

Applied Crime Prevention Case Studies – Crime Prevention Evaluation

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Introduction

Applying crime prevention knowledge and techniques in a real world context can be challenging. Numerous difficulties can emerge that are not always identified in crime prevention texts. The following case studies provide opportunities to work through a series of steps relevant to applied crime prevention work.

Evaluation

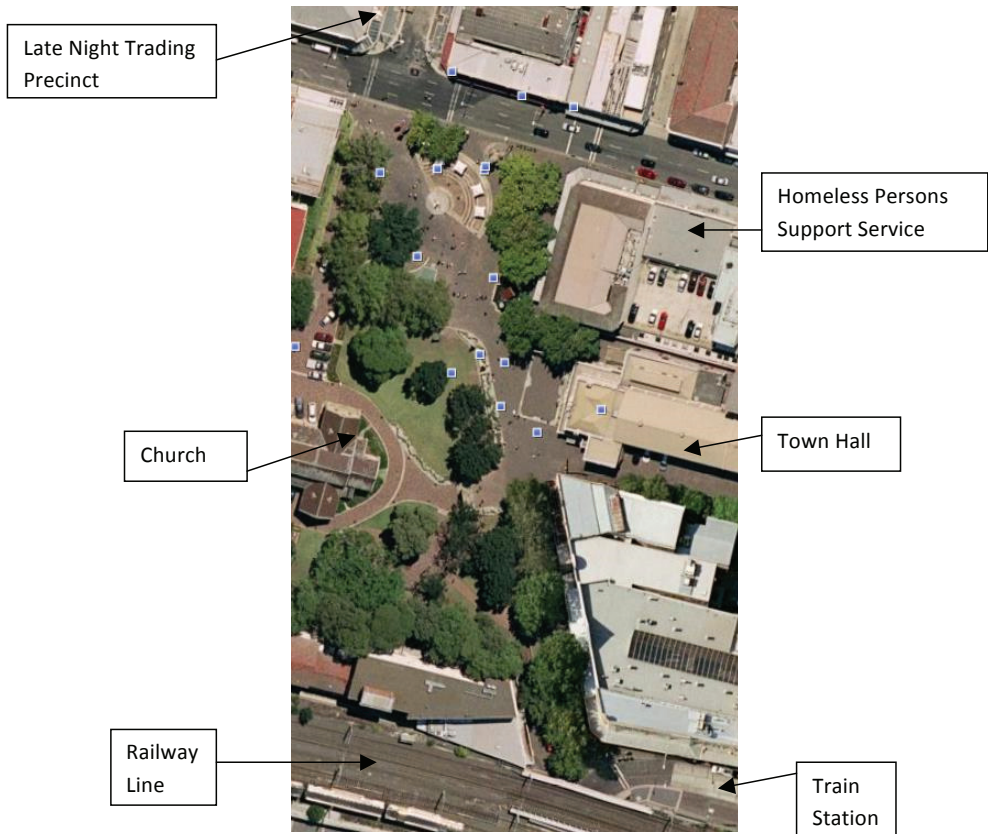
In principle, there is considerable commitment to evaluating crime prevention programs and initiatives. In practice, evaluation is undertaken infrequently, with even fewer evaluation reports ever being made public. Consequently, there should be far greater focus on this important aspect of crime prevention practice.

While there are many ways that an evaluation can be conducted, it is often useful to focus on process and impact evaluations. A process evaluation will focus on how the program was implemented and whether each of the program components operated effectively. For example, if you were assessing the effectiveness of installing lighting in a park to prevent crime, a process evaluation might focus on whether the lights worked as intended; whether the lux levels met appropriate standards; whether the lighting illuminated the appropriate sections of the park; and whether the illumination through the park was consistent. The installation of lighting is unlikely to bring about a reduction in crime if there are still dark spots along the main thoroughfare or if the majority of the lights were faulty and not maintained. Focusing on these aspects will highlight any process issues that might potentially undermine the effectiveness of the intervention (in this case, the installation of lighting in a park to increase the risk of offending).

An impact evaluation of the same intervention might seek to compare reported incidents of crime in a period (say 12 months) prior to and after the installation of the new lighting. This will provide some insight as to whether crime has been positively (or negatively) affected by the new lighting. To make sure that any changes are not part of a wider geographical trend, a series of control sites might also be identified. These sites will not have benefited from lighting upgrades. Similar pre and post crime data comparisons might be conducted for these control sites, to determine if the changes in the treatment site are due to the changes in lighting. Another feature of an impact evaluation might be associated with measuring perceptions of park users. It might be anticipated that people feel safer with the improved lighting. Surveying park users pre and post the lighting upgrades will provide some insight into how perceptions of crime have changed.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Evaluation

A council has commissioned the installation of a CCTV system in a pedestrian mall. The council has committed resources to this form of crime prevention to reduce the incidents of robbery, assault, steal from person and malicious damage to property. Twenty cameras have been installed; signage has been installed advising the public that a surveillance network operates in the area; a control room has been established which is monitored Monday through Friday noon to midnight and throughout the weekend and a communication system has been established between the control room and local police.



CCTV Evaluation Exercise

1. List the steps that you would undertake to complete a process evaluation, including what data sources you would need to assemble.
2. Devise a plan for undertaking an impact evaluation.
3. What are the benefits of starting the evaluation at the same time the CCTV system is commissioned?
4. How would you ensure that displacement and diffusion of benefits are captured by your evaluation processes?
5. What length of time would the CCTV system need to be operational to accurately assess its effectiveness?

Prisoner Reintegration Program Evaluation

Analysis has revealed that approximately 70 ex-prisoners return or move to one particular local government area each year. Further analysis revealed that less than 20% of these people receive any support from the state corrections agency. To address this gap in service delivery, the council has funded a prisoner reintegration program, which is managed by the New Beginnings organisation. The post-release support program provided by New Beginnings involves a support worker visiting the local prison (which is where the majority of ex-prisoners are released from) and disseminating information about the program. Individual prisoners can meet with the support worker. Once the prisoners agree to participate in the program, a post-release program is developed. This program covers issues like housing, employment, support networks, group work programs and income support. Upon release, the support worker regularly meets with the ex-prisoners and assists with various key tasks. Regular events and groups are held at the New Beginnings office. Free support is provided for up to four months.

Prisoner Reintegration Program Evaluation Exercise

1. List the steps that you would undertake to complete a process evaluation, including what data sources you would need to assemble.
2. Devise a plan for undertaking an impact evaluation.
3. What are some of the ethical issues associated with conducting this evaluation?
4. What are some of the challenges of conducting this evaluation?
5. How might you determine the cost-effectiveness of this program?
6. What might be included in an evaluation report of this program?