

# A Review of the Effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch

Trevor Bennett<sup>a</sup>, Katy Holloway<sup>a</sup> and David P. Farrington<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Centre for Criminology, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd CF37 1DL, U.K.

E-mails: thbennet@glam.ac.uk, krhollow@glam.ac.uk

<sup>b</sup>Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, Sidgwick Avenue CB3 9DT, U.K.

E-mail: dpf1@cam.ac.uk

The current paper presents the results of a systematic review of evaluations of neighbourhood watch. The review was conducted as part of the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group research on the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions. The main finding of the review was that about half of the schemes evaluated showed that neighbourhood watch was effective in reducing crime. However, just under half showed no evidence of success. An analysis of variations in outcome by features of the study, methods used and type of scheme showed some correlations with outcome. The paper concludes that future evaluation reports of neighbourhood watch should present more information on the features of the schemes and the method of analysis used to determine the source of variations in outcome, and to enable systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

*Security Journal* (2007) 0, 000–000. doi:10.1057/palgrave.sj.8350076

**Keywords:** neighbourhood watch; effectiveness; crime reduction; systematic review; meta-analysis

## Introduction

One of the earliest neighbourhood watch programmes in the U.K. was the Cheshire Home Watch programme implemented in Mollington in 1982 (Anderton, 1985). Since then the number of neighbourhood watch schemes in the U.K. has grown rapidly. The report of *the 2000 British Crime Survey* estimated that over a quarter (27 per cent) of all households (approximately six million households) in England and Wales were members of a neighbourhood watch scheme (Sims, 2001). This amounted to over 155,000 active schemes. One of the first schemes in the U.S. was the Seattle Community Crime Prevention Project launched in 1973 (Cirel *et al.*, 1977). The report of *The 2000 National Crime Prevention Survey* (National Crime Prevention Council, 2001) in the United States estimated that in that year 41 per cent of the American population lived in communities covered by neighbourhood watch. Considering that there has been such a large investment in neighbourhood watch, it is reasonable to ask whether neighbourhood watch is effective in reducing crime.

The results of previous reviews of the literature on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch have been mixed. One of the earliest reviews by Titus (1984) summarised the results of nearly 40 community crime prevention programmes that included elements of neighbourhood watch. Most were evaluated by police departments or were based on data from police departments. Nearly all found that neighbourhood watch areas had lower levels of crime in

the period following their implementation than in the comparison areas. However, most of the evaluations were described as “weak” in terms of internal validity. A more recent review of the literature on the effectiveness of community watch programmes selected only evaluations with the strongest research designs (Sherman, 1997; Sherman and Eck, 2002). Studies were included only if they had used random assignment or had monitored both watch areas and comparison areas over time. The review found just four evaluations that matched these criteria. The review showed that the results of these evaluations were largely negative. The authors concluded, “The oldest and best-known community policing program, Neighborhood Watch, is ineffective at preventing crime” (Sherman, 1997; Sherman and Eck, 2002).

The current paper presents the results of a recent systematic review of the research evidence of the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch. The review was conducted as part of the Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group research on systematic reviews of the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions. The Campbell Collaboration was founded in 2000 to advance evidence-based social policy and was modelled on the Cochrane Collaboration that commissions and publishes systematic reviews of research on the effectiveness of healthcare interventions. The main aim of the Campbell Collaboration is to improve the quality of research evidence used in policymaking by establishing high standards of research and by encouraging systematic reviews. It covers three strands of research: education, social work and social welfare, and crime and justice.

Systematic reviews use rigorous methods for locating and synthesising evidence from evaluation research and aim to be transparent and replicable in their approach. Reviews are reported with the same level of detail as the original reports. They have explicit objectives, clear criteria for including studies in the review and explain in detail how searches for potentially eligible studies were conducted (Farrington, 2007). Attempts are made to obtain all potentially relevant studies, including both published and unpublished reports. Each study is screened to determine if it meets the criteria for inclusion in the review. Relevant information is extracted from each eligible study and is coded for analysis. Quantitative techniques, such as meta-analysis, are used, where possible, to analyse and summarise the results. The final report of the systematic review is presented in as much detail as possible so that readers can see each phase of the research, the decisions that were made and the conclusions that were reached.

Campbell reviews are published online and are updated regularly as additional evidence emerges. So far, six reviews have been published by the Crime and Justice Group. These cover “Scared Straight” programmes, boot camps, counter terrorism strategies, prison-based drug-treatment programmes, effects of custodial vs. non-custodial sentences and the effects of employment programmes on ex-offenders. Five reviews have completed all of the stages of the refereeing process. These include reviews of hot-spots policing, closed circuit television, cost-benefit analysis of sentencing, cognitive behavioural programmes for offenders and interventions for victims of crime. Five other reviews have been completed and are currently being refereed. These concern restorative justice, institutional violence, institutionalised juvenile offenders, police-led drug-enforcement strategies and the current systematic review on neighbourhood watch (Farrington, 2007).

The current review will be published online as a Campbell review in the next year or two. A summary of the review covering the results of the meta-analysis was published in the

*Journal of Experimental Criminology* at the end of 2006 (Bennett *et al.*, 2006). The current paper presents in more detail the findings of the narrative review and provides additional analysis of the effect of features of the programme on outcome.

## Methods

### *Eligibility criteria*

The first stage of the systematic review on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch was to decide on the criteria by which studies would be considered eligible for inclusion. These were split into three broad categories: the type of *intervention*, the type of *outcome* and the type of *evaluation design*. One of the problems faced is to decide on the type of intervention to be evaluated. Neighbourhood watch is often implemented as part of, or alongside, other programmes. Watch schemes sometimes include what is described as “the big three” (neighbourhood watch, property marking and security surveys). The additional elements (property marking and security surveys) are viewed as part of neighbourhood watch when implemented as part of a package. Watch schemes are also sometimes implemented alongside other unrelated schemes such as environmental improvements, traffic control or changes in housing policy and are less obviously part of a single package. Hence, a decision had to be made about the type of intervention to include and exclude. The programme types considered as eligible for inclusion were: (1) stand-alone neighbourhood watch schemes (comprising solely a watch component), (2) neighbourhood watch schemes that included “the big three” (neighbourhood watch, property marking and security surveys), (3) neighbourhood watch schemes that included two components of “the big three”, as long as there was a watch component and (4) comprehensive programmes that included neighbourhood watch and other unrelated schemes (such as environmental improvements), as long as the independent effects of the neighbourhood watch scheme could be identified in the evaluation or neighbourhood watch was the major component of the programme.

The second decision was the type of outcome to be measured. The main aim of the review was to determine the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch in reducing crime rather than other outcomes such as fear of crime or community cohesion. The main types of crime outcome were those committed in residential areas and were the kinds of offences that neighbourhood watch might be able to prevent. The crimes selected were: (1) crimes against residents, (2) crimes against dwellings and (3) other street crimes occurring in the watch areas. When crime measures were based on police-recorded crimes, the main outcome measure was the total number of crimes recorded in the areas studied. When crime measures were based on victimisation surveys, the main outcome measure was the prevalence of victimisation.

The third decision was the type of evaluation design. In order to be comparable with other Campbell Collaboration reviews, it was necessary to include only those studies of the highest quality in terms of the research methods. The criteria for selecting rigorous evaluations were based on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) (Sherman, 1997; Sherman and Eck, 2002). This is a five-point scale ranging from level 1 (the weakest design) to level 5 (the strongest design) in terms of internal validity. Sherman (1997) argued that evaluations should be at least level 3 in order to conclude, with a reasonable level of certainty,

that the programme was effective. This standard was adopted in the current review. This required that the evaluation comprised at least a comparison of one or more experimental units and one or more comparable control units over time. Hence, the minimum requirement for inclusion of evaluations in the review was that they were based on before and after surveys in experimental and comparison areas.

### *Search strategy*

The next stage in designing the review was to decide on a search strategy for selecting studies. This required making various decisions on such things as whether unpublished studies should be included, whether there should be an earliest year cutoff, and whether they should include non-English language reports. The following types of studies were considered feasible to include and consistent with other Campbell Collaboration reviews: (1) they could be published or unpublished reports, (2) they should be properly documented evaluations of neighbourhood watch, (3) there was no restriction on country of origin, (4) the evaluations had to be available in English, (5) there was no restriction on source sector (e.g., academic, government, policy, voluntary, etc.), (6) there was no restriction in terms of year (e.g., year of implementation, study or publication) and (7) there was no restriction of the time period covered by the evaluation (e.g., short-term or long-term effects).

It was also necessary to devise a method for searching for studies. The following sources were searched: on-line databases, on-line library catalogues, reviews of the literature on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch in preventing crime and bibliographies of publications on neighbourhood watch. In addition, selected researchers were personally contacted. The searches were based on the following data sets: IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences), Web of Science, Criminal Justice Abstracts, National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts (PsycINFO), Social Science Abstracts, Government Publications (Home Office), Dissertation Abstracts (ASSIA), ProQuest and C2-SPECTR. The following search terms were used in the database searches: “neighbourhood watch”, “neighborhood watch”, “street watch”, “block watch”, “apartment watch”, “home watch”, “community watch”, “home alert”, “block association”, “crime alert”, “block clubs”, “crime watch” and “big three”.

### *Attrition of studies*

Table 1 shows the number of studies at each of the selection stages. A total of 1,595 publications were initially identified from the searches. Overall, 335 of these were selected as potentially relevant evaluations based on the information obtained in the titles and abstracts. Publications that were clearly not evaluations of neighbourhood watch were excluded. The 335 potentially relevant publications included 225 unique publications. One hundred and thirty-seven of these were eventually obtained. The main reason for not obtaining publications was that they could not be located following repeated attempts to obtain them through inter-library loan, the Internet or by contacting the authors. In total, 30 publications were deemed eligible. The main reason for ineligibility was that the publication did not include an evaluation of neighbourhood watch. As some studies were reported in more than one

**Table 1** Attrition of publications

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Total</i>
Identified publications	1,595
<i>Whether publication was selected</i>	
Selected	335
Not selected	1,260
Total	1,595
<i>Whether selected publication was unique</i>	
Unique	225
Duplicate	110
Total	335
<i>Whether unique publication was obtained</i>	
Obtained	137
Not obtained	88
Total	225
<i>Whether obtained publications was eligible</i>	
Eligible	30
Not eligible	107
Total	137
<i>Number of eligible publications, studies and evaluations</i>	
Studies	19
Evaluations	43
Total publications	30
<i>Number used in the analysis</i>	
Studies	17
Evaluations	36
Total publications	28

Notes: Publication=a published document. Study=a research project. Evaluation=an evaluation of a single neighbourhood watch scheme. The results of a research project (study) might be reported in more than one publication. A study might present the results of more than one evaluation.

publication there were a greater number of publications than studies. Overall, we selected 30 publications covering 19 unique studies and 43 separate neighbourhood watch scheme evaluations. Two studies containing seven evaluations were excluded from the current analysis because they presented their results in graphical form only with no numerical findings reported. This left 17 studies and 36 evaluations included in the narrative review.

## Results

A summary of the 36 evaluations included in the narrative review is shown in Table 2. This provides information about each study including the name of the authors, date of publication, the number of evaluations conducted, the country and the data source. Overall, 21

**Table 2** Description of publications and methods used

<i>Author/ publication date of main report used in the review</i>	<i>No. of evaluations</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Published</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>Outcome measure</i>	<i>Comparison area<sup>a</sup></i>
Anderton (1985)	1	U.K.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Bennett (1990)	2	U.K.	Published	Self-report	Burglary	Matched
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)	10	U.S.A.	Published	Self-report	Victimization	Not matched
Cirel <i>et al.</i> (1977)	1	U.S.A.	Published	Self-report	Burglary	Not matched
Forester <i>et al.</i> (1988)	1	U.K.	Published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Henig (1984)	1	U.S.A.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Hulin (1979)	1	U.S.A.	Published	Police data	Burglary	Matched
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)	4	U.K.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Knowles <i>et al.</i> (1983)	1	U.S.A.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Latessa and Travis (1986)	1	U.S.A.	Published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)	5	U.S.A.	Published	Self-report	Victimization	Matched
Lowman (1983)	1	Canada	Published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Matthews and Trickey (1994a)	1	U.K.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Matthews and Trickey (1994b)	1	U.K.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Research and Forecasts Inc. (1983)	1	U.S.A.	Not published	Police data	Burglary	Matched
Tilley and Webb (1994)	3	U.K.	Published	Police data	Burglary	Not matched
Veater (1984)	1	U.K.	Not published	Police data	All crimes	Matched

<sup>a</sup>Matched areas=Comparison areas that are specifically matched or comparable with the experimental areas.  
Non-matched areas=Comparison areas are not specifically matched or comparable with the experimental areas.  
These include the remainder of the police division or police force area or other nearby areas chosen solely on the grounds of distance from the experimental site.

evaluations were conducted in the U.S.A., 14 in the U.K. and one in Canada. Twenty-five evaluations were deemed to have been published and 11 not published. Studies were defined as being published if they were books, journal articles or official government reports on the grounds that these would normally have been through a review process and would be widely available. Studies were defined as unpublished if they were police reports or reports from survey companies as these normally would not have been widely distributed. Eighteen evaluations were based on police data and 18 on survey data. Most evaluations (21) used number

**Table 3** Description of scheme features

<i>Author/ publication date of main report used in the review</i>	<i>No. of evaluations</i>	<i>Title of scheme</i>	<i>Scheme elements<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Size of scheme area<sup>b</sup></i>
Anderton (1985)	1	Home Watch	NW plus	Large
Bennett (1990)	2	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Small
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)	10	Neighbourhood Watch	NW only	Large
Cirel <i>et al.</i> (1977)	1	Block Watch	NW plus	Large
Forester <i>et al.</i> (1988)	1	Cocoon Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large
Henig (1984)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW only	Large
Hulin (1979)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Small
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)	4	Home Watch	NW only	Small
Knowles <i>et al.</i> (1983)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large
Latessa and Travis (1986)	1	Block Watch	NW plus	Large
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)	5	Block Watch	NW only	Large <sup>c</sup>
Lowman (1983)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Small
Matthews and Trickey (1994a)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large
Matthews and Trickey (1994b)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large
Research and Forecasts Inc. (1983)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large
Tilley and Webb (1994)	3	Neighbourhood Watch	NW only	Small
Veater (1984)	1	Neighbourhood Watch	NW plus	Large

<sup>a</sup>NW plus=neighbourhood watch plus security surveys and/or property marking. NW only=neighbourhood watch but not security surveys or property marking.

<sup>b</sup>Small=1,000 dwellings or less or 1 census tract or less. Large=greater than 1,000 dwellings or 1 census tract.

<sup>c</sup>Four of the five evaluations were of large schemes.

of burglaries or burglary rates as the main outcome measure. The majority of evaluations (26) used unmatched comparison areas while the remainder (10) used matched comparisons. Comparison areas were defined as matched if some attempt was made to select on the basis of geographic, demographic or crime-rate similarity with the neighbourhood watch area.

The main features of the neighbourhood watch programme are shown in Table 3. The table shows that most schemes evaluated (23 of 36) were labelled as “Neighbourhood Watch” schemes. The remainder were called “Block Watch” (7), “Home Watch” (5) or “Cocoon Neighbourhood Watch” (1). Thirteen evaluations were of neighbourhood watch plus one or more of the other elements of the “big three” (i.e. property marking or security surveys). No additional elements were recorded in the reports of the remaining 23 evaluations. Most schemes were classified as “large” (24 of 36) and the remainder were coded as “small” (12). Small schemes were defined as covering 1,000 dwellings or less or 1 census tract or less.

Table 4 shows the outcome results of all studies combined. These were calculated using a relative change score that determined whether the difference in the change in the experimental area was more or less favourable than in the comparison area. It was only possible to calculate a relative change score when the report included relevant numerical information. In 12 of the 36 evaluations, the results of the study were reported by the author in non-numerical form (e.g., significance tests results or multivariate parameter estimates) and relative percentage change could not be calculated. However, in these cases, the outcome of the

**Table 4** Description of outcome results

<i>Author/ publication date of main report used in the review</i>	<i>Experimental area crime changes</i>	<i>Comparison area crime changes</i>	<i>Relative % change (exp compared with comp.)</i>	<i>Outcome<sup>a</sup></i>
Anderton (1985)	-10%	+3%	-13%	+
Bennett (1990)(1)	-21%	-28%	+7%	-
Bennett (1990)(2)	+37%	-28%	+65%	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(1)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(2)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(3)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(4)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(5)	% not available	% not available	% not available	+
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(6)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(7)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(8)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(9)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Bennett and Lavrakas (1989)(10)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Cirel <i>et al.</i> (1977)	-61%	-4%	-57%	+
Forester <i>et al.</i> (1988)	-38%	+1%	-39%	+
Henig (1984)	-100%	-35%	-65%	+
Hulin (1979)	-26%	+10%	-36%	+
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)(1)	-25%	+2%	-27%	+
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)(2)	+1,100%	+20%	+1,080%	-
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)(3)	-75%	-29%	-46%	+
Jenkins and Latimer (1986)(4)	-71%	-25%	-46%	+
Knowles <i>et al.</i> (1983)	-28%	+12%	-41%	+
Latessa and Travis (1986)	-11%	-2%	-9%	+
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)(1)	-21%	-11%	-10%	+
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)(2)	+23%	-27%	+50%	-
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)(3)	+10%	-18%	+28%	-
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)(4)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Lewis <i>et al.</i> (1988)(5)	% not available	% not available	% not available	-
Lowman (1983)	-33%	0%	-33%	+
Matthews and Trickey (1994a)	-20%	-17%	-3%	+
Matthews and Trickey (1994b)	+24%	+45%	-21%	+
Research and Forecasts Inc. (1983)	-48%	-4%	-44%	+
Tilley and Webb (1994)(1)	-41%	-11%	-30%	+
Tilley and Webb (1994) (2)	0%	+12%	-12%	+
Tilley and Webb (1994)(3)	-13%	+12%	-25%	+
Veater (1984)	-25%	+31%	-56%	+

<sup>a</sup>Outcome="+" when the RPC in crime is lower in the experimental area than in the comparison area. Outcome="-" when the RPC in crime is the same or higher in the experimental area than in the comparison area. When the results of the evaluations are not presented as individual numbers or percentages the RPC cannot be calculated. In these cases, the outcome is determined from the author's conclusions.

study was determined by alternative measures of change reported in the evaluation (e.g., Bennett and Lavrakas (1989) presented their results in the form of a table stating whether the change was positive, zero or negative). This enabled an outcome code for each of the 36 studies, which indicated whether the results were positive or negative.



**Table 5** Summary of the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch by features of the evaluation

	<i>Positive<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Total</i>
All evaluations	56% (20)	44% (16)	100% (36)
<i>Type of study</i>			
U.K.	79% (11)	21% (3)	100% (14)
Other	41% (9)	59% (13)	100% (22)
Sig. of difference	*		
Published	40% (10)	60% (15)	100% (25)
Not published	91% (10)	9% (1)	100% (11)
Sig. of difference	**		
Pre 1990	52% (15)	48% (14)	100% (29)
Post 1990	71% (5)	29% (2)	100% (7)
Sig. of difference	ns		
<i>Type of scheme</i>			
Small	67% (8)	33% (4)	100% (12)
Large	50% (12)	50% (12)	100% (24)
Sig. of difference	ns		
NW only	39% (9)	61% (14)	100% (23)
NW plus	85% (11)	15% (2)	100% (13)
Sig. of difference	*		
<i>Type of methods</i>			
Police data	94% (17)	6% (1)	100% (18)
Survey data	17% (3)	83% (15)	100% (18)
Sig. of difference	***		
Matched area	40% (4)	60% (6)	100% (10)
Non-matched area	62% (16)	39% (10)	100% (26)
Sig. of difference	ns		

Notes: Fisher's Exact Test. \*= $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*= $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*= $P < 0.001$ ; ns=not significant.

<sup>a</sup>Outcome="+" when the RPC in crime is lower in the experimental area than in the comparison area. Outcome="-" when the RPC in crime is the same or higher in the experimental area than in the comparison area. When the results of the evaluations are not presented as individual numbers or percentages the RPC cannot be calculated. In these cases, the outcome is determined from the author's conclusions.

A positive outcome means that the relative percentage change in crime was more favourable in the experimental area than in the comparison area. This would occur when crime reduced more or increased less in the experimental area than in the comparison area. The outcome was also recorded as positive if numerical data suitable were not available, but the author reported other indicators of a favourable change (e.g., significant parameter estimates). A negative outcome means that the relative percentage change in crime was less favourable in the experimental area than in the comparison area. This would occur when crime reduced by a smaller amount or increased by a greater amount in the experimental

area than in the comparison area. The outcome was also recorded as negative if there was no difference in change between the watch and the comparison areas or, if suitable numerical data were not available, the author reported other measures of no change or an unfavourable change. We have defined this as negative as the outcome does not indicate that neighbourhood watch was effective.

The analysis showed that 20 (56 per cent) of the 36 evaluations of neighbourhood watch schemes showed a positive outcome in which crime reduced more or increased less in the experimental area than in the comparison area. Overall, therefore, there is *prima facie* evidence that neighbourhood watch works in reducing crime. However, not all schemes were effective. Just under one-half (44 per cent) of all schemes were coded as having a negative or a non-effect. One possible explanation is that the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch varies by features of the scheme or other factors. In order to explore this, the results were broken down by features of the study, the programme and the methods used.

Table 5 shows that there were two significant differences in outcome by factors relating to the type of study. Unpublished studies were significantly more likely to show positive results than published studies, and evaluations conducted in the U.K. were also significantly more likely to show positive results than studies conducted in the U.S.A. or Canada. The section on type of scheme showed that “NW plus” programmes were more likely to show positive outcomes than programmes based on neighbourhood watch alone. There was no significant difference between schemes implemented in small or large areas. The final section on differences in results by types of methods used shows that evaluations based on police data were more likely to show positive results than those based on survey data. There was no significant difference between studies using matched or non-matched areas.

## Conclusion

Overall, the results of the current analysis show that the implementation of neighbourhood watch was associated with a reduction in crime. Fifty-six per cent of evaluations reported positive findings. However, 44 per cent reported no effect or a negative effect. It was suggested that this variation might be a result of differences in the type of study, type of scheme or type of methods used. An analysis of variations in outcome by features of the study showed some systematic variations. Evaluations that were conducted in the U.K. were more likely than those conducted in the U.S.A. and Canada to report positive outcomes. Similarly, unpublished studies were more likely than published studies to report positive results. In terms of methods, evaluations based on police data were more likely than those based on survey data to show favourable findings. The main variation in terms of design feature of the scheme was that neighbourhood watch plus schemes (i.e. those including property marking and security surveys) were more frequently associated with positive results than neighbourhood watch without these additional programme elements.

### *Research implications*

There are a number of implications that can be drawn from the review for future research on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch. One problem is that very few evaluations attempt to disaggregate the findings in a way that would show differential effects by features of the

programme. The only variables systematically recorded were whether the scheme included other elements of the “big three” and the size of the area in which it was implemented. In order to explain fully the variations between successful and unsuccessful programmes, it is necessary to know something about the other key features of the scheme. These would include level of activity, participation rates, police involvement in the scheme, rates of reporting suspicious incidents to the police, community inventions in crime, take-up of property marking and security surveys, quality of leadership and so on. Unfortunately, very few evaluations record information of this kind. Hence, at the moment, it is not possible to tell why successful programmes succeed and unsuccessful ones do not.

A second problem for systematic reviewers is that studies often fail to present the basic numerical or percentage outcome data in the final reports. This can occur when the results are presented in the form of graphs, when they are simply reported without explanation and when they are presented in the form of parameter estimates derived from multivariate analyses. Regardless of the methods of presentation preferred, it is good practice to report sample sizes to enable further analysis and where possible meta-analysis.

The third problem is that there are still too few evaluations of neighbourhood watch to be able to analyse systematic variation in outcomes. The current review is based on just 17 analysable studies worldwide. One reason for this shortage is that outcome evaluations of neighbourhood watch appeared to stop abruptly in the mid-1990s. It is unclear why this happened. It is possible that researchers felt that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of neighbourhood watch was already established by that time and that there was no need for further investigation. As a result of this, little is known about the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch schemes implemented in more recent times and little is known about the impact of systematic variations in features of the programme on outcomes. Ideally, there should be a sufficient number of good-quality evaluations to conduct systematic reviews and quantitative analysis, and these should be continued over time to enable updates.

### *Policy implications*

The main finding of the review is that across all studies combined neighbourhood watch was effective in reducing crime. This finding offers some support to the belief among policy makers and the general public that neighbourhood watch works. It also offers some justification for the considerable investment in the programme over the last 20 years in terms of both police and public resources. The first policy implication that flows directly from these findings is that existing support for neighbourhood watch schemes should be continued. However, these proposals need to be balanced by the knowledge that just under half of all schemes failed to show a crime-reduction effect.

The main solution to this problem is to find out why some schemes were shown to be effective while others were not. The results of existing evaluations are not sufficiently detailed to help identify systematic variations. Hence, a second policy implication is that further research should be funded that would enable the reasons for variations across studies to be determined.

The findings of the current review have shown that there are some features of the schemes that correlate with outcome. The main significant finding relating to type of programme

was that integrated versions of neighbourhood watch that combine surveillance with property marking and home security surveys were more effective than versions based on neighbourhood watch alone. A third policy implication of the review, therefore, is that integrated neighbourhood watch schemes should be encouraged over stand-alone schemes.

Finally, the review has revealed a surprising lack of detail in existing evaluations of research on the mechanisms by which neighbourhood watch might be effective in reducing crime. Further research funded by the government or the police should focus on the links between residents' actions and offender behaviour. This should reveal more clearly the core features of the schemes that determine effectiveness and should enable more precisely policy prescriptions that could inform good practice.

## References

### Studies included in the review

- Anderton, K.J. (1985) *The Effectiveness of Home Watch Schemes in Cheshire*. Chester, UK: Cheshire Constabulary.
- Bennett, S.F. and Lavrakas, P.J. (1989) Community-Based Crime Prevention: An Assessment of the Eisenhower Foundation's Neighborhood Program. *Crime and Delinquency*. Vol. 35, pp 345–364.
- Bennett, T.H. (1990) *Evaluating Neighbourhood Watch*. Cambridge Studies in Criminology LXI. Aldershot, UK: Gower.
- Cirel, P., Evans, P., McGillis, D. and Whitcomb, D. (1977) *Community Crime Prevention Program, Seattle: An Exemplary Project*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Q1** Forrester, D., Frenz, S., O'Connell, M. and Pease (1990) *The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project: Phase II*. Crime Prevention Unit Paper 23. London: Home Office.
- Henig, J.R. (1984) *Citizens Against Crime: An Assessment of the Neighborhood Watch Program in Washington, D.C.* Occasional Paper, Center for Washington Area Studies. Washington: George Washington University.
- Hulin, J.O. (1979) Community-Based Crime Prevention Project. *Crime Prevention Review*. Vol. 6, pp 26–34.
- Jenkins, A.D. and Latimer, I. (1986) *Evaluation of Merseyside Homewatch Scheme*. Management Development and Force Planning Unit Liverpool, UK: Merseyside Police.
- Knowles, L., Lesser, C. and McKewen, F. (1983) Burglary Prevention: A Citizen Initiated and Operated Neighborhood Watch Program. *The Police Chief*. Vol. 50, pp 36–38.
- Latessa, E.J. and Travis, L.F. (1986) *Evaluation of the College Hill Crime Prevention Program*. Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati.
- Lewis, D.A., Grant, J.A. and Rosenbaum, D.P. (1988) *Social Construction of Reform: Crime Prevention and Community Organizations*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Lowman, J. (1983) Target Hardening Burglary Prevention and the Problem of the Displacement Phenomena. In Fleming, T. (ed.) *Deviant Designations: Crime, Law and Deviance in Canada*. Toronto: Butterworths, pp 277–304.
- Matthews, R. and Trickey, J. (1994a) *Eyres Monsell Crime Reduction Project*. Leicester: Centre for the Study of Public Order, University of Leicester.
- Matthews, R. and Trickey, J. (1994b) *The New Parks Crime Reduction Project*. Leicester: Centre for the Study of Public Order, University of Leicester.
- Research & Forecasts Inc. (1983) *The Figgie Report, Part IV: Reducing Crime in America – Successful Community Efforts*. Ohio: Figgie International.
- Tilley, N. and Webb, J. (1994) *Burglary Reduction: Findings from the Safer Cities Scheme*. Crime Prevention Unit Paper 51. London: Home Office.
- Veater, P. (1984) *Evaluation of Kingsdown Neighborhood Watch Project, Bristol*. Bristol: Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

## Other references

- Bennett, T.H., Holloway, K. and Farrington, D.P. (2006) Does Neighborhood Watch Reduce Crime? A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. Vol. 2, No. 4, pp 437–458.
- Q2** Farrington (2007) The Campbell Collaboration on Crime and Justice. *The Criminologist*. Vol. 31, No. 7, pp 1–3.
- National Crime Prevention Council (2001) *The 2000 National Crime Prevention Survey*. Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.
- Q3** Sherman (1997) Policing for Crime Prevention. In Sherman, L.W., Gottfredson, D.C., MacKenzie, D.L., Eck, J., Reuter, P. and Bushway, S. (eds) *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. Washington, DC: US Office of Justice Programs.
- Sherman, L.W. and Eck, J. (2002) Policing for Crime Prevention. In Sherman, L.W., Farrington, D.P., Welsh, B.C. and MacKenzie, D.L. (eds) *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention*. London: Routledge, pp 295–329.
- Sims, L. (2001) *Neighborhood Watch: Findings from the 2000 British Crime Survey*. Research Findings 150. London: Home Office.
- Titus, R. (1984) Residential Burglary and the Community Response. In Clarke, R.V.G. and Hope, T. (eds) *Coping with Burglary*. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.