

*COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT
IN CRIME
PREVENTION*

A NATIONAL REPORT FROM SWEDEN



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CRIME TREND

Since the end of World War II Sweden, like many other West European countries, has experienced a marked increase in crime. In the period 1950-1990 the number of crimes reported to the police increased by approximately 500%. Over the last fifteen years, however, the number of crimes has remained relatively constant. The crime trend is mainly a result of the development of theft crimes. While these types of crimes have been almost stable during the last couple of years, it is worth noting the prominent increase of violent crimes. This covariates to a great extent with changes in drinking habits, which can be found in Sweden as well as in the rest of Western Europe.

The explanation of the increase in crime is chiefly to be found in certain structural factors that Sweden has in common with other West European countries. Striking improvements in the standard of living and changed lifestyles have led to a sharp increase in the number of criminal offences. At the same time urbanisation led to reduced social control and increased anonymity. Norm systems have changed, as has the role of the family and the school.

Even if it is difficult to compare the crime level in different countries it may probably be said that the level of crime in Sweden remains on an average level in comparison with most other West European countries. As many other Western European countries, Sweden has during the last couple of years seen a growing number of crimes in certain inner city areas.

Even though the total number of reported crimes has been on the same level over a long period of time, is this nevertheless a problem. In Sweden, with a population of nine million, some 143,000 thefts out of a motor vehicle were reported in 2003. In the same year over 84,000 violent offences, nearly 39,000 car thefts, almost 13,000 burglaries in leisure-time houses, over 74,000 bicycle thefts and 17,000 housebreaking offences were reported. To these offences can be added crimes related to motorcycle gangs, offences with racist undertones, the so-called IT offences and transnational crimes. This is enough to provide good reasons for the further development of measures to counteract and prevent crime.

A NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMME

A good deal of the interest in criminal policy has long centred on questions concerning the efforts of the criminal justice system such as, for example, police strengths and the length of prison sentences. Such factors are important but the major part of these resources are employed to regulate the effects of crimes that have already been committed, when the damage has already been done. Both Swedish and international experience demonstrate that the police and the criminal justice agencies alone do not suffice to counteract crime. It is therefore important that every person and organisation able to exert an influence on the causes and opportunities for crime should take part in crime prevention work.

Almost ten years ago, the Swedish government presented a national crime prevention programme. The basis for the programme was worked out by a number of research workers and others within the criminal policy area. The main conclusion drawn was that crime must be attacked using a markedly broader crime policy approach than had been the case heretofore. What was needed, therefore, was an enhanced awareness of preventive efforts that could be undertaken by every sector of the community, and not just within the limited framework of traditional crime policy.

The national crime prevention programme focuses on what is commonly called traditional criminality – thefts, fraud, violence and the infliction of damage. These kinds of offences are dominant in the crime statistics and injure the daily life of the individual. The programme can be said to rest on three cornerstones.

Firstly, increased attention must be given to how societal developments as well as political decisions concerning other than crime policy matters, can exert an influence on criminality. This is a responsibility that must be borne by political decision-makers at all levels and also by commerce and individual business enterprises. Many different kinds of measures have to be considered – town and residential planning, the control of licensed premises and the manufacture of theft-proof vehicles to give but a few examples.

The government and parliament have a special responsibility to weigh the crime policy consequences when new or changed regulations or new public sector activities are introduced. The same should apply to state administrations and municipal bodies. The government has, therefore, issued a directive that applies to all committees of inquiry that have been, or will be, set up. It requires them to analyse and describe the consequences of their recommendations for counteracting and preventing crime. This will ensure that in the future these aspects are given increased attention.

Secondly, it is necessary to develop legislation and administrative activities within the crime policy sphere so as to make them more effective. This can be

done through penal legislation and the various criminal justice agencies and, if the sights are raised somewhat, even measures taken in, for instance, the schools and social welfare services.

The publication on the programme was, therefore, called Our Collective Responsibility (Allas vårt ansvar). This title states something important, namely that everyone has a possibility to influence the causes of, and opportunities for, the commission of crime, not least in the immediate environment.

The third cornerstone deals, therefore, with the importance of making use of citizen involvement in crime prevention work.

This can take place with advantage through collaboration between agencies and citizens. The content and form of such local collaborative endeavours are naturally dependent on local circumstances and conditions. Hence, it is not possible to set up generally applicable goals for local crime prevention work. One idea, however, which is emphasised in the programme and has been received with general approval and later executed well, is the idea that the municipalities should create a local crime prevention council as a point of contact for individuals, enterprises, associations, organisations, the police and schools wishing to contribute to crime prevention.

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The national programme puts forward three different approaches that can be suitable subjects of local efforts:

- Reducing opportunities to commit crime
- Reducing recruitment to criminal lifestyles
- Reducing criminal activity among persistent offenders

REDUCING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMIT CRIME

A central focus in crime prevention work must be to influence the opportunity structure that is to make the commission of crime more difficult to carry out, more risky and less profitable. This, the situational prevention of crime, can be divided up into those measures that make it more difficult to carry out criminal acts, those that heighten the risk of detection, those that reduce the profitability of crime and those that seek to make it more difficult to explain away criminal acts by saying, for example, "But everyone does it".

Knowledge about when and where offences are committed and the circumstances that allow them to occur makes it possible to control much of the so-called every-day crimes. There are strong reasons to assert that greater demands than those made hitherto should be made on those who create opportunities for crime. This has long been the case in such matters as the prevention of damage to the physical environment, traffic accidents, the injurious effects of alcohol, fire prevention, etc. It is natural to lay the main responsibility for such work upon political decision-makers and commerce, which through administrations, organisations and private enterprises builds, forms and guides the underlying structures of social life.

REDUCING RECRUITMENT TO CRIMINAL LIFESTYLES

A very large amount of crime is the work of only a very small proportion of those who commit crimes. True, the proportion varies between different kinds of offences but on the whole and for the majority of serious offences such as, for example, house breaking and violent offences, it is possible to identify a group of constantly relapsing offenders who are disproportionately criminally active.

The most efficient way of preventing the large amount of crime that is committed by constantly relapsing offenders is to prevent new recruits from entering such a career. The career most often starts in early youth, customarily before the age of criminal responsibility (15 years), with minor thefts and infliction of damage. The longer the deviant career persists, the harder it is

with social or situational crime prevention measures to prevent its continuation. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to, at an early stage, prevent children and young people from being drawn into criminality.

The community must, when young persons commit criminal acts, react rapidly, clearly, concretely and consequently. The main emphasis in this work lies - and should continue to lie - outside the framework of the criminal justice system. So far as young people under the age of 15 are concerned it should in all essentials remain within the sphere of the social welfare services. Early interventions have the advantage of being more supportive, while later interventions usually are more repressive.

In this context, special attention needs to be given to the need for early intervention, that is interventions that are focused on children and young people in risk environments and situations. The interventions should seek to prevent, or at least limit, subsequent unfavourable personal development. Consequently, the social welfare services should intensify efforts to develop methods of care and treatment for youngsters in the early stages of criminal development.

REDUCING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AMONG PERSISTENT OFFENDERS

The common factor among many of those who are active in traditional criminality is that they are almost continuously in some form of keeping, care or treatment, usually at the hands of the prison and probation service. Any crime prevention strategy that seeks to hinder a continued criminal career can and should take this fact as the starting point.

One of the most important tasks for the prison and probation service is to so influence offenders that they do not relapse into crime. Locally, the probation service is responsible for seeing that this is done in the best possible way. The service should strengthen its collaboration with other local bodies, notably the social services and the local police. Research done over the last few years shows that close co-operation between the local agencies that adequately satisfies the basic needs of the criminal person, can be an effective factor in changing the criminal lifestyle.

It is essential that the authorities share a common basic view on the treatment of persistent offenders, and that the exchange of knowledge and information between them is increased. A combination of constructive measures in the form of education, work training, accommodation and treatment for the misuse of alcohol and drugs can, if combined with active police work that charts, monitors and makes frequent strikes against the most criminally active, reduce the crimes for which they are responsible.

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

The government's crime prevention programme includes measures to be taken at central, regional and local levels. The main thrust of the programme concerns measures that support and promote local crime prevention work. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ) is at the very hub of this work. This is a matter for municipal authorities, private enterprises, organisations, associations, and private citizens. To a great extent such work is built upon a more or less formal and voluntary collaboration between all those with the possibility to make an impact on crime.

In order that the intentions of the programme can be translated into reality, organisational support is required. For this reason a national crime prevention committee had the task of inspiring, supporting and following up crime prevention work, primarily at local level. The committee's terms of reference required it, in collaboration with the municipalities, to work for the suitable organisation of local crime prevention initiatives and for a local crime prevention programme to be adopted.

The crime prevention committee also allocated the financial resources that the state budget assigns to crime prevention activities. The committee presented a final account of its work early in 1999. One of the more obvious results is that local crime prevention committees have been started in municipalities all over the country. Their nature and the kind of activities carried out vary but a common factor is that they function as a meeting place at which the representatives of the municipality, neighbourhood police, schools, local businesses, estate agents and others can collaborate to reduce crime and enhance public safety in the local community. In addition, the national crime prevention committee has financed a large number of individual local projects.

THE SWEDISH NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CRIME PREVENTION

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (the Council) was set up in 1974. Its tasks then included the co-ordination of the work of the various societal bodies against crime and, in collaboration with other authorities and organisations, to achieve a comprehensive participation in crime prevention work.

Since that time, the Council's role has undergone changes. In accordance with the most recent, the Council has developed into a qualified expert body on crime policy questions with the special task of promoting crime prevention through research and development work, evaluation, and the dissemination of information on crime policy issues. An important part of this work consists of producing essential information for the government on measures and priorities for crime policy work and the evaluation of previously taken measures. The

Council took over the national crime prevention committee's tasks from the beginning of 1999 to support the local crime prevention work.

NATIONAL SUPPORT OF LOCAL CRIME PREVENTION WORK

In order to strengthen the support of local crime prevention activities, the Council set up a special unit for that purpose, the Division for Local Crime Prevention work (Enheten för lokalt brottsförebyggande arbete, ELBA). This unit is required to promote local crime prevention initiatives by (a) working for the organisation of crime prevention activities and suitable forms of implementation; (b) initiating, supporting, following up and evaluating crime prevention projects; (c) collecting and disseminating information on successful projects and collaborative work and (d) contributing to satisfying the need for skilled training.

The government has continued to allocate financial resources so as to further the creation of continuous, long term and enduring crime prevention work. Furthermore special funds have been made available to reinforce crime prevention in the country's major cities.

PRESENT SITUATION

Nearly a decade has passed since the national crime prevention programme was first published. It was emphasised from the beginning that crime prevention requires long-term involvement. It is abundantly clear that much has already been achieved. A great deal of positive activity has been undertaken and the experience gained provides a good basis for further steps to fulfil the intentions of the national programme.

An essential condition for effective crime prevention work is a wholehearted governmental support. This support is to a lesser extent a matter of contributing to the funding of developmental and experimental crime prevention projects. This kind of support for such projects is undoubtedly valuable but the most important proof of the government's interest is that it develops and guarantees effective, well-functioning forms of organisational support for the local work that has to be done. In addition, it is the responsibility of the state to continue to monitor legislation and guide the work of administrations so as to best serve the local crime prevention aims.

The Swedish government's involvement in crime prevention has been, and remains, noteworthy. The role of the Council has been changed so as to focus on, and actively support, local crime prevention projects. Special resources are provided annually from the state budget to fund local experimental and developmental projects. Legislation is designed to provide the necessary means for administrations and other parties to prevent crime. The methods of work of the various criminal justice agencies have been changed so that they can better carry out their work both individually and in mutual collaboration as well as through collaboration with non-criminal justice administrations.

Another essential condition for effective, long-term crime prevention work is

the existence of a local will to act and local involvement. During the nine years that have passed since the national crime prevention programme was first presented, it can be confidently stated that local interest has been consistently displayed. At the start of the year 2005 there were 280 local crime prevention councils in 250, of the total of 290, of the country's municipal authorities, as well as 30 local crime prevention councils in inner city areas.

SUPPORT AND CLOSE CONTACT

After this time of establishment and consolidation of a nationwide network of local crime prevention agencies, the Council finds itself focusing more on the development of knowledge and methodology. The task is to stimulate and support a more systematic and structured way of carrying out the concrete crime prevention work.

The Council also plays an important role to gather and produce knowledge and experience of relevance to the local agencies, and effectively disseminate this information. Another important task for the Council is to stimulate and organise contacts between local agencies that hopefully results in more or less permanent networks.

STRATEGIC FUNDING

The financial resources are used to stimulate and support structured and evidence based crime prevention. The National Council for Crime Prevention provides assistance to research and development projects that can contribute to a long-term increase in knowledge. Special emphasis has been placed on projects that mobilise a number of different actors or create networks for local crime prevention work, as well as projects that are documented and followed up in such a way as to add and increase the knowledge of different preventative crime interventions.

The Council funds local crime prevention projects on application. The main purpose of this funding is to develop knowledge of what works and what does not work to prevent and combat different crime types or other crime-related problems. From this year on the applicants are requested to describe their planned project under five different headings: charting and analyse, intervention, involvement, implementation and evaluation. By doing so we expect to get more generally useful feedback, knowledge and experience from the projects that are funded. In order to further secure such a knowledge building, the project leaders are also expected to take part in special training sessions concerning the so called preventive process, organised by the Council.

INFORMATION AND TRAINING

During recent years the Council has found it necessary to put more energy on the communication of written products and to elaborate new meeting-places

for transfer of know-how in crime prevention. National conferences, thematic seminars, training sessions, network-and target group-meetings are today a core activity of the Council. At these meetings local crime prevention agencies receive information on current knowledge and are able to share their experience with others regarding problems and possibilities within the concrete field of crime prevention.

The demand for information material on how to create a well-functioning organisation and how practically to make a start on projects and activities is considerable. For that purpose the Council continually produces so called Best Practice Manuals, which are being used by the local crime prevention agencies, as well as by many of the country's 21 regional police authorities, to arrange training courses. A full description of these manuals is given at the end of this paper.

A NEW HOMEPAGE

In spring 2005 the Council introduced a renovated webpage, which is more adjusted to local crime prevention agencies.

The purpose of the homepage is to assemble information about local crime prevention. The web page contains an enumeration of all reports and other material that can be read, requested or downloaded. The homepage also contains descriptions of promising projects. Most of the material that publishes is editorial and the web-page functions as a news-sight for people who work with local crime prevention. There is also a presentation of the local crime prevention agencies.

Every month the local agencies also receive information of current crime prevention projects, conferences, training sessions etc by e-mail. In a quarterly newsletter, *Loopen*, interesting articles and relevant information, which have been published on the homepage, are summarized, and can be downloaded.

Recently an introduction of statistics on line was made at the homepage (www.bra.se). This is a tool for local crime prevention agencies to find crime statistics within different areas of crime at the local municipality or city area. This local statistics may also be of great value to follow up and evaluate the effects of a carried out project.

LEARNING BY DOING

The fact that more knowledge is needed about what solutions works in relation to a range of different problems must not be seen as a reason not to act. Existing knowledge, which has been obtained through practical local experience, experimental projects, surveys and other kinds of research, constitutes a sound foundation for achieving positive results in local crime prevention. Testing what has been successful in one place by trying it in another place enables yet more knowledge to be gained. The essential model for crime prevention is learning by doing. A necessary condition for learning by doing, however, is that information on what works well in crime prevention is disseminated effectively.

BEST PRACTICE MANUALS

As a contribution to the development and spread of knowledge within the field, the Council continually publishes writings on how to work in collaboration on the reduction of crime and an increase of public safety. These writings are published in a series that is directly intended for all those engaged in local crime prevention activities. The following description gives a comprehensive overview of the issues on the crime prevention agenda in Swedish municipalities. Until February 2005 there have been 14 published writings.

- ▶ The first publication of the series deals with the way in which a functioning organisation can be built up within a municipality and the tasks of a local crime prevention council. Guidance is given on its membership and the tasks of its members. A description is also given of what a municipal crime prevention programme can look like and how a crime prevention action plan can be devised. Finally, some basic descriptions are given of different approaches to crime prevention that is of social and situational prevention respectively.
- ▶ The second publication describes in detail how to go about assessing local problems and the resources available. It also describes problem-oriented methods of work and illustrates how the use of different information sources and methods can create a basis for a comprehensive overview of local crime problems. Examples are given to show how surveys of this kind can be used to analyse the circumstances that make for the kinds of crime found in a local community and the ways in which these circumstances can be altered.
- ▶ The third publication describes slightly more than 30 different crime prevention projects. The majority of these projects originate from Sweden but some examples have been taken from other parts of the world. The descriptions are relatively detailed and are intended to inspire and stimulate local initiatives. The various chapters of the publication deal with the different kinds of crime or problem that the project sought to prevent. Finally, one chapter describes how local collaboration can be undertaken to reduce relapse among persistent offenders.
- ▶ The fourth publication takes up the questions of follow-up and evaluation. One purpose of the publication is to stimulate those who are actively engaged in local crime prevention projects to document their activities so that others can learn from their experience. Another purpose is to improve knowledge about how to determine different kinds of effects with certainty. The various techniques used for follow-ups and evaluations are described. A number of brief examples are given to show how follow-ups and evaluations can be carried out in practice.
- ▶ The fifth publication describes how maps over the local environment can be used in the preventative work against crime. Presenting crime data on a map is an excellent way to gain knowledge about the local crime structure and

its causes. The publication also presents guidelines covering the creation of such maps. The purpose of this publication is to stimulate police, local crime prevention actors, and others to start using maps as a tool against crime.

- ▶ The sixth publication describes what a Neighborhood Watch is and what it could be. It also presents practical examples of how different residential areas have developed networks for the reduction of crime and the enhancement of community safety.
- ▶ The seventh publication describes how schools around the country have set up projects and activities to reduce offences and disturbances of good order; and to improve the sense of security and well being amongst pupils. An account is given of the various concrete measures that have contributed to the increase of parental attendance and involvement in school activities; and the reduction of bullying, truancy and vandalism.¹
- ▶ The eighth publication presents a method called LUPP (Local follow-up & prognosis-procedure). LUPP is a method used to make crime prognoses for the coming year. The prognoses show how crime varies at different times of the year in different areas. The prognoses are based on the level of reported crime during the last three years. The method can be used to follow-up on crime and measures taken against crime, as well as show when crime preventative measures should be established for best results.
- ▶ The ninth publication presents examples of activities that aim to prevent, treat, and reduce violence against women. Violence and degrading behavior towards women are serious and to a large extent hidden problems. It is an enormous step for women to talk about their situations, and it can be hard for them to know where to turn for help. The purpose of this publication is to stimulate more initiatives on the local level to help and support women and their children after they have been exposed to violence.
- ▶ The tenth publication presents a selection of international parental-supporting activities that have had a documented effect on child and youth criminality. Scientific studies have shown a connection between children's home experience and their development towards a criminal lifestyle. With a couple of Swedish examples, the publication shows how parental-supporting activities can be organized on a local level.

¹ Schools have long been considered as a core partner in local crime prevention work. In order to emphasize and facilitate a preventative work in schools the Council has produced two teachers' guides, for different levels of the compulsory school system (grade 3–5 and 6–9). The aim of these guides is to give the teachers tools for dealing with delinquent and anti-social behaviour.

- ▶ The eleventh publication describes the activities in ten local crime-preventing councils in different parts of the country where both work procedures and conditions vary. The idea is to give an insight on how local crime-prevention work can be organized and operated. The publication shows factors that can facilitate work within the councils based on the council's activities and earlier experiences. The publication also present examples on how other Nordic countries organize their local crime prevention work.
- ▶ The twelfth publication presents national and international crime-prevention projects and measures on the local level. The activities described in the publication aim to prevent and thwart crime, and to increase people's safety. Six different areas of activities are presented in the publication: public transportation, violence at bars and restaurants, hate crime, vehicle crime, recidivism in crime, and crime prevention through environmental design.
- ▶ The thirteenth publication presents preventative measures against illegal graffiti, and contains a deep discussion regarding the graffiti problem. The intention of this publication is to increase the reader's knowledge of the phenomenon, as well as inspire and stimulate local prevention work against illegal graffiti painters.
- ▶ The fourteenth publication presents two practical examples on how to successfully reduce vehicle crime in residential areas. Both examples show that joint efforts between house owners, police, tenants and other local actors reduced vehicle crime by up to 50 percent. Vehicle crime affects people in their area of every day activity; therefore vehicle crime is best reduced on a local level.²

² During 2003 the Swedish government gave the National Council for Crime Prevention the task of developing a three-year strategy to reduce car-crime. A vital and substantial part of the strategy is to work on the local level with local crime. That is involving different local parties in working towards a common goal. During 2005 the focus of the Council will be to meet with the local councils and help them develop ways to fight car-crime in their communities. The help can range from providing the councils with statistics and knowledge about car-crime in general as well as toolkits describing the process of gathering intelligence and evaluate efforts to more specific issues as how to make a certain department stores big car-park safer.



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