



Title: The Reducing Burglary Initiative: Design, Development and Delivery (Home Office Research Study 287)

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SCS topic headings: Home Safety, Monitoring and Evaluation

This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.

Summary of the intervention's aim

The aim of the report is to assess the adequacy of the Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI) programme design (as a key part of the wider Crime Reduction Programme 1998-2002), as put into operation, and to provide policy makers, policy advisers and researchers, with lessons for guiding future crime reduction programme design and development.

The key objectives of the RBI were to:

- sponsor and facilitate the development of innovative burglary reduction practices
- extend the evidence base of what works and what is cost-effective in burglary reduction, in particular through evaluating the effectiveness of innovative practice
- reduce burglary nationally by significantly increasing the volume of burglary reduction activity in the most victimised communities
- reduce burglary cost-effectively and to generate savings through reducing its associated costs.

The first of three phases of the RBI (launched in late 1998) funded 63 'Strategic Development

Projects' (SDPs), which were encouraged to pilot innovative crime reduction work. This report is based on an evaluation of 20 Phase One projects funded in the West Midlands, South West, South East, London and Wales.

Outcomes

A wide range of observations and recommendations are presented that focus on programme design, management and development activities. A selection is presented below under the author's subheadings. (See the document for a full context within which these recommendations are made.)

Funding criteria and bidding process

- Development seminars held mid-way through the Phase II and III project bidding processes, together with processes for providing feedback on bids, were beneficial in helping applicants improve the quality of final bids. These arrangements could be usefully replicated and refined in any future bid-based programmes. (page 83)
- Programme managers should not wait for project staff to come forward with their own training needs. Rather, a more proactive process is required for identifying and responding to training needs in a timely fashion. Managers should plan for peak training need to occur at the very early stages of a project's lifespan. (page 84)

Staffing and management

- Support structures were important under the RBI, because at the project level there was a general shortage of staff, and in particular a shortage of staff with certain skills, such as project management and analytic skills. (page 85)
- Better processes were required for identifying those key project staff that needed to acquire new skills quickly to facilitate project delivery. (page 85)
- It is desirable for projects to be strategically linked- and accountable to- their local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. (page 87)

Project development and adaptation

- Both central programme- and local project- managers need to consider the scope of their work relative to the resources available and the characteristics of the problem they are seeking to address. (page 88)
- RBI project activity was mostly dependent on the 'take-up' of services offered by projects, and on communities appropriately using the equipment or services that were provided. (page 88)
- Poor forecasting was often due to projects exaggerating the likely number of crime victims during the project period by carrying forward the number of victims in the immediate pre-project year. (page 88)

Reducing burglary cost-effectively

- The cost-effectiveness of projects was also impeded by a widespread lack of financial management, procurement and contract development skills amongst the pool of RBI practitioners. (page 90)

- Project managers frequently cited short project timetables as a barrier to achieving long-term change in project areas, with some managers feeling that there was insufficient time to generate sufficient community awareness and ownership of project work to achieve some sort of self-supporting continuity beyond the period of grant funding. (page 91)
- Projects felt weakly supported when it came to building in sustainability into their work- suggesting that more assistance is provided in future with the development of project exit strategies. (page 91)
- Phase I evaluators concluded that some RBI projects were highly cost-effective, though only a minority of evaluated projects were actually judged to be so. These findings need to be treated with some caution, though, in view of the methodological difficulties experienced with the cost-effectiveness element of the evaluations. (page 89)

Summary of evaluation conclusions

Projects under the RBI faced a complex range of development tasks, many of which were unanticipated by both programme and project managers alike. A key quality that was associated with the successful development and implementation of project work was adaptability. Whilst it was important for projects to systematically develop a plan of work based on a rigorous problem-analysis, it was also important for projects to have the capability to adapt intelligently to changing circumstances.

Insufficient technical and strategic support to facilitate local delivery existed against a backdrop of staff shortages and skills deficits. The review points to a general lack of project management, financial and procurement skills amongst practitioners. Weaknesses in identifying these challenges to delivery were accompanied by a lack of realism about what could be practically delivered within the time and resource constraints set by the programme. In particular, projections for activity and spend in the first year of the CRP took insufficient account of the time required to establish effective delivery structures and processes, leading to a widespread (and in the context of the RBI often unwarranted) impression that projects were struggling to deliver. In short, more time and resources needed to be invested in local, regional and central delivery structures (page 92).

Strengths in the management of the Initiative, (in particular benefits derived from the continuity of its management within the Home Office) combined with the determination and energy of a large number of practitioners, mitigated many of the limitations associated with the design of the RBI and the wider CRP. These positive characteristics in turn helped deliver substantial levels of effective burglary reduction activity (page 93).

RBI projects were notably effective at leveraging in significant amounts of local resources to supplement central grant funding (page 89). A key factor was the

effectiveness of the programme in delivering an appropriate level of resources to projects. Projects were more likely to be successful if local managers achieved an effective balance between the scope and dosage of their activities. (page 89)

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

- This report is based on a synthesis of two separate research exercises.
- This synthesis has been undertaken in part to provide a longitudinal perspective on the development of the RBI.
- The independent Phase I evaluation of SDPs consisted of three inter-related evaluations concerned with process, outcome and cost-effectiveness.

Gathering information- The process findings (which form the basis of this report) were based on semi-structured interviews of key project participants (repeated at regular intervals in some cases), non-participant observation of project activities, and attendance at project committee meetings. The evaluation of Phase II projects was solely focused on process issues and involved semi-structured interviews with project managers and the administration of a semi-structured questionnaire sent to all Phase II project managers.

This report is based on an evaluation of 20 Phase I projects funded in the West Midlands, South West, South East, London and Wales conducted by an evaluation consortium led by South Bank University, together with a Home Office evaluation of nearly 100 Phase II projects across England and Wales.

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

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