

Police Service of Northern Ireland

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POLICY DIRECTIVE

REASSURANCE POLICY

1. POLICY IDENTIFICATION

POLICY TITLE: Reassurance Policy

POLICY OWNERSHIP:

DEPARTMENT	Criminal Justice Department
BRANCH	Community Safety Branch

POLICY APPROVED BY:

CCF REF/OTHER	Chief Constables Forum - Ref: 73/05
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2. POLICY STATEMENTS

(1) Policy

- (a) The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is committed to increasing public confidence and delivering reassurance by working in partnership with the community to address the public's sense of insecurity and fear of crime.
- (b) The PSNI will strive to make Northern Ireland safer through professional, progressive policing, creating a Service everyone can be proud of because it delivers policing at its best.

3. INTRODUCTION

(1) Summary

- (a) This Policy outlines a model for the delivery of reassurance policing based around the principles of Policing with the Community.
- (b) Three of the five main themes of policing with the community underpin this Policy namely **communication, consultation and engagement**.
- (c) Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies (HMIC) defines reassurance as 'the extent to which individuals perceive that order and security exists within their local environment'. Reassurance comes from a confidence in the Police Service to deliver an effective and relevant service and, as it is shaped by every interaction with the Police Service, it **applies to all police officers and police staff** who help to deliver that service.

(2) Drivers for Change

- (a) The PSNI is aware of the need to increase the public's sense of security, both by effectively addressing local crime issues and by placing a greater emphasis on reassurance as a policing objective.
- (b) This vision of policing will adhere to the values of honesty and openness; fairness and courtesy; partnerships, performance, professionalism; and respect for the rights of all.
- (c) Reassurance is a complicated, multi faceted concept that is dependent on people's perceptions and can alter with time, particularly after a significant event. It should be seen not only as an end but a means to deliver a sense of security in communities.
- (d) A total of 108,468 offences were recorded during 2007/08 compared with 121,144 in 2006/07. This represents a decrease of 12,676 (-10.5%) and is the lowest level of recorded crime in Northern Ireland since the Home Office introduced revised counting rules for crime in 1998/99.
- (e) While crime continues to fall the change in how clearances are measured has potential to impact on public reassurance and fear of crime.
- (f) There is often a considerable gap between the public interception of crime and the reality. This differential is referred to as the 'reassurance gap'¹.
- (g) Serious crime and even volume crime, at any one time directly affect only a small percentage of the population. This mismatch between actual crime and perception owes more to the fact that every day members of the public witness or experience some incivility, disorder or vandalism, the accumulative effect of which impacts on them disproportionately. These are referred to as 'signal crimes or disorders' (see Appendix 'A') which may trigger a member of the public to interpret them as a warning about their level of security eg vandalism in an area can influence how safe the public feel in that area.

¹ National Reassurance Policing Project

- (h) In order to allay the public's fears, every interaction with the community should be citizen focused, projecting a professional approach which is courteous, reassuring and sympathetic. Similar to the forensic principles that **'every contact leaves a trace'** the demeanour, behaviour or use of language of any member of the police family can have an impact on how confident or reassured a person may feel. In relation to public perception, **'every contact leaves an impression'** and as a consequence a lot of good work can be undermined by one negative experience.
- (i) Official crime figures do not provide the full picture of what is happening in a community as incidents often go unreported for a variety of reasons, or do not constitute crimes. According to the NIO report 'Experience of Crime, findings from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey' issued in 2007 one sixth of occupants of households surveyed were victims of at least one crime 12 months prior to being interviewed, this is a 4.1 decrease on the previous year. However many crimes remain unreported and while a decrease in reported crime may reflect a reduction in actual crime, it could also reflect a loss of confidence by the public in the ability of the police to solve it. Many of the unreported incidents will be 'signal crimes and disorders' which increase the perceived risk to individuals' safety and consequently the fear of crime in the area. These signal incidents should be identified and influence the setting of local priorities to shape the community's collective risk perception. (See Appendix 'B' for the reasons why crime goes unreported).
- (j) Enhancing relationships with the community in order to encourage the reporting of crime and disorder incidents will help reflect the true situation. This will inevitably lead to an increase in reported crime figures, which will have to be analysed and dealt with accordingly. A growing confidence in neighbourhood security will overcome an increasing unwillingness to report incidents, support others to act as witnesses of crime and will enhance the flow of information to assist in the detection of crime.
- (k) While it is essential that police continue to deal with all crimes, the most dynamic effect on the public's feeling of security will be achieved by dealing with those incidents which have the most damaging effect on their perception of fear ie those that are 'highly visible' such as broken windows and graffiti rather than those that are more serious and less visible. This is particularly important where the fear of crime is more prevalent than the actual crime itself (see Appendix 'C'). Sensitivity towards victims, witnesses and others, no matter how minor the matter may appear, can help ensure that fears do not become exaggerated.
- (l) The community should be empowered to identify and prioritise the problems in their area, which they wish to be addressed and to play a part in the solution, exercising initiative and creativity along with other partners. By conducting local surveys highlighting areas of graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs), the nature and location of what people see as their top concerns can be identified, prioritised at public meetings and subsequently tackled by statutory and voluntary agencies in conjunction with the community. The involvement of the community in the decision-making process will encourage the reporting of incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour and consequently better inform the organisation and focus resources on the areas that can reduce the public's concerns.
- (m) Delivery of reassurance needs to be an integral part of everything that the Police Service does. It takes into account the Policing Board requirement for effective and efficient delivery of services by the police and the Chief Constable's vision of delivering the best policing service that everyone can be proud of. It also compliments the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) strategy document 'Creating a safer Northern Ireland through partnership' and the PSNI policy document 'Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland'.

(3) **Aims and Objectives**

This Policy is aimed at improving the quality of life for people by reassuring them that the police are an able and effective organisation that will assist them and other agencies to tackle those issues that give rise to the most concern in their community. This will be achieved through the following key aims and objectives.

(a) **Key Aim 1**

To raise public confidence in the PSNI by improved communication, managing public expectations and assuring local communities that crime is being addressed.

Objectives:

- (i) To implement a communications strategy to manage the public's expectation of what the Service can and should deliver;
- (ii) To deliver a professional service at all points of contact with the public;
- (iii) To work with partners in the Criminal Justice System and community to support victims and witnesses;
- (iv) To bring the perpetrators of crime to justice.

(b) **Key Aim 2**

To reduce the fear of crime by the Police Service being visible, accessible and familiar

Objectives:

- (i) To increase the percentage of police officers involved in front line policing duties;
- (ii) To increase the number of personnel involved in visible policing;
- (iii) To work with the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction;
- (iv) To ensure local police officers are identifiable by their local communities;
- (v) To demonstrate to the public that police are concerned, contactable and willing to be of assistance;
- (vi) To reduce fear of being a victim particularly among those who perceive themselves to be most at risk.

(c) **Key Aim 3**

To consult with communities to identify and prioritize improvements to the physical and social environment and, through working in partnership, to use community-focused policing to target signal crime and disorder to make neighbourhoods more secure.

Objectives:

- (i) To encourage communities to become proactively involved in identifying, prioritising and developing solutions to signal crimes;
- (ii) To engage with young people on crime reduction and the fear of crime.

(4) **Legal Basis**

- (a) Police officers have a duty according to Section 32(1) of the Police (NI) Act 2000 as amended by Section 31A of the Police (NI) Act 2003:
 - (i) Section 32(1)
 - (aa) To protect life and property;
 - (bb) To preserve order;
 - (cc) To prevent the commission of an offence;
 - (dd) Where an offence has been committed, to take measures to bring the offender to justice.
 - (ii) Section 31A
 - Police officers shall carry out their functions with the aim:
 - (aa) Of securing the support of the local community, and;
 - (bb) Of acting in co-operation with the local community.
 - (iii) Police staff have a duty according to the Police (NI) Act 2003
- (b) When carrying out these duties police officers and police staff shall protect human dignity and uphold the human rights of all persons as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- (c) Police officers and police staff must act with integrity towards the public and their colleagues, so that confidence in the Police Service is secured and maintained.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY

The following implications were considered:

(1) **Financial and Efficiency Implications**

- (a) The piloting of EVAs, should be considered as an inherent element of local partnership working as it meets the agendas of District Council, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), DPPs and local community groups.
- (b) Funding need not necessarily have to be borne by PSNI but could be part of the local District partnership arrangements with CSPs.

(2) **Human Resources and Training**

Reassurance is a general principle that should be fundamental to all policing activities rather than seen as an addition. The principles of this Policy should be a key component in all aspects of police and police staff training including training for specialist units and crime investigation. It is also essential that the principles of this Policy should be considered in the training given to all police officers in respect of policing with the community.

(3) **Partnerships**

The Secretary of State's policing objectives include the requirement:

- (a) To work in partnership with other relevant agencies to help reduce the incidence of crime, including organised crime, in line with the Government's published targets; and to diminish the fear of crime;

- (b) To build and sustain confidence in the Police Service and police accountability arrangements by all sections of society in Northern Ireland.
 - (i) As outlined in 'Policing with the Community in Northern Ireland', a major objective of community policing is to establish active partnerships between the police, the community and other relevant bodies through which crime, service delivery and police-community relations can be analysed and appropriate solutions designed and implemented.
 - (ii) The Police Service will continue to work to establish new, and build on existing partnerships with community, voluntary and statutory agencies. Close links are essential with local media, DPPs and CSPs.
 - (iii) The Police Service has also established a number of Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs).
 - (iv) The purpose and role of IAGs is to provide independent advice to the Police Service on:
 - (aa) Policy and Strategy;
 - (bb) Critical Incidents;
 - (cc) Major Investigations;
 - (dd) Proposed police operations;
 - (ee) Accessing hard to reach groups.
 - (v) The formation of local IAGs at District Command level, which would be in a position to identify vulnerable communities within their areas, could ensure that there are appropriate channels through which active engagement can take place. Further information on the role and membership of the IAGs is available from, Community Safety Branch, Headquarters.

(4) Risks

- (a) This Policy must be consistently applied across every Police District to ensure that incidents of crime and disorder including anti-social behaviour are properly recorded and appropriate multi-agency responses are developed to address the concerns of the community affected. There is also a requirement to monitor the contacts which the public have with police officers and police staff to ensure an appropriate response is always given leaving the member of the public with the assurance that their call is important to the Service and will be dealt with professionally.
- (b) By not fully implementing the Policy the PSNI will be failing in its duties under Section 32 of the Police (NI) Act and its responsibilities under Human Rights legislation and Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

(5) Consultation

- (a) The following Police Officers and Departments were consulted:
 - (i) All District Commanders;
 - (ii) All Assistant Chief Constables (ACCs);
 - (iii) Media and PR Department;
 - (iv) Human Resources (HR) Department;

- (v) Finance and Support Services Department;
 - (vi) Diversity Unit;
 - (vii) Legal Services;
 - (viii) Operational Development;
 - (ix) Analytical Services;
 - (x) Superintendents' Association of NI;
 - (xi) Police Federation;
 - (xii) Best Value Review Team;
 - (xiii) Policing with the Community Review Team.
- (b) The groups below were consulted re the Policy, as the evidence on surveys suggests that fear of crime may have a disproportionate effect on older people, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities in relation to confidence and fear of crime.
- (i) Independent Advisory Group for People with Disabilities;
 - (ii) Multicultural Independent Advisory Group;
 - (iii) Independent Advisory Group for People and Older Persons.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY/INTEGRITY/FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- (1) This Policy on public reassurance, is intended to meet, in part, the PSNI's obligation to protect individuals' Article 2, 8 and Article 1 Protocol 1 rights through effective application of the law. Measures taken in pursuance of this Policy will be necessary and proportionate to the identified aims of preventing crime, increasing public safety and protecting the rights and freedoms of others.
- (2) **Article 2:** The right to life, which states; "Everyone's right to life will be protected by law".
- (3) **Article 8:** The right to respect for home and family life, which states; "Everyone has the right to respect for his/her private and family life, his/her home and his/her correspondence".
- (4) **Article 1 Protocol 1,** "Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law".
- (5) This Policy is deemed to be Human Rights compliant; it has been screened for Section 75 considerations on 15 December 2005 and meets integrity standards. This Policy is suitable for release under Freedom of Information.
- (6) This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Ethics for the PSNI.

6. REVIEW

- (1) This Policy will be reviewed annually by Chief Inspector, Community Safety, Lisnasharragh.
- (2) Any feedback in relation to this Policy should be addressed to Chief Inspector, Community Safety.

SECTION 7

PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

1. SERVICE DELIVERY

The following pages outline the actions, which need to be taken to deliver the reassurance aims and objectives highlighted at paragraph 3(2). It is the responsibility of every police officer to ensure that their duties are discharged in a manner which safeguards and promotes the needs and welfare of the community. Everybody has a role to play in improving the quality of the relationship between the Police Service and the public. Each contact will shape the public's overall perception of policing. It is essential to provide consistent levels of customer care irrespective of the reason why or how people make contact with the police. Every opportunity for dialogue with the community should be used to build confidence in the Service and to reduce crime, the fear of crime and increase reassurance.

2. PROBLEM SOLVING

An essential part of problem solving is investigation of what those who are experiencing the problem would see the solution to be. This may involve police engaging with hard to reach and marginalized groups and those agencies that work with them.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

- (1) The Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) is responsible for making sure that the Police Service is effective, efficient and meets the needs of the Northern Ireland Community. It also is responsible for defining the policing priorities each year, in consultation with the local community. The Policing Plan recognises that reassurance is an essential element in the delivery of policing and sets out clear objectives and targets for the PSNI in order to reduce the fear of crime, particularly among those who feel the most vulnerable. The Chief Constable is also accountable for the policing objectives set by the Secretary of State.
- (2) District Commanders take account of the Policing Plan when setting local objectives and are required to consult with their respective DPPs and others so that the policing needs of local communities are addressed.

4. INTERNAL POLICY LINKS

The following related instructions refer:

Service Procedures

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| No 44/01, File Box C(c) | - | Service Charging Policy |
| No 33/04, File Box C(c) | - | Introduction of Support Services at Crown Court for Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses |
| No 18/05, File Box B(a) | - | Professional Standards |
| No 35/06, File Box C(c) | - | PSNI Procedures and Guidance on Anti Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contract |
| No 17/08 | - | Youth Diversion Scheme |

Connected Policy Documents

Freedom of Information Policy – Policy Directive No 03/04

Dealing with Victims and Witnesses – Policy Directive No 05/06

Police Response to Hate Incidents – Policy Directive No 02/06

Crime Prevention Strategy

Northern Ireland Drugs Strategy

Policing with the Community Policy Document

Policing with the Community Implementation Plan

Creating a Safer Community through Partnership

Youth Strategy

Managing Actual/Potential Critical Incidents Policy – Policy Directive No 10/07

Community Impact Assessments

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Sources of further information for the key aspects of reassurance policing are listed at Appendix 'D'

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ACTIONS TO DELIVER REASSURANCE

1. KEY AIM

To raise public confidence in the PSNI by improved communication, managing public expectations and assuring local communities that crime is being addressed

Objective	Action
To implement a communications strategy to manage the public's expectation of what the Service can and should deliver	Development and publishing of a set of minimum standards the community can expect from the Service in the delivery of intelligence led, problem oriented policing
	Pro-actively tackling the 'reassurance gap' by regularly putting factual information about crime levels into the public domain
	Identifying locations and opportunities to emphasise the positive impact of the Organisation with particular emphasis on Media and PR Department
	Identifying initiatives and successes to local media
To deliver a professional service at all points of contact with the public	Revising call handling processes, communicating the revised processes to the public and improving how we deal with people, whether by telephone or face to face, with specific considerations being given to those with disabilities and from ethnic minority backgrounds
To work with partners in the Criminal Justice System and community to support victims and witnesses	Developing systems that will reassure victims or witnesses, maximising the use of special measures to encourage their participation in giving evidence in court and ability to remain in the community
To bring the perpetrators of crime to justice	Ensuring that cases are progressed expeditiously by the most appropriate means including restorative practices and cautioning

One significant factor that influences the public's perception of the crime rate in Northern Ireland is the media through local television news, newspapers and radio stories. People can be unaware of the existence or extent of crime in an area until high profile media coverage brings it to the front of public attention. More often enhanced visibility is due to the activity being repeated on a regular basis. Localised disorder issues such as incivility, graffiti and anti-social behaviour take on a higher degree of sensitivity when they occur regularly. Public confidence that police and partner agencies are actively tackling crime and disorder issues is paramount in creating an environment that increases the public's sense of safety. In addition to reporting crime successes at a provincial level it is essential to relate to communities local initiatives and successes.

How the public experience the contact they have with the police impacts on their level of confidence. The way people are treated and how they are provided with information are often seen as more important than how quickly the police respond to a request for assistance.

2. KEY AIM

To reduce the fear of crime by the Police Service being visible, accessible and familiar

Objective	Action
To increase the percentage of officers involved in front line policing duties	Identifying the opportunities for civilianisation of police posts and tasks
	Increasing the policing family through part-time police officers and considering the development of Police Community Support Officers or equivalent
To increase the number of personnel involved in visible policing	Maximising the visibility of all officers performing duty in a uniform
	Increasing visibility and accessibility of neighbourhood policing teams through working from schools and other community contact points
	Striving to have neighbourhood policing teams with a geographical responsibility on duty and accessible at significant times
To work with the Northern Ireland Policing Board to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction	Carrying out a Best Value Review to look in particular at public expectations, visibility and a patrolling strategy especially in isolated communities and to implement the recommendations
	Carrying out a Best Value Review to look at the spread and effectiveness of existing partnerships

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Objective	Action
To ensure local police officers are identifiable by their local communities	Utilising all opportunities to publicise their identity and how they can be contacted eg wearing of name badges, press profiles, post boards, internet, leaflets etc
	Identifying and managing information, sharing points in the community eg libraries, comment/post boxes, plasma screens etc
	Recognising the importance of, and rewarding those officers who perform neighbourhood duties in a way which will encourage their retention
	Neighbourhood officers should only be abstracted for alternative duties as a last resort.
To demonstrate to the public that police are concerned, contactable and willing to be of assistance	Providing a professional service where every contact with the public whether by telephone or in person leaves a positive perception of the police
	Providing contact details when appropriate, following up referrals and providing feedback on investigations in a timely manner
To reduce fear of being a victim particularly among those who perceive themselves to be most at risk	Putting factual, accurate information about the risk of becoming a victim into the public domain
	Focusing efforts on the needs of victims and in particular those in the communities who are most vulnerable

While actual crime tends to be concentrated on particular areas or victims and committed by a small number of offenders, fear of crime is something that may affect people from all walks of life at any stage of their lives. The presence of visible, accessible and locally known uniformed officers provides a 'controlling presence' demonstrating a 'visible authority' to restore social order within public spaces so that people can use them in comfort and safety. Working in extended teams that include police, community support officers (or equivalent), environmental health officers, council enforcement officers and traffic wardens provides the opportunity to work collectively on a wider range of issues and deliver timely outcomes.

Not only do police need to be visible but also they need 'to be seen taking action' to control the physical environment and the behaviour of people in the environment especially those who repeatedly cause difficulty. Prompt and effective action to address incidents of anti-social behaviour and its consequences is necessary to maintain public confidence.

3. KEY AIM

To consult with communities to identify and prioritise improvements to the physical and social environment and, through working in partnership, to use community-focused policing to target signal crime and disorder to make neighbourhoods more secure

Objective	Action
To encourage communities to become proactively involved in identifying, prioritising and developing solutions to signal crimes	Working with local partnerships to collate existing research data and formulate District strategies and action plans
	Consultation through public meetings, public perception surveys, focus groups, neighbourhood questionnaires, EVAs and analysis to identify specific signal crimes and disorders and identify locations of insecurity
	Neighbourhood policing teams, partner agencies and the community agreeing an action plan identifying which quality-of-life issues will be addressed per neighbourhood area in a specified time frame
	Using a problem orientated model to define the environmental and social causal factors of problems and the stakeholders involved.
	Conveying agreed issues to be tackled to all PSNI personnel, partner agencies and persons within the relevant community
	Neighbourhood policing teams being fully involved with partner agencies and the community in delivering effective interventions to tackle the underlying causes of the signal crimes such as graffiti, litter and derelict vehicles to improve public spaces
	Working with relevant agencies to maximise the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders as appropriate measures to deal with instances of anti-social behaviour.
	Developing the number and effectiveness of neighbourhood watch schemes throughout the province
To engage with young people on crime reduction and the fear of crime	Delivering a youth strategy which focuses on all police interactions with young people

Reassurance deals with people's perceptions and is based on the premise that we can impact on communities' perceptions of risk and insecurity by prioritising the activity of police and partners on what matters most to those communities. Listening to and responding to neighbourhood priorities is the key to success. The physical environment of an area can affect people's fear of crime in that area. Badly lit areas with vandalism are more likely to create a fear of crime than bright well-kept areas.

Tackling incivilities, disorder and dereliction, in the local community, can have a positive impact on the community's feelings of security thereby opening up areas that have previously been thought of as dangerous or inaccessible.

An EVA can be used to map and measure incidents of problems. EVA involves an auditor walking a prescribed route and recording the incidence of particular disorders and comfort factors. After analysis of the results relevant partners will agree an action plan with the community and deliver on the outcomes. The audited area is visited again within a measured time frame and improvements noted.

SIGNAL CRIMES AND DISORDERS

- (1) A perspective is a particular 'way of looking' at something. The signal crimes perspective provides an innovative way of looking at problems of crime and disorder. It is built upon four key concepts: signal crime; signal disorder; signal event and control signal.
- (2) A '**signal crime**' can be defined as **any criminal incident that causes change in the public's behaviour and/or beliefs**. They are crimes that are interpreted by members of the public as 'signalling' the presence of risks to individual or collective security. This signalling function can result from both serious crimes, such as murder, rape and burglary, through to the sorts of anti-social behaviours that agencies in the criminal justice system have so far defined as 'trivial'. This latter dimension is captured by the concept of 'signal disorder'.
- (3) A '**signal disorder**' involves behaviour that may not constitute a major infraction of the criminal law (or what is conventionally understood as only a comparatively minor infraction), but nonetheless disrupts the sense of social order. As such, the importance of signal disorders is that they signal to people the presence of risk in an area.
- (4) In addition to the two central concepts of signal crime and signal disorder, the perspective incorporates a concept of the '**signal event**'. Whereas the two former concepts focus upon deviance and transgressions of law, a signal event is more neutral and refers to significant changes in the social context. As such, signal events can be either positive or negative depending upon whether these contextual events impact upon the ways that people perceive risk. A positive signal event might be where a major new employer moves into an area, sparking significant economic investment and thus triggering regeneration in an area. In contrast, a negative signal event might be when the local media reports a decline in police crime detection figures, thus causing their audience to feel more concerned about criminal victimisation.
- (5) The fourth key concept of the signal crimes perspective is that of '**control signal**'. A control signal is any act of social control that functions to reduce the public's sense of being at risk. Thus a control signal can result from the interventions performed by police and other agencies, or from instances of informal social control performed by communities themselves.
- (6) For more information on signal crimes and disorders see, National Reassurance Policing Programme www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk Crime as a Signal, Crime as a memory – Martin Innes, University of Surrey

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PROBABILITY OF CRIMES BEING REPORTED
TO THE POLICE**

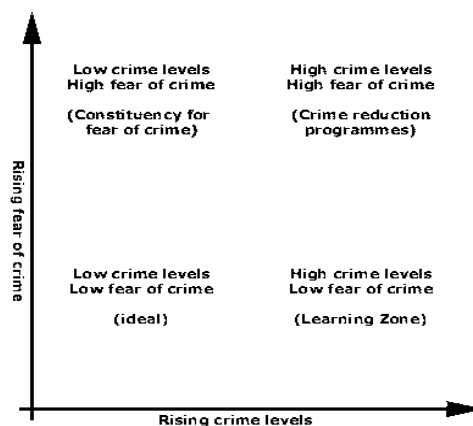
- (1) The three most common reasons for not reporting a crime to police are cited in the Northern Ireland Crime Survey 2005 as:
 - (a) Police could not have done anything ;
 - (b) Police would not have been bothered/been interested;
 - (c) Too trivial/no loss.

- (2) As indicated in the, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) Research and Statistical Bulletins, 'Crime Victimization in Northern Ireland' recorded crime figures cannot provide the full picture of the extent of concern about crime among the different sections of the community, sighting several reasons which 'might influence the probability of an incident being reported' to the police including:
 - (a) Socio-economic factors relating to the victim (for example sex, age, location, social class, and community background);
 - (b) Economic or political developments;
 - (c) Attitudes towards the police;
 - (d) Incident-specific factors (for example, relationship between the victim and offender, the gravity of the crime, the likelihood of an insurance claim, whether the crime was witnessed and the time of the occurrence); and
 - (e) Criminal inclinations of the victim.

MacDonald, Z (2001)

THE FEAR OF CRIME MATRIX

- (1) As previously outlined there is often a considerable gap between the public perception of crime and the reality, but tackling the fear of crime cannot be done in isolation. For any approach to be successful, it needs to take into account the many and varied social, environmental and personal factors that may be contributing to the fear of crime. An assault on a person may be perceived totally differently depending on factors including the age of the victim (an attack on a young adult or an older person), the location of the assault (if it was in a busy town centre at night or an isolated park) or the frequency of attacks in the area.
- (2) The Matrix has been designed to help identify local fear issues and indicate the approach best suited to their particular area.



Each matrix zone is identified as follows:

Crime Reduction Programmes – (Areas of High Crime, High Fear)

- (3) Where an area is experiencing high crime, being fearful of crime is arguably a rational response. These areas should be considered for the introduction of an effective crime reduction strategy. High fear of crime can sustain high levels of crime (eg. fearful to report crime, lack of confidence to challenge crime and lack of confidence in agencies). This approach should be complimented by some community crime prevention so that communities themselves become part of the solution. This ensures a long-term solution as it gives the community empowerment to challenge crime so that it does not become tolerated and sustained in their community. It should also be recognised that crime is usually only one of the factors contributing to fear of crime in these areas. Strategic partnerships need to put policies in place to regenerate the neighbourhood, improve local environmental quality, increase social cohesion and promote neighbourhood renewal. An example of this type of area could be a deprived inner city with a transient population.

(4) Constituency for Fear of Crime - (Areas of Low Crime, Higher Fear)

This quadrant relates to areas where local crime levels are low but the public audience is still unrealistically worried. This quadrant would reflect the areas which are close to high crime areas and people feel more at risk of victimisation than the situation would suggest. In these areas, a coherent fear of crime strategy could have a real impact on the public views and perceptions, and significantly reduce the fear of crime. This type of area could be a rural community and any areas that are adjacent to those with high crime eg the outer suburbs of London. This scenario shows that in some circumstances, people at the least risk of victimisation are more fearful of it.

(5) **Learning Zone - (Areas of High Crime, Lower Fear)**

In those areas where crime is high but fear is low, then good communication and raising local awareness is key. The public should be encouraged to undertake crime prevention measures and remove the opportunity for crime in such a way that will not increase fear. An example of this type of area could be a university town, where many residents are relatively new to the area and unaware of any potential risks.

(6) **Ideal - (Areas of Low Crime, Low Fear)**

There are those areas where fear of crime and crime itself are low. This is the ideal situation that all areas should work towards. This quadrant could reflect remote rural areas where the community is small and has very high social capital.

STUDIES UNDERPINNING REASSURANCE POLICY

The key ideas in reassurance policing are underpinned by a number of studies namely:

1. Defensible Space, 1969

Oscar Newman showed how the physical environment affects the risk of crime and outlined how architectural design could be vital in reducing the opportunities for crime.

<http://www.defensiblespace.com/>

2. The effect of Police Patrols, 1974

Charles Bahn noted that patrols had a significant impact on the levels of reassurance and how protected people felt. This view was reiterated in the Chicago Alternative Police Strategy (CAPS) 1993 which found that it was not only the presence of uniformed officers - but also the ways in which those officers interacted with individuals which influenced public confidence.

3. Broken Windows Theory, 1982

Wilson and Kelling's argument that low level signs of dereliction and disorder, such as 'broken windows' have a disproportionately disturbing effect on public feelings of anxiety and confidence. Areas where low-level crime is allowed to manifest itself draw in *unsolicited* activity. Addressing the effects of antisocial behaviour and criminal damage at an early stage prevents areas from spiralling into disrepair and being perceived as unsafe.

http://www.cptedsecurity.com/broken_windows_theory.htm

4. Problem Oriented Policing, 1990

Goldstein furthered the concept of dealing with individual incidents to identifying and addressing the common causes of incidents, which occur in the same area, around the same time or for a similar reason. 'Problem Oriented Policing' has been a key element in reassurance projects that rely on a detailed local knowledge of individual communities and their problems and the use of low-level interventions to prevent petty offences from escalating into more serious ones.

<http://www.popcenter.org/default.htm>

5. Signal Values, 1992

Risk and the perception of risk have been increasingly identified as important factors influencing the fear of crime. The concept of 'signal crimes' and 'signal disorders' has developed from research carried out by the University of Surrey when looking into perceptions of risk. Developing Paul Slovic's theory that people's perceptions of risk are focused on problems that are 'highly visible' rather than those that are more serious and less visible, high signal values are placed on those risks which trigger raised anxiety

<http://www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk/signalcrime.asp>

6. The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, (CAPS), 1993

CAPS is a key programme informing reassurance policing. It looks to tackle problems of crime and disorder through better integration of police, communities, housing associations, social services and other agencies. The project found that social and physical disorders related consistently highly among the problems the public wanted the police to deal with. This is achieved through:

- (a) Surveys, observations, interviews and focus groups to collect information from residents, businesses and key agencies;
- (b) An emphasis on community involvement and community definition of problems and solutions;
- (c) Multi-agency cooperation and action to tackle environmental and other issues;

- (d) High visibility policing;
- (e) Detailed monitoring and evaluation of the project.
<http://www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk/Links>

7. Risk and signals, and Environmental Visual Audit, 2002

- (1) Risk and the perception of risk have increasingly been seen to be important factors in shaping a persons feeling of safety and influencing their perceived fear of crime.
- (2) The Surrey and Metropolitan Police use an Environmental Visual Audit (EVA) to measure incidents of problems. EVA involves an auditor walking a prescribed route and recording on a form the incidence of particular disorders and comfort factors.

8. The National Reassurance Policing Programme

NRPP is about communities identifying and prioritising local crime and disorder issues, which they tackle together with the police and other public services to increase neighbourhood security.
<http://www.reassurancepolicing.co.uk/>