



# Research Summary 8

## Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme Evaluation

### Key findings and lessons

This report summarises the findings of the national evaluation of the Neighbourhood Wardens Programme, carried out between June 2001 and May 2003. The evaluation was undertaken by Social Development Direct (SDDirect), in collaboration with NOP and Crime Concern, on behalf of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

- Wardens have a unique role to play in neighbourhood renewal. They are a new generation of officials who know the problems, face the people and take the action. Wardens' success lies in their accessibility and ability to link people and agencies together.
- The overriding message from the evaluation is that in successful schemes, wardens can and are having an impact nationally. Key impacts include: increased resident satisfaction; reduced fear of crime, particularly for older people; considerable decline in the overall rate of residents experiencing crime; perceived improvement in environmental problems such as graffiti, fly-tipping, litter and dog fouling; a small decline in residents perceiving youth anti-social behaviour (ASB) as a problem.
- Schemes that are working well have a number of common features: tailored and flexible approaches; involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders; resident participation; active and representative steering groups; consistent scheme management; ability to develop and nurture partnerships; ability to maximise wardens' visibility; targeted approach to the vulnerable; high-quality wardens; and ongoing practical training.



## Key findings and lessons continued

- Neighbourhood Wardens schemes represent value for money. Even assuming that only 10 percent of the reduction in crime rates can be attributed to wardens, there is still an overall saving. There are also important, but uncoded, additional benefits: improved quality of life; reduced fear of crime, improvements in environmental problems and anti-social behaviour.
- The most important policy message arising from the evaluation is that wardens schemes are effective and their further promotion should be encouraged. Other policy implications include: support flexible, tailored responses; share good practice between Government departments; provide assistance to schemes requiring additional support; and help managers improve the recruitment and retention of women and BME wardens.
- Of the 84 schemes funded, over 70 percent have sustainable funding in place and 20 percent fully expect to do so. Of the five schemes that may not continue beyond March 2004, two are converting to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

## Neighbourhood Wardens Programme

The neighbourhood wardens programme was launched as a joint DETR/Home Office initiative in 2000 with £18.5m initially made available on a competitive and matched funding basis in England and Wales. A total of 84 schemes were funded to March 2003. Funding was subsequently extended to March 2004. Sole responsibility for wardens' funding now lies with schemes themselves.

Neighbourhood wardens are a neighbourhood level uniformed, semi-official patrolling presence. Schemes are located across England and Wales and predominantly in deprived urban areas. There is no typical wardens scheme. Schemes vary in the problems they aim to tackle, their objectives and the way in which they are managed and operate. Most, however, have reduction of crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and environmental improvements as core objectives. The majority of schemes are located in areas that are subject to other neighbourhood renewal initiatives, for example, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and Drug Action Teams (DATs), providing opportunities for wardens to work with and complement other programmes.

# The Evaluation

This is the summary of the national evaluation of the initial Neighbourhood Wardens Programme. It draws together the findings of various strands of research, which were designed to complement each other:

- baseline and endline postal surveys of managers and wardens of all 84 schemes;
- baseline and endline household surveys of a sample of residents in 15 scheme areas; and
- in-depth case studies of seven areas, using qualitative and quantitative methods but with a particular emphasis on participatory approaches.

# What value do Wardens add to Neighbourhood Renewal?

The most distinctive feature of the neighbourhood wardens programme is that, unlike many neighbourhood renewal activities, wardens are community based in and about the streets and estates in which they work. Their advantage lies in their accessibility to people, allowing information sharing about activities and resources and enabling them to listen to problems, worries and news from local residents. Wardens form a 'soft' rather than 'hard' interface between people and agencies. They are a new generation of neighbourhood officials that know the problems, face the people, and take the action.

Individual neighbourhood wardens schemes are hugely diverse. The programme as a whole represents a raft of bottom up approaches that are designed around local issues. This move towards 'home grown' responses to national initiatives demands and has benefited from flexibility and understanding from central Government, as well as a system that supports community driven initiative.

The overriding message from the evaluation is that wardens can and are having an impact nationally. There is considerable variation in achievements across schemes with most having some degree of success.

Key impacts include:

- Quality of life in scheme areas has improved since the introduction of neighbourhood wardens. The residents survey found that over 25 percent of residents report an increase in satisfaction with their neighbourhoods since the baseline. There was a six percent increase in residents saying that warden areas had got better as a place to live in the last 18 months and an overall increase in the number of residents who think their area is a good place to bring up children. Comparisons with control areas show a greater increase in satisfaction than non-warden areas. There is a significant correlation between residents reporting that 'wardens make me feel safer' and improved perceptions of neighbourhood problems generally.
- Wardens have reduced fear of crime (FOC) on deprived estates, particularly for older people. Evidence of impact comes from all strands of the evaluation. The residents survey found that reductions in the level and number of worries about crime for residents as a whole were greater than in control areas. The greatest gains have been made for fear of mugging and street robberies: a ten percent decline compared to a small increase in areas without wardens. Residents who 'see wardens' are less worried about being mugged or robbed in the area that they live in than residents as a whole.
- Wardens have been particularly successful at reducing fear of crime among older people. Worry in the over-55s age range has declined more than the overall residents survey sample. This improvement tallies with the targeted action that wardens have been taking with older people, for example, on bogus callers (distraction burglaries) where we see a 6.5 percent decline in worry about bogus callers in warden areas but a 4.9 percent increase in comparator areas.
- Wardens are helping to tackle environmental problems. Evidence of perceived improvements in the local environment emerged from all strands of the evaluation. Residents' perceptions of their environment had improved more in warden areas than comparator areas. Particular improvements have been noted in terms of graffiti, fly-tipping (Evaluation groups), litter and dog fouling (Residents Survey). The greatest impacts were seen in schemes where wardens have a good relationship with agencies responsible for the environment. Residents in these same areas reported improved perceptions of various environmental services. Again, older residents are particularly positive about environmental improvements.

- Youth anti-social behaviour (ASB) remains one of the most serious issues in warden areas and continues to be the main reason for resident dissatisfaction. However, there are positive signs that the perceptions of ASB are changing. The residents survey found a small decline (0.7 percent) in residents perceiving ‘teenagers hanging around’ as a problem, particularly significant when compared to a 5.4 percent increase in non warden areas. Case studies found that where wardens are targeting youth ASB, residents have identified indications of change: ‘fewer gangs’, ‘things have quietened down’ and ‘less intimidation’. Again, older residents were particularly positive about reductions in ASB.
- The link between wardens and ASB improvements is clear. People who say that wardens make them feel safer are more likely to say the problem of teenagers has got better.
- In relation to impact on crime, residents survey evidence suggests that there has been a considerable decline (27.6 percent) in the overall rate of crime in warden areas. This compares to a slight increase (4.7 percent) in crime in the comparator areas. Although residents living in wardens areas appear to be doing relatively well in terms of improvements in crime, they remain at a higher risk of being a victim of crime than the national average.
- Police in case study areas were generally positive about warden’s role in crime reduction, for example, encouraging residents to report crime, improving residents’ perceptions of the police, freeing up police time by dealing with minor incidents, working collaboratively on crime prevention initiatives, and improving intelligence.
- Although few wardens schemes have community development as an explicit objective, the most successful have adopted a community based approach to increase their effectiveness. Wardens have been particularly successful in their role as a ‘linker’ between residents and service providers. Wardens’ almost unique position as the ‘soft’ face of regeneration could be further utilised by local agencies.

# What are the critical elements of a good scheme?

Throughout the process of evaluation, schemes have demonstrated different strengths and weaknesses. However, schemes that are achieving results have a number of common features:

- Tailored and flexible approaches which are responsive to context, and able to respond to lessons as they are learnt. Such schemes demonstrated cultures of learning, where wardens, managers and partner agencies communicated well with one another from the outset.
- Involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders in scheme design, including police, local authority and housing authority staff and residents to ensure that schemes are based on a sound understanding of the problems and shared objectives.
- Resident participation, from scheme design, through implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation. Adequate support and a variety of techniques are essential, for example, ensuring that residents are active partners in steering groups, maintaining consultation throughout implementation, and residents' participation in monitoring and evaluation.
- Active and representative steering groups. These should include key stakeholders and residents, have adequate support to be able to function effectively and meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.
- Consistent scheme management, with attention paid to reducing turnover of managers and staff, and with mechanisms to ensure the smooth running of the scheme in the event of such turnover. Supportive management is highly valued by wardens and is key to maintaining morale and scheme success in terms of impact.
- Ability to develop and nurture partnerships which are productive for all partners. Features of case study schemes with strong partnerships include regular contact, good reporting and feedback systems between partners, information sharing, joint initiatives between partners and grassroots contact.
- Ability to maximise wardens' visibility, using their resources effectively, and recognising that visibility is not just a matter of the intensity of patrolling, but of patrolling where and when the warden is likely to be seen and to provide a reassuring presence. Perceived visibility was enhanced by ongoing awareness campaigns, high profile publicised activities and targeted action in some case study schemes.

# Costs and benefits of the Neighbourhood Wardens Programme

- Targeted approach to the vulnerable. The residents survey and case study results demonstrate the clear benefits of targeting the elderly and youth. Such an approach could be effectively applied with other groups, particularly BME groups and asylum seekers.
- In the better case study schemes, wardens were community focused, interested in young people and had negotiating and mediating skills.
- Support to wardens through ongoing, practical training and exposure to other schemes and wardens through study tours and networking events. It is important that wardens feel valued by managers and residents, given the nature of the difficult, demanding and often low paid job.

The evaluation found that neighbourhood warden schemes represent value for money. An illustration of the costs and benefits are as follows:

- Costs of the Neighbourhood Wardens programme. Total programme costs (including funding from the NRU, matched funding from partners, and in-kind contributions) are estimated at £29.2m over the two-and-a-half years of the Neighbourhood Warden programme. Other possible costs to partner agencies are offset by the savings that wardens make (for example, picking up litter or removing graffiti).

# What are the policy implications?

- Benefits of the Neighbourhood Wardens programme are difficult to quantify (for example, expressing the benefit of improved satisfaction with the neighbourhood or being less worried about being mugged in monetary terms). However, it is possible to calculate the monetary costs of crime and look at crime impacts in warden areas relative to comparator areas. The residents survey suggests that there were over 286,000 fewer offences over the two-and-a-half years of the Neighbourhood Wardens programme. Home Office figures suggest the 'average' offence has a cost to society of about £2,000. While this calculation represents something of an over-simplification, it does at least provide a single figure to use in the analysis of costs and benefits. Using this figure, we have been able to calculate that the Net Present Value (present value of benefits minus present value of costs) is equal to £575.5 million<sup>1</sup> over the two-and-a-half years of the programme. Even assuming that only ten percent of crime reduction can be attributed to wardens, there is still an overall saving. Taking account of the important, but uncoded, additional benefits (e.g. improved quality of life, reduced fear of crime, improvements in environmental problems), the evaluation concludes that Neighbourhood Wardens schemes represent value for money.

The most important policy messages arising from the evaluation are as follows:

- Wardens schemes are effective and are shown to make a distinctive contribution to neighbourhood renewal. Their further promotion is therefore encouraged as a key component of neighbourhood renewal. They are relevant in a wide range of contexts and could be promoted in other programme areas seeking similar impacts.
- Flexible, tailored responses should be encouraged and supported. 'Home grown' responses to national initiatives demand flexibility and understanding from central government and a system that supports, not stifles community-driven initiative.
- Continued central support by the Neighbourhood Management and Wardens Team (NMWT) is encouraged. Technical support and good practice materials are valued by many schemes. New guidance should be developed to incorporate the lessons emerging from this evaluation (and others) for schemes to adapt and adopt as relevant to their particular context.
- The NMWT could further publicise their work and the options of wardens schemes to other Government departments, sharing good practice and lessons learnt. Key departments which should be taking a particularly close view of wardens, and to which the NMWT could be especially promoting themselves include the Home Office, Department for Transport, DEFRA and DfES.

- More attention and support is required from the NMWT to help improve the recruitment and retention of women and BME wardens. Two workshops were organised by NMWT (an awareness-raising event for BME interest groups in November 2003 and a women wardens event in March 2004) to involve wardens, managers and other practitioners to help develop guidance and support in these two areas.
- With the increased policy emphasis on community cohesion, there has been much interest in wardens' potential role in this area. Wardens are almost uniquely placed to interface with BME communities. Extra central support could be provided in this area.
- There are certain schemes which may require additional support in order to be effective: those which are small; those stating community development as a primary objective; those recruiting a significant proportion of staff who are long-term unemployed; and those that are not managed by a local authority.

Finally, two key indicators of programme success are sustainability and replication. As of March 2004, 73 percent of schemes had sustainable funding in place. Of the remaining 23 schemes, 16 have yet to confirm whether they have been sustained. Most of these are still in discussion with funding partners or are continuing to investigate long term funding. Schemes have found funding from various sources. These include being mainstreamed into local authority or housing association services and funding through other sources such as SRB, ERCF (Estates Renewal Challenge Fund), HMRF (Housing Market Renewal Fund), ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and NRF (Neighbourhood Renewal Fund). Scheme expansion has also occurred in a number of areas with substantial increases in numbers of wardens and areas covered.

# Web links and contacts

## **Neighbourhood Wardens Team**

[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/nswardens.asp](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/nswardens.asp)

## **Neighbourhood Wardens Web Community**

[www.ecommunities.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.ecommunities.odpm.gov.uk)

## **International Wardens website**

[www.cleansafeworldwide.com](http://www.cleansafeworldwide.com)

## **Neighbourhood Renewal Unit**

[www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)

## **Social Exclusion Unit**

[www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk)

## **Renewal.net**

[www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net)

## **Social Development Direct**

[www.sddirect.org.uk](http://www.sddirect.org.uk)

## **Crime Concern**

[www.crimeconcern.org.uk/](http://www.crimeconcern.org.uk/)

## **NOP**

[www.nop.co.uk](http://www.nop.co.uk)



**NRU hotline: 08450 82 83 83**  
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