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## **‘Folks Should Have Access . . . How You Do it is the Difficult Thing’: exploring the importance of leadership to maintaining community policing programmes for the homeless**

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In the present paper we examine the operation of a community policing programme that facilitates reporting of victimisation by homeless victims of crime through the assistance of local community service providers. Using data from two sources – our original study of Homeless Remote Reporting in 2003 and a follow-up evaluation conducted in 2008 – we examine the extent to which this programme offers a viable model for policing outreach to homeless communities. Based on stakeholder feedback, we conclude that despite positive endorsements of the programme, this is a programme that is largely defunct because of a lack of leadership. The police have abdicated responsibility for its operation and community groups are unable to assume the responsibility. What we draw from the example that this programme provides is that innovative collaborative modes of governance must take into account ‘the unbearable lightness of community’ and thus the necessity of state actors maintaining active leadership roles.

**Keywords:** community policing; crime reporting; victims; governance

Over the past few years social scientists have noted an increasingly diverse array of modes of security governance beyond the traditional public policing services provided by the state (Bayley and Shearing 2001, Eick 2003, Johnston and Shearing 2003, Nogala 2003). Whereas much of this literature explores ‘responsibilisation strategies’ through which the state encourages individual citizen participation in crime prevention (Garland 1996, p. 452), attention has also been focused on the rise of public–private security partnerships between criminal justice agencies and non-state actors (Garland 2001, Levi 2008) and on those strategies that Rose (1999) terms ‘governing through communities’. Under the latter category, we might include any number of projects of local governance created under the ever-expanding umbrella of ‘community policing’.

Community policing is generally understood as a set of policies and programmes aimed at increasing interaction between the police and community for the purpose of fostering joint ownership of and responsibility for a defined set of problems arising from local crime and disorder (Trojanowicz *et al.* 1998). Under this model, the community is no longer the passive recipient of police services or the creators of

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policing problems, but rather an active co-participant in the solution of local problems (Trojanowicz *et al.* 1998). Supporters of community policing endorse this model on the grounds that it serves the needs of both police and local communities by providing an environment to foster active partnerships and the pooling of resources needed to tackle issues (Trojanowicz *et al.* 1998). Critics have more cynically suggested that, in effect, community policing benefits the state in that it serves as a means by which criminal justice agencies can 'shift responsibility for crime to other institutions' (Ericson 1994, p. 163).

Certainly, the question of 'ownership' in relation to community policing programmes – that is, who can and should 'own' a given initiative – is a tricky issue. Although, theoretically, both the police and their community partners should hold joint responsibility for both decision-making and the operation of a given programme, as Les Johnston (2003, p. 185) notes in his discussion of the 'police extended family', in actuality it is unclear 'whether community policing is something that the police do on behalf of communities; that communities do on their own behalf, either through municipal, commercial or citizen-based provision; or that communities and police do in partnership with one another'. As we discuss in the present paper, the ambiguity over ownership of community policing programmes has important implications for service delivery, particularly with respect to the delivery of outreach policing services to homeless citizens. In *Citizens, Cops, and Power: Recognizing the Limits of Community* (2006), Steve Herbert explores what we see as a critical question: to what extent, if any, should communities be understood and treated as legitimate and effective political actors in relation to community policing projects? His analysis of empirical data collected on community policing projects in three Seattle neighbourhoods leads Herbert to conclude that urban communities are often ill-equipped to 'bear the political weight that projects like community policing place upon' them. This is particularly the case, Herbert suggests, with economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods that are already overburdened and lacking in resources (Herbert 2006, p. 14).

In 2003 the belief that socially inclusive policing services can provide an avenue through which the homeless can access greater security led police and social service agencies in Edinburgh to implement the Homeless Remote Reporting (HRR) programme.<sup>1</sup> This community policing programme utilises local service providers to the homeless community as access points for individuals who wish to report a crime to the police. For participating community service providers, the rationale for supporting this programme is simple: it is 'the belief that Remote Reporting reconstitutes marginalised crime victims as citizens equally worthy of the services of the state' including, in the words of one service provider, 'the right of people to be protected by the state' (Huey 2008, p. 211). We draw upon data from two sources – the original study of HRR conducted following its implementation in 2003 (Huey 2008), and a follow-up study conducted in 2008 (Huey and Quirouette 2009) – in order to examine this programme and the extent to which it offers a viable model for policing outreach to homeless communities. What our case study reveals is that despite positive endorsements of the programme from many of the stakeholders interviewed, significant operational problems exist. In essence, it has become a programme without an 'owner', with police having largely abdicated responsibility for its operation and community groups unable to assume that responsibility. What we suggest, based on the example that this programme provides, is that innovative

community policing efforts and other collaborative modes of governance must take into account 'the unbearable lightness of community' and thus the necessity of state actors maintaining active leadership roles (Herbert 2006, p. 13, see also Edwards 2005).

### **Method of inquiry**

This paper is informed by data drawn from two sources. The first source is an ethnographic study conducted in 2003 of the policing of Edinburgh's homeless population in the Cowgate and Grassmarket area of the city centre (Huey 2007). During the course of conducting fieldwork, one of the authors was made aware of what was then called the Homelessness Remote Reporting project and began to incorporate questions about the project in interviews conducted with police, service providers and homeless men and women. The result was an initial examination of the programme. From this study, we have extracted 31 interviews containing relevant material on issues related to: criminal victimisation and harassment experienced by homeless service users, police relations with service providers and homeless service users and participant attitudes towards the HRR project and experiences of the programme.

The second source we are drawing from is data from interviews conducted in 2008 as part of a larger feasibility to determine whether similar HRR projects should be implemented in two Canadian cities (Huey and Quirouette 2009). In order to properly consider the question of whether implementing Remote Reporting programmes for the homeless in Canada would be a valuable endeavour, it was deemed necessary to evaluate the current operation of the Edinburgh programme. To that end, we contacted each of the five homeless service agencies participating in the HRR programme and requested interviews with key staff members. All agencies agreed to participate. We also developed a non-probability sample consisting of the maximum number of homeless service agencies not participating in HRR; four of these agencies granted our request to interview their personnel.

In order to access homeless citizens as potential interviewees, service organisations that agreed to participate in our study were also asked whether they would assist in facilitating contact with their clients. As participating organisations include agencies that work with various sub-sections of the homeless population, we are drawing from a fairly robust sample of both service organisations and homeless citizens who access these services. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of the present study is that, given the nature of the original study, the views of those who do not access services are not represented here.

For this second study, we conducted 30 open-ended, semi-structured qualitative interviews using an interview guide consisting of series of questions based on five main areas of interest:

- (1) stakeholders' views as to the nature of victimisation within their community and/or their own experiences of victimisation;
- (2) stakeholders' willingness to report victimisation and/or their views as to those barriers that contribute to low rates of reporting incidents of victimisation (if any);

- (3) stakeholder experiences with HRR and/or attitudes and opinions concerning the concept of a HRR project;
- (4) stakeholders' potential interest and/or willingness to participate in a HRR programme in the future; and
- (5) beliefs as to the importance of access to justice for homeless citizens.

For both studies, participants were briefed as to the nature of the research and the subject areas to be covered, and each interviewee was advised that his or her identity would remain confidential. The average interview length was one hour; all interviews were recorded with the knowledge and consent of informants and interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

To analyse the data, interview transcripts from each study were printed, read and then manually coded according to major themes identified. To ensure reliability, as well as to identify emergent sub-themes, transcripts were reread and manually re-coded two further times (Table 1).

### **'What we tried to do is set up a system whereby we could assist homeless people to report crimes'<sup>2</sup>: the origins and operation of HRR**

In response to the problem of unreported criminal victimisation among their client group, in 2002 the Ark Trust of Edinburgh<sup>3</sup> commissioned a study that drew on interviews with 42 homeless youth (Manson 2002). Through an analysis of the interview data collected, the study's author found that 90% of respondents had been criminally victimised while homeless (Manson 2002). Further, 79% of victims had failed to report the crime to police (Manson 2002). Aware of the operation of a Remote Reporting programme for Edinburgh's Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) community, the report's author recommended that a similar programme be implemented for the City's homeless. The proposal was subsequently circulated among other community service groups.

In order to garner police support for the proposal to implement HRR, a senior representative of one of the city's homeless service organisations sent a copy of the report to the police commander who had been responsible for implementing the LGBT Remote Reporting programme. The police commander subsequently adopted HRR as a personal project, and pushed for support for the programme within the police force and among community groups. A member of one of the first community service organisations to join HRR later explained his group's involvement as a direct result of the police commander's intervention: 'I've known [him] for a couple years, and he actually approached me on that programme'. In 2003 the HRR pilot project

Table 1. Interviews.

Subject category	2003	2008	<i>n</i>
Police personnel	8	2	10
Community groups/service providers	9	12 <sup>a</sup>	21
Homeless service users	14	16	30
Total	31	30	61

<sup>a</sup>Three community service providers in the 2008 sample were also in the 2003 sample; all of the other research participants in both 2003 and 2008 samples were only interviewed once.

was established in Edinburgh. Initially implemented as a six-month pilot project, it was adopted as a permanent programme in 2004 (Figure 1).

HRR encourages victim reporting of crimes to police through the use of service providers, who serve as third parties in the process. Upon receiving a client's report of experiencing or witnessing criminal victimisation, a service provider consults with the client as to whether to bring the complaint forward to the police. Should the client wish to do so, two options are available for proceeding: the victim or witness can (1) report the matter for police investigation or (2) report the information anonymously for police intelligence purposes. In some service organisations, the process is triggered when a client comes forward with a criminal complaint. In other facilities, information regarding criminal victimisation is sought as part of the intake process. 'It's part of the assessment when they come in through the door', one shelter worker advised, 'we ask them, "have you ever been party to a crime or has a crime ever been committed towards you?" . . . and if they say yes, then we go into what we can offer them. Remote Reporting, we can offer you this'.

Should the client wish to proceed with a report using the HRR process, the service provider completes the designated forms with the client, filling out such information as the location of the event, type of incident, victim and suspect characteristics and an overall summary of the incident. All reports are sent by email or fax to the Public Assistance Desk at the Force Communications Centre, logged upon receipt and then forwarded to the relevant Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector. Where the victim has requested an investigation, the CID Inspector assigns the complaint to an officer, who is required to follow up with the agency from which the complaint was filed. To reduce any potential fears the complainant may have in relation to dealing with the police, he or she can elect to have a service provider present throughout the process, including attending meetings with investigating officers.

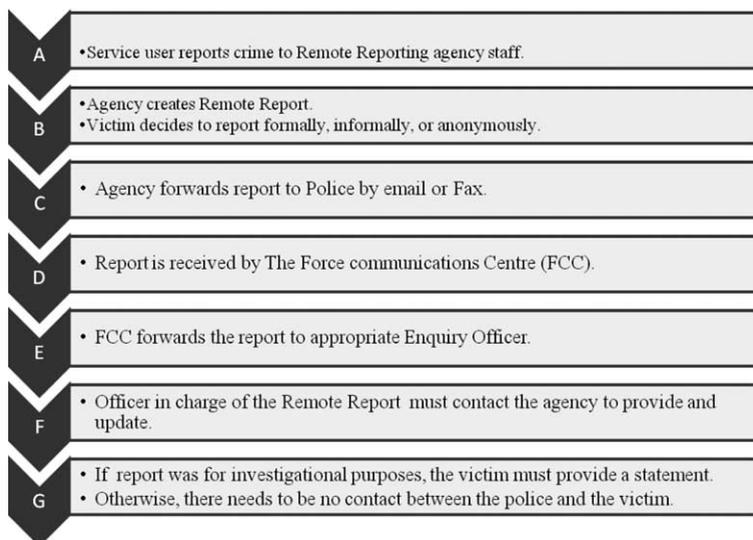


Figure 1. Process of Remote Reporting.

To increase victim confidence in the programme, informal policies and practises have been adopted to address issues that inhibit reporting. For example, to deal with the problem of victims being stigmatised within the local community for going against the 'anti-grassing code',<sup>4</sup> those who report are provided anonymity to the point at which criminal charges have been laid. To assist in keeping reports as anonymous as possible, police officers attend interviews in plain clothes, and arrangements can be made for police to meet with victims and service workers at a location away from the service organisation's premises.

Designated staff members within a participating service agency are provided HRR training by a Lothian and Borders (L&B) Police community liaison officer, who functions as a local point of contact. We were advised that training occurs when an organisation joins the programme, and that training for new staff members is arranged on an annual basis. Whereas the training process was described to us by a police liaison officer as 'an one hour PowerPoint presentation, [which] gives the background on Remote Reporting and . . . on how to fill out the form', a community service provider advised that 'the police came in and they trained the staff on how to be diplomatic, how to assist somebody, how to fill out the incident forms, where the forms went, how they processed it, [and] what was the next stage'.

When we queried participating community service providers about the extent to which they find the reporting process simple or onerous, or the training time consuming, respondents stated that both the process itself and the training were relatively easy to accommodate within their hectic work schedules. One service provider did note an individual case that was particularly time consuming, but stated that she felt the positive outcome for the client justified the expenditure of resources. However, as we note in further detail shortly, while it is the case that service providers stated that they could and would accommodate basic Remote Reporting tasks into their workloads, what they are unable or unwilling to do is to assume responsibility for coordinating, monitoring and promoting the programme, tasks that remain crucial to its operation.

#### **'It kind of protects the victims, doesn't it?'<sup>5</sup> Why stakeholders support HRR**

As the principal focus of the Edinburgh phase of our 2008 study was to evaluate HRR as a programme that might potentially be expanded to Canadian cities, we sought interviewees' views as to the advantages of the programme over traditional reporting routes, as well as what they saw as the larger social implications and/or benefits of the programme. We also posed a series of detailed questions, where appropriate, regarding the mechanics of the programme and how particular aspects of the programme benefit different stakeholder groups. As none of the respondents in the service user group had direct knowledge of the programme, we asked instead about what they saw as potential benefits of using HRR.

For each of the stakeholder groups, HRR was seen as representing a significant improvement over existing avenues for crime reporting. In particular, interviewees felt that the programme permitted homeless victims of crime to 'tell their story' in a safe environment, supported by the presence of someone they trust. To illustrate this point, a community service worker related the following story of taking a report from a client:

We had a young person who had her dog stolen by a 50-year-old man, and was wanting money and sexual favours from her. He was intimidating her, watching her flat, knowing when she was going in and out, trying to get in her door. So, she wouldn't go to the police. She wanted her dog. It was her baby . . . she was just petrified. She truly believed he had her dog, and he knew where she stayed, and there was a whole range of issues that went on within that. And, it was through [a police contact] that we then were able to do a remote report. Yeah, it was extra work, but then I'm gonna support that young person to get to her chief goal. We're very much about helping people to help themselves. I know that it is frightening for her to go to the police. In her logic, she wanted to get her dog back . . . And, getting her to meet with the police officer, that was a good process . . . He brought it down to a level she understood.

The support of a trusted service provider when coming forward with a report to police was also cited by service users as an advantage of the programme. A male shelter client advised that he had been harassed at a former residence and had complained to the police to little avail. When asked if he would have preferred to use Remote Reporting as an alternative option, his response was 'yeah, because I would have had somebody backing me up'.

We note that the majority of homeless service users interviewed in both 2003 and 2008 stated that they would not use HRR to report a crime, regardless of whether they were a victim or a witness. Most were not opposed to the programme on principal, and indeed several said that they thought the programme was a good idea 'for other people',<sup>6</sup> rather respondents either said they had little use for it (preferring instead to deal with victimisation on their own terms through retaliation), or were concerned about earning a reputation as a 'grass'. Interestingly, the 'anti-grassing code' was also cited as a concern by those who said they would use HRR to report to police. Of the 10 service users who stated that they would be willing to use HRR if victimised, a primary advantage of the programme noted was the ability to remain anonymous to the point at which charges are laid. As a service user explained of her community, 'it's what they call the code of silence in the neighbourhood, people don't want to grass. It takes a wee bit of courage to come forward'. In response to the promise of anonymity under Remote Reporting, this individual stated, 'Well, I think that it's a good idea because it's protecting the people, the victims'. A service provider with HRR experience portrayed Remote Reporting as an innovative means of overcoming the barrier that the 'anti-grassing code' represents:

This is why we need this remote reporting. Because [the police] come in plain clothes. If you do request an interview, they will come dressed like you or I. You know, jeans and a t-shirt. So nobody actually knows who they are when they are coming in to speak with you. You can also arrange to see them in the center or arrange to meet them in a coffee shop. You can arrange to meet them outside and people don't know it's the police you are speaking to.

While one service user worried that a visit to a worker's office might signal to other clients that they were reporting, a shelter worker dismissed such fears on the grounds that offices are private and clients are in and out of their offices routinely: 'because we do such intense work with people, somebody coming in to do a report on something is not seen as if you were going to come say something to the police'.

The potential crime deterrent effect of reporting predatory behaviour within the community was cited by all three stakeholder groups as a significant potential benefit. A shelter user expressed this consideration for supporting HRR as follows: 'people are getting harassed, and they are getting bullied into parting with money . . .

intimidated for all sorts of stuff. If it was put out in such a fashion that even the dafter people could read it ... and then reported to the police, then I think [the program] could be beneficial to quite a few people'. Similarly, a service provider explained of her support of HRR:

it's not just about getting people to report crimes but it's also about letting the police know where the crimes are happening. I mean, we see people in here that have had horrendous crimes committed against them and in the past they would not have told anybody. Even if they can just say 'I was attacked', then we can send the form in and at least the police know that is going on in that part of Edinburgh.

In contrast to a number of studies that have revealed notable levels of resistance by police officers towards community policing initiatives (Skogan and Hartnett 1997, Saunders 1999, Herbert 2001, 2006, Huey 2007), we note that each of the officers interviewed in 2003 and 2008 endorsed both the community policing model generally, and the HRR programme specifically. Indeed, rather than cynically viewing the HRR programme as part of a 'rhetorical strategy' intended to serve political purposes within the community (Loader 1999, Lyons 1999), officers interviewed saw it as a legitimate mode of policing and one that yields distinct advantages for both the community and the police service. In particular, police interviewees cited the potential of HRR to provide insights into the 'dark figure' of unreported crimes within the homeless community. For instance, a senior police officer saw the utility of HRR as follows: 'what it is going to give us is a hint of the dark figure of the undercover crime in that very vulnerable section'. Another police representative advised that even in the situation where the victim or witness chooses to make an anonymous report, that 'any intelligence gleaned regarding culprits is entered onto our intelligence systems'. A frontline police officer with considerable experience of HRR demonstrated its utility through the following story:

remote reporting is a great method for us to establish that a problem exists, and it's a great way of discovering trends and new individuals that may be responsible [for crime]. It's good for indicating a problem and not for assisting with an investigation. The time it was most useful for me was probably – actually there have been two times now – we have had a massive influx of people from Eastern Europe ... we found ourselves in a position of dealing with a Polish community, who had no faith in the police ... the staff [at a shelter] became aware of a gang problem. There was a gang ... that were involved in extortion ... we, via the staff, got some information and from that, we were able to get access to the local operation ... eventually, we were able to get some statements and go after these people.

This officer then related another story in which HRR was used to stop a woman who had been robbing homeless individuals attending a mental health clinic. In summarising what he took away from that experience, the officer stated, 'We misjudge who we are dealing with sometimes. Some people with complex needs will never speak to us. Sometimes they have other things they want to hide, though they do not like to be the victims of other things. And we are typically bound to report all crimes, regardless of what we think about the victim. That's where Remote Reporting is becoming effective'.

While interviewees revealed a range of views as what they saw as the broader social implications of increased crime reporting by homeless citizens, the overwhelming majority of those interviewed cited the potential for greater social inclusion of the homeless citizen as the programme's primary potential benefit. For some service

providers, the programme is about letting homeless individuals know that they have ‘rights and entitlements’, including the right to access policing services: ‘it’s important for people to know that the police are there to provide a service and that they are actually the customer’. Further we were told that the programme sends ‘a positive message to the person that they are of value, and that because they happen to be homeless or whatever else, they are still of value’. When asked why his organisation was participating in HRR, another community service provider stated, ‘The attraction was anything that would help the guys who use our service to be more included in the community is more or less good. This is a kind of pathway to inclusion, if you like’.

### **‘That link between the organizations and the police kind of disappeared’<sup>7</sup>: why HRR isn’t being used**

In order to assess the utility of HRR, we also sought to determine the extent to which the programme is used and to identify factors that constrain usage. To access reporting figures, we utilised Freedom of Information requests to the L&B police force. Table 2 reveals the number of reports made through HRR for a six-year period (2003–2008). As can be seen below, of the nine reports for which details are available, three were formal complaints, the remainder being ‘information only’. Of the formal complaints filed, after enquiries were made by police, none led to a criminal case. The type of incidents reported typically involved physical assault or injury, although others were for minor offences such as ‘breach of the peace’. Although the overall number of reports is too small to provide any statistically significant statements about programme use, it appears that service users are less likely to seek a formal police intervention, preferring instead to pass along information to the police discreetly.

Table 2. Remote Reports through HRR.

Year	Remote Reports ( <i>n</i> )	Crime reported	Report type
2003	15	Information unavailable <sup>a</sup>	
2004	5	Information unavailable	
2005	2	Information unavailable	
2006	6	Breach and malicious mischief	Information only; no crime report
		Assault and breach of the peace	Information only; no crime report
		Assault and theft	Information only; no crime report
		Assault and robbery	Information only; no crime report
		Assault with intent to rob	Information only; no crime report
		Assault	Formal crime report, no investigation; report created for information only
2007	2	Breach of the peace	Formal report and investigation requested; enquiries negative
		Hit and run vehicle accident	Formal report for minor injuries; enquires negative
2008	1	Breach of the peace	Information only; no crime report

<sup>a</sup>We were informed by the Lothian and Borders Police Force that detailed information on incident types was not available before 2006.

As the figures above also demonstrate, HRR is not generative of a large volume of criminal complaints. In 2006, one of the authors sent a query to the L&B Police Force as to why the overall number of reports seemed fairly small. A representative of the L&B responded by advising that 'although numbers appear to be low, it was never envisaged that large number of reports would ever be received through this scheme'. Instead, she stated, 'the aim is to build up the trust and confidence the community to be able to report through conventional methods'. As can be seen in Table 2, the highest number of reports occurred in 2003, when the programme was implemented, and then began to dwindle thereafter. When we returned to Edinburgh in 2008, interviewees who were involved with the programme were asked about the volume of reports. A number of factors were cited by respondents for decreasing rates of reporting through the programme, including increased confidence in local officers leading to better relationships with the local community. For example, a police interviewee stated that HRR numbers were down because 'people are reporting more to their [Community Beat Officers] or are feeling more comfortable about reporting'. While it is the case that some community organisations and their clienteles may have excellent relations with their Community Beat Officers (CBOs), and that such relations may play a role in declining rates of HRR usage, through interviews with members of each of the stakeholder groups, other factors emerged.

Successful community policing programmes rely on participation from community groups, other public agencies and individual citizens (Bayley 1994). Acquiring broad-based support requires active promotion of programmes to would-be participants; however, as Chermak and Weiss (2003) have found, police organisations frequently put too few resources into marketing their community policing initiatives, with the result that opportunities at expanding programme participation are missed. This is no less the case in relation to HRR. Indeed, one reason for declining reporting rates became immediately obvious when we interviewed representatives from local groups that are not participating in HRR. What we discovered is that despite the fact that the programme had been in operation for some 6 years, three of the four groups that agreed to be interviewed were unaware of the programme until we contacted them. For example, a representative with one of the major organisations that provide services to the homeless in Edinburgh stated that 'I didn't know that they had the service, to be honest'. Another expressed puzzlement, 'I know all the services in Edinburgh, but I have not heard of this project'. 'Certainly the idea's good', still another service provider stated, 'but it needs to be publicised a bit'. We also heard this from several service users who were similarly unaware of the programme; indeed, all but a handful of the homeless citizens interviewed in both 2003 and 2008 lacked knowledge of the programme and required us to explain its basic premises and operation to them. It would appear that local CBOs are not always aware of the programme either. A representative from the fourth non-participating homeless service organisation that we interviewed advised that not only was her organisation never approached about joining HRR, but that she had found it difficult to access information about the project through her local CBO: 'we did try, because we had a client that did want to report an incident . . . we tried to find out more about reporting that way, and we really came across a stumbling block trying to get information about it'. A service provider articulated the views of other community representatives upon stating that '[the] police should

do a little bit more to introduce this to services, and not just to services but to people around Edinburgh’.

Sustaining community involvement in local policing programmes has been identified as a significant challenge by previous researchers (Skogan and Hartnett 1997). Not surprisingly then, another factor related to low reporting rates in the HRR programme is that enthusiasm for the programme has waned on the part of community service providers. Participants’ dwindling enthusiasm for the programme was explained as being due to inconsistent monitoring of the programme and/or a general lack of coordination. Indeed, a recurring refrain in interviews was that HRR ‘got off to a good start’, but that ‘it’s been downhill all the way’. It was felt that HRR was something akin to a rudderless ship, with both service providers and police believing that it was the responsibility of the other stakeholder group to ‘own the programme’. For example, when we asked a shelter worker why the volume of reports had dropped rather than increased, she offered the following perspective:

A lot of energy came out at the beginning. Big launch. Then one or two agencies fell away. The monitoring that they hoped would take place didn’t really happen. Or at least the liaison between the police and ourselves really quickly folded after three or four months. I’m sure that the police are still recording what’s been going on, incidents and responding to them, but that link between the organisations and the police kind of disappeared.

A hostel manager similarly stated that the reason why his organisation had seen the number of reports dwindle was the lack of a central owner of the programme tasked with monitoring it and facilitating communication between participants. As this individual explained, ‘I think that’s been lacking, the monitoring and reviewing of it. Then it really would be successful. It would help keep it on the agenda’.

In its ideal form, community policing operates under the ‘ownership’ of individual police officers, who work with the community to effect change (Skogan and Hartnett 1997). In practise, however, community policing programmes are often ‘un-owned’ and/or significantly under-resourced as a result of other institutional needs and external pressures (Tilley 2005, Huey 2007). For example, CBOs are among those easily re-allocated to regular patrol units when coverage is required for critical staffing shortages (Huey 2007). The institutional rank structure and promotion process also plays a role. As Fielding (1999) points out, the reality of a policing career entails promotions and transfers, thus community policing programmes and initiatives are frequently abandoned when their ‘owner’ is moved elsewhere within an organisation. As may be recalled, when we interviewed one of the principal organisers of HRR in 2003, he advised that his decision to become involved was as a direct result of being approached by the local police commander who had adopted the programme and promoted it both within the police force and to external agencies. A few years later, the police commander had left to join another organisation and the programme was under the nominal oversight of a lower ranking officer at force headquarters, apparently buried in the constellation of other community programmes that the L&B promotes. In 2008, we re-interviewed this service provider about what appeared to be a significant lack of momentum in relation to promoting the programme. The response we received located the problem within the police organisation: ‘You need somebody to organise it within the police and push it’. According to this individual, community service groups do not have

sufficient resources to make community policing programmes work without an active leader in the police department promoting their cause. With the police commander no longer promoting the programme within the police organisation, service providers saw the programme as largely abandoned by the police. As one service provider queried, 'Who's left to kind of champion it?'

A central theme in interviews with community service providers is that local agencies do not have sufficient resources to take on community policing projects without a significant level of support from the police. In interviews with staff members at other participating community agencies, we were repeatedly told that HRR 'has been slowly dwindling' or 'put on the back burner' because agencies had limited resources and too many other issues to deal with to promote the programme or to coordinate efforts with other agencies. For example, we heard 'unfortunately, we have so much other stuff' and 'other things came on to the agenda', among other comments explaining why community groups were unable or unwilling to assume a more proactive role in developing HRR. One shelter worker explained waning support for the programme among service agencies in the following terms:

this is more paperwork for services, we don't get any money to implement it. It's a fantastic service and we should all do it, but, you know, if it's not right on your desk I guess and there's no money for us to provide this service, possibly there is a chance that maybe people will say 'Oh well, put it on the back burner and I'll come back to that later'. And maybe they're right.

An illustrative example of the lack of ownership of the programme was provided to us courtesy of the HRR page on the L&B Police Force website. In order to set up interviews with participating service providers, we contacted each of the seven agencies listed on the website. We then discovered that one of the agencies listed had been shut down for over a year, and another was completely unaware of the HRR project. Indeed, a senior official at this organisation claimed that she had never heard of HRR. After checking with half a dozen other employees at this agency, she could locate no one there who had knowledge of the project. When we subsequently pointed out the inaccuracy of the information on their website, a police liaison stated that it is the duty of participating agencies to inform the L&B when there are changes to their involvement in the project. As she explained, 'Nobody tells us. The way it works is once somebody, once an agency becomes a Remote Reporting site, there is like a single point of contact, an officer in each division who goes out and trains the staff. We get a brief overview of what they do. But unless they tell us they are closing, we don't have any way of knowing that'. Rather than seeing the police as the owner of the programme and thus responsible for monitoring it, this individual said of the programme's community partners, 'the onus is really on them'. The lack of police oversight in maintaining the programme caused one service provider to suggest that, for the police, HRR was no longer 'the flavour of the month'.

#### **'It's such a good service; it's too good to lose it'<sup>8</sup>: concluding remarks**

The goal of Remote Reporting is to offer an alternative method for a marginalised population to report victimisation to police, thereby encouraging access to security and facilitating social justice. Based on our analysis of interview data provided by members of key stakeholder groups, we see HRR as a potential means by which:

- (1) homeless victims of crime can be heard by the criminal justice system;
- (2) issues related to criminal victimisation of the homeless can be addressed;
- (3) societal awareness of the victimisation of the homeless can be increased;
- (4) relations between homeless communities and police organisations can be improved;
- (5) relations between service providers for the homeless and policing agencies can be strengthened; and
- (6) police can receive information concerning crimes that they may not be aware of and/or receive critical information to further existing investigations.

These are worthwhile goals and a model that holds the potential to achieve any measurable effect in any of these areas is one that is clearly worth considering.

Unfortunately, the model HRR programme in Scotland also stands as an exemplar of one of the central problems that undermines collaborative community programmes in general, and community policing programmes in particular: lack of leadership. Although collaborative efforts between public and private groups to address complex problems related to homelessness are laudable and to be encouraged, the decentralised approach taken with respect to the operation of the HRR programme has meant that no one individual or group 'owns' the programme, and thus there is no driving force ensuring consistent communication among partners, monitoring the programme, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses and, most critically, promoting the programme within the homeless community. In Skogan's (2006) 10-year study of community policing in Chicago, he notes the important role played by participating community organisations in fostering and maintaining wider citizen involvement. However, what Skogan's study demonstrates is the importance of active police participation in creating and maintaining both a network of community actors to 'spread the message', as well as structures and routine processes to guide communications between participants. Charles Edwards similarly argues that:

Crime prevention initiatives, like any other initiative, need coordination and organization to keep them effective: for example, a British study . . . found that Neighbourhood Watch worked most successfully when police co-ordinated it. It would seem to follow, then, that whether the bulk of the responsibility for a particular community policing project falls on police or on the community, a significant police input is necessary for it to be fully effective (2005, p. 97).

The importance of leadership in not only bringing parties together for common causes, but also for steering partnerships through the collaborative process, cannot be understated (Chrislip and Larson 1994, Ansell and Gash 2007). Collaborative leaders, Lasker and Weiss (2003, p. 31) argue, must have the skills to promote broad and active participation, ensure broad-based influence and control, facilitate productive group dynamics and extend the scope of the process. It is important to note that such tasks require time, resources and skills (Huxham and Vangen 2000). Not all partners in a collaborative effort will have equal access to these necessary ingredients. In the instant case, tasks that are fundamental to the success of the HRR programme have been left to over-burdened community partners and, not surprisingly, the programme has become largely defunct. We draw from this case study a key lesson: modes of governance based on public-private partnerships cannot be so

decentralised in their processes that they constitute a burden on community partners, because it is all too likely the homeless service user who will bear the cost.

### Notes

1. Although the programme was subsequently renamed 'Take Control', throughout this paper we refer to the programme by its original title, Homeless Remote Reporting Program or HRR.
2. Quote from an interview with a community service provider (2003).
3. The Ark Trust of Edinburgh is now defunct, having been subsumed by another agency.
4. The anti-grassing code is a prohibition against informing to authorities found within street-based communities.
5. Quote from an interview with a male shelter user in Edinburgh (2008).
6. The majority of homeless service users interviewed were of the view that HRR was an excellent programme for those segments of the homeless population deemed particularly vulnerable. The vulnerable, according to our interviewees, variously include women, youth and the elderly.
7. Quote taken from an interview with a community service provider (2008).
8. Quote taken from an interview with a community service provider (2008).

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