Comprehensive Community Safety Strategies For Delivering Effective Crime Prevention

Strategic Overview

Most common crime is concentrated within municipalities in certain areas, addresses and families. Various social and situational risk factors correlate highly with these. The evidence from the ¨resources¨ available today shows that tackling these risk factors prevents crime from happening.

Municipalities that have diagnosed their areas and risk factors to tackle them and evaluate outcomes have reduced crime significantly:

- Glasgow established a unit to analyze locations and risk factors and so mobilize youth services, family services, the health sector, and police to tackle those risk factors. They achieved a 50% reduction in violence in their high crime areas.

- Minneapolis established a unit to analyze locations and risk factors and so mobilize youth services, family services, and police to tackle those risk factors. They achieved a 50% reduction in violence across the city.

- Winnipeg established a task force to analyze the risk factors for auto theft and so mobilized youth services, citizens and police to tackle those risk factors. They achieved more than a 50% reduction across the city.

UN-Habitat states that municipalities will be made safer by establishing a responsibility centre to diagnose the areas and risk factors and so mobilize a range of sectors to prevent crime and increase feelings of community safety. The process also involves a strategic plan, evaluating outcomes and engaging the public. Several Canadian municipal task forces agree.

Stable funding for the improved services are essential to success. Governments of advanced nations such as Belgium and France bring their ministries together to contribute additional funding for these services in their municipalities.

Actions for Municipal Stakeholders

1. To create or strengthen municipal community safety strategies by identifying a responsibility centre to diagnose the problems, plan solutions, mobilize improvements in service sectors and evaluate the outcomes;

2. To seek sustained funding for improvements in service sectors from the municipal budget and other orders of government;

3. Conduct process and outcome evaluations of all implemented initiatives.

¨We stop a 14-year-old high risk youth from a life of crime, we would save society $2.6 to $5.3 million. If we start the process at birth, we would save $2.6 and $4.4 million.¨ (Cohen et al, 2009)

¨We must go beyond a response by our criminal justice system – police, courts and corrections – if we are to prevent crime in our cities. Our response must be part of a long-range approach, yet be responsible to immediate needs.¨ (Montreal, 1989)

¨In all cases, crime prevention strategies and programs must be tailored to local needs – but not limited to local resources. Local efforts must be supported by national policies which provide stable, direct and timely funding and allow for local flexibility in program design.¨(Montreal, 1989)

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What is a comprehensive community safety strategy

A comprehensive community safety strategy (CCSS) embraces some way of mobilizing more of the services that can successfully tackle risk factors that lead to crime. It is about getting more investments ¨upstream¨ and not just paying more ¨downstream¨ to react to crime after it has happened. The high risk youth are concentrated in a limited number of areas:

8% of street segments produce 60% of police recorded crime in BC (Curman, 2014); 5% of youth account for 55% of offences in the Family Development study (Waller, 2014).

Further crime patterns at high rate places are relatively stable across time. So continuing to only react to crime does not reduce crime where reductions are most needed.

The evidence based correlates of these high concentrations point to risk factors such as disadvantage, poor parenting, school dropout, youth exclusion and so on. Statistics Canada has mapped the concentration of crime in most large Canadian cities and showed it to be correlated with disadvantage, family breakdown and lack of social cohesion.

In Action Briefs, 2016.2 and 2016.3, we have shown the strong evidence now available and accessible that tackling these risk factors has prevented crime before it happens.

Do Comprehensive Community Safety Strategies Reduce Crime?

Some municipalities have analyzed the data on these problems in order to mobilize the appropriate services ¨upstream¨. But they also used data to evaluate the outcomes – generally recognized as essential to the success of prevention. Here are some examples:

Glasgow, Scotland

After being named the murder capital of Europe by the World Health Organization in 2002, Glasgow established a permanent Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to institute a public health strategy to diagnose ways to reduce knife and gang violence among young men. This unit implemented the strategy. The unit teamed up with agencies in the fields of health to work with victims to stop repeat behaviour, with social work to improve parenting, reduce violence against women and outreach to youth, and with schools. Additionally, the VRU focused on enforcement to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who were involved in violence as well as reduce abuse of alcohol.

A crucial step in its success was the implementation of an evaluation by a local university. Preliminary analysis showed it cut violence in targeted neighborhoods by 50% in only three years. For more information on how they achieved this success, visit actiononviolence.org.uk/. Listen to the CBC Sunday Edition (http://bit.ly/1MzGyjI)

Minneapolis, U.S.A.

Concerned with the high rates of serious injuries and deaths and costs to taxpayers, Minneapolis city council declared youth violence a public health issue. They established a permanent office led by the city´s mayor. The office developed a comprehensive strategy to improve actions including: mentor at-risk youth; intervene at the first signs of risk; focus on reintegrating youth; and commit to changing the culture of violence. This led to a sustained 62% reduction in youth crime. (Waller, 2014).

Winnipeg, Canada

In 2004, Winnipeg had the highest rate of auto theft in Canada. After the failure of tactics based only on proactive policing, the city of Winnipeg established a task force that analyzed the problems and so what was needed to mobilize multiple sectors such as the police, youth services, and the public.

Its business plan received $50 million from the Province´s Insurance agency and was guided to a comprehensive community safety strategy by a leading policing and crime prevention academic.

After diagnosing the problem areas and the risk factors, it implemented a three-pronged plan that was tailored specifically to their auto theft problem. The plan included 1) intensive community supervision of high risk youth; 2) a program requiring compulsory vehicle

immobilizers for the most at-risk vehicles; and 3) youth programming to address the root cause of the vehicle thefts.

The all important evaluations show that this strategy was a significant success, reducing auto theft 29% in 2007, 42% in 2008, and an impressive 76% by 2010. This is an excellent example of how preventative programs that tackle all facets of the root causes of crime into account get tangible results, without requiring reactive crime control policies. The investment of $50 million has contributed to annual reductions in insurance premiums of $30 million or more over several years – perhaps a return alone of $5 for every $1 – with other savings in health and policing costs (Linden, 2012; Waller, 2014).

Multi-Sectoral Strategies for Crime Prevention

Governments such as Canada have agreed to the importance of comprehensive community safety strategies to prevent crime and make communities safer in a number of intergovernmental resolutions, including UN Habitat (2015a; 2015b), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2006a; 2006b), and the World Health Organization (2014). The UN Sustainable Development Goal 17 reinforces these strategies with its emphasis on funding, use of evidence and measurement of outcomes.

UN Habitat in its program on safer cities repeatedly calls for a coordinated, multidisciplinary effort to address the multiple root causes of delinquency, violence and insecurity (Guidelines on Safer Cities, 2015).

The Canadian Municipal Network of Crime Prevention was built around different ways for municipalities to organize multi-sectoral strategies to reduce crime and prevent victimization. The reports completed in collaboration with the University of Ottawa in 2007, 2008, and 2009 all concluded that the most effective governance structures require a locus of responsibility for coordination and leadership, strong political support, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary partnerships, and the integration of safety as a cross-cutting element in municipal planning.

Centre of Responsibility (COR)

A key action that municipalities can take is to establish a responsibility centre for planning and coordinating crime prevention and community safety strategies with other local services. The main roles of the responsibility centre are to coordinate and promote strategies, bring together the different sectors around a diagnosis of problems, develop a plan to tackle those problems, and oversee implementation and evaluation of the results (Waller, 2014).

City crime prevention planning office
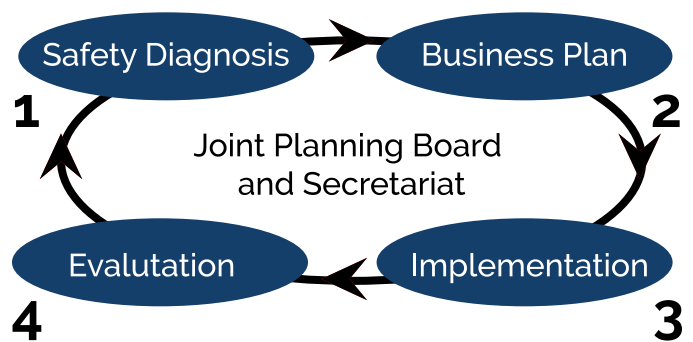
Canadian Municipal Task Forces

Several members of the Canadian Municipal Network for Crime Prevention have completed their own consultations with government officials, crime reduction experts, stakeholders, and community groups to identify strategic directions for crime reduction and prevention.

The initiatives and goals identified in these reports overlap strongly with those recommended throughout this action brief. For instance the strategies focus on:

- Reduction of risk factors as the most effective and cost efficient method of crime reduction;

- A strong focus on at risk populations, particularly at risk-youth;

- Identifying a means of addressing violence against women.

They also focus on keys to successful implementation, including:

Sustainable program funding;

- A comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy partnering of all levels of government

with school boards, health departments, community based organizations and cultural groups;

• Enhance community knowledge and foster engagement with all members of the community;

• Implement rigorous evaluation and reporting regimes focusing on outcome evaluations to track the implementation and efficacy of the programs.

World Health Organization

The Global status report on violence prevention 2014 takes stock of the extent to which governments are implementing effective violence prevention strategies. The report advises that any comprehensive violence prevention strategy must identify risk factors and efforts to address them. Furthermore, through multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration across sectors, governments can start closing the gaps in knowledge, prevention programs, access to services, and enforcement of laws. They need to use data and develop action plans.

The Challenge of Funding

Municipalities represent the level of government best suited to identify local issues and problems and the conditions that contribute to these problems. Yet municipalities only access 8% of taxes in Canada, the majority of which come from property taxes. The federal and provincial governments must provide stable and timely funding for municipal crime prevention.

The Horner Commission recommended investing 5% of what is currently spent on policing, courts, and corrections on crime prevention initiatives. FCM called for a $1 investment in crime prevention for every additional $1 spent on policing as of 2008. If this had been implemented, municipal crime prevention would have flourished, crime rates decreased even further and demand for reactive policing reduced.

Advanced Countries provide financial and capacity support for CCSS in Municipalities

The influence of national policies is a key variable in the establishment of local crime prevention strategies. The state can help the shift by being an important financial partner and provider of support, such as training and tools. Several other countries are already doing this. Here are just two examples:

Belgium

Belgium has nearly 20 years of experience of requiring municipalities to develop a comprehensive community safety strategy, which is the basis for a contract between the municipality and the federal government. It created a central crime prevention center that contracts with cities to develop an analysis or audit of the crime problem, develop a plan to tackle it, implement and then evaluate the plan. In the past few decades, the Belgian Council of Ministers approved hundreds of program targeting at-risk populations and communities. Through evaluations of these initiatives, they conclude that they have met over 90% of the project objectives (Belgium Crime Prevention Strategy, 2009).

France

In 1986, France supported six of its cities to pioneer CCSS. By 2014, almost every municipality has some form of CCSS. In 2014, France continues national support for these multi-sectoral strategies, including the Stratégie nationale de prévention de la délinquance (2015), a detailed action plan and a multi-sectoral strategy aiming to improve public safety by targeting at-risk youth, violence against women, and reducing fear of crime.

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