Scottish Community Safety Network

Title: Burglary Prevention: Early Lessons from the Crime Reduction Programme (Policing and Reducing Crime Unit Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 1)
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http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimreducpubs1.html (accessed July 14th 2010) NB. Other reports in the Home Office Crime Reduction Research Series are also available at this web link.

SCS topic headings: Home Safety, Partnership Working, Personal Safety, Community Engagement

This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.

Summary of the intervention's aim
The paper includes a number of recommendations on how burglary reduction efforts might be improved in future, and includes recommendations related to planning local burglary reduction projects.

This study is based on early findings from the Burglary Reduction Initiative which was a major element of the [then] Government's Crime Reduction Programme launched in 1998. The Burglary Reduction Initiative was an evidence-based programme designed to extend current knowledge of cost-effective burglary prevention measures and aimed to reduce burglary nationally by targeting high crime neighbourhoods

Outcomes
Chapters 1 and 2 stress the need to understand how the elements in the chemistry for burglary are brought together to generate high rates in local areas. It also shows how those elements can be assembled in differing ways. Given this variety, measures that have a fighting chance of delivering reductions in one area may be lost causes in another. The tri k is to understand the local problem well enough to direct plausible and potentially cost-effective efforts appropriately at reducing it.

The report details interventions aimed at addressing burglary for both offenders and victims. For the purpose of this evaluation the summary below focuses only on victim related measures that the report identifies.

Packaging burglary initiative measures

The case study localities conceived burglary initiatives in different ways and these can be grouped into three kinds- interactive, combined and contradictory packages:

Interactive packages consist of interventions that were designed to work in complementary and cumulative ways. Often there is an important sequencing to the interventions in which the effectiveness of one intervention is dependent on the successful prior implementation of another. A 'crackdown and consolidation' approach provides an example of an interactive package in which an initial police enforcement operation is followed by a programme of community self-confidence building.

Combined packages consist of a range of interventions that work independently of one another. Often these were framed in terms of long lists of interventions without a clear explanation of how they were related or how they combined to form an effective plan for reducing burg l a ry. For example, a number of projects included interventions aimed at offender, potential offender, victim and potential victim.

Contradictory packages consist of interventions that work against each other so that the success of one intervention results in the failure of another. An example of such a package is one containing target hardening and covert detection (such as tracking devices installed in electrical products) in the same properties in which the success of the former is to the detriment of the latter.

Wider locality related measures

These are approaches that aim to improve the area in which the burglaries are occurring. This might consist of a whole housing estate, a street, or a group of houses. Table 8 identifies two wider locality related measures that were proposed by partnerships. Both area lighting upgrades and neighbourhood watch schemes aim to increase the risk of detection for the offender by increasing the levels of natural surveillance, either through improved street lighting or by making residents more aware of strangers in the area.

Issues for those planning efforts to reduce burglary locally

1. Taking a strategic perspective: It is helpful to consider burglary reduction projects from a strategic standpoint that involves identifying and analysing the problem, devising solutions, assessing the likely impact of solutions, reviewing progress, refining approaches and evaluating success.

2. Assembling the local team: In each local area, there is a range of personnel with different skills, experiences and knowledge that may be drawn on to assist in devising burglary solutions.

3. Checking data: Analysis of available data will be important in defining the problem. It is essential that information is double-checked before it is acted upon, to avoid misallocating resources later.

4. Testing assumptions: At the local level, there will often be assumptions, or common held beliefs about the nature of the burglary problem and its causes. It is important that assumptions a re tested with available information and to distinguish between approaches that are founded on 'facts' and those based on unsubstantiated beliefs.

5. Devising suitable crime reduction plans: In developing the local burglary reduction plan, it is important to ensure that the component parts of the strategy complement each other.

6. Creating a self-sustaining process: burglary reduction strategies should, ideally, incorporate plans to reinvest some of the savings from successful schemes, thereby creating a process that will continue to tackle burglary in the longer term.

7. Adjust priorities to reflect crime reduction needs.

8. Allowing time for preparation of plans.

9. Clarify offence categories covered by initiative.

10. Allow plans to tackle 'virtual communities': The first phase of the burglary reduction initiative focused on area based problems. However, there would appear to be a number of burglary problems that are not best suited to geographical analysis, such as victimisation of students and those residing in houses of multiple occupations.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

A varied range of interventions and recommendations are presented here. For a community safety interest point-of-view the schemes focusing on burglary victims, specific situations and wider locality related generators of burglary are of interest (although the document also discusses interventions aimed at offenders too).

This report highlights the need for strategic approaches that incorporates analysis of the local problem that provides the basis for generating sustainable crime reduction measures. In most cases the projects reviewed involved a package of interventions, for example, approaches where one intervention was dependent on another. Other cases could be classed as combined packages in which long lists of interventions were proposed but not necessarily integrated with each other. Finally some were contradictory approaches in which one intervention worked to the detriment of another.

There are also recommendations related to the future operation of burglary reduction initiatives, focusing on the criteria for selecting burglary problems, the timing for the preparation of plans and the method of funding projects.

Further recommendations are presented for how burglary problems could be addressed centrally, by reducing the vulnerability of students, designing crime prevention features in products most commonly targeted in burglaries and promoting campaigns that reduce the acceptability of buying stolen goods.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

This study is based on early findings from the Burglary Reduction Initiative, launched in 1998 by the [then] Government's Crime Reduction Programme. The authors visited approximately 60 of the Strategic Development Projects (page 2 & 21) and gathered information and data about the range of burglary initiatives undertaken there. Presumably much of this was qualitative and anecdotal evidence from practitioners themselves, perhaps supplemented with individual organisational internal reviews and monitoring data.

However, it cannot be ascertained from this document as to the geographical context of these selected localities nor the socio-demographic, political or historical backgrounds in relation to previous burglary initiatives.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Date added to the SCS website: July 2010 (RC)