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A report for the
National Business
Crime Centre

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City, University of London

BUSINESS CRIME REDUCTION
PARTNERSHIPS

ENHANCING VALUE AND PROMOTING SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs) play an important role in protecting businesses and their employees. There are over 250 BCRPs operating in the UK working with local and national partners to prevent and reduce crime impacting on their local communities. The work they do is invaluable.

In 2019, National Accreditation Standards were introduced to recognise this and raise the standards to support their members. This review, commissioned by the National Business Crime Centre, provides an opportunity to understand the standards and assess how they are perceived by businesses, BCRPs, Business Improvement Districts and statutory partners.

The review also seeks to identify opportunities to recognise and include other business crime reduction initiatives to support our communities and further enhance the effectiveness of partnership crime prevention initiatives across the country.

Thank you to all those who took the time to complete the survey and share your views. We appreciate all your feedback.

The NBCC is fully committed to the national standards and will work with partners to review the recommendations to ensure the standards are fit for the challenges ahead.

Assistant Commissioner

Paul Betts

NPCC lead for Business Crime

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

› A BCRP is a subscription-based, business-led, non-profit making action group working with police and the local authority to tackle and reduce crime and disorder affecting businesses.

› Partnerships can apply to become accredited via one of two Assessing Organisations, with the accreditation being awarded by the Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI). Yet not all BCRPs apply to become accredited for reasons that have not been clear.

› This project aimed to better understand the role and functioning of BCRPs, how to promote their value-add to business, the police and community, and how to increase levels of accreditation.

› A national survey was conducted in August 2022. The survey received 132 responses; 43% (n=57) from businesses, 21% from BCRP representatives (n=27), 11% from BID representatives (n=15), 8% the police (n=10), 3% from Pubwatch or Shopwatch representatives (n=4), and 14% (n=19) from other industry and stakeholder groups.

Findings

- There is confusion about the governance structure of BCRPs and the roles and responsibilities of key organisations and groups involved, including the National Standards Board, National Business Crime Centre (NBCC), Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI), the National Association of Business Crime Partnerships (NABCP) and the National Business Crime Solution (NBCS).

- The proliferation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in recent years (222% increase since 2010) has provided a robust funding stream for some BCRPs. However, there have been varied approaches taken, particularly since the geographical area of a BID does not always map onto a BCRP.

- Information Sharing Agreements (ISAs) between the police and businesses are an integral part of effective crime reduction partnerships. Yet these are not always readily established or renewed.

- Not all BCRPs operate with a strategic plan or key performance indicators (KPIs). This can make it difficult for them to demonstrate effectiveness to potential and current members. They also cannot benchmark their activity against other BCRPs.

- 21% (12 out of 57) of businesses responding to the survey reported that they had left a BCRP that they had once been a member of. The main three issues that businesses identified as underscoring this decision were issues relating to data sharing, the cost of the subscription becoming prohibitive, and a lack of demonstrable effectiveness.

- Some of the reasons BCRPS choose not to become accredited, include: the amount of time and resource it would take, feeling intimidated by the process and worried about not meeting the criteria, and that there wasn't enough guidance readily available to research the process before applying.

- The assessment and accreditation processes are not viewed as being as transparent or standardised as some stakeholders would like.

- 39% of respondents to the survey did not recognise the BCRP accreditation logo.

- Feedback from the interviews and survey revealed support for the logo and branding of the accreditation certification to be refreshed.

- Suggestions for more sustainable funding models for BCRPs (aside from amalgamation with BIDs) include proceeds of crime funds (POCA), the commissioning of service delivery by the local authority in receipt of national government funding, and Police and Crime Commissioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Standards Board

① **Appointment of a Chair.** Currently the Standards Board does not have a Chair. An independent Chair needs to be appointed and regular meetings reinstated. As part of this process, the Terms of Reference, membership and remit of the Board could be revisited to ensure a balanced representation of different stakeholder groups and the recruitment of new interested parties.

② **Regular meetings.** The Board should meet at least twice a year to discuss matters arising and ensure that the partnerships are supported as well as possible. The Standards, policy and procedures should also be periodically reviewed to ensure that they stay up to date with relative legislative change and other developments.

Standardising assessment and increasing transparency

③ **Assessment Process.** The BCRP National Standards Board should consider developing a standardised assessment process and procedure that is prescribed to the Assessing Organisations (currently assessing organisations are required to develop their own which creates divergence in the process).

④ **Training Assessors.** An independent body should consider training the assessors and authorising individuals, rather than organisations, to conduct the accreditation assessments.

⑤ **Transparent and readily available guidance for partnerships. A Guide for Partnerships** that is readily accessible for all business crime reduction partnerships that are looking to become accredited should be produced. This guide will provide working examples for each of the National Standards to illustrate how a partnership might achieve them. The Guide could also include a checklist as an appendix so that a partnership could conduct its own initial benchmarking before undertaking the accreditation assessment.

⑥ **Standardised Assessment Tool.** Developing an Assessment Tool to be used by all assessors regardless of which organisation they are from. The Assessment Tool could outline the National Standards criteria, and similar to an MOT vehicle assessment, provide a 'pass', 'fail' and 'advisories' with comments outlining any additional information.

Rebranding and marketing

⑦ **BCRP Logo.** It is recommended that as part of a refresh of the BCRPs model, the logo and branding is revisited. The 'BCRP' labelling doesn't resonate with all of those who might feasibly seek to have their crime reduction partnership accredited (e.g. BIDs) and the logo itself could be more akin with the Secured by Design family of initiatives and the police.

⑧ **Marketing and publicising successes.** Consideration should be given to producing a regular newsletter that showcases BCRPs from around the country, shares best practice, and highlights 'good news' stories. The newsletter could be produced by the secretariat for the National Standards Board or one of the membership organisations.

Raising awareness of the value of BCRPs

9   **Evidencing effectiveness.** It is recommended that the National Standards Board considers developing a toolkit to identify and capture standardised performance indicators so that BCRPs can begin to demonstrate their value-add to retailers, the police, PCCs, and other stakeholders.

Funding

10   **Police Crime Commissioner support.** Funding remains an issue for the majority of standalone BCRPs (i.e. those that are not part of or funded by BIDs) and this undermines their ability to operate strategically and undertake long-term planning. In order to secure PCC funding there are two key things that would need to be in place i) PCCs would need to feel confident that any data shared between the police and businesses was done so in a secure manner (i.e. through ISAs that had sufficient oversight and accountability mechanism in place, and ii) BCRPs would need to routinely collect data to illustrate their performance and cost-effectiveness to ensure the renewal of funding.

1. INTRODUCTION

A BCRP is a subscription-based, business-led, non-profit making action group working with police and the local authority to tackle and reduce crime and disorder affecting businesses (Metropolitan Police, 2021). They have huge potential to drive communication and collaboration between the police, local businesses and local authorities on crime-related issues that directly impact on business as well as the surrounding areas more broadly. Partnerships can apply to become accredited by The Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI). Yet not all BCRPs apply to become accredited for reasons that have not been clear.

There exist a whole range of crime reduction related initiatives that vary by scope, design and membership. As such, some stakeholders describe 'Business Crime Reduction Schemes' ('BCRSs') or 'Business Crime Reduction Initiatives' ('BCRIs'), that allows for a broader definition of a BCRP to encompass the night-time economy and other sectors (e.g. sports and rural industries). There are, in addition, schemes that are specific to certain sectors such as Shopwatch and Pubwatch. The myriad schemes can be somewhat complicated for businesses to navigate and it's not always immediately apparent which ones they should become involved with. This is becoming even more important since many schemes require a subscription fee or levy and so businesses want to see a return on their investment.

There has been considerable work in recent years to encourage police forces to include business crime in their Police and Crime Plan. This has resulted in more than 90% of Police and Crime Plans having business crime as a priority or recognised within it, according to the APCC Lead for Business and Retail Crime. This provides an opportunity for BCRPs to demonstrate how partnership working can assist police forces to fulfil their strategic aims.

1.1 Methodology

This project comprised a scoping exercise of BCRPs alongside engagement with key stakeholders to better understand the role and functioning of BCRPs, how to promote their value-add to business, the police and community, and how to increase levels of accreditation. In addition, a national survey was conducted in August 2022. The survey received 132 responses; 43% (n=57) from businesses. The majority of these were major national businesses (more than half of the business respondents who provided information on the number of stores or premises their company operated, stated that they had 500+. A quarter (25%) reported that they operated 1000+). Furthermore, several of these businesses reported paying into hundreds of BCRPs nationally each year. The remaining respondents were BCRP representatives (21% n=27), BID representatives (11% n=15), the police (8% n=10), Pubwatch or Shopwatch representatives (3% n=4), and 14% (n=19) from other industry and stakeholder groups which includes security companies, local authorities, accrediting organisations, and stakeholders from other industry organisations.

This report provides recommendations on how to improve the visibility of BCRPs to those empowered to support them. This in turn will enhance the effectiveness of crime reduction partnerships by providing reassurance to businesses, stakeholders, and the police that accredited schemes are of value to achieving the shared aim of reducing crime and creating safer communities where businesses can thrive.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

43%
businesses

21%
BCRP representatives

11%
BID representatives

8%
the police

3%
Pubwatch/Shopwatch representatives

14%
other industry and stakeholder groups

2. GOVERNANCE, ACCREDITATION AND THE BCRP NATIONAL STANDARDS

There has, and continues to be, some confusion about the governance structure of BCRPs. The structure is outlined on p.3 of the BCRP National Standards Policy and Procedures document which was published in 2019 and still hosted on the NBCC website. However, throughout this project there was disagreement amongst stakeholders about the current status of the Board, ownership of the standards, and aspects of governance. Any changes that have emerged since 2019 need to be agreed by consensus of Board members (or vote where consensus cannot be reached) and formally documented in line with the Board Terms of Reference (see NBCC, 2019b: p.5). A revised 'policy and procedures' document should help clarify the structure and operation of BCRPs.

The National Standards Board provides a top level of governance for the standards. The Board is made up of members who represent stakeholder groups (see NBCC, 2019b: p.6 for the Membership Structure established in 2019). The National Standards Board appoints an Accrediting Body. The Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI), which is the commercial arm of the National Police Chiefs Council, was appointed by the Board when the standards were first initiated and remain the Accrediting Body for BCRPs. In this capacity, PCPI provides independent oversight of the assessment and accreditation process. At the time of writing, there are currently two assessing organisations; the National Association of Business Crime Managers (NABCP)[1] and the National Business Crime Solution (NBCS)[2] who have been appointed by PCPI to conduct assessments using the BCRP National Standards.

The BCRP National Standards provide guidance on "what good looks like" in terms of partnership working (NBCC, 2019a). The BCRP National Standards Policy and Procedures document states that the the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) (a unit hosted in the City of London Police and overseen by the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) lead for Business Crime) 'owns and publishes the standards on behalf of the board' (NBCC, 2019b: p5). The NBCC also provides an independent secretariat to the Standards Board.

2.1 Accreditation and Assessing Organisations

There are currently two assessing organisations; the NABCP and the NBCS who have been appointed by PCPI to conduct assessments using the BCRP National Standards. The BCRP National Standards Policy and Procedures document (NBCC, 2019b) outlines the process for an organisation to apply and be accepted as an Assessing Organisation (see Figure 1, p.12 for a flow chart depicting the process). Currently each prospective Assessing Organisation is required to 'design a scheme for assessment' and 'design a training package for assessors.' The result is that there can be different approaches to assessment depending on which Assessing Organisation a partnership chooses to be assessed by. This has been a cause for concern for some stakeholders who believe that the variance in processes could introduce discrepancies that could potentially undermine the integrity of the accreditation.

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[1] The NABCP describes itself as 'a non profit organisation representing its Business Crime Partnerships at a national level […] It seeks to promote the concept of BCRPs to local and national government and to increase the collective effectiveness of the hundreds of schemes across the country by lobbying for greater resources and influence (*https://www.nabcp.com*). Its membership is exclusively BCRPs.

[2] The NBCS has been operating since 2012. It describes itself as a 'not-for-profit initiative that works with the police and the business community to help tackle business crime'.

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> *The assessment process is far too open currently which makes the assessing organizations open to criticism. Because there are two different organisations the approach taken by each is different. To maintain the integrity of the standards, the actual assessment should sit with one organisation - the NBCC - and then have independent assessors who would conduct those assessments. There hasn't been anything implemented yet to ensure consistency across the board.*
>
> - BCRP stakeholder

> **"**
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> *One assessor to the next can have quite a different interpretation of what they are looking for in a BCRP. I don't think it's robust enough - the whole thing needs to be a bit more prescriptive*
>
> - BCRP stakeholder

> **"**
>
> *[It would improve the value of accreditation] if there was a standard framework of documentation and procedures that if adopted and implemented would ensure compliance with basic standards. Essentially, this would be more of a franchise model than the present fragmented set of independent schemes.*
>
> - BID with external / 3rd party BCRP

To ensure uniformity and avoid any concerns regarding inconsistency, it is recommended that the assessment process and procedure is prescribed to the Assessing Organisations. In addition, it could be explored as to whether an independent body could train the assessors and authorising individuals, rather than Assessing Organisations, to conduct the accreditation assessments.

In addition, it was reported that the cost for a BCRP to go through the assessment is not clear. This is because the Assessing Organisations combine the cost the of the assessment and accreditation process with their membership fee. It is recommended that these two fees are separated out, and furthermore, that the assessment fee is standardised across all approved assessors.

2.2 The National Standards

The National Standards were first developed in 2018 as a collaborative effort between BCRPs, businesses, police forces and other stakeholders. The National Standards are divided into five subsections: Overview and Governance; Partnership Benefits, Aims and Objectives; Communications; Systems and Procedures; and Data Integrity. Each of these sections contains multiple requirements.[3]

55% of the survey respondents reported that they were familiar with the BCRP National Standards	**85%** of these reported that the Standards cover the right issues and topics	**8%** did not think that the Standard covered the right issues

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[3] The current National Standards are available on the NBCC website, here: *https://nbcc.police.uk/images/2022/Partnership/ BCRP_Standards_Nov2019_v3_2_Accessible.pdf*

More than half (55%; n=73) of the survey respondents reported that they were familiar with the BCRP National Standards. Of these, 85% (n=62) reported that the Standards cover the right issues and topics and 8% (n=6) did not think that the Standard covered the right issues (the remaining did not answer the question or stated 'don't know'). The reasons given were that the accreditation process required better standardisation because 'at present there is a sense that accreditation comes down to who assesses you' (BID representative), that there needed to be more focus on GDPR compliance, and that the Standards could be simplified, particularly for small BCRPs that might not have the same level of resource to invest in the accreditation process. The stakeholder interviews similarly highlighted that the National Standards could benefit from a refresh

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The standards are not perfect. There needs to be some updates, particularly as a result of the last couple of years. We've gone through the pandemic, cultures have changed, data sharing activities have changed. The standards don't recognize that and have become outdated. Simple things like Teams meetings and data sharing through different methods. We are all conscious of it, but it's not written down anywhere.

- BCRP stakeholder

In revisiting the National Standards to ensure that they are still relevant and workable, it is recommended that two documents are produced. The first is a Guide for Partnerships that is readily accessible for all busines crime reduction partnerships that are looking to become accredited. This guide will provide working examples for each of the National Standards to illustrate how a partnership might achieve them. The Guide could also include a checklist as an appendix so that a partnership could conduct its own initial benchmarking before undertaking the accreditation assessment. The second document is the Assessment Tool. This same document will be used by all assessors regardless of which organisation they are from. The Assessment Tool will outline the National Standards criteria, and similar to an MOT vehicle assessment, provide a 'pass', 'fail' and 'advisories' with comments outlining any additional information. The feedback from the survey suggests that the process for accreditation and what is required is at times too opaque. Furthermore, there are concerns that the National Standards are interpreted and applied differently. The uniformity of documentation and advice would assist in addressing these issues.

At the time of writing, the BCRP Standards Board does not have a Chair. An independent Chair needs to be appointed and regular meetings reinstated. As part of this process, the Terms of Reference, membership and remit of the Board could be revisited. Following this, it is recommended that the Board meets at least twice a year to discuss matters arising and ensure that the partnerships are supported as well as possible. The Standards, policy and procedures should also be periodically reviewed to ensure that they stay up to date with relative legislative change and other developments.

2.3 BCRPs, Crime Reduction and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

329

BIDs in Great Britain, Nothern Ireland, and Ireland in 2020

Business Improvement Districts are 'business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses ... (they operate in) a defined area in which a levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill' (Gov.UK, 2014). There were 329 BIDs in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and Ireland at the end of September 2020 (British BIDs, 2021). This figure represents a 222% increase since 2010 when there were just 102 BIDs in existence.

Many BIDs include crime and community safety as part of their 'safe and secure' commitment. According to some, this has provided a "complicated patchwork" (PCC representative) of crime reduction initiatives. The 2018 National BID Survey found that 87% were 'heavily involved in their Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, often providing...radios...and local policing', 10% fund police officers and 2% fund Police Community Support Officers. In addition, a third (33%) reportedly funded ambassador schemes.

There are several models for how BIDs incorporate a crime reduction partnership as part of their 'safe and secure' mandate. These can be broadly divided into three approaches: i) the BID works alongside an already existing BCRP but the BCRP retains autonomy; ii) a BID incorporates an existing BCRP and provides funding and resources to it to fulfil its work; iii) a BID establishes a crime reduction initiative which it does not necessarily consider to be a "BCRP" but may have some similar approaches e.g. a radio network.

> **There are lots of BCRPs that aren't in a BID; absolutely fine. There are lots of BIDs with a BCRP inside them. And I know one or two places where there's a lot of contestation and rivalry between the BCRP and the BID. Because the businesses pay a levy to the BID anyway, it seems foolish to make them pay more. So, the BID may essentially provide the crime reduction partnership as a service to their levy payers. Which is why the picture is messy.**

- British BIDs representative

> **You've got a growing number of BIDs who are either taking over the existing independent BCRPs in their area or are starting up their own and, that, for me is a much more sustainable model as for at least 5 years that levy payment guarantees the investment is there. It's a much more simplified investment for the end user as well. National retailers are asked to invest considerably in partnerships – it's a much easier return on investment if it's attached to a BID.**

- BCRP Stakeholder

2018 NATIONAL BID SURVEY

87%

were heavily involved in their Business Crime Reduction Partnerships

10%

fund police

2%

fund Police Community

All 15 (100%) BID representatives completing the survey reported that they had heard of BCRPs. However, two of the BID respondents were not aware that BCRPs could become accredited and the same two BID representatives had not heard of the BCRP National Standards. Of the 15 BIDs in the survey, ten reported that they had an internal BCRP i.e. a crime reduction partnership that was integrated with the BID, and funded by it, as part of their 'safe and secure' mandate. Yet only half of these "integrated" BCRPs reported being accredited (although some respondents did not answer this question or answered 'don't know'). Prior research on the approach of BIDs to crime reduction (Brockie, 2019: 30) found that although BIDs were principally in favour of accreditation via the BCRP National Standards, they 'found it hard to justify allocating resources to the new standards as the process was deemed duplication, administratively burdensome and offered very little'.

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> ***BIDs with BCRPs within them tend to be a younger structure, younger format. And a lot of BIDs, they don't recognise themselves as BCRPs. They just see themselves as a BID and that's fine, but they obviously have a business crime reduction operation within, which we would categorise as a BCRP.***
>
> - National Partnerships Manager

Some stakeholders felt strongly that more BIDs should seek to have their crime reduction partnership accredited even if they did not necessarily view it as "a BCRP".

> **"**
>
> ***I don't think the BID should escape outside external examination because they don't call themselves a BCRP. If they are a BID and delivering a service that we recognise is the service that a town centre partnership will deliver, then they can't escape that accreditation. They should be accredited in exactly the same way however it is that they deliver that service.***
>
> - National Partnerships Manager

BIDs are voted in for five years and it is mandatory for businesses that fall within their geographical area to pay a levy (based on rateable value). This means that BIDs have a more robust and predictable funding stream (British BIDs estimated a total spend of £132,493,286 in September 2020). In addition, some stakeholders highlighted that the benefit with BIDs is that they have a strong governance board ran by an organisation with very clear accountability, whereas the governance around BCRPs can be les formalised.

Given the benefits that accreditation can bring to the legitimacy and reputation of BCRPS, it would be worthwhile encouraging a stronger expectation that crime reduction initiatives are accredited regardless of their governance structure and association (or not) with BIDs. While much of the promotional work for the accreditation process might reasonably fall to the NBCC, the National Standards Board, the Accrediting Organisations, and the Accrediting Body, it might be worthwhile engaging with the British BIDS and the Institute of Place Management to include the value of accreditation in their guidance to BIDs.

3. ENHANCING AWARENESS OF BCRPS AND THE VALUE OF ACCREDITED PARTNERSHIP WORK

Awareness of the strength of local multi-agency partnerships to tackle crime developed in the 1980s and multiple voluntary initiatives were in operation. Initiatives such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) placed emphasis on partnership working and the effective sharing of data, intelligence, and experience between businesses, the police and other public agencies as appropriate. In the late 1990s, The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 established the formation of statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). The Act formalised the recognition of the idea that crime reduction cannot be the responsibility of the police alone, and ought to be tackled with a multiagency partnership approach.

In the current climate, businesses largely regard the police response to crime and antisocial behaviour as insufficient. For example, the British Retail Consortiums' Crime Survey 2022 revealed that 60% of retailers regarded the police response to retail crime overall as poor or very poor. The role of BCRPs in this context therefore becomes more important than ever as they can fulfil a function that otherwise might not be prioritised by the police due to resourcing constraints. Yet, BCRPS can only be effective if there is widescale awareness of their existence, if their work is strategic, evidence-based and measured (and they are supported to fulfil these attributes), if the value of BCRPs is understood by members, the police and government, and if they are properly resourced with a sustainable funding model.

3.1   Raising awareness of the value of BCRPs

There are many benefits for joined up partnership work to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour. Figure 1 shows a 'word cloud' of terms that were routinely used by respondents in the survey when describing the benefits of a BCRP. Key themes are the localised nature of partnerships, communication, identifying prolific offenders, and sharing information.
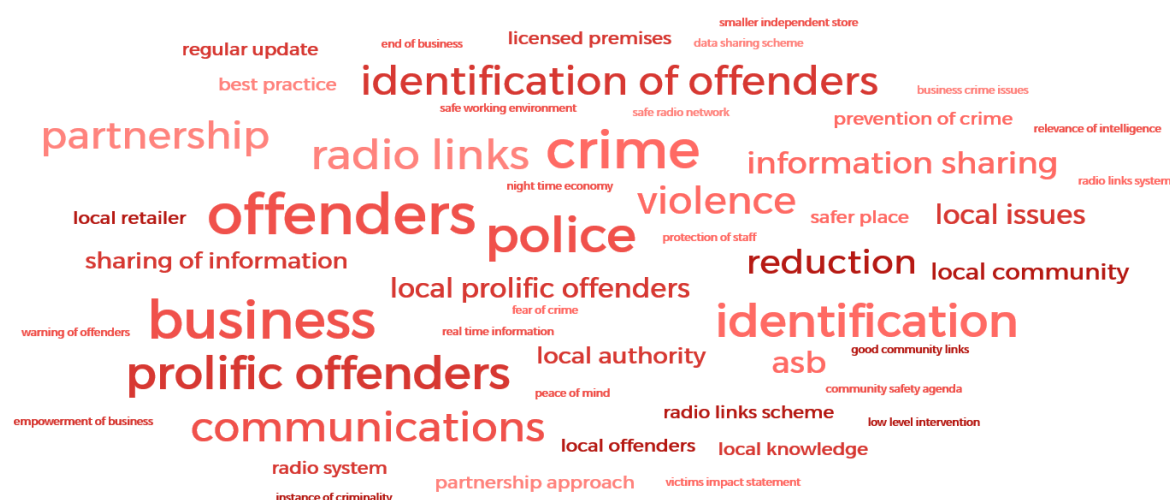

Figure 1. A 'word cloud' of key terms used to describe the benefits of BCRPs

Survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of several attributes of crime reduction partnerships. Figure 2 shows that having an ISA in place with police and businesses was perceived to be the most important feature. Accreditation scored the lowest in importance, but was still viewed as being important, with an average score of 7.9 out of 10. It should be recognised that these two features are linked since an accredited BCRP is more likely to secure an ISA with the police force where it operates.

It is possible that the relatively lower importance placed upon accreditation is due to a lack of awareness of what it entails and signifies. As one stakeholder commented:

> **"**
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> *Accreditation is supposed to give businesses reassurance that BCRPs are doing all the right things and to demonstrate value for money. The problem is there's only really a handful of businesses that actually understand what the accreditation is. There needs to be more work done around that.*
>
> - BCRP stakeholder

In addition, raising the profile of BCRPs with government agencies, the police, businesses, and other industry associations was regarded as a priority, as on stakeholder commented:

> **"**
>
> *I would like to see more lobbying of government and PCCs about the successes of a BCRP, basically, "Look at how much money you can save when you have a successful BCRP in your town centre." They need to be promoting BCRPs on a local, regional and national level to people like the Home Office. BCRPs should be on the agenda with National Pubwatch, British BIDs, the Association of Town Centre Managers, the BBIA, the SIA. There needs to be more of a voice for BCRPs in these arenas.*
>
> - BCRP stakeholder

Figure 2. 'On a scale of 1 - 10, how important do you think the following elements of a crime reduction initiative are'
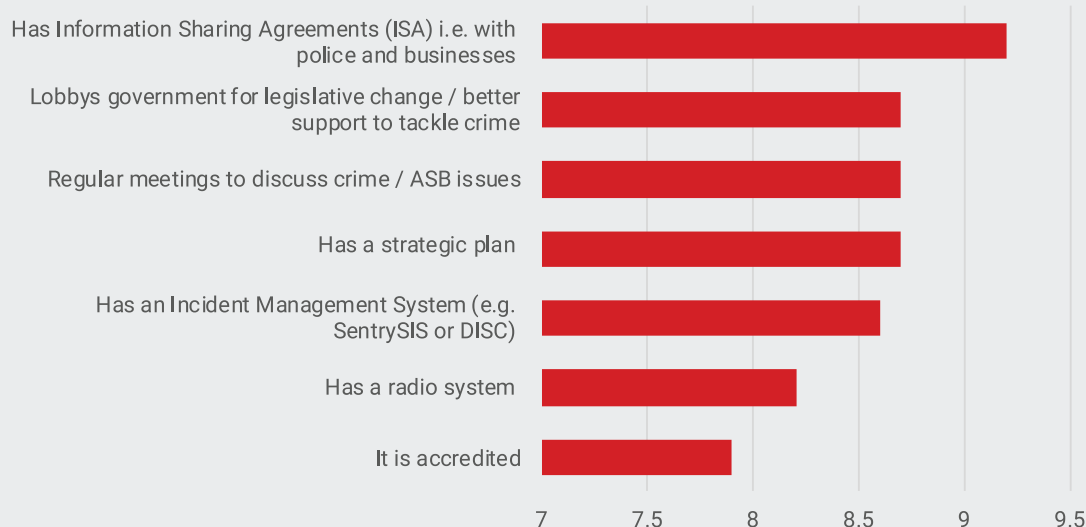

*When rounded, all categories listed were ranked '8' or '9' out of 10 in importance. To highlight the differences, averages have been reported to one decimal place.

There was some concern amongst participants that it was difficult for BCRPs to demonstrate their value to a range of stakeholders, including the police, large businesses with centralised management structures, and government. Part of the reason is likely because not all BCRPs operate with a strategic plan or key performance indicators (KPIs). This can make it difficult for them to demonstrate their progress and effectiveness. It is recommended that the National Standards Board assists with developing a toolkit to identify and capture performance indicators so that BCRPs can begin to demonstrate their value-add to retailers, the police, PCCs, and other stakeholders.

Consideration should be given to producing a regular newsletter that showcases BCRPs from around the country, shares best practice, highlights 'good news' stories and provides case studies of how BCRPs have tackled specific issues. The newsletter could be produced by the secretariat for the National Standards Board or one of the membership organisations.

Leaving a BCRP

21% (12 out of 57) of businesses responding to the survey reported that they had left a BCRP that they had once been a member of. The main three issues that businesses identified as underscoring this decision were issues relating to data sharing, the cost of the subscription becoming prohibitive, and a lack of demonstrable effectiveness.

21%

of businesses responding to the survey reported that they had left a BCRP that they had once been a member of

Main three reasons for leaving a BCRP

| Issues relating to data sharing | Cost of the subscription becoming prohibitive | Lack of demonstrable effectiveness |

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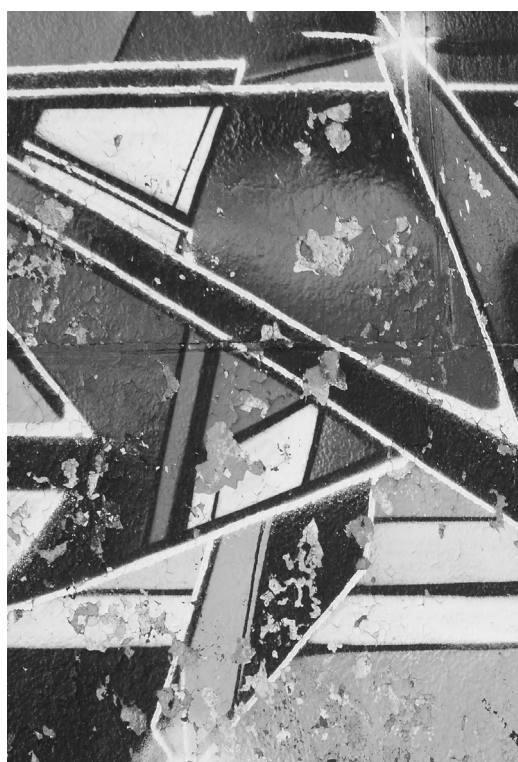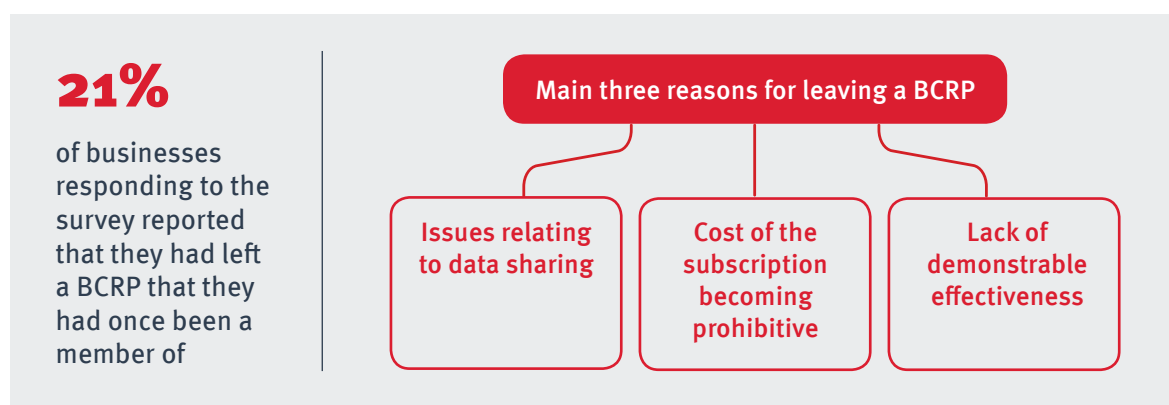
We have a presence on most high streets and we're members of over 300 crime reduction partnerships, either via the BID or an actual independent BCRP. We're generally supportive but some we have discarded on the basis that they don't perform, and we've had meetings with them, and they still don't perform in the way that we'd like them to. The main issue is sharing of data. Some are unnecessarily obstructive or hide behind GDPR because they don't understand it. It's being obstructive and not sharing images, not holding meetings, or just not being proactive that makes a poor BCRP.

- National retailer, 1000+ premises

This further highlights the need for BCRPs to be able to objectively evidence effectiveness through strategic plans, KPIs and robust data, as well as securing accreditation to ensure appropriate data sharing processes are observed.

3.2 Raising awareness of the importance of information sharing agreements (ISAs) and BCRP accreditation

There are many benefits for an accredited partnership but perhaps the most prominent is the confidence that it can instil in law enforcement and businesses around data sharing. Having an information sharing agreement (ISA) in place between businesses and the police can facilitate the linking of crimes across multiple businesses and sites. The NBCC has recently launched the first ever national ISA between NBCS and the 43 police forces.

> *Having an ISA with partners in crime reduction (Police, District Council ASB Teams etc) allows for better information sharing and more open and effective communication.*
>
> — BID representative with internal BCRP

> *It's the comfort that being accredited gives me that makes it important. I know how that data's going to be handled and where it'll go. The consequences of me giving some information that then could be disclosed to the wrong people is a business damaging risk.*
>
> — National retailer, 1000+ premises

> *A BCRP really should have a local information sharing agreement in place with their local police force. There are challenges in certain policing areas for partnerships to get the initial ISA in place, but also a renewal, and that tends to be because it's not very high up on the ladder of priorities from a police force point of view.*
>
> — National Partnerships Manager

> *We [BIDs] all want information sharing agreements and that is one of the reasons why we're all getting very interested in the topic you're looking at now. We want them with the police force, and we want them with each other because we sense that trend is growing. We also want them with some of the nationals. Some of the big players have got lots of data that we're all interested in. So, everyone is interested in information sharing agreements. This is why quite a few BIDs now are accredited. BIDs are very into accreditation. That is mainly because we know our national players, Boots, Tesco, the big ones, would only vote for us if we are highly reputable. So, good BIDs are always accredited as BIDs, and I want all crime reduction partnerships as part of BIDs to be accredited.*
>
> — British BIDs representative

Recurrent terminology used to describe the value of accreditation included 'credibility', 'accountability', 'best practice', 'professionalism', 'reassurance', and 'validity'.

8 of the 27 BCRPs (30%) responding to the survey were not accredited. The reasons given included: the amount of time and resource it would take, feeling intimidated by the process and worried about not meeting the criteria, and that there wasn't enough guidance readily available to research the process before applying. In addition, three BCRPs did not perceive accreditation as being important.

In terms of businesses, 33 had heard of BCRPs and were aware that they could be accredited. Of those 33, just two said that it wasn't important to them if a BCRP was accredited or not. The reasons given was their priority was that crime was reduced and the detail of how this achieved was less of a concern. For the remaining businesses accreditation, was regarded as very important. The main reasons given were to ensure that agreed minimum standards were met, to have confidence that the partnership was being run professional, to ensure data sharing is GDPR compliant, and to provide a level of accountability.

All police affiliated respondents who had heard of BCRPs and were aware that they could be accredited regarded accreditation as very important.

NBCC has previously published a list of accredited BCRPs. However, it was commented that there exists 'no central portal to view accreditation status' (National retailer, 1000+ premises). It would be useful for both prospective and current members to be able to access a searchable register. This could go beyond simply reporting whether a BCRP is accredited or not, to providing additional data such as a report on KPIs.

3.3   Rebranding BCRPs

The current BCRP logo is shown in Figure 3. Survey respondents were asked if they recognised the logo. Overall, 61% of respondents said they did recognise the logo and 39% said that they did not. Figure 4 shows the breakdown by respondent type. There were five BCRP respondents that did not recognise the logo. Of these, two were accredited and three were not accredited. More than half of businesses (56%) reported that they did not recognise the accreditation logo.


Figure 3. BCRP Accreditation logo

56%

of businesses did not recognise the accredittaion logo
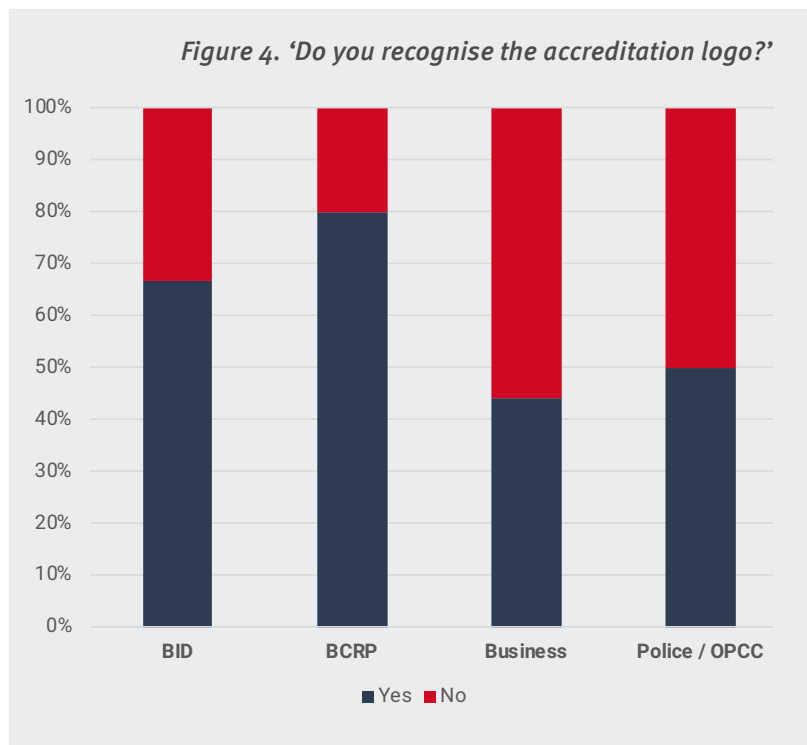
Figure 4. 'Do you recognise the accreditation logo?'

Feedback from the interviews and survey revealed support for the logo and branding of the accreditation certification to be refreshed. Figure 5 demonstrates that support for updating the logo was strongest from 'other' (which includes security companies, local authorities, accrediting organisations, and stakeholders from other industry organisations), followed by business, BIDs, and BCRPs. Some of the survey respondents suggested that the logo looked dated, that the use of multiple colours did not convey the seriousness of BCRP core business, and that there was little alignment to the police and security. In addition, several commented that the abbreviation "BCRP" was not commonly known and so a catchier title or slogan might resonate more. It is recommended that if a rebranding exercise it undertaken that it also encompasses a consideration of a more generic terminology or there is a separate option for BIDs to utilise. This could open the accreditation process to crime reduction initiatives that don't necessarily consider themselves to be "BCRPs".

Figure 5. 'Do you think the logo should be updated to better promote the accreditation?'
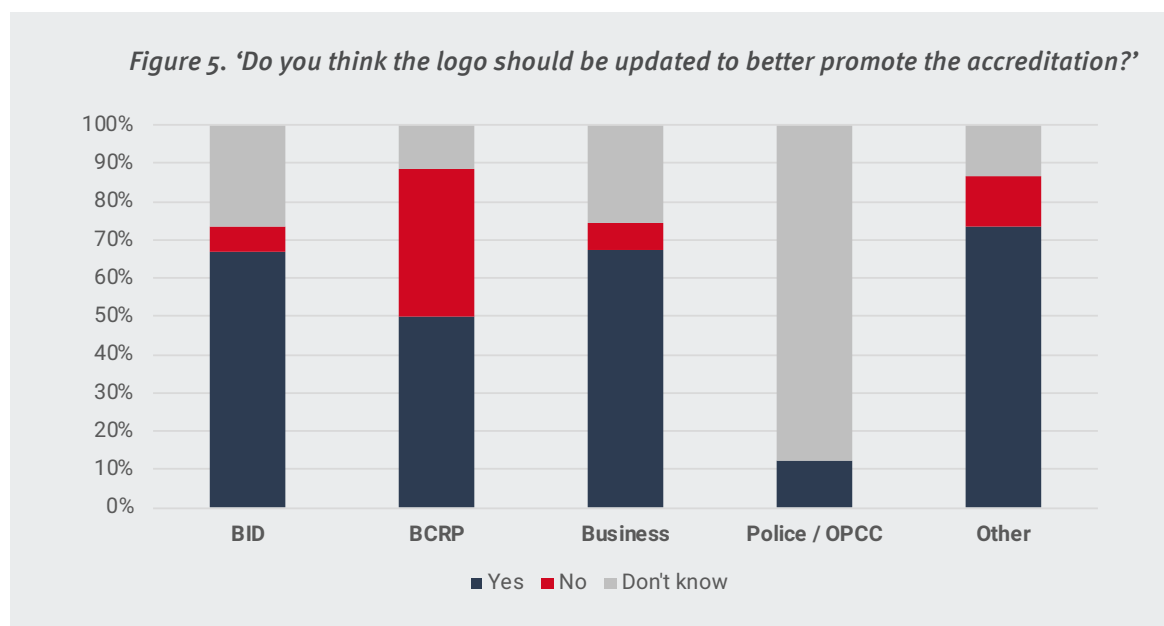
There were many suggestions offered as to how the logo might be improved to make it "more impactful" and "punchy". The most common suggestion was that the term 'accredited' should be included in the design. There were also suggestions to simplify the colour palette, to align the logo more with Secured by Design, to design a logo that resonates more with the themes of 'security', 'crime', 'police', 'partnership' and 'safety'.

> **The BCRP logo doesn't say anything about police. I think it should say it is a 'police approved' BCRP. I think a lot of BIDs and BCRPs would get more confidence if we can show it is a police approved BID or BCRP. A more police centric logo has to be the way forward. If the standards are robust enough then it will give police that confidence that it is a well-run organization and that it meets its requirements around data protection etcetera. I want the standards to be seen to have value and that it's something that BCRPs and BIDs aspire to and by doing that it gives additional legitimacy in terms of an information sharing agreement and/ or powers.**
>
> - BCRP Stakeholder

It is recommended that as part of a refresh of the BCRPs model, the NBCC considers commissioning a professional designer to develop a new logo and branding. The 'BCRP' labelling doesn't resonate with all of those who might feasibly go through the accreditation process (e.g. BIDs) and the logo itself could be more akin with the Secured by Design family of initiatives and the police.

3.4 Funding and Sustainability

There are ongoing concerns about the sustainability of BCRPs that rely solely on subscription. The High Street has suffered considerable retraction in recent years, and this will have an impact on revenue for the BCRP. BCRPs are geographically contained entities that often encompass a town centre or part or all of a city. As such they are relatively localised. This means that a national business could be paying into hundreds of different BCRPs. Furthermore, in some locations, businesses are paying a mandatory BID levy and are reluctant to, or cannot justify, paying into two schemes.

Other than linking up with BIDs where possible and appropriate to do so, participants in this research suggested a number of avenues to explore in order to secure funding and a more

3.4.1 Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

There were suggestions that money to support BCRPs could be derived from the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 funds (often referred to as "POCA"). For example, a PCC stated, 'If 1% or 2% more of POCA came back to PCCs and used to pay for this [business crime reduction], that could make a big difference.'

3.4.2 Commissioning of service delivery via funded body.

Although BCRPs might not be eligible as individual entities to bid for some government funding schemes, the local authority, PCC, or other public body could apply for funding and either commission the BCRP to assist with delivering the programme of work or use the funds to enhance the BCRP's work. For example, the Safer Streets Fund[4] (now on round 4) has been used to invest in CCTV, curb antisocial behaviour, and invest in wardens in some areas, and the Future High Streets Fund (now closed) invested in 72 areas, many with a focus on reducing crime and ASB.

3.4.3 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

Historically, some PCCs have provided seed funding to BCRPs to enable them to grow into a self-sufficient model over a period of time, usually 1-2 years. One example of a successful PCC-funded BCRP that went on to become self-sufficient is the Partnership Against Business Crime in Staffordshire (PABCIS); a long-standing partnership in Staffordshire that has grown out of the Stoke on Trent City Centre Crime Initiative. This county-wide business crime reduction scheme was initially funded by Staffordshire police, but it is now funded by subscription from its individual members. Some participants in this study believed that county-wide BCRPs would be more likely to gain PCC financial backing rather than multiple smaller partnerships. Although this might provide a 'neatness' for PCCs, there is currently no evidence to suggest that they would be more effective than more localised partnerships.

"

I want police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to help support BCRPs. There is a danger that badly run BCRPs are supported by PCCs which then fall apart - that's a reputational issue for PCCs. This is where I think the value of the National Standards come in – they can offer reassurance that the BCRP is credible as long as the standards are credible. I want PCCs to have the confidence to invest in BCRPs and I think a robust standards process will give them that confidence. And they're not robust at the moment.

- Stakeholder, NBCC

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[4] See Safer Streets Fund, available at: *https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safer-streets-fund-continues-to-make-streets-safer.*

Similarly, the British Retail Consortium has suggested that PCCs prioritise business crime in their strategic plans and act upon it (BRC, 2022). This has gathered traction and the APCC Lead for Business and Retail Crime, reported that more than 90% of Police and Crime Plans now have business crime as a priority or recognised within it.

In order to secure PCC funding there are two key things that would need to be in place i) PCCs would need to feel confident that any data shared between the police and businesses was done so in a secure manner (i.e. through ISAs that had sufficient oversight and accountability mechanism in place, and ii) BCRPs would need to routinely collect data to illustrate their performance and cost-effectiveness to ensure the renewal of funding (see above).

4. CONCLUSION

Business crime continues to be high volume (Stafford, 2019; Home Office, 2022). While there has been considerable progress in ensuring that business crime features in Police and Crime Plans, notably by the NBCC and the NPCC's lead for Business Crime, police resources to respond and tackle it remain limited. In this context, Business Crime Reduction Partnerships are ideally placed to deliver strategically-focused, evidence-based, and coordinated crime reduction functions to the business sector and community in which they operate. The research presented here clearly demonstrates an appetite to boost awareness of BCRPs and enhance their value, effectiveness and sustainability.

This report has produced ten recommendations relating to, for example, the national governance structure of BCRPs, the relationship between Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and BCRPs, and how the accreditation process might be developed so that it is more appealing and valued. Although not all the recommendations will be relevant to all parties, or indeed all BCRPs, it is hoped that this report will prompt a renewed appreciation of the BCRP model and generate more support for these initiatives where it is needed.

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