



Burglary Prevention: Early Lessons from the Crime Reduction Programme

Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 1
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Introduction

This study is based on early findings from the Burglary Reduction Initiative, a major element of the Government's Crime Reduction Programme launched in 1998. The first phase of this initiative involved commissioning a series of Strategic Development Projects (SDPs) in high burglary communities and were designed to extend current knowledge of cost-effective burglary prevention measures. These SDPs form the basis upon which future burglary reduction projects will be designed.

In the early stages of developing these projects, participating local crime and disorder partnerships were helped to refine their approaches to tackling their local burglary problem. This report provides the lessons learned from that exercise.

Identifying and understanding the local burglary problem

The criteria for participating in the initiative required partnerships to identify areas with a rate of domestic burglary twice the national average over three years and with 3,000 - 5,000 households (areas with fewer households were permitted if the number of burglaries exceeded 100). This often proved difficult and some of the common problems encountered were:

- Aligning administrative boundaries so that burglary data, based on police areas, could be compared with household data, based on local authority areas.
- Identifying burglary problems that crossed administrative boundaries.
- Examining trends over time where there had been changes to IT systems, or to administrative boundaries.

It was clear from the SDPs that the 'chemistry of burglary' could be formulated in many different ways. Many factors

contribute to local crime problems but can be categorised into five key types of crime generator:

1. offender related;
2. victim related;
3. community related;
4. specific situational and
5. wider locality related generators.

Local burglary problems will often contain a combination of these factors and burglary reduction projects need to be tailored to take these into account.

During the course of the visits to SDPs, a number of local burglary problems emerged that had not previously been fully appreciated. Many of these were related to the role of privately rented accommodation. For example, students, who tend to live in cheap, privately rented accommodation, suffered a high level of victimisation. From the area perspective, the decline of some traditional seaside towns had led to a rise of factors conducive to burglary. In other areas, a collapse in the local housing market, resulted in cheap houses being bought by landlords, who rent to housing benefit recipients, some of whom are offenders, but all potential victims of burglary.

Devising solutions

While many interventions were proposed by SDPs, these generally aimed to tackle either offender related, victim related, specific situational, or wider locality related generators of crime. In most cases, projects involved a package of interventions. Some involved interactive approaches in which one intervention was dependent on others (e.g. crack-down and consolidation in which enforcement is followed by community self-confidence building). Others were long lists of interventions which were not necessarily integrated with each other. Finally some SDPs had planned contradictory approaches in which one intervention worked to the detriment of another,

e.g. a package containing target hardening and covert detection (i.e. tracking devices installed in electrical products) in the same properties.

SDPs and the bidding process

Much was learned about the process of allocating resources from the first round of the initiative that will be of benefit for future rounds of the programme:

Type of area eligible for funding: the difficulties in identifying geographic areas fitting the criteria, suggests there may be benefits from taking a more flexible approach to identifying burglary problems. This might allow for 'virtual communities' of victimised groups (e.g. students) who suffer from burglary but do not necessarily live in close proximity to each other.

Funding available: a ceiling of £60,000 per project was placed on funding for SDPs. Consideration should be given to funding projects on the basis of a formula related to the size of the burglary problem, or the number of households.

The initial bids: local areas varied in their familiarity with the process of preparing bids for government funding and this affected the quality of the bids received, although a well "polished" bid was not always a good indicator of the best projects.

The development visits: Those visited were not always clear what was expected of them. The extent to which proposals were developed also varied considerably from project to project. It was invariably helpful to visit the site of the proposed intervention and to talk about the burglary problem with those working in the area.

The revised bids: In many cases, the revised bids were much more comprehensive than the original outline bids and showed that a great deal of thought had gone into them.

Recommendations

The process of visiting those local crime and disorder partnerships bidding for funding has highlighted a number of ways in which local burglary reduction efforts might be improved more generally.

Recommendations related to the development of effective local responses to burglary include:

- Taking a strategic perspective that involves identifying and analysing the problem, devising solutions, reviewing progress, refining approaches and evaluating outcomes.
- Assembling a local team with the most appropriate skills and experience for tackling the problem.

- Testing commonly held assumptions about the nature of the local problem with available information.
- Double checking information upon which decisions are made, to avoid the misallocation of resources.
- Creating a self-sustaining process in which some of the savings from burglary reduction are reinvested to provide an effective response to burglary over the long term.

Recommendations related to the future operation of the burglary reduction initiative include:

- Refining the criteria for selecting burglary problems to allow for smaller geographic areas and for non-geographically defined problems to be eligible.
- Allowing more time for the preparation of crime reduction plans.
- Relating funding to the scale of the problem experienced.

Recommendations for how burglary problems could be addressed centrally include:

- Raising awareness among University Vice Chancellors and Principals of the need to reduce the vulnerability of their students.
- Designing crime prevention features in products most commonly targeted in burglaries.
- Promoting campaigns that reduce the acceptability of buying stolen goods.

Other related PRC research papers

CDP Paper 82: *Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimisation in Huddersfield*

CDP Paper 85: *Getting the Grease to the Squeak: Research Lessons for Crime Prevention*

CDP Paper 90: *Repeat Victimisation: Taking Stock*

CDP Paper 108: *Preventing Residential Burglary in Cambridge: From Crime Audits to Targeted Strategies*

About the Crime Reduction Research Series

The Crime Reduction Research Series presents research findings and guidance material relevant to practitioners involved in crime reduction at the local level and particularly the crime and disorder partnerships. The series will include work funded under the Government's Crime Reduction Programme as well as other relevant RDS work.