Lost in translation?
Analysis of Crime and Immigration Delivery Chains

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Background

The link between policies made at the centre and delivery of services on the ground is one of the perennial problems of public service management, and of central concern in an age of 'delivery'. Failure to deliver policy on the ground has long been blamed on selective implementation by street-level bureaucrats with too much scope for discretion. Yet, many governments also advocate the detachment of delivery agencies from policy-makers and more local autonomy. Do such developments effectively nullify government's potential to deliver, or can new incentives and partnership arrangements ensure that local actors successfully deliver central policies?
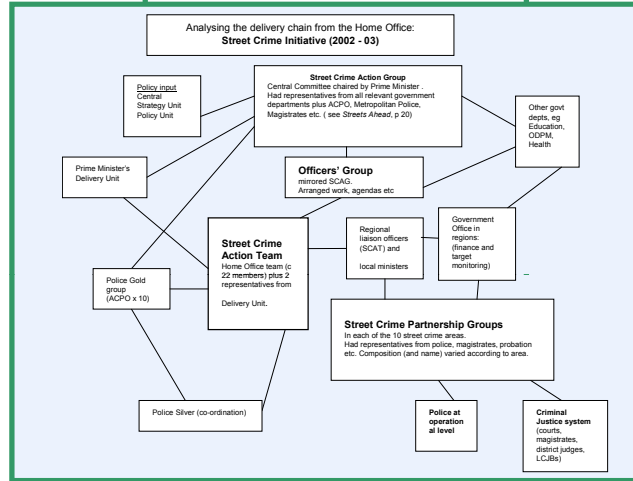

Figure 1

What We Did

❖ We selected three case studies within the then Home Office: one immigration policy involving the allocation of work permits, and two crime reduction policies, the street crime initiative (SCI) and anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy. This allowed us to compare different management mechanisms and map the delivery chains involved in each case study (Figures 1 and 2 show the maps of street crime initiative and anti-social behaviour policy respectively).

❖ To discover the mix of management mechanisms involved, we conducted 63 interviews with people at all stages of each of those delivery chains, from policy-makers in Whitehall to police officers 'on the beat'.

Aims

We aimed to:

❖ map delivery chains for selected crime and security practices in England;

❖ identify the management mechanisms used to diffuse policy through the delivery chain in the mid-2000s, distinguishing *command*, *partnerships* and *incentive* relationships among the players;

❖ assess how far the rhetoric of a shift away from command had been realised and if so, what effect such a shift had on the way that street-level bureaucrats delivered services;

❖ explore whether there was a single mechanism, or combination of mechanisms, most likely to result in effective policy delivery.
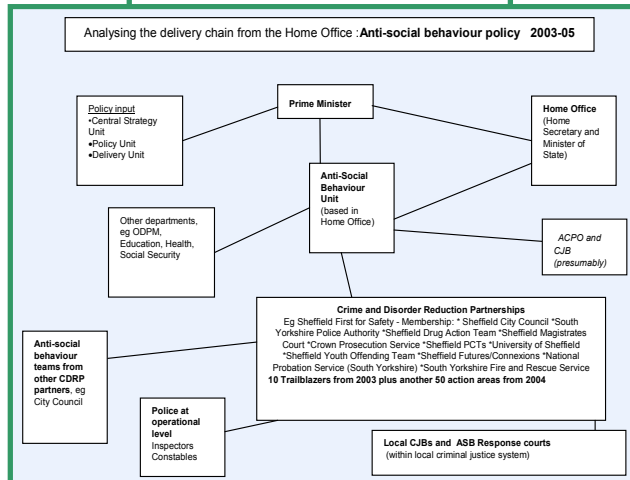

Figure 2

Findings

❖ Elements of all three management mechanisms were found in both the cases illustrated, even though at first sight the SCI was a case of incentive-driven management through PSA targets and ASB was partnership-driven using 'trailblazer' areas.

❖ When central targets were successfully delivered, local autonomy disappeared and street-level bureaucrats were exposed to command and control from the centre.

❖ While command appeared to be the most successful mechanism for ensuring short-term delivery, it seemed an unreliable way of achieving long-term delivery since it depended on an unsustainably high level of top-level political attention.

Find out more.