Introduction

Crime is restructuring. Over the past fifteen years it has been reducing and traditional acquisitive volume crime has become relatively less important in terms of overall aggregate patterns. In their place, new forms of crime have been emerging. Most obviously this includes digitally enabled and dependent offences where the internet and social media enable some criminogenic function. Some of these ‘new’ crimes repackage long-standing motivations and methodologies. Others are more innovative and have distinctively original elements, enabling harms to be conducted at scale and sometimes remotely, creating greater disjunctions between the place of victimisation and the place of offender residence than were possible before. But in addition, there are forms of violence and abuse that were previously ‘hidden’ but are now becoming more visible, with higher rates of public reporting and police recording.

Set against this backdrop, the purpose of this report is to examine how crime prevention is being and could be framed to respond to this altered spectrum of risks and threats. Components of this frame have started to be delineated by the Home Office (2016) in their recently published ‘Modern Crime Prevention Strategy’. The strategy is premised upon the development of strong evidence in order that key risks can be diagnosed and appropriate treatment responses administered. This approach effectively sets the policy context for the empirical findings outlined below. The insights and evidence that are summarised have been distilled from four studies conducted as part of the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction. These studies focused upon very different crime problems and the preventative strategies and tactics leveraged against them. Consequently, they illuminate some innovative facets of contemporary crime control.
The four studies can be summarised as follows:

- Will smart cities be safe cities? Urban areas across the globe are seeking to promote the idea that they can harness new ‘big data’ and ‘Internet of Things’ technologies to improve the management of a range of urban problems. Based upon documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with key actors in the smart cities movement, the analysis focused in particular upon the implications for public safety.

- Domestic Violence and the DASH Risk Assessment Tool. Risk assessment instruments are an increasingly important aspect of how practitioners identify which crime risks and threats should be prioritised for prevention activity. The study looked at the policing practices gravitating around the DASH risk assessment process used for domestic violence cases by police.

- Prevent and Crime Prevention. One of the most pressing and high profile issues currently is how to manage risks of terrorist violence. This project used concepts and theories drawn from general crime prevention, to leverage new insights about how the UK government’s Prevent strategy is working and evolving.

- Behavioural Crime Prevention Communications. Based upon a social experiment followed by a field trial in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, the final project was designed to establish ‘what works’ in communicating crime prevention advice to the public.

The evidence-base derived from the experiment formed the basis of 10 principles of Behavioural Crime Prevention (‘BCP’). These principles were used to develop an innovative crime prevention campaign in Phase 2 of the research.

The main body of the report is structured around briefly setting out the key issues, insights and evidence distilled from the four studies. The conclusion then seeks to draw together some of the wider implications in terms of how crime prevention should be conceptualised and configured for the future. However, before this, the next section first briefly outlines some key ideas and perspectives about crime prevention.

### PART 2

### Crime Prevention

#### Key Ideas & Frameworks

Crime prevention as a set of activities and interventions has been disaggregated and broken down through the application of several conceptual framings. In an early and influential treatment, ideas from public health were imported to delineate primary, secondary and tertiary modes of crime prevention (Brantingham and Faust, 1976). Primary prevention was defined as involving modifying criminogenic conditions in the physical and/or social environment. In contrast to this, ‘secondary crime prevention’ is more explicitly targeted towards early identification and intervention with individuals or groups exposed to criminogenic circumstances. Tertiary crime prevention is the most targeted configuration, focused upon inhibiting recidivism amongst prior offenders.

van Dijk and de Waard (1991) differentiated between preventive activities seeking to engage with offenders, situations and victims. Tonry and Farrington (1995) also separated out more ‘social’ and more ‘situational’ tendencies in crime prevention work, but they nuanced three specific ‘social’ strategies, namely: developmental prevention’ – inhibiting the acquisition of criminal potential at an individual level; ‘community prevention’ – steering social norms to influence group and peer behaviour; and ‘criminal justice prevention’ – which relies upon formal social control capacities and capabilities.

There are affinities here with the role of ‘focused deterrence’ strategies in leveraging preventative effects. Kennedy (2008) assembles a compelling argument that communication is a critical component of successful prevention, inasmuch as it is signals about risks that shape the decision-making of both potential offenders and victims.

McCord’s (2003) analysis concluded that there are ‘cures’ that can harm. Based upon a review of several general crime prevention programmes, she identified how narrowly selected success criteria can neglect the potential for wider and longer deleterious consequences being unintentionally induced. This is
especially apposite for crime prevention programmes which are seeking to engage with complex social problems, through the implementation of multiple intervention modes. It steers our attention towards the possibility that interventions conducted under the auspices of such programmes may deliver some benefits at the same time that they cause some negative consequences, which may not always be measured.

Further to which, Grabosky’s (1996) review of what works in crime prevention found that successful interventions in some situations and settings cannot be assumed to be similarly successful in other contexts, on the grounds that there is evidence that not all benefits transfer and translate. Taken in conjunction with McCord’s findings, this poses important questions about the wisdom of social scientists seeking to derive generalizable crime prevention frameworks. Equally, it suggests that seeking to pick up and apply models from established crime problems in an effort to prevent new and emerging risks and threats may accomplish less than anticipated.

Will Smart Cities be Safe Cities?

Around the world, city administrations are increasingly talking about how they aspire to become ‘smart cities’. It is argued that smart cities possess three defining qualities. They are: Instrumented – utilising a multitude of digital and human sensors to steer and guide urban governance processes and the delivery of key public service; Interconnected – they routinely network data, algorithmic systems and people across a range of policy domains; and Intelligent – they harness the power of new predictive analytics algorithms in order that they don’t just react to issues, they can anticipate them (or to be more modest, at least some of them).

The particular focus of the study was upon how public safety issues are envisioned by the designers of ‘smarter’ urban environments. Put another way: what are the implications for crime and policing as the internet of things is threaded into the urban fabric? It was based upon interviewing key actors involved in urban policy development and design, and analysis of a large quantity of policy documents from the UK and globally on smart cities?

Key findings from the analysis include:

- Developing instrumented urban infrastructures will likely induce new kinds of crime risks and threats that have to managed and countered.
- With a few exceptions, the public safety implications of ‘smartening up’ cities have been relatively neglected. The benefits are principally constructed as being economic and environmental.
- It is not clear who ‘owns’ the public safety implications in terms of seeing themselves as responsible for and competent to manage the public safety risks that will be related to smarter cities. A process of ‘problem shunting’ can be detected in that corporate actors do not believe this as their problem to solve, whereas government agencies do not see that they possess the competencies to engage meaningfully with the complexities of the issues raised.
Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is a prime example of the continuing evolution of our understanding of crime-related harms. Establishing what it is and who it affects, in other words diagnosing the problem, is far from a resolved issue. Defining the boundaries of the concept of DVA and putting in place valid and reliable measures to ascertain its prevalence continue to be dynamic and contested exercises. The concept itself has been defined as multi-faceted for many years in order to acknowledge the many ways that abusive behaviour may manifest (e.g. as physical, sexual, psychological and/or financial abuse). It has recently grown to encompass an explicit reference to ‘coercive and controlling behaviour’, which is itself a new criminal offence. Although the scale of the prevalence of DVA is rarely disputed, it continues to elude precise estimation, as measures and procedures for collecting information about this issue have changed over time, as have the recommended analytical techniques. Even the answers to basic questions like whether the DVA experienced by women has increased or decreased in recent years depends on the definition employed as well as analytical decisions about keeping ‘high frequency victims’ in or out of the analyses (Walby et al., 2016). Even establishing the number of women murdered through DVA each year has not been possible to ascertain from official statistics, and remains a task undertaken by a charity (Brennan, 2016). These rapid and fundamental alterations to the conceptualisation and measurement of the problem reveal a Sisyphean diagnostic task with serious implications for the development and implementation of effective responses.

This study is the first to consider in-depth the implementation of risk-led policing of domestic abuse and the DASH risk tool used by the majority of police forces in England and Wales. Although it is at the heart of the national ‘risk-led’ approach to policing DVA, in practice the DASH model varies force by force, due to differences in resources, structures and processes both within the force and among partner organisations. Within these different organisational contexts, individual officers use their discretion and professional judgment to respond to DVA, as they always have done. Yet now there is a more complex
and sophisticated conceptualisation of DVA which includes coercive and controlling patterns of abusive behaviour, as previously discussed. The research involved an analysis of official data, police surveys, interviews and frontline observations, and revealed the following:

- A lack of understanding of coercive control influences the police response at every stage: from what is recognised and officially classified as DVA, the factors most salient to police officers’ identification and assessment of risk using the DASH, and what strategies are put in place to manage that risk.

- Broadly speaking, a tendency to focus on physical violence and what has occurred at the current incident tends to dominate how police ‘diagnose’ the problem of DVA and therefore affects what ‘treatment’ they deem suitable.

- This study found that a failure to recognise coercive and controlling patterns of abusive behaviour was not uncommon, and could lead to practitioners excluding eligible cases from processes designed to respond to DVA, as well as exacerbating the long-standing tendency of police to under-appreciate the inherent risk in some situations (e.g. those presenting as ‘low-level’ or ‘verbal only’).

Although the DASH contains several questions relating to coercive control, it requires officers to have sufficient understanding of the concept to probe around victims’ responses in order to recognise and record it effectively. This research highlights the following paradox: practitioners’ lack of understanding of coercive control leads to its underrepresentation in official records, in turn reinforcing their narrow focus on physical violence, resulting in victims being ill-served by the very laws, policies and interventions designed to support and protect them. Policing DVA, which now is officially recognised in policy and law to include coercive control leads to its underrepresentation in official records, in turn reinforcing their narrow focus on physical violence, resulting in victims being ill-served by the very laws, policies and interventions designed to support and protect them. Policing DVA, which now is officially recognised in policy and law to include coercive control, requires a more sophisticated set of diagnostic tools and skills on the part of frontline practitioners. The research therefore recommended that a more focused tool be designed that foregrounds coercive control by including explicit questions and altering the response options to assist officers to see beyond the incident at hand to what might be a broader pattern of abusive behaviour. The College of Policing is now piloting a re-designed tool in three police force areas.

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**The Prevent Strategy & Crime Prevention**

Managing the risks of violent extremism to prevent radicalisation and terrorist violence will be a key ongoing challenge for police and their partners. Reflecting the broader focus upon new modalities of crime prevention, an in-depth examination of the role of the police in Prevent was conducted based upon interviews with key stakeholders and analysis of policy documentation. This refreshes work originally conducted for the Association of Chief Police Officers in 2010:

- Prevent comprises a multi-modal range of interventions. Generally, there is a lack of a robust evidence base about what works in terms of inhibiting processes of violent extremist radicalisation.

- We have evidence that police are increasingly reliant upon disruption strategies in tackling violent extremists. Understood as relatively near-event forms of preventative action, we lack robust evidence about the long-term implications of disruption. For example, does it just temporarily shift risks ‘downstream’?

- Over the past few years, Prevent has increasingly adopted and adapted ‘safeguarding’ techniques from other preventative domains.

- The changed policy accent associated with the introduction of ‘the Prevent Duty’ for all relevant public services to have ‘due regard’ for their responsibilities in inhibiting extremism, is having a significant impact upon what Prevent looks like.

- There is also increasing interest in the role of digital information environments both in terms of how they are used to try and radicalise people, but also in terms of their counter-radicalisation potential. Albeit the connections are rarely explicitly drawn, many of the interventions and techniques being applied under the auspices of the Prevent Strategy, have strong ‘familial resemblance’ to approaches found in general crime prevention work. This is potentially helpful in that establishing the efficacy of such measures in countering terrorist violence is replete with difficulties. As such, understanding what works and how, when applied to other problems, may provide some form of guidance.
One way that police routinely try to prevent crime is through undertaking crime prevention advertising campaigns. We designed a project to systematically test the efficacy of crime prevention advice campaigns delivered by the police. The work took place in two phases:

1. An experiment with 1064 members of the public where they were exposed to different crime prevention scenarios, where the message, messenger and social psychological mechanism for prevention were systematically varied across the filmed scenarios, and tested their reactions;

2. A field trial in London where we compared the effects of a traditional crime prevention campaign launched by the Metropolitan Police Service, with an approach informed by the results of the film experiment, designed around a cartoon cat called ‘CopCat’.

The work was underpinned by taking established influence and persuasion behaviour change mechanisms from the literature on Social Psychology and Behavioural Economics and formatting these for the purposes of crime prevention. Key findings and insights from this study included the following:

- We found that the majority of police crime prevention campaigns rely upon a ‘fear frame’ – they try to scare people into changing their behaviour.

- Using innovative communication devices (such as ‘clean graffiti’ and short films delivered by social media) can achieve ‘cut through’ grabbing public attention in an increasingly ‘noisy’ information environment.

- There is good evidence to suggest that ‘fear framed’ messages actually increase levels of fear of crime amongst some segments of the public. The irony being that over the past decade as recorded crime has fallen, police campaigns may well have inhibited falls in the fear of crime.

- This was confirmed by the field trial, in that the Metropolitan Police’s fear framed prevention message was found to be statistically significantly more likely to make people angry or afraid, when compared with the CopCat campaign.

- Using non-authority messengers, and presenting information clearly and using humour are potentially more effective in persuading people to change their behaviour, than using fear or long detailed lists of target-hardening measures.

- There is a particular ‘teachable moment’ currently with the public about how to protect themselves from cyber-crime risks in that they are especially receptive to such messages, and don’t feel competent to take effective risk reduction actions.

Perhaps the most important finding derived from the London field trial was that the prevention campaign ‘fronted’ by the cartoon cat had similar levels of visibility and awareness to the Metropolitan Police’s far more traditional approach. Critically however, CopCat was far less likely to make viewers angry or afraid. To adopt a medical analogy, the two communications ‘treatments’ were similarly effective, but one was far less likely to induce negative ‘side effects’.

Both the evidence generated and methodology utilised by this study has considerable potential to be applied to other crime and disorder problems.
PART 4

Implications
For Future Crime Prevention

Based upon the findings of the four projects listed above we can distil several cross-cutting principles for how we think about preventing future crimes and the future of crime prevention. The task of preventing future crimes involves forecasting possible and likely trends in crime and disorder and preparing for these patterns of development. It is not therefore concerned with specific tactical options, but is a more strategic concern. Thinking about the future of crime prevention therefore involves a focus upon how preventative interventions can and will be aligned with these developments.

It is clear that crime prevention is a multi-modal undertaking involving a spectrum of interventions spanning those positioned more ‘upstream’ from key issues of concern and those far more proximate to the event to be prevented. Another key difference is between forms of prevention that seek to modify conduct directly, and those where the behaviour change agent is more indirect, for example, by modifying aspects of the context or situation that people are located within. Notably, situational crime prevention methods and techniques have played an important role in the reductions in aggregate crime rates observed in the introduction to this report.

Aspects of our analysis suggest though, that for a number of emerging future crimes, it is less obvious what the effective situational levers for behaviour change might be. Moreover, there are also intimations that for some of these new crimes, potential victims might be unintentionally complicit in increasing their risk exposure. For example by the way that they deal with mail, with emails and with other aspects of communication and investment behaviour that may involve offline and/or online social engineering. Victims might also need assistance in fully recognising their own level of risk for a variety of reasons, as has been demonstrated with DVA research. Engaging with such challenges might be helped by adopting a form of behavioural crime prevention, grounded in solid research about how victims, as well as the professionals tasked with helping them, interpret and act when confronted by different types of risk.

Developing such an approach also makes sense in a climate of ongoing public sector austerity, in terms of being able to influence and persuade people to protect themselves where they are able to do so. This can be encouraged, as Nick Tilley found, by fostering a sense of both responsibility and competence. That is, people will engage in preventative work when they feel they ‘own’ the issue concerned, but also if they feel it is something they can do something about. These are important principles for formulating any future approaches to crime prevention.
Implications
For Evidence-Based Policing

“[W]e should help police understand that problems come in a daunting array of shapes and sizes, and help them to develop the broader analytic versatility required to reveal a broader range of problems and bring them into clearer focus” (Sparrow, 2016: 167).

This assertion from Malcolm Sparrow locates an important role for research in terms of the future of crime prevention and its engagement in preventing future crimes. It is certainly in line with the tenor of a number of the findings outlined above. The nature of these findings suggest both the possibility of and need for a reorientation of aspects of evidence based policing practice. Evidence based policing strongly commends the idea of improving how policing services are delivered to the public informed by rigorous and robust research. With its accent upon the particular value of systematic reviews and randomised control trial designs, the preponderance of attention has been upon ‘what works’ for policing ‘treatments’. But to extend this medical metaphor, what key aspects of our work have suggested is considerable potential for rigorous and robust research to be leveraged in support of an ‘evidence based diagnosis’. That is, helping police and their partners to better understand and calibrate the crime and disorder issues in terms of their prevalence, distribution and harm impacts, in order that potential effective intervention points can be identified. Rather than emphasising just ‘what works’, this is an approach concerned with ‘what matters’ in order that limited policing (including, where feasible, non-police) resources can be targeted towards those incidents and problems that possess particular public value.

The relevance and applicability of such an approach is starkly apparent when considering the official UK definition of DVA, which covers a wide range of different types of violence and abusive behaviours, including intimate partner violence, coercive controlling abuse, elder abuse, sibling abuse, and adolescent-to-parent violence, as well as so-called ‘crimes of honour’, a category that can also include female genital mutilation and forced marriage. It is perhaps not surprising that practitioners often struggle to correctly apply this broad definition in practice (Myhill & Johnson, 2016), leading to diagnostic errors that can result in the application of no treatment, an ineffective treatment, or even a harmful treatment.

Decades of research to answer the question ‘what works’ to reduce DVA reveals that reliable diagnosis leading to effective treatment is more often the exception rather than the rule, especially in the criminal justice system. For many years, the best evidence of a successful intervention was for police to make arrests when responding to misdemeanour incidents involving physical assaults. Even against this narrowly defined manifestation of DVA, the evidence for arrest as a consistently effective treatment weakened as the number of research sites and participants grew. In the end, even the original proponents of arrest had to publicly question its efficacy, especially after a 23-year follow-up study was published (Sherman & Harris, 2015). Research on DVA perpetrator programmes follows a similar storyline: a lot of investment in testing an intervention being applied to a diverse cohort of research subjects following only minimal diagnostics. On the other hand, interventions arising from specialists engaging in on-going and in-depth diagnostic discussions with their ‘patients’, such as the safety-planning and non-therapeutic support provided by victim advocates, have been demonstrated to be both effective and cost-effective across diverse cohorts of research subjects (NICE, 2014; Ramsay et al. 2009). Despite this, cuts to such services attract media attention on a regular basis, highlighting that evidence about ‘what works’ is often not the driver of the decisions made by politicians and commissioners.

Prevention is a touchstone of the UK policing model that can be traced back to the values apocryphally espoused by Sir Robert Peel in 1829. Over recent years it has been relatively neglected, reduced to a set of techniques to be implemented. In light of the changes to the profile of the dynamics and mechanics of criminal activities, that reflect wider and deeper transformative shifts in the interactional and institutional ordering of society, it is timely for a resurgent interest in concepts and practice of prevention. These may have to be adapted to an ever-broader set of crimes than those the police have traditionally handled, and may involve an array of local, national and transnational actors, depending on the form of crime and the intervention tools that are required. Given scarcity of resources, more explicit active choices between harms to prevent and guardians to make more capable will have to be made, in addition to the tasks thoughtfully set out in the Home Office’s ‘Modern Crime Prevention Strategy’.
End Notes

1. Whether measured by official statistics or by crime survey. These newer crime methodologies have created problems for both forms of measurement, including a huge boost to crime statistics for cyber-enabled economic crimes as pressures built to include those in official statistics in 2016. (See Levi, M. (2017) ‘Assessing the trends, scale and nature of economic cybercrimes’, Crime, Law and Social Change, 67(1): 3-20. DOI: 10.1007/s10611-016-9645-3.) Other forms still lie outside the frameworks developed in simpler times, increasing the challenges for demonstrating the effectiveness (or otherwise) of crime control measures, especially in an era of public distrust of data and experts.


4. Defined by the Home Office (2013) as ‘any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality’. See also https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse#domestic-violence-and-abuse-new-definition

5. Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 - Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship, see Home Office (2015) and http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted


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