

The Essex Risk-Based Policing Initiative: Evidence-Based Practices in Problem Analysis and Crime Prevention in the United Kingdom

This study implements a policing initiative focused on risky places and the micro-spatial attractors that create vulnerable settings for crime to emerge or persist in the town of Basildon. The experimental approach taken to assess, implement and test the risk-based policing initiative incorporates lessons learned from similar US-based initiatives, and is the first study of its kind in the UK. This study demonstrates the value of evidence-based approaches to problem analysis and place-based crime prevention, and the generalizability of policing research in the US to UK settings. It also demonstrates how a researcher-practitioner implemented initiative from a large city in Missouri (US) was transferred to a small town in Essex (UK) solely via the in-house expertise of Essex Police personnel who reviewed published and open-access scientific literature, a true testament to “pracademics” and translational criminology.



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1. Introduction

Essex Police (United Kingdom) officials utilized Risk Terrain Modeling for a problem analysis that informed their decisions about where to optimally allocate resources and what to do to mitigate crime risks.



2. Implementing RBP in Basildon

Involved geospatial data acquisition, problem analysis, target and control area selections, training for officers involved, meetings to plan the intervention activities, and activity tracking and compliance monitoring.



3. Intervention Activities

Within the target areas: 1) police patrols, 2) building and business checks, 3) coordination and deployments of non-police resources, and 4) positive police-community engagements.



4. Results and Cost-Effectiveness

Violent crime significantly decreased. Target areas outperformed the comparison areas by 47%. There was also a significant diffusion of benefits from the target area to its buffer area. The total net effect was about 75 fewer violent crimes.

Using only police unit cost estimates, reductions in violent crime in the intervention area generated cost savings of £106,220 during the 6-month project period.



5. It Works!

Police officers focused attention on features of the built environment that attracted illegal behaviors. In so doing, they addressed both vulnerabilities and exposures to crime, which yielded deterrence and less attractive behavior settings for criminal offending. RBP is adaptable to differences in political, economic, and policing structures in multiple countries and jurisdictions.