

## From the Home Secretary

**I was very pleased to accept ISTD's invitation to write a guest editorial for this issue of 'Criminal Justice Matters' particularly since the suggested topic was the prevention of crime.**

As readers know, the Home Office has wide responsibilities as far as the criminal justice system is concerned. We are involved in reducing the amount of crime with which the system has to deal through deterrence and by holding offenders in prison so that they cannot continue to offend. This involves the police service, the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts. We are also involved, through the successful treatment of offenders, where the probation and prison services have a key role. But in addition to this we are concerned to prevent as many crimes as possible from happening in the first place, and here we are increasingly aware of the vital contribution not only of the police but also of industry, commerce and individual citizens. Crime prevention, in this sense, is playing a growing part in crime management policies in this country.

In 1983 we set up the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) within the Police Department. One of its several tasks was to co-ordinate the various interests around the Home Office in relation to the prevention of crime. Unusually, the unit has within it a strong research and development capability. This plays a key role in our approach.

The research group publishes regular reports in the Crime Prevention Unit papers series which are freely available from the Home Office. There have been twenty such reports since the Unit was established. The approach taken to prevention is, predictably perhaps for

researchers, based on the analysis of crime data. They argue for the targeting of preventive effort in those areas where crime is at its peak. In terms of domestic burglary, and many of the violent offences about which we are all particularly concerned, this means that effort and resources need to be concentrated on the more hard pressed estates. We are trying hard to do this with the help of the police service and with the support of other government departments through the Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention which is chaired by my colleague John Patten, a Minister of State at the Home Office, and serviced by the staff of the CPU.

The development work of the Unit centres on the Safer Cities team. We now have 12 Safer Cities projects launched throughout the country, each with a full-time co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator working to local consultative teams but employed by the Home Office - a co-operative venture indeed. Up to about £250,000 is available for each area to support crime reduction activities. Rather like the system in France, the local projects determine where they are going to place their priorities and they bid to the central co-ordinating team for resources. The criteria for funding, agreed with the local projects prior to their joining, require that schemes put forward for funding should meet the Safer Cities objectives which are to reduce crime, to lessen the fear of crime and to create safer cities where enterprise and community life can flourish.

Although I have concentrated on the research and development work of the Unit in this short piece, I should mention that the CPU also arranges the Home Office crime prevention publicity programme (with our Public Relations Branch) and also that it oversees the Home Office Crime

Prevention Training Centre for the Police Service and generally co-ordinates Home Office policy work related to crime prevention as well as supporting Ministers in our promotion of crime prevention activity.

This then, is a very short overview of our efforts within the Home Office to prevent crime. We are also constantly trying to raise the profile of prevention in other Government departments, in industry and commerce, with local authorities and statutory and voluntary agencies. In this I am particularly pleased to welcome the interest of the ISTD.

Your recent conference, 'Crime Prevention in Europe: Models for Britain?' is a helpful contribution to this process. We need to keep up to date with colleagues and friends in other countries, the more so as 1992 approaches, and we need to ensure that we stay amongst the leaders in our efforts to promote the reduction of crime in our society.

Keep up the good work, and my very best wishes to ISTD for the coming decade.

*The Rt Hon David Waddington MP*

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