



nacro

LONDON Reducing crime, building communities

Jim McManus

Crime in London is a complex problem and reducing it requires complex solutions. Policing is one part of that solution. Neighbourhood regeneration, economic development, improving local services and building trust and relationships between people and communities are just as important.

We believe that London's new Mayor – who controls functions that are central to building safer communities – is in a unique position to put in place the complex solutions that are needed. He can act on crime through his own functions and build the broad-based coalition that is needed to reduce crime. We want him to:

- **put a strategic framework in place**, including a Pan-London Steering Committee for Community Safety Partnerships
- **put community safety at the heart of the GLA's functions**
- **strengthen communities** by building their capacity to become safer and resist crime



changing lives
reducing crime

Contents

The problem: crime in London 3

Putting the strategic framework in place 4

Putting community safety at the heart of the GLA's functions 5

Regeneration 5

Spatial development: a safer urban environment 6

Connecting London: safer public transport 7

Economic development 7

Housing and neighbourhood action 8

Public health 9

Strengthening communities 10

The Mayor and the future of London 11

The problem: crime in London

Inner London is the richest population subdivision in the European Union.¹ Over one million people come into London daily to work.² Average earnings in London are almost a third higher than the UK average.³ Despite this, there are major pockets of crime and deprivation in London: 13 of the 20 most deprived local authority areas in the UK are London boroughs;⁴ unemployment in Inner London is twice the national average;⁵ and Londoners in deprivation suffer disproportionately due to the higher cost of living.

London also suffers disproportionately from crime. There were 1,059,822 recorded crimes in London in 1999–2000⁶ – 21 per cent of all recorded crime in England. London showed the highest regional increase in recorded crime – 12.6 per cent for the Metropolitan Police (8.8 per cent for the City of London) – with the lowest clear-up rate for violent crimes in the UK.⁷

In 1999–2000 London recorded:

- 43 per cent of all crime in major urban areas
- 27 per cent of all violence against the person across England and Wales
- 43 per cent of robbery
- 14 per cent of burglaries
- 16 per cent of criminal damage
- 24 per cent of sexual offences
- 18 per cent of vehicle crimes

The *ALG Survey of Londoners* showed that crime was the highest concern for Londoners in 1999–2000.⁸

London's absolute recorded crime figure is three to seven times higher than metropolitan averages (depending on type of crime). Table 1 shows that London has the third highest rate of crime per 100,000 population of any metropolitan area in England, and is one of only four metropolitan areas not to record a decrease in reported crime.

¹ Source: Eurostat

² Source: DETR

³ Source: DfEE

⁴ Source: Association of London Government, ONS

⁵ Source: DfEE

⁶ This comprises 7,775 for City and 1,052,047 for Metropolitan forces.

⁷ Metropolitan clear-up rates fell from 25 per cent to 22 per cent while City rates increased from 28 to 33 per cent.

⁸ Source: Association of London Government

⁹ Source: Recorded Crime Figures 1998–1999. London comprises City and Metropolitan forces. Other Metropolitan Average excludes London.

Table 1 Recorded crime in Metropolitan Police Areas

Area	Offences per 100,000 population ⁹		
	1999–2000	1998–1999	Change (per cent)
Greater Manchester	14,636	14,093	+4.0 per cent
West Midlands	13,884	11,959	+16.0 per cent
London (City and Met combined)	13,784	12,360	Met +12.6 per cent City +8.8 per cent
Humberside	13,752	14,772	–7.1 per cent
West Yorks	12,315	12,976	–5.0 per cent
Merseyside	10,513	9,967	+5.2 per cent
South Yorks	10,099	10,200	–1.0 per cent
Northumbria	9,981	10,579	–6.0 per cent

Putting the strategic framework in place

Local and regional government have a vital strategic and practical role in making communities safer and reducing crime. The functions of the Mayor and the GLA are relevant to both community capacity building and 'community safety friendliness': they can create the economic, social and spatial environment within which local and pan-London initiatives can take effect.

At a borough level, the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 placed a duty on local government and the police to lead on community safety in partnership with NHS, probation services and other interested parties, including schools and faith communities. Each authority must conduct an audit of crime and disorder across the local authority, consult with and involve the local community, and develop a community safety strategy.

Even though London's boroughs and the Metropolitan Police have lead responsibility for this work, crime and community safety are also important priorities for the Mayor. Crime and the problems associated with it do not stop at borough boundaries – they affect the whole of London. Reducing crime is inextricably bound up with tackling social and infrastructure problems, which are part of the Mayor's responsibility. The Mayor, the GLA, London boroughs, the Metropolitan Police and all other relevant agencies need to work in partnership across the whole city. We therefore advocate that the Mayor sets up a Standing Committee on Crime and Disorder in London to share good practice and co-ordinate cross-borough projects.

Better Information: The Report of Policy Action Team 18 within the National Strategy

for Neighbourhood Renewal identifies better information as a key requirement for effective planning. Barriers to this are: discontinuity between boundaries of respective authorities, lack of sharing of information, incompatible information formats, cultural barriers, inter-agency rivalries, poor awareness of what is available, poor awareness of how information can be used for Best Value and the dedicated resources to turn data into knowledge. The Mayor could have a significant effect on this by taking the following steps.

- Provide support for pan-London and locality information, auditing and research through the London Research Centre.
- Set up a London Crime & Community Safety Observatory, operating along similar lines to other data surveillance centres (eg the regional Public Health Observatories).
- Develop a clearing house of research work and put in place dissemination strategies for it.
- Provide data warehousing and knowledge management services, including web-based resources.
- Encourage pan-London mapping of economic, social, crime and quality of life indicators and needs, using GIS and other geodemographic systems.
- Encourage joined-up planning within and across boroughs, and support stakeholders working in partnerships.
- Support the harmonisation and streamlining of the various planning and consultation processes for the range of statutory initiatives (SRB, HAZ, New Deal, Community Care, Children Act, etc) to avoid 'process fatigue'.

Putting community safety at the heart of the GLA's functions

Community safety requires a co-ordinated response across all public services. Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 requires that an authority shall 'exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area'.

Although Section 17 does not apply to the GLA, the authority can be a flagship of good practice and the Mayor could ensure a major effect on the outcomes of any strategy by adopting the principle of Section 17. Crime and the factors which can help prevent it cut across GLA functions. This kind of joined-up policy making is especially important in:

- setting targets for improvement of the public security of Londoners in streets, public places and public transport across all GLA functions
- sharing high-quality information between different functions to facilitate planning
- requiring each GLA function to take account of the others
- harmonising GLA functions and strategies with those of other agencies such as local authorities and NHS trusts
- encouraging reconfiguration and reorganisation of public services across London to better serve the population

The use of the 'Best Value' framework could support this cross-functional synergy, ensuring that opportunities are fully exploited, duplication is avoided, and the most effective and beneficial application of resources achieved.

The Mayor could have a direct impact by ensuring issues of crime and community safety are built into his strategies for London. A number of his areas of control – regeneration, spatial development, public transport and economic development – directly affect the situations in which crime can be encouraged or prevented. In addition, he can use his direct powers to advocate that the Metropolitan Police Authority gives proper importance to

crime reduction in partnership with agencies and communities.

The Greater London Authority Act also confers on the Mayor a general power to do anything he decides will promote economic and social development in London. This role is crucial, and can have a major effect on local and pan-London strategies and partnerships. Through the use of his general powers, the Mayor can also work indirectly to enable key stakeholders to be more successful at local and cross-borough level. This, too, can be driven by Best Value. The Mayor should apply the principle underlying Section 17 and the use of the Best Value framework to support it, so that the GLA can become an advocate for and an example of good practice. There are a number of key areas – especially housing and public health – where the Mayor's general powers could have a major effect.

Regeneration

Regeneration tackles variables that are associated with crime and disorder as much as they are with social exclusion and inability to participate in society. These variables are:

- high unemployment
- degenerating physical neighbourhoods
- poor economic choice and diversity
- dependence on state welfare
- feelings of exclusion from society
- poor access to services
- limited lifestyle choices
- poor health outcomes

Regeneration of many neighbourhoods requires concerted action to tackle poor physical environment, poor community spirit, poor service infrastructure and lack of opportunity. The role of joined up services in this is crucial.

The Report of Policy Action Team 9 on Community Self-Help within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* emphasises that communities should not be passive recipients of services: self-help is vital

and this should include action to increase the viability of community groups and their own actions. The barriers to this are not only economic (no jobs or poor local shopping) but social (low social capital and no informal networks). *The Report of Policy Action Team 13 on Improving Shopping Access* within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* also identified the need for local community involvement.

There are also process barriers that arise from the lack of proper community involvement in regeneration programmes:

- conflicting planning systems
- poorly co-ordinated action
- inflexibility in planning and service delivery systems
- lack of understanding and ownership at community level

Nacro's research in *Community Safety, Community Solutions* found that involving local communities requires energy in building and tapping into informal social networks and harnessing their capacity. Good public services are also vital: 'Agencies ... need to recognise the contribution that responsive and effective delivery of services can make to local feelings of community safety.'¹⁰

The Mayor can take the following steps to make the regeneration framework for London 'community safety friendly'.

- Make crime and community safety issues integral to setting priorities for selecting areas for SRB and other regeneration funding.
- Establish the GLA as the major clearing-house for all regeneration activities that are linked with community safety.
- Create frameworks that reduce the bureaucratic burden on partnerships and highlight existing community safety structures and systems.
- Require all regeneration and SRB bids to mainstream community safety, by taking account of it in all SRB bids and programmes.
- Require hard indicators of community safety impact in SRB and other regeneration projects.
- Work with central government and the European Union to harmonise community safety funding.
- Develop plans for mixed-partner (private, public, voluntary and community sector) funding for regeneration across London.

- Ensure regeneration strategies incorporate the means to overcome barriers to community self-help and seek to involve communities from the start.
- Incorporate community self-help into regeneration strategies.
- Provide support including advice and best practice guidance to local communities, SRB partnerships and consortia on community safety and regeneration.

An effective way of ensuring that regeneration projects are 'community safety friendly' is to set a 'gold standard' framework for SRB-funded projects and other regeneration projects and funds controlled by the Mayor. The 'gold standard', which should be rigorously monitored and enforced, should comprise standards for:

- mainstreaming community safety
- community safety compliance of bids and bidding partnerships
- community involvement
- community self-help
- Best Value
- an evidence-based approach
- research, audit and planning
- inter-agency partnerships
- integral evaluation

A harmonising framework for SRB, New Deal, Health Improvement, Health Action Zone, ESF and other projects also needs to be developed. Community safety should be integral to this framework.

Spatial development: a safer urban environment

The way public space is used in London is a key issue in preventing or encouraging crime. Derelict land can provide opportunities for drug use and prostitution. Green spaces and building developments can feel unsafe for women and people using them late at night or early in the morning. Poor natural surveillance is also a problem in town centres and green spaces. High levels of physical disorder, unregulated change in land and property use, and a poor mix of housing, business and other amenities are all risk factors for crime.

Nacro's research in *Community Safety, Community Solutions*¹¹ highlighted the importance of integrating land use, economic development and regeneration to make communities truly safe. Working to ensure residential areas and businesses do not just

¹⁰ Fraser, P. (1999) *Community Safety, Community Solutions*. Executive Summary, p.7. London: NACRO

¹¹ Fraser, P. (1999) *Community Safety, Community Solutions*. London: NACRO

'peter out' in some areas – leaving derelict estates and areas with neither employers nor retail businesses, or that become 'ghost towns' after 5 pm – can mean people feel safer in travelling through them late at night. It is essential that brownfield sites are developed sensitively to reduce opportunities for crime and meet concerns identified by local communities. *Community Safety, Community Solutions* emphasised that local people need to be involved in what is happening and what is planned.

The following measures will improve community safety in London.

- Plan public spaces with security in mind, to prevent and design out crime. This may include selective demolition and changes in planning consent.
- Require new land use developments and redevelopments to incorporate community safety into their designs and project plans.
- Reduce physical disorder in neighbourhoods by restoration, selective demolition, and redrawing and enforcing planning frameworks.
- Involve local communities in planning 'community safe' land mixes across London which encourage vibrant local communities and reduce opportunities for crime. (A sustainable mix of leisure, business and housing land in each community will be an essential part of this.)
- Redevelop brownfield sites where crime is currently a major problem.
- Landscape existing and new green spaces with better natural surveillance.
- Employ park rangers and wardens for green spaces to improve security and physical order.
- Plan town centres that discourage crime and make people feel safer (eg places which aren't 'ghost towns' after 6pm).

Connecting London: safer public transport

Users of public transport may be exposed to mugging, robbery, criminal damage, wounding and assault, sexual harassment and rape. Fear of these crimes is a factor in some people deciding not to use public transport but instead to drive their own cars or stay at home. Reducing crime and the fear of crime on public transport would not only be a good thing in itself; it would also help to decrease congestion and pollution on the roads and

reduce the likelihood of certain groups, such as elderly people, becoming isolated and placing an increasing burden on the care system.

1.02 million people commute into and out of London each day for work. They are very difficult to reach or involve in consultation and planning. The transport strategy needs to find innovative ways of taking into account the needs of the commuting population. There is also a need to improve information and monitoring of crime; the Mayor could work with the British Transport Police to develop their capacity to monitor crime in their area of responsibility. This will include ensuring that the Police have adequate resources to contribute to a strategy.

As well as addressing the needs of the commuting population, strategies to reduce crime on public transport should also take into account the needs of resident populations who may be vulnerable to crime in near-deserted stations outside commuting times.

Key public transport initiatives should be:

- Design out opportunities for crime by improving security and services, eg station design and refurbishment, staffing levels, frequency of services and connections in areas where people are vulnerable.
- Get Best Value from existing initiatives designed to make travelling safer, eg by evaluating the effectiveness of station help points and of CCTV compared with warden schemes.
- Plan for the needs and concerns of people most vulnerable to violent crime, eg women, older people, disabled people and children.
- Improve transport infrastructure to support economic regeneration.
- Employ railway or travel terminus wardens or security staff.

Improving public transport will also help regenerate communities by connecting them with the rest of London, providing opportunities for jobs and encouraging outward and inward travel and investment.

Economic development

Communities cannot become safer without thriving economies. The Mayor's role is crucial in this. *The Report of Policy Action Team 13 on Improving Shopping Access* within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* highlighted the importance of locally

developed strategies, with solutions that are economically viable in the long term and will not become untenable when fixed-term special funding dries up.

The problems that *The Report of Policy Action Team 1 on Jobs for All* within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* identified are:

- unequal distribution of skills and aptitudes which employers want
- a lack of networks linking people without jobs to the employers with jobs to fill
- a lack of support for local opportunities for sustainable job creation
- too much dependence on short-term funded projects
- prohibitive transitional costs of taking up employment

Both this report and the *Report of the Policy Action Team 11 on Building Learning Communities* found that appropriate skills and other learning opportunities either do not exist or are poorly accessed when they do exist. Arts and sports opportunities can be a part of this, as highlighted by the *Report of Policy Action Team 10: Arts and Sport*. As highlighted above, spatial development and transport strategies are a part of economic development. There are additional opportunities for tackling the problems of economic development. We believe that the Mayor and GLA should:

- Ensure that the London Development Agency sees community safety as a key objective.
- Reduce the need for acquisitive crime by improving job opportunities and quality of life.
- Target key areas for priority action and development.
- Ensure sustainability and access are key features in any strategy or project.
- Lever available resources to create the best climate for individuals, communities and businesses to benefit from inward investment.
- Recognise the importance of local economies for skills, confidence and jobs.
- Ensure Best Value from the range of SRB, European, SSA, precept and other funds across all agencies.
- Provide better information and common indicators of success.
- Ensure a climate that supports businesses of all kinds.
- Encourage a culture where businesses have

tangible incentives to become involved in their local communities.

- Ensure joined-up planning.

It is also vital to involve and work with the business community. Businesses are vital to the survival of communities, providing jobs and facilities as well as being part of the community itself, but crimes against them can tip businesses into insolvency and dissuade businesses from moving into or remaining in an area. The Mayor needs to work in partnership with the business sector to:

- Identify and prioritise crime and disorder issues that affect businesses.
- Respond to these issues within the context of the regeneration and economic development strategies.

Housing and neighbourhood action

Housing Management: The Report of Policy Action Team 5 within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* highlighted the importance of good housing management with an on-the-spot presence to help reduce crime and disorder and fear of crime. Other important factors include: concierge services; enforceable service agreements for all services (from repairs to street cleaning, lighting, local policing, etc); letting policies that are sensitive to the community; and ensuring congruence with wider economic plans for that community. Black and minority ethnic communities must also be confident they will receive fair treatment. The report states that this cannot be achieved by housing authorities and agencies alone. Although the Mayor does not have any direct powers over housing, he could exercise indirect influence to:

- Bring housing providers together to ensure they consider and contribute to other strategies for the area.
- Put in place local special needs housing strategies and links from these to crime and disorder reduction partnerships and GLA functions.
- Work with housing corporations and key providers to incorporate Section 17 into the planning framework in light of London's needs.
- Encourage housing providers to relate their planning and functions to the GLA strategies.
- Support local authorities in responding to the housing implications of Section 17.

- Support current initiatives for good practice and pan-London knowledge, eg the London Housing Unit.
- Support the introduction of neighbourhood wardens and the framework of joined-up services to make their roles effective.

Public health

Public health in its widest sense will be a specific Mayoral function. Public health is clearly related to crime: many of the risk factors for poor public health are the same as those for unsafe communities.¹² Because of this, public health and community safety strategies need to interrelate. Good public health – which consists of improved physical, mental, social and economic wellbeing – requires good public services and good infrastructure. Some of the initiatives already mentioned above are part of this. The Mayor can also use his general public health powers to:

- Work with the NHS Executive Regional Office for London to create a Pan-London Public Health and Crime Strategy.
 - Support applied research on the links between crime, community safety and health need.
 - Provide robust measures of outcomes on the relationship between inequality, ill health and crime.
- Set a clear strategic framework that makes explicit the links between public health, inequality and community safety.
 - Ensure inequality, deprivation and crime are given proper weight in all pan-London strategies.
 - Set standards for inter-agency work between Health Authorities, NHS Trusts, Primary Care Groups and others in SRB funded projects related to crime and community safety.
 - Ensure NHS Health Action Zone initiatives link up with other regeneration initiatives to achieve Best Value in addressing inequalities and crime.
 - Ensure that generic actions and frameworks which would benefit crime and community safety are in place. These could include:
 - joined-up public services and infrastructure – key issues in improving public health
 - increasing health-led regeneration projects such as those in Redbridge and Waltham Forest
 - working to ensure improved health outcomes for everyone
 - developing a pan-London homelessness strategy
 - Work with other agencies to tackle drug use and crime.
 - Reduce alcohol-related crime and disorder, especially on public transport.

¹² Acheson, D. (2000) *Health Inequalities*. London: The Stationery Office

Strengthening communities

¹³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) *Sustainable Suburbs*. Findings 219.

¹⁴ Fraser, P. (1999) *Community Safety, Community Solutions*. London: NACRO

¹⁵ Marmot, M. *et al* (Eds.) (2000) *Social Determinants of Ill Health*. Cambridge: CUP

¹⁶ Acheson, D. (2000) *Health Inequalities: A Report and Summary of Evidence*. London, The Stationery Office

¹⁷ Based on risk calculation from British Crime Survey and Recorded Offences Figures 1998.

¹⁸ Fraser, P. (1999) *Community Safety, Community Solutions*. London: NACRO

The safety of someone's community is a key aspect of their quality of life. Living in fear of crime against person or property can make the difference between wanting to work and live in an area, and wanting to leave it. It is not just the fear of crime or the actual levels of crime that affect how safe our communities are. A safe community has high social capital: good infrastructures of formal and informal services, local social networks, goodwill and trust between the people who live in it, good physical and environmental standards, and opportunities for work and recreation.

An unsafe community, by contrast, experiences low social capital and *The Report of the Policy Action Team 8: Anti-Social Behaviour* within the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* highlights neighbourhood decline due to people moving away and tenants abandoning housing as an effect of low social capital.

Other *Policy Action Team* reports highlight some characteristics of unsafe communities with low social capital:

- deteriorating community facilities and services
- lack of opportunity for employment
- disaffected young people
- failing schools
- fewer people with less money, so that local shopping facilities deteriorate
- poor public transport infrastructure with poor security
- ageing housing badly adapted to changing housing needs and social patterns¹³
- barriers to community self-help and to taking up jobs and education

Nacro's evaluation of community crime prevention projects *Community Safety, Community Solutions*¹⁴ found that this is a spiral process, with one factor impinging on another. The links between deprivation, poor social capital, poor public health and crime are well established.¹⁵

The effects of low social capital in London's unsafe communities is disproportionately felt in disadvantaged and marginalised populations.¹⁶ Someone living in one of London's ten highest areas of social deprivation is five times more likely to be the victim of violent crime and four times more likely to suffer long-term economic and emotional disturbance from burglary than someone living in a more affluent area.¹⁷ In the midst of one of the world's most affluent cities, there are places that are unsafe for those who live in them and that heighten the risk factors for crime. The situation is worsening.

Community safety encompasses roles such as neighbourhood regeneration, encouraging inward investment, policing, education and youthwork policy, housing and tackling anti-social behaviour, health services and policing. These all work to build community capacity to respond to community safety initiatives and sustain them in the long term.

Nacro's research in *Community Safety, Community Solutions*¹⁸ emphasised that community safety needs agencies to plan strategies, but no strategy will be effective without proper involvement of communities and building their capacity to self-help. The ability to both prevent crime by reducing opportunities for it and deal effectively with victims and offenders is crucial to this.

Creating safe communities in London is a complex task. There is a need for a wide range of actions from an equally wide range of players. There needs to be a strategic framework which gets the Best Value from each agency involved, both at a local level and across London. The Mayor can set a strategic framework that encourages this process, so that all strategies are 'community safety friendly' and community safety issues are integral to each area of activity. The Mayor has a key role in making GLA strategies 'community safety friendly'.

The Mayor and the future of London

Although the challenges for London are enormous, with the first pan-London authority since 1986 the Mayor has an unequalled opportunity to address London's problems. Building social capital will improve community safety. Better community safety can only be gained through enhancing the

capacity of the host of agencies and communities in London to play their part in the process. The Mayor and GLA can directly ensure the best possible environment for this by ensuring that community safety is at the heart of key strategies, and they can indirectly enable success by supporting stakeholders.

About Nacro

Nacro is the principal independent organisation in England and Wales working to reduce crime. We employ over 1,000 staff who, together with volunteers, run a wide range of practical projects. At a strategic level, Nacro works with partners at national, regional and local levels to develop and implement effective strategies for tackling crime.

In the field of community safety, Nacro works with local people, practitioners and inter-agency partnerships to reduce crime levels, lessen the fear of crime and regenerate communities, with an emphasis on tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour, racially motivated crime and mainstreaming for sustainable solutions.

Our research, our work with Government and our experience of delivering services at a local level give us an excellent national perspective on what works in community safety and how to adapt and apply this at a local level. Community safety practitioners from a range of community safety partnerships use this expertise at every stage of partnership development:

- developing and implementing crime and disorder reduction strategies
- involving communities
- monitoring and evaluation
- research
- training
- developing and managing projects

We use our strong track record in research to produce publications and briefings on all aspects of community safety. Many of the briefings are contained in our free quarterly mailing, which is sent to community safety practitioners throughout England and Wales.

For more information on our community safety work, please contact Chris Fox, Nacro Crime and Social Policy Section, 237 Queenstown Road, London SW8 3NP
t 020 7501 0562
f 020 7501 0556.