Investigating the impact of crime upon local enterprise in Croydon

Contributed by ORC International
Thursday, 01 February 2007

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2 February 2007

Does fear of crime deter residents, workers and visitors from using their local shopping area?

Addressing crime concerns of residents, workers and visitors in the borough is key to creating an environment where consumers feel safe to shop, as well as to the success and growth local businesses can achieve.

The task is challenging and begins with the problem of public perception of crime. Out of over a thousand Croydon residents recently consulted by ORC International, 42% stated that fear of crime or anti-social behaviour affected their decision whether or not to use their local shopping area.

Given that nearly half of local residents feel unsafe or intimidated during their shopping trips due to the fear of mugging or "groups of people hanging around", the importance of counteractive measures and good communication between local authorities and the public becomes apparent.

The survey findings suggested that greater awareness of the policeâ€™s actions to tackle public safety problems would help instil higher confidence amongst residents. Indeed, the demand for increased police activity is significantly high, with 65% of residents considering more police presence as one of the most effective measures in making local shopping areas safer and more desirable places for residents. Similar views were shared amongst local workers and visitors to the area.

Furthermore, over half (58%) of all residents, workers and visitors felt that local companies were affected by crime against their business, and a similar proportion (56%) felt that fear of crime impacted upon businessesâ€™ decision to locate within the area.

These findings were reinforced by business respondents, of whom 84% stated that they were concerned about crime in their local business area and almost a third felt that crime or fear of crime affected the number of customers visiting their area.

ORC International's research has helped to identify businessesâ€™ and consumersâ€™ experiences and perceptions of crime, as well as capture community priorities in relation to policing and community safety interventions. It also emphasises the importance of engaging with both residential and business communities to encourage involvement and partnership-working, in the pursuit of reducing both actual crime and fear of crime, as well as the negative effects of anti-social behaviour.

This research will ultimately aid in the exploration of potential measures to reduce crime or increase perceived levels of safety whilst visiting local shopping areas during the day or evening. The Safer Croydon Partnership and Croydon Business are now taking steps to address these issues. While the issues for each borough/council will be different, through identifying the key concerns of residents and businesses, Croydon can effectively target its financial and personnel resources to maximum effect.

Communication and Community Involvement Manager, Safer Croydon Partnership Unit commented:

"We developed a good working relationship with ORC International, which was instrumental in the final "product" being delivered on time. ORC International followed our initial brief precisely and compared the findings from the survey with other recent research commissioned. The survey provided the Safer Croydon Partnership and Croydon Business with vital findings which will inform policy development for our new Crime Reduction Strategy"