Measuring police value for money

16th May 2016 - PRESENTATION TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

http://ggap.nuff.ox.ac.uk/index.php/projects/

Outline of presentation

Who needs to know?
What is the question to which PCCs are the answer?
Why is value for money hard to measure?
Previous research
Our project

Who needs to know? A: Governments

Governments need to cut labour-intensive public services
Therefore sharp cuts in unprotected services
- Public Protection function cut by up to 40% in current UK Spending Review
- Doesn’t directly affect Scotland (or NI) but does indirectly
- Hurriedly bolting back on things on radar, esp. anti-terrorism
- Within policing, slogans say ‘protect frontline services’, ‘bobbies on the beat’ (i.e., skew budget pro labour intensive services – using expensive labour)

Who needs to know? B: regulators & academics

Professional body: CIPFA – sponsor of our research
Inspectorates: HMIC and HMIC(S)
Home Office, Scottish Government

Previous academic research
- Some generously funded
- Inconclusive answers
- Some lines of research last till funds run out: no long-term monitoring

Known knowns, e.g., bobbies on beat ineffective
Known unknowns, e.g. relationship between force size and value for money

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

Introduced in 2012
Cover most forces, but not London or Scotland, nor non-territorial forces
- Transport (within our study). Why BTP covers trains but not ships, planes, or roads
- Ministry of Defence (not in study)
- Northern Ireland (not in study)
Meant to increase democratic accountability
Second election 2016: Greater Manchester drops out

What is the question to which PCCs are the answer?

Democratic deficit
- Pre PCCs, little democratic control. Traditionally, none in London (or BTP, MoD). In shires, very indirect (councillors nominated to sit with magistrates)
- BUT very low turnout in first PCC elections in 2012
- Natural experiment: non PCC forces (Met, City, BTP, Scotland, MoD)

No evidence to date that PCC regime helps value for money
- Police precept still hidden in council tax bills
- Direct funding opaque
- What do PCC candidates run on? (We will ask some, and have looked at campaign literature)
- Do the public want a proven ineffective solution? (bobbies on the beat)
Why is Value for Money so hard to measure?

Lots of descriptive stats, e.g., costs per head, staff per head
AND crime data: recorded crime, more recently reported crime
Difficult to determine input and output measures -- what do the police actually do?
BUT: fundamental point due to Carr-Hill and Stern (1973, 1979):
- IT’S ALL INTERACTIVE
  - E.g., more officers → more recorded crime (? → more officers?)
  - More deprivation → more crime (harder to run businesses in deprived areas)
AND: solving crimes is not all they do:
- They prevent crimes.
- And deal with the frail, confused, and mentally ill.
- Pilot completed in one large metropolitan force, saw the introduction of mental health nurses into call centres; Assessments of patterns of reduction of emergency calls reduced police demand by 15%. The 15 most prolific callers were causing 40% of incidents.

Previous research

Carr-Hill and Stern
- Simultaneous equation modelling
- Hard to interpret. Hasn’t been followed up
- Should have warned people never again to use recorded crime as dependent variable
- But they do
Other attempts at novel techniques:
- E.g., Drake & Simper – Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA)
- Ended when grant ended
- Unstable results. Used recorded crime
So most people use the old warhorse, regression analysis

Our research: qualitative

Scope: forces with PCCS, some without (the Met, Scotland, BTP)
- Exclude City of London, MoD (too different); N Ireland (differently too different)
Interview participants, interrogate manifestos, political statements
Within size and scope of project, can’t hope to get a representative sample of players
But hope to collect varied perspectives
One natural experiment: force size. Plan to explore Scotland v Wales and speak to participants in both

Our research: quantitative

Learn from past errors
Use verifiable dependent variables (e.g., reported crime experience from BCS)
- But limited data at force level
If we HAVE to use recorded crime, mitigate effects by building difference-in-difference models
- Assume that the differences between observed reports and the unobserved ‘real’ level of crime doesn’t change much in short run
HMIC force ratings: can they be treated as objective indicators?

References

R.A. Carr-Hill & N. Stern
L. Drake & R. Simper