



**Title:** Older Victims of Burglary and Distraction Burglary- Recommendations for Practitioners (Home Office Development and Practice Report 11)

**Author:** Home Office

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**SCS topic headings:** Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Home Safety, Personal Safety, Partnership Working

**This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.**

## **Summary of the intervention's aim**

This report provides guidelines and recommendations for practitioners working with older people who are vulnerable to becoming a victim or who has been a victim of burglary and, in particular, distraction burglary.

The suggestions presented in this document are relevant to practitioners dealing with older people and vulnerable groups on a day-to-day basis, and those who come into contact with older victims following a crime incident. In particular, these recommendations may be of special interest to the police, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), local authorities, other housing providers, Primary Care Trusts and organisations in the voluntary and charity sectors.

## **Outcomes**

Recommendations are put forward that cover three main topics:

### **1. Raising awareness of the crime of distraction burglary and how to prevent it amongst both older people and professionals working with them**

These relate primarily to distraction burglary although some do apply to other forms of burglary. Raising awareness must be done in such a way so that it does not raise unnecessarily the fear of crime. Recommendations for the content and dissemination of future distraction burglary awareness-raising campaigns aimed at older people could include suggestions as listed below. NB. Consult the original document for full details regarding these abbreviated recommendations.

- Incorporate specific warning messages in awareness-raising campaigns rather than general cautions
- Add a “keep door locked message” could reduce the number of incidents of a distraction burglar gaining entry uninvited, and also help reduce other crimes such as walk-in burglaries
- Adopt methods that encourage interaction rather than passivity on the part of the audience of older people, to maximise learning effectiveness, particularly through the use of face-to-face awareness-raising strategies such as role-playing
- Promote self-confidence and feelings of personal control over victimisation amongst older people through reinforcing messages about doorstep behaviour, as these can minimise future vulnerability
- Wherever possible tailor campaign strategies, material and delivery style to meet the needs of individual recipients, including minority ethnic communities, through focused local campaigns using local community resources
- To encourage the home-owner to take action, enable the viewer to witness an actual (staged) victimisation, and alert them to the repercussions of unsafe doorstep practices
- Encourage the reporting of attempted and successful distraction burglary incidents amongst all communities.

## **2. Reducing vulnerability**

**Environmental factors** that may mark out a potential target for distraction burglaries include external property indicators of a vulnerable resident include neglected gardens and décor. Suggestions as to how these risk factors could effectively be minimised are presented (see page 3).

**Psycho-social factors** (e.g. poor mobility and difficulties in carrying out activities of daily living) may also factor into an individual’s extent of vulnerability. The research also identified isolation as a vulnerability factor. Recommendations to reduce vulnerability caused by these factors are given.

## **3. Reducing impact once a crime has occurred**

The findings from the study on distraction burglary highlighted the importance of assessing and treating victims as individuals, rather than developing a standard response to distraction burglary victims. This could apply equally to victims of burglary. Suggestions are presented.

### **Summary of evaluation conclusions**

According to the British Crime Survey older people are at lower risk of being a victim of both property and personal crime than the general population (Chivite-Matthews and Maggs, 2002). Despite this they have similar levels of worry for most crimes as people in other age groups and the level of worry increases for those in poor health.

Research studies conducted into the incidence and impact of burglary and distraction burglary against older people have shown that, whilst many older people cope well following burglary victimisation, those that are most vulnerable can suffer more severe consequences.

### **How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions**

This guidance is based upon the findings from literature review evidence. These sources are both from governmental publications and academic publications. The document lists reference to these in the final pages under the 'further information' and 'references' section.

**Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request.**

**Date added to the SCS website: July 2010 (RC)**