Reviewing the Priority 44 Programme
A process evaluation of a Home Office crime reduction initiative

Stephen Finer, Sally Marshall, Lauren van Staden, Gemma Stringer and Andy Feist

Background

In late 2006, a group of 44 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) was identified as having the potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of the then Home Office target (Public Service Agreement [PSA] 1) to reduce crime as measured by the British Crime Survey (BCS) by 15 per cent, comparing 2007/08 with the baseline year of 2002/03. The Home Office initiated a programme of work with these partnerships designed to maximise performance against the target, which became known as the Priority 44 Programme (P44). The initiative lasted until the end of the target period in March 2008.

This qualitative research study explored the perceptions of a sample of practitioners and policy makers involved in the management and execution of the Priority 44 Programme. It sought to understand key elements of the initiative and how they translated into 'action on the ground'; map the range and diversity of practitioners' perceptions of the initiative; and understand and explain the reasons behind these perceptions in order to inform the development and implementation of future initiatives.[1]

Sixty-one interviews were conducted with participants from three tiers of programme delivery: staff from 13 of the 44 partnerships involved in the initiative; regional Government Office (GO) or the Home Office Crime Team in Wales (HOCTiW) staff who were involved in delivering the initiative at a regional/Welsh level; and Home Office staff who were responsible for managing the initiative as a whole. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2008, after the initiative had concluded.

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1 This project is not an outcome evaluation and did not seek to determine whether or not P44 was effective in reducing crime. It is worth noting, by way of context, that the 15 per cent target was met; and that there were sizeable reductions in BCS comparator crime (a subset of police recorded crime data that most closely approximates those covered by the BCS) in P44 areas over the course of the initiative that undoubtedly contributed to the achievement of the target. However, more in-depth analysis would be required to judge the scale of any contribution P44 made to the reductions.

Contents

Keywords

Community safety partnerships

Crime and disorder reduction partnerships

Crime reduction

Effective practice

Localism

Partnership working

Performance management

Process evaluation

Qualitative

Weeks of Action

There has been a change of administration and several relevant major shifts in government policy that are relevant to this study since the interviews and analysis were carried out. Most notably, the government has announced an intention to abolish regional Government Offices, and signalled the end of routine, top down performance management of local areas by central government.

Overall perceptions of the Priority 44 Programme

The main objective of the Priority 44 Programme was generally well understood. There was less clarity and consistency of understanding about the rationale for the selection of the 44 areas. The understanding of some was in accordance with the rationale set out by the Home Office: to maximise performance in those areas with the greatest potential to influence the achievement of PSA 1. However, others interpreted the initiative as focusing specifically on poor performers and regarded inclusion, at least at the outset, as fundamentally negative.

At the start of P44, partnership staff demonstrated a wide spectrum of 'buy-in' – that is, they varied greatly in the degree to which they positively engaged with, and were willing to be, an active part of the initiative.

Higher levels of buy-in amongst partnership staff were associated with: greater understanding of the underlying rationale of the programme; acceptance of the reasons for their areas selection in the 44; willingness to be part of a centrally conceived and managed initiative; and a good perceived fit between P44 and the existing work of their partnership.

Buy-in to the initiative was not constant over time. Where it changed it was always described in positive terms: initial reservations were overcome and buy-in increased. Initial concerns about the way in which partnerships were selected diminished over time. Also, anxieties that partnership staff had identified at the outset in terms of the nature and purpose of the initiative were diminished once the actual agenda became clearer.

The Priority 44 Programme as an enabler of change: resources, structural change and analytic capacity

Organisational change was not perceived to be a main consequence of the Priority 44 Programme. Where people did ascribe organisational change to the initiative, they tended to do so in terms of how it facilitated (rather then instigated) changes in structure, priorities or allocation of resources to take place. It was said to have removed barriers to the implementation of existing plans, or to have made it easier to progress work that was already underway.

P44 was described as having affected funding or the use of resources in a variety of ways. Some understood the initiative to be primarily about working in a different way – targeting existing funds more judiciously – rather than acting as a stimulus to draw in additional resources. Others were able to use the lever of P44 to bring in resources from across the partnership in order to support crime reduction activity; and some described having felt encouraged by the initiative to target new sources of funding that they had not tapped before.

Focus, sharing practice and Weeks of Action: core elements of the Priority 44 Programme

The increased focus that the Priority 44 Programme gave to those involved was very widely thought to be both the most salient and the most successful aspect of the initiative.

Focus was not uniformly described. P44 was said to have engendered focus in quite diverse ways: through the emphasis of a single objective; by directing attention to a small number of local areas; and by enhanced scrutiny by GOs and central government of those areas.

The enhanced scrutiny of those areas designated as P44 was generally welcomed and felt to be motivational. However, a minority felt that P44 was unnecessary and that pursuit of the PSA 1 target and a desire to improve community safety were sufficient motivators in themselves.

There were various specific aspects of the initiative that contributed to the general impression of increased focus. The very fact of being identified and labelled as Priority 44 brought about an expectation of scrutiny; and this was then manifested through increased contact and questioning of partnerships, primarily from GO/HOCTiW staff. Interim targets and the requirement of regular reporting were further tangible contributions.

The general feeling was that, while there had been some successes in sharing effective practice between P44 partnerships that had come about through the initiative, it was not where the main strengths of the initiative lay.

The communication of examples of effective practice from the Home Office (primarily via the P44 newsletter) was felt to have been limited. There was some feeling that it improved towards the end of the initiative, but by this time the potential for it to have an impact on achievement of the PSA1 target had lessened.

The most notable single tactical success was perceived to be the implementation of Weeks of Action – periods of intensive and highly co-ordinated partnership action, usually focused on discrete high crime and high deprivation areas (such as a ward, neighbourhood or cluster of streets).

Weeks of Action were, on the whole, thought to have been effective in reducing BCS comparator crime – at least in the short term. They were also felt to have been successful in improving existing (or building new) relationships between the various partners who participated, and these improved relationships were said to carry over into other aspects of partnership working.

There was some less positive feeling toward Weeks of Action. It was widely thought to be a short-term approach to crime reduction; and although some thought that appropriate given the nature of the target, others had resisted carrying them out at the expense of longer-term priorities.

There were also other examples cited of GOs/HOCTiW being effective in encouraging cross-pollination of ideas through seminars, workshops and other means.

Perceptions of whether P44 had helped reduce crime

Participants commonly felt that P44 had been a factor – albeit one of a number of successful factors – in reducing their area's level of BCS comparator crime and the achievement of hitting the overall PSA 1 target. However, they did not feel confident about judging the size of the contribution of P44.

Feelings were more mixed about the longer-term sustainability of the reductions in recorded crime. Some saw a natural contradiction between how the short-term reductions in crime had been achieved – intensive, focused efforts – and the adoption of a longer-term, sustainable approach.

Others felt that some of the steps that had been taken in pursuit of supporting P44 could be channelled into longer term benefits. Examples given were: structural changes; the establishment of new partnership relationships; and improved ways of working, such as better performance management.

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1. Introduction

Background

Under the 2004 Public Service Agreement (PSA), the Home Office had a target (known as 'PSA 1') to reduce crime by 15 per cent, comparing 2007/08 with the baseline year of 2002/03.[2] In late 2006, a group of 44 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)[3,4] was identified as having the potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of this target. The 44 were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- the size (by volume rather than percentage) of the gap between current levels of crime and the target end point for each partnership;

- current direction of travel (i.e. whether levels of crime were rising or falling); and

- the volume gap from the average of the 'most similar comparison group' on iQuanta.[5]

The calculations were carried out using data to the end of October 2006.

The Home Office initiated a programme of work with these partnerships designed to maximise performance against the target, which became known as the Priority 44 Programme. The initiative lasted until the end of the PSA period in March 2008. A list of the 44 partnerships is given in Annex A.

The Priority 44 Programme was directed by the Home Office and delivered regionally through Government Offices (GOs) and, in Wales, through the Home Office Crime Team in Wales (HOCTiW). The initiative sought to enhance performance against the PSA 1 target through both challenging partnerships and providing them with support. A central aspect of the initiative was a focus on analysis of recorded crime data, along with other data provided by partnership agencies, with the aim of increasing understanding of why changes had occurred. Other key elements included:

2 The national target was measured using the British Crime Survey (BCS). BCS comparator data (a subset of police recorded crime data that most closely approximates those covered by the BCS) was widely used to monitor interim progress against the target. This is because the BCS cannot give sufficiently robust estimates of crime levels at a local level and because police recorded crime data updates are available more frequently. The BCS comparator includes recorded theft of and theft from a vehicle, vehicle interference and tampering, domestic burglary, theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle, theft from the person, criminal damage, common assault, wounding and personal robbery.

3 At the time of the Priority 44 Programme, CSPs were known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) in England. (They have been known as CSPs in Wales since their inception.) For the purposes of simplicity, we have used the word 'partnership' as a catch-all term in this report.

4 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 put CSPs on a statutory footing for the first time. The Act required local authorities and the police (so-called 'responsible authorities') to come together to review the pattern and extent of crime and disorder in their local area and to implement a strategy for tackling these issues. Under the Act, fire and rescue, police authorities and, in Wales, local health boards were also classified as responsible authorities; Section 97 of the Police Reform Act 2002 extended this list to include Primary Care Trusts. The 'responsible authorities' are supported by additional representatives from local bodies who have either a co-operating body status (e.g. social landlords and NHS trusts) or invitee to participate status. The extent of involvement of individual partnership agencies in local partnerships varies from area to area.

5 The iQuanta website provides analyses of current policing and community safety performance in England and Wales. It helps the crime reduction community to focus on performance management and to track progress in improving performance. The 'most similar comparison groups' provide partnerships with benchmarks for comparing their performance with similar areas elsewhere in England and Wales. They also help to identify similar areas that are performing well, to promote the sharing of good practice. Each partnership has a unique group of other areas to which it is 'most similar'.

Home Office

- encouraging robust and clearly defined governance at a local level;

- ensuring effective communication – within partnerships, between Priority 44 partnerships, and between partnerships, GOs/HOCTiW and the Home Office;

- encouraging problem–solving and intelligence-led action planning;

- the implementation of periods of intensive and highly co-ordinated partnership work (known as 'Weeks of Action'); and

- sharing and disseminating effective practice that was felt to be relevant to achieving the target.

There was a large element of flexibility inherent in the initiative. The implications for individual local areas of P44 with regards to resourcing and the scale of activity were not made explicit; rather, it was to a degree left for local areas working with GOs/HOCTiW to decide the extent to which the programme influenced the work of the partnership. Nor was P44 supported by a large centrally administered budget.

Since the research was undertaken, there has been a change of administration and several relevant major shifts in government policy that are relevant to this study since the interviews and analysis were carried out. Most notably, the government has announced an intention to abolish regional Government Offices, and signalled the end of routine, top down performance management of local areas by central government.

Aims of the research

This study explores the perceptions of a sample of practitioners and policy makers involved in the management and execution of the Priority 44 Programme. It seeks to:

- understand key elements of the initiative and how they translated into 'action on the ground';

- map the range and diversity of practitioner perceptions of the initiative; and

- understand and explain the reasons behind these perceptions to inform future initiative development and implementation.[6]

The Priority 44 Programme is a good example of a government department attempting to influence outcomes through intensive scrutiny of local areas, but with limited additional resources. This study aims to contribute to the evidence base on the relationship between central policy initiatives and changes in local delivery.

Although the Priority 44 Programme was concerned with community safety, the results of this research will be relevant to programme development and delivery across other areas of social policy.

A short review was conducted for this project of existing research on crime and community safety initiatives that were designed and managed by the Home Office or Ministry of Justice for delivery at a regional or local level. The review drew from the literature a number of elements that have been identified as being key to the effectiveness of this kind of central and local partnership approach. These elements are:

- integration of central and local delivery systems such that the different organisations can effectively operate as a single entity;

- clearly defined and recognised roles and responsibilities;

- clear communication;

- appropriate and adequate resourcing, including flexible staff with the required competencies; and

- a dynamic planning, management and delivery process.

The findings from the review are presented more fully in Annex B.

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6   This project is not an outcome evaluation and did not seek to determine whether or not P44 was effective in reducing crime. It is worth noting, by way of context, that the 15 per cent target was met; and that there were sizeable reductions in BCS comparator crime in P44 areas over the course of the initiative that undoubtedly contributed to the achievement of the target. However, more in-depth analysis would be required to judge the scale of any contribution P44 made to the reductions.

Methodology

A small reference group was established, which included senior officials from both the Home Office and a Government Office, along with a member of the research team. Members were regularly consulted to inform the scope and direction of the project and ensure it remained relevant to policy and practice.

This study is based on information obtained from a series of interviews conducted with participants in the Priority 44 Programme, with representation from the following three tiers of programme delivery:

- Home Office personnel who were responsible for managing the initiative as a whole;

- personnel from each GO and the HOCTiW who were involved in delivering the initiative at a regional level;[7] and

- participants from a sample of the 44 partnerships selected by the Home Office to take part in the initiative.

Thirteen of the 44 partnerships were selected to cover the majority of English regions and Wales. They were also selected to be representative of the following attributes of the 44:

- direction of travel of BCS comparator crime in the twelve months prior to the start of the initiative – i.e. a mix of those that saw increases and those that saw decreases;

- levels of change of BCS comparator crime over the course of the initiative – i.e. a mix of those that achieved greater than average reductions and those that achieved less than average reductions; and

- performance against partnerships' individual targets by February 2008, a month before the end of the PSA period – i.e. a mix of those that were on course to meet their target and those that were not on course.

The table in Annex C illustrates how the 44 partnerships were distributed across the attributes that were used to select which partnerships were included in the study.

Potential interviewees within partnership areas were then identified using a 'snowball' approach. The research team made contact with local Community Safety Officers from the sampled partnerships, who then made recommendations about whom it would be appropriate to approach for interview. Only those who were understood to have had a direct involvement in the Priority 44 Programme were asked to participate.

Following the identification of participants, the research team conducted individual, face-to-face[8] qualitative in-depth interviews. A topic guide was developed (and refined following piloting) to direct the interviews and ensure consistency of approach across the interviewing team. The guide covered the following themes:

- the individual's involvement in the Priority 44 Programme and how their partnership implemented the initiative;

- perceptions of how the initiative was communicated, managed and supported;

- perceptions of the level of change brought about by the initiative, including changes in resourcing, relationships, performance management processes and performance;

- views of which elements of the initiative were particularly helpful or unhelpful; and

- perceptions of the critical factors in delivering crime reduction on the ground in the area, be this through the Priority 44 Programme or other unconnected factors.

Participants were also asked to explain the reasons behind their perceptions and, where possible, to point to the evidence supporting their positions. A full discussion guide can be found in Annex D.

Interviews generally lasted about an hour and were recorded for transcription. Sixty-one interviews were conducted in total.

Raw data from each interview transcript was summarised using a thematic matrix designed specifically for this study. This allowed systematic analysis to be conducted both within and between individual cases. An initial analysis of the data allowed the wide-ranging

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7   This included all ten of the Home Office Regional Deputy Directors (HORDDs).

8   Except for one, which, for logistical reasons, was carried out over the telephone.

views and experiences of individuals involved in the initiative to be mapped, whilst further exploration identified key themes which appeared to be influencing perceptions. Similarities and differences between cases were identified and possible explanations for these were then explored.

It is important to note that there has been a change of administration and several relevant major shifts in government policy that are relevant to this study since the interviews and analysis were carried out. Most significantly, the government has announced an intention to abolish regional Government Offices; and has also signalled a sharp reduction in performance management of local areas by central government. Given how far progressed the research study was at the time of the change in administration, it was not possible to undertake another full analysis of the data in the light of these policy changes. However, the practical lessons that the authors have drawn from the findings do take them into account.

Structure of this report

This report explores the key themes arising through the research, based on the perceptions of those involved in the Priority 44 Programme. Chapter 2 looks at the extent to which the aims of the initiative were understood and discusses how far individuals 'bought in' to the initiative. Chapter 3 explores whether the initiative acted as an agent of change within partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW. Chapter 4 looks in depth at three elements that people identified as embodying the Priority 44 Programme: focus, the facilitation of the sharing of practice, and Weeks of Action. Chapter 5 describes the impact of the initiative on the professional relationships of those involved. Chapter 6 describes participants' views as to the effectiveness of the initiative in reducing crime. Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the main findings from the study and considers their relevance for the current policy environment.

We have used quotes throughout the report for illustrative purposes, i.e. to give a flavour of the language that participants used during the interviews. They are attributed by job description or by the organisation that the participant worked for; but, in order to preserve the anonymity of participants, not both. For reasons of anonymity, in attribution of quotes and some in parts of the main body of the text we have used 'GO' to cover both GO and HOCTiW staff. In some instances, where we felt that a more in-depth description of

an individual's point of view would provide useful illustration of a point, we have included a short case study. We have also sometimes included words used by participants themselves in the main body of the text. Where this is the case, we have put them in double quotation marks.

2. Overall perceptions of the Priority 44 Programme

This chapter gives an overview of perceptions of the Priority 44 Programme, both initially and as it continued. It explores the extent to which people understood its aims and the rationale for the selection of partnership areas; how partnership staff responded to the selection of their area in particular; and responses to being part of a centrally organised initiative. It also discusses the extent to which individuals 'bought in' to the initiative and how this changed over time.

Initial understanding of P44

Understanding of the rationale and objectives
The single objective of the Priority 44 Programme – to help meet the PSA 1 target – was well understood. GO/HOCTiW and partnership staff were generally well versed in BCS comparator crime as the measure of success in PSA 1, so there was little misapprehension here. The small number of individuals who did not have this basic level of understanding (and were in fact generally unclear about most aspects of the initiative) invariably had come late to the P44 process and been appointed to their posts towards the end of the initiative.

Beyond the simplicity of achieving a reduction in a familiar basket of recorded crimes, wider understanding of the initiative – and in particular the rationale for particular partnerships being included and the processes that defined the initiative – was found to be far more varied.

Within partnerships, there were some individuals whose wider understanding of the initiative's objectives and the overall rationale for a partnership's selection could be described as being closely aligned to those set out by the Home Office. They were clear that P44 was intended to

maximise performance in reducing crime in those areas with the greatest potential to influence the achievement of PSA 1.[9]

Others, however, had interpreted the wider rationale of the initiative rather differently although they were nonetheless confident that their interpretation was correct. These individuals interpreted the initiative more as a mechanism for tackling areas with poor performance through a process of central scrutiny. Involvement in the initiative was, at least at the outset, seen as fundamentally negative and inclusion in the 44 was described as being a "*black mark*" against an individual partnership. Individuals holding these views invoked pejorative language to describe the P44 experience: being part of the "*naughty 44*" was a label used by more than one interviewee. Others described the initiative as including "*the worst of the worst*" or inclusion as being "*in the doghouse*".

Even where the 'maximising potential' message had been clearly understood, some felt that it masked a less benign actual objective of tackling poor performance against the PSAs – and it would have been better had the Home Office admitted as much.

> "*Cynical, which is very unusual for me, inasmuch as I'm not really a fan of dressing up. You see… there's a certain patronising element to the tone of the stuff that came out initially about this: 'Oh, if we'd all rally around we can do it.' I'd much rather somebody said, 'Do you know what? You're not doing well on your PSA targets.'*"
>
> (Partnership staff)

Finally, a small number simply admitted that they were confused as to the goal of the initiative and the agenda it was meant to be setting. As we will examine later, these views were not consistently held and, over time, P44 status was seen as conferring some advantages.

One factor that caused the initiative to be perceived in such different ways was the range of partnerships involved in P44: partnerships were at different levels of maturity, facing different challenges and operating in different political climates, and this context will have coloured expectations of an initiative such as P44.

A second factor was early communications about the initiative from the Home Office. Those who claimed to be confused at the start as to the aims of the initiative tended to be critical of its marketing and initial communications from the centre. As described in the example below, early Home Office communications were commonly perceived to be lacking in focus and clarity and some messages were seen to be contradictory.

> The Head of Community Safety in a partnership described how, at first, in conversations with the Home Office and Government Office, although references had been made to Weeks of Action and poor performance, their inclusion in the Priority 44 Programme had not been mentioned explicitly. Subsequently, although their "*membership of the club*" had been made clear, the participant did not feel that the reasons for their inclusion had been explained fully. In addition, the participant was not clear about what it meant to be part of the initiative, what was expected from the partnership or what objectives they were intended to be contributing towards. They felt that what was needed from "*those initial discussions was… 'You have now been identified as Priority 44, this is why you've been identified as Priority 44, and this is what is expected of you'*".

The launch event in particular was viewed by some as a missed opportunity to provide a clear steer on what the initiative was about and was seen to be lacking in specificity.

A final factor influencing initial understanding of the rationale of P44 was prior experience: some simply expected the Home Office to target poor performers on the basis of previous similar initiatives that they had been involved with.

Understanding of what the initiative constituted
P44 was not designed as a single definable intervention with which to bring about change; rather it was a loose assembly of approaches to reduce crime, which could be selected and implemented locally. Sharing effective practice, an intensified focus on performance, and so-called 'Weeks of Action'[10] were all key strands in the package; but generally the initiative itself was not rigidly defined. This is discussed further in later chapters.

A criticism levelled at P44 by some was whether this group of activities actually constituted a 'programme'. In fact, the initial documentation associated with P44 did not explicitly use the word 'programme' to describe the

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9   The selection of areas able to 'maximise performance' as opposed to those with the poorest performance is most clearly manifested in the first of the three criteria described in section 1.1, i.e. the volume gap to the target end point. High crime areas were selected over low crime areas even if they had a smaller percentage reduction required to meet their target if the volume of the gap to the target end point was greater.

10 See Footnote 18 for a full description of Weeks of Action.

initiative – it simply became common currency over time.[11] This is somewhat paradoxical in that, whilst some took objection to the use of the label, it evidently came naturally to others.

Engaging with P44 – 'buy-in'

Partnership staff demonstrated a wide spectrum of initial engagement with the Priority 44 Programme and willingness to be an active part of it – or 'buy-in' to the initiative. There were some who, from the outset, had a broadly positive attitude to their area's inclusion. They engaged with the initiative, recognising that it could offer opportunities to improve local delivery. At the other end of spectrum were individuals whose initial views on their area's selection were wholly negative; they took issue with their perceived view of the selection criteria, felt their partnership's involvement was unwarranted and were unwilling to engage at any level. Between these two extremes were some individuals who were ambivalent about their partnership's inclusion. They were not enthusiastic about their initial selection but neither did they view it in wholly negative terms.

Four factors were key in influencing levels of buy-in. Understanding of the underlying rationale, as discussed in the previous section, was one important factor: those who were neutral or did not buy in to the initiative generally were also found to have lower levels of understanding of its wider rationale. The three other key factors were: responses to their area being one of the 44; feelings towards the general principle of a top down, centrally conceived initiative; and perceptions of how in harmony the initiative was with the existing work of the partnership. Each of these is discussed in turn below. Table 2.2 summarises the characteristics of different levels of initial buy-in and can be found after the discussion of these factors.

Responses to being selected into the 44

Given the range of views of the underlying rationale for being selected into the initiative, it is not surprising that individual responses to an area's inclusion within the 44 were not uniform. Some individuals expressed no surprise at their partnership's selection. Regardless of any misunderstanding of the rationale for selection, they saw their area as deserving – or requiring – priority action and therefore viewed their partnership's inclusion in a programme of action of this type as wholly to be expected.

This group were more likely to have greater initial buy-in to the initiative.

Several interpretations of 'poor performance' were offered as reasons for selection, including the relatively high proportion of the region's crime that their own partnership contributed, or perceived problems in the working of the partnership.

"Because we were crap. We weren't just mediocre at that point, we were truly rubbish. I think the point at which I arrived in April 2006, people were shaking their heads and saying it couldn't happen, and we wouldn't achieve our targets."

(Partnership staff)

"Being the biggest city, most people, most crime, it's done mathematically and we were always going to be included."

(Partnership staff)

By contrast, however, others stated that they had been surprised by their area's inclusion, and generally took issue with their selection. This group tended to have lower levels of initial buy-in. They believed inclusion to be unwarranted on performance grounds, or that the very act of selection brought with it negative connotations and this in turn sapped morale. Those that spoke of an area's unwarranted selection – and this included both partnership and GO/HOCTiW staff – sometimes did so in relation to other areas in the region who were felt to be performing worse and were therefore perceived as more worthy candidates for the initiative. As noted above, this discontent with an area's inclusion may have been linked to unclear communication of the selection criteria or simply an expectation that inclusion in a centrally conceived initiative of this kind automatically implied 'poor performance' of some kind or other (even if it was felt this view was unmerited). Whether any central initiative involving a selected number of localities can be perceived by those involved as something other than a sign of the need for local corrective action is open to question. An overview of the responses to selection is given in Table 1.

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11 For example in The Home Office Departmental Report 2008 (HMSO).

Table 1   Partnership staff's views of the selection of their area into P44

Expectation	Range of explanations
Selection was expected	Partnership was always a focus of GO/ HOCTiW attention – not being selected would have been a surprise.
	Recent partnership performance was acknowledged as heading in the wrong direction.
	Relations within the partnership were generally perceived to be poor.
	Within the region, the partnership was seen as having by far the largest share for the crime problem.
Selection was not expected	Partnership already perceived that it was on the road to improvement.
	Historic performance until recently had been good so selection came as surprise.
	Other (non-P44) areas were thought to be performing worse and therefore more worthy candidates for inclusion.

Responses to a top-down, centrally conceived, nation-wide initiative

It was clear to all that the Priority 44 Programme was conceived and developed by the Home Office. This was understood to mean that, while there was a degree of autonomy in how the initiative was interpreted on the ground, it was essentially a 'top-down' approach, albeit mediated through the GOs/HOCTiW.

That the initiative was centrally conceived and covered the whole of England and Wales elicited a range of responses. Some partnership staff saw it positively, viewing the process of involvement in a central government initiative as empowering, providing a mandate for change. Allied to this was a sense that the initiative provided a shared goal and gave people a feeling that they were not in it on their own or isolated in tackling PSA 1; rather the initiative highlighted that they "*were part of a bigger scheme of things*" (Partnership staff). These positive views overrode any concerns relating to local autonomy: the Home Office had a responsibility for delivering the PSA and P44 was essentially just another legitimate measure to help deliver this. Those in this group tended to have greater buy-in to the initiative.

On the other hand, because of its provenance, some individuals saw P44 as being fundamentally intrusive. Those that were most vocal on this issue felt that partnerships were being subject to interference from the centre

and that they were being instructed what to do (about tackling crime). One partnership described the initiative as the Home Office "*coming in and telling us we should be doing XYZ and, 'Why aren't we?'... and, 'Are we going to be penalised?'*" (Partnership staff). This group tended to have lower levels of buy-in.

Fit of P44 with the work of the partnership

A final factor influencing levels of buy-in to P44 was how well it was perceived to fit with the existing work of the partnership and the direction in which individuals wanted the partnership to head.

Some had already recognised problems within their partnership and had started to implement changes that chimed with the aims of P44 before the initiative started. In effect, they were already working within the spirit of the initiative and its implementation did not fundamentally change their existing approach – although it did, in some cases, empower them to continue with it.

> "*What* [we] *did do was fully engage with the programme. But it didn't change our activity; it didn't change what we were going to do anyway. Crime in the city was really high, so we were going to bring it down. It's not as though we suddenly thought, 'Oh dear, we'd better do something about this because the government have now noticed'. We'd already noticed.*"
> (Partnership staff)

Some believed there to be a greater possibility of innovation and learning through the Priority 44 Programme. They engaged with the initiative because they saw it as offering organisational development opportunities, such as through the mechanisms of peer support and evaluation.

This was not always the case: others felt that P44 had a 'one size fits all' approach that did not offer anything new to their area. This group had lower levels of buy-in to the initiative and tended to place greater weight on other factors as more influential in bringing about change in local areas.

> "*Without doubt the most significant thing* [that contributed to a reduction in crime] *was a restructure of the policing division to enable us to focus more closely on those areas that we were getting measured against. That is the single biggest factor. Within that there are lots of different initiatives around certain crime types. But it's really getting the day-to-day operational aspects of policing right for the city, in the state of evolution that the city is currently in… [and] the BCU organisation was nothing to do with Priority 44.*"
> (Partnership staff (BCU commander))

Table 2   Characteristics of different levels of initial buy-in

Typical characteristics of high initial buy-in	Typical characteristics of low initial buy-in
Accepted the rationale for selection. Was already implementing change in a way which was sympathetic to P44.	Had misinterpreted the rationale for inclusion into P44 and reacted negatively to their area being included.
Acknowledged organisational and development opportunities through peer group involvement.	More inclined to attach greater value to other factors contributing to change.
Good fit between P44 and existing partnership agenda and priorities. Embraced the potential for innovation through the initiative.	Initiative seen as not responsive to addressing local circumstances; general resentment of its central provenance.

It is important to note that, although in some areas all the individuals involved had similar levels of buy-in, in others there was variation amongst different individuals within the same partnership. This shows that buy-in was not just about the circumstances of a given partnership; other factors, such as the organisation within the partnership that they worked in and people's own beliefs and attitudes, played a part as well. These differing levels of buy-in are illustrated in the following case study.

Two participants – a BCU commander and a partnership manager – demonstrated different levels of buy-in at the outset of the initiative despite working together within the same partnership. The BCU commander had a limited understanding of the aims of P44 and was positive about the inclusion of the area in the initiative although he felt that it had very little impact on day-to-day business. His view was that while it was beneficial to put scrutiny on the partnership, no additional focus was needed for the police, as they were already working towards the objectives embodied in P44. In reviewing the initiative, the BCU commander felt that the changes that had occurred within the police and partnership had not been a result of P44. The only attributable impact that was attributed to the initiative was an inspection that was held at the beginning of the period. In contrast, the partnership manager had a fuller appreciation of the aims of P44 but was sceptical about the partnership's inclusion in the initiative, doubting the tangible benefits that it would bring. Despite her reservations, she felt that the partnership worked towards actively

implementing the principles of the initiative. When reviewing the outcomes of P44 the partnership manager felt that the initiative had brought a commitment to actually making changes within the partnership and had provided an invaluable tool through which to generate multi-agency working specifically through Weeks of Action.

Changes to buy-in over time

The extent to which individuals bought in to Priority 44 was not constant over time. Where individuals' buy-in did change, it was always described in positive terms: the direction of travel was always towards greater levels of buy-in, so from being neutral or cynical about the initiative at the outset to embracing it positively towards its conclusion. Although some individuals' views, on the basis of the interviews, appeared to remain static and unchanged during the life of the initiative, there were no instances where partnership staff described their views as becoming less positive.

Several factors were identified as encouraging partnership staff to become more positive towards the initiative and demonstrating higher levels of buy-in.

- **Selection of partnerships.** Initial anxieties about the way in which partnerships were selected to be part of the initiative diminished over time. The question of 'why has this partnership been selected?' simply became less of an issue.

- **Changing perceptions of 'membership' of P44.** Several individuals described how the initial pejorative connotations of being branded as one of the 44 changed radically during the course of the initiative. For some, the rather negative associations of being one of "the naughty 44" (which were common at the start of the initiative) were transformed into a sense of being part of a much more exclusive group. This exclusivity was capped by the celebratory conference held for P44 areas at the Oval in March 2008 (which was widely seen as a positive event). The change from P44 being viewed as a problematic to an "*exclusive*" group was probably aided by the high degree of success the 44 achieved in meeting their crime reduction targets.

- **Improved understanding of P44 rationale.** With time, partnerships gained an improved understanding of the rationale that underpinned

the initiative. Although part of this reflected greater clarity in the messages coming from the centre, it was also seen as being a function of individuals' increased familiarity with the initiative and their role in it. Anxieties that partnership staff had identified at the outset in terms of the nature and purpose of the initiative were dissipated once the actual agenda became clearer.

GO/HOCTiW buy-in

The buy-in of GO/HOCTiW staff to the Priority 44 Programme also varied, albeit less so than that of partnership staff. Most GO/HOCTiW staff were generally well disposed towards the initiative: it was commonly seen as bolstering their existing role and giving them a direction as to how they could further contribute to the push towards achieving the PSA 1 target.

However, there was still some evidence of different levels of buy-in within the GOs/HOCTiW, and this was most clearly demonstrated through the interviews with HORDDs. HORDDs tended to buy into the initiative to a greater degree if their region contained more P44 partnerships. Several regions had large numbers of P44 areas (the highest had eleven). Those HORDDs with high buy-in *and* a large number of P44 areas explained their position in terms of the initiative more closely matching their own regional priorities, and providing an effective means for them to pursue the PSA 1 target.

By contrast, in regions in which there were only a small number of P44 partnerships (five regions and Wales contained only one or two P44 partnerships), the initiative fitted less well with their overall objective of reducing crime across the region, and consequently HORDDs tended to be less engaged. This was not, however, a uniform pattern. One GO with only one Priority 44 partnership bought in fully to the initiative mainly because the HORDD viewed it as an effective lever with which to engage this particular partnership that had strategic significance within the region. In this sense, the initiative was perceived as aligning closely with the HORDD's own higher level objectives by addressing their concerns with one particular partnership.

3 The Priority 44 Programme as an enabler of change: resources, structural change and analytic capacity

Participants often had difficulties in linking any changes that had taken place to the Priority 44 Programme specifically. The chapter begins with a discussion of this, and then goes on to explore how the initiative was perceived to affect three elements of organisational change: partnership access to funding and resources; partnership structures; and capacity for data analysis.

The Priority 44 Programme as a contributor to organisational change

In attempting to understand the process of change – and individuals' perceptions of change – it is important to appreciate the context in which the Priority 44 Programme existed. P44 took place alongside several other Home Office-led interventions, the most commonly cited being PSPs[12] (although, as discussed below, in some instances they were seen as actually constituting part of the Priority 44 Programme) and the Tackling Violent Crime Programme (TVCP).[13] The objectives of these other initiatives were mostly regarded as being complementary to those of P44.

The existence of multiple interventions made it hard for some to assess whether a particular change was due to any given initiative; or indeed whether it was due to a raft of initiatives working in tandem. Others felt more confident in ascribing change to particular interventions.

To add to the complexity, some GO/HOCTiW staff highlighted the effect of a Treasury Review that had preceded the Priority 44 Programme. In some regions, this resulted in a large-scale restructure of GOs, which in turn was felt to have affected teams and how they operated in a way that was difficult to disentangle from any (more minor) effect that P44 may have had.

Understanding what changes were due to the initiative was made harder still because, although it was perceived

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12 See Box 3.1 for a description of PSPs and a discussion of their relationship with the Priority 44 Programme.

13 The Tackling Violent Crime Programme works intensively with practitioners in a small number of local areas with high volumes of more serious violent crime. TVCP activity focuses on alcohol-related and domestic violence. By targeting activity in these areas, the programme aims to reduce the national level of violent crime.

to have a very clear overarching objective – i.e. to reduce BCS comparator crime – there was no explicit pathway to achieving that objective, and there was no explicit expectation of organisational or structural change.[14] That lack of specificity allowed room for interpretation as to what did and did not constitute part of the initiative.

With these complications and room for interpretation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the degree to which individuals seemed willing to ascribe change as having been due to the initiative was linked to their level of buy-in. The better the Priority 44 Programme fitted with local structures and priorities, and the more it was seen as offering opportunities for change, the greater the perceived impact on processes. Similarly, the extent to which they bought into other interventions that were happening at the same time seemed to affect how likely they were to ascribe changes to those.

> *"I'd say the PSP assisted. But Priority 44 made no impact whatsoever. Basically, by recognising there were some relationship management issues within there, the authority acknowledged the fact it needed a more senior officer to take on a lead responsibility for community safety, where it hadn't been before."*
> (Partnership staff)

The Priority 44 Programme as a facilitator of organisational change

Where people did ascribe some element of organisational change to the Priority 44 Programme, they did so in terms of how it *helped* changes in structure, priorities or allocation of resources to take place rather than it being the primary cause of change. The initiative was thought by some to act as a facilitator, removing barriers to the implementation of existing plans, or making it easier to progress work that was already underway.

Perceptions of the extent to which the initiative acted as an enabler of change varied both within and across partnerships. Some participants described specific developments that they perceived as having their roots firmly in the initiative, and were driven or instigated by it.

> *"Being part of Priority 44 gave* [partnership name] *access to resources that we probably wouldn't have been able to access previously, in pure hard cash terms. So we were incorporated into the Tackling Violent Crime Programme, we received money from the HORDD's Fund in a marvellously managed process, and I think we got some money as well for night-time economy work."*
> (Partnership staff)

Some changes were described as already happening but were either accelerated or given added impetus as a result of a partnership's involvement in the Priority 44 Programme. The process by which this took place was mainly through the increased 'focus' that P44 was perceived to have provided. This was especially the case for changes to the structure of partnerships and GOs, and for relationships within partnerships.

> *"[P44] was seen as an opportunity to review and refresh the approach that the* [partnership] *was taking and, having done that, to intensify the activity on where it could have most impact. But what I'm not clear about is whether that would have happened anyway, without the Priority 44. I think it probably would have done with the people that had been appointed, but what the Priority 44 Programme did was really provide the drive and the intensity and the focus for doing it."*
> (GO staff)

Box 1   Partnership Support Programmes

Partnership Support Programmes (PSPs) were introduced by the Home Office with the aim of improving the effectiveness of a partnership and its readiness to meet the minimum standards for partnerships, in order to drive up performance across the community safety agenda, including reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and tackling drug misuse. Support programmes were delivered through a diagnostic consultancy process, which engaged with local stakeholders in order to identify both effective practice and areas for improvement.

PSPs pre-dated the P44 initiative, although some P44 areas also received PSPs during the life of the initiative. In these areas, the precise relationship between P44 and PSPs was, perhaps predictably, sometimes unclear to partnership staff. In some areas PSPs were perceived to be an integral part of the P44 Programme while in others they were understood to be entirely separate. Home Office staff stated that PSPs and the P44 initiative were discrete entities with different provenances but that PSPs had been organised for P44 areas as a part of the overall package of help.

Where PSPs had taken place, they were regarded as having had a strong impact on structures within partnerships and on partnership relationships with GOs/HOCTiW. In these areas, all the organisational change that had taken place during the P44 period was, in fact, ascribed to the PSP.

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14 Apart from areas that had had a PSP as part of P44, in which case there would have been an expectation of organisational change.

The remaining sections in this chapter explore how the initiative was perceived to have impacted on specific aspects of partnership activity. These tended to fall under four main headings: funding and resources; organisational structures; data analysis; and operational activity.

Changes to funding and resources

Although access to a central pot of money was not a central feature of the Priority 44 Programme,[15] it would be wrong to infer that the initiative did not have resource or funding consequences for some partnerships. Indeed, some regarded a major transformational aspect of the initiative as the improved accessibility of additional funding or resources for crime reduction initiatives.

In Chapter 2 it was noted that P44 had been interpreted differently by different individuals. This variation extended to the issue of resourcing. A small number of partnership staff believed that the Priority 44 Programme did not automatically provide additional financial resource. They understood it to be about encouraging partnerships to work in a different way with existing resources rather than acting as a stimulus to draw in additional resources. For some, then, the initiative's focus translated into being more judicious about what work was funded and undertaken by a partnership to reduce crime. In this sense, P44 was seen as prompting areas to focus on resource allocation and reflect on the benefits and disadvantages of alternative possibilities.

> *"The prioritisation did mean that you had to focus more clearly and carefully on what you were spending. But I think what it also began to tease out was, in certain things there was a lack of funding, and there was some underfunding. And we needed to be a bit more specific in certain areas about maybe putting some additional funding in which is very specific to* [certain] *crime types."*
>
> (Partnership staff)

Others, however, were able to use the lever of P44 to acquire additional resources to support crime reduction activity by working creatively within their partnership. This type of approach was seen as integral to a push towards better partnership working. In some cases this was just about better harnessing the activities of partners. It might

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15 While Partnership Performance Support Unit (PPSU), the unit in the Home Office responsible for P44, did not have any extra funds for the initiative (in fact its budget was cut at around the time that P44 was beginning) they were able to provide some limited funding to those requesting extra resources and they prioritised business cases that fitted with the ethos of P44.

include, for instance, identifying activities undertaken by other parts of the local authority that were not focused on tackling crime and drawing them into co-ordinated programmes. (This kind of approach was best illustrated in Weeks of Action.) Elsewhere, it was simply that P44 status helped draw in 'floating' resources within partnerships, for instance, securing the donation of generic staff resources from within an authority and allowing these to be dedicated to support crime reduction activity. One example offered was the allocation of a local authority analyst to work exclusively on crime issues.

Alongside more judicious use of existing resources, improved co-ordination of partnership resources and the dedication of floating resources, some partnerships sought new funds to support their activities. There were various descriptions of how the initiative encouraged partnership staff to seek out and access additional financial resources. Some felt encouraged by the initiative to take an innovative approach and targeted sources of funding that they had not tapped before.

> *"[P44] made us go out and look for* [extra resources]*, it definitely made us go out and look. I mean, stuff we would never ever have dreamt of doing before."*
>
> (Partnership staff)

Several points are worth making on the search for external funds. First, there was a feeling that the Priority 44 Programme label conferred special status on areas when it came to bidding for additional financial resources. This was felt to make it easier for partnerships in competitive bids. Second, people described how some GOs/HOCTiW had helped Priority 44 areas in accessing funds, for instance through assistance with the development of business cases, or through the personal dedication of individual GO/HOCTiW staff in seeking out particular sources of funding.

Finally, it should be noted that GOs/HOCTiW were also able to channel their own resources directly towards areas that were in the initiative. One GO/HOCTiW representative stated simply that "*we distributed resources in favour of P44*". However, no additional funding for the initiative was made available for GOs/HOCTiW themselves, and a number of GO/HOCTiW staff talked about resources having been stretched by the initiative's requirement for intensified action in selected areas. One GO officer said that due to the commitments required of him by the initiative, he had been unable to undertake his primary role for six months. Indeed, some GO/HOCTiW representatives felt that the concentration of GO/HOCTiW staff time on a narrow P44 focus was

detrimental to the wider community safety agenda across the region (suggesting some resource displacement as a result of P44).

Changes to organisational structures

The Priority 44 Programme was also said to have had some influence on the way in which partnership activity was organised. However, the influence was thought to be limited and often secondary to that resulting from other initiatives or internal factors. Where an influence was evident, it happened in two main ways. First, several partnerships talked about having been stimulated by the initiative to create new working groups, such as performance management, commissioning or practitioner groups. Second, in some cases, internal structures within partnerships were altered to reflect changing priorities through the creation of new lead roles and responsibilities that reflected the impetus given through P44.

As well as leading to the creation of new structures, the Priority 44 Programme was also felt in some cases to have played a role – often alongside other factors – in encouraging the improvement of already-existing structures. This happened through, for example, a streamlining of business processes, an increase in face-to-face communication, or a greater focus on problem-solving.

Expanding capacity for data analysis

Another feature of Priority 44 areas was the expansion of analytic capacity within partnerships. This was mainly driven by the demand to support routine monitoring of crime trends, although the need to undertake analysis to support intelligence and problem-solving was also identified in some partnerships. One of the main requirements placed on P44 partnerships was fortnightly reporting to the GO/HOCTiW – who subsequently reported to the Home Office – on the progress of partnerships and their trajectory towards PSA1 targets. This was supported in a variety of ways, ranging from the recruitment of new analysts, to the secondment of analysts from other organisations (e.g. police) or the reallocation of existing personnel (see above).

4 Focus, sharing practice and Weeks of Action: core elements of the Priority 44 Programme

The three elements that people identified as embodying the Priority 44 Programme were the focus it gave to those involved, the facilitation of the sharing of practice, and Weeks of Action. This chapter explores perceptions of how well these three parts of the initiative worked.

Focus

Over the course of the interviews, many references were made to the enhanced focus that came about as a result of the Priority 44 Programme. However, it was clear that, in using the term, people were not referring to one specific thing. They described the initiative as giving focus in one or more of a number of different ways:

- through emphasis of achieving a single, unambiguous objective;

- through, as a result of that objective, encouragement of resources to be directed in a more concentrated way towards a small number of crime types;

- by directing attention to a small number of local areas; and

- by increasing the scrutiny on those areas.

This section first describes perceptions of this element of the initiative and then goes on to explain how some quite different mechanisms worked together to give a general impression of increased urgency.

Perceptions of focus
The focus that the Priority 44 Programme gave to those involved was very widely thought to be both the most salient and the most successful aspect of the initiative.

Although, as mentioned in previous chapters, there was some lack of clarity about what being part of P44 entailed, no-one was under any doubt as to its primary aim: to reduce BCS comparator crime enough to meet the PSA 1 target. This clarity of purpose was described as having a galvanising effect. It made it easier for some partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW to decide how to prioritise their resources; and, in many cases, it energised pursuit of the target.

"I suppose the most significant [thing] *is going to be the clarity, the focus around what is it we're looking at and why, so from going from a sort of generic, lots of issues, like anti-social behaviour, which is a huge thing in its own right, to specifics, criminal damage violence whatever. So actually drilling down and getting a combined effort to a specific issue, that's probably the main one, rather than just this generic where we do everything."*

(Partnership staff)

Some (from both partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW) reported that they felt the clear focus provided by P44 had given them licence to strip away less effective parts of their organisation's workload.

"I don't think there were any changes in priorities. What we did do is to make sure everyone knew what they were and their activity should be based around those priorities, so what we did is cut away some of the things that people like to do because it was nice and made sure they focused on the priorities with the partnership."

(Partnership staff)

The enhanced scrutiny of those areas designated as P44 was generally welcomed. Some described it as "*a kick up the backside*" or similar; and most saw this as motivational.

"I think the overall project, it's a success because, for one reason only, performance is being brought into account and that accountability [makes] *a difference to people."*

(Partnership staff)

The further prioritisation, combined with a perceived need to meet scrutiny by being able to provide explanations for patterns of crime, led some partnerships to redouble their analytical efforts.

Although the focus provided by the initiative was overwhelmingly thought to be a good thing, there were a few instances of where it was perceived to have had a negative impact. These were mainly where competing priorities were felt to have suffered – for example, where the focus on reducing volume crime was felt to have hampered efforts to address more serious crime, fear of crime, or other local priorities; or where the focus on meeting the short-term target was felt to be at the expense of addressing longer-term issues. GO/HOCTiW staff also expressed some concern that areas that were not in the Priority 44 had suffered through the focusing of efforts – and in some cases these were high crime areas that had seen impressive reductions.

A minority of partnership staff felt that the extra scrutiny of P44 areas was unnecessary. Improving community safety and aiming to meet the PSA 1 target were sufficient motivators in themselves; extra motivation from the Home Office was not felt to be required.

"If it was designed as a spur to action, it was unnecessary. If it was designed to say we can give you some assistance, it was helpful."

(Partnership staff)

"The feeling was one of knee jerk panic, 'If we don't come along, knights in shining armour, they won't achieve'. And that straight away creates some resistance, and it's almost like, how they come in and tell us we can't achieve and we can't do this."

(Partnership staff)

Achieving focus

There were various specific aspects of the initiative that contributed to the general impression of increased focus. They affected behaviour in two ways: through the *expectation* of focus, which had a direct impact in itself; and through *actual*, more concrete methods of focus.

The very fact of being **identified and labelled as Priority 44** was perceived as clear evidence that the Home Office would be paying those partnerships more attention than previously, and more in comparison to non-P44 partnerships. The labelling of the partnerships brought about an expectation of scrutiny and, for most partnerships, this expectation acted as a motivator to improve performance.

"Them being identified as one of the 44, actually being fingered if you like, made a real difference. We suddenly got the chief executives saying, 'I don't want to be on anyone's list'. And that for me was the most powerful thing about it."

(HORDD)

Increased contact and questioning of partnerships, primarily from GO/HOCTiW staff, but also from Home Office Partnership Support Managers (PSMs)[16] was a primary factor in the *actual* feeling of increased scrutiny. GO/HOCTiW staff also spoke of increased questioning by the Home Office about what was happening in P44 areas. Views of this increased scrutiny are described in Chapter 5 and above.

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16 Partnership Support Managers are central Home Office staff who work closely with HORDDs and GO/HOCTiW staff, providing a link between the Home Office and local areas. Their role at the time of P44 included relationship management, performance management and delivery support.

The requirement of P44 areas to complete a **regular report** describing their activity to the Home Office – fortnightly at first but then monthly – was a tangible and more formal manifestation of the Home Office's interest in P44 areas, and contributed further to the feeling of scrutiny. However, there was a good deal of criticism of the reporting mechanism itself: it was felt to be resource intensive; overly frequent (this obviously improved when it went to monthly rather than fortnightly); and the reporting form itself was thought to be poorly designed. Some expressed doubt as to how much attention Home Office staff were actually paying in completed returns, having not been questioned on parts of the reports as they might have expected. Some GOs/HOCTiW filled in the forms on behalf of the partnerships in their area (something that was appreciated by the partnerships).

There was a feeling that the regular report was a missed opportunity. It was a potentially important and useful mechanism for gathering interesting information about what was happening in P44 partnerships. However, because the format was not felt to be user-friendly ("*the devil is in the detail*" (GO staff)) the information provided on partnership activity was lower quality and less specific than it might have been.

The Home Office set individual September 2007 **interim targets** for BCS comparator crime for P44 areas, and this was perceived as another concrete manifestation of enhanced Home Office scrutiny. The targets were designed to provide a stepping stone to the end of the target period proper in March 2007. They contributed to the focus on the final target, and were welcomed by some for providing a useful landmark and creating positive pressure. However, there was some feeling that, given the clarity of the end target, they were unnecessary and unimportant.

Sharing practice

Home Office and GO/HOCTiW staff reported that a key objective of the P44 Programme was to facilitate the sharing and implementation of effective practice in reducing the crime types that constituted BCS comparator crime – or, in the absence of rigorous (or indeed any) evaluation of practice, what practitioners *believed* to be effective practice.

The issue of P44 sitting in the context of a variety Home Office policies, as discussed in previous chapters, was particularly pertinent to this element of the initiative. The vagueness as to the contribution of P44 alongside other

Home Office work led to a further lack of clarity as to what active role the initiative had played in facilitating the sharing of effective practice. Even for those who did have a clear idea of what P44 constituted, it was usually seen as one of a number of contributory factors that had encouraged them to seek out effective practice – and the extent to which the various factors influenced partnerships was not important to them.

The perceived looseness of the link between P44 and sharing and implementing effective practice was compounded by actual local initiatives not having been badged as P44. As mentioned earlier, P44 was not a wholly positive brand for partnerships. The perception of "*the naughty forty-four*" meant that inclusion was, at least initially, not seen as something to be proud of and their membership of the group was not something that partnerships were keen to advertise. Therefore, even where the P44 Programme had been a factor in facilitating the implementation of effective practice, it was not flagged as such locally.

These complications aside, the general feeling was that, while there had been some successes in sharing effective practice, it was not where the main strengths of the initiative lay. The most notable single success was the implementation of Weeks of Action (described in more detail below), and there were examples cited of GOs/HOCTiW being effective in encouraging cross-pollination of ideas through seminars, workshops and other means. However, the communication of examples of effective practice from the Home Office (primarily via the P44 newsletter) was felt to have been limited. There was some feeling that it improved towards the end of the initiative; but by this time the potential for it to have an impact had lessened.

Some GO/HOCTiW staff, who evidently had been active in promoting effective practice amongst the P44 areas in their region, emphasised that they had also made a concerted effort to pass on P44 ideas and material to non-P44 areas.

Box 2   The impact of being recognised as 'effective practice'

The badge of 'effective practice' (or 'good practice' or 'best practice') was regarded as a valuable commodity by partnerships. For example, being asked to speak at conferences about a crime reduction initiative undertaken by their partnership was seen as a reward or vote of confidence. However, it was also widely felt that 'effective practice' status could be achieved by partnerships doing a good job of promoting their own work. It was not always thought to be a case of crime reduction work achieving the status based on evaluation and proven results.[17]

This had several corollaries. The first and most obvious is that those who had had effective practice status conferred upon their work said that they felt a sense of pride and that their confidence increased as a result. The second is that there was some resentment amongst those who felt that they had not been given the opportunity to tell others about their work in the same way. Some felt that they had been doing just as good work as other partnerships, but had not "*shouted as loudly*" about themselves, or sold their work effectively. However, whilst some resented what they saw as self-promotion, others felt that communicating work to other partnerships was a sign of a maturity and confidence.

Another corollary of the label of good practice having a currency was that it complicated the process of partnerships using each others' ideas. By adopting techniques from another partnership, the borrowing partnership was effectively conferring some best practice status on the originating partnership. Although some were happy to admit directly borrowing ideas from other areas, others at the other end of the spectrum were reluctant to do so, and were largely dismissive of work that they could not present as home grown.

Weeks of Action

Priority 44 partnerships were strongly encouraged by the Home Office and GOs/HOCTiW to implement Weeks of Action[18] during the course of the initiative. These mostly involved establishing a co-ordinated approach within one partnership, although several operated across a wider geographical area.[19]

Weeks of Action were an important part of the P44 Programme because they were one of the few elements of practice that all P44 areas were encouraged to undertake. Although the majority found the focus given by P44 to be the most salient aspect of the initiative, there was some feeling that Weeks of Action were more tangible and closer to what traditionally constituted 'a programme'.

Weeks of Action were, on the whole, thought to have been effective in reducing BCS comparator crime – at least in the short term. They were also felt to have been successful in improving existing (or building new) relationships between the various partners who participated, and these improved relationships were said to carry over into other aspects of partnership working. One police officer reported having got excellent community intelligence via Weeks of Action.

"In terms of bringing stuff together for [Weeks of Action]*, now that's something you couldn't pay for, because it brings people together who wouldn't have ordinarily have done so. So I think that's an invaluable benefit."*

(Partnership staff)

There was some less positive feeling toward Weeks of Action. It was widely thought to be a short-term approach to crime reduction; and although some thought this appropriate given the nature of the target, others had resisted carrying them out at the expense of longer-term priorities.

There was criticism of the perceived imposition of what was described as a "*one size fits all*" approach by the Home Office. In one instance, a partnership had felt that Weeks of Action were not appropriate for them. The GO/HOCTiW had agreed and, to appease the Home Office, had presented routine partnership activity to the Home Office as a Week of Action.

One partnership was presented to P44 partnerships as 'effective practice' in implementing Weeks of Action and, to a degree, pioneers of the technique. A senior police officer from that partnership spoke at an early P44 conference describing the approach they had adopted. As described

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17 This gives rise to a wider issue about who is advocating certain initiatives as effective practice and on the basis of what evidence.

18 Weeks of Action were periods of intensive and highly co-ordinated partnership action, usually focused on discrete high crime and high deprivation areas (such as a ward, neighbourhood or cluster of streets). They were designed to bring together a broad range of partners, involve local communities and local media, so as to reduce crime and disorder and increase reassurance (particularly in some of the most marginalised communities within P44 areas).

19 One Government Office described having organised a co-ordinated Week of Action across all the police forces in the region. This was felt to have been a big success, and to have had a motivating impact on staff taking part.

in Box 2, this conferring of effective practice status had a variety of consequences. Some other partnerships were happy to learn from this example. However, there was also some resentment that the area had been identified as *the* experts on this technique; and there were a number of reports of other areas having done something similar by a different name prior to P44.

5 Working across organisations

This chapter describes perceptions of the impact of the Priority 44 Programme on the professional relationships of those involved. It explores the effect of the initiative on: relationships between partnerships and GOs/HOSTiW; between partnerships and the Home Office; and within P44 partnerships.[20]

Relationships between partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW

The relationships that were most often described as having been affected by the Priority 44 Programme were those between P44 partnerships and their regional Government Office or, in Wales, the Home Office Crime Team in Wales. Typical examples of changes that were perceived to have happened as a direct result of P44 were:

- more meetings and day-to-day contact between GOs/HOCTiW and partnerships;

- GOs/HOCTiW requesting more information from partnerships, for example about what steps were being taken to address a particular crime type;

- more communication from GOs/HOCTiW to partnerships about examples of effective practice; and

- more advice and guidance from GOs/HOCTiW in relation to operational details, such as requests to focus efforts on specific crime types (e.g. criminal damage) or undertake specific crime reduction measures (e.g. Weeks of Action).

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20 Relationships between different partnerships are covered in Chapter 4.

The *extent* to which participants ascribed change to P44 ranged from marked variations in the nature and frequency of interaction to little or no change. Where change did happen, it was usually felt to have enhanced and strengthened relationships – although, in a handful of cases, relationships were said to have become more strained. There were various reasons for the difference in the impact that P44 had.

The impact P44 had on relationships between partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW was generally influenced by the particular **context** in which the initiative was operating within the partnership. So, for example, where partnerships were already in regular and close contact with the GO/HOCTiW through normal working practices, or as a result of Partnership Support Programmes, collaborative work on the hallmarks of a good partnership or other initiatives, P44 often did not have a strong impact on the nature of relationships. Where relations between the partnership and GO/HOCTiW were good, they were not perceived as being negatively affected by the initiative, and if anything, were nearly always felt to have been enhanced.

"I feel that the Government Office, as well as doing their role, which is okay, to make sure that you're up to standard and you're doing the things that need to be [done], understand the problems that we've got here and are very supportive. So I've got no problems, a very positive working relationship. And again, it wasn't the Priority 44 that brought that along – it was already there."

(Partnership staff)

However, where existing relationships were less intense, the impact of P44 was perceived to be greater. The initiative usually acted to improve relations, with partnerships appreciating the increased dialogue and support. There was, however, a minority of cases where the intensification in the relationship was felt by partnership staff to have led to a deterioration of GO/HOCTiW-partnership relations.

There were a small number of instances where partnerships' existing relationship with the GO/HOCTiW was difficult. In most cases, the intensification through P44 did little to rectify the situation. However, one HORDD described how a previously very poor relationship between a partnership and the GO/HOCTiW had been immensely improved through the focus and support (e.g. help with problem profiling and hotspot analysis) that the GO/HOCTiW had delivered through the P44 Programme.

The **style of approach** adopted by GOs/HOCTiW in response to the initiative affected how their relationships with partnerships changed. There were differences between how GO/HOCTiW staff and partnership staff perceived this impact.

GO/HOCTiW staff generally spoke of an intensification of their existing challenge and support (or "*stroke and poke*") role with P44 areas; i.e. P44 made them be *more* challenging (e.g. by asking more questions about performance) but also *more* supportive (e.g. by working harder to identify examples of effective practice). However, different GO/HOCTiW staff placed varying emphases on these two elements. Some described how the GO/HOCTiW had moved into a narrower band of direct performance management, thus putting more store by the challenge function. Others focussed more on how they saw P44 as an opportunity for GOs/HOCTiW to build a rapport with partnerships and develop a supportive relationship that they felt had been lacking previously. (One manifestation of the varying emphases by GOs/HOCTiW on their supportive role was the different lengths that GOs/HOCTiW went to in order to identify and secure additional resources for their partnerships, as discussed in section 3.3.) Those in the latter group commonly spoke of working together with partnerships in pursuit of a common goal, rather than simply standing back and challenging performance.

> "We were in close contact… so that they knew that we were in their corner."
>
> (HORDD)

> "[P44] *helped. It made the link stronger, but I think the links were there already, anyway… We had a common purpose… Having a label or a badge somehow generates its own momentum. I think that is what 44 did. It got people together in a way that they felt that was their common goal.*"
> (GO staff)

Two factors influencing the degree of emphasis placed on the challenge function versus the support element were personal style and interpretation of the ethos of the initiative (as discussed in Chapter 2). However, several GO/HOCTiW staff also spoke of tailoring their approach on the basis of local knowledge and flexibility, judging a more direct, challenging style to be suitable in their dealings with some partnerships but a softer, collaborative approach more appropriate with others. The experience and confidence of the GO staff was also a factor here: those with greater experience and confidence felt better able to judge how best to tailor their approach.

Partnership staff expressed a wider range of perceptions of GOs'/HOCTiW's style of communication than the GOs/HOCTiW themselves. The majority felt that the changes had been positive, with the focus of P44 having clarified the role of GOs/HOCTiW as mediators and advocates for partnerships in their dealings with the Home Office. There was a feeling that GOs/HOCTiW were working more collaboratively with partnerships than previously, and that relationships had become more open and constructive. The increased contact and scrutiny that came about through P44 was largely thought to be a good thing and was appreciated as such.

> "*I think the relationship changed as a direct result of GO becoming far more visible. That's not to say it was particularly bad in the past but, what it felt like was, they were there to support us in terms of improving our performance and developing our partnership… They were part of the solution with us, they were one of the partners, it almost felt like, as opposed to somebody sitting and watching us perform or not perform as the case may be at certain times… so I think that was the significant change.*"
> (Partnership staff)

By contrast, others felt that the initiative had had a negative impact on their relationship with their GO/HOCTiW. They had found the increased contact and scrutiny to be a distraction and unwelcome. One partnership officer described receiving "*fatuous pep talks*" from their GO/HOCTiW; others felt that contact and scrutiny from their GO/HOCTiW had increased to the point of being interference.

> "*The relationship* [between the partnership and the GO] *isn't brilliant. I think… that there's an awfully huge proportion of time taken up reporting stuff and preparing to report stuff and working out what targets are going to be, saying, 'It's down to you to set your own targets but actually we're going to be all over you like a rash to work out what we want'.*"
> (Partnership staff)

One individual felt that the introduction of the P44 Programme had led their GO to panic, resulting in an initially overly pressurised and unconstructive relationship. However, as time passed and the panic subsided they described the relationship as having become far more positive. This is further evidence of the importance of experience and confidence on the part of GO staff.

Another factor influencing the impact of P44 on relationships between partnerships and GOs/HOCTiW

was (perhaps inevitably) the **personalities** of those individuals involved. Relationships between individuals were influential on relations for the organisations more widely. Where there was scope for P44 to have a facilitative effect, this had a greater impact where individuals were able to form strong working relationships.

"Well, I often think it sometimes comes down to personality, you know. Because they're fairly narrow corridors that we have between ourselves and Government Office, and it's the individuals who populate those corridors that make the difference… So the working relationships are pretty important… and building those working relationships to be positive and constructive is really, really important."

(Partnership staff)

Finally, GO/HOCTiW and partnership staff with greater **buy-in to P44** tended to have better relationships with their counterparts. There are different possible explanations for this. It could have been that those with greater buy-in embraced more closely the focus brought about by the initiative, resulting in a greater degree of intensification of the relationship. Another possibility is that those factors described above served to improve relationships, and that these improved relationships led to greater warmth towards the initiative and belief in its merits.

In fact, it seemed to be the case that greater buy-in and better relationships were mutually reinforcing. Those with greater enthusiasm for the initiative found it easier to forge better relationships, which led to both GO/HOCTiW and partnership getting more out of it, which in turn further increased belief in the merits of the initiative.

Relationships between partnerships and the Home Office

Few partnerships had had a great deal of direct contact with the Home Office as a result of the Priority 44 Programme: the majority of communication was via GOs/HOCTiW. Therefore, for most partnerships, P44 had little impact on their relationships with the Home Office.

GO/HOCTiW staff felt strongly that it was sensible that contact with partnerships should primarily be with them rather than the Home Office. This was because their local knowledge and awareness of local sensitivities allowed them to tailor messages appropriately for different partnerships, and having a single GO/HOCTiW contact made it easier to convey a consistent message to partnerships.

GO/HOCTiW staff cited several examples of direct communication between partnerships and the Home Office causing difficulties in GO/HOCTiW relationships with both the partnership and the Home Office. In some cases, this was because Home Office staff had caused friction with the partnership by failing to take local sensitivities and past events into account. In others, it was because the partnership was giving slightly different messages to the GO/HOCTiW and the Home Office, leading to disagreement between the GO/HOCTiW and the Home Office as to how relations with an individual partnership should be handled.

The perspective from the Home Office and partnerships was slightly different. Although Home Office staff felt that it was right that the majority of government contact with partnerships should be through the GOs/HOCTiW, they said that where they had had some direct contact with partnerships they had found it to be rewarding. They also felt that their relationship with delivery partners had changed over the course of the initiative: they had learned the importance of being more inclusive in policy development and delivery with local partners.

"I think with quite a lot of the partnerships, we have really strong relationships now… Not necessarily personal relationships but just in terms of knowing where people are and the things that they do, I'd imagine that that's a hell of a lot closer because of this programme and the focus that we've got on it."

(Home Office staff)

Of the few partnerships that did have direct contact with the Home Office as a result of P44, the majority found this to be a positive experience: they felt that it gave them a better understanding of the context and objectives of the initiative. The exception was a participant from one partnership that had had a visit from a Home Office staff member. The participant had found that staff member's manner to be unhelpfully aggressive and confrontational.

Partnership staff described how they dealt with a variety of different interventions from the Home Office at the same time. In addition to P44, there were mentions of: the general drive by the Home Office to encourage all partnerships to contribute towards the meeting of PSA 1 (i.e. activity that was not just constrained to the 44 partnerships that had been designated a priority); PSPs; the Tackling Violent Crime Programme; the Respect campaign to tackle anti-social behaviour; and the new hallmarks of effective partnerships (part of the Partnership Reform Programme). While the distinction between these various interventions was clear to those within the Home Office, it was not always so apparent to those working at a local level, who evidently had less time to devote to each one and who were balancing the sometimes competing priorities of the different interventions.

Thus, when partnership staff were asked about the impact of P44 on their relationship with the Home Office, perhaps unsurprisingly it was common for them to talk about contact they had had with the Home Office through any means in the last year or two – and they were often unclear as to whether the contact had been part of P44 directly.

Relationships within P44 partnerships

The Priority 44 Programme was felt to be just one concern amongst the many challenges facing a partnership and affecting the relationships within it. As a result, many partnership participants described the impact on relationships within partnerships as small or negligible.

"The relationships in… the partnership generally were evolving and continued to evolve; and I'm not sure I could unpick 44 as being something which did something different on that at all."

(Partnership staff)

This was not always the case though. Some participants did feel that the initiative had had an impact on relationships within partnerships. These changes were mostly described as having happened in two ways: either as embedding or strengthening existing relationships, or as instigating engagement from new partners.

Almost all of those who thought that P44 had changed pre-existing relationships with partners welcomed these changes. Improvements in multi-agency working were felt to have been encouraged by the existence of a common goal. The additional focus offered by the initiative was seen to provide a stimulus to partners, offering a means by which everyone could work towards a shared objective. In some cases, an improvement in relations between partners was said to have started prior to the initiative; but even here P44 served to strengthen the process of change.

"I think when you're identified as one of the, dare I use the term, more troublesome or problematic, or potentially more troublesome or problematic 44 areas within the country, you don't want to be there in that bracket. So I'm sure that did focus both, you know, the statutory partners and some of their other partners within the CDRP more fundamentally… And the CDRP people who maybe used to attend but not really show that much interest and not necessarily contribute, there's definitely this feeling now of achievement."

(Partnership staff)

Where P44 was said to have instigated new relationships between partners in itself, it was felt to have done so through the multi-agency approach generally advocated by the initiative, and exemplified by Weeks of Action in particular. As one participant noted, there was a "desire to see crime reduction from bodies that previously would never have seen that as being one of their primary functions."

(Partnership staff)

In a handful of cases, the initiative was said to have adversely affected partnership working. This adverse impact was attributed to the specific focus on volume crime, which was felt to be primarily a concern of the police alone. Other local priorities and work on issues such as public reassurance and reducing anti-social behaviour, which were seen as being central to a multi-agency view of the locality, were felt to have suffered as a result.

"I think the thing I'd flag up most of all is the destruction it actually had in terms of partner engagement. The driving people away from the table because they just confirmed their worst fears that this is just a police agenda."

(Partnership staff)

6 Perceptions of whether the Priority 44 Programme reduced crime

Given the primary aim of the Priority 44 Programme, participants' views as to the effectiveness of the initiative in reducing crime give important context to their perceptions of P44 as a whole. This chapter describes those views.

The most commonly expressed view was that P44 was one of a variety of factors that worked together to have an impact on crime.

"There's just so much that goes on. There's lot of little golden nuggets, there isn't one overall solution, because if there was I'd be earning loads of money in selling it."

(Partnership staff)

Participants did not feel that they were in a position to unpick the size of the impact of the various contributory factors; and many expressed a wish that an evaluation had been in place for P44 from the start to attempt to gauge its success.

External factors (for example, the favourable economic climate over the PSA period) were thought to have played some – and perhaps a substantial – part in changes in the levels of crime. Indeed, the more fatalistic seemed to think that practically all changes in crime in their area were due to external factors.

"There's no doubt that we saw quite a big decrease in the final year and we were feeling that's probably a lot down to our efforts… [but] we could see that others were getting similar reduction. That could just be the coincidence of us all pulling together at the same time. Or it could be that there's something happening in society so I still think I wouldn't mind knowing a little bit more what the national evidence is … We probably were as tight an action-focus group as we've ever been as a partnership but I'd be naïve to think that the reductions in the last year were all down to sterling local effort."

(Partnership staff)

"I think it was just one of the things basically. I don't think there's anything anybody did."

(Partnership staff)

However, most felt that the P44 Programme was a factor in the reduction in BCS comparator crime and the achievement of hitting the PSA 1 target.

Feelings were more mixed about the sustainability of the reductions in recorded crime beyond the life of the initiative. In particular, there were contrasting views about the effect of the pursuit of the PSA 1 target on longer-term sustainability. Some saw a natural contradiction between achieving short-term reductions in crime and adopting a longer-term approach. They felt that, with the scrutiny of areas being lifted after the end of the initiative, and with the focus of the PSA 1 target passing, the reductions in crime would not continue and might even be reversed. This was compounded by a view that Weeks of Action, the main on-the-ground activity of the P44 Programme, were thought mainly to result in short-term reductions in crime.

"I'm not sure what significant impact Weeks of Action had. They were good for the community, they were good for bringing partners together, but in terms of making a massive reduction [in crime] *and sustaining it, very little."*

(Partnership staff)

Within this group, the perception that almost by definition quick reductions were at odds with a sustainable approach was a source of frustration for some more than others. Whereas some felt that it was a distraction from sustainable improvements, others were more accepting of the need to focus sometimes on a short-term target.

By contrast, others felt that the steps being taken in pursuit of supporting P44 could be (and had been) channelled into longer term benefits. They gave examples of changes that had come about through P44 that they thought were likely to lead to sustainable improvements (although, at the time of the interviews, not enough time had elapsed since the end of P44 to establish whether this was the case). These included:

- structural changes that had come about through or had been facilitated by P44;

- the establishment of new partnership relationships through Weeks of Action or some other aspect of the initiative (although this was felt to be vulnerable to turnover of staff);

- ways of working, such as improved performance management;

- initiatives that were set up (or 'pump primed') using resources that had been garnered through P44 that could then be mainstreamed; and

- increased confidence that had been gained as a result of successful working that had been as a result of or facilitated by P44.

7   Moving forward

Since the interviews and analysis for this study were carried out there has been a change of administration and several major changes in government policy that are relevant to this area of work. The government has announced a shift towards a greater emphasis on localism, two facets of which have been the announcement of an intention to abolish regional Government Offices; and a signalling of the end of routine, top down performance management of local areas by central government. Both GOs and performance management were important components of the original P44 programme; while partnerships will continue to be an important feature of the way in which crime is tackled locally, these broader changes to the wider policy environment inevitably limit the contemporary application of the study findings.

There are, however, several areas in which the findings of this present study are likely to be of relevance. First, it is presently unclear the way in which planned Policing and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will ultimately engage with partnerships in their areas: the intention is to enable PCCs to develop strong relationships with local partners but not to prescribe in detail how such relationships should work. Some of the broader findings from this study (around how partnership buy-in was secured; the challenges of communicating across CSPs; the leverage of additional resources into partnerships; and the importance of focus in stimulating action) may be of value to individual PCCs when they become an established feature of the new community safety landscape. Second, the study identified particular issues around the sharing of good practice between local areas, which continues to be an area of interest within the new policy environment.

With this in mind, the main findings from the evaluation that might help inform future action can be summarised as follows.

Buy-in

- At the start of the initiative, partnership staff demonstrated a wide spectrum of 'buy-in' to the initiative. Higher levels of buy-in amongst partnership staff were associated with greater understanding of the underlying rationale of the programme; acceptance of the reasons for their areas selection in the 44; willingness to be part of the initiative; and a good perceived fit between P44 and the existing work of their partnership.

- Buy-in to P44 was, for many, found not to be a constant over time: it improved as initial reservations were overcome and the nature and purpose of the initiative became clearer.

Communication

- There was an inconsistency of understanding about the rationale for selection of the 44 areas in the Priority 44 Programme. Early communications about the initiative were perceived to be lacking in focus and clarity, and this seems to have contributed to the general level of misunderstanding. Preconceptions about the reasons for selection in initiatives of this kind also appear to have been in evidence.

- There was a predictable churn of staff in local areas, and the participants with the lowest level of understanding of the objectives and rationales of P44 were those who had come into post after the start of the initiative.

Resources

- Being designated as a P44 area was described as having affected funding or the use of resources in a variety of ways. Some understood the initiative to be primarily about working in a different way – targeting existing funds more judiciously – rather than acting as a stimulus to draw in additional resources.

- Others were able to use the lever of P44 to bring in resources from across the partnership in order to support crime reduction activity; and some described having felt encouraged by the initiative to target new sources of funding that they had not tapped before.

Focus

- Different mechanisms worked together in the Priority 44 Programme to give a general impression of increased focus and heightened urgency within P44 partnerships.

- P44 was said to have engendered focus in quite diverse ways: through the emphasis of a single objective; by directing attention to a small number of local areas; and by enhanced scrutiny of those areas. This was very widely thought to be both the most salient and the most successful aspect of the initiative.

Effective practice

- Conferring effective practice status on the implementation of a particular intervention in a specific location had benefits, but also drawbacks. The badge of 'effective practice' was welcomed by those individuals in areas which had been granted such status.

- However, it was also widely felt that 'effective practice' status could be achieved by partnerships successfully promoting their own work without having demonstrated its value through evaluation and proven results. This led to some resentment amongst those not identified, especially those that felt that they had been doing similarly good work themselves without having marketed it as effectively.

Annex A   The Priority 44 Partnerships

The following partnerships were selected for inclusion in the Priority 44 Programme:

East Midlands	Nottingham
Eastern	Luton Peterborough
London	Newham Lewisham Islington Hillingdon Ealing Camden Bromley Barking and Dagenham
North East	Middlesbrough Darlington
North West	Trafford Stockport Salford Rochdale Oldham Manchester Liverpool Knowsley Preston Burnley Blackpool
South East	Windsor and Maidenhead West Berkshire Milton Keynes Dartford Southampton Portsmouth Basingstoke and Deane
South West	Bristol
Wales	Cardiff
West Midlands	Stoke on Trent
Yorkshire and the Humber	Sheffield Rotherham North Lincolnshire North East Lincolnshire Leeds Kirklees Kingston Upon Hull Doncaster Calderdale Barnsley

Annex B   Existing literature

The Priority 44 Programme was by no means the first initiative of its type; a number of crime and community safety initiatives have previously been designed and managed by central government departments for delivery at a regional or local level. A short review of the literature was therefore undertaken in order to examine the existing evidence in this area.[21]

The literature in this field highlights the complexities of translating a 'blueprint into an operational programme' (Homel et al., 2004b:5) and a number of common elements emerge as being essential in making this kind of central and local partnership approach work effectively. These elements are:

● integration of central and local delivery systems;
● clearly defined and recognised roles and responsibilities;
● clear communication;
● appropriate and adequate resourcing, including flexible staff with the required competencies; and
● a dynamic planning, management and delivery process.

The remainder of this section is organised around these themes.

Integration of central and local delivery systems

In their review of the Crime Reduction Programme, Homel et al. (2004a; 2004b) identified the gap between centrally defined and managed initiatives and their local management processes as an issue for effective local delivery. They found that, in order to be effective, 'programme delivery at all levels of the delivery stream need to be treated as a single integrated system' (Homel et al., 2004b:5). Central and local agencies should collaborate and jointly play an active role in the delivery process.

Clearly defined and recognised roles and responsibilities

Homel et al. (2004b) also found that a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities in programmes of this type can lead to confusion, inconsistency and frustration. During the early phases of the implementation of the Crime Reduction Programme central Home Office and regionally or locally based staff did not always understand their own role, each others' roles, or the distinctions between their respective roles. Homel et al. emphasised the importance of all of those involved in designing and delivering interventions of this type having a clear understanding of their own role and how it fits into and contributes towards the overall programme delivery structure.

Clear communication

The literature suggests that programme delivery across different tiers of government can be complex and demands the cultivation of strong relationships based on effective communication. The programme's aims and its methods for achieving them need to be fully articulated and understood by all of those working within it. An evaluation of the Prolific and Other Priority Offenders (PPO) Programme found that a lack of understanding of the relationship between two separate strands of the programme's work was a common challenge expressed by practitioners (Dawson, 2005).

Studies (e.g. Dawson, 2007) have found that bringing together delivery staff across a range of government tiers and local organisations for programme delivery can lead to problems with communication and information sharing. Dawson recommends that efforts should be made to identify and address any such blockages.

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21 This review is not based on a systematic search or assessment of the full range of available literature.

It has also been suggested that a clear purpose for any structured programme communications is essential. For example, an evaluation of the Tackling Violent Crime Programme identified some weaknesses in meeting structures which resulted in a lack of focus and accountability (Czarnomski *et al.*, 2006).

Appropriate and adequate resourcing, including flexible staff with the required competencies

Studies have found that the provision of appropriate resources is a key element for successful programme delivery, whether that is in terms of staff numbers, investment in training and development or the provision of direct funding. For example, in their review of the Crime Reduction Programme, Homel *et al.* (2004a; 2004b) state that a range of skills and resources are required to allow effective programme delivery, including relevant technical and policy knowledge, skills in research interpretation and application, financial management, project management and strategic planning.

The literature also suggests that a lack of specifically defined and recognised programme resources can be a challenge in delivery. For example, an early evaluation of the PPO Programme (Dawson, 2005; 2007) found that practitioners identified clear disadvantages in being expected to manage a PPO scheme with little or no additional resource and felt that more could have been achieved had additional funding been available.

It has been found that, where funding is available for programme delivery, it is important that it is delivered in a timely manner and can be accessed through a straightforward process. Frustrations with funding processes were evidenced in the TVCP evaluation. Funding which becomes available at short notice and for comparatively short periods of time does not aid the strategic planning process (Czarnomski et. al., 2006).

A dynamic planning, management and delivery process

The literature suggests that difficulties can often emerge when programme aims and objectives are poorly planned at the outset or changed significantly during implementation; and that it is essential that the aims and objective of any programme are clearly planned and defined at the outset. For example, Homel *et al.* (2004a; 2004b) highlight the need for programme delivery to be seen as a dynamic process. Systems need to be both planned and put in place to allow effective responses in continually evolving programme implementation. Learning and knowledge from the programme should be encouraged and form part of a continuous cycle which then influences delivery.

Annex C   Attributes of the 44 partnerships

The following table illustrates how the 44 partnerships were distributed across the attributes that were used to select which partnerships were included in the study.

	Included in the study?	BCS comparator crime rising or falling prior to Priority 44	Change in crime greater or less than national average over the course of P44	Performance against individual target at Feb 2008
Area 1	Y	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 2	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 3	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 4	Y	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 5	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 6	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 7	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 8	N	Rising	Greater	On target
Area 9	Y	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 10	N	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 11	Y	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 12	N	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 13	N	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 14	N	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 15	Y	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 16	Y	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 17	N	Falling	Greater	On target
Area 18	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 19	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 20	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 21	Y	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 22	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 23	Y	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 24	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 25	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 26	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 27	N	Rising	Greater	Not on target
Area 28	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 29	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 30	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 31	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 32	Y	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 33	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 34	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 35	Y	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 36	Y	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 37	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 38	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 39	Y	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 40	N	Rising	Less	Not on target
Area 41	N	Falling	Less	Not on target
Area 42	Y	Falling	Less	Not on target
Area 43	N	Falling	Less	Not on target
Area 44	N	Falling	Less	Not on target

Annex D   Discussion guide

This is the discussion guide that was used for interviews with partnership staff. Slightly adjusted guides were used for the interviews with GO/HOCTiW staff and Home Office staff.

Background information
Aim: to build up a picture of the interviewee and his or her involvement with the Priority 44 Programme.

The Priority 44 Programme started around October 2006. Have you been in post for the full duration of the programme?

How long have you held this post?

Can you briefly describe your key roles and responsibilities during P44?
- Record job title
- Who reported to
- Different from 'usual' role; if so, how

Can you identify the main organisations/individuals you worked with over the course of P44?

Understanding of the performance context
Aim: to get an impression of the extent to which the interviewee understands the nature of the crime and offending in the partnership and changes over the course of P44.

How would you describe the nature of offending within the partnership?
- Volume
- Particular crime types

What were the main features of the trend in BCS comparator crime during the P44 period?
- Crime types that have contributed most to reduction in BCS comparator crime
- Specific characteristics of reduced offences
- Any increases in crime?

Please indicate whether or not the partnership was part of a Partnership Support Programme during the P44 period.

Awareness of the P44 programme
Aim: to get an understanding of how P44 was initially introduced in this partnership and what the interviewee felt about selection processes.

How did you become aware of the programme?
- Who from?
- Approximately when?
- How were you informed?
- Level of understanding of purpose and aims of P44?
- Effective or not?

Why was this partnership included in the 44?
- Your understanding of rationale for inclusion.
- Knowledge of other partnerships in P44.
- Links with other P44 partnerships.

What were your initial views about the inclusion of this partnership in the 44?
- Good or bad thing?
- How, if at all, did views change during course of programme?

How was information on P44 disseminated within your partnership?
- Views on the effectiveness of means of communication.

Awareness/involvement in other forms of communication around P44.
- Weekly Home Office newsletter (on P44).
- Attendance at regional or national P44 events.
- Views on usefulness of these mechanisms.

Awareness of interim ('September waypoints') targets?
- Views on helpfulness of these.

Management of P44 within the partnership

Aim: to map how P44 was managed within the partnership.

How was the P44 process managed within your partnership?
- Describe accountability (individual responsible for delivery? How effective was this?)
- Was an individual responsible for reporting requirements that were part of P44? Benefits of such a role.
- Describe changes in links/contact within the partnership (frequency, nature, seniority)?
- Additional management/monitoring within the partnership?
- Views on the effectiveness of changes to monitoring and management.
- Additional views on the changing nature of your role.

What was the impact of P44 in delivering a greater focus on problem solving? Better targeting of resources? More strategic focus?

Nature of P44 delivery

Aim: to explore how the P44 programme was delivered within the partnership.

How would you describe the main changes in focus, priorities or strategies that took place as a direct result of P44?
- Nature of these changes and how they came about.
- How were any changes in priority decided upon.
- Evidence base for these decisions.

Were there any resource implications resulting from P44 in this partnership?
- Any extra resources from the Home Office or GO/HOCTiW.
- Additional resources found locally and redeployed to support particular P44 goals.
- Type of resource and for what purpose.
- Value of any additional resources.

Any centrally driven/supported P44 initiatives that featured in this partnership?
- Any perceived as important in reducing crime?
- What evidence was there to support this perception?

Relationships within P44 Programme

Aim: to explore whether the programme resulted in any changes in professional relationships within the partnership and with the GO/HOCTiW and Home Office.

Can you give your own perception of whether the P44 programme directly changed the nature of working relationships within the partnership?
- What sort of changes (evidence for change)?
- Why do you think they took place?
- Positive or negative?

How did the P44 programme change the relationship between your partnership and the GO/HOCTiW?
- What sort of changes (evidence for change)?
- Why do you think they took place?
- Positive or negative?

Please describe the nature and extent of direct contact between the Home Office and your partnership during the Priority 44 Programme period. [May need to prompt around parts of Home Office.]
- What sort of changes (evidence for change)?
- Why do you think they took place? Changes down to P44?
- Positive or negative?

How has your contribution through the P44 programme been recognised by the Home Office/GO/HOCTiW?
- Views on whether adequate or not.

Did your partnership's involvement in P44 stimulate additional contact with other P44 partnerships?
- Nature of contact.
- Any benefits (comparative performance, shared practice, cross boundary working).

Overall observations

Aim: to explore general views about the impact of the P44 programme.

Thinking in terms of processes and ways of working, how would you describe the most substantial changes that took place in your partnership as a result of the introduction of P44?

Which have brought most benefit to ways of working?

How sustainable do you believe any of these changes have been or are in the long term?

Thinking about the pattern of crime reduction within this region during the P44 period, what factors do you think most contributed to any reduction in BCS comparator crime? Probe:
- specific tactical approaches;
- specific initiatives (e.g. Weeks of Action);
- improved performance management;
- communication between partners;
- evidence?

Any examples of problem solving, strategic assessments or action plans (within the P44 period) you thought were especially effective in helping to reduce crime?
- Evidence.

What contribution do you believe was made to the reduction in BCS comparator crime by factors <u>outside</u> the P44 programme?

Thinking about everything we have discussed, what do you perceive was the main added value from the Priority 44 Programme in this partnership?

Thinking about everything we have discussed, what do you think worked best about P44? Why?
- Regarding initiatives.
- Relationships.
- Communication.
- Accountability.

Thinking about everything we have discussed, what didn't work so well in P44? Why?
- Regarding initiatives.
- Relationships.
- Communication.
- Accountability.

What have you personally learned from the P44 programme?

What should the main learning points be for the Home Office? And for GOs/HOCTiW?

Views on being part of focused central programme (like P44) at some point in the future.

What sustainable difference would you like to see in how we manage crime reduction as a result of the P44?
- Locally.
- Regionally.
- Nationally.

Improvements to P44 programme

Aim: to explore partnership views on how to make future programmes/initiatives more successful.

What do you think could have been done differently or better within the P44 programme?
- Suggestions for improvements.
- Relationships with GO/HOCTiW, Home Office.
- Communication.
- Action plans.
- Other.

We have come to the end of the areas that I wanted to explore with you. Are there any further points or issues that you would like to raise that we have not already covered?

THANKS AND CLOSE INTERVIEW.

Acknowledgements

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