

CRIME GENERATORS



CRIME GENERATORS

Definition

A crime generator can be defined as *'the factors and circumstances that attract those (individual or group) who commit crime and which contribute to the continuation of their offending behaviour'*.

Why is this important?

Agencies are often criticised for dealing with the 'effects of crime rather than their causes'. The Lambeth Community Safety Partnership strongly believe that if we are going to have a long lasting impact on crime reduction and reduce the Fear of Crime within our community we have to address the underlying issues, which are at the heart of crime and subsequently make our communities fear crime.

Deprivation

Deprivation is a significant factor in offending behaviour. The 'Overview of Lambeth' chapter highlights the poor quality of health, housing and lack of affordable or access to housing, the low-income levels and high numbers of people who suffer from poor numeracy and literacy skills.

The most deprived wards in Lambeth are Coldharbour and Vassall. These correspond with the overall priority wards for the crime in the borough.

- Of the total Index of Multiple Deprivation Ranks for all of England, there are two Lambeth Super Output Areas (SOAs) amongst the top 5% most deprived in England
- 108 of the 177 SOAs in Lambeth are in the top 25% most deprived in England
- Our communities constantly referred to deprivation issues as causes of crime
- Our young peoples focus groups continuously raised the issue of 'material wealth' as a risk factor in carrying out crime
- An issue raised through the focus group is the easy access to drugs and thus the easy money that comes with selling them. One respondent knew of someone earning £35,000 a week. The perception is that you can make more money from illegal drug activities than you could in regular employment, with or without formal education
- Housing estates consistently featured amongst the focus groups as a factor for crime and fear of crime

'Housing estates (mostly council but also housing association)... feature prominently in any list of 'bad' locations.'

- Our young black male population has less employment opportunities with twice the national average of unemployment amongst black African Caribbean and black African, which correlate to the crime statistics

Emerging priorities

- The physical and social regeneration of key areas of Lambeth would have a significant impact in reducing offending in the borough

Transport

Lambeth's transportation networks are vast and numerous. Waterloo is one of London's busiest transport hubs, including an international terminus. There are nine Tube Stations, all of which are hot spots for crime within the borough, and 13 overland stations. The A23 and key bus routes are also components of the boroughs transport network.

When we looked in detail at our crime hot spots across the themed chapters above, it was evident that the majority were centred around our transport hubs, particularly underground stations, along our arterial routes and bus routes.

The results from our focus groups consistently referred to fear of crime and personal safety on our buses, trains and tubes. Our Pensioners Forum focus group, highlighted safety on transport and mobility and accessibility as key issues.

Young people aged between 2-10 who participated in drawing where they felt unsafe indicated bus and tube stations.

In our face-to-face interviews 53% of females felt unsafe using buses after dark.

Council officers who responded referred to feeling fairly safe on public transport except after dark or when returning home from evening meetings.

Emerging priorities

- A greater partnership emphasis on safety on public transport and the environments around transport hubs to improve accessibility is a key priority

Drugs and Alcohol

Our audit clearly indicates that drugs and alcohol impact on levels of crime and fear of crime. This is covered on page 47 of our Drugs and Alcohol chapter.

Lack of Choices and Opportunities

There was a clear indication that people's opportunities played a significant role in crime and criminal behaviour.

Low educational attainment for example was most prevalent in those who commit crime. The pan London Audit indicated:

'That 80% of ex-prisoners have writing skills at or below the level of an 11 year old child, and 65% the equivalent numeric skills.'

There is also a clear link between positive roles models and behaviour. Once again the pan London Audit 2004 stated:

'That compared with the general population, those who end up in prison are thirteen times more likely to have been in care as a child, 20 times more likely to have been excluded from school and 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant.'

Furthermore there was a recurring theme amongst our focus groups that role models are a key issue.

'The young kids need somebody to inspire them, on what the future can look like, many of them don't get the kind of motivational talks at home.'

It was clear that there was a lack of positive roles models.

'In the youth culture, MC is big and everyone knows a MC. For whatever reason, I cannot tell you how it got to such a level, but nowadays the majority of MCs just talk about confrontation and violence that is what generates the subject matter.'

'The youth selling the drugs are perceived as successful by other young people, mainly due to the material goods that they can obtain.'

This included peer pressure, which affected young peoples choices and opportunities.

'Peer pressure is a very big part of this: no one wants to be the one who appears scared... There's a very thin line between being scared and being smart.'

Territorial issues can also limit opportunities for resident.

'Some people are restricted in their areas because of differences between other estates.'

Lack of facilities and activities constantly came through from our focus groups. This included young people saying that they have no facilities but also other sections of the community reinforced this view.

'If we sit outside, they tell us to move, because we make the area look untidy and unsafe, but we have nothing to do. They say we scare people away and make too much noise. It is not true, we just sit outside and talk really, we cannot play football, and so we sit and play cards and talk. That happens night and day time, if we don't go here, we go there.'

The third highest priority to reduce crime as stated in our face-to-face respondents was 'better places for teenagers to go so they are not hanging around' (29%).

The choices and opportunities amongst those who have committed offences and who want to change their lifestyles is further restricted. The ability to find employment is limited and there is an added pressure by those previously associated with crime.

As for victims of crime their increased vulnerability restricts their opportunities in where they feel safe and when they feel safe. They will often avoid areas or events, which might place them in a vulnerable situation. This was particularly pertinent for the members of our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), elderly and disabled communities and young people.

Emerging Priority

- The lack of choice and opportunities, including positive role models, causes crimes and increases vulnerability

Taking Responsibility

There is a common thread that appeared to the Community Safety Audit Team as the audit evidence was reviewed. That theme centred on 'responsibility and ownership'.

Our analysis broke this down into three headings:

Commercial Responsibility

Whether we looked at drugs, alcohol, environment, young people, property crime, motor vehicle crime or anti social activities, we saw evidence that where businesses that operate within the borough failed to recognise the impact that their business had on the environment and community, crime and associated criminal behaviour flourished.

Personal and Community Responsibility

There was a lot of evidence from the surveys and focus groups, which indicated individuals felt that their environment had a substantial impact on how unsafe they felt, whether at home, in their home area, in town centres or on public transport.

When asked what could be done to make them feel safer there was an overwhelming emphasis amongst respondents on external, statutory provided services such as more Police, CCTV and wardens, rather than taking personal ownership.

This is born out by our crime statistics where volume crimes such as:

- Other Theft
- Theft From A Motor Vehicle
- Accessibility in summer months, which results in increases in Residential Burglary
- Mobile Phone Theft
- Property Theft outside tube and bus stations

have demonstrated that individual behaviour, personal responsibility and community ownership can have a significant impact on reducing crime levels and the fear of crime in the borough.

Responsibility of public bodies

The public authority, whether it is the Police, local authority or health providers have a responsibility to set standards with regards to what they do, when and how they provide their services to ensure that there is an environment in which people feel safe.

There was strong evidence from the surveys and focus groups that indicated that the community's confidence in the public authorities' ability to

tackle crime was low, despite the significant crime reductions in the borough over the last three years.

Our young people felt that the public authorities should have a greater responsibility to ensure that they had the opportunity to influence and participate in delivering services for young people.

It was also evident that there was a strong misconception around whose role it was to make Lambeth clean and safe.

Emerging Priority

- There is a clear need for those visiting, working, living and providing services in Lambeth to create a culture of 'responsibility' and to clarify their role in preventing crime and improving the environment

Image and Reputation

There was evidence that the image and subsequent reputation of Lambeth significantly impacted on the sense of feeling safe. This image, created through the media and driven by perception of poor reputation of areas portrays Lambeth as a place to come to commit crime, particularly drug-related crime. This was evidenced in our focus groups and in our face-to-face surveys where 50% of respondents stated that the reputation of the area made them feel unsafe. This is supported by statistical information from our arrest referral and stop and search where 50% of those arrested were non-Lambeth residents.

It is not only the image of the borough that impacts on crime. Evidence from our young people focus groups indicated that personal image in what they wear, how they behave, who they associate with and 'street culture' was a significant contributor to feeling safe, feeling less vulnerable and less likely to being victim of crime. There was an underlying culture within our young community that carrying a weapon was not just about feeling safe, but was about image.

Emerging Priorities

- Image of the area or the individual undermines community cohesion and is detrimental to how people feel safe and to the effectiveness of crime reduction compared to community perceptions