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# Tackling crimes against small businesses:

## Lessons from the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas initiative

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# Tackling crimes against small businesses:

## Lessons from the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas initiative

The crime problems faced by small retailers were highlighted in the Social Exclusion Unit's 2000 report on providing access to shopping facilities in deprived areas. In June 2001, the Home Secretary announced the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas (SRDA) initiative. Under this initiative £15 million of capital modernisation funds were made available over three years to strengthen the security of small retail businesses in the ten per cent most deprived wards in England and Wales. In total, over 12,500 businesses received assistance under the scheme.

### Aims and structure

This report draws on evidence from the SRDA initiative and provides guidelines for practitioners working to increase the security and viability of small businesses. It is hoped that the recommendations may be of interest to the police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), local authorities, the business community, security professionals and other regeneration and voluntary groups working in the field.

The main discussion follows a broadly chronological path through the project process, from design to implementation:

- Targeting – a problem-solving approach
- Business and agency involvement – how to foster ownership
- Thinking through interventions
- Implementation
- Sustainability and ongoing support.

The key good practice lessons that have emerged from 12 SRDA projects have been pulled together and are highlighted throughout the report with practical examples, where possible. Eight SRDA projects were evaluated as full case studies, which involved pre- and post-implementation surveys with both businesses and customers, together with in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. A further four projects were subject to more limited evaluations of implementation by regional research teams, whose main focus was to examine the processes behind the projects and to identify any good practice.

The report finally moves on to briefly discuss emerging findings on the impact of the SRDA initiative, focusing primarily on the eight fully assessed case studies but also drawing on emerging findings from a recent telephone survey with 1,000 small businesses, half of which benefited from the SRDA initiative.<sup>1</sup>

1. The telephone survey compared the victimisation and attitudes of 507 businesses that were involved in an SRDA scheme with 493 businesses that were not involved with the SRDA. All businesses interviewed were located in England's ten per cent most deprived wards and each employed a maximum of 25 people. It is not a random sample, is not weighted and therefore may not be representative of all small businesses operating in deprived areas.

*Home Office Development and Practice Reports draw out from research the messages for practice development, implementation and operation. They are intended as guidance for practitioners in specific fields. The recommendations explain how and why changes could be made, based on the findings from research, which would lead to better practice.*

## Summary: key good practice lessons

### Targeting – a problem-solving approach

- When identifying a target area combine hotspot/crime statistics analysis with regular consultation with businesses and the wider community. This is important as the high levels of under-reporting among businesses mean recorded crime statistics may not reflect the true crime picture or wider perceptions.
- Whilst the focus of many retail crime projects has been to rather parochially focus on upgrading the security of individual premises, good projects also think about problems within the wider retail environment. Try to develop a solution that is embedded in the local regeneration or neighbourhood strategy; one that benefits the local community.
- Another important consideration in area selection is whether the proposed action is likely to complement existing provision, work and initiatives in the area. Are there opportunities to share knowledge, contacts or tie-in funding?
- Projects should carefully survey all premises within the target area to determine their specific vulnerabilities and needs. For example, consider using a survey to assess each outlet on the basis of vulnerability to crime, how essential it is for the local community, and its existing security provision.

### Business involvement – how to foster ownership

- Consider developing the role of a business owner to oversee and develop the project in liaison with CDRP/project staff. This helps to ensure that businesses drive the project forward and can help overcome the problems associated with turnover of staff from official agencies.
- Regular visits to businesses throughout a project will help agencies and project staff to manage expectations, avoid potential conflicts and build trust.
- Capitalise on any existing resources in the area to help build support for the scheme. Consider using established groups such as traders' associations, key local figures and where appropriate, the involvement of national chains to 'sell' the scheme to small businesses.

### Thinking through interventions

- When choosing interventions, ask the following questions about each. How will it work to solve the community's problems? How will it work on the ground? What needs to be in place for it to work as anticipated?
- Think carefully about the capacity of the project staff and businesses to carry the project forward, particularly where interventions require co-operation between businesses, for example radio links.
- Use innovative design and technology so as not to detract from the attractiveness of the shopping area, and where feasible, aim to improve its overall appearance.

### Implementation

- Consider the practicalities of dealing with differing opening hours, trading practices and staff patterns etc. in order to ensure minimum disruption to trade.
- Ensure that the quality of all installation work is checked regularly, giving the businesses opportunity to give feedback.
- The effectiveness of interventions, particularly CCTV systems and alarms, is heavily dependent on them being installed, operated, and monitored effectively and this will require training. Training can in turn create a 'virtuous circle', engendering a greater ownership by recipients and ensuring greater sustainability of use and impact.

### Sustainability and ongoing support

- A desire to create a sustainable project must underlie all initial plans. It is not just something to think about after implementation.
- Think about how best to ensure the ongoing use and maintenance of any equipment and also whether the businesses have the capacity to develop the crime prevention work in the future.
- Recognise that businesses will need support to carry projects forward. A strategy would be to develop the role of a key business owner and, if possible to link a project with an existing group from the start.

## Background

### The crime and disorder problem

The theoretical premise behind the SRDA initiative was not only that small retailers suffer from high rates of victimisation (Mirrlees-Black and Ross, 1995, Hopkins, 2002), compared to households, but also that crime and anti-social behaviour has a negative impact on the economic viability of small retailers, who are often ill equipped to protect themselves adequately and face greater difficulties absorbing the direct and indirect losses due to crime (Tilley, 1993, Fisher and Looye, 2000).

Indeed, preliminary analysis from the recent telephone survey confirms that crime and disorder remains a pressing concern as over 85 per cent of the 1,000 small businesses surveyed had experienced a crime between January 2003 and January 2004. Previous research has shown how crime can have a serious effect on the viability of small businesses, reducing the amount of trade they might otherwise capture (Hopkins, 2002, Taylor and Mayhew, 2002). This leads, in turn, to poor retail provision in deprived areas as customers and essential services are driven away, weakening the local economy and deepening the deprivation felt by these communities.

### The SRDA projects

The SRDA initiative provided capital funding to improve the security of small retail businesses and, as such, the majority of projects focused on local parades or small town centres. The overwhelming majority of SRDA projects aimed to tackle acquisitive crime problems, such as shop theft and burglary and, as a consequence, most chose to install target-hardening equipment such as shutters and window grilles. There were exceptions though; projects were able to build upon co-operation between businesses to implement radio-link or Shopwatch schemes and several others opted for environmental redesign measures to tackle wider anti-social behaviour problems.

While it is too early to make substantive claims about the impact of the SRDA as a whole, it is useful to outline at this stage the kind of outcomes a typical SRDA project may realistically achieve:

- an increase in security awareness among retailers
- an increase in crime reporting among retailers
- a decline in victimisation among the targeted premises
- an increased feeling of safety among staff
- an improvement in fear of crime and disorder.

## Targeting – a problem-solving approach

### Selecting a target area

The eligibility criteria for the SRDA initiative guided projects towards areas that fall within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in England and Wales (as defined by the DETR, 2000) and towards areas where local businesses are offering vital services to a local community. Clearly, within one ward or CDRP boundary, a host of commercial areas would qualify under these criteria and therefore it was necessary for project teams to undergo some initial scoping at the proposal stage. This typically involved some analysis of local crime patterns and deprivation levels. As crimes against businesses are not only under-reported (Taylor, 2002, Taylor, 2004) but also poorly recorded within police statistics (Tilley, 1993, Burrows *et al.* 1999) many projects used overall crime rates as proxy measures. Although imperfect, this is broadly reliable as it is likely that a business situated in a high-crime area will also be victimised and/or suffering the effects of wider disorder and incivilities.

However, some projects undertook more advanced analysis using not only abstract approaches such as hotspot mapping, but also alternative measures of viability such as surveys of empty premises and estimates of business closure in order to select an appropriate site. Such an intelligence-led approach may be preferable as less obvious sites will be considered; for example, several projects targeted pockets of deprivation within an otherwise prosperous and low-crime ward.

A concern raised during the SRDA was that project funding would be less effective in cases where it was directed at areas falling outside the ten per cent of most deprived wards because retail premises in those areas were likely to be less victimised. However, preliminary prevalence findings from the telephone survey, (that is the proportion of businesses

experiencing any crime<sup>2</sup>) show that a similar proportion of SRDA funded and non-funded businesses (the latter being *exclusively* drawn from the ten per cent most deprived wards) experienced a crime between January 2003 and January 2004. Eighty-seven per cent of SRDA businesses were a victim of a crime compared to 84 per cent of non-funded businesses, which suggests that the SRDA funding was correctly targeted at those businesses at risk from crime.<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally, many retail crime projects have focused on upgrading the physical security of individual premises via target hardening. However, it is often preferable, or necessary, to address the problems within the wider retail environment. For example, one project tackled the youth nuisance problems in an area surrounding a local shopping parade and worked with existing bodies to develop a solution to benefit not only the local businesses but also the wider community.

Another key consideration in area selection is whether the proposed action is likely to complement existing provision, work and initiatives in the area. Several SRDA case study projects did this effectively, considering not only other crime prevention schemes but also how their work would complement schemes with a broader remit such as youth provision initiatives. If there are complementary schemes in the target area, one consideration should be whether the funds would be better spent extending an existing scheme. This worked well in two case studies where SRDA funds enabled small businesses to join an established Pub or Shopwatch scheme. This approach not only helps the project to bed in with wider community work but it may also save time and money by channelling funding to existing capacity.

### Understanding the local crime and disorder problems

Whilst a certain amount of crime pattern analysis may have been conducted at the proposal writing stage, it is crucial for projects to gain a full understanding of the crime and disorder problems facing the business and wider community before taking any further steps.

This is particularly crucial when working with small businesses as research shows there is a substantial under-reporting of crimes against small businesses. Indeed, the case study surveys back this up. Business owners were asked whether they had reported the most recent incident of each crime type they had experienced over the previous 12 months and it was found that typically 59 per cent of these crimes had not been reported to the police.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, there is a need to balance the targeting of interventions between the problems identified in recorded crime data and the issues that are *perceived* as problematic by businesses and customers. Perceptions and reality can differ and this research shows that projects that based their work on assumptions about what a particular community needs often faced obstacles during the implementation stage.

#### Example 1: Reliance on crime statistics – a cautionary example

One case study used SRDA funds to install target hardening and boost external CCTV provision along a shopping street at the periphery of a city centre. The area was suffering from high crime, acute deprivation and localised problems with drug abuse and prostitution.

The team relied on hotspot mapping to locate the most heavily victimised businesses and these stores received target-hardening equipment. They also had ongoing plans to assist the numerous needle exchange chemists in the area that were targeted by local drug users.

Towards the end of the funding period the team admitted that with hindsight they should have given the individual target-hardening measures to the chemists before the other highly victimised retailers. However, they only discovered the true extent of the problems facing the chemists during the implementation stage when they went out and spoke to the businesses.

All of this validates the need for project teams to visit the businesses in the chosen area to get a true picture of the problems they are facing. This can be particularly helpful at picking up any low-level disorder problems and incidents of abuse and intimidation against staff as these are not well reported or recorded within official statistics. Whilst informal

2. Any crime' here includes the following crimes that respondents were asked about – burglary (and attempted), vandalism, theft of and from vehicles, theft by customers, employees and outsiders, fraud by employees and outsiders, robbery and assaults/threats/intimidation.
3. As the telephone survey did not employ a pre/post methodology we do not have a baseline to establish whether the SRDA sample experienced a higher rate of crime than the non-SRDA sample prior to the commencement of the SRDA.
4. Based on pre-implementation interviews with 86 case study businesses. Business owners were asked whether the police had come to know about the most recent incident of each crime type they had experienced over the previous 12 months – a total of 182 crimes.

face-to face visits can be effective, some projects chose to conduct a brief survey or asked businesses to record a log of all crime and disorder incidents they experienced over a short period. Such methods can also provide a useful set of baseline data.

It may also be appropriate to think about crime trends in neighbouring or similar areas so that the project can build in pre-emptive measures. For example, the night-time economy in one case study area is expanding and so the SRDA project there was designed to pre-empt any possible crime and disorder increases by working with licensees to expand the existing 'Pubwatch' scheme.

### Targeting individual businesses

It is often necessary to channel assistance at selected shops within a target area, particularly where the target area is large or where funds will be thinly spread across a number of retail sites. The guidance for the SRDA program steered projects towards retail businesses with up to approximately 3,000 square feet of retail space and those providing vital services. However, there are a number of other factors that projects may wish to consider when deciding which specific premises should benefit, including:

- **Does the business provide a key service for the local community?** For example, a chemist, launderette or general store.
- **Is the business a repeat victim?** A small number of businesses attract a disproportionate amount of crime so practitioners may want to identify and concentrate on the repeat victims in the target area.
- **What size is the business?** The research with small retailers has proved that it is often appropriate to involve national chains such as high-street chemists or large supermarkets. Although getting some national chains involved will often require persistence, these stores not only provide essential services but also evidence suggests that their involvement can add credibility to a project, fostering further involvement from small businesses.
- **Is the business new to the area?** It may be appropriate to focus on helping new businesses as research shows that the rate of start-ups is often lower in deprived areas (Small Business Service, 2004) and businesses are arguably most vulnerable to closure within the first few years of trading.
- **Does the business suffer from racist incidents?** Several projects aimed to tackle racist abuse and crimes affecting minority ethnic businesses.
- **How effective are any current internal and external security measures?** It should be a priority to target those businesses that are not adequately secure.
- **Is the building in a poor state of repair?** The low standard of physical maintenance and in particular electrical installations can make it difficult to introduce certain measures effectively.

One good way to ensure premises are targeted effectively is to conduct a risk assessment or basic crime survey among businesses, which can then encompass the relevant questions from the list above. This can also be a good opportunity to manage the expectations of the businesses before work starts. See Bowers (2001) for details on how Merseyside Police conducted such assessments and the example of an efficient approach used by one SRDA case study project (Example 2).

#### Example 2: Using a simple scoring system to assess needs

One of the SRDA case study projects focused on a town-centre area with over 200 small, mostly independent businesses. In order to select suitable premises within their target area they carried out a quick survey with all 200 businesses.

The community safety sergeant devised a pro forma survey sheet for this work, which included assessments of:

- existing security measures;
- the extent to which the business had been victimised over the past year, including any unreported incidents; and
- whether the business had been the victim of any racially motivated incidents.

Businesses were also given an opportunity to raise any other problems or issues that they felt were relevant.

This information was then fed into a simple scoring system designed to ensure that the project targeted the right premises on the basis of vulnerability to crime and how essential each outlet was for the local community. The businesses were not told that their responses would be used to rate them so there was no direct incentive for them to exaggerate. This system helped the project team to quickly identify 130 businesses that were most in need of assistance.

This proved to be a simple, effective way of targeting businesses and assessing their individual needs ahead of the implementation stage. The project team also found that the scoring system provided a clear yardstick in case of disputes about eligibility afterwards.

In addition, it is rarely the case that one intervention will be appropriate for all businesses. This is particularly true where projects aim to address issues that are only perceived as problematic by a proportion of traders. Be aware that in some cases the interventions that some retailers are pushing for might be detrimental to other businesses. In one instance, several store managers were dissatisfied with youth nuisance at lunchtimes and wished to decrease the number of school pupils using the area. However, these same youths were vital to the success of other businesses. In such difficult cases the best way forward is to consult with all the businesses to try to reach a compromise that is sensitive to the needs of all involved.

### Good practice: targeting

- When identifying the target area and its crime and disorder problems, combine techniques such as hotspot analysis with regular consultation with the business and wider community to understand which problems they see as important.
- An important consideration in area selection is whether the proposed action is likely to complement existing provision, work and wider initiatives in the area. Are there opportunities to share knowledge, contacts or tie-in funding?
- The focus of many retail crime projects has been on upgrading the security of individual premises. Good projects though, when it is desirable and achievable, engage with the wider retail environment and work to develop a solution to benefit the local community.
- Projects should carefully assess the retail premises within the target area to determine their specific vulnerabilities and needs. This can be done by using a simple survey or risk assessment.

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## Business and agency involvement – how to foster ownership

*“You’ve got to have a good working relationship with all your partners...it can’t be done by the police alone, can’t be done by the local authority alone, it needs good partnership working.”*

(SRDA project manager, November 2003)

Many SRDA projects have highlighted how the enthusiasm and commitment of the project manager can be crucial to the success of a project and how individual personalities can be central in ensuring that a specific agenda is taken forward. Arguably more important though, is the degree to which projects can benefit from involving existing agencies and community groups. Not only can this approach bring in valuable expertise and practical knowledge, but it may also be easier to involve businesses if a familiar local agency is already part of the project. However, not all SRDA projects tapped into these resources as the example 3 illustrates.

### Example 3: Capitalise on existing resources

One of the eight SRDA case studies aimed to improve the security of a local parade of five shops in an area suffering from acute multiple deprivation.

One of the premises in the parade was the base for the Community Enterprise scheme that housed the community safety wardens. Whilst these wardens were aware of the project and monitored the local area, they were not approached to take a proactive, official role. Clearly, had they been more fully involved they could have provided a much-needed link between the project team and the businesses. This in turn may have encouraged greater ownership of the project amongst businesses, leading to a more sustainable outcome.

Indeed, engaging with businesses has proved to be the lynchpin in the relative success or failure of SRDA projects and practitioners should not underestimate how difficult it can be to achieve buy-in from businesses. The interviews with project managers revealed that they frequently found it difficult to get businesses involved, particularly where the

schemes required co-operation between businesses. There were varied reasons behind this reluctance, from an entrenched distrust of public bodies to an unwillingness to share information with competitors and fears over data protection – see example 4. Therefore, it will be helpful for project teams to gauge the willingness of businesses to collaborate on any collective action, before work starts.

#### Example 4: Problems with eliciting co-operation

The project manager handling one case study site experienced considerable problems dealing with a shop owner who received target-hardening equipment. The manager explained before work began that there was no money for internal refurbishment. However, after the shop front was redecorated and new secure windows installed, the shop owner refused to cover the bare cement surrounding the new shop front, insisting that the scheme paid for the work. The floor was left crumbling and the work had not been completed when researchers revisited the site a year after implementation. This highlights the concern that, in some cases, more individualistic businesses, who have not been fully involved in the scheme, may view the work as a way to boost their competitive edge, rather than as a vehicle to improve collective security or community gain.

Projects often ran into problems when the agency and project staff failed to familiarise themselves with the area or, more importantly, the shop staff. Very often small businesses will find it difficult to attend meetings and therefore project teams should try to visit their premises or use existing community forums. This consultation is a crucial two-way process, keeping the businesses updated with the details of the project and enabling the project team to manage the expectations of the retailers, all of which helps avoid conflict and builds trust.

In one scheme, the project managers not only consulted with the businesses throughout the project but also involved a local councillor who provided a crucial link to the local residents and was a key driving force behind the project. This councillor used his community website to publicise options for the planned environmental redesign work, giving the businesses and residents input into the final design. Other projects took a more formal approach and held community forums to engage with the businesses and the wider community. For example, one team held open meetings to involve the community in the design of a mural that would improve the attractiveness of a shopping precinct.

One project manager talked about the need to build up business involvement gradually, an approach that worked well with her Shopwatch scheme.

- Start, by getting businesses involved with the scheme on an individual basis.
- Then, aim to get businesses co-operating with each other.
- A final aspiration might then be to get them to take more ownership of the immediate retail area.

*“...In lots of retail places businesses don't actually talk to each other because you're in competition – you are all looking after your own problems and you tend to look at security issues in the same way. Now because we actually meet regularly, share information, work together, we now look at it as a town centre that we are all collectively responsible for.”* (Case study project manager and business owner, March 2003)

This final stage offers a potential bridge between business partnerships and community-based partnerships or CDRPs. However, businesses will need on-going support if they are to be encouraged to develop partnership arrangements in this way. If agencies themselves cannot provide direct managerial support then one alternative is to support and build up a 'champion' amongst the retailers who can drive the project forward. Developing the role of a business owner to oversee the project in liaison with CDRP/project staff can also be a good way to circumvent problems associated with turnover of staff from official agencies.

Getting businesses fully involved in the project not only fosters ownership and facilitates greater sustainability, but often business staff can contribute vital skills to the project, such as knowledge of financial management, procurement and publicity. The following example highlights some of the potential benefits and pitfalls with involving existing business groups. Local authority staff may also like to read 'Doing the Business' (DETR, 2000) which offers clear practical advice on how local authorities can engage more effectively with small and larger businesses.

### Example 5: Using an existing network to support the project – advantages and disadvantages

Several SRDA projects used established groups such as an existing traders' association, community forum or business watch to help launch and manage their initiative.

#### Advantages

- The use of an existing group can save on limited professional resources, allowing agency and project staff to be utilised where they are most needed – for example, project design, legal issues, and procurement.
- It can increase the businesses' investment in and commitment to the project.
- It can provide a useful network for launching and publicising the project in the initial stages – a good way in to drum up support among local businesses.
- Existing group meetings may provide a useful forum to engage with businesses and customers and enable project staff to learn about relevant wider community issues and concerns.
- It may be a particularly useful way to help project teams engage with hard-to-reach groups and communities where there is little trust in official bodies and community projects.

#### Disadvantages

- A small association or group might not represent the views or concerns of all the businesses in the target area. This could mean that the most appropriate interventions are not introduced and the project could meet with resistance from non-members. Existing groups are more likely to work well where there is a high proportion of membership and where there is little or no hostility between members and non-members.
- Involving those who are not already members of the group may require persistence. As Wood *et al.* (1997) found with a small business scheme in Leicester, businesses need convincing that co-operative schemes will have an impact and are worth their time.
- Without careful management there is a danger that the project may become sidelined or unduly influenced by the priorities of the existing group.

### Good practice: fostering ownership

- Building support for the project among the retailers and, where appropriate, the wider community is critical and will require persistence on behalf of the project team and regular consultation with all stakeholders.
- Think about innovative ways to engage with the businesses and the local community. Piggy-backing onto existing traders' groups (such as Town Centre Partnerships, Shopwatch schemes) may help but also consider wider organisations, websites and involving key local figures where appropriate.
- Developing local champions and strategic ownership can help to sustain the project after funding ends and help minimise the problems associated with the loss of key project staff.

## Thinking through interventions

Once a target area and the local crime and disorder problems to be tackled have been identified, the next step is to consider what is the most appropriate scale and type of response. For the SRDA projects and the majority of crime prevention schemes there are three plausible responses, which can be combined and tailored to local needs.

- Individual security measures, for example, target-hardening equipment such as shutters, locks or CCTV.
- Co-operative crime prevention approaches such as Radiolink or Shopwatch schemes.
- Schemes that encourage wider ownership of the retail environment.

One example of the third type of response is provided by a recent pilot Shopwatch initiative in Camden, north London that has trained high-street shop staff as special constables who then patrol the shopping area. Although this pilot has not yet been evaluated, it has nevertheless put in place the arrangements for retailers to take ownership of the wider environment through police patrols and community engagement.

When thinking through which approaches are most appropriate, there are numerous issues to consider which have been covered thoroughly within existing literature such as Hough and Tilley (1998), Read and Tilley (2000) and ODPM's 'Safer Places' (2004) report. However, it is worth briefly reiterating the main points with illustrations of how SRDA projects tackled the problems.

### Mechanisms and conditional factors

If there is one main criticism of many SRDA projects, it is that very often projects did not think through how the interventions would solve the problems they identified in their proposals. For example, several projects aimed to tackle customers' fear of crime or anti-social behaviour *and* reduce acquisitive crime but only installed simple target hardening measures like shutters and gates. While such equipment may decrease acquisitive crime and increase feelings of safety among shop staff, it is more difficult to see how such equipment will impact upon wider anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.

One way to consider the likely impact of each intervention is to think through the mechanisms – how will the intervention actually work? At this point it is often helpful to '*think thief*' to understand how an offender might deal with an intervention (Ekblom 1997). Another consideration are the *conditional factors*, mainly what needs to be in place for the mechanisms to work? An example of how this might look is shown in Figure 1:

#### Figure 1: Thinking through how CCTV might work in practice

##### Intervention

Internal CCTV system to cover front entrance of shop

##### Mechanisms

1. CCTV acts as a deterrent – offenders may think that there is an increased chance of them being identified subsequent to committing an offence on camera and then being prosecuted as a result.
2. Increased camera surveillance leads to increased rates of offender apprehension as CCTV provides prosecution evidence.
3. CCTV with appropriate monitoring equipment facilitates greater natural surveillance by shop staff leading to greater risk of offender apprehension.

##### Intended outcomes

1. Reduction in shop theft, anti-social behaviour and violence in store.
2. Increased rate of detection and prosecution of offenders.
3. Increased staff and customer safety.

##### Conditional factors

1. The CCTV system is appropriate for the vulnerabilities and design of the premises.
2. Cameras are installed in the correct locations, at the right angle and height etc.
3. CCTV installed in such a way that offenders, staff and local residents are aware of its presence – e.g., by signs and/or local publicity.
4. The CCTV equipment is explained to and effectively used by staff, in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the evidential requirements of the police.
5. The CCTV system produces recorded images that are of a suitable format and quality for use in court and the local police actively support their use to prosecute offenders.

### Mix of interventions

As the problems facing retailers are rarely one-dimensional, it is often necessary for the response to incorporate a complementary mix of interventions which are sensibly tailored to the individual needs of the businesses. An important consideration should be the balance between premises-based interventions and wider design or collaborative approaches. The example in Figure 2 highlights how two different projects tackled similar youth disorder problems. While both used environmental redesign measures, the outcomes were less positive in project A as the mix of interventions proved inadequate without a diversionary youth activity, which was only ever regarded as a subsidiary aim for the project.

**Figure 2: An example of how two SRDA case study projects tackled youth disorder**

| Problem   | Cause  | Interventions   | Outcomes  |
|---|--|---|---|
| Project A – Youths congregating, playing football and causing criminal damage in a local precinct.                              | Lack of alternative space for youths and existing open design of precinct. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demolition of concrete goalposts.</li> <li>● Seats, bins, planters and play statues to disrupt 'pitch'.</li> <li>● Alternative football area only a subsidiary aim and not yet implemented.</li> </ul>           | Reduction in criminal damage but evidence youths displaced to other areas within precinct or town. Mixed feedback from businesses and customers.              |
| Project B – Youths congregating on walls and playing football outside local shops rather than on adjacent green/football pitch. | Few diversionary activities and poor design of existing environment.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Large planters to cover 'pitch'.</li> <li>● External CCTV</li> <li>● Walls replaced with seats and youth shelter and goal posts on green.</li> <li>● Other funding secured to secure outreach worker.</li> </ul> | Youths no longer congregate outside shops and make more use of existing pitch. Disorder perceived as a less serious problem by both businesses and customers. |

Another salient issue that arose during the SRDA was that of sophistication. It is important that projects do not feel pressurised to provide 'high-tech' equipment such as internal CCTV or alarms where simple solutions might prove more effective and cost-effective. Indeed, feedback from several case studies has shown that often simple, inexpensive interventions, such as tailored security advice, publicity campaigns, panic alarms and access control locks, can prove effective and popular with businesses, providing vital reassurance to shop staff. The use of the more technical equipment will also require on-going support and projects should consider the willingness of likely recipients to engage with technical equipment.

### Example 6: Interventions – helping retailers to help themselves

Retailers may often be keen to purchase security equipment but may be deterred from doing so due to uncertainty about their needs, and about what equipment would be suitable and cost-effective to match their needs. One case study project developed a novel approach to assist retailers with these sorts of decisions.

This example relates to the provision and use of internal CCTV systems. Here the project realised that many CCTV systems on offer to retailers were too sophisticated or too expensive for the premises concerned, or were used ineffectively. However, they could not afford to fund internal systems for all the premises involved in the scheme.

Their solution was to purchase a number of mobile CCTV kits installed on a temporary basis in those stores suffering the most problems. After a period of approximately three months the cameras would then be moved to another store. The intention was that this temporary loan would give retailers experience in using an appropriate CCTV system and would hopefully encourage them to buy their own system. In fact, several retailers purchased systems as a result of this approach.

### Capacity to deliver

Whilst it is good practice to consider the capacity of the project staff to deliver, projects working with businesses also need to think about whether the businesses have the skills and support required to carry the project forward once funding has ended.

Most SRDA schemes used premises-based interventions. Few had problems with the capital funding arrangements and explained upfront that the responsibility for the maintenance of equipment fell with the individual retailers. Several projects took a direct approach and spread the SRDA funding further by asking businesses to contribute. In one example, a supermarket contributed approximately £4,000 towards the cost of a new digital CCTV system, which meant more

businesses could benefit. While this may not always be possible, the project manager felt that this approach had additional benefits, helping businesses to take ownership of the project and enabling them to get the most from their equipment.

However, if the planned response is likely to require co-operation between businesses (for example a radio-link or Shopwatch scheme) then capacity issues are more complex. As mentioned previously, it is advantageous to canvass businesses at the initial stage to gauge to what extent they are willing to work together and take responsibility for their new equipment. If external CCTV is the best way forward, can the system be tied into a wider council scheme? If not, is there an established business willing to take responsibility for the CCTV camera monitoring?

### Security v. attractiveness – a balancing act.

Clearly, the viability of any shopping area is closely related to the overall design and accessibility of the retail environment. While they may be individually secure, fortress-like shops detract from the community sense of place that underpins retail vitality. Example 7 highlights how one store was struggling to achieve a balance between appearance and physical security.

#### Example 7: Security v. signage?

Even without directly experiencing victimisation, shops in high-crime areas can lose trade by having to adopt a low profile and restrictive practices in order to avoid victimisation. For instance, an internet café in one SRDA case study site deliberately avoided advertising its presence, foregoing any signage on the shop front, and installed blinds to obscure the nature of the business inside. Furthermore, the shop had progressively shortened its evening opening hours due to fears about staff and customer safety. As a consequence, the business was planning to relocate as it felt that it was being impeded from attracting sufficient custom in its current location. This example highlights the complex nature of the relationship between security, aesthetics and business viability.

Any crime prevention activity should work to ensure that the aesthetics of the area are not compromised and, wherever possible, are enhanced by the interventions chosen. Technology and creative design can help to strike a balance between what may be seen as competing priorities. For more detailed guidance on how to build safer, well designed urban environments, see the 'Safer Places' report (ODPM 2004).

### Innovative design of individual measures

Once the type and scale of response is determined, attention should turn to the detail of the individual measures. This can mean anything from designing attractive wrought-iron gates to comply with planning regulations within conservation areas, to tailor-making shop shutters so that existing awnings still function. Example 8 illustrates how accessibility and crime prevention can be achieved through simple design.

#### Example 8: Interventions – thinking through design and use

In one case study area a path running behind a row of shops was frequently being used as a 'rat run' by shop thieves who used it to make off with stolen goods and to break into flats that were located above the retail premises. The project originally considered simply closing off this path to block access by offenders. However, the path was also an official right of way and a popular short cut for locals, so this proposal had to be abandoned.

The project then considered installing lighting to illuminate the area and a camera to provide images of offenders. However, it was realised that the speed at which offenders moved along the path was such that effective camera images would probably not be captured. The solution to this was to fence off the path but not to block access. Instead, a slide-bolt gate was installed which provided the only means of access to the path. This gate was also directly situated by the camera and lighting. Thus, people were 'corralled' through this gate, and in the time it took them to open the gate, a good quality image of individuals could be recorded by the camera. This simple measure has stopped offenders using the alleyway as an escape route and has also been instrumental in a number of arrests.

### Good practice: selecting interventions

- Think carefully about *how* each intervention is likely to work and what needs to be in place for the intervention to work as anticipated.
  - Consider both premises-based measures and the scope for co-operative approaches that bring in a concern for the wider retail environment.
  - It is important that simple measures are not automatically rejected in favour of more sophisticated interventions, as this may not always be an effective use of resources.
  - Think about the capacity of project, agency and business staff to deliver and manage the interventions, especially once the project formally ends.
  - Try to use innovative design and technology to ensure that the interventions do not compromise the aesthetics or accessibility of the retail environment.
- 

## Implementation

### Practicalities and project management

While it may seem obvious, there are a number of practical issues to consider when working with businesses to reduce crime. First, it is vital to ensure that any installation work is carried out with the minimum of intrusion so that businesses do not lose trade. This will often require careful planning due to differing working hours and practices. Second, regular visits throughout the installation phase are also important to not only check the quality of the work but also to get feedback from retailers.

Indeed, good project management is not only about implementing what has been planned but having the creativity and flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and negative feedback. Many SRDA projects faced problems during the implementation stage, from a lack of awareness about planning restrictions, prohibitively expensive installation costs, to unreliable contractors. While it is easy to say that these obstacles could be avoided if sufficient time had been set aside for planning and risk assessment, in reality these problems can and do occur, and often what is needed is the strength to abandon or adapt original plans.

The research suggests that implementation is often smoother where there is continuity of personnel and involvement of senior staff. It is advantageous if the key team members are at a level of seniority where they are able to make quick decisions without referring back to colleagues as this can help prevent delays and rectify problems.

Many SRDA projects also benefited enormously from using the skills and contacts of partners, and indeed of businesses themselves. For example, one project manager hired a New Deal organisation for manual installation work as they had worked well on similar projects in the area. The supervised New Deal workers installed fencing, grilles and carried out general environmental improvements for the project. The work was conducted with minimal disruption and to schedule. This approach can avoid problems with procurement because if a contractor has been recommended by another agency, then it is likely that they will be reliable and perform well again.

### Maximising the benefits

A shortcoming of many SRDA projects has been that interventions have been introduced in a rather mechanistic way without sufficient thought being given to how the effect of the interventions can be maximised and sustained once implemented.

To give an example, while many projects chose to install CCTV systems only a few chose to maximise the benefits by encouraging retailers to use the technology proactively. However, CCTV worked well as a tool within one Shopwatch scheme. Here mobile CCTV systems were fitted in 'hotspot' stores throughout a town centre. The cameras were used proactively in conjunction with the Shopwatch offender descriptions and radios, enabling staff to pre-empt situations on the shop floor. This gave the staff time to react and decide what to do. For example, they could choose to bring extra staff onto the shop floor to deal with an incident, or to deter a potential offender, alert neighbouring stores and use the cameras and radios to pass on accurate physical descriptions of offenders to other stores or the police.

*"If we know an offender's approaching, we put staff at the front of the shop. We used the radios 50 – 100 times in the last year, giving the position of a likely offender."*  
(Business owner, April 2003)

This same project also took a sensible approach to implementation that ensured the scheme had the capacity to expand, building in sustainability – see Example 9.

### Example 9: Planning for sustainability – implementation

*"What we've managed to do with the £20,000 is put an audio link in to the CCTV (linking shop radios with the town-centre CCTV station)... that can support as many shops as want to go on it... Because we spent it on six internal cameras we can move them around so it has the potential to benefit every shop that joins the scheme."*

(Project manager, April 2003)

Issues of sustainability are not only relevant when it comes to planning the organisation and funding of a crime reduction scheme; they can also have a direct bearing on the design and implementation of physical interventions. For instance, in one SRDA case study a radio link was installed to complement the existing street CCTV system. In installing the radio link a decision had to be made as to where to install the radio base station. The cheapest solution – as the base station had to be physically linked to the CCTV system cable network – would have been to pick the premises which necessitated the shortest length of cable to be laid.

However, the project manager realised that such an approach whilst cheap, was not conducive to the sustainability of the scheme. The siting of the base station depended on the manager of the chosen premises being prepared to host and manage that station. If, as was likely at some point, the host premises decided to give up this role, then the base station would need to be relocated. If the radio link cable was simply run to the nearest premises, then at this future point in time the scheme would have to find the money to dig up and extend the cable to the premises of a new base station 'volunteer'.

Of course, if capital funds were not available to do this at this future date then the radio link would be unable to function. The project manager therefore decided – as the scheme had sufficient short-term capital funding at the outset – to site the base station at the furthest premises from the cable start point. This meant that if in future the radio base station had to be relocated, this could be done without major expenditure as all the other participating premises would be located along the length of the existing cable.

## Training

Physical interventions interact with the social environment in complex and subtle ways and careful thought needs to be given to how equipment will be perceived and used. The findings show that some projects have not fully considered how to secure the resources needed to train the businesses to use their equipment. Inadequate training has meant that some businesses cannot use their security equipment effectively, which has in severe cases meant the equipment is not used at all, undermining the effectiveness of the project. These problems were most acute where projects had installed electronic equipment such as intruder alarms and CCTV systems without tailored training.

These simple but typical examples are taken from two SRDA sites. Despite initial training, one store manager we spoke to was not getting the most out of her new alarm system because she was not shown how to automatically receive a telephone call at home when the shop alarm was activated. Similarly, staff benefiting from another project were unable to reset the time on their CCTV system, which meant that although they were recording, it is unlikely that the images could have been used as evidence.

*"We could do with much more training...the contractors were too quick in explaining...A print-out of instructions in big text would be very useful"*  
(Business owner, November 2003)

Several stores did not understand how to use their equipment and many others were not following the guidance they had been given on how to use their systems appropriately as a crime prevention measure. Example 10 shows the problems faced by this project and the steps they took to overcome the problem.

### Example 10: CCTV – training and support solutions

Early in the installation period of one case study project the team became concerned that retailers were not managing their internal CCTV system appropriately. Despite attempts by the project architect and CCTV contractor to address this by supplying businesses with advice and relevant information leaflets, spot checks revealed that there were a number of problems in the way CCTV was being used by some businesses, namely:

- staff members in several businesses remained unaware of how to operate their systems – how and when to change tapes etc;
- several businesses had failed to notify the Data Protection Register – see guidance below; and
- similarly, many businesses were not displaying CCTV notices, failing to number and rotate tapes and were leaving tapes in unsecured positions.

As a result, an easy-to-use CCTV checklist was drawn up and the crime prevention officer visited all the shops that received internal CCTV. Only five businesses were operating the CCTV system in a way that the team considered satisfactory so further efforts were made to rectify the situation. As the SRDA funding had ended, the team used their links with the local Enterprise Shopwatch Co-ordinator (funded by Single Regeneration Budget) who set up a training course for the businesses. The community safety sergeant reported that around half of the businesses had attended the course.

This example highlights how the complexity of security equipment should match the skills and readiness of the recipients to use the equipment effectively. Although the businesses that received CCTV systems were pleased with their equipment, there was evidence that in many cases it was not being used effectively. Where retailers are unwilling to be trained in how to use complex equipment, projects should consider whether a similar impact could be achieved if the money was used to provide more straightforward, cheaper items to a greater number of businesses.

*It should be noted that in 2004 new guidance was published by the Information Commission which means that not all basic CCTV systems used by small businesses are now covered by the Data Protection Act 1998. Practitioners and businesses should consult the Information Commission guidance at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk> to see if their CCTV systems are covered by the Act.*

### Good practice: implementation

- Be realistic about how long the procurement and implementation process will take and see the project plan as something flexible that may have to be adapted in order to overcome obstacles.
- Try to minimise the disruption caused by installation works as this can negatively impact upon the daily work of small retailers, losing them trade.
- Ensure that there is sufficient and on-going provision for quality checking and refinement throughout the installation process.
- Projects using CCTV may like to consider how to maximise the benefits of the system. For example, when linked in with a radio system the cameras can be used more actively by shop staff, who can alert other shops to the presence of known shoplifters. Staff can then take steps, such as moving staff to front of store, to prevent snatch thefts etc. However, where co-operation between businesses is low, it may be appropriate for schemes to use CCTV more passively.
- The effectiveness and utility of interventions will also be enhanced if appropriate training and support is provided to intervention recipients. Training and support also help to foster a greater ownership by recipients and hence ensures sustainability of use and impact.

## Sustainability and ongoing support

*"...Sustainability happens once you get to a point where they [businesses] take ownership of it as a centre for themselves and realise how much the community can work together, once you get that working, it will work whatever."*  
(Project manager, April 2003)

Whilst the term sustainability has become somewhat of a catch-all term, the essential premise remains critical for crime prevention projects, especially those in the SRDA which provided capital-only funding. A concern for the long-term impact of the interventions must drive the initial thinking behind any project and teams should plan to ensure they maximise the value of their interventions now and in the future. Ideally, a crime prevention project should be able to continue over time and be malleable enough to adapt to the changing needs of the target area.

Provided physical measures such as shop shutters are installed correctly, it is likely that they will prove to be fairly sustainable, at least in the short-term. What often proves more difficult is ensuring that measures are well maintained over the longer term and sustaining the co-operation between businesses. It can be difficult to foresee how equipment could be compromised in the long term. For example, Ekblom (2001) cites how the invention of a new 'Gator wrench' allowed offenders to conquer a host of esoterically shaped nuts and bolts that were previously installed as a crime prevention measure. Sustainability needs to be considered in terms of:

1. The design and maintenance of any equipment. For example, innovative design can help to ensure that measures are used effectively long after the novelty wears off. In addition, SRDA projects had to think about how best to secure funding for any ongoing costs such as maintaining environmental improvements and replacing CCTV video stores.
2. Training and support to ensure the ongoing proper use of equipment.
3. Fostering business ownership of the project so businesses are better placed to carry the project forward. This is achievable provided there is a stable base of businesses and the interventions are not solely street-based.

Whilst this report highlights how critical it is to build in sustainability from the outset, on the ground this is rare. Therefore it is worth examining some of the key issues to consider at the critical stage when the funding has been spent and the installation has been completed.

- Revisit the site at regular intervals where possible to canvass opinions about the outcomes and address any outstanding training needs or installation work. For example, one project manager we interviewed had not visited his site after installation and months later was surprised to find that several shop shutters could still not be locked.  
*"The one thing I would do with hindsight is have a hand-over exercise and sit down with the shopkeepers...we never did that and I suppose I've not paid the attention I should have done."* (Project manager, March 2003).
- Regular contact can be particularly important if there is a danger that certain retailers might suffer a backlash for making a stand against crime and disorder. For example, one business owner responsible for a CCTV monitoring station reduced the angle of one external CCTV camera following a threatening attack by local offenders worried about the level of information he was storing. This highlights the importance of continuing to consult with businesses on an on-going basis following implementation.
- The research has shown that SRDA activity has often boosted levels of reporting and partnership working among the businesses involved. Project work can provide an important window of opportunity for agencies to capitalise on the trust that is developed between formal agencies and businesses. It is therefore crucial that all agencies involved carry these relationships forward and continue to offer support to the business community after the project ends.
- Revisit the plans for the maintenance of the equipment and ongoing financial support. One project manager developed a 'forward plan' for funding, where ongoing needs such as training or technology upgrades are written into a plan so that when a funding stream becomes available, the team can formulate a bid quickly. There may also be opportunities to secure ongoing assistance from existing business forums or trading associations, provided they are adequately involved throughout the project.

### Example 11: Planning for sustainability – maintenance and support

Two of the most common challenges faced by projects in attempting to achieve sustainability have been retaining the capacity to co-ordinate the project beyond the external funding period and retaining the commitment and input from any participating agencies.

One SRDA case study was particularly effective at dealing with these challenges. First, businesses benefiting from the scheme's interventions paid a modest monthly fee to be part of the scheme. This fee not only covered the on-going maintenance and insurance costs for the interventions, but it also covered the costs associated with renting, heating and equipping a project office.

Second, the scheme partly depended on effective working relations with the local police. However, the project had found in the past that these working arrangements were prone to suffer when key police participants moved post or station. Consequently, to secure a more reliable long-term contribution from the police service, the project manager lobbied the local police superintendent. The solution that the police came up with was to enter into a service level agreement, which formalised the minimal level of support that the police service would provide the scheme. The manager hoped that this would go some way to 'insure' the scheme against future disruption caused by a turnover in police personnel.

- Think about ongoing publicity to ensure customers and wider residents are aware of the scheme. Two case studies we examined installed street CCTV and both projects were deemed a success by the businesses involved. However, many local residents believed that the cameras were either fake, or not monitored. It is crucial that local residents believe that all equipment is appropriate and functioning correctly, otherwise they will not buy into the scheme. (See Johnson and Bowers (2003) for more detailed guidance on the role of publicity in crime prevention projects.)
- Consider how to share knowledge and experience with others, whether this is a lesson for agencies about project management or practical advice that could benefit businesses outside the project area. One project manager working to develop a Shopwatch scheme has since helped several neighbouring towns to develop similar schemes, passing on her practical knowledge and helping them to progress at a faster rate.

## Impact

Having highlighted some of the key good practice lessons from SRDA projects, it is appropriate to briefly consider the sort of outcomes that such good practice can deliver. Although only interim findings on impact are available from the case studies at this stage, these initial indicators are promising. A fuller impact report is planned which will consider in more detail the overall impact of the SRDA initiative.

### A reduction in crime and disorder?

Due to the limitations with the telephone survey methods it is difficult to rely on this data to assess the overall impact of the SRDA initiative (see footnote in targeting section). While the overall risks of crime for the businesses that received funding and those that did not are broadly similar, preliminary survey results indicate that for some of the more serious crimes, the average number of incidents per victimised premise was lower for SRDA funded businesses. For example, for those SRDA businesses that were burgled between January 2003 and January 2004, the average number of incidents experienced was 1.4 compared to an average of 1.7 burglaries among victimised non-SRDA businesses.

This provides some support for the case study findings, with the analysis from the eight case studies indicating that the majority of projects achieved a reduction in premises-based incidents of crime and disorder, with several notable reductions in serious property crimes such as burglary. The following two examples are indicative of the type of impact that SRDA projects could expect to see.

One case study introduced a complementary mix of interventions that were predominantly focused around physically blocking opportunities for offending and increasing surveillance around a parade of ten local shops. This project saw a marked reduction in the number of incidents of victimisation among those businesses that responded to the evaluation survey. In the year before the scheme these retailers experienced 24 incidents of victimisation, including several

burglaries and robberies. In the year after implementation this fell to nine incidents and none of the premises experienced a robbery or a successful burglary.

Similarly, another project that made environmental improvements and installed CCTV in a small parade of 11 shops serving a council estate saw the total number of incidents fall from 102 in the year prior to implementation to 45, post-implementation.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps more importantly, while there had been four robberies and two burglaries in the year prior to the scheme, there were no such serious acquisitive crimes in the year after implementation.

While such reductions in acquisitive crime are encouraging, evidence suggests that, because of a reliance on target-hardening measures, few of the case studies considered or successfully tackled crime and disorder problems in the surrounding retail environment. This is not to say that some projects did not show the potential to do so. For instance, there were several encouraging collaborative schemes that given continued work, could reduce town-centre crime and disorder more widely.

### Additional benefits

The impact of the SRDA on business viability is not straightforward. Positively, retailers who felt that the SRDA had reduced local crime and disorder and/or improved the safety of their staff were also more likely to feel that the project had improved the prospects of their business. Retailers though were less likely to rate the SRDA as having a positive effect on their turnover and in some projects it was clear that the SRDA alone was unlikely to solve many of the deeper economic challenges confronting some of these small businesses. Nevertheless, these initial findings do indicate that the reduction in crime attributed to such crime prevention projects has the potential to contribute to the economic viability of individual retailers and wider shopping areas, particularly where this work is linked in with comprehensive businesses regeneration activity.

The concentration on the security of individual premises and in some cases, a lack of publicity, meant that few SRDA projects managed to successfully alter the perceptions of local customers, even where feedback from businesses was positive. Indeed, few schemes had made customers feel significantly safer or changed their perceptions of crime problems in the area.

However, a number of other important benefits that have been seen in some of the case study projects include:

- An increase in levels of reporting incidents to the police. This is an important finding indicative of stronger relationships with the police and a greater awareness of crime issues. To give an example, in one police-led case study the percentage of incidents reported rose from 47 to 53 per cent and importantly, the most frequently given reason for not reporting crimes changed from 'police couldn't have done anything' to 'the incidents were not serious enough'.<sup>6</sup>
- Improvements in retail staff confidence, particularly at vulnerable times throughout the working day. For example, following the installation of better street lights, grilles and external CCTV, the businesses involved in one case study project were no longer concerned about closing up their premises which had previously been a worrying time for many of the business owners and staff.
- Increased knowledge of security issues among businesses. Over half of SRDA- funded businesses surveyed said that the scheme had had a 'big impact' or 'some impact' upon their knowledge of security and crime prevention.
- Improved perceptions regarding the attractiveness of the retail areas where projects altered the design of the retail environment. For example, in one project where planters, a mural and other simple environmental improvements were introduced, 73 per cent of customers surveyed<sup>7</sup> agreed that the area was more attractive than a year ago.
- An ability to make more use of available retail space, increasing the amount of goods stocked and/or displayed – see example 12.

5. In the post-implementation survey at this site the respondents were unable to provide quantifiable answers when asked about outsider theft victimisation so this crime type has been excluded from both the pre- and post- calculations.

6. The respondents were asked whether they had reported the most recent incident of each crime type they had experienced over the previous 12 months. These figures are based on 14 responses to the pre-implementation survey and, due to lower crime levels post-implementation, only eight responses in the post survey.

7. In December 2003, a street survey with 47 customers was conducted, a year on from implementation at the case study site. Customers were asked whether they agreed with the statement 'this area is a more attractive place to shop than a year ago'.

### Example 12: Changing business practices

A newsagent involved in an SRDA case study project was especially positive about the target-hardening equipment that had been installed to his premises. The fencing that now delimited the back alleyway meant that he felt secure enough to re-open his back door for deliveries, which had previously been kept permanently locked. This is a real benefit to the business as stock is now delivered straight into the storeroom in minutes, rather than being taken through the store.

This experience is similar to that of a chemist involved in another scheme that benefited from a mobile CCTV system. The CCTV cameras meant the shop was less vulnerable to shoplifting and the manager felt able to re-open their second entrance and display stock on a stand, which prior to the CCTV had been difficult to monitor. These changes increased the floorspace and critically, the opportunity to sell.

- Improved working links and co-operation between retailers and between retailers and the local police. Indeed, the survey data substantiate this as approximately 30 per cent of SRDA-funded businesses attend *'meetings between local businesses and police'* compared to just 17 per cent of non-SRDA businesses. While the majority of projects we looked at developed co-operative arrangements during the SRDA, arguably the most effective relationships were fostered where co-operation was a prerequisite from the start i.e. Shopwatch schemes.

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## Conclusion

This research on the SRDA initiative has identified some key good practice lessons, many of which will be transferable to those working on small business crime more widely. These lessons are summarised at the front of the report. As mentioned above, a report assessing the impact of the SRDA initiative will be produced in due course. However, a number of key factors that are critical to the success of projects working to reduce crimes against businesses have emerged throughout this report.

First, the design of the project will benefit from early consultation with local businesses and, whilst the interventions should be tailored at local crime and disorder problems, the scope for reducing crime in the wider retail environment should be considered. The research has also shown that throughout implementation project teams are likely to face a number of practical challenges, but that these issues can often be resolved by adequate planning and by providing businesses with ongoing training, support and feedback. Indeed, the most effective projects were those that thought about these issues right from the outset. Whether through planning, innovative design, or supporting businesses, the SRDA has provided many examples of how to build in sustainability from the start, in order to develop a scheme that works and one that can be sustained.

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## Further information

More information on the funding of the SRDA initiative and further thematic examples can be found on the small retailers' minizone hosted at [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)

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