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RV Snapshot:

UK policing and repeat
victimisation

Graham Farrell, Alan Edmunds, Louise Hobbs,
Gloria Laycock

Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 5

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*Editor: Barry Webb
Home Office
Policing and Reducing Crime Unit
Research, Development and Statistics Directorate
Clive House, Petty France
London, SW1H 9HD*

Crime Reduction Research Series

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRCU) is based in the Research, Development and Statistics (RDS) Directorate of the Home Office. The Unit carries out and commissions social and management science research on policing and crime reduction, to support Home Office aims and develop evidence-based policy and practice.

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Foreword

In 1995-1998 the UK then Home Secretary established a performance regime for the police forces of England and Wales around the concept of repeat victimisation (RV). This concept had been suggested through research as an appropriate measure of police crime prevention effort. This paper reports on the progress made by the police in meeting the Home Secretary's remit. It comprises a 'snapshot' of where forces were up to in May 1999. The paper considers the extent to which the performance regime contributed to the development of police activity on the ground, whether the tactics proposed to address repeat victimisation appear appropriate, and what might next be done to take these issues further.

Important developments have occurred in this area since the Local Government Act (1999) and the subsequent introduction of 200 Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's). Two of these BVPI's refer explicitly to repeat victimisation, in relation to both domestic burglary and domestic violence. Police Authorities will now have to review police forces' performance in reducing repeat victimisation.

The police have come a long way in incorporating RV into mainstream practice, and I hope that the continuation of RV indicators under Best Value, together with the lessons learned from the programme of Home Office research, will help to consolidate these achievements and address some of the current variations in performance. RV provides an important foundation for the development of toolkits, which are being developed by the newly formed National Crime Reduction Task Force (NCRTF), for practical use in crime reduction initiatives.

CAROLE F. WILLIS

Policing and Reducing Crime Unit
Research, Development and Statistics Directorate
Home Office
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The Authors

Graham Farrell is Deputy Research Director of the Police Foundation in Washington. Alan Edmunds is a retired Metropolitan Police Inspector and a former member of the Repeat Victimisation Task Force. He has more recently conducted research for the Home Office Crime Reduction Unit. Louise Hobbs is a partner in Hobbs and Hook Consulting. Gloria Laycock is International Visiting Fellow at the Department of Justice in Washington.

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Executive Summary

Background

Beginning in the early 1980's the Home Office supported a programme of research and development on the prevention of repeat victimisation. Much of this work was published throughout the late 1980's and 1990's.

There were a number of important messages for both the prevention of crime and the treatment of victims, which together led to pressure on the police service, and other agencies, to pay greater attention to repeat victimisation. A range of methods was adopted to bring these research results to the attention of the police in the UK. This included the establishment of a small task force in the Home Office with specific responsibility to raise the profile of repeat victimisation. The task force developed a range of mechanisms for promoting repeat victimisation but probably its most significant action was in supporting repeat victimisation's adoption as one of the Home Secretary's police performance indicators (PI) for the prevention of crime. The PI was developed over a number of years from 1995 – 1998 and took an incremental approach, aimed at encouraging the police service to address repeat victimisation in a planned, evidence based and realistic way.

The report

This report provides a 'snapshot' of repeat victimisation activity as at May 1999 and considers the extent to which the performance regime contributed to the development of police activity on repeat victimisation. It makes use of a database originally established as part of the work of the task force, and further developed in 1998 through personal contact with all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

What did the survey show?

All 43 forces reported having a repeat victimisation strategy. The report addresses some key issues associated with the strategies, including:

Crime type: Burglary, and particularly residential burglary, was given as the most common crime tackled. Other crime types addressed included criminal damage, personal crimes and motor vehicle crime, with a small number of forces addressing all crime types.

Definitions of RV: Forces were encouraged to develop local definitions of repeat victimisation within a broad national framework. While there was some consistency in the way they did this, for example, a burglary defined as a repeat where there was a

previous reported burglary, there was variation in how far they used previous crimes of a different type or previous unreported incidents. Most limited their definition to repeats within the twelve months prior to the burglary and most had more than one component to their definition.

Identifying repeats: In the early stages of this work, police forces generally lacked the appropriate systems for identifying repeats. The survey shows that, by May 1999, significant progress had been made. The most common types of system were computerised crime recording systems, manual means of identifying repeats and relying on questioning the victim. Other, less frequently used systems, included crime pattern analysis systems, incident logging, GIS systems and information from other agencies. Most forces used more than one means of identifying repeat victims.

Tackling repeat victimisation: Most forces reported that they had developed some form of graded response, based on the Huddersfield model, where crime prevention resources are allocated according to risk as determined by the number of prior victimisations. There was also a wide variety of other activities being undertaken, ranging from target hardening to social interventions. There were two particularly notable findings: 17 forces (40%) had adopted a response that involved some form of detection activity, which suggests that prevention and detection are moving closer together, with crime prevention no longer being seen as the poor relation. Secondly, 14 forces had integrated repeat victimisation prevention into a more general problem solving approach, acknowledging its broader context.

Conclusions

The report considers whether: the performance indicator made a difference in the way the police approached this work; the tactics chosen by forces are likely to work; and finally, what remains to be done by researchers and police if further progress is to be made. On the impact of the performance indicator, it concludes that the degree and speed of progress made suggests that the impact of the performance regime was considerable. By May 1999, all police forces in England and Wales claimed to have strategies in place to address repeat victimisation and it is unlikely that this universal response would have resulted from the diffuse process of research dissemination.

Although the survey showed that forces' strategies incorporated a wide range of tactics, it seemed likely that many were already in place prior to the development of the repeat victimisation strategy. There was no indication that they had been adapted to address it. Of greater concern was the implication that other, more evidence based responses, had not been considered.

Future action

The survey highlights the impressive progress made by police forces in developing their approaches to reduce repeat victimisation. At the same time, it suggests that further work is needed to support forces in doing this. The report proposes a need for more demonstration projects dealing with violent crime. In addition, there is a need for more information and formal police training on how different activities will deliver the crime reduction required – the mechanisms of crime prevention. The final point of the report is directed at the Home Office, suggesting that it needs to give further attention to an outcome measure as part of the performance regime.

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1. Number of activities to prevent repeat burglary: all police forces, 1999 13

Beginning in the early 1980s the Home Office supported a programme of research and development on the prevention of repeat victimisation (rv). Much of this work was published in various Home Office research series and as *ad hoc* publications throughout the late 1980s and 1990s (Forrester, *et al*, 1988, 1990; Sampson and Farrell, 1990; Sampson, 1991; Sampson and Phillips, 1992; Farrell and Pease, 1993; Tilley, 1993a, 1993b; Bridgeman and Sampson 1994; Lloyd *et al*, 1994; Pitts and Smith, 1995; Sampson and Phillips, 1995; Anderson *et al*, 1995; Chenery *et al*, 1997; Bridgeman and Hobbs 1998; Hanmer *et al*, 1999).

There were a number of important messages for both the prevention of crime and the treatment of victims, which together led to pressure on the police service, and other agencies, to pay greater attention to the possibility of rv in various aspects of crime control. These ranged from the way in which data was collected to the planning of crime reduction initiatives (Laycock, forthcoming). Pease (1998) summarised these messages in a stock taking report:

- Victimization is the best single predictor of further victimisation.
- When victimisation recurs it tends to do so quickly.
- High crime rates and hot spots are as they are primarily because of rates of repeat victimisation.
- The same offenders tend to return and re-offend.
- Those who repeatedly victimise the same target tend to be more established in criminal careers than those who do not.

He went on to describe the advantages of concentrating on repeat victimisation as part of a crime control strategy, drawing on the by then considerable literature on how victimisation could be reduced.

A range of methods was adopted to bring these research results to the attention of the police in the UK. This included the establishment of a small task force in the Home Office with specific responsibility to raise the profile of rv. They began this process by ensuring that each force had a rv liaison officer – a champion – who would make it his or her business to steer force policy and to disseminate the research results around the force as appropriate. The liaison officers proved significant in constituting a network across the country. They met on a regional basis and were able to provide the task force staff with feedback on progress and to draw attention to areas where the police were having implementation problems, such as on the definition of rv.

The task force staff developed a range of mechanisms for promoting rv. Probably their most significant action in encouraging rv onto the police agenda, however, was in supporting its adoption as one of the Home Secretary's police performance indicators for the prevention of crime. This followed the publication of a research report by Tilley (1995) in which he argued that the reduction of repeat victimisation, while not ideal, was likely to be an adequately effective measure of the police crime prevention effort.

The measurement of police performance was, and still is, a sensitive matter. The police both appreciate central government's right to express a view on their performance, yet resent the manner in which it is done. The Audit Commission has in the past used league tables as the

Table 1: Police performance regime – reducing repeat victimisation ¹

Year	Performance requirement	Commentary
1995 - 1996	Demonstrate capability of identifying repeat victims	This PI was chosen because in the mid 1990s most forces did not have the technical capability of measuring rv in relation to any specified offence, but many were in the process of upgrading their computer systems. This PI helped to ensure that the ability to measure rv was taken into account.
1996 - 1997	Develop a strategy to reduce repeat victimisation for any locally relevant offence	There was a concern not to specify an offence centrally. These PIs are assumed to operate at the basic command level in forces where local concerns are more relevant than central prescription. In some areas domestic violence might be a major issue, in others domestic burglary might feature. An important consequence of this approach is that it precludes the creation of simplistic league tables.
1997 - 1998	Implement the strategy	This was intended to reinforce the point that strategies need to be delivered. An obvious point at one level, but one often ignored by managers whose interest stops with the articulation of a strategy.
1998 - 1999	Set targets for reduction?	It was intended that targets should be set locally as part of the strategic development.

¹Taken from Laycock (forthcoming).

mechanism through which the performance of forces is compared. In introducing rv as a performance indicator (PI), there was concern not to place unfair burdens on the police and raise expectations of their performance, which they could not reasonably deliver at this stage. An incremental approach was, therefore, adopted. This aimed to take the police from the point at which many of them were in the mid 1990s, where they were unable even to measure rv, to one where they could tackle it and deliver real results.

The PI regime that was finally developed is illustrated in Table 1. This regime was implemented from 1995-1998 and appeared to be effective in encouraging and supporting police action. One of the side effects of the introduction of this regime was a greater police interest in 'what works' and therefore an increased attention to the research papers emanating from the Home Office.

There has not, however, been any systematic effort to assess the extent to which the police have responded to these indicators. This paper attempts to fill that gap by presenting information from a database originally established as part of the work of the task force, and originally intended to provide an information source of good practice. The task force developed the database both to help them target their own work and as a means of sharing information amongst police managers and practitioners. It was adapted over time to reflect changing priorities and was regularly sent out to liaison officers and other interested police staff. The information was also placed on the Police Research Group's information desk, which is a central enquiry point for police agencies and others to obtain current research based good practice. In addition, it was also made available to HMIC and the Home Office Crime Reduction College, which is the focus of police crime reduction training in the UK. In the present context, the information is being presented as a way of assessing police progress in meeting the Home Secretary's requirements.

The present dataset was first established by the task force on rv, and following the disbandment of the task force in 1998, work on the dataset continued. It portrays the position in May 1999. The information is based on personal contacts, interviews and visits with Force Crime Prevention Officers or an appropriate alternative, and on a review of stated force policies, which were provided to the task force. Due to the nature of the interviews, it is possible that some small differences may exist between the version recorded here and that which might be reported in a formal statement of force policy. Few are expected. It is also possible that some changes in force policies may have been introduced since the present dataset was collated.

The response rate to the 1999 RV Snapshot Survey was 100%. This is unusual even for the relatively small population of 43 UK police forces, but was probably facilitated by the personal telephone approach and the fact that Alan Edmunds (who collated the information) was a police officer himself and knew many of the respondents personally. Data were also collected on the rv policies of the British Transport Police and the military police although these are excluded from the present analysis. In short, all available indicators suggest that the results presented below are an accurate snapshot of the state of rv policing practice in early to mid 1999.

All 43 police forces reported having a repeat victimisation policy of some sort or for some types of crime. The text that follows highlights some key aggregate points, leaving the interested reader to explore specifics of the tables in more detail.

By crime type

Eight forces reported having a policy on repeat victimisation for all crime types² although burglary dominates the 1999 snapshot. Every force had a policy for at least repeat residential burglary with the exception of the City of London, which instead covered repeat commercial burglary.

Force policies by crime type are detailed in Table 2. Within these main categories a force could report policies relating to more specific types of crime. For example, in the first row, Avon and Somerset report a repeat burglary policy for both residential and 'other' burglary (shown in the same cell) as well as for repeated assault (under personal crime) and repeat motor vehicle crimes.

Including the eight forces with an rv policy for all crime types, a total of eleven forces had policies to prevent repeated criminal damage, twenty for various types of personal crime, eleven for motor vehicle crime, and ten for other types of crime. Within personal crimes, the crime most mentioned was domestic violence, followed by racial crimes (coded as 'Eth' in Table 1), assault, homophobic attacks, robbery, rape, and violence between neighbours.

Operational definitions of RV

One of the questions frequently asked by practitioners is "How do we define rv?" Should the unit of analysis be the individual, the household, the vehicle or other target? Should crimes of different types count as rv? The formal response from the Home Office has been that the appropriate definition is simply the one that works the best in the specific circumstances. While this sounds vague it allowed rv to be used appropriately as a tool to analyse and respond to local crime problems. Even though this means that practitioners in the field are obliged to use a little initiative, this is probably the optimal solution. The alternative - a fixed single definition for all circumstances - would impose constraints that outweighed any possible benefits of a fixed definition. So what definitions were used in practice?

²The definition of all is really that of 'local' crimes, primarily those in the subcategories shown.

Table 2: Force rv policies by crime type

	All crime types	Burglary	Criminal damage	Personal	Motor vehicle	Other crimes
Avon & Somerset	•	Res,Oth	•	Ass	MV	•
Bedfordshire	•	Res,Oth	•	Rob, Eth	•	•
Cambridgeshire	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Cheshire	•	All	•	•	•	•
City of London	•	Com	•	•	•	•
Cleveland	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Cumbria	•	All	CD	•	•	•
Derbyshire	Y	Res	Y	Y	Y	Y
Devon and Cornwall	•	Res	•	DV, Neigh, Eth, Rape, Rob	•	•
Dorset	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Durham	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Dyfed-Powys	•	Res, Oth	•	Ass	•	•
Essex	Y	Res, Oth	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gloucestershire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gtr. Manchester	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Gwent	•	Res	•	DV	•	•
Hampshire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hertfordshire	•	Res	•	DV, Eth	•	•
Humberside	•	All	•	•	•	•
Kent	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Lancashire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Leicestershire	•	Res	•	•	MV	•
Lincolnshire	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Merseyside	•	Res, Com,Sch	CD	•	MV	•
Metropolitan	•	Res, Oth	•	Eth, Homo	•	•
Norfolk	•	Res	•	Ass, DV	•	•

Table 2: Force rv policies by crime type (continued)

	All crime types	Burglary	Criminal damage	Personal	Motor vehicle	Other crimes
North Wales	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
North Yorkshire	Y	Res	Y	Y	Y	Y
Northamptonshire	•	Res, Com	CD	Ass, Oth	•	•
Northumbria	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Nottinghamshire	•	Res	•	•	•	•
South Wales	•	Res, Sch	•	DV, Eth, Homo	•	•
South Yorkshire	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Staffordshire	•	All	•	•	•	•
Suffolk	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Surrey	•	Res, Oth	•	•	•	Other
Sussex	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Thames Valley	•	Res	•	•	•	•
Warwickshire	•	Res	•	•	•	•
West Mercia	•	Res, Sch	•	•	•	•
West Midlands	•	Res	•	DV	•	Other
West Yorkshire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wiltshire	•	Res, Oth	•	DV, Eth, Homo	•	•
All forces	8	43	11	20	11	10

Key:

Forces reporting an rv policy for all crimes types are denoted by a 'Y' in each relevant cell. Other codes by category are:

'Burglary': All=All burglary; Res=Residential; Com=Commercial; Sch=School; Oth=Other.

'Criminal Damage': CD=Criminal Damage.

'Personal Crime': Ass=Assault; Rob=Robbery; Eth=Racial incidents; DV=Domestic violence; Homo=Homophobic attacks.

'Motor Vehicle Crime': MV=Motor Vehicle Crime.

'Other': Other=other crime; Local=Local crime.

Data were examined relating to the definition of repeat residential burglary for all 42 forces, and that relating to commercial burglary was used for the City of London Force (this is true for the remainder of the analysis). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Operational Definitions of Repeat Residential Burglary

Definition	Forces (N=43)
At least one burglary	43
Same residence	42
Previously recorded burglary	42
Within a 12 month rolling period	38
Same victim	29
Previously unrecorded burglary	10
Different crime - previously recorded	7
Different crime - previously unrecorded	2
Within period other than 12 months	2

Note: Table shows multiple responses per Force.

Table 3 gives a sense of how forces approached the definition of repeat victimisation. There is the potential for confusion here since strictly, there is no repeat victim until after a *second* offence. This has caused conceptual difficulties, which the task force touched on from time to time. The requirement is for the police to *prevent* repeat victimisation, which means that they should be targeting all first-time victims to ensure that they are not re-victimised. Defining a repeat victim as having been burgled once is logically incorrect, but operationally spot-on.

Most forces would also define an incident as a repeat if there had been a previous reported burglary, or a reported crime of a different type. Forty-two forces reported that the burglary must be against the same residence but in practice it is likely that all forces used this as part of their definition. Most forces also limited their definition of repeats to within the year prior to the burglary. Two thirds of forces counted a burglary as a repeat if it were the same victim, implying that a third would also count it as a repeat if it were the same dwelling but a different victim. Perhaps surprisingly, only ten forces defined a burglary as a repeat if there had been a previous burglary but it had not been reported. This may have been related to the 'discomfort' forces felt about how to handle unreported burglaries. It was easier not to ask victims about previous victimisation. If there had been a previous crime reported by the same individual but it had been a different type of crime, only seven forces would count it as rv, and only two if that crime had not been reported. Which of these options forces chose may have depended upon how they planned to use the information. Knowing about repeats is useful in assessing the scale of the problem and therefore in planning the work, but in the case of the individual victim you need know no more than that they have been victimised once.

As is fitting, forces generally had more than one component to their definition of rv. Thirty-nine forces had four, five or six components with a mean of five and a maximum of eight. One Force reported defining repeat burglary as only 'more than a single incident', but this probably reflects a survey error since a minimal definition must include the component of the same target, location or owner.

What systems did forces use to identify repeats?

Putting rv policy into practice means identifying which people or other targets have been revictimised. The national rv policy was introduced gradually over a period of years to allow time for forces to gear their computer and other identification systems towards the identification of repeats. Where were they by 1999? Again, systems used to identify repeat burglaries were analysed; Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: What Systems did forces use to Identify Repeats?

System	Forces (N=43)
Computerised crime recording system	28
Manual system for identification of rv	26
Relies on questioning victim	24
CPA systems identify rv	20
Incident logging system identifies rv	12
Hot spot/ hot dotting (GIS)	7
Other agencies id rv and exchange info	5
Systems automatically identify repeats	2
Links victim/offender/ location made	2

Note: Table shows multiple responses per Force.

Twenty-eight forces (65%) used their computerised crime recording system to identify rv, of which sixteen also used a manual system. Over half of all forces (24) questioned the victim as part of their effort to identify repeat victimisation, and slightly less than half (20) used a crime pattern analysis system to identify rv. Only seven forces used a GIS system to identify hot spots or hot dots to allow them to pick out rv, and, perhaps surprisingly in the age of inter-agency cooperation in community policing, only five forces (12%) allowed other agencies to identify rv and exchanged the relevant information with them.

Forces generally used more than one means of identifying repeat victims. A mean of three methods (the exact mean was 2.93) was used, and a maximum of six. Thirty-one forces used two, three or four methods of identifying repeats.

What tactics did forces use?

While forces may *report* having a refined definition of rv, a means of identifying repeats and a formal rv strategy in line with the performance requirement, this may not be reflected in much activity on the ground. A strategy comprises one or more tactics or activities, which determine what is actually done (HORS 187 revised). If the police are to prevent crimes being repeated, then the tactics they adopt to do so are fundamental to determining the success of the strategy – the crime outcome. What did forces claim to actually be doing?

Most forces (37 of 43, or 86%) reported that they had developed some form of graded response to burglary. This is the response based on the Huddersfield model where crime prevention resources are allocated according to risk as determined by the number of prior victimisations (Anderson *et al*, 1995). For example, a victim who reports their third burglary within a year is likely to receive a higher-level response, perhaps including the more costly elements of detection and security software, than a first time victim. This is on the assumption that such a household remains at greater risk of a further crime in the near future. In Table 5, the grade of response is shown as either A (the least resource intensive) to D (the most resource intensive), although the naming of specific graded response systems varied between forces (e.g. some called it 'gold, silver, bronze', others 'red, amber, green', others 'A, B, C' etc).

Table 5: Number of forces adopting graded response

Tactic	Forces (N=43)
Graded Response:	
Graded response/activity after 1st crime (Level A)	33
Preventive activity after 2nd crime (Level B)	36
Preventive activity after 3rd crime (Level C)	30
Preventive activity after 4+ (Level D)	1
Linking rv prevention to detection activity	17

Forces could report more than one level of graded response, so Table 5 contains double counting of forces. Of the 43 forces, 29 reported having a specific response to each of a first, a second and a third victimisation. Three forces reported a response to only a first or second victimisation (unfortunately the survey did not ask why), five reported a response to a combination of both of a second or third burglary, and six forces reported not having a graded response.

By 1999, 17 forces (40%) had adopted a response that involved some form of detection activity. This seems particularly appropriate given that of the order of 80% of repeat burglary victims are likely to have been re-victimised by the same offender (Pease, 1998).

At a strategic level, a third of forces (14) had integrated rv prevention into a more general problem-solving approach. Again, this is understandable – POP can be construed as an overall policing strategy from which tackling repeat victims, repeat offenders and hot spots derives (HORS 187 revised).

The survey also asked about other tactics that formed part of the rv strategy. Those listed in Table 6, for consistency with the analysis above, are related to preventing repeated residential burglary. Forces adopted a mean of three of the listed tactics (the exact mean was 3.06), with

a minimum of zero (by three forces) and a maximum of five (by six forces). Five forces reported using two of the tactics, 15 forces three tactics and 11 forces four.

Table 6: Activities and tactics to protect victims from re-victimisation, grouped by mechanism

Mechanism	Activity (Number of Forces)
Crime prevention measures implemented	Home Office alarm installation (27), alarm installation (13), pens for property-marking supplied (5), shriek alarms (1), carelink alarm installation (1), mobile phones for vulnerable (1).
Surveillance	NW (30), cocoon watch (18), CCTV - permanent and mobile (8), police directed patrols (28), watch schemes (2).
Other police action	Detective inspector/ crime manager notified (22), offender targeting/disruption (14), house to house enquires – burglar alert (12), priority fingerprint search (11), LIO checks (8), property outlets checked (7), risk assessment at the response (6), tasking/cultivating informants (5), regular police contact with victim (4), aide memoires for victim to help risk assessment (3), aide-memoire for officers (3), search warrant expedited (2), prison visits to identify opportunity causes (2), witness liaison (1), digital cameras for briefing (1).
Crime prevention advice (generally target hardening)	Crime prevention advice packs (25), CPO visit and advice (25), CP advice by SOCO (24), CP advice at the response (23), other means of advising on CP (16), letter to victim suggesting rv is possible (15), property surveys (12), property marking scheme advice (11), advised re risk of rv (10), burglary pack given (9), victims letter shows rv status noted (7), info on support organizations given (3), holiday crime prevention packs given (2), business leaflets given with council tax bills (1).
Partnership activity	Victim support activity (28), local authority activity (26), repair schemes (15), Bobby van/age concern (11), social services activity (9), crime prevention panel/trust activity (6), Age Concern activity/Help the Aged (4), work by volunteers (2), environmental health (2), Probation Service activity (2), diversion scheme (1).

Notes to Table 6: Number of forces reporting each activity are shown in parenthesis. CP = crime prevention; CPO = Crime Prevention Officer; SOCO = Scenes of Crimes' Officers (forensics); LIO = Local Intelligence Officer.

Not all activities related to protecting the individual victim or place directly. The most popular activity, for example, was neighbourhood watch, which clearly operates on a neighbourhood basis. It is probable this tactic was in place or planned regardless of the rv strategy and was therefore independent of it. The second most popular activity was visits by Victim Support, which as with directed patrols, was reported by 28 forces.

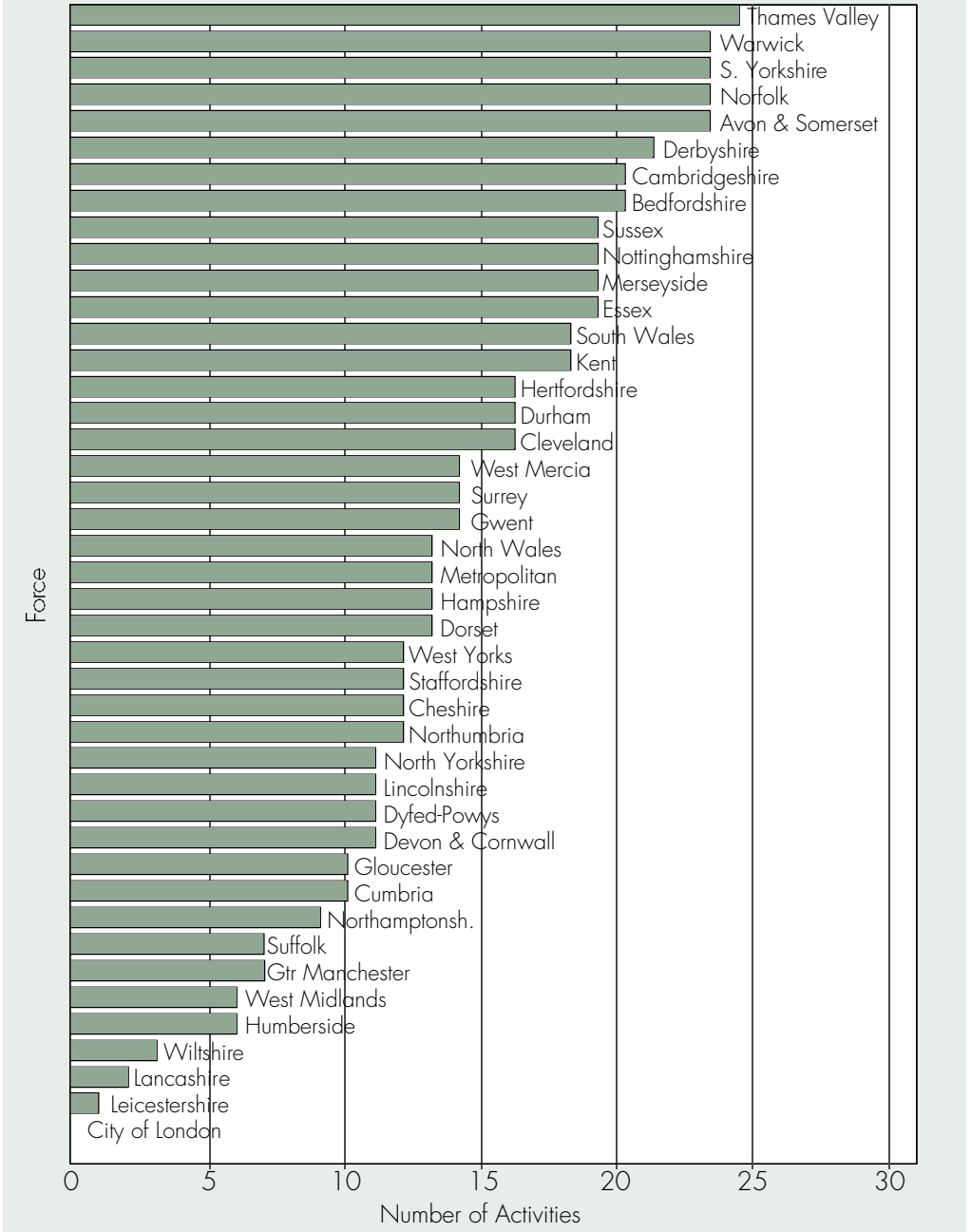
Activities in Table 6 have been put into broad groups according to the mechanism by which the activities might prevent repeat victimisation. Some of the mechanisms are more direct than others, and the ordering in the table tries to reflect this to some extent: implemented crime prevention activity comes first, followed by surveillance, then other police action, crime prevention advice and partnership activity. Clearly there is variation within groups as well as between. The category 'partnership activity' is particularly problematic in this respect since there is nothing in partnership activity *per se* which would reduce crime; it is what the partnerships do, or facilitate, that might lead to an effective crime reduction mechanism.

But what does Table 6 tell us about activities? For the most part it tells us that a wide range of activities are underway, although it is difficult from the present snapshot to determine which specifically focused upon rv. This limits possible inferences about effectiveness. Perhaps one of the more surprising points arising from Table 6 is the extent of 'other police action', which is mainly about detection. At one level it is hardly surprising that the police should include detection in their strategic approach to crime control! What makes it remarkable in this context is that there is so much of it in response to a question on crime reduction. For many years prevention has been characterised as the Cinderella of policing. The crime prevention side of the business was not valued as highly as the detective side. The suggestion from Table 6 is that the two worlds are coming closer. Detection and prevention are finally being seen as both necessary and complimentary to a holistic approach to crime management.

What forces reported the most activities?

An imperfect indirect indicator of actual activity levels is the number of activities that each force reported. The present indicator suggested great variation by force, from the City of London that reported no specific activities relating to rv and burglary, to Thames Valley that reported 24 (Figure 1). Of course more does not necessarily mean better, but Figure 1 does give a flavour of the extent to which different forces are committing resources to tackling rv and may provide a basis for further exploration. The 'activities' indicator, however, is not necessarily perfectly standardised between forces – the emphasis in the data collection was upon allowing forces to convey the information rather than giving them a pre-set checklist of activities.

Figure 1: Number of activities to prevent repeat burglary: all police forces, 1999



4.

Discussion and conclusions

This discussion falls into three sections. It first considers the extent to which the performance regime appears to have made a difference to the way in which the police approach rv. Secondly, it reviews the tactics which forces have chosen to include in their strategies to tackle rv, and considers whether there is any *prima facie* evidence that they may work. And finally, it looks to the future and discusses what remains to be done by both researchers and the police if progress is to continue to be made.

Did the performance regime make a difference?

There is not, nor could there be, a categorical answer to this question – too many other things of relevance were happening at the same time (Laycock, forthcoming). Nevertheless, it is not an unreasonable assumption that the developments which we have documented here would have been less likely, probably much less likely to have happened, had that regime not been in place. In the early days of the rv task force, no police force was systematically able to identify repeat victims for any offence, including domestic assault. They now all claim to be able to do so. The staff of the rv task force did a great deal of networking, training and dissemination of information, but much of that was carried out at a relatively low level in the forces. In order to have made the progress which was made, and at the speed at which it was made, senior officers needed to be on board and it was through the performance regime that this happened. This view is reinforced by the observation that *all* English and Welsh forces claimed to have policies and practices in place to address rv. If these developments had resulted from the more diffuse process of research dissemination, training and networking, it is doubtful that such a universal response would have been in evidence.

Looking first at the identification of repeats, which was a requirement for the period 1995/96, all forces claim to have a system in place. It was not possible in this brief review to determine the extent to which the identification of repeats by forces was accurate or properly carried out, but this may be covered in the course of a future inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), or through the force inspection processes.

The requirement for the period 1996/97 was that forces should have developed a strategy to tackle rv. The choice of offence was for local decision. It is perhaps not surprising that the emphasis of rv policies in 1999 was upon residential and other forms of burglary. Burglary has been the focus of much of the existing published rv research. It is the crime type where the best examples and guidelines exist and is consequently the most discussed in presentations, seminars and training. So if the snapshot is of a 'work in progress', then this is a good thing: all forces should start with what is easy and familiar to get the rv ball rolling. It is also a sensible starting point given that burglary is a high volume crime of public concern. But it is disappointing that relatively few forces have chosen to look at domestic violence,

which is the quintessential repeat crime. There is also a relative lack of attention being paid to 'hate crimes' generally – racial attacks and homophobic offences in particular, where again repeat victimisation often features.

The national picture also shows great variation in the progress being made. The stages of policy implementation were always intended to be gradual and to allow for individual variation between forces, but the discrepancies are quite wide. Some forces appear to be doing far more than others.

There is no way of knowing to what extent the strategies which forces claim to have in place have actually been implemented as planned without visiting the areas and systematically checking. That could not be done as part of the work of the task force for resource reasons and it is, in any case, more properly a task for others.

The tactics

Forces claim to have launched a wide range of tactics as part of their rv strategies. There are a number of points to be made in relation to this. First, some of the tactics are suspiciously like the run-of-the-mill force crime prevention activity that has been going on for some time. Neighbourhood Watch (NW) is a good example here. There was no sense from the responses from forces that NW had in any way been modified to make it more relevant to the needs of existing victims. If the collation of this information is to continue and a further snapshot be developed, this classification system might be refined. Specifically, it would have been useful to be able to identify which activities were focused upon rv rather than activities that the force already undertook as part of its general crime prevention work.

Forces are clearly trying to respond to the requirement that they address repeat victimisation, but it seems likely from many of their responses that not only are the tactics not obviously targeted to the protection of victims, but many have a weak preventive mechanism. At present, it is largely assumed that police officers know (either from training, experience or from research literature such as the Home Office publications) of the full and wide range of prevention possibilities and the mechanisms which underlie them. This assumption may well be wrong. Indeed the recently published review by Pease (1998) was addressed to the many police officers with whom Ken Pease had discussed rv over the bulk of the last decade, but who were not familiar with the research. As Pease says; 'many of them believed they knew about the available research, but were familiar with only a small proportion of it. Neither had they encountered anything which sought to locate recent rv research in thinking about crime prevention more generally'.

The purpose of the review was, therefore, to support the implementation process – bringing research to practice. Although the notion of preventing repeat victimisation has penetrated police strategic thinking, the associated tactics have not been so successful. This is a challenge for researchers.

One way to address this issue might be to work with the police to develop a portfolio of crime-specific prevention tactics that have been shown to prevent crime under certain circumstances. This would provide forces with a list of options, which they might tailor to their specific circumstances. The basis for such a portfolio could simply be a synthesis of crime prevention activities to date, grouped by crime type, and prioritised by likely effectiveness. For example, silent alarms might be recommended for burglary prevention over neighbourhood watch, since alarms are more likely to protect the individual victim – they are more closely targeted on the presenting problem and therefore more likely to be cost effective.

The snapshot might also have benefited from more direct measures of the extent to which various activities were implemented. For example, what proportion of each force undertook these activities, all divisions or just particular ones, for how many victims and crimes, and over what time period? Forces might consider carrying out victim satisfaction surveys to check on the extent of rv that occurs, perhaps as a six-month follow-up to victimisation. Such information, particularly if using standardised surveys, could prove useful to a more formal evaluation of the rv policy.

The wide range of tactics seen as relevant to the protection of victims and the reduction in crime is particularly notable. There appears to be a balance between crime prevention advice and attempts to catch offenders. There is good research evidence that seeing prevention and detection as the opposite sides of the same crime control penny is an effective way of approaching the problem. And of course it suggests that crime prevention more generally is no longer being seen as a backwater specialism but has joined the mainstream of policing activity.

The fact that some forces, albeit a minority, have subsumed their approach to repeat victimisation into a broader problem-oriented policing perspective is an important development. Preventing repeat victimisation fits well into, or alongside, a POP approach. Victims, or targets however defined, are a tangible focal point around which a crime prevention response can be developed. There is, however, an important distinction between the problem-oriented policing perspective, particularly insofar as it involves the SARA process of scanning, analysis, response and assessment (Eck and Spelman, 1987), and rv. Preventing rv usually does not need to involve complex scanning and analysis of data, crime maps or calls for service, since an rv response can be triggered at an incident level by the reporting of a crime. What that response should be may well call for the same kinds of skills as apply to the process of problem solving because each response needs to be tailored to individual circumstances. It may, however, be a more straightforward process at that individual level, offering the opportunity for a more 'menu' driven response. For domestic burglary, to take a concrete example, the police might select from a pre-determined list of preventive activities according to the force rv protocol. The list could include target hardening to prevent a repeat by the same modus operandi, a general security upgrade, cocooning of the victim by neighbours, and/or some detection effort.

In some instances, however, the more traditional problem-solving approach will be necessary, with aggregated data analysis and the use of crime mapping assisting in identifying linked offences and in the subsequent development of the appropriate response.

Some of the conclusions from this review are fairly straightforward:

- Many forces need to get up-to-speed with their rv policies to keep up with the trailblazers on the basics of implementation.
- More forces need to introduce rv policies against personal crimes of various sorts, and criminal damage. While preventing repeat motor vehicle crimes could also be developed, the optimal manner in which to do this, and its combination with other elements of problem solving, may require further thought (see e.g. the examination of 'virtual' repeat victimisation of identical cars by Ken Pease (1998:23)). As such, it may be an outstanding opportunity for the development of inventive preventive approaches.
- Greater clarity is required on the mechanism through which the various tactics might be expected to protect victims. An offence-specific portfolio of effective tactics might be developed in order to maximise the use of cost effective preventive mechanisms.

Moving forward

The survey results reported here, in common with many relatively superficial snapshots of agency activity, raise as many questions as they answer. How, for example, do forces implement rv policies against 'all' crimes? Are there any policies that are just 'paper policies' that have resulted in little change on the ground? (this suggests the need for in-depth force case studies). What are the results in terms of crimes prevented? Can we identify good and bad practice across areas and across (or even within) forces? How can we continue to support the development of effective tactics in this area – is there, for example, a role for an rv awards scheme for innovative practice, good projects and evaluations?

The list of additional questions is long, but perhaps the most important is what are the next steps in developing our response to repeat victimisation; where should the emphasis be? There are perhaps three areas for attention. First, there is a need for more demonstration projects, which address violent crime. Burglary, particularly domestic burglary, has been well served by research and development projects over recent years. The police and researchers have demonstrably worked well together and have shown that significant reductions in property crime can be achieved through this approach. A similar effort now needs to go into addressing the sometimes more intractable problems of violence – domestic, racial and homophobic.

Secondly, the present snapshot was based on the analysis of a database that was developed for administrative rather than evaluation purposes. Although some assessment was possible, it

may also suggest a need for the introduction of more formal instruments and mechanisms designed to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of national changes in police policies.

Finally, there seems to be a need for more information and formal police training on the concept of mechanisms (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The mechanism is no more than a statement about how the proposed activity or tactic will deliver the crime reduction required. How, for example, would the probation service, contribute to the protection of a particular victim? Asking the question in this way is not meant to imply that the probation service *cannot* contribute to tackling repeat victimisation at the individual level, simply that the mechanism, which in this case is likely to involve a long causal chain with a number of assumptions, needs to be articulated. This is an important area if cost effective solutions are to be developed. For example, a long causal chain might run along the following lines - 'we want to protect the victim and we know that 80% of offenders go back to the same victim and repeat their offence, so if we believe that a particular offender is involved, it may be worthwhile approaching the probation officer with responsibility for that offender and asking them to keep a close watch for further offending'. It may be cheaper to target harden the victim's home.

In conclusion, the police have made astonishing progress over a relatively short time in the way they approach repeat victimisation. They claim to be able to identify repeat victims through a variety of means, and some of the tactics included in their response to the problem are plausible and sophisticated insofar as it is possible to assess this from a survey of this nature. Although it is not possible to prove the point, it has been argued here that the performance regime made a significant contribution to the progress that has been made. There remains, however, a need to develop a similar response to repeat violence as we have seen developed on domestic burglary. There is also a need for greater appreciation of the cost of some of the tactics that have been introduced in relation to their effectiveness. Understanding and articulating the mechanism through which the tactics are meant to operate would be a major step forward. In-depth case studies of a selected number of forces would seem to be an appropriate means of assessing what has happened on the ground.

Finally, it is important to move towards an outcome measure as was originally intended as part of the performance regime. The Home Office needs to consider how to take this forward.

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Policing and Reducing Crime Unit
Room 415
Clive House
Petty France
London
SW1H 9HD

Tel: 020 7271 8225
Fax: 020 7271 8344

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