



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Criminology

Regional Organisation for Crime Prevention Delivery

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Introduction

Experience from across the world is proving that programs for the effective delivery of crime prevention outcomes need to be a combination of national and statewide measures together with carefully targeted local initiatives (Sherman et al. 2003). This is because some of our important crime problems will be most amenable to action at a central level (e.g. electronic crime, fraud prevention, the prevention of organised crime) while others will be more responsive to local action (e.g. reducing domestic burglary, anti-social behaviour, etc.).

However, experience is also showing that joining up the efforts of central agencies and local authorities and communities is also extremely important if the benefits of crime reduction and prevention efforts are to be maximised. Unfortunately, the history of these relationships is not always good and across the world there is a constant process of searching for the most effective approach.

One such approach, which is particularly important in the Australian context, is the use of regional management processes. This is particularly important in Australia because of our federal system of government and our relatively small population and large distances.

Why regionalise?

A regional management system is often seen as an efficient method for mediating the process of achieving centrally determined objectives and policies (albeit policies determined through a consultative process) at a local level (IPAA, 2002). While locally-tailored delivery processes are seen as the optimal service goal, regional management is seen as a method for achieving efficiencies of scale in service management and delivery infrastructure (Farland, 2002). Regional systems are also

viewed as efficient platforms for monitoring performance and managing differences between localities and populations (UK Cabinet Office, 2000a, 2000b).

However, where regional systems have been artificially overlaid on localities that have no organic or historical connection, the efficiency advantages that may flow from a more natural structure can be lost as the primary regional management task becomes the management of what is often historically derived competition or rivalry between groups and localities (Katz & Bradley, 1999).

Additionally, regional management structures can often be viewed by localities as serving a purely policing function on behalf of the centre rather than a facilitating and assisting function (Boyle, 1999).

All of this suggests that what is really required is a different sort of approach to managing the relationship between the central agencies of government that are promoting the idea of community based crime prevention and those other parts of the government, community and business sectors that are ultimately responsible for making it happen.

Making regional management work

The question of how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and implementation of centrally designed and promoted programs through a regional system to achieve the delivery of local outcomes has been the subject of a great deal of study in the UK in recent years. As such, in spite of the obvious differences between Australia and the UK, there are many lessons that can be learned and applied to our local experience.

For example, a recent review of the range of problems experienced in the implementation of the UK's Crime Reduction Programme (Homel et al. 2005a) together with the experience of the UK's Local Strategic Partnerships initiative and the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (Russell et al. 2004), among others, suggests that the primary functions of effective regional systems are in the areas of technical support; guidance and problem solving; knowledge management; program development; and resource deployment (Geddes, 2003; Johnson and Osborne, 2003).

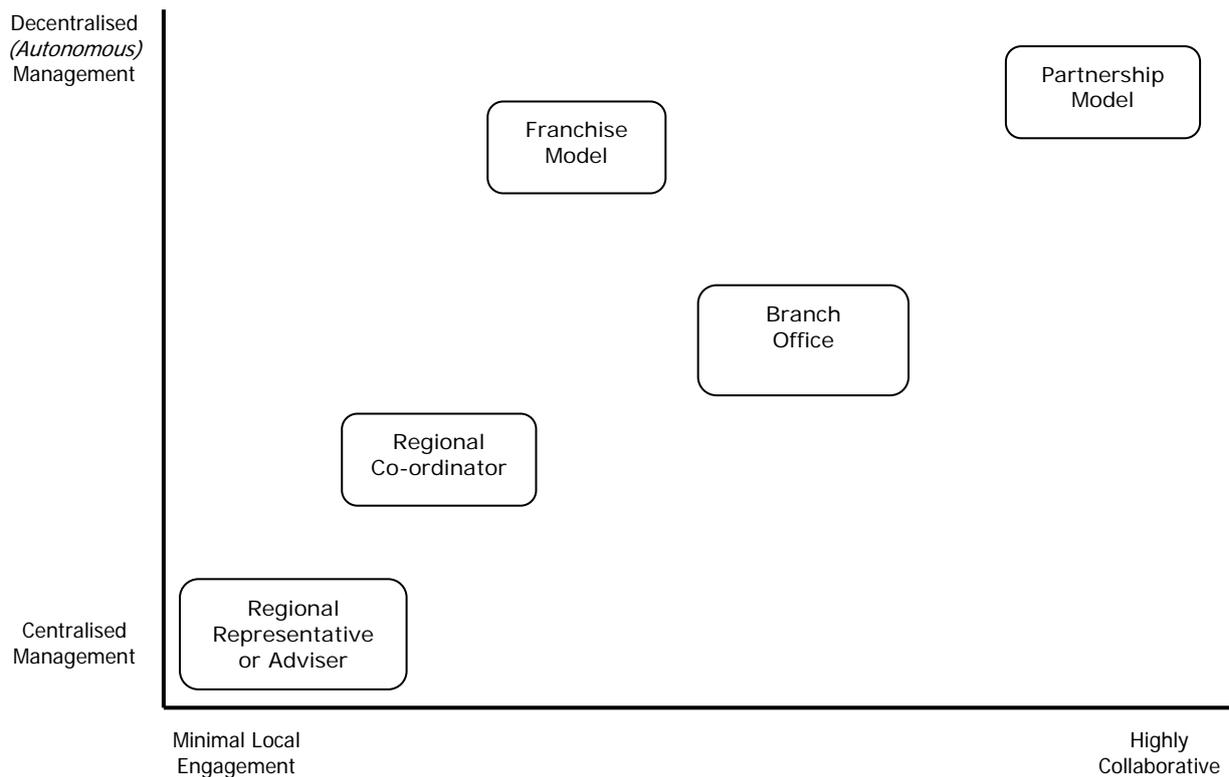
However, there is great diversity in how those functions can be most efficiently delivered. This diversity means that there is no single right or wrong method or approach to regional management. Rather it illustrates the need for a well structured and ongoing analysis of what form of regional management is appropriate for what communities; for what services; in what circumstances; and for what objectives and outcomes.

Overview of some basic types of regional management model

The following is a simple typology of different regional management models and what they might be used for. They are presented in a sequence reflecting differing levels of centralisation, autonomy and collaborative organisation. Figure 1 illustrates the nature of this relationship. As can be seen, the differences between the different forms of regional management are neither linear nor complete. Rather they represent a series of options for regional management, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The approaches described here are based on work undertaken for the Home Office to review the implementation of the Crime Reduction Programme in the UK (Homel et al. 2005b). Where relevant, direct reference is made to examples of organisational types that were found in the review of the Crime Reduction Programme (CRP), already mentioned and in related crime prevention initiatives.

Figure 1: Basic approaches to regional management



1. The Regional Representative or Adviser

“Regional Advisers” are generally centrally located, but with responsibility for what happens in a particular region or area. Their function will normally be limited to the role of central adviser and information gatherer – i.e. the organisation’s internal expert on a region. However, they may also operate as contact point for regionally based services and residents, often providing an informal role as the region’s link to what is happening or being planned at the centre.

It will often be the case that these people will work alone with little more than basic administrative assistance. Essentially they fulfil a policy and monitoring role for a particular area.

2. The Regional Co-ordinator

Where an organisation has a range of related but possibly poorly linked services in a region, or wishes to improve its connection with other service providers in an area, the position of “Regional Co-ordinator” will often be established. This position will be regionally located but retains line accountability to the centre.

They will generally have very few resources available, such as minimal administrative infrastructure and little or no discretionary budget. As such, their functions do not extend much beyond that of the “Regional Adviser”, except that they have the additional brief to promote (generally by advocacy alone) improved service co-ordination and delivery. In this sense they have a pseudo-operational role.

Through this co-ordination brief, they may be able to add an on-ground capacity for improving inter-agency co-operation and action on issues that might otherwise fall between the gaps. However, they will often find that the lack of any discretionary or program budget power marginalises them in discussions with local budget holders and service providers. They can also suffer from the perception that the centre has parachuted them in as a local representative of central interests and that loyalties and accountabilities will necessarily always be to the centre.

Interestingly, a common response to this criticism by local staff can be that the Regional Co-ordinator begins to represent the interests of the region exclusively and at the expense of the centre’s goals and aspirations. This will often occur when a Regional Co-ordinator cannot reconcile the competing demands of the centre and the locality or finds some of the more complex demands of the role beyond their personal capacity or outside their competency.

This form of regional management is to some degree described by the UK’s Safer Cities initiative of the late 1980s and early 1990s illustrated by the experience of Tilley (1992). It also shares some qualities with the early period of the Home Office’s regionally based Home Office Government Officers, who were in place prior to the appointment of the Regional Crime Reduction Directors. It is also noted in a recent Australian study of approaches to partnership working by the Institute of Public Affairs Australia (IPAA 2002).

3. The Branch Office

The Branch Office will frequently co-exist with the previous two structures or systems. The Branch Office is set up when an organisation decides to establish a significant regional presence in order better to deliver its products or services at a local level. Branch Offices will have a local manager, but their major features and business practices are centrally defined and driven. A Branch Office will be centrally owned with little or no discretionary budget control.

Banks, major retailers and local courts are good examples of organisations that use a Branch Office model for regional service delivery. To a major degree, a local community's Police Station operates like a Branch Office.

The primary objective of this model is to ensure that the service that is provided in one branch is virtually identical to that experienced in another. As such they are managed within quite tightly defined guidelines and operating principles.

4. The Franchise

The concept of the "Franchise" is most often associated with modern retailing. It is where a local retail or service outlet is individually owned (or owned by a separate company) but the product sold, the look and feel of the outlet, and the basic standards of service are centrally defined and complied with by the local outlet owner (i.e. franchisee). Obvious examples are chain stores and fast food outlets.

This model of service delivery has also been quite common in other sectors for many years. For example, insurance and finance companies have sold franchises that allow local business people to sell their products. Service standards are set and potential risks and liabilities are shared between the franchise seller and holder, as are the profits.

What is most important about the "franchise" model is that while some regional relationships may exist (and these are most often in the context of large transnational organisations) the strongest relationship is between the centre and the local service provider.

There is very limited freedom to vary service provision from a tightly specified delivery regime. Typically, there will be a high degree of local budget control and autonomy, but the centre is likely to assume a significant standard-setting role in terms of acceptable qualifications and competencies and skills of staff and service delivery standards.

One of the problems with the “franchise” model is that it tends to promote a competitive approach to service delivery and customer management. People compete to be franchise holders just as they compete for customers. Many examples exist where competitive service provision, which may well be capable of improving service outcomes by alone, does not help meet needs for joined-up services to achieve joint goals. This latter process requires, at least to some extent, the replacement of competitive process with an approach that shares resources and goals.

In the UK, the Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, are an example of a “franchise” approach in operation in the public sector. Local Strategic Partnerships also resemble franchises in many respects. In Australia, the NSW Community Safety Compacts, which flow from the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997 are an example of this as are a number of initiatives the Victorian Safer Streets and Homes Strategy.

5. The partnership model

One approach to improving regional management for the achievement of shared goals and outcomes is the “partnership” model. Under this model, service provision is not viewed in terms of core functions and responsibilities, but in terms of how to best organise and deploy services to achieve those goals, regardless of where the service is sourced.

However there is a great deal of confusion over what the term “partnership” means in practice. The term is used widely to describe local structures such as for planning, coordinating and delivering local crime prevention initiatives.

Numerous definitions exist regarding what it means to be in a “partnership” arrangement within the public sector. For example, Bennington and Cummane (1999) list a number of elements that will be present in a successful partnership arrangement.

These will include commitment; equity; trust; mutual goals/objectives; collaboration over implementation; continuous evaluation; and timely communication and responsiveness. Brinkerhoff (2002) emphasises the need for a balance between mutuality (e.g. equality in decision making, joint accountability, mutual trust and respect, as well as jointly agreed purposes and values) and the specific organisational identity and features of partner agencies that both add value to the process and make each agency indispensable to others.

The bulk of attention in how to get partnership models operational has focused on the co-ordination and collaboration of local services within a regional and local context. As has been pointed out in a recent review of the experience of integrated governance approaches in Australia (IPAA, 2002; 13), improved *co-ordination* is often regarded as the prime solution to government problems.

However, the review of the UK's Crime Reduction Programme has demonstrated that without a clear and coherent plan and capacity for active technical support at the central level even the best local action is likely to fall short of the goal (Homel et al. 2005a). As well as this, it is clear that functional inter-agency agreements between central agencies are also necessary in order to maximise local and regional collaboration. These partnership arrangements need to flow both horizontally (i.e. across agencies) and vertically (i.e. from the centre to the local and regional level) if they are to be effective in practice at promoting joined-up action.

This does not mean that the relationships within any partnership arrangements will always be equal. The nature of the power relationship between each agency involved in the partnership will be a product of what value they can add to the achievement of the joint outcomes. For example, at times it may be appropriate for a regional manager to assume leadership of an initiative, as a result of being best placed to lever the necessary resources or most effectively to influence the policy process. In other circumstances, a local authority may be most appropriate as it has access to the most relevant resources. In other situations it may be the police, a community or voluntary organisation, a local business group, or another government agency.

However, without a functioning partnership arrangement based on the principles of integrated governance, this form of flexible organisation will not be able to occur.

A fundamental step in implementing a partnership model of regional management is to view all sections and levels of the program delivery process as a part of a single process. So, for example, the role of a central crime prevention Director cannot be portrayed as a purely policy-defining, goal-setting and monitoring one, just as regional and local services must not be viewed as simply operational. Similarly, service recipients (e.g. crime victims) are not just customers. Rather, they are a key part of the process for further developing the service's quality and effectiveness.

A recommended approach for the regional management of crime reduction

Intrinsic to these different models of regional management are different understandings about the preferred form of governance to be employed. Each model represents a mechanism and structure associated with a preferred governance relationship between the centre, the regions and the locality. Optimally an analysis of the outcomes desired, the complexity of the processes for achieving them, and the context in which this is to occur will define the governance relationship that is adopted. None of these things is static, so any regional management model will need to change over time to reflect changing conditions.

The experience of the UK's Crime Reduction Programme has illustrated that the regional management of program delivery will work most effectively when there is a framework that is able to grow and develop as program activity within a region and specific locations matures and changes. It needs to be able to capitalise on emerging innovations, opportunities for individual and organisational learning and managed change.

The "partnership" approach, as difficult as it may be to manage and implement, is the most likely to deliver effective crime reduction outcomes. It represents a comprehensive, integrated governance approach that can be difficult to achieve and resource intensive at times. It needs to be used carefully and possibly selectively because, "integration is about addressing those issues and problems that can only be solved in partnership, where there is an acknowledgement of a multiplicity of stakeholders". (IPAA, 2002; 71)

A partnership approach to the regional management of crime reduction work will help to define a clearer future role and relationship for both the central agency and regional offices, when and wherever a regional approach is demonstrated to be appropriate. It effectively places the centre and regional offices as key facilitation and support agencies for local delivery. However, the centre and the regions still retain the unique function of accumulating the learning and developing the global policy guidance and advice that effectively grows out of the local experience.

The way forward: regional governance for local delivery

So what does this all mean for the organisation of future crime reduction activity and the organisation of the centre-regional-local delivery relationship?

Firstly, the experience of implementing the UK's Crime Reduction Programme has shown that to achieve effective local crime reduction program delivery all levels of the delivery stream need to be treated as a single integrated system. Even where regional management is employed, the central agency must be an active part of a delivery process.

This means that the centre itself must be appropriately staffed and adequately resourced if it is to contribute positively to the delivery process. "Appropriate" does not mean large or expensive. It means "effective" in the sense of being able to provide the type of support required to improve program implementation. This can include support to budget development and reporting tasks, training and other forms of passing on best practice knowledge and skills, etc.

Similarly, the regional offices must be staffed with technically competent and policy-literate staff capable of providing direct support (such as analytical skills capable of interpreting and applying research findings, as well as project management guidance and training) to individual projects. The regions must also be capable of assisting the centre to remain actively informed of progress towards targets and where and in what form strategic and technical assistance to address emerging deficits is required.

The business model that is to be employed in managing this process must be clearly articulated, well communicated and understood. In practice, it must be a negotiated

relationship that recognises and responds to the full range of roles, specialities and responsibilities of all the parties involved.

While due consideration should be given to all viable approaches to implementing a regional management model, the approach recommended for use in developing future centre-regional-local management relationships for the delivery of crime reduction outcomes is the “partnership” model described here.

To help maximise effective delivery through the “partnership” approach, an appropriate investment in adequate resources and staff competencies at every level of the program delivery stream is required. In particular, the centre and the regions need to be capable of providing well-supported strategic guidance and technical assistance to local services that are both flexible and responsive to local needs and capable of learning from successful innovations.

In adopting this approach, the delivery stream becomes a dynamic process by which new knowledge is cultivated and constantly reapplied to produce innovative policies and programs. New skills will be effectively acquired and transferred across the management layers to be applied where and when they are required. This also means a commitment to a continually evolving management system that will adapt to meet the different requirements of the changing crime reduction environment and needs of partners.

Action to achieve such a system goes beyond conventional planning and funding processes. It encompasses a range of capacity-building actions to enhance skills and knowledge. Some suggestions for this are described below.

The implementation of a “partnership” management model requires a commitment to an open approach to centre/region/local relations that is structured, nurturing, sustaining and consistent. The process will be a dynamic one; changing according to the requirements of a developing program progressively moving towards the achievement of defined agreed outcomes.

These sorts of lessons can be translated into practical action. The twenty-three-point action plan for *Developing Skills And Knowledge For Neighbourhood Renewal*, developed by the UK’s Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002) suggests a way forward.

It attempts to meet the need for defined roles, central and regional capacity building, and development. It also suggests how this can be achieved over a structured and articulated framework.

Put simply, this strategy is intended to

- Identify the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for effectively engaging in the neighbourhood renewal process;
- Develop ways in which knowledge of best practice and ‘what works’ can be spread;
- Provide opportunities to learn and ways to access those opportunities;
- Show how these can be provided at all levels (national, regional and local);
and
- Provide opportunities for residents to get jobs in neighbourhood renewal.

The designers of this strategy suggest that implementing this approach will mean redefining and restructuring the roles and responsibilities of those who engage with the implementation process for neighbourhood renewal across all levels of the management process.

The parallels with crime reduction and prevention are very clear. The opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness arising from modelling the future organisation of locally and regionally managed crime reduction activity on a similar program are also powerful. In this way replication and duplication may be replaced with the efficiencies that arise from collaboration. This sort of collaboration and sharing is at the heart of how to implement a genuine partnership approach to program delivery across all the tiers of government.

Across Australia there is evidence of these new approaches being adopted. For example, the new Western Australian Community Safety and Crime Prevention Partnerships exhibit many of the characteristics needed to achieve substantial crime prevention outcomes (WA Government 2004) as does Queensland’s *Strategic Framework for Community Crime Prevention* (Gadsen and Henderson 2003). It will

be important to adequately review these initiatives in order to determine how well they manage to implement the principles of partnership operation and what results they achieve. These may then be compared with results from new initiatives from overseas as a way of further extending our understanding of how to better implement centrally driven crime reduction and prevention initiatives at the local community level.

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