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RESEARCH AND ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICING

An Analysis of the Problem and a Programme Proposal

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Norwich, December 1987

Preamble - An Interpretation of the Brief

"Why do the police ignore research findings?"

Why don't researchers produce useable knowledge?"

"Why do the police always reject any study that is critical of what they do?"

"Why do researchers always show the police in a bad light?"

"Why don't police officers even read research reports?"

"Why can't researchers write in plain English?"

"Why are the police so bloody defensive?"

"Why are researchers so bloody virtuous?"

"Why are the police unwilling to examine their own organisational performance?"

"Why are researchers unwilling to produce information that a practical man exercising power can use to change a limited aspect of the organisation instead of theoretic and explanatory structure of no use to the problem-solver?"

"Why do the police insist that they know better, when the researchers are the experts in knowledge construction?"

"Why do researchers write recipes when they can't even cook?"

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Whenever and wherever social research is carried out with a view to improving social action, this 'dialogue of the deaf' is likely to be aired. For "the police" we could substitute any other social service, or more generalised groups like "the bureaucrats" or "the politicians", without feeling any need to change the lines of argument. Indeed, we could substitute "university teachers", since those who preach the virtues of research have shown themselves to be just as reluctant as any other group to act upon research into their own practices. The translation of research by some into action by others is experienced, in relatively open, relatively pluralist, and relatively non-authoritarian societies, as a general and as yet unsolved problem. This is not, of course, to say that research is not used. Any reading of history, or of the daily press, would make a nonsense of such a proposition. The issue concerns the role of research in direct problem-solving in real time. Many of those who work in police research, whilst conceding the generic nature of the issue, consider that the police service constitutes an extreme case. If you can crack the problem in that case, they say, you will have a solution that is bound to work in other areas. We shall see. The task is to promote collaborative rationality in the cause of better policing in a democratic society. We have been offered three years of financial support for a programme that could, credibly, implant and test a range of approaches calculated to accomplish that task. We had better make sure that such a programme is based

upon a persuasive analysis of the nature of the problem and an accurate perception of the contemporary opportunity structure. Most of what follows is an attempt to do just that.

The paper will end with a proposal for action in a specified context - that of the police service. The possibilities of effective action depend crucially upon a sound understanding of the nature of the problem combined with an accurate analysis of the contemporary opportunity structure.

If the readers will bear with me, I propose to approach the particular problem in a roundabout way, being concerned to avoid both superficiality and over-focalisation, and to bring together a range of perspectives and considerations that we should take into account before deciding what action to take. I will begin with a broad view of the politics of social science and social policy, drawing attention to both enduring problems and recent relevant developments. Having established that backcloth, I will then attempt to give further depth of the analysis by exploring some intrinsic dimensions of the problem that are rarely aired in public by the research community. I will conclude this section of the paper with a summary overview of the issues raised, and a provisional outline of approaches to the problem that are suggested by, or consistent with, the analysis. That concludes the general overview. I will then go on to look at the police service and at the police research community as sub-sets of the general analysis, drawing attention to specific problems and opportunities. This will be followed by some comments suggesting a reinterpretation of the brief, before a programme of action is outlined and discussed.

Social Science and Social Policy

There is a lot of social research, most of it still done by academic scientists located in universities. And there is a lot of social action, a context of continuous review and change. Social research is increasingly action conscious and social action is increasingly research conscious. The problem is linkage, how to achieve research-based action. The problem has been evident for some time. As one commentator said in the late sixties, "We need a science of utilisation." We still do, though perhaps 'science' is putting it a bit strong.

Take a recent example, from the police service. Bramshill trains Inspectors from Force Research and Development units in the techniques of systematic enquiry, using an action-research approach. At the end-of-course evaluation one Inspector, expressing their frustration, said, "What we really need is a course on how to influence the hierarchy." Same problem, twenty years on. Yet the nature and design of that course was intended to solve the problem of linkage. It embodies several strands in contemporary thinking about how to integrate research and action. It appears to circumvent the problem of researchers and actors belonging to two distinct communities, of researchers

not understanding the context of utilisation, of competing agendas. Or does it?

As this example shows, it would be quite wrong to think that the problem, once identified, has not been tackled. Post-war developments clearly demonstrate otherwise. Let me briefly summarise these developments, whilst acknowledging that they do not derive solely from consideration of this particular problem. In the first place the control of knowledge production and dissemination has shifted substantially from the universities to the government. Sponsorship of independently conceived research has largely been replaced by the commissioning of research along customer-contract lines, with the customer specifying the definition of the problem, claiming ownership of the data and discretion with regard to its utilisation. Academics now compete with private firms for these contracts. Success in the marketplace is beginning to replace publication as the currency of career advancement in higher education, so that docility to stipulative constraints carries fewer penalties for the research community.

This shift from an independent to a consultancy relationship with government means that social services research now resembles in its conditions of employment a model hitherto associated with industrial social research. As a response to the problem of integrating research with action, one could argue that this development is a change for the better from the user's point of view. The sponsor defines and controls the product of the research. This movement in the locus of control has entailed a shift from long term to short term research and, more dramatically, a shift from research to the evaluation of policy implementation. This certainly makes the research community more useful to social programme managers, facilitates access to social action and enlarges opportunities for influence.

At the same time the risk of this conscripted status is high in a liberal democracy such as ours, which is more fragile than its historical stability might

suggest. It changes research from a public to a private activity, it restricts research to questions of immediate practical utility and questions of concern to the powerful. Unless one takes a totally benign view of the conduct and control of social affairs, it erodes what some would see as a crucial role of academic research in a democracy - that of holding such conduct and control to informed public account. It can be argued that freedom of enquiry is the research corollary of freedom of thought and freedom of speech, and that too cosy a relationship between research and action is fundamentally collusive.

This is a big issue, and a long-standing one. It is also a very contemporary one in these utilitarian and authoritarian times, with abolition of tenure and course-contract relationships threatening to further undermine the autonomy of university-based enquiry. The current drive for efficiency through managerial accountability, a drive focussed upon the social services, has forced research back onto the organisational agenda, both as a feedback loop for hard-pressed administrators and as the basis of competitive bidding for scarce resources. And it has become clear in recent months that the police service, for long the beneficiary of a light political touch in such matters, is now firmly in the Treasury sights.

Should this scrutiny begin to bite into the resources available for policing we may see the service associations follow the lead of their counterparts in education and health, commissioning evaluative research as a bargaining counter in the battle for central resources (as well as a resource in the struggle to reassure and increase their membership). These professional sponsorships can be seen as offering increasing recognition of the importance of research in the political sphere, especially where issues in contention turn upon mutually exclusive empirical claims, and as a reaction against monopolistic trends in government with respect to research utilisation. Such research has to be seen to be independent and impartial to be of any use as a brokerage service in relation to disputes, and therefore offers hope of a resurgence of independent

enquiry. Such a trend could indeed be reinforced within Whitehall. The Treasury has in recent months made it clear to the spending departments that in future all bids for venture capital will be contingent upon the provision of a credible and favourable evaluation of all such expenditure. Should the Treasury fail to be satisfied with either in-house or quasi-independent provision we may soon see some easing of authoritarian aspects of research sponsorship in the field of policy enactment.

This is the context. What does it mean, in terms of relating research to action in some effective and democratically defensive form? In formulating a programme designed to enhance the influence of social research in developing the police service, the task is to combine our best understanding of fundamental and enduring problems with an informed grasp of the contexts of research production and research application. Let us take a closer look at these aspects of the design problem.

Traditional research works towards a better picture of man and society, but it moves slowly so as to minimise risks from ill-grounded theory. It is not value free, but its history reveals a great deal of naivety about its own social determinants and preferences. Nevertheless it seeks knowledge that will endure, knowledge that is context-resilient rather than context-bound, knowledge that is cumulative in character, diffuse in its relevance, tentative in its conclusions. It invariably concludes that more research is needed before research-based action would be justified. As a service to society it shapes beliefs about the social world, directly through teaching and indirectly through publication. Its practitioners are not, in general, insensitive to social needs and problems, but see their particular contribution in terms of the unfettered production of knowledge that is guaranteed by standards of scholarship. Such research can and does introduce new concepts, facts and propositions that may constitute an immediate challenge to accepted beliefs and practices and a resource for those who seek to question or change them, but the research is designed to close a gap in the field of knowledge rather than to solve a problem of action. Social

research in this mould is now in decline. Governments will not pay for it, and charitable foundations, whilst in principle more sympathetic to arguments for long term benefits, do not see their philanthropic mission best served by such investments. Many social researchers too have reacted against the tradition, seeing it as too unresponsive to the knowledge needs and opportunities generated by post-war social engineering on an unprecedented scale. For many of them the point of departure for research has become social action rather than social life, and the aim of research to relate theories of action to theories of those acted upon. A major shift is underway, much of it inspired by the rise of policy and programme evaluation, and the learning that has accrued from the experience of evaluative research in the last thirty years.

Evaluative research, which is now the dominant form of social research in our society, is designed to help social actors to take the next step, based on the best picture of the relevant facts that can be assembled in the time available. It has already gone through two phases, and has entered a third, which is where we are now. In the first phase of government interventionism, it concentrated on measuring the output of programmes, using traditional techniques of a largely quantitative nature. In the second phase, when it had become clear that the problems of social change were more complex and resilient than initial forecasts and assumptions had estimated, it moved to a qualitative methodology designed to yield better understandings of those problems so that more effective programme strategies could be devised.

The third phase is based on a number of conclusions from earlier work. The first is that research information is a minor component in policymaking and that other kinds of information had been neglected. The second is that decision-making is not a process of rational command determined by the disinterested pursuit of the public interest or the implementation of a rhetoric of principles and intents, but more of accommodation of interests. The third is that research either produces too little

information to be critical in decision-making, or too much to be manageable. The overall conclusion, which is very significant for the programme we now propose to design with respect to the police service, is that researchers lack and need a satisfactory theory of how the system works.

But we know quite a bit about how it doesn't work. We know that the rational model - problem identification, followed by research, followed by consideration of the research report, followed by policymaking, has no basis in reality. We know that busy people won't read more than two sides of A4 on any topic, so that the product model on which almost all research has traditionally rested may be a non-starter. By the mid-seventies, when the in-trays of the Washington bureaucracy were jammed with one thousand commissioned social research reports each year, one observer estimated (optimistically in the view of many) that less than one per cent had any impact on policy. Apart from undermining the rationalist hopes for scientifically derived action, this led to the executive summary, and that in turn to the executive paragraph prepared for USA legislators by their research staff. Legislators in this country lack even that facility, so that the logistics of utilisation at the corresponding level in this country may be even more problematic. But if the product model doesn't work, what is the alternative?

Let me qualify these remarks. There is no such thing as a pure product model of social research, its impact exclusively dependent upon the report. For a start there is usually more than one report, and a growing consensus that interim reports, less affected by changes in the agenda of those they seek to persuade, are much more influential than final reports. We must recognise also that social research is an interactive form of research, pursued via a social process which itself impacts in various ways on those who commission the work, those who keep it under review and those who are its focus of study. No-one knows how much influence upon action can be traced to this interaction, the extent of which will obviously vary according to the focus of the research, its procedural rules and its methodology. Nevertheless, it is still true that where the final report

constitutes the criterion of delivery of the research contract, such interaction tends to be seen as instrumental to that end rather than valued for its sake. A process model of social research, in which the final report assumed less significance than the continuous involvement of the researcher in the theatre of action, might begin by reordering these priorities. It might then also look for a better match between the pattern of interaction and "the way the system works." This could counteract a tendency on the part of organisations to devolve the ceiling of interaction to levels that are comfortably below those at which the power to act is held. This can be a particular problem in organisational contexts characterised more by command than negotiation, such as the police service.

Having outlined three phases in the development of evaluative research as if each displaced its predecessors, I must hasten to correct that, otherwise it would convey an inaccurate picture of contemporary social research. The process has in fact been additive, widening the range of practice and offering more options to the sponsor, a testimony to the growing confidence of market forces and the declining authority of the academic peer group. Even traditional research and scholarship, though impoverished, is not dead. Quantitative research is alive and thriving in the social market, although qualitative research, in the form of ethnography and naturalistic enquiry, have achieved parity of esteem in the evaluation domain. History and biography have been added to psychology, economics and sociology in extending the repertoire of applied social research, while political science has made a belated entry to the field of policy analysis. The criterion of short term utility is now widely, if in some cases reluctantly embraced, and this has led also to the growth of multi-disciplinary research in an effort to match the vocabulary of action of the sponsor.

Inevitably, this closing of the gap between the research and the action communities has brought ethical and political issues to the fore. The researcher's aspiration to benefit the larger community has to be reconciled with commitments to sponsors

and informants, with her own political convictions, and with her need to stay in business. This is evidently more important to some than to others. Counter-trends notwithstanding, research in the form of confidential consultancy is on the increase, whilst government contracts, even for so-called independent research, feature ever more restrictive constraints on the freedom to communicate.

#### Problems of Knowledge in relation to Utility

So we don't know how the system works. Is that the question, and therefore potentially the answer? Of course not. Knowing how the system or sub-system works is clearly a pre-condition of understanding how it might be changed, but it is not a guarantee of influence. We know a great deal, for instance, about how the educational service works, but educational researchers also bemoan the lack of serious attention to their findings. Let us return to the proposition, cited earlier, that we need a science of utilisation. And let us focus specifically on evaluative research, since evaluation of programmes and policies, constitutes the major growth area in the search for a utilitarian science.

There are some fundamental difficulties in linking science to utility in the arena of social action. Science works through disciplines, and disciplines through paradigms of enquiry. A paradigm is a set of assumptions about what the social world is like. For instance, some science works through psychology, and some psychologists through the paradigm of behaviourism. Behaviourism assumes that the social world can be explained in terms of stimulus-response theories. The point of this argument is to suggest that the kind of social knowledge that is generated by this scientific process is a product of its assumptions, and has no validity independent of those assumptions. Those who produce such knowledge cannot claim for it any overriding authority, although we know that they frequently do. This argument both illuminates and complicates our problem. If we also concede that paradigms are

simplifications of social reality, that they insulate the sciences from the complexities of social reality in order that they may 'progress' by concentrating on problems they can solve, then we may begin to view in a more sympathetic light the alleged indifference of the social actor to the exhortations of the social researcher.

This is where evaluation comes into the argument. Evaluation is sometimes called 'dirty' research, sometimes 'unscientific'. But if science depends for its academic respectability on divorcing itself from the complexity of social life, then such criticisms may hold promise. We reviewed earlier the post-war history of evaluation. One way of interpreting this history is in terms of an increasing realisation that the available paradigms of scientific enquiry are too restrictive in terms of the information they admit to allow us to match the vocabulary of action of the social decision-maker. Even lumping them together into multi-disciplinary conglomerates yields only a patchwork quilt, a simulation rather than an integrated synthesis of social perspectives.

Can we then abandon the paradigms, these simplified abstractions of life, in order to seek a better match with the in-use rationality of the world, rather than bitch about its lack of 'scientifically' based rationality? Would a science of utilisation be any less simplified than any other? Will evaluative research that is derived from knowledge of how the system works construct new knowledge differently, perhaps on the basis of users' assumptions?

Here we come across another difficulty. It is not just researchers who operate on simplified and selective assumptions about the world. This is just as true for all of us, and for all the organisations and institutions we create. The paradigm does for researchers what world views (terminal beliefs) do for individuals, what ideologies do for organisations. They simplify social

reality sufficiently to allow us to operate within it. In 1971, when evaluators were beginning to re-assess the utility of the measurement paradigm that had dominated their social programme studies in the previous two decades, a surveyor of evaluation case studies wrote:

" ... when research findings were inconsistent with the beliefs and values of the clients whose programs were being evaluated ... the net result was the perpetuation of the client's ideology, self-image and concept of social reality."

Since that time, as we have seen, the relationships that previously were assumed to be appropriate between researchers and their clients have undergone considerable change. On the one hand clients have either demanded more control over the agenda of research, thus gaining control over the production of knowledge, or moved to consultancy-style contracts, thus gaining control over the distribution of knowledge. Sometimes both. Under such arrangements, the client's ideology, self-image and concept of social reality are much less likely to be challenged. On the other hand those researchers who are not content to play the role of technician but who wish to stay in the game, have evolved a variety of strategies and arguments. Let me just take one or two of them. Taking account of the erosion of their own socio-political power they have sought to establish and promote new 'rights' for participants and audiences other than the paymasters, arguing that the 'objects' of social policy, its proclaimed beneficiaries, are entitled to be represented in and by the research process. This offers the possibility for researchers to move to a broker role in relationship to the exercise of power. Evaluators have been at the forefront of this move, which logically entails the adoption of a less technical language and less abstruse methods in developing a more accessible approach to problem-solving. Researchers have also evolved a variety of forms of collaborative enquiry, which have in common a greater responsiveness to the difficulties faced by those under scrutiny and a more

prominent involvement of the participants in defining and investigating the problem. Some of these collaborative arrangements travel under the label of 'action research', a concept in which the division between researcher and actor disappears, with the professional researcher playing a facilitative support role to a self-investigating group of practitioners. Action research has mushroomed in recent years in the educational sector, but we should note the highly distributive nature of power that characterises the educational system, and the exasperation expressed earlier by Bramshill students engaged in an apparently similar style of enquiry.

Finally, in an overview of social science and social policy which has emphasised relationships between the relevant constituencies, we should not forget the significance of research as a heavily used resource in internal power struggles. The research community is characterised by competition between individuals, groups and institutions, between disciplines and paradigms. Income, prestige and opportunity are always on the line in any research practice.

In this sense the research community is no different from the communities it investigates and serves. All social service sectors are battlegrounds in which individuals, groups and institutions seek to maintain and advance their interests and images. Research findings, sometimes even research processes, are a valuable resource in such campaigns. We do well to remember that research is not a game in which everyone wins. One man's bandwagon is another man's hearse.

Summary and Conclusions

1. Social research has expanded enormously in the post-war period.
2. The utility of research, both for legitimating and improving social action, has become a matter of increasing concern.
3. Consequently social research has become more evaluative in character, and more subject to stipulative control by those who sponsor it.
4. Despite these changes, the evidence suggests that social research largely fails to promote social change in a direct, linear way.
5. Efforts to improve the impact of social research on policy at different levels of action have led to a proliferation of models of engagement, mostly collaborative in character, and of models of useable knowledge, both quantitative and qualitative.
6. Analysis of the problem of achieving research-based action suggests that the following considerations/conclusions are worth bearing in mind:
  - (a) the notion of a science of society as an authoritative guide to social action has been abandoned
  - (b) both research and action are biased and self-serving forms of behaviour in important respects
  - (c) the so-called rational model of social decision-making has no correspondence in reality
  - (d) if the rational model is wrong, then the product model of research, which places all its faith on what use is made of its conclusions, is wrong
  - (e) if social action is, as we suspect, continuously shaped by the accommodation of a range of interests and values in a changing context, then a process model of research offers more hope of influence
  - (f) researchers need, and generally lack, a grounded knowledge of how the organisations they study actually work.
  - (g) the research community cannot afford, even in the interests of short-term utility, patronage and influence, to abandon its ex-officio obligation to promote a critically informed citizenry. That is the bedrock of academic freedom, and constitutes its long term security, and ours.

programme and policy evaluation specialists have in recent years been engaged in rethinking both their practices and their expectations in the light of such considerations. The emerging model is as follows. They negotiate with their sponsors and with their subjects, seeking an accommodation between the interests of those responsible for programmes and the interests of those the programmes are intended to serve. They seek access to all the levels of decision-making relevant to programme origin and action, so as to get a grasp of how and why they programme came about, and what the consequences of changing, continuing or abandoning it might be. They stay close to the programme from start to finish, responding to changes of context or of key personnel that may have implications for the direction, focus or timing of evaluative feedback. They see theirs as an educative role, widening the sphere of deliberation both in terms of the numbers participating and in terms of the range and depth of the information that is taken into account in a graduated process of reshaping beliefs. They are case-oriented, relatively non-comparative, working on actor frames of reference and value commitments. They are non-exhortatory, resisting the exploitation of the specialist's platform. They are sensitive to the risks of human subjects research, and the threat implicit in the evaluative act. They operate from no particular discipline base, produce no grand theory, pursue no personal theory. They work within the language of those they seek to influence. They offer methodological competence in the construction of new knowledge rather than substantive expertise. They depend upon persuasive and educative interaction to achieve impact rather than upon authority. At the same time they do not conspire, they do not collude, and they insist upon their obligation to represent the views of those who hold neither power nor office. In the latter respect, they are political brokers. This emerging model of engagement has been presented in some detail because it comes closer than any other to representing a process alternative to the product tradition of research. Since evaluators explicitly claim a utilitarian intent, this recently reformulated and as yet largely untested view of how evaluation should be conducted is of particular interest to us. Some initiatives along such lines, or some effort to re-educate police research in the light of such views,

ould well form part of the programme of action we have in mind. But police research, like research into other social services, will no doubt continue to be pursued in a variety of ways, so that an effective programme of impact enhancement will have to be responsive to the range of research practice that actually exists and to which its practitioners are committed. Although we may hope to influence that practice, perhaps to encourage experimentation, it would be foolish to assume that research policy as a form of social action is more open to change than policing.

### Police research

There is a lot of it, and it is growing fast, especially within the Service itself, where it is reinforced by accountability pressures and the increasing career currency of academic credentials. The Police Foundation's recently published Register reveals more than 200 on-going studies of a systematic nature involving at least academic oversight, and that leaves out of account the burgeoning of purely internal Force research, and probably a great deal of academic involvement that takes the form of personal consultancy. This growth is not adequately reflected in publication, especially of books, which remain commercially unattractive, as the Foundation's assisted publication scheme and poor sales testify. The field is also uncoordinated, largely fragmentary, methodologically varied, and without organisational representation. Foundation initiatives in the form of research conferences may come to be seen as the precursors of formal association, though this has yet to emerge. Looking at police research more narrowly in terms of the activity of the academic community, it appears to consist of a number of scattered individuals, groups and centres, rather than a community. The Home Office plays a central role in supporting social research, both through its in-house research staff, who concentrate for the most part on problem-focussed management issues, and through its sponsorship of independent research. It is also stimulating in-Force research initiatives through ad hoc grants. The Police Foundation,

albeit on a slender resource base, has brought a new source of sponsorship, brokerage and general stimulus to the field. I do not, at this point in time, know to what extent other government departments sponsor police-related research, though I assume that most police-related research from other government departments is of an indirect kind, concerned with issues such as women's rights or community studies. The ESRC has recently collaborated with the Foundation in sponsoring a research programme in policing and the community, and many charitable bodies are, at least in principle, open to proposals in this field.

Crudely speaking, most of the academics involved in police research are psychologists or sociologists. Again crudely speaking, most of those involved in collaborative relationships with the police, devoted to short term problem-solving, are psychologists, and most of the others are sociologists. The psychologists are problem-solvers, the sociologists either interactionists primarily concerned with the ethnography of occupational groups or the more explicitly political group concerned with democratic accountability. In relation to our earlier problem analysis, these crude dichotomies raise interesting questions for us. Does the high profile of psychology in problem-solving indicate a match between its individualist orientation and the tendency of the police to see their inadequacies in terms of individual rather than organisational deficit? Are ethnographers, by tradition identified with the interests of the powerless, more likely than other research groups to be ideologically hostile to the police? Are New Left sociologists, or indeed sociologists of any persuasion, less likely than other groups to be given the kind of access to police organisations that would enable them to mount a grounded critique of policy? Such questions are speculative but relevant to the problem of research impact.

Another way to define the academic field of police research is in terms of the old guard and the new. The old guard, exemplified by groups at Oxford and Cambridge, appears to consist largely of sociologists in departments of social

administration with a strong and particular theoretical perspective. New growth consists largely of contract researchers following the familiar pattern of moving from post to post and probably in and out of police research. In career terms involvement in police research is not on the whole a sound investment. There are no university courses that teach policing. Police research and police studies are always part of some other course. This situation may be changing because of the establishment of some programmes of police studies in polytechnics, but these are likely to be discipline based rather than problem-focussed. This is a very important factor in terms of the problem we are attempting to address. If soft money researchers see their future in, say, mainstream sociology or social psychology, then they have a vested interest in developing and publishing theoretical contributions of general relevance to a broad academic field. The kind of evaluation model of engagement which was outlined earlier would represent for such people a very high risk commitment. This clearly has implications for those who seek to sponsor more effective research.

Finally, in this brief review of the current state of police research, we should note the increasing prominence, particularly in consultant roles, of academics whose expertise lies in administration theory, particularly systems theory, in organisational management, in training, and even occasionally in education. Almost all of these are involved in internally controlled capacities, as outsider insiders.

#### Relevant Developments in the Police Service

Those who are likely to read this document will be familiar enough with general developments in the Service, and in the course of the previous sections I have already referred to developments of particular relevance. The Service is more researched now than it has ever been, is more responsive to requests for research access than it has ever been, and itself undertakes more research,

especially in the form of aims/achievement evaluation, than it has ever done. That is the rosy side of the picture. The debit side confirms the findings from the more general review with which this document began. In addition, the experience of most academics who have been involved in police research is one of limited access, a great deal of open hostility and hyper-sensitivity to criticism. Even compared to other police services, the Service makes less use of outside expertise than others do, places less value on experience other than experience of operational policing, and makes less use of research in its training and development courses. The low esteem in which Bramshill academics are held, the scepticism, sometimes amounting to derision, that is directed at ACPO's own Research Committee, the general failure of the Service to develop a systematic and organised research plan, offer confirmation of an at best ambivalent attitude towards research. And Mollie Weatheritt's conclusion following a survey of the growing body of research carried out by the police on themselves, that it mainly serves to legitimate what it is supposed to investigate, echoes my earlier generalisation about the perpetuation of self-images. This finding should not surprise us. Policing is dominated by a power culture-infallibility conferred by seniority in a context of command. What, then, is the opportunity structure in the Service through which we might hope to promote the more effective deployment of research? Social research is probably most effective when it is allied to social change rather than attempting to stimulate change in stable systems. Are there changes going on that constitute an opportunity structure for research? I think there are. The development of research and development units in Force testifies to the growing importance of planning in Force management. At the same time the trend towards decentralisation is pushing decision-making and accountability down to sub-divisional level. This is already in some Forces leading to a fundamental review of the roles of top management, involving consideration of a change from a structure of command to a structure of support, facilitation and an enhanced concern for the improvement of organisational effectiveness. This in turn could lead to a review of the role and organisational status of Rand D units, a review which could well

address the frustrations referred to at the very beginning of this paper with respect to the Inspectors at Bramshill. What we may be seeing here is a rolling back of the process of hierarchical bureaucratisation that has characterised the post-war growth of large Forces. If such a change should take anything like the form it has taken in parts of the United States, then the kind of skills and perspectives associated with social research, as well as the research itself, may find a new market, and researchers a new opportunity for influence. These emerging initiatives may also be reinforced by the increased attention given by the police to multi-agency approaches to social problems, following the Home Office circular of 1984. The experience of the few researchers already involved in such enterprises will be interesting to analyse in terms of their relevance to future directions for research.

#### Converting the Brief into a Programme of Action

The point of such a lengthy excursion into the nature of the problem and of the organisations involved is to reinterpret the brief as a basis for action. The brief suggests that the problem lies with the failure of the police to use the research that academics produce, and that what is needed by way of remediation is a programme of police education in the use of research. Clearly that is not enough. What the analysis points to is a broader programme with the following aims:

1. To investigate, rather than assume or speculate about, how and when the police do use social research, with a particular focus upon research that is produced with the intention of impacting upon police practice. Such an investigation would include the construction of a profile of what part research plays in the formal education of officers of all ranks.
2. To evaluate how academics involved in police research define their relationship to the police, what models of influence are explicitly or implicitly embodied in their research practice, what influence they claim and can provide evidence for, and how they see greater influence being achieved.

3. To carry out a research policy evaluation of central agencies that seek to promote research-based police action. These would include the Police Foundation and the Home Office, and might include the Police College, the Central Planning Unit, the Brunel Centre and ACPO Research Committee.

4. To undertake a case study of a typical Force with a view to producing a descriptive account of management and decision-making as a base-line model of how police organisations work.

5. To undertake a case study of a Force in the vanguard of organisational change, with a view to guiding the development of research practice and use in the light of emergent needs and opportunities.

This would constitute the first phase of a two phase programme of action. The second phase would consist of development initiatives. Without the first phase we would be whistling in the dark. With it we have the basis for informed collaborative action. Although the second phase would obviously be shaped by the findings of the first, it ought to include the following:

1. In-service education for police officers. Courses would deal with such topics as:

External research - what to expect and how to use it, how to critique proposals, how to negotiate fair agreements regarding access, products dissemination and utilisation, how to construct and maintain collaborative relationships.

In-house research - how to define a research question and an appropriate design, how to protect the research against organisational threats to its validity, how to prepare the organisation for the use of the research, how to convert critical findings into constructive proposals, when to introduce the research and how to enhance perceptions of its credibility and utility.

Research policy - how to create and maintain a research unit, how to build a self-evaluation dimension into the organisation, how to select and use academic consultants, how to plan secondments of officers to academic courses of study so as to enhance in-house research capability, how to select officers with research capabilities.

2. In-service education for academics. Courses would deal with such topics as:

A critical review of research practice in the context of concern about utility and influence - product and process models.

Collaborative forms of research and evaluation - how to combine collaborative and critical aspirations.

Police studies in higher education - the need and what can be done about it.

Police research and academic careers - how to combine career concerns with a more utilitarian approach to practical knowledge.

How police organisations work and the implications for research approaches, negotiation of terms, timing, style of interaction, reporting and dissemination.

It is proposed that two working groups be set up at the start of the programme, one consisting of academics and the other of police officers, with provision for joint meetings. These groups would take the above as a provisional agenda of issues for consideration and work through them towards the construction of courses and other forms of educational provision. These groups would be kept in close touch with the ongoing work of Phase One, which would continuously inform their deliberations. Some might well play an active role in the conduct of Phase One activities. As a result of Phase One, these groups should be able to differentiate groups within both the academic and the police constituencies, targeting courses at those who are identified as having particular potency for the advancement of effective research practice.

3. Policy development initiatives bringing together those agencies which are targeted for evaluation in Phase One in a series of meetings. Issues to be addressed would include:

The results of the evaluation

The deliberations and proposals of the working groups

The adequacy of the overall picture of research promotion, the need for new initiatives, closer coordination

The need, if any, to review the balance between in-house, in-Force and external research, conditions of contracting, the selection of institutions and individuals to do research, criteria for supporting proposals.

4. New research/evaluation initiatives, preferably within the two Forces chosen for case study. It is anticipated that such initiatives, based on knowledge of the organisations concerned, would be attempts to implement process models of academic involvement in research-based organisational development. One would exemplify the basic tenets of action/research, in which the participants define the problem, take action to solve it, investigate the results of the action, and take further action. The role of the researcher is that of facilitator, methodological expert, and critical friend. The other initiative would start from the emerging model of programme evaluation outlined in some detail earlier in this paper, and implement it on one Force.

#### Programme Feasibility

Lots of people - academics, police officers, civil servants, research sponsors are going to have to find this analysis and this plan of action persuasive if it is to get off the ground with a reasonable chance of success. In the course of preparing this paper I have consulted on an informal and confidential basis a number of individuals who are broadly representative of the relevant constituency, and have been encouraged by these talks into thinking that the line of my own thinking, as expressed in the foregoing argument, could provide a consensual basis for the kind of research and development programme I have outlined.

Of course, I recognise that informal consultations are one thing, formal negotiations with a view to active support are another, and these lie ahead. But it does seem to me that we may have reached, with respect to the issues addressed in this proposal, a point of critical mass in the police service. All modern societies are characterised by attempts to plan and control change, and

all accept that research and evaluation are key dimensions of planning. It is clear from what has already been said that the effective use of research and evaluation skills needs to be part of that planning, and it is argued such an objective would be facilitated by a combination of analytic review, experimental initiatives, and educational provision. I have outlined one such programme. It is ambitious, but I would argue that it is based on a sound understanding of the problem structure and a state-of-the-art view of the way ahead.

What is proposed is an essentially collaborative programme of facilitated self-development by all concerned. As the analysis has demonstrated, the problems experienced by the Service and by academics do not call for the distribution of blame, but for an understanding of their deep-seated and universal nature. Almost certainly everyone involved will have to change in some respect if progress is to be made. Open-ness to learning is required of all participants, recognition of both shared and divergent interests and risks must be accommodated, and a willingness to solve rather than to live with problems will be called for. This should not be seen as a programme to help academics to gain more influence over the Service. It may or it may not. It should be seen as a programme designed to enhance police effectiveness, and that is in everyone's interest. On the persuasiveness of this case the feasibility of the proposal rests.

#### Staffing and Costs

I was invited to think in terms of a budget of £240,000 spread evenly over three years. The programme I have outlined would cost more and take longer, ideally £400,000 over four years. Much depends on what programme ultimately emerges from the various processes of negotiation that will have to take place in order to ensure a fully supported enterprise. It may be that the programme is pruned or changed in ways which would reduce its cost. It may be that the sponsors are willing to offer increased funding. It may be that complementary

funding is available to top up the initial offer. It may be that some of the participants are willing and able to bear some of the costs.

As it stands, and assuming a central unit located in an institution of higher education, I envisage the central costs as follows:

Director (part-time)	£10,000 per annum
Three Senior Research Associates (full-time)	£60,000 per annum
Secretary (full-time)	£ 8,000 per annum
Travel and Subsistence	£15,000 per annum
Office costs (including phone and post)	£ 5,000 per annum
Equipment	£ 1,000 per annum
General running costs (including workshops)	£ 1,000 per annum
TOTAL	£100,000 per annum

These costs could be trimmed by having an unpaid director. The issue is whether the work involved in establishing and maintaining networks of association with the programme at all levels, and the delicate problems of negotiation and policy review that may arise, call for a more substantial involvement of a senior academic than unpaid status would warrant.

I don't see how the programme could be carried out with fewer than three experienced and suitably qualified (research, evaluation and educational credentials) full time staff. A full time secretary is needed because of the data processing demands of the research, network maintenance, and the production of educational resources. It may be that some of the burden of this support could be met elsewhere (by the Police Foundation for instance), but otherwise this level of secretarial support will be necessary.

The programme could be done in three years, but it would have to operate with unimpeded efficiency to do so. Experience suggests that the extensive negotiations

that will need to attend each phase of each element in the programme can take considerable time and effort, and that the production of educational materials and the problems attendant upon their introduction and trialling are equally time consuming. My estimate is that Phase One of the programme would take two years to complete, if we include within it the conversion of the research and planning processes into fully designed educational programmes and policy reviews. Phase Two, which involves the introduction of new initiatives in research training and collaborative action, could not be carried out, evaluated, reported and disseminated in less than two years. That makes for a four year programme. Of course these are provisional estimates. It seems pointless to go further at this stage.

There are other options. You could regard the programme outlined as an a la carte menu, choosing some items, rejecting others. Phase One could be funded without commitment, or at least prior commitment, to Phase Two. Phase One might be amplified by elements of Phase Two, and the programme costed at £120,000 per annum over two years. A more modest programme could be undertaken over a longer period, say, £50,000 per annum over five years. I have presented and argued for a four year programme costing in the region of £400,000 at current prices. It is intended as a starting point for further discussion.