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Working in Partnership

The Challenges of Working across Organizational Boundaries, Cultures, and Practices

Adam Crawford and Mike Cunningham

Introduction

The appeal to partnerships as the effective means of delivering policing and community safety has been an established mantra in crime control and crime prevention policy for nearly three decades now. Yet, whilst much has changed in the intervening years to facilitate and embed partnership working, the goal of a genuinely joined-up, holistic, and coordinated response to crime and disorder seems as stubbornly elusive as ever. Having spent some considerable time during the early 1990s researching the emerging shift to partnerships in community safety, it strikes me that many of the obstacles apparent then remain prevalent today (Crawford 1994; 1997; 1998; Crawford and Jones 1995). This was brought home recently whilst conducting research commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation into anti-social behaviour (ASB) interventions with young people (Crawford et al 2012). Anti-social behaviour by its very nature straddles the concerns of a variety of organizations and demands a collaborative approach (Crawford 2009). Hence, the ASB partnership arrangements studied saw police working with local authorities, social housing providers, and youth justice workers. The research found that effective partnership working was vital for identifying local problems, delivering preventive solutions, and ensuring an accurate understanding of the needs of young people and their families. It noted that

where coordination is well-organized through effective partnerships, there are significant benefits to community safety and crime prevention. A coherent and consistent area-wide policy that combined the efforts of different partner agencies was held out as desirable by many managers not only because it provided the basis for more effective solutions but because it accords with principles of fairness, equity, and transparency with positive implications for engagement with parents and compliance on the part of young people. However, the research found evidence of 'a lack of joined-up working and insufficient coordination of local service delivery, such that the same individuals or families were often the subjects of disjointed interventions by diverse local agencies' (Crawford et al 2012: 2). It concluded that: 'Delivering [partnerships] on the ground was demanding and often not accomplished' (Crawford et al 2012: 3). The conundrum, therefore, is that whilst partnerships have become a dominant feature in the local governance landscape, their realization remains precarious and considerable debates persist about what makes for good partnership working.

This chapter sets out to identify and revisit some of the fundamental challenges associated with working in partnerships across organizational boundaries, cultures, and established practices, and to consider some of the vexed issues that often stymie good intentions as well as their implications for police leadership. This critical starting point is deliberately chosen to prompt consideration of how best to manage inter-organizational relations. It also underscores the importance of strong leadership and strategic direction in providing organizational commitment and coordination of effort as well as facilitating engagement with and buy-in from multiple partners. The intention of this chapter is not to undermine the rationale for a partnership approach but, rather, to highlight often ignored problems and structural conflicts, so as to inform contemporary thinking and good practice and to help enlighten leadership strategies for negotiating these. For it is only by recognizing the barriers and the working assumptions that inform organizational hurdles that we can begin to surmount them. The implication is that successful inter-organizational partnerships don't just happen; they need to be fashioned, crafted, nurtured, and supported. They need both strategic leadership and the appropriately skilled people to deliver them on the ground. I shall leave it to Chief Constable Mike Cunningham (later in this chapter), to reflect on his experience in the context of what we know from research about partnerships and to highlight some of the ways in which police leaders and their partners are attempting to realize the potential benefits that undoubtedly accrue to working in partnerships.

A Short History

Nearly 50 years ago, influenced by the management modelling trend of the time, the United State's Report of the President's Commission (1967), entitled 'The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society', sought to apply a 'systems analysis' to

criminal justice. This systemic mode of thinking—most iconically captured some years later in the image of the criminal justice 'funnel' advocated by Blumstein (1986)—emphasized the inter-dependence and 'system quality' of the diverse institutions and processes that had grown up around the modern criminal justice enterprise. Similarly informed modelling of criminal justice was conducted in the United Kingdom some years later (Morgan 1985; Moxon 1985). The idea that the police, courts, lawyers (both prosecution and defence), parole, probation, and penal institutions had something in common, reciprocal interests, shared modes of exchange and communication, similar ways of thinking, and mutual regard as part of a coherent system was certainly innovative. It was, however, an ahistorical reading of criminal justice which, since the late 19th century had witnessed the slow growth of an elaborate and complex division of labour in relation to the tasks of crime control, in which specialized organizations and professional groups organized themselves around and appropriated aspects of criminological work (Garland 1985). It was also counter-intuitive, since the premise of common law was that conflict and mediation were necessary to produce 'case-by-case' justice. However, one of the by-products of this 'systems thinking' was a growing recognition that in practice criminal justice represented, and was experienced as, a 'non-system' (Cohn 1978). Following this line of thinking, commentators identified 'system failures' and 'institutionalized gaps' which engender problems of coordination and responsiveness. In relation to neighbourhood services, Mudd evocatively described the problem as follows:

> If a rat is found in an apartment, it is a housing inspection responsibility; if it runs into a restaurant, the health department has jurisdiction; if it goes outside and dies in an alley, public works takes over. More complex undertakings compound the confusion (Mudd 1984: 8).

Wilson and Kelling, building on Mudd's analogy in the policing context, added: 'a police officer who takes public complaints about rats seriously will go crazy trying to figure out what agency in the city has responsibility for rat control and then inducing it to kill the rats' (1989: 52). Subsequent gurus of organizational cultural change and management have likewise emphasized problem-oriented approaches to enterprising government through forms of preventive partnership (Osborne and Gaebler 1992).

Consequently, the last 30 years or so have seen the emergence and institutionalization of a new politics and landscape at the heart of which is a partnership approach to governing safety problems, broadly conceived. Writing a decade and a half ago, Garland noted how:

> . . . a whole new infrastructure has been assembled at the local level that addresses crime and disorder in a quite different manner . . . The new infrastructure is strongly oriented towards a set of objectives and priorities—prevention, security, harm-reduction, loss-reduction, fear-reduction—that are quite different from the traditional goals of prosecution, punishment and 'criminal justice' (2001: 16–17).

This new politics has been marked by:

- a focus upon pro-active *prevention* rather than reactive detection;
- an emphasis upon *wider social problems*, including broadly defined harms, quality of life, anti-social behaviour, and disorder;
- a focus upon modes of *informal social control* and local normative orders, as well as the manner in which they relate to, and connect with, formal systems of control;
- implementation through decentralized, *local* arrangements for the delivery of this politics—'local problems require local solutions';
- delivery through a *partnership* approach, drawing together a variety of organizations and stakeholders, in horizontal networks;
- aimed at producing *holistic solutions* that are 'problem-oriented' rather than defined according to the means or organizations most readily available to solve them.

Key policy landmarks in the United Kingdom have included: the inter-departmental Circular 8/1984, which recognized that 'since some of the factors affecting crime lie outside the control or direct influence of the police, crime prevention can not be left to them alone' and urged various organizations (such as the probation service) to join the new coordinated approach; the Report into the Cleveland child abuse cases of 1987 (Butler-Sloss 1988), which recommended improved inter-agency coordination; the Morgan Report (1991), which advocated a partnership approach to community safety; and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which placed a statutory duty on the police to work with partners in delivering local community safety strategies. Importantly, the 1998 Act also provides a legal basis (in section.115) for sharing information between community safety partner agencies where this is necessary for fulfilling the duties contained in the Act. More recently, partnership practice has been extended through the national roll-out of neighbourhood policing in England and Wales in 2008. As a result, partnerships can now be found in diverse areas of policing, from domestic violence, child abuse, mental health, public protection, and road traffic to counter-terrorism—notably those partnerships promoted under the *Prevent Strategy*[1] (HM Government 2011).

The Theory and Practice

It is in the light of this growing recognition that a fundamental rupture in thinking has transpired at the heart of which has been a partnership approach to diverse aspects of prevention, policing, and criminal justice processing. This

[1] Prevent is part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. Its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism—see 'Prevent Strategy, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf> (accessed 26 January 2015).

shift in emphasis and concomitant transformation in governing structures has had significant implications for contemporary policing. In many senses, the police organization is required to work in partnership with other agencies due to the interdependent nature of the problems that they are called upon to deal with. These cooperative relationships extend from health, housing, social and youth services to education, probation, penal institutions, voluntary sector organizations, commercial businesses, and community groups. As a result of the breadth of the police mandate and the fact that the police are a '24 hour' service shaped in response to citizen demands, crime fighting and law enforcement (in any straightforward way) are only a relatively small part of police work (Bittner 1970). Many crime and policing issues are by their very nature 'wicked problems' that demand the engagement of multiple actors and agencies. Policy problems are referred to as 'wicked' where they have multiple causes and many of them are interdependent (Rittel and Webber 1973).[2] Solutions are similarly interconnected and, in some cases, contradictory. The challenge when addressing such 'wicked' issues is how to combine effectively the contributions of diverse knowledgeable and competent actors and organizations towards a clear understanding and confidence in how to proceed (Conklin 2006). Yet, the hierarchical nature of the police organization and its culture, with its strong internal sense of occupational identification and suspicion of 'outsiders' (Reiner 2010), serve to render partnership working particularly problematic.

Partnership approaches to policing are largely built on the premise that no single agency can deal with, or be responsible for dealing with, complex community safety and crime problems. Partnerships are a product of fragmentation of resources, knowledge, and capabilities. As such they are a product of social complexity and an intricate division of labour. The fragmented pieces are, in essence, the perspectives, understandings, and intentions of the different partners. Fragmentation exists where the diverse actors involved view, understand, and define a problem through the organizational lens in which they work and in which information is constructed and across which knowledge is scattered. Different agents have differing, and sometimes incompatible, tacit assumptions about the problem, and often each believes that their understandings are complete and shared by all. Whilst the vertical chains within and between departments and agencies in any one field and in professional groups such as the police, teachers, doctors, and nurses are strong, the horizontal links tend to be weak or non-existent. Partnerships, therefore, require a movement away from working in and through hierarchies—the traditional structure of bureaucracies (most evidently command and control type organizations like the police)—to working through networks. These networks are characterized by diplomacy, trust, and reciprocity rather than the hierarchical authority and rules of bureaucracies (Fleming and Rhodes 2005). However, as a framework of governance, they are

[2] Wicked problems contrast with 'tame problems' which are ones for which the traditional linear process is sufficient to produce a workable solution in an acceptable time frame.

also different in essence from the contracts that structure and regulate relations between the police and private sector in most so-called 'public-private partnerships'. Price and competition structure the organized contractual relations of outsourcing, sponsorship, and sub-contracting, where mutual obligations are spelled out in relations of exchange (Crawford forthcoming).

The potential of this radical shift in governance through partnerships is significant in that it:

- recognizes that the levers and causes of crime lie far from the traditional reach of criminal justice;
- acknowledges that there is no 'single agency solution' to crime—it is multifaceted in both its causes and effects;
- recognizes the need for social responses which reflect crime's multiple aetiology;
- enables a shift to 'up-stream', early intervention—causes not symptoms;
- allows for an holistic approach which is 'problem-focused' rather than 'bureaucracy-premised' (ie existing service provision);
- affords the potential coordination and pooling of expertise, information, and resources, enabling the targeting of scarce resources.

Thus partnership working challenges many assumptions about professional expertise, specialization, state paternalism, and monopoly. In theory, if not in practice, it offers a de-differentiated response that is not segmented but a generalized, non-specialist activity. As such, it challenges introspective organizational cultures and the often cosy working assumptions of specialized agencies. In so doing, it potentially facilitates a re-articulation of powers within and between the state (public sector), community, voluntary, and commercial sectors. Furthermore, it questions taken-for-granted conventions about who should provide which services and their legitimacy and competency for so doing. It also challenges the fundamental premise of services which provide responses to problems—so evident in policing and criminal justice—rather than seeking to anticipate or prevent problems from occurring (up-stream) in the first place. Hence, Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan of Strathclyde Violence Reduction Unit, reflecting on his partnership work and the importance of early intervention, is quoted as stating that, 'If I had the choice between a thousand extra health visitors and a thousand extra police officers I'd choose a thousand health visitors every time' (cited in Allen 2011: 23). Whilst the observation may be hypothetical, it nevertheless raises vexed questions about the appropriate balance of resource allocation between public sector services in relation to particular social problems and thus prompts some challenging issues about the rationale for the existing distribution of resources—particularly in times of austerity.

The research literature (Crawford 1998; Rosenbaum 2002; Bullock et al 2006; Fleming 2006; Turley et al 2012; O'Neil and McCarthy 2014) highlights significant benefits that derive from partnership working. These include:

- enabling the development of creative and targeted interventions by combining different approaches;
- delivering efficiencies through better coordination of resources and opportunities to reduce duplication;
- providing for multiple interventions that may be more effective than single agency interventions and maximize the impact on any particular target audience;
- helping to transform insular police occupational culture;
- enabling more effective problem-solving;
- facilitating the development of collaborative skills and collective intelligence;
- increasing staff job satisfaction.

A recent Home Office-commissioned rapid evidence assessment of partnership working sought to address two questions: first, whether partnerships are more effective and efficient in achieving crime-related outcomes than alternatives; and second, the factors that have been identified as making partnerships work effectively and efficiently in delivering crime-related outcomes (Berry et al 2011). Given the framing of its questions, the report drew largely on the evidence from the United States. In relation to the first question, it noted that 'isolating the contribution that particular components of an intervention make to crime reduction can be difficult' (Berry et al 2011: 23). Partnerships, after all, are an approach to working relations rather than a strategic intervention or mechanism of change with a theory of causation; albeit, that processes can significantly determine outcomes (Pawson 2006). Nevertheless, despite a 'mixed' picture, the report concluded that 'on balance, the evidence suggests that the principle of applying partnership working as a component of initiatives to tackle complex crime and disorder problems is effective' (Berry et al 2011: 20). It found the catalyst that brought most partnerships into existence to be either a response to the identification of a particular problem or the provision of funding to address an identified problem. In relation to the second question, the report highlighted a variety of specific mechanisms and strategies associated with effective partnerships (see Table 4.1). Many of these are consistent with earlier findings. However, they need to be understood in the context of the wider and deeper barriers to implementation of partnerships as well as the structural, cultural, and organizational challenges that they imply.

The Barriers

In many senses, community safety partnerships, given their legislative footing, have been at the forefront of much debate, policy innovation, and research. However, such has been the political disappointment with community safety partnerships—despite the steady decline of aggregate crime rates since the mid-1990s—that in late 2004, the government announced a major review of their activities, governance, and accountability, acknowledging that: 'a significant

Table 4.1 Mechanisms Associated with Better Partnership Working

Leadership	• Shared vision, values, and norms of partners involved to establish collaborative advantage • Strong leadership and strategic direction (focused on proving a central coordination effort, getting buy-in from partners and managing the project) • Full integration of project aims into partner organizations' aims • Clear project brief, roles, and responsibilities • Core groups to oversee problem solving approach
Data sharing and problem focus	• Clarity regarding the problem(s) being tackled through focused analysis to ensure a properly problem focused intervention • Regular exchange of relevant information • Having focused interventions in each area • Including researchers within partnership • Continual evaluation to review and inform activity of group
Communication and co-location	• Regular face-to-face contact and communication between partners • Co-location of agencies, partners, and staff • Presence of partners at local level
Structures	• Flexibility of structures and processes • Having a research partner as an active member of the taskforce • Clear monitoring, accountability, and integrity mechanisms • Having operational groups to implement strategies • Involvement of most appropriate agencies
Experience	• Prior experience in working together in partnership (ie established relationships) • Secondment of skilled officers into joint team • Careful selection of appropriate partners • Joint training of team members

Source: Berry et al (2011: iii)

number of partnerships struggle to maintain a full contribution from key agencies and even successful ones are not sufficiently visible, nor we think accountable, to the public as they should be' (Home Office 2004: 123). The question then is why have the high hopes been so severely curtailed? And what has happened to derail such aspirations? One response might be that the initial claims of a rupture with the past were exaggerated. Another is that the obstacles—structural, organizational, and cultural—that stand in the way of realising a genuine partnership approach are more substantial, entrenched, and ingrained than otherwise acknowledged. Furthermore, the absence of genuinely critical debate about the processes involved in delivering multi-agency partnerships may serve to impede practice. The development of good practice conversely requires the recognition and exploration of the many unspoken problems that both practitioners face and are implied by practice.

The main barriers to successful partnerships include a reluctance of some agencies to participate (especially health, education, and social services); the dominance of a policing agenda; unwillingness to share information; conflicting interests, priorities, and cultural assumptions on the part of different agencies; local political differences; lack of inter-organizational trust; desire to protect budgets; lack of capacity and expertise; and over-reliance on informal contacts and networks which lapsed if key individuals moved on. The involvement of the private sector has often been patchy and the role of the voluntary sector frequently marginalized. In practice, partnerships experience considerable problems in reaching agreements or protocols about what data they could legitimately share and on what basis. As a result, concerns over confidentiality often hinder partnership working and problematize inter-organizational trust relations.

Information sharing

Data sharing remains one of the most intractable and contentious aspects of policing and community safety practice: technological and cultural barriers to data exchange often undermine effective partnership work. Recent research into ASB partnerships found that:

> Misunderstandings of data protection legislation are widespread and reluctance on the part of some partner agencies to share information remains a significant obstacle to effective work. Practitioners were uncertain about the circumstances and purposes for which data can and should be exchanged. Some formed arbitrary distinctions between what they were willing to exchange in face-to-face interactions and what they were prepared to share electronically (Crawford et al 2012: iii).

In many, but not all, areas of policing, there exists a pervasive and deeply ingrained reluctance to share information between agencies. This is sometimes based on an over-interpretation (and occasionally a misinterpretation) of the current data protection legislation. There also remains substantial ignorance about and misunderstanding of the implications of data protection legislation for data sharing. In risk adverse organizational cultures, data protection is commonly cited as a reason not to release data, often in circumstances in which it may be perfectly legitimate to do so (Thomas and Walport 2008: 37).

Yet for partnerships, good quality data collection, management, and use matters because they:

- allow for joined-up provision and continuity of service over time and between different service providers;
- afford opportunities for joint analysis and coordinated working between relevant agencies;
- provide the capacity to track individuals and families through service provision and diverse interventions, and assess their trajectories and pathways;

- enable interventions provided by different service providers to be used in a more strategic manner in which consideration is given to the relations between them and how they interact;
- provide an evidence-base from which to assess effectiveness and to evaluate what works, for whom, and in which contexts;
- ensure the best use of resources and facilitate best practice;
- afford opportunities to monitor performance and render services accountable and reviewable.

Managerial obstacles

In many ways, the dominant managerial reforms of the last 20 years or so have worked counter to the demands of partnerships by focusing attention on hierarchical control and on the clear distribution of authority and responsibility in the name of efficiency, economy, and value for money. Perversely, managerialist reforms (notably since Home Office Circular 114/1983) have served to increase the introspection of many criminal justice, policing, and other public sector organizations. They encouraged an *intra*-organizational focus that pays scant attention to the task of managing *inter*-organizational relations. Less regard is afforded to the more complex process of negotiating shared purposes, particularly where there is no hierarchy of control. Managerialism may suit hierarchical line management structures but is largely inappropriate for managing horizontal inter-organizational networks. As such, there have been fundamental tensions between a partnership approach and aspects of the *intra*-organizational focus of much recent managerialist reform. Furthermore, the intra-organizational focus on outputs and performance measurement has often encouraged partner organizations to concentrate their energies upon their core tasks and activities at the expense of peripheral ones. This has frequently served to frustrate those working on cross-cutting, horizontal accountabilities and responsibilities in multi-organizational networks.

Structural dynamics

As implied earlier, policing partnerships by their very nature embody a number of key structural dynamics. The first is the existence of, often fundamental, *conflicts* over ideology, purpose, and interests. Criminal justice agencies have very different priorities and interests, as do other public sector organizations, voluntary bodies, the commercial sector, and local community groups. The second dynamic is the existence of *differential power relations* between the partners. Third, partnerships intrinsically *blur the boundaries* between the roles and functions, as well as accountabilities of the partner organizations. This can present difficulties for accountability and for the appropriate distribution of responsibilities. Together, these dynamics can prompt or generate a number of unhelpful strategies within partnership work (Crawford 1997; Crawford et al 2012).

The first is *conflict avoidance*, whereby the parties seek to avoid conflict to such a degree that real issues are not confronted or addressed. This may be an understandable strategy in certain contexts (particularly in the earliest stages of an initiative's life) but leaves power differences unaddressed. Furthermore, real conflicts are often dispersed into other arenas, rather than being negotiated or resolved.

Second is a *strategy of multiple aims*, whereby increasingly disparate aims or objectives are accorded to a particular partnership project. This is what I earlier described as the 'Smögasbord approach' (Crawford 1998), in which something for everyone is placed upon the menu. In the process, projects can find themselves signing up to such broad and sometimes confused sets of aims, as to be almost meaningless. The danger is that in the attempt to appease all interests, fundamental aims are not prioritized. This may lead to 'lowest common denominator' solutions and a lack of clarity and coherency. This also presents significant problems for subsequent evaluations as it is unclear which criteria should be prioritized in assessing success.

The third strategy is where decisions are taken outside the frame of formal partnership arrangements 'behind the scenes' and in private settings, often in part to avoid conflict. Often, important decisions are taken elsewhere. Such 'shadow' relations are hard to monitor and present problems for accountability. This can be, and often is, justified in terms of 'getting things done'. However, it runs counter to the spirit of transparency and often reinforces the power of the more dominant partners and, at the same time, undermines the role of weaker partners.

Trust and difference

By contrast, there is a need to maintain the clarity of the divergent inputs and their collaborative objectives—with significant implications for leadership. Hence, one of the key aspects of successful partnerships involves establishing and sustaining trust relations across agency boundaries. This is not easy, particularly where there is a history of mistrust or misunderstanding. Trust is a central coordinating mechanism of networks and is essential for cooperative behaviour (Tyler 2010). A crucial element in establishing trust relations is making partners aware of the limitations of their own and other organizations' contribution, so that they neither try to 'do it all' (something that the police are particularly prone to do), nor do they have unrealistic expectations of what others can deliver. There is a need for mutual respect for different types of contributions. In this regard, there is an important role for training in multi-agency relations and working dynamics which needs to be recognized, particularly in relation to designated staff performing link functions within partnership networks. Tensions between organizations with very different ideologies and working practices are often mediated by long-term (primarily inter-personal) working relationships (Crawford et al 2012). Tensions are frequently most strained during periods of personnel change,

when bridges between different working cultures and practices have to be rebuilt and new interpersonal and inter-institutional trust relations forged.

One of the negative inferences of employing 'systems logic' to an understanding of responses to crime and criminal justice is to accord to the partners a unity of purpose where this may not exist. This does not mean that the basis of a consensus cannot be constructed, but rather that to do so necessitates the acceptance of difference and the active negotiation of commonalities, as opposed to an assumed 'ideology of unity' (Crawford 1997: 137). The danger of such an ideology is that it assumes a homogeneity of interests without ever really questioning the interests served, the tensions over purpose and working ethos, and where conflicts, as well as common purpose, may exist. 'Independence' and 'partnership' stand in a highly ambiguous relation to each other. For, as Paul Rock noted, it is the 'independent interdependence' between organizations which constitutes 'the weak force which binds the criminal justice system together' (1990: 39). Criminal justice, after all, is concerned with balancing sometimes competing individual and group rights and interests and embodies finely balanced tensions between the independence and interdependence of criminal justice agencies. The goal of unity can serve to efface rather than manage and negotiate conflict and exclude or side-line difficult issues or 'awkward partners'. In this light, conflict and difference are perceived to be the enemies of effective partnerships, despite the fact that they structure the material and ideological relations which exist between organizations involved in much policing partnership work.

Shared understanding

By contrast, the basis for effective partnerships lies in creating shared understanding about the problem and shared commitment to the possible solutions. However, shared understanding does not mean that all the partners necessarily agree on the problem or hold the same view of it. Shared understanding demands that the partners understand each other's positions well enough to have meaningful dialogue about the different interpretations of the problem, and to exercise collective intelligence about how best to seek to resolve it. Fleming and Rhodes (2005: 195) note: 'Shared values and norms and an appreciation of divergent organisational cultures are the glue which holds the complex set of relationships together.'

Finally, partnerships exhibit significant problems with regard to accountability; given the very nature of partnerships, their multiple layers of authority and complex interdependency. Joint and negotiated decisions tie the various parties into corporate policy and outcomes but often fail to identify lines of responsibility. Institutional complexity further obscures who is accountable to whom and for what. This gives rise to what Rhodes (1996: 663) identified as, ' "the problem of many hands", where so many people contribute that no one contribution can be identified; and if no one person can be held accountable after the event, then no one needs to behave responsibly beforehand'. As authority is 'shared' it

becomes difficult to disentangle and can become almost intangible. Clarifying lines of responsibility in this context is crucial, so too, are mechanisms of shared accountability, monitoring, and oversight. Developing methods to encourage shared ownership throughout the partnership and building evaluation into the project can also assist in this regard. In summary, all the foregoing point to the importance of effective leadership and strategic direction in creating the inter- and intra-organizational infrastructures that support partnerships and the organizational culture conducive to their implementation.

Conclusion

As noted earlier, many partnerships have been brought into being facilitated by the incentives of accessing resources and new funding streams. Hence, the current period of austerity in public sector funding, which has resulted in unprecedented reductions in police budgets and police officer numbers, presents critical challenges for the future. On the one hand, austerity has added a powerful dynamic to the receptiveness of governments and police managers to the involvement of the private sector in searching for solutions to budget cuts and how to do 'more with less' (HMIC 2012). Fiscal restraint, combined with an ideological commitment by the current government to greater private sector involvement in the delivery of public services—including policing—as *the* 'rational response' to conditions of austerity (Letwin, cited in Mason 2012), is certainly likely to prompt and energise novel experiments in public-private partnerships. However, across Europe there appears less of an appetite for analogous responses to similar fiscal and crime-related policing problems. Some jurisdictions (notably Scotland and the Netherlands) have responded by way of very different reform strategies of internal organizational restructuring and centralisation (Fyfe et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, in England and Wales as the HMIC 'Policing in Austerity' reports (HMIC 2012) suggest, thus far, the main form of post-austerity police partnerships has been 'collaborations' between police forces. And yet, the HMIC recently concluded that: 'The extent to which forces are collaborating in order to save money and transform efficiency is deeply disappointing' (2013: 18). This acknowledgement of the barriers to collaboration appears to have prompted the Home Office to provide incentives to collaborate via the Police Innovation Fund.[3] Regardless, these collaborations do not seem to be delivering the savings expected of them. Hence, the prospects of the greater recourse to outsourcing and sub-contracting in the provision of policing remain firmly on the agenda and have far-reaching implications. They raise fundamental questions about the role, function, and legitimacy of police authority within society, as well as the cultural

[3] The outcome of the £50m Police Innovation Fund for 2014/15 is available via a Home Office Press Release at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-rewards-police-innovation-with-50-million> (accessed 4 November 2014).

place of the police institution as a 'sacred symbol' of national identity (Reiner 1995). Thus far, there has been little systematic academic, practitioner, or policy debate that has reflected on the benefits, disadvantages, and limits of private sector involvement in policing. The Independent Police Commission warned: 'the service, constrained by the lack of finances available to it, risks outsourcing key aspects of policing to the private sector in an ad-hoc and unprincipled manner' (Stevens 2013: 13). Likewise, the National Audit Office (2013) identified a distinct lack of transparency and scrutiny with regard to major contractors in delivering public services, as well as a growing crisis of confidence in contracting out processes.

On the other hand, how the public and voluntary sectors respond to austerity is also uncertain. A number of possible scenarios might be envisaged unfolding in the face of sustained fiscal pressures. First, organizations (including the police) might retreat into their 'silos'; retracting from inter-organizational collaborations, redrawing their boundaries to focus on core objectives, and seeking to off-load responsibilities to others, wherever possible. Short-term cost savings may arise at the expense of partnership commitments, particularly where key individuals or posts are lost to early retirements or workforce reorganizations. A second scenario might prompt more fundamental questions about purpose, expertise, responsiveness, and effective service delivery. This might look for collaborative advantages through partnerships as a means of finding longer-term cost efficiencies. Such prompting might also see investments in 'up-stream' preventive solutions to crime problems and away from reactive fire-fighting. However, as decades of policing research has demonstrated, such far-reaching thinking would necessitate significantly bold shifts in police organizational culture and working practices. The extent to which either, or a combination of both, of these scenarios prevails; only time will tell. However, the manner in which police leaders respond to austerity will undoubtedly shape the next phase in the development and institutionalization of policing partnerships.

Ultimately partnership working is a means to an end, not an end in itself. However, means are outcome determinative. As well as enhancing a specific crime-related strategy, through pooled knowledge, collective intelligence, collaborative skills, and multi-level interventions, partnerships also afford benefits for organizations—notably the police—in terms of cultural change and openness to external engagement and critical reflection. In many ways, specific local partnerships must work with the grain of local cultures, tailor the constellation of partners, and reflect the nature of the problems to be addressed but they can also serve to transform these in constructive ways. Partnerships based on trust, mutual understanding, and regard for difference can facilitate approaches that are 'problem-oriented' rather than defined according to the means or organizations most readily available to solve them. Whilst a philosophy of partnership is strongly embedded within the policy frame there is still much to do and to learn in fashioning and nurturing partnerships that meet their lofty ambitions through a combination of strategic leadership and the appropriately skilled

people to deliver partnerships on the ground. As I have sought to highlight, the challenges associated with working across organizational boundaries, cultures, and established practices are significant but not insurmountable, the benefits are many and varied.

Practitioner's Perspective

It is difficult to bring to mind any sustainable and effective community safety intervention that is delivered by a single agency. Adam Crawford correctly identifies that the reason for this is that community safety problems are multi-faceted ('wicked problems'), requiring multifaceted solutions. Partnership working was once the province of small, specialist police departments who were regarded by some as peripheral to operational policing and who I once heard referred to as 'the trumpets and pamphlets department'. There was also a distinct impression that the role of partners was to help the police to do our job, the 'cultural dominance' described by Adam Crawford.

There is a recognizable shift in emphasis that is increasingly apparent across the public sector: a shift from reacting to preventing and early intervention. It is apparent in the Health Service where the cost of prevention appears to be dwarfed by the cost of acute care. It is apparent in centrally driven initiatives such as 'Troubled Families'. It is apparent across those agencies charged with protecting communities from fire prevention to crime prevention. This change in emphasis is brought into sharper relief by the current climate of austerity; prevention is cheaper than cure.

It is now widely recognized by police officers and staff at all levels that effective preventive interventions which stand a chance of having a lasting impact are reliant upon two or more (usually more) agencies working together to achieve joint outcomes. It is also widely recognized that partnership working can be extraordinarily difficult to achieve. Police leaders, in particular chief officers and those who lead departments and local policing areas, are thinking more carefully about how best to enable partnership working. When I reflect on the successes and travails of leading partnership working, a number of hallmarks emerge, the characteristics of effective joint working. In this section, I will set out, based on my experience, what I consider to be the characteristics of effective partnerships and how the leadership challenges of working across organizational boundaries can be best confronted.

Focus on the problem

The first hallmark of effective partnerships is a clear focus on the problem. The late 1990s into early 2000s saw the emergence of some police forces explicitly adopting a 'Problem-solving philosophy', 'Problem oriented policing' (see Goldstein 1990). The Tilley Award in the United Kingdom saw forces competing

to demonstrate the initiative which best demonstrated a problem solved and UK forces were well represented at the international Goldstein Awards for problem solving. The police appetite for activity can lead partners to accurately describe the Service as 'getting things done' or, equally accurately, describe the Police as 'bulls in china shops'. To solve a problem requires understanding the problem and analysing before responding. Problem solving exposed the requirement for new analytical skills, and in some exemplars, joint analysis of the problem between agencies. Take the issue of alcohol misuse which presents community safety problems, health problems, and education problems, for example. Joint analysis of the problem is the only way to identify the most appropriate action it also helps to decide who should be around the table. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that established 'Community Safety Partnerships' some sterling work was done. However, the limitation of that approach was that it meant in some places the emphasis was on which partners should be at the table before the specific problems were identified. The nature of the problem should determine the contributors and each of the contributors should be clear about what they can offer to the joint solution.

Focusing on the problem assists in the identification of shared desired outcomes. In the early 2000s I had leadership responsibility for the police in Blackpool when we developed the 'Tower Project'. This project was an offender management programme primarily delivered by the police, the probation service, and the health service. Chaotic drug users presented many problems which were the responsibility of a number of different public agencies. The problem for the police and the probation services was that there were a number of chaotic and prolific offenders who were motivated to commit crime to feed their drug habits. For the health service the problem was to reduce the waiting times for drug dependent people to receive treatment and to reduce the number of drug-related deaths. The challenge for the leaders of each of these agencies was how to coalesce resources to have the best opportunity for problem solving. The reason that Tower gained the traction that it did was the synergy of outcomes resulting from addressing the problems of drug dependent individuals. When the partners focused on the problem, it simply made sense to work together; drug related criminality reduced, treatment waiting times shortened. To use Adam Crawford's terms, the approach was 'problem focused' rather than 'bureaucracy-premised'.

Trust

Developing trust across organizational and cultural boundaries is hugely difficult. Some of the barriers to partnership working identified in the previous section—such as the dominance of the policing agenda, conflicting interests and priorities, and the protection of budgets—can result in a lack of trust. My reflection on the most effective partnership working is that trust has developed between key individuals, often in spite of the identified barriers. Leaders can ensure that the following four steps are taken to enhance mutual trust.

- *Early engagement of all parties in the design and build of the interventions*. It is essential that all contributors feel some ownership and stake in the planned activity.
- *Co-location*. It is said that co-location is not essential for effective partnership working, and that is surely true. However when I think of the most effective partnerships I have seen they have all involved staff being co-located and jointly managed. There is often an initial reluctance to this arrangement on the part of the affected staff which time and again I have seen replaced by a new partnership dynamic which makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
- *Sharing success*. The words most often quoted in this regard are ascribed to Harry S Truman: 'It's amazing what you can achieve if you do not care who gets the credit.' Governance arrangements, discussed more in the next section, need to be developed in such a way that successes are jointly claimed. This can also lead to mutual advocacy, partners recognizing and praising the contributions of each other.
- *Retaining professional identity*. The power of partnerships has to lie in the unique professional contribution of each of the agencies, described by Adam Crawford as 'independent interdependence'. I have observed occasions when the police officers who have been working in partnership have lost or diluted their professional identity. The police should be there to make a policing contribution, health to make a health contribution, for example.

One of the barriers identified in the previous section is 'the over reliance on informal contacts and networks which lapse if key individuals move on'. This is a double-edged sword. Brilliant and committed individuals from different agencies working on solutions to common problems can often establish relationships of trust which greatly accelerate the effectiveness of the partnership.

Leadership

Demonstrable and clearly stated commitment from leaders is essential. Specifically I refer here to chief officers and to those who lead local policing areas or departments. These are the people who set the tone and bring great influence to bear on the environment in which people are working. Ultimately, it is these people who will enable or prevent effective partnership working. In order to best protect vulnerable people many areas have recently developed a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Within the MASH safeguarding experts from the police, local authorities, and health trusts are co-located and jointly managed. The intention is to facilitate the better sharing of information and risk assessing across agencies to ensure the best possible protection of vulnerable people. My experience of the MASH in Staffordshire is that it required the most senior leaders in the respective organizations to sign up to the concept. That sign up involved a commitment to the delivery of joint outcomes (focusing on the problem) and

shared clarity as to what success would look like. The leaders had to be sufficiently senior to commit resources both in terms of people and money. Other tiers of strong leadership were required to ensure the delivery of the concept and the alignment of the different organizational business processes. Yet other tiers of leadership were required to ensure that teams worked together and that cultural differences were overcome. Leadership is required well beyond start-up into the ongoing daily business, long after the gleam of the new initiative has worn off. Senior leaders also have to identify the managerial permafrost which blocks and stymies progress. It is relatively straightforward to deal with those who openly object to any particular initiative. It is less straightforward to identify and deal with those who seek to block with indifference.

The establishment of shared governance ensures a commitment that goes beyond informal contacts. If properly established, the governance should also ensure that the desirable individual organizational objectives are achieved whilst remaining focused on joint outcomes. In the MASH scenario the desired joint outcome is that vulnerable people are safer, the organizational objective for the police is that there are fewer crimes (fewer victims) as a result of better information sharing and earlier interventions. This is what Adam Crawford refers to as the radical shift in governance enabling a 'problem focused' response. The governance should be established in such a way as to allow all of the contributing partners to hold each other to account. This relies on clearly expressed success indicators and openly available management information. Most importantly it relies on strong leadership because holding others to account and being held to account is not for the faint hearted.

Leaders set the tone for the organizations they lead. If the tone is not conducive to partnership working then joint work will falter. Tone is set by explicit and implicit actions on the part of the leader and is often exhibited by those who thrive. Traditionally, police commendation ceremonies were a celebration of those who are the bravest or those who are best at detecting large numbers of crimes or bringing villains to justice for the most serious offences. It sends a clear message to an organization as to what is valued. It is true that bravery and skilful detections are causes for celebration but so too are the ingenious preventive partnerships which have often been delivered in the face of serious obstacles.

If partnership working is central to core policing then it follows that those who aspire to leadership positions at all levels in the Service are able to demonstrate that they have the skills and attributes to foster such working. This is likely to require skills which have to date not been high priorities in training curricula: negotiation skills; analytical skills; and problem solving skills. It is reassuring to see that increasingly a multi-agency approach is being taken to leadership development. Development opportunities for leaders across public sector agencies which allow them to come together and to consider how they can work better together for the public good has to be a positive step in ensuring more effective and efficient public services.

Leading partnerships also requires an appetite for risk. The best partnerships I have seen usually involve trying something for the first time, not something that comes naturally to the risk averse. For example, it can often involve giving up direct management control of your resources or committing resources to something which is likely to accrue results in a timescale which is longer than immediately. A traditional police culture has been risk averse, but there are signs (and in some places clear evidence) that this culture is changing.

Information sharing

Adam Crawford correctly identifies the 'unwillingness to share information' as a barrier to partnerships. When things go wrong in the protection of vulnerable people, public sector agencies have been correctly castigated for their inability or reluctance to share information. Professionals can hide behind a restrictive interpretation of legislation to 'protect' information. If the hallmarks identified earlier are evident in any partnership initiative, then information sharing can be easier. Many parts of the country have Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programmes. Partners in Staffordshire, quite properly, take great pride in their joint IOM work. There is a clear focus on the problem, how to assist offenders to reform, and a clear joint outcome of safer communities. There is tangible trust between the public sector and voluntary agencies who work together in one team. There is strong leadership at all levels, creating a sense of purpose. IOM is also reliant on lawfully audacious information sharing across agencies to gain an accurate picture of offending behaviour, a careful analysis of the motivating factors for the offending, and an assessment of the most appropriate interventions. Across the spectrum of partnership working, this is still work in progress. Different agencies use incompatible systems which are still overly reliant on manual transactions and there are still too many examples of organizational preciousness.

The list of hallmarks of effective partnership identified previously is not intended to be exhaustive, rather the product of my reflections on effective partnerships I have been involved in and the observations of Adam Crawford earlier in this chapter. What has changed relatively recently is the context within which partnerships are operating: austerity.

The potential shift in governance, according to Adam Crawford, 'affords the potential coordination and pooling of expertise, information, and resources, enabling the targeting of scarce resources'. I believe this to be the case, but like much else in this area it easier said than done. If there are efficiencies and economies to be had from joint working then collaborative and integrated approaches ought to be more easily achieved. Whilst I am witnessing some evidence of a new urgency to some partnership discussions, I am also seeing evidence of organizations becoming more protective of their diminishing resources. The positive impact has been a discernable shift in discussions with much more cross-agency emphasis on prevention, 'up-stream' is the word of

the moment. This makes sense as money spent in prevention appears to provide a greater return than money spent on consequences. It is also the right thing to do.

In the world of community safety there is a recent potential catalyst for encouraging participation from partners in a time of austerity. Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) have a democratic mandate to bring partners to the table, they also have control over a number of budgets, ie they have (potential) influence and they have money. It is too early to say whether this opportunity is being fully, or even partially, exploited but nevertheless I believe it exists.

Community safety practitioners deal with wicked problems. Problems which are multifaceted cannot be resolved by one-dimensional responses. Solutions at times have to be complex and multi-layered and, if they are to be sustainable, will have to be delivered by more than one agency or organization. Partnership working is not an optional extra, it sits at the very heart of community safety. The earlier part of this chapter has carefully analysed the challenges to such working and the potential opportunities it can provide. As leaders and practitioners in policing we have a responsibility to understand these challenges and to craft solutions; there is no alternative.

Shared Reflections

It is becoming increasingly apparent that austerity measures are requiring police leaders to think very differently about how policing services are delivered and by whom. It appears that more than ever innovative thinking is a desirable—and possibly a necessary—trait in the leadership of the police service. Partnership service delivery with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention is at the heart of these new approaches. Shifting resource and effort from responding to incidents after the event to prevention is seen not just as delivering better community safety but also providing better value for money; it is more affordable. Hence, rising to the challenge of budget cuts has prompted police leaders to ask fundamental questions about purpose, expertise, responsiveness, and effective service delivery and, in doing so, to look for collaborative advantages as a means of finding efficiencies. It has also placed the question of investment in 'up-stream' preventive solutions to crime problems firmly on the agenda. Partnership working and inter-organizational collaborations are undoubtedly pivotal in delivering the necessary organizational change that will underpin any sustained shift in resources, priorities, and commitment to prevention and early intervention to address the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour.

There is much discussion in policing about structural reform, including mergers of police forces (where there are passionate voices on both sides of the debate) and inter-force collaboration. Undoubtedly, there is more to be said about both issues and there will certainly be continuing structural reform

going forward. However, police leaders are likely to devote as least as much, and very often more, time and energy to consideration of the redesign of collaborative public service delivery within their force borders. This is currently manifested in pioneering initiatives, such as those dealing with 'troubled families', safeguarding the vulnerable, and managing prolific offenders. There are signs in some areas that this thinking is moving beyond specific initiatives to a reflection on a much broader approach to mainstream collaborative delivery of services. This is most developed in areas where leaders across relevant agencies are sharing priorities, sharing resources, and looking for joint outcomes in the public interest.

One domain that remains ripe for the greater development of collaboration and partnership working is in relations between the police and higher education institutions. This book is itself testimony to the undoubted benefits that derive from greater mutual understanding and knowledge exchange between research and practice in the field of policing. Moreover, the shift to prevention will need to be premised upon a firm evidence base to justify the allied reallocation of resources and targeting of interventions. Here, research has a key role to play. The development of new approaches with less money has also given a new emphasis to the requirement for evaluation. It is increasingly important to know what works, where, and for whom. The advent of the College of Policing has brought a renewed focus on the requirement to build a solid evidence base and rigorous evaluation of practices. Yet, as Peter Neyroud recognized in his 'Review of Police Leadership and Training' for the Home Office, achieving the translation of research into policing practices requires a 'transformation of the culture of learning in the police service' (2011: 2). He went on to note: 'the relationship between police education and practice and higher education has not reached the level of embedded partnership that it has done in medicine or education' (2011: 81). It follows that there is a new imperative for greater collaboration between policing and universities. Academic scrutiny must be sought and welcomed in building a more open and reflective police culture. Whilst policing has traditionally been about getting on and doing things, the 'can-do' culture of policing is regularly highlighted by partners, usually as a strength; the need for what is being done to be evaluated has never been more pressing.

A new partnership between police and higher education institutions to facilitate research impact, support police innovation, enhance training and learning opportunities, and promote an evidence-based profession is both timely and prescient. In their joint foreword to the College of Policing's 'Strategic Intent' document, Dame Shirley Pearce and Chief Constable Alex Marshall state:

> ... the police should be able to easily access the most recent and credible evidence about what works best and equip themselves with the skills to use that evidence ... They should have access to ongoing professional development and education to support the skills, attitudes and behaviours needed in modern policing (College of Policing 2013: 5).

No doubt there is still a long journey to be made before this ambition can be realized. Nevertheless, there are signs that new regional collaborations are emerging that will complement the work of the College of Policing and foster greater police-academic partnerships to build capacity and foster knowledge generation, translation, and application. It is hoped that this collection of essays can help along the way.

Finally, talk of partnerships in policing is frequently in danger of sounding like 'apple pie'—an inevitably good thing that radiates a warm 'fuzzy' glow—yet remains vague, all-encompassing, and imprecise. In thinking about the benefits and evaluating the impact of different types of policing partnerships, we need to be more unambiguous about the extent to which particular models of inter-organizational relationships fulfill specific purposes. What form, norms, and ethos best suit which strategic purpose? Does a given partnership arrangement constitute a legal contractual form, a formal agreement, or an informal collaboration? Whilst both partnerships and contractual relations are concerned with the distribution of responsibilities and obligations, as modes of organizing and constructing social relations they are fundamentally different in values and processes. The legal formality of a partnership will have implications for conflict processing and the nature of mutual obligations as well as the extent to which these are premised on relations of exchange, trust, or collaborative advantages by 'drawing synergy from the differences between organisations, different resources and different expertises' (Huxham and Vangen 2005: 82). Here, both context and people matter, they constitute the stuff of partnership working. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that the same models of partnerships work at the different scales of analysis or levels within the police (and partner) organizations. What works well among senior commanders will not necessarily be as applicable among frontline officers and workers. Hence, we need to know more about what works, where, for which purposes, and for whom. In the preceding pages, we hope to have contributed, in small part, to this discussion and debate.

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