

## Creative Tactics

Innovation and creativity are terms associated more with advertising agencies than police forces. But a new ethos is to be adopted by the recently set up Specialist Crime Directorate, where the Met hopes innovation and creativity will become powerful weapons against serious crime.

Within the directorate, the Serious Crime Reduction in Partnership Team is being created to analyse major crime in the capital and identify ways to reduce and prevent it. The principle is: find the root causes of the crime and change the environment that allows it to flourish.

Under this strategy, rather than police reacting to crime - which is currently stretching resources to the limit - officers aim to identify the catalysts for crime and destroy them. Detective Chief Supt Allan Gibson, who is heading up the new crime reduction partnership unit, says it is a new way of working and admits it will mean changing the mindset of officers.

Explaining the thinking behind this new approach, Detective Chief Supt Gibson says "The old maxim that if you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got, is behind our belief that it is time to refocus our efforts on serious crime.

Detective Chief Supt Gibson says police work can no longer be just about arresting criminal. Gun crime, which in the Met area has soared by almost 50 per cent, is to be the first scourge to receive the new 'why is it happening' approach.

Detective Chief Supt Gibson explains "Gun violence has become a huge issue of public concern in London and other UK cities. We intend to apply a problem-solving approach to gun violence and to other major crimes in London, working closely with partner agencies and communities. In this regard, there is a great deal we can learn from the experience of US and other world cities, where gun crime has been a major priority for years."

A wide range of strategies will be developed to reduce gun crime. They will include:

- \* law enforcement to detect, disrupt and deter
- \* diversion to prevent young people becoming involved in major crime, and
- \* community interventions designed to change the social conditions that cause crime.

Deterring people, especially youngsters, from getting caught up in the gun culture will be one of the directorate's key focuses.

Detective Chief Supt Gibson says: "One thing we will be doing is going into schools with role models from the music industry, show business (and so on) and explain why gun crime is not the right way forward.

But we need the involvement of the community and other agencies to do this. We are identifying which youngsters might be more susceptible to getting involved in crime and trying to identify why they are vulnerable."

It is a far cry from swamping estates with armed-response units and dragging known gunmen from their homes. Detective Chief Supt Gibson explains that officers will have to re-adapt from the more traditional 'arrest people and take them to court' approach.

He says: "People join the service to catch criminals. But arresting people solves crime in the short term. Like many other busy detectives around the country, I have often wished I had more time and resources to deal with the root causes of major crime. Unfortunately, the reality is too often the reactive demands of dealing with crime and victims of crime overwhelm us - too many fires to fight and too few opportunities to build firebreaks.

"To change this, you have to be prepared to set aside resources to work on problem solving and major crime reduction - people who do not get swallowed by the next major investigation - even though this is not easy."

Tarque Ghaffur, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who commands the new directorate, adds: "The amount of serious crime in London has continued to rise and is becoming more complex. Resources do not keep up with demand. We need to find ways of reducing the reactive demands made on us. Preventing major crime through problem solving methods is good sense".

Taken from Police Review 7th February 2003