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# EVALUATING SECURITY INTERVENTIONS FOR VENUES AND PUBLIC SPACES

The 'Evaluating Security Interventions in Public Locations' research project, responds to the challenge of understanding how best to evaluate protective security measures in an increasingly complex threat environment and across a significantly diverse range of venues and public spaces.

The project is based on four phases:

1. Assessing Protective Security Evaluative Practice;
2. Formulating Protective Security Logics for the Evaluation Design;
3. Evaluative Action Research in Use Cases; and
4. Adapting and Developing Evaluation Thinking Tools and Recommendations.

## TOWARDS A THEORY OF CHANGE

The first phase was covered in a previous CREST article focused on a review of evaluation approaches within the extant literature base. In this article we focus on the development of protective security logics.

The objective of this phase was to formulate, through co-creation and dialogue, the change logic underlying protective security measures and interventions and to use this as a basis for meaningful evaluation. A Theory of Change approach was employed as a tried-and-tested method of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to work together on a common set of tasks.

A Theory of Change is simply a logical way of demonstrating how interventions can be conceptualised and organised around the changes they create in relation to a particular issue. A good Theory of Change is an effective way of making the link between individual, everyday actions (or activities) such as 'holding an event' or 'installing CCTV cameras' to large, overarching goals such as 'reducing threat' or 'increasing resilience'. This approach begins with a problem or aim and works back in logical steps to the actions and interventions undertaken by individuals, organisations and partnerships. More specifically, it shows how activities lead to intermediate changes (outcomes) which then come together to tackle large-scale and often hard-to-measure problems (presented in the form of an aim).

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Crucially, it is an assumption-based model. It creates a set of theoretical causal links between the activities, outcomes and aim. These links are then tested through implementation and evaluation.

Researchers from Coventry University and Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) facilitated workshops with practitioners drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and with differing levels of experience and expertise in protective security and protecting venues and public spaces. Workshop participants included policymakers, law enforcement professionals and other emergency service representatives, faith-based organisation representatives, local authorities, security specialists and university staff from both academic and facilities backgrounds.

## DEVELOPING PROTECTIVE SECURITY LOGICS

Posing to each workshop group the basic question “Why do we protect venues and public spaces?” and encouraging and prompting conversation led to a great amount of dialogue and introspection amongst practitioners. Some had a very clear idea as to why they do what they do based on previous negative experiences or specific threats which their groups face.

Often this was people with an obvious vocational commitment to their roles (e.g., a voluntary faith leader or law enforcement professional responsible daily for the safety of their respective publics). Others, including those more distanced from front-facing roles, were not able to answer immediately in great detail.



However, throughout the workshops, a common pattern emerged. There was a strong consensus across the groups that protective security is important in venues and public spaces in order to:

1. Protect life
2. Protect property
3. Protect the reputations of the location or those operating it
4. Ensure legal compliance
5. Enable people to live their life as they wish to freely go about their daily lives

These five principles enabled the development of a clear aim for protecting public spaces and venues. This aim was:

*“To have safer and more secure venues and public spaces which provide people with the confidence to go about their lives and ways of life”*

This aim addresses the crux of protective security in that it directly seeks to improve the safety of venues and public spaces and those using them. It also goes a step further in aiming to provide those using venues and public spaces with the confidence and ability to go about their own way of life and to use a public space and venue as it was intended/as they wish.

This, for instance, means that places of worship must be able to remain open to worshippers who can use and access the premises

in the way that they wish and that it was designed. It also means that people can use public transport or attend large venues with a high degree of confidence in their safety. Importantly too, through this, the aim also addresses concerns around the over-securitisation of venues and public spaces and negative, unintended consequences of protective security.

The workshops then identified two main objectives for achieving the aim:

1. People and places become more resilient and better able to respond to security threats and those using venues and public spaces have greater confidence in their safety and security.
2. Approaches to protective security become more standardised, joined-up, evidence-based, proportionate and able to demonstrate and justify their impact and value.

Broadly these represent the split in what it is that, from the perspective of practitioners, protective security interventions around venues and public spaces aims to achieve. On the left-hand side of the diagram (Figure 1) the three activity strands aim to make people and places safer, more resilient, and more confident. This, in many senses, represents the more visible outcomes. Whereas the right-hand side of the diagram aims to improve the practice, effectiveness and efficiency of protective security interventions around venues and public spaces – to influence and improve the sector. This, over time, represents a virtuous circle with one leading to improvement in the other.

During the workshops, many activities were discussed by participants. Though there was greater emphasis on some areas of work than others in different workshops, there was similarity in the content discussed by different stakeholder groups and across different areas. This suggests a high degree of commonality in understanding and practice around protecting venues and public spaces.

The Theory of Change diagram (see next page) makes sense of this diversity by using six groupings of activities, each of which is discussed below, using examples to illustrate the type and breadth of work undertaken and an explanation of the direct outcomes resulting from each type of activity.

The activities are not separated by partner, sector or job role. Rather this approach recognises that each element of the programme is likely to contribute to multiple types of activity. These activity groupings are:

**Practical Physical Measures**

This strand of work is often the most visible to the general public and is what many people, including practitioners, often think of first with protective security. It includes all forms of physical measures to protect including security guards, bollards and barriers. More complex facets of practical physical measures include the design and re-design of built environments.

**Training and Capacity Building**

This strand of work aims to raise the quality and quantity of capable protective security practitioners. This ranges from specialists in security to those who merely need to consider it as a part of a wider role (e.g., building managers, retail staff). It does this through training and development as well as encouraging legal compliance and the development and sharing of good practice in the sector.

**Public Awareness Raising**

This strand of work is one which aims to advise and educate the general public and users of venues and public spaces about threats and safety and security features. This includes media campaigns and signage, as well as educational products designed to raise peoples understanding and awareness of terrorism threat.

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**Partnership and Collaboration**

This strand of work covers many of the formalised aspects of partnership working which are not covered in the Training and Development or Research, Intelligence and Information Sharing Strands. Here areas of work such as sharing emergency planning protocols, impact planning and collaborating on specific events are kept distinct to represent the capacity and ways of working which exist in the sector and which enable effective cross-organisational and cross-sector working.

**Research, Intelligence and Information Sharing**

This strand of work includes both academic and non-academic research as well as advice and publications for practitioners and the general public. The work here is much of the formal knowledge on which protective security practice is based. Additionally, this strand of work also includes information sharing in established working groups and multi-agency fora which exist to promote data and intelligence sharing.

**Strategy and Evaluation**

This is a strand of work which is most often internally focused. It covers strategic planning, including the allocation of resources for protective security, and the evaluation and monitoring of work that is currently in place. Evaluation and monitoring are often both formative and summative, with some evaluation taking place in real-time and shaping planning and delivery and some taking place retrospectively.

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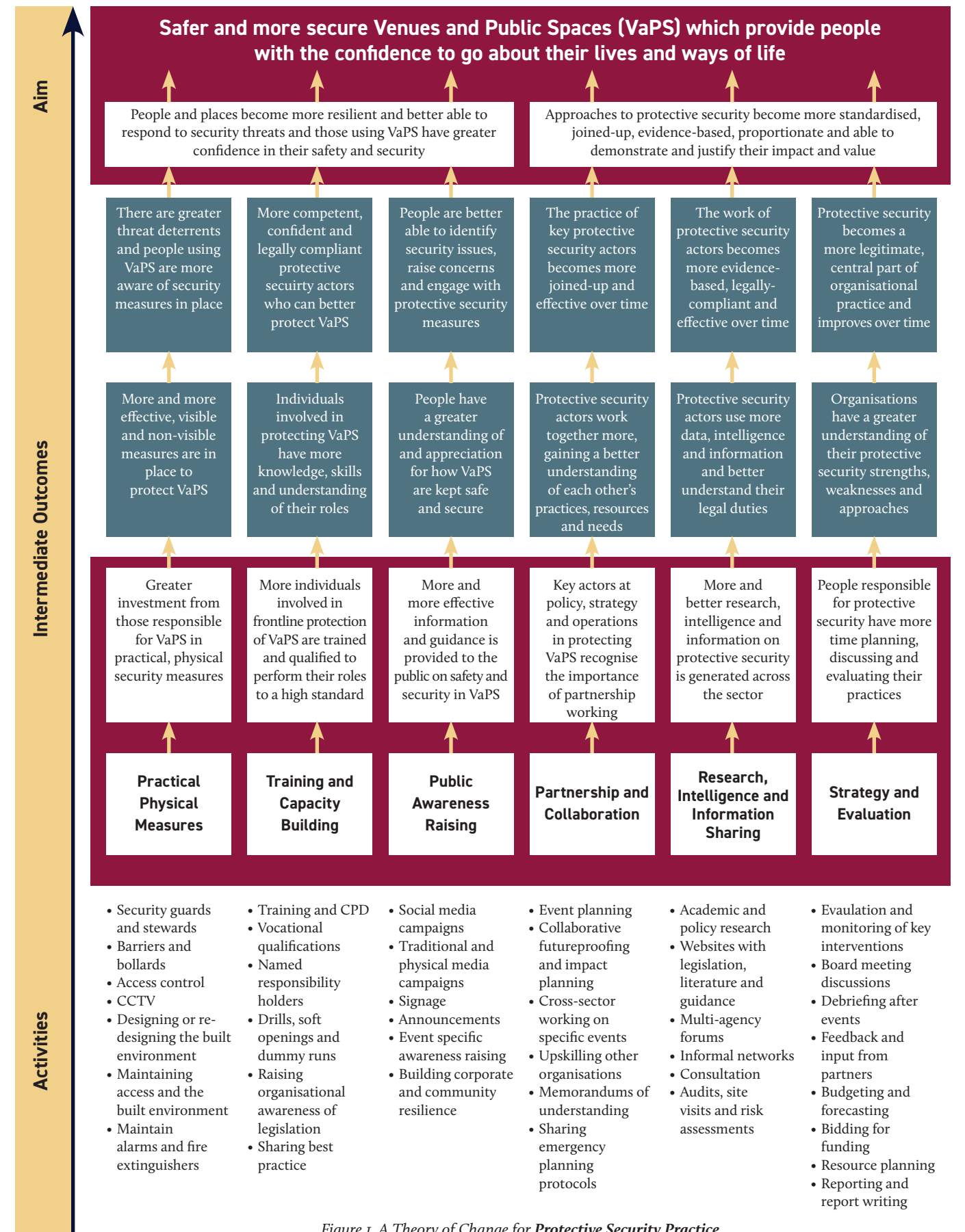


Figure 1. A Theory of Change for Protective Security Practice