

Home Office Police Research Group Briefing Note



BITING BACK: TACKLING REPEAT BURGLARY AND CAR CRIME

Police Research Group - Crime Detection and Prevention Series Paper 58
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Summary

The project contributes to a Home Office programme of work on repeat victimisation. Previous work has established the potential scope for reducing crime by preventing repeat victimisation. The purpose of this two-year project is to consider how forces might tackle repeat victimisation as part of their crime management strategies for burglary and car crime, and to provide guidance on how the current obstacles to this might be overcome.

The project is being conducted by staff from the University of Manchester, who are working with the police on Huddersfield Division of West Yorkshire Police to develop and implement a strategy for preventing repeat burglary and motor vehicle crime as part of the operational policing of a police division.

The project has been running for over a year and development of the strategy has involved a wide range of local agencies, including the police, local authority, victim support, the university and the media. This report documents the research and events leading up to implementation of the strategy on 1 October 1994. A further report next year will describe how the strategy has developed and what it has achieved in terms of crime reduction and detection.

Key research findings so far

The examination of data from the force crime information system found that:

- there were many repeat burglary and car crimes, and that they tended to occur quickly after a prior offence;
- there were problems in always recognising repeats as such, and in measuring the true extent of repeat victimisation; and,
- the risk of repeat burglary of the same house is significantly higher than the risk of burglary of an adjacent house.

Interviews with domestic burglary repeat victims established:

- the profound impact of repeat victimisation on people's lives; and,
- the fact that repeat victims identified from crimes

reported to the police constitute a substantial underestimate of their true rates of victimisation.

The strategy

The strategy involves grading responses to victims according to the number of times they have been victimised in the last year. Conventional 'bronze' level measures such as property marking and security upgrading are received by all first-time victims. Repeat victims receive more resource-intensive 'silver' and 'gold' measures, for example, focused patrolling of victimised places, and the use of high technology devices such as vehicle tracking and silent alarms. In general, the strategy moves from fairly conventional preventive measures through to innovative detective tactics. The precise composition of measures will vary with time, further research and experience.

Data are being collected to monitor and evaluate the strategy and will be documented in the final project report.

Points for action

The experience of the project so far suggests that in developing strategies to tackle repeat victimisation, forces need to ensure:

- ★ crime recording systems can accurately identify repeat victimisation. Systems need to be developed which are capable of both measuring and monitoring victimisation patterns. Reported incident data are likely to provide an underestimate of true rates of repeat victimisation for all offences; measurement problems are least substantial for domestic burglary, which may provide a good starting point for tackling repeat victimisation;
- ★ procedures are in place for a prompt response to repeat victims; and,
- ★ the allocation of resources, including the co-ordination of prevention and detection activities, reflects local victimisation patterns. A graded response to victims on the basis of the number of previous victimisations may facilitate a cost-effective targeting of resources.

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