and a national survey of 243 business crime reduction scheme managers conducted in 2018 (output 2).

The findings from this research that underpin the impacts described in this case study are:

- Almost all members of Gloucester's BCRP were positive about the achievements of the partnership and the approach to crime reduction that it employs. Members reported an increased sense of community cohesion and feelings of safety arising from their involvement (output 1);
- Key characteristics of the partnership's approach were found to offer unique benefits and were clear means of best practice for tackling crime and increasing safety. These included the breadth of the partnership's crime-tackling focus, the commercial diversity among members, and its day and night-time operation. Because some offenders commit offences against more than one type of business, offend during both the daytime and night-time trading hours and commit more than one type of offence, BCRPs without the breadth of focus that span these parameters might not be aware of the extent of this group's activity (outputs 1-3);
- The partnership's crime reduction and safety increasing successes arose largely from high levels of member communication, close-working and timely information sharing. There were techniques employed by the partnership that were particularly effective for facilitating close working among members and for recruiting new members. Factors that limited information sharing or usage did exist, however, and in some instances were restricting offending prevention efforts (outputs 1-3);
- Place-based zonal exclusion or banning schemes were found to be a useful tool for tackling offending behaviour. They require high levels of communication between members, clear terms and conditions and appropriate policies in place concerning data sharing and storage (output 3);
- Valuable insight into risk and patterns of offending behaviour can be generated through the analysis of crime reduction scheme data. For example, in Gloucester individuals who continued to offend after the receipt of the BCRP's sanction were found to be more likely to commit further offences at another business location rather than revisit the premise at which they committed their original offence. This offending displacement highlights further the importance of information sharing between partnership members (output 2).

3. References to the research

1. Stafford, A.B. and Hobson, J. (2018) Business crime reduction partnerships: examining a holistic approach. *Safer Communities*, 17 (4). pp. 238-248. ISSN 1757-8043
Peer reviewed.
Available here: http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6033/

2. Stafford, A.B. (2019a) *Business Crime Reduction Schemes: An examination of operation, management and best practice*. Project Report. University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham.
Available here: http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6815/

3. Stafford, A.B. (2019b) Examining offending behaviour following receipt of a Business Crime Reduction Partnership's place-based exclusion sanction. *Criminology and Criminal Justice.* ISSN 1748-8958. Peer reviewed.
Available here: http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6562/

4. Details of the impact

Prior to the authors' efforts, there was a distinct lack of robust evidence underpinning UK national guidance and training on best practice for business crime reduction and BCRP operation. The authors' achievements have brought about significant improvements to national and local public policy and services in these areas and brought demonstrable benefits to thousands involved in UK business crime reduction and to the retailers and members of the public who are affected by business crime.

A. Transformation of BCRP UK National Standards

Stafford was appointed Chair of the National Business Crime Centre's (NBCC) Governing Board (responsible for BCRP accreditation to National Standards) in September 2018, and subsequently led a review of the organisation's BCRP National Standards and supporting application and assessment guidance. According to the Chief Inspector and NBCC lead for the Metropolitan Police (source d); 'Dr Stafford's research now firmly underpins the revised Standards (source a), and the assessor (source b) and applicant (source c) guidance documents make direct reference to the findings from Dr Stafford's research, promoting best practice in nine key areas' (including partnership design, data analysis, member activity, information sharing and communication and the use of sanction and exclusion schemes). Since the revised Standards were made public in November 2019, 25 new BCRP assessments against the standards have commenced and a further 36 partnerships are registered to be assessed. This illustrates that these 61 partnerships all claim to have adopted the principles of best practice that Stafford and Hobson's research identified.

B. 'Purple Flag' accreditation and £140,000 funding gained for business crime reduction in Gloucester, and counter-business crime communications informed in Brighton & Hove

Researchers at UoG began working with Gloucester City Safe in 2014. Since then, Stafford and Hobson have conducted research into the operation and effectiveness of this BCRP, providing it with much needed insight into public perceptions of crime and safety and into its performance and achievements. Findings from output 1 were included in Gloucester's successful application for Purple Flag accreditation from the Association of Town and City Management in February 2018. The researchers' findings concerning the importance of effective, efficient and timely information sharing prompted the partnership in 2018 to reorganise its online offender image galleries for members and eliminate the requirement for members to report incidents to both the partnership and to the police by introducing a new automated process. The partnership uses Stafford's research as a promotional tool and its manager acknowledges (source e) that this will have played a part in the recruitment of over 50 more members and in increased incident report volumes (from approximately 1000 in year 1 to 1,807 in 2019). Evidence of the partnership's success and achievements captured by the research were also used to bring about increased support, resources and £140,000 funding for City Protection Officers.

The statistical analysis conducted in output 3 for Gloucester City Safe was repeated using similar data from Brighton and Hove BCRP. According to supporting testimony from its Director (source f), this partnership has benefitted from the insight into offending activity provided by this research and has used this evidence to 'inform its communications with stakeholders concerning risk and the importance of information sharing'.

C. Guidance for increasing safety and reducing business crime embedded in crime reporting training and shared with 450 UK crime reduction initiatives

Littoralis, the company that provides the crime reporting platform Disc (used by Gloucester City Safe, Brighton and Hove BCRP and over 450 other UK crime reduction schemes), has used Stafford's research to promote the benefits of the platform, and through training underpinned by this research helped the platform's users reduce business crime, improve their practice and increase levels of safety, community cohesion, information sharing and communication.

Stafford began working with Littoralis in 2018, and in partnership with the company conducted a national survey of 243 crime reduction scheme managers. According to supporting testimony from its Director (source i), Littoralis used the findings from Stafford's research (outputs 2&3) in a series of press releases and a twitter campaign to promote the value and benefits of business crime reduction partnerships (source g) and of offender exclusion schemes (source h), and shared the output 2 report with all of its 450+ users and stakeholders. The company's training for Disc users is underpinned firmly by Stafford's research. Littoralis uses examples from this research to promote the Disc system and encourage best practice concerning business crime reduction and scheme management. The Littoralis Director also states (source i) that the research has played a significant part in winning at least 10 new customers in the last 12 months.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (a) NBCC BCRP National Standards
- (b) NBCC Assessor guidance (with specific contributions from research highlighted in yellow).
- (c) NBCC Applicant guidance (with specific contributions from research highlighted in yellow).
- (d) Letter of support from the Chief Inspector NBCC lead for the Metropolitan Police.
- (e) Letter of support from the Manager of Gloucester City Safe.
- (f) Letter of support from the Director of Brighton & Hove BCRP.
- (g) Littoralis press release: 'Private Low-level Crime Reduction Schemes Are Filling The Growing "Policing Gap", New Research Shows', available here: https://www.discagainstcrime.com/private-low-level-crime-reduction-schemes-are-filling-growing-"policing-gap"-new-research-shows
- (h) Littoralis press release: 'Unique Research Project Quantifies Positive Impact of Local Banning Schemes', available here: https://www.discagainstcrime.com/unique-research-project-quantifies-positive-impact-local-banning-schemes
- (i) Letter of support from the Director of Littoralis (Disc).