Evaluation of the Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative

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Distraction burglary (also known as 'burglary artifice') has generated considerable public concern during recent years because of the predatory way in which vulnerable and older people are targeted. The hallmark of distraction burglary is the deliberate engagement with victims by offenders in order to deceive them and gain entry to their dwelling. If this approach is unsuccessful, then offenders sometimes resort to violence. This emphasises the serious nature of the offence and its potentially damaging impact upon victims.

The research found that in West Yorkshire the average age of distraction burglary victims was 77 years. Almost three-quarters (72%) were aged over 75, with over half (57%) exceeding the age of 80. Most victims (69%) were female. It is estimated that distraction burglaries represent between four and eight per cent of all dwelling burglaries.

The transient nature of offenders tends to impede detection, so a proactive, victim-focused crime prevention approach is merited.

The Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative

The Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative (LDBI) was a two-year crime prevention project funded under the Home Office's Targeted Policing Initiative. The project ran between April 2001 and April 2003 with the purpose of reducing incidents of distraction burglary within the Metropolitan District of Leeds.

The LDBI successfully implemented a range of law enforcement and crime prevention interventions, which focused predominantly upon older people. These interventions included:

- a range of situational crime prevention equipment to enhance domestic security;

- a doorstep cold-calling protocol for agency visitors;

- a domestic contractors' voluntary registration scheme;

- a specialist distraction burglary detective and Scenes of Crime Officer;

- presentations to members of the public, the voluntary sector and statutory agencies;

- training conferences for agency personnel and neighbourhood volunteers;

- drama performances portraying crime prevention messages;

- educational crime prevention and detection videos;

- a high profile media strategy.

The LDBI took a multi-agency approach which utilised the expertise and delivery capacity of a range of statutory and non-statutory partner agencies. The City of Leeds has a well-developed older people's voluntary sector – which proved a key factor in the successful implementation of the project. Volunteers from older people's community groups were mobilised, which helped to extend the project's coverage and disseminate crime prevention advice, assistance and resources to large number of older people.

Another key strategy of the LDBI was to develop partnerships with an array of agencies providing services to older people. It then successfully equipped these agencies with the appropriate financial resources, specialist knowledge and tools that enabled the project's crime prevention activities to be sustained after the Home Office funding expired. A clear objective, therefore, was to promote the reducing distraction burglary agenda across a range of public, private and voluntary agencies in order to stimulate and 'snowball' further crime prevention activity.

Several of the project interventions obtained continuation funding from local and national sources. For example, West Yorkshire Police and Leeds City Council sustained the project's specialist distraction burglary detective and domestic contractors' voluntary registration scheme respectively. As the project was a relatively short-term pilot initiative, the identification and sustainability of good practice was a vital consideration.

Crime outcomes

Prior to the LDBI commencing in April 2001 the rate of distraction burglary in Leeds and in the wider West Yorkshire Police area increased. It subsequently declined in Leeds during the first six months of the project before rising again in line with the wider force area and peaking in summer 2002, 15 months after the project began. Much of this increase is believed to be due to greater reporting by the public following the widespread publicity and more efficient police recording practices. During the last nine months of the project the number of recorded distraction burglaries declined, falling to a comparatively low level after the funding period ended.

Cost effectiveness

The total economic cost of all the interventions was estimated to be £600,700. Around 88 per cent of these costs came from the Home Office grant, with the remaining 12 per cent levered in from other public and voluntary sources. Over half (54%) of total project costs supported staffing, with a further 23 per cent for equipment. The remainder paid for premises, transport, stationery and other miscellaneous costs.

Overall, the project was not cost-effective in terms of crime reduction outcomes. A comparison of the full project costs with generated crime reduction outcomes produced an estimated cost of £4,172 per offence prevented. In comparison, the Home Office estimates that the average cost to society from a burglary offence is £2,300. Consequently, the aggregated cost following the implemention of the LBDI was around £270,000. The project did, however, produce a range of positive outcomes the value of which is difficult to cost.

Key examples of good practice

Partnerships

The project:

- established an effective multi-agency approach towards crime prevention;

- gave pre-existing voluntary structures a significant stake in implementation;

- was managed by a motivated and resourceful co-ordinator;

- accessed expert knowledge of older people via a clinical psychologist and the voluntary sector;

- mobilised a breadth of public, private and voluntary groups in support of its overall objectives; and

- created strategic alliances between disparate agencies that 'joined up' service provision for older people.

Interventions

The project:

- developed innovative methods of delivering safety advice to older people, for example, through drama performances;

- delivered crime prevention messages within the context of social and leisure events, thereby gaining access to some 'hard to reach' members of the public;

- encouraged interactive approaches to raising awareness about, and combating, distraction burglary;

- promoted doorstep behaviour by which people can enhance their safety;

- developed strong media connections to promote and support its objectives;

- produced a range of crime prevention videos to equip frontline agency personnel with practical safety advice;

- funded a specialist detective with a cross-divisional remit, who followed best practice procedures for interviewing older victims of crime;

- funded a specialist Scenes of Crime Officer who enabled a faster and more thorough response to forensic searches; and

- established a voluntary registration scheme of domestic contractors that reassured people about the trustworthiness of participating companies.

Outcomes

The project:

- stimulated self-regulation within agencies whose staff rely upon gaining entry to people's dwellings;

- motivated replica crime prevention initiatives across the wider force area, as well other regions;

- promoted the reducing distraction burglary agenda within a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and groups;

- gave a national profile to the need for tighter regulation of the doorstep cold callers;

- gained additional funding from various local and national agencies to sustain elements of good practice.

Recommendations

This report outlines much good practice undertaken by the LDBI, specifically with regard to the methods by which victims might protect themselves and partner agencies can develop crime prevention campaigns. Here, its broader lessons for policy and practice are summarised.

Drawing on the findings of the research it is recommended that:

- crime and disorder partnerships, wishing to harness multi-agency interests in support of reducing distraction burglary, allocate responsibility for developing partnership structures to a 'Champion'; by encouraging personal ownership over distraction burglary, strategies aimed at its prevention are less likely to slip between the gaps of 'partnership working'.

It is recommended that police forces:

- create inter-force structures to enable the development of more efficient mechanisms of information sharing about the activities of highly mobile distraction burglars; operations 'Liberal' and 'Litotes' represent pre-existing blueprint models of such structures of regional police co-operation;

- create intra-force structures to facilitate the cross-divisional collation and dissemination of crime intelligence about local incidents of distraction burglary; appointing a specialist, 'offence-based' detective with cross-divisional responsibility for undertaking initial enquiries, can greatly facilitate this outcome;

- develop partnership links with agencies that routinely receive useful intelligence from the public about the activities of distraction-type offenders, including the utilities companies, Trading Standards and Social Services; the speed that relevant information about 'attempt' or 'actual' distraction burglaries can be transferred to the police is seemingly crucial to the crime prevention and detection value of such inter-agency alliances; and

- encourage greater use of the 'delayed interview procedure' to improve the quality of evidence obtained from victims found in high states of emotional anxiety; two caveats accompany this recommendation: firstly, the investigating officer should obtain the victim's consent in order to reduce the risk of re-igniting any post-offence trauma during the second visit, and secondly, the first 'light-touch' interview should gain sufficient detail from the victim to ensure that urgent forensic examinations are appropriately directed – post-offence contamination of crime scenes regularly impedes distraction burglary investigations.

It is recommended that distraction burglary reduction partnerships carry out the following tasks.

- Establish mechanisms for consultation and information exchange with agencies delivering services to older people, such as health agencies, Social Services, social registered landlords, the police, voluntary organisations, community groups, older people's clubs, by engaging with these agencies, partnerships can improve their access to 'at risk' individuals in order to better target crime prevention resources.

- Establish mechanisms for representing and consulting older people. Practitioners are advised to question common assumptions about older people and their behaviour. If the instrumental reasons that underpin the 'risky behaviour' of many older people are misunderstood then their susceptibility to distraction burglary cannot be fully addressed.

- Focus upon vulnerabilities rather than age as the principal characteristic upon which to distribute crime prevention resources. This requires recognition of the diversity found among older people and their different levels of risk. Such an approach enables

interventions to be more appropriately tailored and targeted to the needs of individuals and communities.

- Develop holistic educational campaigns that raise awareness about all the dimensions of distraction burglary. The various guises exploited by offenders are a useful entry point from which to explore these dimensions. These include:

    – bogus utility worker;

    – bogus public servant;

    – bogus domestic contractor;

    – other bogus worker;

    – other (non-bogus official) types of distraction.

    Although offenders' modes of deception and distraction can be usefully categorised, it may be helpful for crime prevention projects to break down stereotypical understandings of 'distraction burglary' and 'distraction burglars'. The manner of the distraction can vary according to the offending strategy. Sometimes 'distractors' try to gain entry to the dwelling, other times they entice the occupant outside. The characteristics of the offending group also vary. Offenders are not gender-specific (i.e. not always men), nor age-specific (although younger offenders tend to restrict their involvement to 'other types of distraction'), nor do they always work in pairs.

- Promote safety routines (e.g. doorstep etiquette) through interactive and discursive methods that encourage 'deep' learning. These practices also help challenge stereotypes, whilst avoiding a paternalistic approach.

- Manage the content of media strategies in order to depict positive images of older people that prioritise their strengths over their weaknesses. Headlines portraying older people as 'easy prey' risk reinforcing unhelpful notions of vulnerability, both within the minds of older people and the offenders targeting them.

- Develop innovative and systematic implementation strategies that access 'hard to reach' older people. This is crucial because whilst it may be relatively difficult for agencies to engage with those who are socially isolated, cognitively impaired and physical immobile, these characteristics are also considered to be indicators of heightened risk to distraction burglary victimisation.

It is recommended that future research and practice explores:

- other factors beyond age that might also shape the distribution of distraction burglary victimisation (e.g. the spatial dimension, health dimension, household tenure type, etc); such analyses will enable the development of more intelligence-led approaches towards allocating finite crime prevention resources;

- the longer-term physical impacts of distraction burglary upon older victims. If distraction burglary is a trigger event responsible for the terminal decline of some victims then the seriousness of the offence is being greatly undermined by the short-term gaze of the criminal justice system.

1. Introduction and background

The Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative

This report evaluates the Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative (LDBI), which was a two-year crime reduction project designed to reduce incidents of distraction burglary within the Metropolitan District of Leeds, West Yorkshire. Launched in April 2001 and funded by a grant of £554,000 under the Targeted Policing Initiative (part of the UK Government's Crime Reduction Programme), the LDBI pursued a combination of crime prevention and law enforcement strategies. Importantly, the crime prevention element of the project focused almost exclusively upon people aged 65 and over.

The objectives of the LDBI, as detailed in the initial proposal, were:

- to identify and target harden the most vulnerable victims;

- to establish a social network around potential elderly victims;

- to increase the reporting of unsuccessful attempts to commit burglary artifice;

- to increase the reporting of burglary artifice offences;

- to decrease the incidence of burglary artifice by 75 per cent;

- to decrease the incidence of burglary artifice revictimisation;

- to increase the detection rate for burglary artifice by five per cent; and

- to improve the quality of life for the elderly community by reducing the fear of crime and providing a supportive network which will break their social isolation.

The formulation of the LDBI occurred at a time of rising public concern over the problem of distraction burglary.

The national policy context

In early 2000 the Home Office set up the Distraction Burglary Taskforce, a national partnership comprising statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations. Established in response to the growing awareness of distraction burglary, it aims to

> tackle distraction burglary and thereby improve the quality of life of vulnerable communities through a co-ordinated national partnership initiative within England and Wales. (Home Office, 2001:1)

The remit of the taskforce is to promote the distraction burglary reduction agenda within a range of agencies by identifying and disseminating good crime prevention practice. An important aspect of its strategy is a national campaign to promote the 'Stop-Chain-Check' crime prevention slogan.[1] Its membership includes representatives from the major utility companies, the police, and central and local government agencies. The LDBI and national taskforce mutually supported each other, working together closely in order to attain shared objectives.

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[1] Because recent research found that some offenders walk into properties uninvited, this slogan is now commonly prefixed to read 'Lock-Stop-Chain-Check' (see Thornton and Hatton, 2004).

The local policy context

The LDBI originated from an informal network of local agencies that assembled in 1999 through a shared interest in distraction burglary. The principal organiser of this network was a Chief Superintendent of West Yorkshire Police, who later retired from the force to become the co-ordinator and figurehead of the LDBI. This developmental network subsequently formed into a multi-agency steering group that applied successfully for Home Office funding to undertake a city-wide distraction burglary reduction project.

The multi-agency approach enhanced the LDBI's capacity to identify persons at risk and disseminate victim-focused crime prevention advice through a range of agencies that provide services to older people. The unwitting role of the victim within many distraction burglaries underpinned this approach. Moreover, a proactive 'community safety' response must be viewed in the context of criticisms that distraction burglary tends not to receive the law enforcement resources that it deserves (see Steele *et al.* 2001). A local authority officer summarised the situation.

> *And what you can see with distraction burglary is, it's almost like domestic violence and racial harassment, which may not actually appear in the [crime] numbers but it does actually have a great effect on those people affected by it and so it is worth taking forward.*

Within this local context the LDBI aspired to mobilise a range of agencies beyond the police to participate within distraction burglary reduction strategies.

The target area

Covering 562 square kilometres, the Metropolitan District of Leeds in West Yorkshire was the target area of the LDBI. The City of Leeds is the main urban hub of the district, lying at the intersection of the M1 and M62 motorways.[2] Over the last two decades it has become a modern progressive city with well-developed administrative, commercial, legal and financial infrastructures. During the lifetime of the LDBI, six police Basic Command Units policed the target area. The city has the highest domestic burglary rate within its Crime and Disorder family grouping (family four)[3] and local crime prevention partnerships have, since 1999, received various government grants to reduce burglary.

The 2001 census reveals the size of the LDBI's primary target audience. It shows that the Leeds district population is 715,500, of which one twelfth (8.2%) are from Black and minority ethnic groups. The population aged over 65 years is about one-seventh (15.3%), just under half of which (47%) are aged 75 or over. Table 1.1 further analyses the age groups within this sub-population.

Table 1.1: Breakdown of Leeds population by persons aged over 65 years

Age group	Leeds population aged over 65	Percentage of aged over 65 group	Percentage of Leeds population	Cumulative total
65-74	57,728	53%	8.07%	57,728
75-84	38,256	35%	5.35%	95,984
85-89	8,972	8%	1.26%	104,956
90 >	4,592	4%	0.64%	109,548

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[2] For this reason the city is well located to attract highly mobile offenders.
[3] To compare the effectiveness and efficiency of service provision across local areas, crime and disorder partnerships and police divisions were grouped into similar social, economic and demographic 'families' (see Leigh *et al.*, 2000).

The Leeds district has 301,000 households, of which slightly less than a quarter (23%, n = 69,000) are occupied by people aged 65 years or more. Of these, just under two-thirds (63%, n = 43,300) are occupied by a single person.

The local voluntary sector

A well-developed older people's voluntary sector played an important role within the LDBI. In the mid-1990s, the Social Services Department of Leeds City Council used a central government grant to establish a network of older people's voluntary organisations known as the Neighbourhood Network Schemes. Maintained through a variety of funding sources, 36 of these local community groups provide service coverage across the entire city. Their mission statement is as follows:

> *Neighbourhood Network Schemes provide a range of services and activities for older people across Leeds. The schemes are supported by Leeds Social Services and other funding, and are managed by local people who decide what they want from the scheme.*

Although each group funds a full-time co-ordinator, they rely heavily upon lay volunteers to deliver care, support and advocacy services. These community groups were placed at the forefront of service delivery within the LDBI because of their access to large numbers of older people. Each varies in size and capacity, with the larger groups providing services to over 1,000 older people. Although other UK towns and cities benefit from similar voluntary arrangements, the sophisticated structure of the Leeds network must be taken into account if the LDBI model is to be replicated.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation of the LDBI ran between November 2001 and November 2003, in three tiers. Firstly, an *outcome* evaluation measured the impact of the project upon recorded crime rates, both within the target area (the Metropolitan District of Leeds) and the wider police force area of West Yorkshire. To this end, a range of data was collected from the crime recording systems of West Yorkshire Police. In addition, the outcome evaluation assessed the nature and extent of any *organisational* change that the project had stimulated within partner agencies to support its overall objectives.

Secondly, a *process* evaluation examined the project's implementation. In so doing, it aimed to identify any transferable lessons that might inform future initiatives. Drawing out good practice lessons involves learning from failure as well as success. The process evaluation therefore eschewed action research and maintained a detached stance from the strategic decision-making process. This detachment did not, however, prohibit the research adopting an *interactive* approach that engaged with practitioners *in situ*. Consequently, observational data were collected from a variety of settings, including fourteen steering group meetings, as well as other project events, such as training seminars, workshops, conferences, promotional events and drama presentations. A limited amount of time was also spent shadowing and observing the activities of the LDBI co-ordinator, the project-funded detective and Scenes of Crime Officer. Over twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted both with implementing practitioners and key local stakeholders.

Following the expiry of the Home Office funding, an evaluation survey was distributed to 128 local, voluntary, community and professional groups with a vocational interest in older people. All of those approached were members of the Leeds Older People's Forum, a network of older people's service providers. The survey canvassed local attitudes and experiences of the LDBI, as well as crime prevention policies for older people more generally. The response rate to the survey across the entire cohort was 40 per cent (n=51), although this increased to 64 per cent (n=23) among the 36 voluntary groups (Neighbourhood Network Schemes) that the LDBI particularly wished to assist with its implementation. Data from this survey are presented throughout the report to demonstrate the extent of implementation and identify examples of good practice.

Thirdly, a *cost effectiveness* evaluation compared the total cost of the LDBI (including financial inputs and resource donations) against the wider, societal benefits of reductions in offending.

Structure of the report

This chapter has drawn the contextual backdrop to the remainder of the report. Chapter 2 describes the dimensions of distraction burglary. Chapters 3 to 5 describe the LDBI's various interventions and the manner and extent of their implementation. Where appropriate, they also discuss their reception among the target audience, identifying any specific outcomes and good practice lessons. Details of the interventions that the LDBI considered, but did not implement can be found in the appendices. Chapter 6 explores the main issues arising from the partnership forum. Chapter 7 presents an outcome analysis of the LDBI's impact on crime rates. Chapter 8 presents a cost-effectiveness analysis of the project. By way of conclusion, Chapter 9 draws together the main transferable good practice lessons to emerge from the project.

2. Distraction burglary

This chapter describes what distraction burglary is and who the offenders and victims are, before discussing the extent of the offence. It concludes by situating distraction burglary within debates about crime prevention and older people

Defining distraction burglary

Distraction burglary is distinguishable from other forms of burglary because offenders engage directly with victims in order to deceive them and gain entry to their dwelling. This *modus operandi* contrasts with more 'conventional' forms of burglary whereby offenders typically seek to avoid victim contact by entering dwellings unnoticed, often when their occupants are away or asleep (Bennett and Wright, 1984). Significantly, this premeditated engagement with the victim shapes offending methods, targets and patterns, and subsequently informs the crime prevention logic of many of the interventions aimed at its reduction.

With effect from April 2003, distraction burglary became a recorded sub-category of the 'burglary dwelling' offence category. For this purpose, the Home Office defines distraction burglary as

> *any crime where a falsehood, trick or distraction is used on an occupant of a dwelling to gain, or try to gain, access to the premises to commit a burglary. (Hansard, 2003: 12/3/03, 968W)*

The introduction of this formal definition is likely to raise the profile of distraction burglary and allow easier monitoring of reporting levels. Thornton *et al.,* (2003: 51) warn, however, that a narrow definition premised on the use of a trick may fail to capture the variation found within distraction-type, victim-offender interactions. It is important to understand that 'distraction burglary' frequently overlaps with other (non-distraction) forms of burglary entry.

What is known about the offenders?

Although ethnographic research has studied the offending routines of residential 'street' burglars (see for example, Maguire and Bennett, 1982; Bennett and Wright, 1984; Cromwell *et al.*, 1991; Wright and Decker, 1994), relatively little research has considered the activities of 'distraction burglars'. The findings that do exist are mainly drawn from police intelligence reports, the victimisation studies of Jones (1987) and Thornton *et al.*, (2003) and the pioneering interviews conducted by Steele *et al.*, (2001) with convicted offenders.

Police intelligence suggests that serious criminals, demonstrating high levels of organisation, commit distraction burglary. There is evidence of informal tutelage, which reproduces patterns of offending, and of the use of 'tipsters' to identify and broker information about 'suitable targets' (Steele *et al.*, 2001). Many distraction burglars operate across a wide territorial range and are therefore accorded the status of 'level-two offenders' within the police National Intelligence Model (NIM). Exploiting good transport networks, some offenders regularly commit distraction burglaries across several police force boundaries, all within a relatively short space of time. A police detective explained the regional context to this pattern of offending.

> *And what you find with bogus offenders is they're very clever. They'll hit three forces in the space of an hour, and they tend just to cherry pick. They'll come along the M62 or up the M1, which tend to be the two corridors we get hit on, and they'll just drop off and do crime. They'll pick a point, sort of West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and bang, bang, bang, so they'll have done three crimes in three counties. Or they'll come to Leeds and maybe hit four divisions in the space of a day, so all that is, is one crime in every division.*

Police intelligence also reveals that offences committed within these 'crime sprees' are not restricted to distraction burglary. Rather, offenders sometimes participate in a range of acquisitive and violent crimes, including robbery, auto-crime and (non-distraction) burglary of dwellings and commercial premises. Therefore, simply to apply the label 'distraction burglar' can be simultaneously misleading and restrictive.

Distraction burglary requires offenders to demonstrate relatively sophisticated interpersonal skills, which they express through various techniques of subterfuge in order to deceive and distract their victims. Sometimes, they take advantage of a person's goodwill, for example, by requesting a glass of water or use of the toilet or telephone. On other occasions, they impersonate officials who might have legitimate reason to visit households unannounced, thereafter exploiting a householder's ignorance about, or fear of losing, key domestic utilities such as water, gas or electricity. Unsurprisingly therefore, most distraction burglaries occur on weekdays, during daylight hours (Steele, *et al.*, 2001).

Some offenders work alone, although most operate in pairs. A 'distractor' diverts the occupant, either enticing him/her outside or into a specific area of the house, while an accomplice enters unobserved usually stealing cash, jewellery and other portable items. These offence dynamics enable offenders to exit the dwelling without the occupant realising he/she has been victimised, and thus often leave the region before the police have been informed. Such risk-avoidance behaviour reduces the likelihood of offenders being identified locally and thus disrupts the effectiveness of police investigations. Hence the detection rates for distraction burglary are generally lower than that of 'burglary dwelling', fluctuating between four and six per cent (Home Office, 2001:6).

Although distraction burglaries can display high levels of planning and organisation, the degree of sophistication varies. As mentioned above, there is a cadre of offender who, after establishing that the occupant is alone or too frail to resist, may simply enter uninvited, often by physically barging in to the property (Jones, 1987). Therefore, a burglary that begins as 'distraction entry' may turn into 'forced entry' and *vice versa* (see Thornton *et al.*, 2003: 21). Moreover, distraction burglary can also develop into 'aggravated burglary' (i.e. burglary with violence), as offenders adapt their behaviour in response to the unfolding situation. Offenders sometimes use violence, for example, if unsuccessful during the search phase, especially if they believe that a large amount of cash is kept in the house. As Wright and Decker (1994) observe, the *modus operandi* of burglars is fluid because the process of burglary does not always follow a rigid and pre-planned format.

Different types of distraction

The analysis of recorded distraction burglary incidents found that offenders employ a range of guises to deceive occupants and thereby gain entry to dwellings.[4] These guises fall into the following categories, illustrating the importance of understanding distraction burglary as a 'family' of deceptions for the purposes of crime prevention campaigns and criminal investigations.

- Bogus utility worker (e.g. electricity/gas, meter reader, water board official).

- Bogus public servant (e.g. council officer, police officer, social services).

- Bogus domestic contractor (e.g. gardener, roofer, drain/window cleaner).

- Other bogus worker (e.g. collect/deliver goods, charity collector, door-to-door sales).

- Other (non-bogus official) types of distraction (e.g. person in an emergency or in need of help; requests a drink or to use the toilet; householder enticed outside by a person reporting to have lost something or to be looking for someone).

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[4] Thornton *et al* (2004) found that a minority of victims were not deceived by the offender's bogus guise, but allowed them entry all the same.

Figure 2.1 shows the extent of each offending guise as a percentage of all recorded incidents of distraction burglary occurring in West Yorkshire between September 2000 and November 2003. In line with common wisdom about distraction burglary, the guise of a bogus utility worker features in a large proportion of offences (31.1%). More surprisingly and perhaps contrary to official narratives, almost one-third of distraction burglaries (31.7%) do not involve the offenders operating under the guise of any type of bogus official.

Figure 2.1: Offender (modus operandi) entry guises
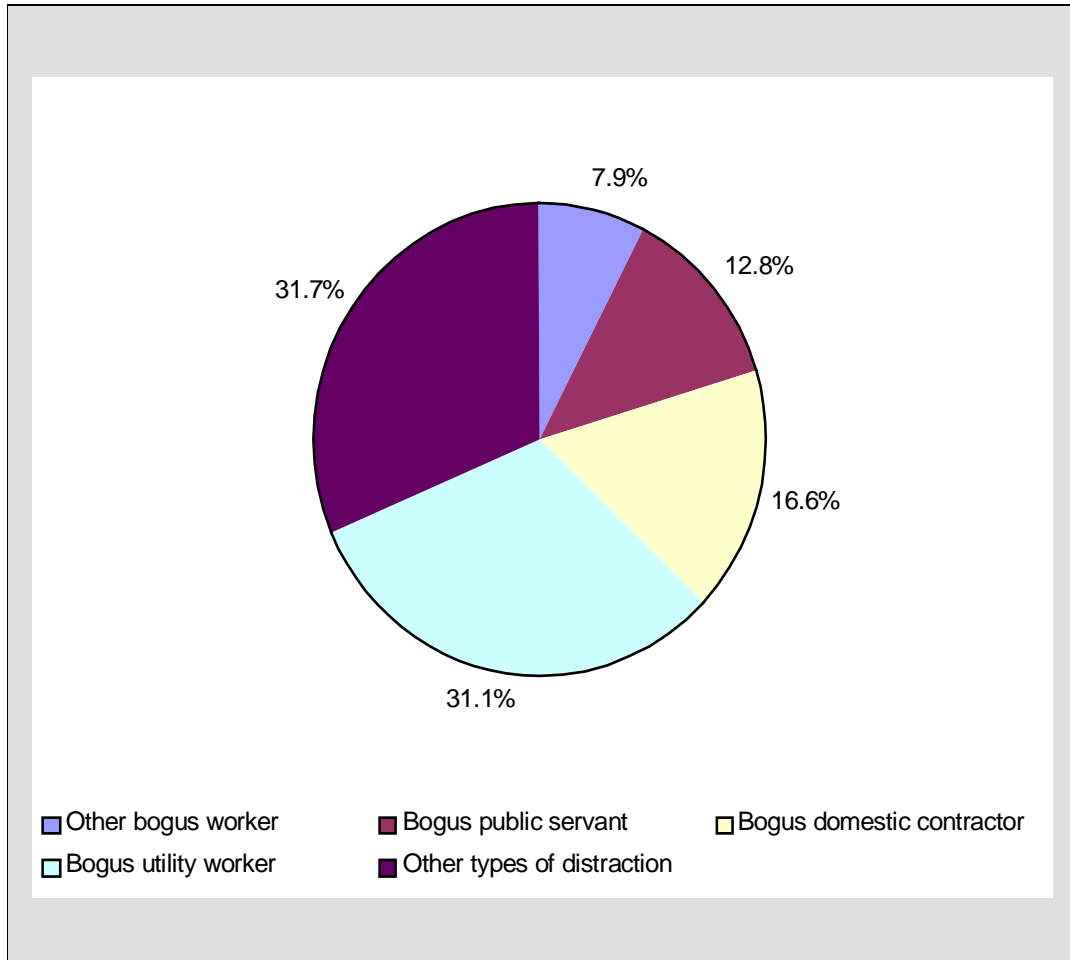
Source: West Yorkshire Police recorded incidents of distraction burglary (n=3498)

The absence of a (pre-planned) 'bogus' guise in 'other types of distraction' suggests that these burglaries occur at the less organised end of the offending spectrum and are therefore more likely to be opportunistic in nature, committed by local offenders exploiting local knowledge. This interpretation is supported by an analysis of incidents recorded on the police database, which indicated that the involvement of younger offenders within distraction burglary is largely restricted to those entry methods classified as 'other types of distraction'. Of course many younger distraction burglars are unlikely to appear credible when impersonating an agency official. Similarly, their offending methods may be constrained by unequal access to resources such as information, equipment and transport (Mullins and Wright, 2003).

The data also show that offenders operating under the guise of 'bogus domestic contractors' commit a relatively large proportion of distraction burglaries (16.6%). This finding corresponds with that of Steele *et al.,* (2001) which established a fluid relationship between fraudulent domestic contractors and distraction burglars. Opportunistic 'rogue traders' were found

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routinely to gain employment by means of doorstep cold-calling, thereafter committing distraction burglaries on customers, or defrauding them through a variety of deceitful commercial strategies, most commonly over-charging for incomplete work or systematically inflating quotations for services. Older people are frequently the targets of these rogue traders and the deception methods employed are often similar to those of distraction burglars, such as misinforming householders about the condition of non-visible, household features such as roofs and drains. Consequently, the LDBI effectively collapsed both, treating them as a single category of 'bogus crime'.

Victims and victim profile construction

In common with previous studies (e.g. Steele, *et al.*, 2001; Thornton *et al.* 2003), the victimisation data obtained during the research show that the victims' age, ethnicity and gender markedly structure the distribution of distraction burglary.

Age

The police database of distraction burglary incidents recorded the age of victims between September 2002 and November 2003. Figure 2.2 shows that persons over the age of 70 accounted for four out of five (82%) of all victims, whilst over half (57%) exceeded the age of 80. The average age of victims was 77. These data suggest that offenders either target people within the aged over 80 group more than any other; or that people in this age group are comparatively less successful at preventing their own victimisation – or both.

Figure 2.2: Age of distraction burglary victims
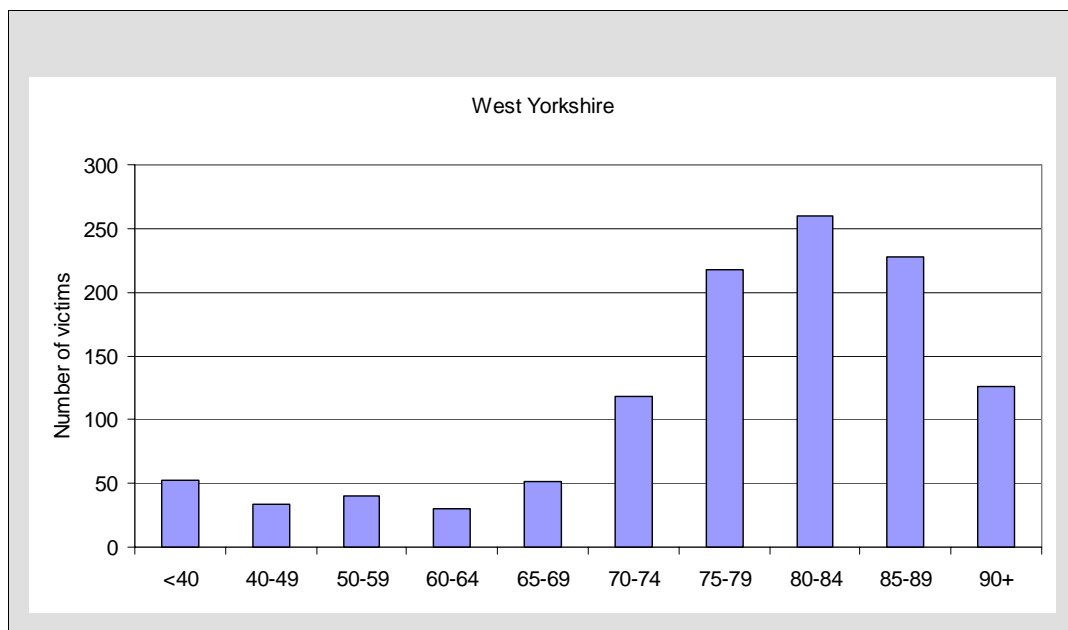
Source: West Yorkshire Police recorded incidents of distraction burglary (n = 1155)

Previous research on domestic burglars found that offenders construct typologies of preferred targets based upon subjective assessments of potential risks and rewards (Wright and Decker, 1994). Distraction burglars act in a similar manner, associating the ageing process with increasing levels of vulnerability and constructing older people as 'suitable targets'. Research suggests that they assume older people are more likely than other age groups to exhibit the following range of behavioural traits (see Home Office 2001):

- Live alone.

- Remain at home for long periods during the day.

- Acquiesce to doorstep callers.

- Fail to check visitor's identification badges.

- Undertake cash transactions at the doorstep.

- Keep cash savings at home.

- Fail to miss stolen items.

- Make poor identification witnesses.

- Fail to report the offence to the police.

However, the extent to which these traits are age-specific is debatable because many are also characteristic of some younger people. Moreover, the level of vulnerability among older people varies significantly. Like any age group, older people are heterogeneous, possess different attitudes and outlooks, behavioural characteristics, states of health, social and economic status, life styles and experience. Therefore, while some display tendencies that make them relatively susceptible to distraction burglary, others do not. However, stereotypical and ageist assumptions inform the offenders' constructions of older people as vulnerable, dependent, frail and therefore as suitable targets (see Steele *et al.*, 2001). Thus the prevalence of older people within distraction burglary statistics may reflect as much a systematic targeting process as their actual level of vulnerability.

Gender and household status

The police database recorded the gender of distraction burglary victims between January 2003 to November 2003. Figure 2.3 shows that over two-thirds (69%) of victims were female, whereas just under a quarter (24.5%) were male. These data demonstrate that distraction burglary victims are not only predominantly older people, but that they are also disproportionately female. In six per cent of incidents both men and women were recorded as victims. Importantly, although variations in police recording practices render this finding suggestive rather than conclusive, these data indicate that distraction burglary victims are mainly single people living alone. This observation reflects Chave's finding that over three-quarters (77%) of distraction burglary victims lived in single occupancy households (cited in Home Office, 2001:7).

Figure 2.3: Gender of distraction burglary victims
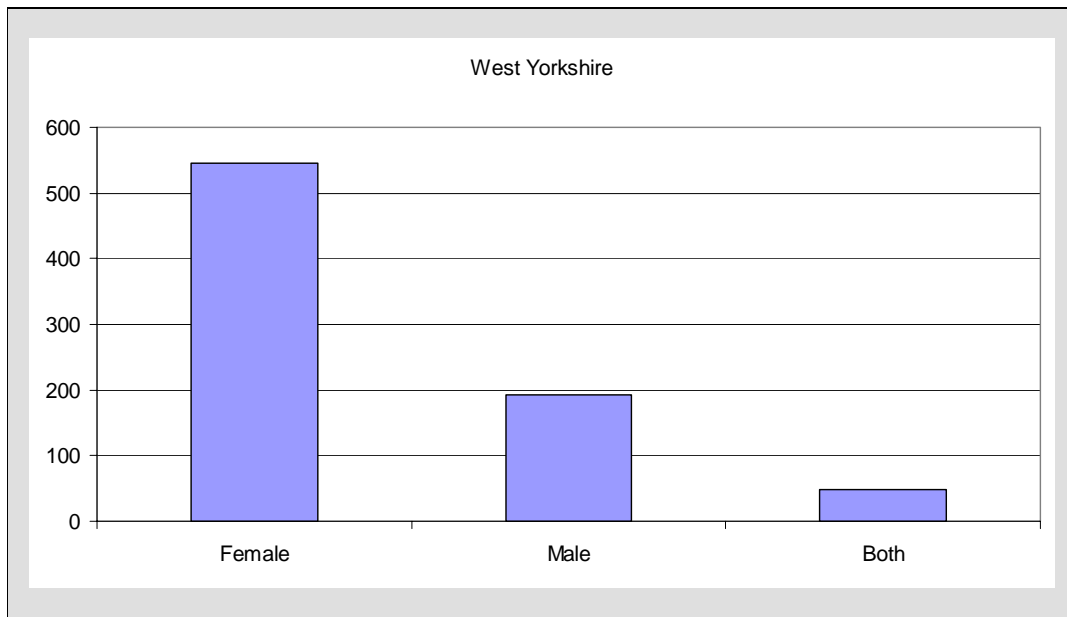
Source: West Yorkshire Police recorded incidents of distraction burglary (n = 787)

The disproportionate victimisation of older single women may be attributable to two inter-related factors. The first is the demographic fact that women usually outlive men, therefore older women tend to live alone more then men. This 'knowledge' reinforces offender perceptions of them as the most 'suitable targets' and, in so doing, they make assumptions about their physical and social vulnerability, as well as their overall capability to repel distraction burglars (see Steele, *et al.*, 2001).

Ethnicity

The police database recorded the ethnicity of distraction burglary victims between January 2003 and November 2003 (n = 774). The data show that victims were almost exclusively white Europeans (99%). Thornton *et al.*, (2003) report that distraction burglary is mainly a 'White-on-White' offence, while suggesting that lower reporting rates among ethnic minority groups may partly explain this disproportionately low level of victimisation.

The extent of distraction burglary

Assessing the overall extent of distraction burglary is problematic because prior to April 2003 it was not disaggregated from other burglary dwelling offences within official crime statistics. However, statistics collected between 1999 and 2001 from all 43 police forces in England and Wales, showed annual fluctuations of between 15,000 and 19,400 distraction burglaries during this three-year period (Home Office, 2002).

Two main considerations undermine the extent to which these figures accurately reflect the extent of distraction burglary. Firstly, Steele *et al.*, (2001) identified that police recording inconsistencies sometimes lead to distraction burglaries being mis-classified as fraud or robbery offences, or treated as 'non-crime' incidents.[5] Secondly, the failure of some victims to report distraction burglaries to the police also masks the level of victimisation. The reasons for non-reporting include: the embarrassment of being deceived, a lack of awareness of personal victimisation, the potential trauma of engaging with the criminal justice system and a lack of confidence in the police to respond adequately (Home Office, 2001).

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[5] The recent introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and the formal definition for distraction burglary may help remedy many of these recording inconsistencies.

The most accurate assessment of the extent of distraction burglary is drawn from the British Crime Survey (BCS), the national household victimisation survey which avoids police reporting and recording shortfalls. The latest BCS reports an annual 'burglary with entry' rate of 561,000 (Simmons and Dodd, 2003). Of these, four per cent involved the use of false pretences as the method of entry,[6] and a further five per cent of offenders pushed past the person who opened the door (Home Office, 2004). As mentioned above, some of these latter incidents are initiated as distraction burglaries, suggesting that somewhere between four and eight per cent of all burglary dwelling offences with entry might be distraction type offences.[7]

Crime prevention and older people

The preceding analysis of victimisation situates distraction burglary within a broader debate about the value of segregating older people as a discrete unit of analysis for crime prevention activity (see Mawby 1988; Midwinter; 1990; Pain, 2003). Victimisation research consistently demonstrates that older people are the least likely age group to become victims of crime (see Chivite-Mathews and Maggs, 2002). The 2001 BCS, for example, found a decrease in the rate of burglary victimisation from 7.6 per 100 households for the 16 to 24 age group to two for those aged 75 or over (Kershaw *et al.,* 2001). On the surface, these findings suggest that other age groups experiencing higher levels of victimisation are more deserving of crime prevention resources. However, such generalised accounts not only fail to disaggregate, and therefore identify, the uneven distribution of distraction burglary among different age groups, but they also fail to reflect the impact of specific types of victimisation upon different age groups.

Research into the impact of burglary upon older people is ambiguous (see Mawby, 2004). On the one hand, Donaldson (2003) found that its impact is relatively serious and that mortality rates can increase as a consequence. On the other hand, Maguire and Kynch (2000) found little evidence to show that burglary had a greater impact upon older victims than younger ones. As stated earlier, generalising about the impact of specific crimes on older people, such as burglary, is difficult. Incidents of burglary vary in their form and seriousness, from the unnoticed loss of a negligible sum of cash to the violent robbery of a person's entire life savings. Therefore, the emotional, financial and physical impacts of distraction burglary undoubtedly vary. Further, the heterogeneous nature of older people – in terms of their wealth, health, life experience and social status – highlights a varying capacity to cope with, and recover from, episodes of victimisation.

Nevertheless, given the broad commonalties of the offence, its impact can be considerable with victims experiencing the humiliation of being deceived and the financial and sentimental loss from the burglary (Thornton *et al.*, 2003). Additional sentimental attachments of older people to 'the home' environment (Sexsmith, 1990) may also intensify any victimisation trauma. Furthermore, contact with the offender during the commission of the offence increases the victim's level of personal risk and, as suggested, sometimes results in violence.

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[6] This figure increases to 14 per cent where the head of household is aged 60 or over (Budd, 2001).
[7] This research found that within the city of Leeds, distraction burglary accounted for three per cent of all *recorded* burglary dwellings (see Chapter 7).

3. Promoting the distraction burglary agenda

This chapter describes how the LDBI aimed to raise the profile of distraction burglary within the target area, both among older people and local stakeholder agencies.

While seeking to promote the distraction burglary agenda, and in accordance with recent policy recommendations (see Thornton *et al.*, 2003: 52), the LDBI did not merely disseminate general warnings, but imparted specific crime prevention advice designed to empower older people to protect themselves should offenders target them. The main principles behind the empowerment drive, or 'doorstep etiquette', are shown in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1: The five principles of 'doorstep etiquette'

- Always use the door chain when answering the door – 'Stop-Chain-Check'

- Always check the credentials of unknown callers

- Never employ cold-calling doorstep traders

- Do not keep substantial sums of money in the home

- Always keep front and back doors locked

The LDBI's partnership approach was crucial to its overall 'awareness raising' strategy. Below, is described the development and role of these partnerships, as well as the methods by which the project equipped partner agencies with the financial resources, specialist knowledge and material tools to enable them to disseminate crime prevention messages to older people.

Developing partnerships

In order to create wider structures of implementation the project courted partnerships with various agencies and community groups that either provide service to, or engage regularly with, older people, including housing associations, the police, neighbourhood wardens, Neighbourhood Watch Associations (see Box 3.2), Social Services' Home Carers and Victim Support. To help develop these partnerships, conferences were arranged for personnel to receive training in distraction burglary issues. For example, a conference organised with the Social Services department of the local authority enabled a large number of the city's professional Home Carers to receive crime prevention information so that they could relay appropriate advice to their clients. In outline, agencies were encouraged to:

- promote doorstep etiquette among their clients;

- identify 'at risk' individuals in order to refer them to relevant agencies (e.g. to receive target hardening);

- promote the various services offered by local voluntary and community groups;

- develop greater care and support structures around socially isolated older people.

Box 3.2: The role of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers within the LDBI

- Raise the profile of the offence within the local community generally

- Discuss the risk and various forms of distraction burglary with older people

- Demonstrate doorstep etiquette routines to older people

- Show older people and neighbours distraction burglary prevention videos

- Be more vigilant towards older people within neighbourhoods

- Provide greater social support to victims of distraction burglary

The LDBI also distributed funding via a 'Community fund' to stimulate crime prevention agendas within partner agencies. This gave the LDBI a degree of flexibility because the 45 localised initiatives funded under this budget stream were not pre-specified. Costing approximately £500 each, the activities within these initiatives fell under the following objectives:

- Raising awareness.

- Assertiveness training.

- Reducing vulnerability.

- Reducing social isolation.

The activities and products funded included:

- distraction burglary calendars carrying crime prevention messages;

- social and leisure functions at which crime prevention information and advice was disseminated;

- gardening equipment and labour to tidy up the external appearance of older people's homes;

- inter-agency development sessions to facilitate information exchange over vulnerable older people;

- doorstep crime training events to improve the doorstep etiquette and assertiveness of older people;

- television and video equipment to enable agencies to show crime prevention videos;

- crime prevention display boards, newsletter and leaflets to raise the profile of distraction burglary; and

- door chains to enhance household security.

These activities not only extended the project's overall coverage and strengthened the distraction burglary agenda within local organisations, but they also enabled it to leave a 'footprint in the sand'. The Community fund therefore helped the LDBI to 'light fires' (Tilley, 1992) within a variety of organisations operating at a neighbourhood level. The following

respondents to the evaluation survey indicate some of the ways in which this aspect of the project was successful.

> *We have just created a new safety and crime prevention project to attempt to fill the hole left by the demise of the Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative. [Respondent 10]*

> *The training days were excellent! It was also the catalyst that allowed our organisation to form a partnership with Help the Aged to fit their 'SeniorLink' response units[8] and door alert buttons in our area. [Respondent 13]*

> *For our organisation it has given us practical support and help and has opened the door to other initiatives: given us ideas for future planning and other initiatives that we can look for or do to improve the security of elderly people. [Respondent 22]*

A further objective of the partnership strategy was to develop greater care and support structures around victims of distraction burglary to assist their recovery process. The LDBI therefore planned to create alliances between agencies and thereby provide a cradle of social support for victims. Consequently, Victim Support had a pivotal role to refer all older victims of distraction burglary to voluntary and community groups that could provide them with ongoing support. Local interpretations of data protection regulations, however, prevented the routine transfer of personal details between these statutory and non-statutory agencies. The LDBI attempted to overcome this obstacle by seeking victims' consent for their personal details to be passed to other relevant agencies. This aspect of the project, however, failed to develop as initially envisaged. Nevertheless, all three Victim Support branches located within the target area continued to support the project's overall objectives (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3: The role of Victim Support within the LDBI

- Volunteers and paid staff receive training in distraction burglary and older people's issues

- Increase the priority status accorded to distraction burglary victims

- Discuss with victims their own victimisation process and thereby seek to re-empower them

- Promote the adoption of doorstep etiquette among victims

- Refer victims to target hardening agencies for additional security equipment

- Promote the role and services offered by voluntary groups to distraction burglary victims

- Liaise with the specialist distraction burglary detective over victims' circumstances prior to initial visit

- Disseminate distraction burglary prevention literature to all older victims of crime

By establishing a wide-reaching partnership approach, the LDBI was able to incorporate a variety of agencies and community groups within both the design and implementation of its 'awareness raising' interventions. These included:

- verbal presentations;

- drama presentations;

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[8] SeniorLink is a 24-hour 'community alarm' that enables householders to immediately contact remote monitoring staff (see Mawby, 2004).

- video presentations;

- ringmaster messaging system;

- school visits; and

- media coverage.

Verbal presentations

Throughout the life of the LDBI, the co-ordinator and other steering group members gave approximately 100 presentations about distraction burglary to audiences composed of older people, voluntary sector personnel and local agency staff. In order to reach the target audience a range of older people's forums were approached, including community day centres, luncheon clubs, widower groups, bereavement forums, and pensioner associations. These presentations enabled crime prevention messages to be relayed directly to groups of older people.

Drama presentations

One of the LDBI's key challenges was to deliver crime prevention messages through innovative strategies. At one level, this challenge arose from the practical difficulties of raising awareness among the entire target group, as some older people are 'hard to reach' because of their social isolation and reduced physical mobility.[9] At another level, it recognises that those suffering a degree of cognitive impairment tend to learn more effectively when information is delivered within an enriched social and psychological context (Robertson, 1987). On both counts, drama performances proved valuable. They formed part of a wider entertainment programme which served to boost levels of attendance and thereby 'get the grease to the squeak' (Hough and Tilley, 1988), whilst incorporating audio and visual cues to deliver crime prevention messages within an active, as opposed to passive, learning environment.

Implementation

The LDBI arranged for two theatre companies to stage distraction burglary performances throughout the Leeds area. The first theatre company, Feeling Good, comprised older actors, employing 'naturalistic' story telling methods. The second group, Metamorphosis comprised younger actors, working within the modern tradition of 'experimental theatre'.

In preparation for their performances, the Feeling Good group consulted a clinical psychologist specialising in older people about the precise nature and content of the script.

Important insights gained from these consultations included ensuring that the script:

- was 'person-centred' and deconstructed the experience of distraction burglary from the victim's perspective;

- contained sufficient time gaps to assist audiences to 'internalise' the information presented;

- removed unnecessary and supplementary information; and

- contained a short interactive interval during which audiences were invited to discuss openly their knowledge about, and experiences of, distraction burglary.

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[9] Whilst guidance to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 labels 'the elderly' a hard to reach group, this is both an over-generalisation and potentially stigmatising in its capacity to make culpable those sub-populations that agencies may find it difficult to engage with effectively (Jones and Newburn, 2001).

The performances were pitched at a level suitable for the most cognitively challenged audiences because those with cognitive impairment are considered particularly vulnerable. They therefore aimed to ensure that *all* audience members understood the relayed crime prevention information. In adopting this 'lowest common denominator' to message delivery, the actors were mindful that performances did not belittle audiences. This is a fundamental consideration because members of the public are less likely to heed, or pay appropriate attention to, crime prevention messages delivered in a condescending or derisory manner.

The Feeling Good performances constituted a series of short sketches that contrasted a range of negative and positive doorstep actions, while demonstrating the breadth of distraction guises and deceptions employed by offenders. However, because the drama group contained no child or young adult cast members it could not portray the offending routines of this age group.

Box 3.4 displays the key messages delivered during the performances. In demonstrating the dimensions of distraction burglary, it is important to emphasise that victims are sometimes enticed outside the house, beyond the doorstep. This is because within the context of such 'other types of distraction' incidents (e.g. lost ball in garden), the 'Stop-Chain-Check' message may be less appropriate because the distractor is not seeking to enter the dwelling.

Box 3.4: Key crime prevention messages of the drama performances

- Always use the door chain

- Always keep valuables out of sight (e.g. jewellery, purse, handbag)

- Never keep large sums of money in the house

- Always ask doorstep callers for an identification card

- Always keep a list of official phone numbers to verify a caller's identity

- Don't buy from doorstep traders

- If expecting a caller, ask someone to be present

- Bogus callers come in many guises

The performances also visually displayed a series of concise and easily memorable mnemonic slogans to facilitate audience memory retention. These are listed in Box 3.5.

Box 3.5: Key crime prevention slogans employed in theatre performances

- 'Stop-Chain-Check'

- 'No appointment, no entry'

- 'It's not being impolite to keep callers out'

- 'If in doubt, keep them out'

- 'Just say no and they'll soon go away'

- 'Careless talk helps thieves'

- 'Remember a lady can be shady'

The Feeling Good group began performing in November 2001 to a wide range of older people's voluntary and community groups. By April 2003 it had staged over 80 performances within the Leeds area, with audience strengths ranging from a dozen to over 200. During the life of the LDBI, the profile of the Feeling Good company grew, resulting in it performing over 40 shows outside the target area. In response to sustained demand, the group decided to continue performing the shows beyond the funding period.[10]

The performances of the second drama group, Metamorphosis, were included within a series of social events that Crimestoppers organised in partnership with the voluntary sector. Over a three-month period almost 800 older people and over 100 volunteers attended 16 events designed to provide audiences with an enjoyable experience while delivering crime prevention information. Again, these drama performances promoted the use of 'doorstep etiquette'. Each event also included a presentation about the role of Crimestoppers, the First Checkpoint scheme and a general discussion about distraction burglary.

Discussion

The respondents to the evaluation survey felt that the Feeling Good theatre performances were well received and subsequently provoked considerable amounts of discussion among audience members. The following survey responses are illustrative.

> *The impact has been greater than anticipated, people still talk (over a year later) about the sketches and the messages they were relaying. [Respondent 3]*

> *Very good at getting the message across to an elderly audience: clear and dramatic portrayal of 'right and wrong' way of keeping safe. [Respondent 4]*

> *Positive feedback from all the older people who have seen them. It reminded them in a positive and entertaining way and made them think about how they do things! [Respondent 8]*

> *Realistic and thought provoking; designed to encourage our elderly residents to change their life long habit of trusting those who come to the door. [Respondent 16]*

> *The work of Feeling Good theatre company really raised awareness in our Sheltered Housing schemes, and has brought a real buzz to our community involvement for older persons effort. [Respondent 31]*

Respondents also regarded the Crimestoppers events as successful and enjoyable occasions, although as the following quotations suggest, some concerns were raised over the delivery of the performances.

> *Positive: good afternoon out, people enjoyed the entertainment. Negative: drama could have been seen as patronising. [Respondent 3]*

> *They didn't deliver their work in an adult way to older people – they were patronising. [Respondent 15]*

> *The information on Crimestoppers was very useful; the theatre group was condescending. [Respondent 19]*

These responses suggest that some audience members failed to relate positively to the experimental theatre style of performance characterised by exaggerated choreography, ironic humour and heavily caricatured scripts. Hence, as well as script content, drama productions need also to give consideration to form, context and the anticipated tastes of the target

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[10] A video featuring the group, which provides guidance on producing distraction burglary performances, is available (see http://www.doorstepcrime.com/).

audience.[11] Nonetheless, the relatively high levels of attendance demonstrate the practical value of disseminating crime prevention messages within the context of a social event.

Production and dissemination of crime prevention videos

Crime prevention videos were another mechanism through which the LDBI promoted the distraction burglary agenda, both among older people and agency personnel. The steering group commissioned a major regional television company to produce a series of four educational films about distraction burglary. Using a combination of actors and practitioners, each fifteen-minute video relayed crime prevention strategies to specific audiences that the project wished to mobilise. A brief description of the content of each video follows, as well as the dissemination mechanisms.

Beat the Bogeyman

Shown mainly at raising awareness and training events (e.g. presentations, workshops, conferences and seminars), *Beat the Bogeyman* aimed to give older people and 'frontline' agency staff an introductory education about distraction burglary. Box 3.6 shows the key content of the video.

Box 3.6: Key messages of the Beat the Bogeyman video

- The relatively organised nature of offenders and the variety of methods employed

- The potential impact of the crime on the older victim (i.e. increased fear of crime, physical and mental decline)

- Crime prevention strategies (e.g. increased use of target hardening and doorstep etiquette, well kept gardens, avoid displaying address nameplates, don't conduct business with doorstep traders, verify the identification of domestic cold callers)

- The importance of reporting incidents and the reasons for low reporting rates (e.g. intimidation of the criminal justice system, personal embarrassment)

- The increased vulnerability of older people associated with social isolation and lack of social support

- The pivotal role of carers in warning vulnerable people and referring them to relevant support agencies, such as Neighbourhood Watch and community groups

Beware the Bogeyman

Beware the Bogeyman aimed to equip relevant agency representatives, including neighbourhood watch co-ordinators, professional carers, neighbourhood wardens, and lay volunteers, with a practical tool to demonstrate crime prevention techniques to older people. A guidance manual for 'learning facilitators', produced by the LDBI and previously piloted by one of the voluntary organisations, accompanied the video. It promoted the principles of 'doorstep etiquette' and encouraged doorstep assertiveness through interactive learning, such as audio-visual stimulation, group discussions, practical demonstrations and role plays. Lay volunteers from across Leeds attended a training conference and were tasked to deliver the intervention within neighbourhoods.

The video was shown in older people's homes and community group settings to the extent that the LDBI co-ordinator estimated approximately 5,000 older people had viewed it. Many

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[11] Other forms of drama are also utilised as vehicles for crime prevention, for example, musical productions that seek to instil 'learning through reminiscing', see for example http://www.dorsetmagic.co.uk/trickster/

respondents to the evaluation survey regarded the video as a particularly useful means of delivering safety advice:

> *Video was very well received – once again clients could see themselves in the same situation. [Respondent 14]*

> *Well received and the message is easily understood. [Respondent 21]*

The responses also indicated considerable variation in the extent to which different voluntary groups had shown the video. This is unsurprising because some of these groups possess a far greater lay capacity then others. Moreover, while the policy of utilising the voluntary sector to deliver interventions brings both practical and clear cost-efficiency advantages, in so doing implementation is largely contingent on the goodwill of volunteers as well as their notions of self-competence (McGonigle, 2002). The following quotations are illustrative:

> *Somehow, this didn't take off – though our volunteer did the training. [Respondent 2]*

> *Have used [the video] for groups – and have had positive feedback. Would like to use with individuals but volunteer or worker time not available. [Respondent 8]*

> *Might have been better to have a person from LDBI to demonstrate the video because we were not sure that we had the professional expertise. [Respondent 12]*

> *Do have the video, but no resources to follow up. [Respondent 20]*

These responses suggest that crime prevention partnerships seeking to utilise the voluntary sector in the delivery of interventions should seek to monitor their actual level of participation.

Catch the Bogeyman

Produced for a police audience in consultation with a clinical psychologist, *Catch the Bogeyman* demonstrated best practice techniques for interviewing older victims of crime. The video's key points are highlighted in Box 3.7.

Box 3.7: Best practice techniques for interviewing older victims of crime

- Do not make any assumptions about the victim on the basis of (old) age

- Develop a personal rapport with the victim and seek to decrease his/her anxiety (i.e. remove trauma)

- Be aware of the victims cognitive abilities and social circumstances

- Use plain language and shorter sentences

- Avoid discussing irrelevant information

- Provide suitable gaps between questions, giving the victim more time to formulate an appropriate response

- Avoid external distractions (e.g. remove pets, ensure radios and televisions are switched off, etc.)

Copies of the video were sent to all divisional commanders, crime managers and community safety departments in each of the 13 police divisions within the West Yorkshire Police area.

Produced near the end of the LDBI, *First Contact* portrayed the interconnections between distraction burglary and domestic contractor fraud, thus emphasising the benefits available to the police through partnerships with Trading Standards agencies. It offered guidance to Trading Standards' telephone call handlers about how best to elicit detailed information from complainants of 'bogus crime', and suggested that such information should always be passed to the police. It also encouraged call handlers to refer complainants to support agencies, such as Victim Support, Neighbourhood Watch and local community groups.

The video series provided the project with a practical tool through which to raise public awareness about distraction burglary. The continuing availability of the videos has provided an enduring legacy of the LDBI's programme of work. Since the end of the project, West Yorkshire Trading Standards has continued to distribute the videos to inquiring organisations.[12] Furthermore, the videos also increased the geographical coverage of the LDBI beyond its target area because, unlike target hardening-based interventions, they are not tied to a particular locality.

Ringmaster messaging system

The Ringmaster messaging system was a warning tool that disseminated distraction burglary information to over 80 older people's organisations, community groups and Neighbourhood Watch associations. During the LDBI approximately 220 recorded telephone messages were circulated, each containing information about recent instances of distraction burglary occurring within the target area. Specifically, these briefings made participating agencies aware of occasions when offenders appeared to be targeting particular neighbourhoods as well as any new offending routines. The specialist detective collated the relevant crime information on a city-wide basis, which was then passed to a police crime prevention officer who circulated it through the ringmaster system. In so doing, the officers felt the regularity and speed at which current information was disseminated were particularly important features of the system.

Responses to the survey highlighted that the use of this crime information varied between organisations. Some disseminated it through newsletters, whilst others displayed it on community boards or in message books. However most organisations, reticent about raising fear of crime among their clients, circulated the information only to their frontline agency staff or Neighbourhood Watch members. The following survey responses illustrate the range of views.

> *The ringmaster system is first class. It very quickly gets the important information out to voluntary groups in the city. We can then spot if our area has been targeted. I talk to my clients regularly about what has been happening – any new tricks around etc. [Respondent 14]*

> *This is copied and circulated to all four social centres, committee members and all paid staff. Everyone within [our organisation] constantly uses these reported incidents as reinforcing messages when talking to clients about self-protection and doorstop protocol. [Respondent 10]*

> *Very limited dissemination. Not suitable for general publicity (e.g. posters) due to format and constant publicity about burglaries would raise anxiety too highly. Perhaps not suitable for a city-wide organisation – more useful at neighbourhood level? [Respondent 44]*

Hence, some organisations felt the information provided by the system was a useful awareness raising mechanism that informed their staff about the changing nature of risk and victimisation.

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[12] See http://www.doorstepcrime.com/

School visits

To reduce the social distance that often segregates older and younger people, the project arranged for two older people's community groups to visit two local schools. During these visits, distraction burglary, crime and matters of general social well-being were discussed within the context of citizenship classes. The visits sought to promote intergenerational understanding, develop a broader sense of citizenship within pupils and reduce any social dislocation between the two age groups. Thereafter, pupils were encouraged to return home and discuss distraction burglary issues with older relatives, thereby further raising awareness within the target group.

A key personnel change within the LDBI restricted the number of school visits that occurred. Nevertheless, the logic behind them acknowledges that crime prevention projects for older people might benefit from a broader social integration approach. This perspective emphasises that some forms of older people's victimisation results from intergenerational misunderstandings that give rise to mutual suspicions between younger and older people (Pain, 2003). It also recognises that older people's fear of crime is often informed by broader anxieties than just crime alone (Crawford *et al*, 2003). Viewed in the longer-term, attempts to increase levels of interaction between older and younger people are, probably, ultimately worthwhile, although their short-term impact upon crime reduction outcomes is likely to be limited.

Media coverage

The appearance of over 50 articles in the local and regional press about the LDBI aimed to increase public awareness about the offence and the project. The main regional evening newspaper ran a two-week 'distraction burglary campaign' and several local radio stations featured interviews with the co-ordinator. A specialist detective, funded by the project, also supplied regular factual briefings for this newspaper's weekly crime column, detailing recent incidents of distraction burglary. These media briefings played an important role in disseminating general crime prevention warnings, especially to more socially isolated and less mobile older people who may be reliant upon the media for news and information.

Despite this positive contribution, the role of the media within crime prevention projects can often be problematic. Although media attention may serve to boost crime reduction efforts (Bowers and Johnson, 2003), it can also stigmatise events or places by highlighting specific crime problems (Crawford and Lister, 2004). Similarly, it can serve to reinforce notions of vulnerability among sub-populations, a dilemma to which one of our survey respondents alluded.

> *Society and the media seems to have frightened parents into curbing children's play freedom – it has also told older people they are ever potential victims…a learning situation for the criminal to believe this too. [Respondent 29]*

The content of crime prevention reportage requires close management, especially if older people are the subject matter. A danger emerges when media coverage draws upon stereotypical imagery that depicts older people as frail, dependent and vulnerable. Headlines, for example, portraying older people as 'easy prey' reinforce negative stereotypes that construct older people as defenceless, thereby influencing a vulnerable self-image and identifying them as suitable or 'easy' targets (Midwinter, 1990). As such, they risk amplifying fear of crime and may lead to an increase in the targeting of older people by offenders. It is therefore important that project-driven media strategies address these concerns by reflecting positive images of older people that prioritise their strengths over their weaknesses.

Concluding remarks

When seeking to raise awareness about distraction burglary and thereby influence change in doorstep behaviour, it is important to consider the level of knowledge that this presupposes among the target group. Yet, even if significant numbers of older people already possess prior

knowledge about distraction burglary, then it may still be of crime prevention value to remind them of the risks of victimisation and thus reinforce the use of simple preventative behaviour (see Thornton *et al.* 2003). Moreover, agency personnel and lay volunteers within their respective fields may have limited knowledge about the specific crime risks that confront older people (see Elliston, 2002 with regard to public health officials). This theme emerged from the evaluation survey responses.

> *Taught me personally and professionally not to trust doorstep callers and to always convey this message strongly to my client group. [Respondent 12]*

> *The Leeds Distraction Burglary Initiative has put information directly before voluntary groups in Leeds. It has made voluntary groups very aware of a subject that has a very real impact on our clients. [Respondent 14]*

> *Raising awareness through this campaign has been excellent, especially empowering professionals to inform their clients of the choices available. [Respondent 49]*

In raising awareness and encouraging older people to adhere to the principles of doorstep etiquette, the LDBI recognised that it is also necessary to engage with the specific factors shaping older people's behaviours. It is insufficient simply to advocate that people should always adopt safety-conscious routines. Training guidance produced by the LDBI outlined this requirement:

> *…safer doorstep behaviour…does not involve telling the person what to do, rather it promotes discussion of safe behaviour through interaction and conversation.*

Such an interactive approach is important because it aims to counter the stereotypical assumptions that often underpin interpretations of older people's behaviour. It is within this context that educational campaigns aimed at encouraging greater use of doorstep etiquette among older people are required to address the culture of the 'open door', wherein householders leave external doors unlocked for the practical purpose of receiving regular visitors (Jones, 1987). The evaluation survey drew the following comments about the objective of changing older people's doorstep behaviour:

> *The project hit those people who are elderly, active and who are able to understand the concept of distraction burglary. But none of us have yet worked out how to deal with those who ignore leaflets and are so marginalised that having callers come in through the 'open door' is a part of their daily routine. [Respondent 16]*

> *My case load consists of vulnerable housebound clients, who often leave their doors unlocked due to statutory agencies visiting throughout the day. [Respondent 49]*

These responses raise two key points. Firstly, they emphasise that many older people leave their doors open or unlocked for deliberate and rational reasons, and not simply because they might be careless or forgetful. Initiatives seeking to influence doorstep behaviour are therefore required to engage with the full range of reasons that underpin existing behavioural practices. As the LDBI demonstrated, there is scope to address older people's routine security behaviour through consultation and training with statutory agencies and residents' groups to ensure that household visitors are not unwittingly promoting unsafe practices.

Secondly, they indicate that those more isolated older people are a key implementation challenge within distraction burglary reduction projects. In order to 'get the grease to the squeak', the delivery of crime prevention messages must consider that those most at risk of distraction burglary victimisation are likely to be the hardest to reach because of their social isolation, cognitive impairment and reduced physical mobility (Steele, 2001). Self-evidently, older people in this sub group are also less likely to be members of, or associated with, local voluntary or community groups and clubs. Therefore, innovative and systematic approaches to implementation are required if crime prevention messages are to reach this high-risk group.

4. Other crime prevention strategies

This chapter discusses the implementation and, where appropriate, the outcomes associated with the following crime prevention strategies of the LDBI.

• Tidying the gardens of older people to remove signs of deterioration.

• Additional security equipment for older people's dwellings.

• A doorstep cold-calling protocol.

• A domestic contractors' voluntary registration scheme.

Together, these interventions anticipated disrupting the capability of offenders to identify, and enter, older people's households.

Gardening work for older people's dwellings

Steele *et al.*, (2001) found that neglected domestic gardens serve as visual cues to offenders of an older person's occupancy. Tidying up older people's gardens therefore sought to make the house and its occupants less obvious targets of distraction burglary.

Towards the very end of the project, older people's voluntary groups from across the city were invited to apply for grants of £1,000 to fund environmental improvements to their clients' gardens. Subsequently, 17 grants were distributed benefiting an estimated 340 properties. This intervention was distributed by cross-referencing 'old age' with 'poor garden condition'.

The effectiveness of this place-based crime prevention intervention would have potentially benefited from a crime analysis input, which identified specific 'hot-spots', or areas of heightened risk, within the target area. By introducing more variables into the assessment of risk (e.g. a spatial dimension), crime prevention interventions can be targeted more appropriately at 'high-risk' estates and properties. Furthermore, unless this intervention motivated recipients to maintain the improved level of tidiness of their gardens, it otherwise represents a relatively short-term measure, likely to have negligible longer-term effects.

Additional security equipment for older people's dwellings

Although the majority of distraction burglaries involve the offender gaining the householder's consent to enter the premises, the LDBI anticipated that extra security equipment would enhance older people's ability and willingness to refuse entry to suspicious callers.

Implementation

Agencies and community groups were invited to identify potentially vulnerable households that would benefit from the installation of target hardening equipment enabling them to exercise greater control over entry to their premises.[13]

A wide assortment of security equipment was allocated via a graded approach that prioritised older people who had been recently victimised, single occupancy persons, those with reduced physical mobility and those thought to be at greater risk simply on the grounds of their age. The following security devices were distributed – the numbers are shown in brackets.

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[13]The LDBI also referred the addresses of approximately 60 older people to a parallel Home Office-funded crime reduction initiative specialising in target hardening work.

- *Automated door announcer* (340)

  Located next to the front door, the automated door announcer plays a pre-recorded audio-message as the householder approaches the doorway. It bridges the gap between target hardening and raising awareness by prompting householders to use doorstep etiquette, for example, 'Stop-Check-Check' each time they answer the door.

- *Brass door bar* (700)

  Functioning in the same way as the traditional door chain, the brass door bar allows a door to be ajar so that householders can check credentials whilst securely debarring entry to unwanted visitors.

- *Defender door bar* (400)

  The defender door bar is a wall-fitted device that employs a spring to close a door forcefully when released by the householder.

- *Door chain-mirror* (1550)

  The door chain-mirror is attached to the inside of the door frame to assist the householder to see a visitor while applying the door chain.

- *Door scope viewer* (100)

  The door scope viewer is a wide-angle 'peephole' device inserted through the body of the door to allow the householder to view a visitor without opening it.

- *External door grill* (132)

  An external iron door grill enables the householders to speak directly with domestic visitors while maintaining a physical barrier that debars access to unwanted visitors.

- *Identislot* (24)

  The Identislot insertion slot is usually fitted adjacent to the front door and allows a visitor to pass an identification card through to the householder, while the door remains shut.

- *Remote entry, door guardian system* (209)

  The door guardian system removes from the householder the responsibility for answering the door by passing it to a call centre operative who opens the external door remotely. Prior to entry, visitors must confirm the legitimate purpose of their visit to the operative by communicating a password via an intercom system. Thereafter the operative asks the householder whether they are happy to receive the visitor. The provision of the service requires a weekly monitoring fee, which the LDBI paid during the funding period.

- *Segment timer* (192)

  Segment timers automatically switch house lights on and off at timed intervals.[14]

After taking into account the installation of more than one device in some households, it is estimated that 3,500 properties received additional security equipment. The suitability, both of properties and people to receive different types of equipment formed an important consideration in the allocation process. For instance, the automated door announcer that

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[14] It is counter-intuitive that these devices will reduce distraction burglary because they are designed to deceive offenders that an occupant is at home, which of course distraction type offenders actively look for at a potential target.

'reminds' clients to adopt doorstep etiquette was aimed at householders with poor memories. Likewise, particularly vulnerable or fearful older people received the remote entry, door guardian system. As one respondent to the evaluation indicated, different older people possess quite different combinations of needs and preferences:

> *Some older people prefer multiple security measures, whilst others don't. We must not forget the person who would prefer measures but has the inability to use them, i.e. poor mentality/dexterity. [Respondent 50]*

Discussion

The effectiveness of target hardening technologies is contingent upon appropriate 'implementation-in-action' in that it must be used as intended. Without user compliance turning policy into practice is often impossible (Jones, 1987). Hence, the provision of target hardening equipment such as door locks, mirrors and chains, complemented other aspects of the LDBI in promoting behavioural change on the doorstep.

The evaluation survey invited feedback from community groups about the target hardening strategy and its reception among clients. All respondents welcomed the opportunity to distribute additional security equipment and indicated that the vast majority of their clients had been very positive about receiving it. As the following responses illustrate, the external door grills were much appreciated.

> *The external door grills are a wonderful extra layer of security – our clients rave about them – lots of requests continue to be received. [Respondent 14]*

> *External door iron grills were very popular. This gave people an extreme sense of security – they felt a lot safer with these in their homes. [Respondent 22]*

Two important caveats emerged however. Firstly, some respondents were worried that the increased use of target hardening might have led to greater introspection about their overall level of risk and thus increased their anxiety about crime.

> *Some older people feel too afraid to leave their home. Some speak of being prisoners at home because of extra locks, chains etc. [Respondent 4]*

> *I worry about a 'siege mentality' – nervous answering the door to all, even to friends. [Respondent 5]*

> *Too many security fixtures can give the impression of living in a prison, whereas changes in behaviour and ongoing support encourage confidence and self-esteem. [Respondent 19]*

These concerns imply that a negative by-product of providing crime prevention equipment is its ability to remind people of their own vulnerabilities, whether perceived or real. While this outcome – as the LDBI intended – may be *enabling* in that it encourages greater use of security equipment and preventative behaviour, it may also be *disabling* if it causes some individuals to stay at home when they might otherwise have gone out. This latter outcome is troubling on two counts. Firstly, it bears negative implications for an individual's quality of life (see Home Office, 2003); and secondly, since a fundamental prerequisite of distraction burglary is the presence of the householder in the home, then such behaviour conversely leaves them more at risk from *this* form of burglary victimisation.

Clearly, a close interrelationship exists between fear of crime and the employment of crime prevention strategies (Mawby, 1988). The main challenge is, therefore, to ensure that the recipients of security equipment perceive its capacity to empower them by increasing their control over access. In conveying this message, users of crime prevention technology are perhaps more likely to be reassured by the protection that it offers, rather than reminded of the vulnerabilities that it seeks to reduce.

Secondly, some respondents were concerned that additional security devices and procedures could create entry problems for support agencies upon which household occupants may be reliant, especially home carers and associated domestic services (see Wynne-Harley, 1991). Similarly, concerns were raised that target hardening may obstruct the access of the emergency services.

> *External door grills are fantastic against burglary. Local fire brigade not too keen but we have developed a protocol and the fire brigade visits after installation to talk to users about fire safety. [Respondent 8]*

> *Extra security can be a real hindrance and danger in an emergency, e.g. locked security gates and a fire, or collapse of an older person. [Respondent 12]*

As these responses suggest, security devices may also impede householders' exit and evacuation routines: a particular worry where an older person's health is poor or their mobility reduced. Therefore, when installing security equipment, good practice requires consultation with both recipients and relevant agencies, such as domestic service providers and emergency services, to make them aware of the presence of installed security equipment so that they can develop procedural and educational protocols.

Domestic contractors' voluntary registration scheme

LDBI personnel viewed the establishment of a voluntary registration scheme for domestic contractors as a key element within its overall strategy. The crime prevention theory underpinning this intervention was the close interrelationship between distraction burglary and fraudulent domestic contractors. The scheme aimed to prevent opportunities for offending by reducing the extent to which older and disabled householders employed cold-calling workmen. The LDBI therefore funded the compilation of an approval list of 'trustworthy' contractors to reduce incidents of distraction burglary and fraudulent commercial transactions involving household maintenance.

Implementation

Launched in November 2001, First Checkpoint (domestic contractors' voluntary registration) scheme employed two full-time staff, who remained in post throughout the two-year funding period. Initially, a cross-section of 220 domestic contractors, all recommended by local service users or recognised trade organisations, were invited to register. In order to obtain registration status, contractors had to be screened for relevant criminal convictions, be cross-referenced against a Trading Standards' complaints database, provide evidence of acceptable trading accounts and public liability insurance, and supply three satisfactory customer references. Several retired contractors were also recruited to provide a 'handy persons' service, which responded to requests for minor work.[15] By April 2003, 60 contractors, representing 24 specialist trades, were registered with the scheme.

All of the LDBI partners publicised First Checkpoint, although a particularly supportive relationship developed with West Yorkshire Trading Standards, whose core business is consumer protection. In order to increase city-wide awareness of the scheme, strong media links with the local press, radio and television were exploited. Over 70,000 publicity leaflets were also distributed via a range of local outlets such as community centres, council offices, Neighbourhood Watch forums, police stations and post offices. This publicity strategy sought to raise public demand incrementally, in accordance with the number of contractors recruited.

Whilst public demand for the service grew steadily over time, registering a sufficiency of contractors to provide a full range of domestic services became the scheme's main challenge. There were three main contractor recruitment problems. Firstly, the costs and administration of registration seemingly deterred some contractors from registering. Secondly, the scheme's limited organisational capacity, particularly the low staff numbers, restricted the extent to

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[15] Replicating the Handy-Van service operated throughout large parts of the UK by Help the Aged.

which it could proactively recruit contractors. Thirdly, during the life of the LDBI, the local economy was reasonably vibrant and therefore public demand for contractors was relatively high. Consequently the commercial pressure upon contractors to register was less pressing than it might otherwise have been in less prosperous times. So, while some contractors keenly signed up to the scheme, others did not. Paradoxically, the contractors of known probity that First Checkpoint most wanted to register had the least commercial incentive to do so. This signifies a predicament of such schemes in that the most 'preferred' contractors may be least available. Therefore, an important aspect of the success of similar future schemes is effective communication of the commercial and public service benefits to reputable contractors.

Outcomes

By April 2003, First Checkpoint had passed 3,800 customer referrals on to contractors, with work requests ranging from cellar conversions and outbuilding extensions, to the fixing of dripping taps. The scheme co-ordinators estimated that just under two-thirds (65%) of these referrals resulted in work being undertaken.

The arrangement required contractors to pay First Checkpoint five per cent commission on turnover generated by their referrals. The LDBI envisaged that this income would enable the scheme to become financially self-sustaining beyond the period of Home Office funding. Although the annual operational costs of First Checkpoint (inclusive of two full-time staff) were between £50,000 and £60,000, by April 2003 it had generated an income of only £15,300. Nonetheless, in response to its perceived crime reduction benefits, Leeds City Council made a commitment to sustain First Checkpoint with non-core funding until March 2005. A council officer – and steering group member – explained the decision.

> We obviously want to reduce all burglary levels across Leeds and to be effective in this, all types of burglary need to be addressed by appropriate projects. First Checkpoint was identified as a very valuable tool in dealing with the bogus callers and rogue traders issues, and so within our Burglary Reduction Unit we allocated funds to ensure its continuation. 'Cause too often many worthwhile projects are allowed to finish and are then re-invented a few years later often in an endless cycle of stop-start syndrome, where often any effective impact is diminished.

First Checkpoint aims to be fully self-financing by 2006. In order to meet this objective, it has recruited two extra staff members and the age-specific referral criterion has since been abandoned. The scheme has also been placed under the managerial supervision of a local charitable body, Community Action Support Against Crime, which is experienced in administering services in partnership with the local authority.

Discussion

The success of any domestic contractors' voluntary registration scheme is ultimately contingent upon the skills and competencies of its contractors. Recognising this, practitioners intended to monitor referred transactions via two independent processes. Firstly, surveyors were to inspect samples of work undertaken by contractors; however, this form of accountability was not introduced because the recruitment of suitably qualified persons proved difficult. Secondly, evaluation and monitoring forms were distributed to customers on a dip-sample basis.

The vast majority of completed monitoring forms emphasised the reassurance afforded by the intermediary nature of the First Checkpoint service. The following quotations typically illustrate client gratitude:

> The reassurance of the First Checkpoint staff gave me confidence to contact the contractor and consult him in my home. I have always been hesitant to do so on my own.

This is an excellent service which takes a good deal of the stress and worry out of hiring workmen. Being a widow I am very grateful for First Checkpoint.

Having someone to vouch for reliable and trustworthy workmen makes me feel safe and very secure.

Such responses reveal the feelings of vulnerability and apprehension that individuals sometimes experience when purchasing domestic services 'blind' from unknown contractors. Consequently, older people and their community groups welcomed First Checkpoint as a reliable 'public guarantee' against potentially exploitative private transactions. Irrespective of the scheme's impact on distraction burglary, the reassurance that it provided was highly valued. A respondent to the evaluation survey echoed this view.

There is a great demand for this service, especially from homeowners who are not eligible for other forms of help. People value the reliable referral system, but probably not (consciously) for crime prevention reasons – reliability and value for money. [Respondent 45]

In keeping with this sentiment, the vast majority of survey respondents felt that First Checkpoint provided a valuable service. Criticism, albeit rare, focused upon the unavailability of specific types of contractors, typically decorators and gardeners, prohibitive work delays and inflated prices. In the event of disputes between customers and contractors, First Checkpoint personnel were required to mediate. This exposes an implementation tension in so far as the success of the scheme relies upon the development of a professional reputation as a guarantor of contractors' general probity, whilst also sustaining amicable working relationships with contractors. Over time, the scheme's co-ordinators ascertained which contractors were reliable and dependable. As a consequence, some working relationships prospered while others waned.

Doorstep cold-calling protocol

The 'doorstep cold-calling protocol' aimed to disrupt offenders' *modus operandi* by establishing more formal and robust verification procedures for domestic visitors. By including legitimate doorstep callers more proactively within this process, the protocol prescribes a crime prevention principle which encourages householders always to request proof of identify. Thus, the protocol's value depended upon whether it assisted householders to differentiate between genuine and non-genuine agency visitors, thereby removing the offender's cloak of false legitimacy.

Implementation

The LDBI co-ordinator devoted much time to the development of the cold-calling protocol. During the negotiation process some co-ordination difficulties were experienced, chiefly because the deregulation of the utilities sector has fragmented the organisation of the industry's supply side. Nevertheless, after much negotiation, twelve private and public sector organisations from across the region, including six utility companies, the local authority and the local fire service, agreed to incorporate the protocol's procedures into their standard doorstep procedures.

The launch of the cold-calling protocol in June 2002 attracted substantial local media coverage as well as the support of the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI's) consumer watchdog, Energy Watch. Thereafter the LDBI co-ordinator broadened the protocol's geographic focus and began negotiations to place it on a national footing. Subsequently, in November 2002, 18 private companies signed the 'national cold-calling protocol', which was

launched by the Trading Standards Institute, as part of its annual National Consumer Week Campaign.[16] The procedures contained within the protocol are described in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1: The cold-calling protocol

- Where possible, agencies should pre-arrange visits with householders

- Where notification is not an option then each representative should, prior to entering a household

  – explain the purpose of the visit (e.g. read meter, sales visit, etc.)

  – automatically hand the occupant an identification card

  – carry an A5 size identification card with enlarged photograph and font size to assist visually impaired people

  – explain identification can be verified by telephoning the employing organisation

  – explain the appointment can be rearranged to enable the presence of a third party

  – explain they will not enter unless the householder is happy for them to do so

In order to help assess the extent to which the cold-calling protocol had been implemented within the target area, one year after its launch telephone interviews were conducted with personnel from all of the participating utility companies. Each indicated that their organisation had broadly adopted the cold-calling protocol as standard procedure and, to varying degrees, incorporated it into their training regimes. All were positive about the enlarged identification card, though some doubted the feasibility of conducting domestic visits on a pre-arranged basis. Some representatives were also ambiguous about the extent to which the protocol represented a substantial change from pre-existing procedures. The following quotations are illustrative of the range of views.

> *We pre-book visits by ringing ahead so most of the time households know we're coming; we tend not to do cold-calling. But the broad principles of the protocol were already included within our standard procedures.*

> *The protocol's not really that relevant for us 'cause I'd say that 99 per cent of our contact with householders is by appointment. Our field operatives carry the larger identity cards. Presentations have been made to them and the protocol is incorporated; though really it's involved very little change to established practice.*

> *The protocol is good for us – we like it. It's a jog for ourselves and is another procedure that we want our cold-calling advisors to be tightening up on. In fact they are audited on it as part of the EnergySure scheme. Our advisors all carry the enlarged identification cards and we won't let them work without them.[17]*

> *Our sales force have been made aware of it, though it's pretty much in line with what we do anyway.*

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[16] Partly motivated by the work of the LDBI the theme of this campaign was 'A Foot in the Door'. This aimed to educate consumers about their statutory rights when conducting business on the doorstep as well as the threat of distraction burglary.
[17] EnergySure is a self-regulating accreditation scheme for sales people working within the energy sector. Developed by the Electricity Association, it operates a code of conduct which, amongst other things, specifies that doorstep sales people must reasonably identify themselves to householders.

The protocol is based on our procedures; we've fully run with it, all our guys have the large identity cards. But the procedure is just a guide and parts of it won't be appropriate for every given situation.

The array of participating agencies makes it difficult to assess the extent of the protocol's *systemic* implementation, even within the narrow confines of the target area. A clear tension exists in some agencies between organisational effectiveness and the time implications endured by their front-line operatives adhering to the protocol's procedures. Also, it is in the interests of participating organisations to 'talk up' the extent to which the protocol has been adopted, much in the same way that the LDBI applied the lever of 'good public relations' to gain the compliance of participating agencies.

A range of individual impediments may also undermine the protocol's *operational* implementation. Clearly, the application of the protocol is an ongoing process that requires 'implementation-in-action' within an infinite number of dispersed micro-social interactions. This raises a sustainability challenge, particularly as its implementation is reliant upon agency personnel whose doorstep conduct is not only hard to supervise, but who are also remote from crime prevention objectives. Of concern is the impact of the 'human failings' of boredom and forgetfulness as well as the aforementioned time constraints, which may combine to reduce the extent to which the procedures are followed. If effective implementation-in-action of the protocol is to be sustained, then it will need to be frequently republicised.

Outcomes

In order to assess any impact of the cold-calling protocol, the changes over time in the distribution of the various guises adopted by distraction offenders in Leeds were examined, both before and after its introduction.

Figure 4.1 illustrates percentage changes in the use of offender guises between September 2000 and November 2003 (see Chapter 1 for category profiles). This time period spans the LDBI and enables the periods before (column 1), during (columns 2-4), and after (column 5) the project to be contrasted. The LDBI began in April 2001, the cold-calling protocol was launched in late June 2002 and the project ended in March 2003. The data therefore indicate any changes before and after the introduction of the cold-calling protocol as well as before and after the overall project.

Figure 4.1: Changes over time in the type of offender guise employed in Leeds
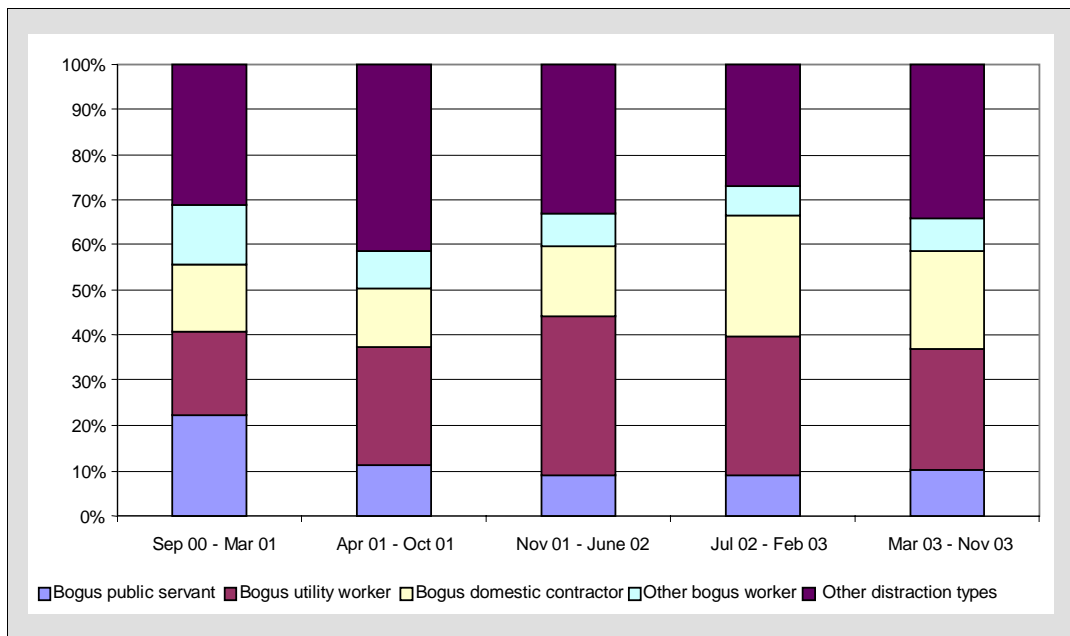
Given the range of utility companies which signed the cold-calling protocol, the LDBI expected it to have the greatest impact on those distraction burglaries which exploit the guise of a *bogus utility worker.* Between September 2000 and June 2002 the average monthly number of these offence types was 12.5; this decreased to 11.5 in the period July 2002 to Nov 2003. As a percentage of all offences the figures were 27.3 per cent in the before period (columns 1 and 2) compared with 28.9 per cent in the implementation and after period (columns 3, 4 and 5). These changes are statistically insignificant. A narrower view of the figures shows that although the percentage use of this guise declined from 35 per cent immediately prior to the protocol's launch (column 1) to 27 per cent in the last time period, (column 5) this change was also statistically insignificant.

The use of the *bogus public servant* guise declined during and after the project, halving to just over ten per cent following the launch of the LDBI, where it more or less remained throughout the project and afterwards. The percentage use of the *other bogus worker* guise also declined during the project from 13 per cent to 6.5 per cent. These decreases contrast against the increases in the percentage of *bogus domestic contractors* from 13 per cent before the LDBI, peaking at 27 per cent prior to the introduction of the cold-calling protocol and falling to 22 per cent after the project ended. A slight overall increase also occurred in *other types of distraction*, such as offenders asking for general assistance, a drink of water or use of the telephone.

The apparent lack of any distinctive trends in the 'offender guise' statistics resulting from either the introduction of the LDBI or the cold-calling protocol does not demean the crime prevention logic of applying some manner of regulation to these precursors to distraction burglary. Also, if the trends noted above are viewed in terms of the potential 'governability' of the different forms of guise, then more weight can be given to the observed shifts being the result of the cold-calling protocol. The latter two categories of guise (which display a percentage increase) are more disparate and far less 'governable' than the categories of guise in decline. Utility workers and public servants originate from fewer organisations than, for example, domestic contract workers and others, so tokens of trust (e.g. identification badges) can therefore be more easily identified by inquiring members of the public.

Despite this, the cold-calling protocol is a form of self-regulation, which is unmonitored by an external agency that could impose sanctions if codes of practice are transgressed. Compliance and control are therefore difficult to ensure. But the debate over the protocol has stimulated further interest in, and demand for, the introduction of tighter external controls over the activities of domestic visitors who expect to gain immediate entry to households, as well as those seeking to undertake unsolicited doorstep transactions. For example, both the Department of Trade and Industry, motivated by a 'Super Complaint' from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (see Marks, 2003), and the Trading Standards Institute are increasingly concerned about the serious nature of the criminal practices that fall under the rubric of 'doorstep crime'. In addition, a Private Members Bill, The Property Repairs (Prohibition of cold-calling) Bill 2003/04, aimed to ban domestic cold-calling by property repairers. Introduced in January 2004 by Andrew Robathan, MP for Blaby, the Bill failed to obtain parliamentary approval in subsequent readings.

Discussion

Evidence as to whether the cold-calling protocol is effective in assisting, even empowering, householders to deny entry to bogus callers operating under 'official' false guises is ambiguous. However, two main dynamics potentially undermine its crime prevention value. Firstly, it may stimulate a form of 'tactical displacement', whereby offenders continue to commit the offence, but employ a different type of distraction or deception in order to gain entry. Secondly, as a Leeds detective argued, it may serve to render householders over-trusting of identification tokens that appear 'official'.

> *You've only got to look at the main supply companies, they use that many firms to read for them, nobody knows whose coming to the door; so checking IDs isn't worth a lighter at the moment. Because there's that many IDs going round for separate companies, and you can make an ID up for two pence; you can make them in*

motorway service stations out of business cards can't you? So telling people to beware of IDs, I think, is poor because it's false confidence isn't it? If somebody comes to your door and they've got an ID, already the barriers are down, you're trusting the ID rather than trusting the person and that's it, then they're in your home.

According to this police officer's view, the crime prevention value of identification badges is limited because they merely seek to transfer a householder's trust from 'the person' to easily forgeable, abstract 'tokens of officialdom'. Moreover, an increased reliance upon external forms of regulation may be detrimental towards personal assessments of trust.

The cold-calling protocol, therefore, specifies that agencies should make pre-arranged appointments for home visits. Furthermore, in order that householders do not just rely upon identification badges, the LDBI distributed over 60,000 laminated leaflets bearing the telephone numbers of all the relevant utilities companies to older people's households within the target area. While this strategy equipped telephone-connected householders with the means to undertake more rigorous doorstep identification checks on visitors, the extent to which the listed utility agencies received an increase in inquiries about 'suspicious' cold-callers is unknown. Here, as described earlier in relation to Trading Standards agencies, crime detection benefits may accrue from such information – which often equates to intelligence on attempt burglaries – being passed directly to the police, demonstrating, once again, the value of an inter-agency response, with clearly defined information exchange protocols.

The role and impact of the cold-calling protocol should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a wider package of complementary interventions, including the voluntary registration scheme for domestic contractors. The attendant publicity promoted the crime prevention value of householders always checking callers' identification cards. As such, this intervention is likely to have further reinforced generic levels of awareness about the dynamics of the offence within the target area, which was another underlying objective of the LDBI.

5. Specialist policing posts

This chapter discusses the way that the LDBI aimed to enhance the law enforcement capability of the police by funding two dedicated police posts, a Detective Constable and a Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO).

The officers' primary purpose was to improve the quality of evidence obtained from distraction burglary crime scenes in the form of witness testimony and forensic materials. Subject to their availability, both officers conducted preliminary inquiries at all distraction burglary crime scenes within the target area. Importantly, they were not tied to a single police division, operating instead across all six of the target area's divisional boundaries. This cross-divisional flexibility anticipated improving the police response by the better co-ordination of investigative inputs and outputs.

Specialist detective

The specialist detective received best practice interview training, as demonstrated in the *Catch the Bogeyman* video (see Box 3.7). The LDBI also produced a statement-taking protocol for the officer to follow during initial routine inquiries (see Box 5.1).

Box 5.1: Police protocol for taking witness statements from older victims of distraction burglary

- The initial police visit to a crime scene should concentrate on reducing victim anxiety and developing rapport

- Sufficient details should be taken to record a crime and initiate the investigation proper, but a statement of evidence should await a second visit, after victim trauma subsides

- Whilst awaiting a second appointment, victims should informally record their recollections in written, trigger-point form

- Victims should have a friend or relative present throughout their interactions with the police

- In the case of sick or frail victims/witnesses, police should consider video recording the statement-making process

- Police should keep victims informed of the inquiry progress, as this can have therapeutic effects

- Introduce Victim Support at the earliest opportunity in order to reduce victim trauma and anxiety levels

The police protocol contained the innovative guidance for police officers to delay taking a victim's full statement until any post-offence trauma had fully subsided. Requiring victims to be visited more than once, this procedure carries significant resource implications.[18] Nevertheless, the less stringent time demands of the externally funded post enabled the specialist detective to pursue this strategy, when deemed appropriate. The officer explained the benefits of the approach, whilst offering a caveat.

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[18] The LDBI wished to roll out the protocol across the entire force area, but no agreement was reached with West Yorkshire Police.

It's very, very often that when I do go back 24 or 48 hours later to record a statement, their recollection is far better than it was at the time just after they suffered the burglary. And as often as not when I do go back, they do disclose further items and I often recall the Scenes of Crime Officer. [But] it's not right to say that every complainant you go to it's best to leave it 24 or 48 hours. I don't think that's the case. The danger is that by the time you go for a further visit, they are sick to death of the police because they've had all this attention.

This suggests that the delayed interview procedure may enable police investigations to gain an additional richness of information from victims suffering trauma or anxiety than would otherwise have been the case.

Implementation

The specialist detective began dedicated duties in May 2001. During the life of the LDBI, he attended over 300 crime scenes, conducting extensive house-to-house inquiries at each and recording 275 victim or witness statements. When necessary, the detective notified Victim Support and other relevant community groups of the priority status and domestic circumstances of particularly traumatised victims. Crime prevention advice was also routinely given to victims in order to rebuild their confidence and 're-empower' them. This procedure took the victim back through the event to identify which of their doorstep actions had enabled the offender to enter their premises.

I try to instil in them a sense of confidence, a sense of belief that they are capable of stopping somebody at the door, that they're not just powerless that the next time they come they'll just walk in again.

After being in post for while, the detective began to pursue more proactive, offender-focused lines of enquiry based upon accumulated intelligence. A discrete multi-agency working group was convened, comprising traveller liaison officers from each of the county's local authority districts. This proved to be an important forum for information exchange, notably in relation to the whereabouts of suspected offenders within the itinerant community.

Although these proactive activities served to reduce the extent of the officer's victim-based work, they led to the development of a more integrated approach to crime investigation combining proactive and reactive duties.[19] The officer explained the accrued benefits in relation to the collation and dissemination of cross-divisional intelligence.

Previously, there wasn't anybody pulling it all together, and that's the beauty of my job. I know what's happening in the other Leeds divisions, and so I'm able to recognise trends. What I'm building up is a vast evidence base, through written statements, through crime scene investigations – so if we do manage to identify an offender then we've got the evidence to link them to other scenes as well.

Importantly, the specialist detective also had a 'multiplier effect' by attracting additional police resources towards investigating distraction burglary. Over the funding period, the officer made successful business cases for a number of operational orders against distraction burglars and established a serious crime investigation desk for one particular crime series that resulted in the conviction of three prolific offenders.

Outcomes

During the lifetime of the LDBI, the activities of the specialist detective contributed to the arrest of at least 20 'bogus offenders' and resulted in 18 convictions. Each charge pertained to offences occurring within the target area, though investigations were often multi-tiered and inter-force. Accordingly, the officer routinely transferred police intelligence reports to

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[19] For a detailed discussion of the interdependence of reactive and proactive investigative processes, see Jacobson *et al.*, 2003.

colleagues in other police forces, thus indicating that the investigative benefits of the role were not confined to either the target area or the wider force area.

The introduction of the specialist detective also had the effect of increasing the recording levels of distraction burglary within the target area, which in the present climate of divisional performance indicators could threaten the sustainability of the post. The officer explained:

> *I am proactive looking at crimes and impressing upon people that what may in the past have been submitted as an intelligence report, is crimed. For instance, two people call at this old lady's house claiming to be from the Water Board. Whilst one of them steps in to the kitchen, the next door neighbour came round and disturbed them. Nothing was stolen. That may have gone on [the Crime Information System] as an intelligence report instead of being crimed. So an intelligence report doesn't add to the crime figures but a crime does. I mean, Minute sheets come across my desk where clearly they should be crimed and they send those to me for intelligence purposes and I just turn them round and say 'please crime this incident'.*

During the first year of the project the specialist detective was the first attending officer at a high proportion of reported distraction burglaries in the target area. Therefore, the officer contributed towards a greater proportion of these offences being recorded as distraction burglaries – when they may have previously been unrecorded or recorded otherwise. This demonstrates a contradiction within specialist local policing initiatives, namely that additional police resources combined with the broader public awareness of a specific crime problem, may lead to the artificial appearance of rising crime levels, as reporting and recording rates increase.

Despite this organisational tension, the divisional commanders within the target area unanimously agreed to continue funding the specialist post for an additional year (pending further review) beyond the period of Home Office funding. As discussed below, the findings from this research support this decision.

Discussion

The transient nature of many distraction offenders emphasises the importance of police investigative resources gaining greater cross-border mobility, for example, through the development of more formalised intra- and inter-force systems of co-operation (see Kock *et al.*, 1996). The introduction of a specialist detective with a city-wide (cross-divisional) remit helped police investigations to overcome some organisational problems associated with confining operational resources within divisional units.[20] It improved the co-ordination and fluidity of police investigations that are, in contrast, routinely parochial and introspective (Porter, 1996). It also provided an identifiable and accessible point of liaison within West Yorkshire Police that facilitated greater internal and external flows of crime intelligence as well as the development of regional networks of police expertise. The specialist detective therefore served as an organisational conduit, processing and knitting together divergent sources of intelligence from across the region. A police supervisor explained the crime detection benefits.

> *The provision of the officer has given the Leeds' divisions a more co-ordinated approach to bogus jobs. As the MOs tend to be more specific than in other crime types, the role has proved extremely useful in identifying crime series and the geographical spread of offending – and this problem crosses not only divisional boundaries but also force areas. And over time he's built up an in-depth knowledge of key nominals, which has lead to earlier identification of suspects and the deployment of technical assistance earlier than would have normally been the case. So we've been able to make arrests earlier in the crime series, which ultimately reduces the incidence of burglary.*

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[20] The need for a cross-border law enforcement response motivated the formation of Operations Liberal and Litotes, both of which are sizeable, inter-force consortium initiatives aimed at combating distraction burglary through pooling intelligence and resources (see http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/boguscaller13.htm).

The specialist post also helped to negate some organisational tensions that reduce the effectiveness of the police response to distraction burglary. For example, in order to hit performance targets, police supervisors are more willing to allocate resources to the investigation of prolific local burglars than to transient offenders who commit a low volume of offences across several police jurisdictions (Kock *et al.,* 1996, Steele, 2001). Quantitative performance targets do not measure the qualitative impact of crimes upon victims. The influential role of centrally defined targets in the allocation of local police resources, therefore, takes little account of the victim's ability to recover, financially, physically or emotionally, from different types of crime.

Similarly, the widespread assumption held by many detectives that older people constitute poor witnesses also diverts police resources from the investigation of distraction burglary. This perception strengthens cultural understandings that such offences are notoriously difficult to investigate and detect. Hence, negative stereotyping further reinforces the low priority of the offence within a culture of target-driven detective work (Baber and Brough, 1997:9). The introduction of an 'offence-based', as opposed to 'case-based' detective, who received training in older people's issues, better enabled the police response to circumvent these structural and cultural problems.

Specialist Scenes of Crime Officer

Responding to the finding of Steele *et al.*, (2001) that many distraction burglars are forensically aware, and therefore able to impede the recovery of forensic material from crime scenes, the LDBI funded a specialist Scenes of Crime Officer. The project anticipated that the specialist post would introduce the following changes to the process of collecting forensic evidence from distraction burglary crime scenes:

- Faster responses to incoming incidents.

- More crime scene examination time.

- Best practice evidential recovery techniques.

- More 'intelligence-led' searches.

Implementation

After 17 months in post the specialist SOCO resigned for personal reasons and, owing to the project's time constraints, was not replaced. While in post, the officer examined 369 distraction burglary crime scenes within the target area. Gaining more time for crime scene examination, the officer was able to conduct extensive searches, for example, of a property's external perimeter; the tops and sides of internal doors and bedroom drawers; and any estimates, bills or calling cards recently left behind by doorstep traders.

The dedicated remit also enabled the SOCO to develop a close and collaborative working relationship with the specialist detective. The pair jointly investigated a number of fraudulent 'rogue trader' transactions, which rarely receive detailed forensic attention,[21] and atypically, upon becoming aware of new information about a distraction burglary crime scene, the detective felt readily able to recall the specialist SOCO to conduct further forensic examinations.[22] In turn, the detective routinely remained at crime scenes to direct the SOCO to examine specific items and household locations, whereas this is often left to (potentially traumatised) victims. The specialist detective observed that the development of a close working relationship between these two parts of the investigative process is normally rare because of stringent demands upon police time.

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[21] Interconnections between 'rogue traders' and 'distraction burglars' indicate that it might be fruitful for police investigations to cross-reference these fields of inquiry.
[22] This raises questions over the extent to which the 'second visit' interview strategy is in tension with the time imperatives of collecting forensic evidence.

The SOCO's crime scene investigations produced a range of forensic materials that created resource implications for investigation budgets. Although the LDBI provided no additional budget to fund the analysis of 'extra' forensic outputs, all recovered DNA samples were despatched to the Forensic Science Service under a Home Office-funded fast track system, demonstrating how flexible budgets can be levered-in to complement and support short-term injections of additional resources. Furthermore, it highlights that additional policing posts usually produce knock-on effects elsewhere in the organisation, such as requiring extra capacity to process forensic evidence, additional managerial support, or simply extra office space and vehicles. Therefore, prior to funding additional police posts, the capacity of existing organisational resources to meet any extra demands incurred, requires consideration.

Outcomes

The materials that were gathered by the specialist SOCO produced eight forensic 'hits', in which a sample was later linked to a suspect's name. Half of these provided corroborative evidence that resulted in arrests. Despite a swifter response to reported incidents, post-offence contamination of crime scenes, notably from the fingerprints of victims or even fellow officers, remained a particular problem. This emphasises the benefits of ensuring that crime victims always receive early advice about avoiding crime scene contamination, feasibly from the call handler at the initial reporting stage.

Discussion

A primary justification for funding additional police posts is that they generate 'added value' and do not merely sustain pre-existing operational practice (Crawford *et al.*, 2003). The introduction of the specialist SOCO, as with the dedicated detective, benefited the police organisation, although the extent to which this appointment might be considered cost-effective is debatable. Certainly, no substantive discussions occurred between West Yorkshire Police and the LDBI about sustaining the role beyond the life of the project. Nevertheless, the development of mutually supportive and integrated working practices between the two officers led to a more holistic law enforcement response that provided some investigative dividends as well as a more comprehensive service to victims.

The specialist SOCO also enhanced the status of forensic evidence within distraction burglary investigations. Mirroring their CID colleagues, the occupational culture of SOCOs tends to classify crime scenes by 'offence type', thereby informally prioritising them according to the perceived likelihood of recovering useful evidence. As the specialist SOCO explained, this informal classification can result in variations in the intensity of forensic examinations.

> *From the SOCO's point of view there is more chance of getting evidence at a burglary where somebody has actually broken into a house then there is where somebody has actually opened the door and let them in. So if they actually want to gather evidence, they've got to look a lot more closely; and there is a possibility they may treat them with a little bit more reluctance than when collecting evidence from other [burglary] scenes. That isn't to say that they won't do a proper search, it's just that it's 'oh we're going out to another job, oh it's a bogey job, we'll probably not get 'owt from that'.*

The dedicated nature of the specialist SOCO, however, served to overcome the problematic implications of this occupational 'rule of thumb'. This finding suggests that the specialisation of SOCO duties may give designated officers a greater sense of ownership over specific offences and therefore an increased level of personal motivation to perform routine investigations.

Concluding remarks

Whilst further specialisation of investigation units is likely to produce crime reduction benefits, such internal restructuring within police organisations is, of course, always contingent on available resources. Given this context, the findings of this project indicate that in relation to distraction burglary, forces ought to consider refining the division of labour within criminal

investigations departments above that of forensic examination teams. Such specialisation should be accompanied by appropriate publicity that seeks to deter offenders.

One option that police forces could explore to enable this degree of investigative specialisation is external sources of funding. Section 9 of the Police and Magistrate's Courts Act 1994 provides the statutory basis for police forces to charge more widely for the provision of goods and services. As this report emphasises, distraction burglary is a particularly emotive offence, which stirs significant interest in a range of public and private bodies. Police forces might, therefore, attract external funding to assist with financing such specialist positions.

6. The partnership forum

This chapter discusses the nature of the LDBI's partnership forum. A multi-agency steering group oversaw the overall implementation of the project, with a co-ordinator managing it on a day-to-day basis. The steering group met monthly to discuss future priorities, review progress and provide a forum in which members could suggest ways that their respective agencies might assist delivery plans.

Partnership composition

The LDBI followed an 'independent' partnership model (Morgan, 1991:46), employing a full-time, independent co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator. Under this partnership approach no single agency took the lead, although Age Concern acted as 'host agency', processing the project's finances and employing the funded posts of co-ordinator, assistant co-ordinator and the two First Checkpoint personnel.

The 'organic' development of the partnership encouraged the participation of a wide variety of interest groups, as demonstrated by the following list of partner agencies represented at steering group meetings.

- Age Concern (host agency).

- Gordons Cranswick Solicitors.

- Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber.

- Leeds City Council.

- Leeds Neighbourhood Network Schemes (i.e. voluntary sector).

- Leeds Victim Support.

- West Yorkshire Neighbourhood Watch Association.

- West Yorkshire Police.

- West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service.

- Yorkshire Television (Chair).

- Zurich Insurance.

Unlike many other multi-agency crime prevention partnerships, the LDBI was not dominated by police or local authority interests (Gilling, 1997). Initially, a senior Community Safety Officer represented the local authority in the steering group, but this responsibility was subsequently transferred to its Burglary Reduction Officer. This officer secured local authority funds to sustain First Checkpoint. The specialist detective, representing the police, provided monthly reports on distraction burglaries, recent arrests and ongoing criminal investigations. The LDBI co-ordinator, himself a retired Chief Superintendent of the West Yorkshire Police, ensured the regular presence and support of senior police officers at high-profile occasions, such as the launch of the videos, training conferences and other public events.

Although the LDBI liaised with local Primary Care Trusts during its implementation, notably over raising awareness and gaining referrals for target hardening, the health sector was not represented at steering group meetings. Such formal representation might have given the

project greater access to high-risk sub-populations of older people, particularly those suffering from physical frailties or diagnosable forms of dementia. Many public health professionals, especially district nurses, practice nurses and health visitors are in regular contact with vulnerable and sometimes socially isolated people dispersed in local communities. Health officials are therefore well placed to raise awareness of distraction burglary among these 'at risk' clients (Elliston, 2002: 18), as well as draw the attention of relevant support agencies to particularly vulnerable people.

Consulting older people and the voluntary sector

The evaluation report of the recent Better Government for Older People Programme emphasised the need for agencies to engage and consult with older people about the quality and scope of local service delivery (see Hayden and Boaz, 2000). Consultation provides a range of benefits, not least because it enables policy design and delivery to be tailored better to the needs and rights of older people. But it also gives practitioners greater access to the resources that older people are themselves able to offer. For crime prevention purposes this enables practitioners to draw upon the older person's lifetime of experience in dealing with the threat of crime (Pain, 2003). Furthermore, the process of inclusion can also help to empower older people by giving them a greater stake of ownership in such projects, thereby making them *active* participants rather than *passive* recipients which has long been the traditional – if much criticised – approach of public policy towards older people (Midwinter, 1990).

As well as a practical role, lay participation has important symbolic value. Active participation encourages positive self-images of older people and the ageing process, while reducing the extent to which ownership of projects is perceived as belonging solely to professional 'experts' (Hayden and Boaz, 2000). Moreover, it may also help to address criticisms that projects directed at older people are often over-paternalistic, denying them their only generic resource: old age (Fennel *et al.*, 1988). In appealing for such inclusiveness, the older people's voluntary sector in Leeds adopts the maxim: 'nothing about us without us' (Leeds Older People's Forum, 2002).

Although lay older people were not directly represented in the LDBI steering group, the professional managers of three older people's voluntary groups accepted an invitation to join. This strengthened the project's existing links with, and thereby better mobilised, the voluntary sector. Importantly, it also brought to the steering group more individuals and agencies closely attuned to working with older people. Given that misunderstandings about older people are recurrent within society (Bytheway, 1995), this is a crucial requirement of crime prevention projects aimed at this age group. However, while a voluntary sector presence provides multi-agency initiatives with a more holistic composition, some partners may construe this as 'representation by proxy'. This is potentially problematic because professional or voluntary sector representation may serve to displace lay participation from partnership processes since '… there may be a trade-off between traditional notions of representativeness and the importance of inclusivity' (Hayden and Boaz, 2000: 111).

The evaluation survey invited comments on matters of consultation and representation. Some older people may, of course, prefer the voluntary sector to represent their interests, and the following respondent was critical about the extent to which lay participation could ever be truly 'representative'.

> *Who is 'representative'? Older people are as diverse as any other age group. Self-appointed representatives or professional meeting goers may be as unrepresentative as anyone else. Voluntary organisations and other professionals from older people's services may have a wider perspective and therefore be reasonably representative. [Respondent 45]*

Another respondent suggested that although direct representation by older people themselves is preferable, representation through the voluntary sector is a far more practical option.

In principle it must be better to obtain information from older people themselves, provided appropriate sampling techniques are used. However, in practice, voluntary organisations, which are in contact with many older people, may be the only sources of information immediately available and should, to an extent, be representative of older people's views. [Respondent 52]

This latter view suggests that indirect representation through the voluntary sector may, in pragmatic fashion, provide some representation of older people's interests whilst enabling deadlines for the service delivery of relatively short-term projects to be met by avoiding lengthy consultation processes. But the representation of lay and professional representation within such projects should not be viewed as an either/or scenario. Each may, in fact, serve a unique purpose in facilitating and strengthening mechanisms of service delivery.

The juxtaposition of agencies within the partnership

The LDBI steering group assembled a range of agencies with an array of different specialist skills and knowledge, from which it was collectively able to learn. The organisational agenda of some agencies was primarily crime reduction, of others it was older people *per se*. Clearly the typical victim profile of distraction burglary stimulated the involvement of the older people's voluntary sector in the project.

The juxtaposition of diverse agencies within partnerships requires them to recognise, accept and manage their differences, particularly in relation to their own unique ways of working, organisational priorities and dominant values (Crawford, 1997). Here, crime prevention practitioners tend to be narrowly concerned with risk and crime reduction, while older people's groups usually maintain a broader interest in a wide range of their client group's quality of life indicators, such as health, and social and economic status. Importantly, the fundamental concerns of guaranteeing older people's rights of autonomy, independence and choice underpin the service provision of these voluntary groups. Therefore, as well as facilitating the project's implementation and extending its reach, the inclusion of these groups proved to be of further value, as they were particularly mindful of these wider underlying concerns.

This role was important because crime prevention agendas can, if pursued in an over-intrusive manner, impact negatively upon overall quality of life by increasing the dependency of older people (Johnston, 1999; Mawby, 1988). Good practice within multi-agency forums therefore requires partners to recognise areas of potential tension between their respective agendas and not just those of consensus. For crime prevention projects aimed specifically at older people, this entails an open dialogue between partners that provides checks and balances against any crime reduction strategies that might encroach upon the rights of the target group. Again, the tendency for practitioners to adopt a paternalistic approach towards older people and their security 'needs' raises the threshold of this requirement.

The role of the co-ordinator

The appointment of a full-time co-ordinator proved to be pivotal to the successful implementation of the LDBI. The co-ordinator's police background and prior specialist knowledge of distraction burglary brought to the partnership a considerable body of relevant experience and expertise (see Steele *et al.*, 2001), as well as strong connections with local statutory and voluntary networks. Suitably equipped, the co-ordinator was able to straddle rigid hierarchical structures, displaying high levels of personal commitment, drive and charisma in pursuit of partnership objectives, but also adopting, when necessary, an emotive approach that successfully struck a chord in many agency and community representatives. Consequently, the co-ordinator proved highly skilled at motivating and thereby mobilising a diverse range of agencies to participate within delivery plans. This demonstrates that the personal demeanour and stature of co-ordinators can be very influential in partnerships gaining, and maintaining, local trust and credibility (see also Tilley 1992). In seeking, therefore, to implement a partnership approach, co-ordinators can bring with them a range of

pragmatic resources. Local profile, personal charisma and strong connections with, and access to, practitioner networks all complement the arrival of financial resources.

In appointing a highly motivated, charismatic and experienced co-ordinator, however, multi-agency partnerships can become over-reliant upon the incumbent (Tilley, 1992), especially if the accumulation of expertise fosters an imbalance of power between partners and the co-ordinator. Such imbalance can sometimes lead partners to defer tasks and responsibilities routinely to co-ordinators, thereby diluting the extent of inter-agency collaborations (Crawford, 1998). The high level of autonomy that often accompanies the role of co-ordinator can accentuate this problem (see Sutton, 1996). Such fears were largely allayed within the LDBI because, although the flattened managerial structure of the steering group gave the co-ordinator a high degree of independence and autonomy, it operated within both an external and internal framework of accountability.

Although implementation mainly followed the pre-designed strategy specified in the initial funding bid, any significant deviations had to be negotiated with the Home Office. The co-ordinator's discretion was therefore mostly limited to operational rather than strategic matters. The monthly steering group meetings also constituted a valuable mechanism of internal accountability that reduced the extent to which personal discretion could undermine shared decision-making processes. Within the steering group forum, the co-ordinator accounted for retrospective activities, and future priorities were collectively discussed and recorded. Whenever strategic decisions were required, proposals were laid before a quorum of steering group members for discussion and approval. These processes show that if partnerships employing independent co-ordinators are to remain genuinely multi-agency in approach, then it is important for them to establish appropriate and transparent mechanisms of accountability at the outset.

Concluding remarks

The LDBI demonstrated that a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies can be mobilised in support of distraction burglary reduction strategies. The serious and emotive nature of the offence and the availability of significant funds were influential factors in this process. Similarly, the appointment of the co-ordinator was also crucial, as this provided a single point around which to coalesce multi-agency interests, supporting the concept of 'the Champion' who is given responsibility for, and ownership of, the development of specific areas of crime prevention policy. Preventing distraction burglary is an area of policy with considerable scope to develop a holistic partnership approach. Therefore, local community safety partnerships wishing to harness multi-agency interests in support of this crime reduction goal ought to consider allocating this responsibility on an individual basis.

7. Measuring crime reduction outcomes

This chapter considers the impact of the LDBI on crime rates. It outlines the methodologies employed to quantify and value the effect of the implemented interventions on the aggregate level of distraction burglary within Leeds. The analysis is based upon approximately three years of monthly data, which begins six months prior to the project commencing and ends eight months after it ended. The data have slight time variations which are detailed below along with a brief description of the collected data, including statistics on the level and spread.

The chapter then explores the changes in the level of distraction burglaries and all other forms of burglary dwelling offences over time and assesses the detectable impact of the project on these figures. A number of alternative methodologies for measuring project impact are reported, from a simple comparison of percentage changes in the rates of distraction burglary between two areas and a more detailed examination of project activities using an econometric time series framework.

Description of crime data

Police crime records of monthly burglary offences in two separate geographical areas informed the outcome analysis. The two areas were the target area (comprising the four divisions that make up the Metropolitan District of Leeds[23]) and the reference area, which included all seven remaining divisions within the wider force area of West Yorkshire Police. The crime data from the reference area offer an indication of the underlying trends in crime rates occurring generally across the region and enable a comparison with any changes experienced in the target area.

Whilst consistent data on 'all other burglary dwelling' offences were collected, the period over which they were available varied because the figures relating to distraction burglaries originated from a different police database. This has implications for the type of analysis that can be conducted. In particular, as only four months of post-implementation data are available for all other burglary dwelling, their inclusion in the econometric analysis restricts the time frame over which the model may be estimated, reducing the likelihood of accurately measuring the longer-term impact of the project.

Table 7.1 shows the crime data collected and the time periods covered (the Home Office code for each offence appears in brackets). 'All other burglary dwelling' is the only other form of crime considered within the analysis because of its potential to be affected by any *cross-crime displacement* (otherwise known as 'crime switch') resulting from the project.

Table 7.1: Collected aggregate data

	For the target and reference area
Distraction burglary (28.2)	Oct 00 – Nov 03
All other burglary – dwelling (28/29)	April 00 – Jul 03

Description of changes in the rate of distraction burglary

Figure 7.1 presents changes in the rate of distraction burglary in Leeds. It shows that during the first four months of available data, between October 2000 and January 2001, the number of distraction burglaries remained comparatively stable at around 30 offences per month. During February and March 2001, immediately prior to the start of the project, recorded offences increased considerably, followed by a decline to a relative low of 24 offences during

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[23] In April 2003, the number of police divisions in the target area changed from six to four.

July 2001. The level of offences then remained relatively stable until it began a sharp increase in October 2001, peaking at a sample high of 85 offences in May 2002. Thereafter the level of distraction burglaries fell sharply and continued to decline more steadily (albeit with fluctuations month by month) such that the number of recorded offences during the last five months of available data averaged 21 per month.

Figure 7.1: Changes in the monthly rate of distraction burglary in Leeds
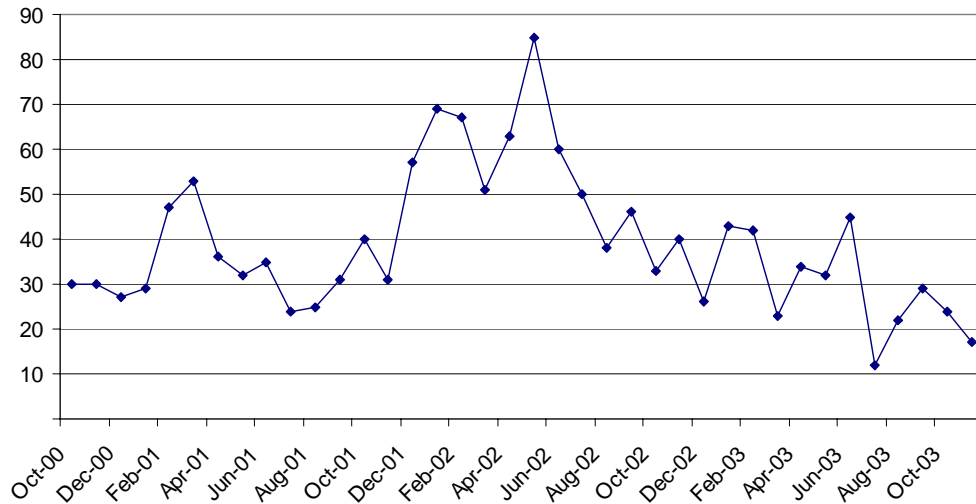
To further understand the changes in the data over time, Table 7.2 presents some basic descriptive statistics for the monthly number of distraction burglaries in both the target and reference areas. The data are divided into four time periods to accommodate the time frame of the LDBI. The first, the 'before period', covers October 2000 to March 2001; the second and third represent the 'implementation period', which is split between project years one and two; the fourth, the 'after period', begins at the end of the project and runs between April 2003 and November 2003.

Neither the statistics presented in Figure 7.1 nor Table 7.2 imply a causal link between the project's interventions and level of distraction burglaries; rather they simply portray the data pre, during and post-project.

Table 7.2: Descriptive statistics of distraction burglaries by area

	Monthly crimes			
	Oct 00 – March 01 (n=6)	April 01 – March 02 (n=12)	April 02 – March 03 (n=12)	April 03 – Nov 03 (n=8)
Target area				
Mean	36.0	41.5	45.8	26.9
Variance	122.4	245.5	294.9	108.7
Reference area				
Mean	46.7	58.8	47.8	39.0
Variance	158.7	120.6	212.2	65.4

Table 7.2 presents two statistics, the *mean*[24] and the *variance*.[25] In both areas the mean (or average) monthly level of recorded distraction burglaries was higher during the first year of implementation than during the months preceding the project's start date. This increase was sustained during the second year of the project within the target area, while in the reference area, during this period, the level of monthly crimes fell. In both areas, the average number of monthly distraction burglaries was lower in the project's 'after period' than at any other time covered by the available data.

The *variance* can be seen as a measure of the volatility of monthly offence levels over time. Within the target area, the volatility associated with monthly distraction burglaries followed a similar pattern to the mean. The lowest figure was recorded during the post-project phase, after increases had occurred during the two years of the project. Here, it is important to understand the variability of the crime data to ensure that the analysis is correctly interpreted. Analysis of variance was conducted to indicate whether observed differences between the means in the four time periods could be attributed to chance, or whether they represented real differences. In the target area, the Levene statistic, which tests for the equality of the variances across the different samples, was statistically insignificant. This implies the null hypothesis, which assumes the variances are equal, could not be rejected.

Given this result, robust tests, taking account of the difference in the number of data points in each period, found that overall there was a significant difference in the mean values. Further analysis of the difference in means between periods, however, highlighted that the only statistically significant change was measured between the second year of project implementation and the 'after period'. Generally, the same results were found with respect to the reference area. The only divergence being that the one significant difference in means was found between the first year of project implementation and the 'after period'.

Description of changes in the rate of other burglary dwelling

Table 7.3 details the other burglary data collected, reporting the mean number of crimes in each area for the same time periods outlined in Table 7.2, with the exception of the 'after period' which covers only four months post-project implementation.

Table 7.3: Mean number of monthly crimes by area

	Oct 00 – March 01 (n=6)	April 01 – March 02 (n=12)	April 02 – March 03 (n=12)	April 03 – Jul 03 (n=4)
Target area Burglary – dwelling (28/29)	1243.3	1264.5	1316.5	1241.0
Reference area Burglary – dwelling (28/29)	1507.5	1525.1	1624.3	1626.0

The figures for the average number of monthly other burglary dwelling offences (28/29) in the target area follow the same pattern as distraction burglary, although the figures are much larger. Over the whole period, October 2000 to July 2003, distraction burglaries account for just over three per cent of total recorded burglaries in the target area. Whilst the patterns appear similar, and may indicate a relationship between the two categories, the large size difference between them renders it extremely difficult to detect any statistically significant *cross-crime displacement* effect of the LDBI on the number of other burglary dwelling offences in either the target or reference areas.

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[24] The mean of a set of values is the sum of the individual values divided by the total number of values; it is used here to represent the typical number of offences occurring each month.
[25] The variance of a dataset provides an indication of the extent to which the data is dispersed, or spread out. Smaller variances imply the data is more closely bunched around the mean value.

Analysing project effect

Two alternative methods for estimating the effect of the project are considered below. The first compares the change in the rate of distraction burglaries in the target area to the reference area and indicates the number of crimes that may have been prevented as a result of the project. This estimate has a number of shortcomings which the second approach, an econometric time series model, attempts to overcome. This second model incorporates a number of explanatory variables, including one for the introduction and implementation of the project, which seeks to explain why the levels of various crime categories changed over time.

Change in rate of distraction burglaries

As a first step to examining the possible project effect on the number of distraction burglaries in the target area, the change in the rate of distraction burglaries was calculated. The number of offences in the six months of the project's 'after period' was compared to what the expected number might have been if there had been no intervention.[26] The 'before' and 'after' figures within the reference area were used to estimate the target area is counterfactual value, against which the actual figure was compared. Table 7.4 sets out the calculations for this estimate.

In addition to the actual recorded distraction burglary figures for the target area, Table 7.4 also presents an adjusted figure. This adjusted figure attempts to account for the possibility that the project adversely affected the number of recorded distraction burglary offences in two potential ways, as discussed in Chapter 5. Firstly, through raising the profile of the crime within the target area, victims may have developed a greater willingness to report incidents than previously. Certainly this was an objective of the project, and the messages that it disseminated encouraged victims always to report such offences to the police. Secondly, the role of the specialist detective, dedicated to the investigation of these offences, increased police recording levels.

Although quantifying accurately either of these potential effects upon recorded crime levels is problematic, the specialist detective estimated that over the course of the first year of the LDBI between 40 and 50 intelligence reports were, on his insistence, recorded as full crimes. Based upon this assessment, the figures recorded within the target area were decreased by four per month from May 2001 (the month the detective began work on the project) onwards.

Table 7.4: Change in distraction burglary rate

Number of offences	Reference area	Target area – actual	Target area – adjusted
Before – actual	280	216	216
After – actual	229	174	
After – adjusted			150
% change	-18.2	-19.4	-30.6
After – expected		(229/280) * 216 = 177	(229/280)*216 = 177
Expected – actual		177 – 174 = 3	
Expected – adjusted			177 – 150 = 27

The actual percentage change in the number of offences is marginally greater in the target area than in the surrounding divisions and, based on these figures, this model estimates that at least three offences over a six month period may have been prevented as a result of the project. This figure increases to 27 when comparing the expected number of offences with the adjusted figure for the target area.

There are, however, many caveats accompanying this analysis. Importantly, this calculation problematically assumes that the reference area is a suitable control for the target area. Given the geographical size and diversity of the reference area it is doubtful that overall the

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[26] As only six months of data are available for the before period, the last two months of the 'after period' have been omitted in order to compare like with like.

two areas are very similar. Whilst some localised areas in both are alike and share similar contexts, these similarities tend to be lost within the larger picture. For instance, as the target area is located at the intersection of two major motorways, the M1 and M62, its ease of access to travelling offenders is far greater in comparison to all other urban areas contained within the reference area. It is likely also that the project's effect will have bled into the reference area, not least because the areas under consideration adjoin each other. Indeed, the audiences at the project's training events included personnel working and residing in the reference area, much of the media attention that it received was regional, and the crime prevention drama performances were not restricted to the target area. Moreover, the activities of the LDBI motivated two of the seven other West Yorkshire police divisions to develop their own local campaigns to reduce distraction burglary. Another major flaw with the simple 'change in rate' analysis is the two-year implementation period for the project. The underlying assumption is that the only change between the 'before' and 'after' periods in the reference and target area results from the introduction of the project. However, other changes occurring in both areas during this time could have impacted upon the number of distraction burglaries. For example, other area-based crime reduction initiatives or regeneration projects (of which there are numerous examples in both the target and the reference areas) could have influenced offending rates.

Situating the identified change in the target area rate of distraction burglary within broader macro-trends in burglary dwelling rates is also difficult. In comparison to the changes witnessed with respect to distraction burglary, the average number of recorded monthly burglary dwelling offences remained relatively constant in both the target area and the reference area over the four time periods covered in Table 7.3. For example, within the target area, while the average number of distraction burglaries changed by 15, ten and -41 per cent between the relevant time frames the corresponding change in the average number of monthly burglary dwelling offences was only two, five and -6 per cent. It is therefore difficult to conclude that either the local or regional trend in burglary dwelling can explain changes in the level of distraction burglaries within the target area. Moreover, as stated above, the size difference between the categories implicitly makes any comparison extremely difficult. Furthermore, it is perhaps questionable how related the two offences actually are, given the differences in *modus operandi*. It was also impossible to compare the changes in distraction burglary offences with areas outside the jurisdiction of West Yorkshire Police because consistent and thus comparable crime data were unavailable.

While this model clearly shows a relatively large decrease occurred in the number of distraction burglary offences in both the target and reference areas between the 'before' and 'after' periods, it cannot indicate if these changes were a result of the project being implemented. Given the problems highlighted, a different approach to modelling the change in the level of offences was required.

Econometric time series models

To counteract a number of these shortcomings, an alternative assessment of the overall impact of the project on crime rates was performed using an econometric time series framework. This analysis attempts to explain any changes in the dependent variable (e.g. the level of distraction burglaries) through changes in the explanatory variables (e.g. the introduction and implementation of the project and other categories of crime). The results of estimating such models indicate the impact of the project over time upon the dependent variable.

In order to conduct such an analysis it was first necessary to quantify the outputs associated with the individual interventions. The basis for this measurement was the percentage of the intervention undertaken each month and the total resources and inputs employed to achieve particular outputs. Taken together, this information allowed the creation of a new explanatory variable that detailed the development of all the interventions over time. This additional

variable, labelled the Intensity of Project[27], was then incorporated into the time series framework to help explain changes in crime levels since the inception of the project.

The general underlying principles for calculating the Intensity of Project variable are shown below.

- *Different types of intervention require differing measurement procedures*

  Interventions were classified and quantified according to their attributes. For example, interventions that were dependent upon the installation of equipment and have a degree of permanency associated with them differ markedly from the more personnel-based interventions that require further investment in order to continue and therefore have an effect beyond the project finish date.

- *Intensity measures should relate to what has actually happened rather than to what could have taken place*

  Although interventions normally have a stated aim, for various reasons it is not always possible to achieve these aims. Consequently, full implementation of individual interventions was adjudged to have been achieved only when work on the intervention ceased or the funding of the intervention switched to another source.

- *The intensity of each intervention should reflect the quantity of inputs utilised by the intervention*

  This principle was required in order to standardise each intervention's input into the overall project Intensity variable. The measurement of the resources used by the project was conducted according to Home Office guidelines[28], in accordance with the underlying principle of identifying the level of resources required to replicate the project elsewhere.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 depict the amalgamated Intensity of Project variable and the monthly distraction burglary figures for the target and reference areas respectively.

Figure 7.2: Monthly distraction burglaries in the target area and project progression
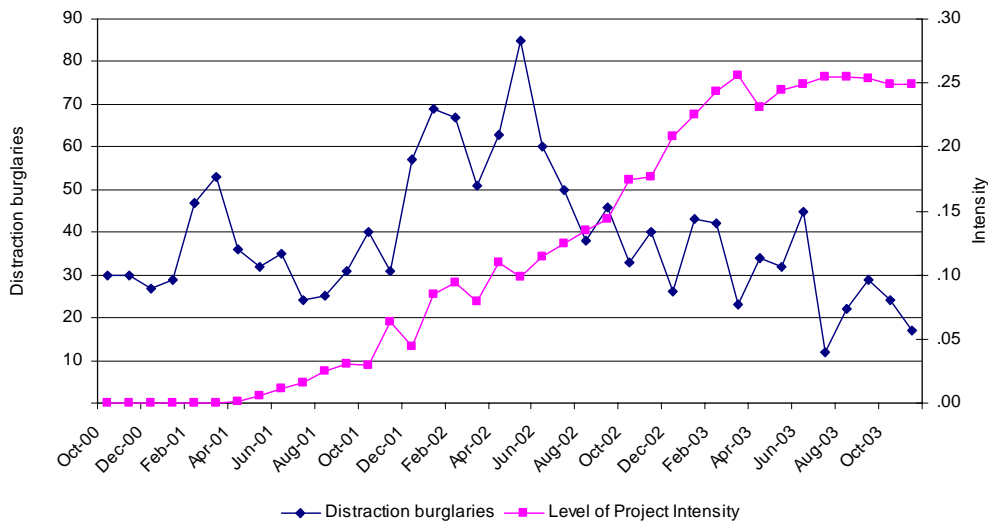
Within the target area, during the first year of the project the number of monthly offences increased considerably, while at the same time the intensity of the project was increasing steadily. After May 2002, while the intensity of the project continued to increase, there was an initial sharp decline followed by a gentler drop in the level of distraction burglaries.

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[27] Examples of the calculation of individual intervention intensity measures are shown in Appendix B.
[28] Dhiri and Brand (1999) and Legg and Powell (2000).

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Figure 7.3: Monthly distraction burglaries in the reference area and project progression
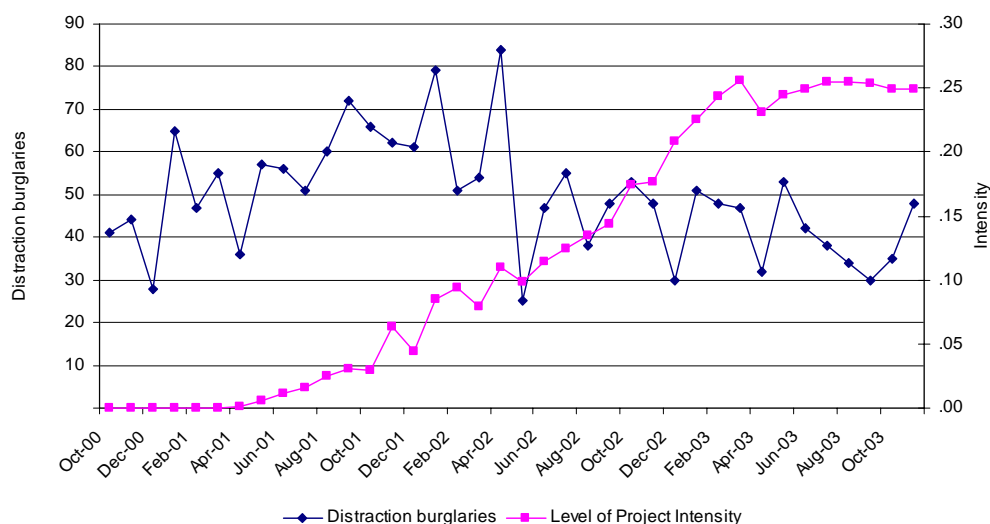
The number of monthly distraction burglaries in the reference area generally followed a similar pattern to that found in the target area. The exception is that the sharp decline, witnessed in summer 2002, began a month earlier and the grade of decline did not continue during the subsequent months. Rather from May 2002 onwards the level appears to have stabilised at between 30 and 50 incidents per month.

As a consequence of the difference in time periods for which aggregate crime data were available, econometric time series models were estimated over both the shorter and longer periods. The number of explanatory variables was, however, very restricted over the longer period since the only aggregate data available related to distraction burglaries. Despite this restriction, and irrespective of the modelling approach applied, the estimated coefficient on the Intensity of Project variable proved to be very robust and without exception insignificant in relation to the level of distraction burglary in the target area.

The results from the linear regressions are reported in Table 7.5.[29] The estimated impact of the project is given in relation to distraction burglaries in the target and reference areas regardless of whether the variable was statistically significant. The final column in Table 7.5 reports the adjusted R^2 for each equation; this provides an indication of the goodness of fit by measuring the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression equation. In general, the closer the adjusted R^2 to one the better the independent variables explain the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 7.5: Results from linear regressions

	Area / crime category	Effect	Adjusted R^2
N = 38 months	*Target area*	-3.4	.480
	Reference area	-12.3*	.254
N = 34 months	*Target area*	-0.8	.416
	Reference area	-11.8*	.457

* Significant at five per cent level.

Whilst linear models were estimated, the relationship between the Intensity of Project variable and the level of crime was rarely linear. Instead, as apparent in Figure 7.4, a cubic

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[29] A linear regression is a method of predicting the average value of one variable (the dependent variable) in terms of the known values of other (explanatory) variables.

relationship often proved to be a more appropriate function between the two variables. Consequently for ease of interpretation Table 7.5 presents only the overall effect of the project, rather than the individual coefficients estimated for each part of the cubic relationship. Figure 7.4 implies that at very low intensity levels, during the early stages of the project, the number of reported distraction burglary offences actually increased within the target area, before declining as the project intensified. This may result from the awareness raising campaign that began early in the life of the project and which actively encouraged the target population to report offences. Then as other aspects of the project proceeded, including the target hardening of individual properties, the overall impact was to reduce the number of offences.

Figure 7.4: Plot of monthly distraction burglaries and Intensity of Project
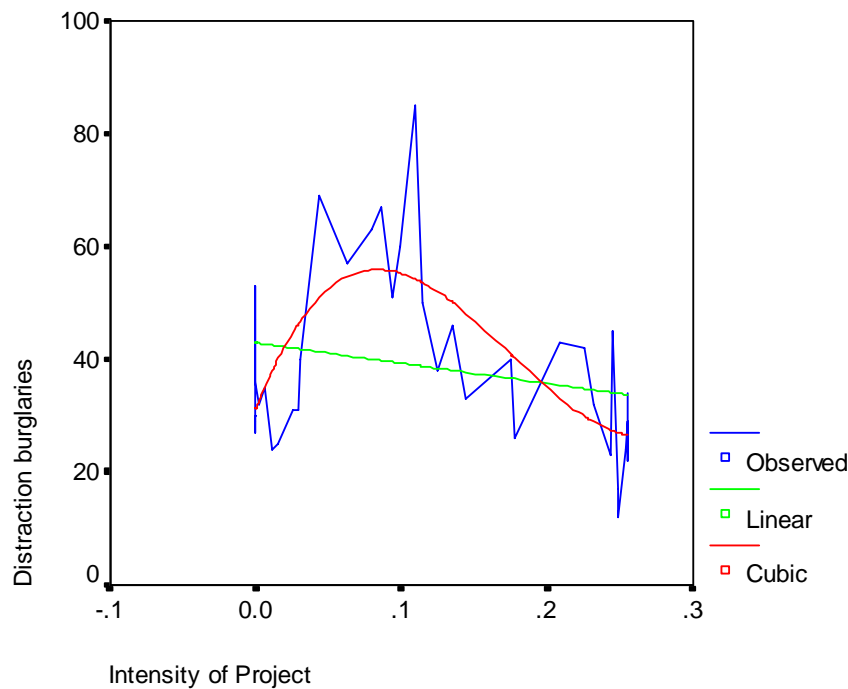
The 'effect' column in Table 7.5 indicates the impact of the Intensity of Project variable upon the mean number of monthly crimes for a period into the future. These results imply that the effect of the LDBI on the mean number of distraction burglaries in the target area was statistically insignificant across the *overall* life of the project. Nevertheless, the model estimates that the project caused a decrease of between one and three distraction burglaries per month in the target area. It also estimates that the project may have affected significantly the level of distraction burglaries in the rest of the force area. This suggests some 'diffusion of benefit' whereby the pattern of distraction burglary was disrupted across the wider force area. As stated previously, the LDBI developed a regional dimension by stimulating replica crime prevention campaigns, attracting regional publicity, and exporting some of its interventions beyond the target area. However, without comparison to national trends in distraction burglary, this assessment is difficult to confirm.

The preceding analysis considered the project effect across the life span of the LDBI. Yet, given the staggered implementation timetable of its various interventions, the project effect is likely to have begun more immediately. For example, crime prevention videos, presentations and drama performances, may have an immediate impact. To investigate when the project activities started to have an effect, regression equations were estimated for each time period following the end of the first year of implementation, April 2002.[30] With respect to distraction

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[30] Prior to this point in time insufficient data periods are available to validate any conclusions.

burglaries, a positive impact was experienced in the target area from July 2003, while in the reference area the Intensity of Project variable became significant during the same month. Between July and November 2003 the average modelled impact of the LDBI on the level of monthly distraction burglaries within the target and reference areas shows a reduction of two and ten offences respectively.

Whilst estimating when the project began to affect various crime levels is feasible, it is more problematic to model how long after the last available data point the project will continue to impact on crime levels. In order to calculate an overall impact from the project it has been assumed that the average measured effect is constant over at least a twelve-month period. Therefore the project is estimated to have prevented 24 distraction burglary offences in the target area and 120 similar crimes in the reference area.

As with the changes in rates of distraction burglary analysis, some caveats should be raised in relation to the reported regression results. An obvious omission is the absence of any explanatory variables capturing the possible impact on the number of distraction burglaries of other crime reduction initiatives, regeneration projects, or other changes in circumstances, occurring in either target or reference areas. Secondly, the longer-term impacts of the project may not have been adequately captured within the available data. Some interventions may continue to influence the level of offences for a period into the future. However, the insignificance of the overall intensity of project variable, and the very small change in the level of distraction burglaries in the target area, meant it impractical and unfeasible to disentangle, and assess, the individual impact of each intervention.

The problem of 'disentangling' the cause and effect of specific interventions was also hindered by the unavailability of disaggregated (i.e. address-level) data pertaining both to crime records and those properties 'covered' by project interventions (e.g. those properties in receipt of target hardening equipment, householders receiving crime prevention advice, etc). Nevertheless, the arrest of a number of distraction burglars, attributed either wholly or in part to the activities of the specialist detective, suggests anecdotally that this intervention may have been prominent in the project's overall crime reduction impact. This suggestion is reinforced by research findings that highlight the serial nature of many distraction-type offenders (see Steele, 2001).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approaches employed to quantify crime reduction outcomes associated with the LDBI. Firstly a simple change in rate comparison was calculated, which indicated that the change in the target area was insignificantly different to that witnessed in the surrounding areas. However, given a number of concerns related to this estimate, an alternative approach using an econometric model was considered. This necessitated the level of output intensity generated by the project each month being quantified; this newly generated variable was subsequently incorporated into the modelling process to estimate the effect upon crime levels. The estimated results imply that although the implementation of the project impacted upon the level of distraction burglaries in the target area, it did not do so to any significant extent. It must be stressed, however, that the number of time periods after full implementation is very small and the full effects of the project may not be evident in these data.

8. Measuring cost-effectiveness

This chapter considers the cost-effectiveness of the LDBI. It begins by outlining the results of the cost evaluation, highlighting the percentage of resources targeted at each intervention and indicating which inputs received the majority of funding. Based upon the estimated costs and outputs generated by each intervention, a unit cost per output is calculated. The overall cost of the project is then compared with the results obtained in the previous chapter with respect to the outcomes generated.

Cost evaluation

Information was collected that described how all resources were allocated between the activities supporting specific interventions. This included those resources financed directly by Home Office funding allocated to the project, as well as those additional resources donated by other public agencies, financed from normal budgets for the ongoing activities of these services.

Table 8.1 shows the division of modelled resources, by input type, between all interventions implemented in the target area. Because the timing of project activities and expenditures was not identical across interventions, all costs are expressed in present value terms and at constant 2001 (Quarter II) prices.

The total economic cost of the twelve interventions was estimated to be approximately £600,700. By intervention, the additional security provided to individual properties was the most expensive (accounting for around £144,000 or 24% of the total), followed by First Checkpoint (£95,600 or 16%) and Specialist Detective (£78,200 or 13%). The intervention that attracted the least resources was the ringmaster messaging system with a total cost of around £8,200, of which almost all was donated police time.

Over half (54%) of total project costs related to personnel input, with a further 23 per cent used to purchase equipment and the remainder used to fund premises, transport, stationery and other miscellaneous costs. Breaking down these overall project figures by intervention reveals a distinct pattern of resource use. In particular, the target hardening intervention accounted for almost all of the equipment costs (95%) while interventions such as First Checkpoint and the theatre productions were significantly more reliant upon personnel input.

Around 88 per cent of project costs were funded from the Home Office grant, with the remaining 12 per cent levered-in from other public and voluntary sources. Importantly, these percentages do exclude around 3,500 hours voluntarily given by Feeling Good theatre group actors to the drama productions and crime prevention videos.

Table 8.1: Resource use and outputs by intervention

	Target hardening	First check point	Feeling Good Theatre	Crime Stoppers Carousel	Cold-calling protocol	Community fund	Gardening fund	Specialist detective	Specialist SOCO	Ring master system	Videos[31]	Training / present	Total	%
Inputs														
Personnel	11,167	78,568	13,729[32]	23,638	19,361	5,800	1,998	61,226	39,760	7,096	2,275	37,030	322,128	*53.6*
Equipment	132,344	153	1,821	147	1,004	260	49	51	53	153	596	1,787	138,419	*23.0*
Other	445	16,887	3,124	983	6,689	20,573	16,452	16,898	4,402	956	49,393	3,349	140,151	*23.3*
Total	143,956	95,609	18,674	24,768	27,054	26,633	18,499	78,175	44,216	8,205	72,744	42,165	600,698	
%	*24.0*	*15.9*	*3.1*	*4.1*	*4.5*	*4.4*	*3.1*	*13.0*	*7.4*	*1.4*	*12.1*	*7.0*		
Outputs														
Properties	3,500						340							
Referrals		3,800												
Performances			80	16										
Protocol					1									
Projects funded						45								
Arrests								17	4					
Messages										220				
Nos.seeing VIdeo											5,000			
Nos. of events												100		
Cost per unit output (£)	41	25	233	1,548	27,054	592	54	4,599	11,054	37	15	422		

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[31] Does not include 50 hours of voluntary actors time
[32] Does not include 3,450 hours of voluntary actors time

In addition to detailing the level of resources utilised by each intervention, Table 8.1 also indicates the outputs produced and accordingly the cost per unit of output. For example, the output measurement for both the target hardening and gardening fund interventions relate to the number of properties covered by work conducted under these headings. Although the type of target hardening implemented varied between properties, the average cost per dwelling has been estimated as £41. With respect to the gardening fund intervention, it is estimated that around 340 properties benefited from the numerous mini-projects funded by the LDBI, at an average cost of £54.

An alternative output measure for the Feeling Good Theatre and Crime Stoppers Carousel interventions would be the number of individuals seeing the performances. Within the target area, approximately 2,800 and 900 people are believed to have attended the shows implying a unit cost of £6.70 and £27.50 for the two interventions respectively.

Cost-effectiveness

As the output measures vary considerably across interventions a more meaningful assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the project relates to the cost per unit of generated outcome. Table 8.2 presents the estimated outcomes following implementation of the project as a whole, the average cost to society associated with particular crimes and the corresponding monetary benefit as a result of the project.[33] The outcome estimates are based upon the results obtained and reported in the previous chapter and assume the project has an effect over a twelve-month period.

Table 8.2: Outcomes and cost per outcome

Outcomes	Crimes prevented	Cost of crime (£)	Monetary benefit
Target area Distraction burglary	24	2,300	55,200
Reference area Distraction burglary	120	2,300	276,000
Overall impact	144	2,300	331,200
Cost of project			600,698

Cost per unit outcome   (600698 / 144) = 4172

Ordinarily, cost-effectiveness analyses would allow decision-makers to choose between several alternative options based upon the cost per unit of outcome. As only one project is being evaluated, the results from the LBDI project are compared with what would have happened if the interventions had not been implemented.

Conclusion

On the basis of a comparison of full LBDI costs and generated outcomes – see Table 8.2 – the cost of preventing each offence is estimated to be £4,172, which is significantly greater than the £2,300 average cost to society were the offence to have occurred. Consequently, the aggregated cost from implementing the LBDI is around £270,000. If the measured impacts continue for longer than twelve months then this cost to society would decrease.

These monetary benefits, however, may underestimate the full gains of the project to society. The financial costings applied to distraction burglary within this report are the same as those associated with all forms of domestic burglary. As such, the costings ignore the variable of age and, therefore, the fact that the victims of distraction burglary are predominantly older

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[33] The figures used accord with those listed by Brand and Price (2000).

people. Similarly, they do not incorporate the impacts of violence and accompanying threats, introduced by the specific forms of victim engagement found in distraction burglary. If a broader range of impacts were to be considered, particularly the potential health care savings gained from preventing victimisation, for example, the costs of subsequent entry to hospital or care homes (see Donaldson, 2003), then the apparent cost to society, as detailed above, could feasibly become a saving. Finally, it is difficult to place a monetary value on any public reassurance, or improved feelings of well-being, that the project may have engendered, either directly through its interventions or indirectly through stimulating better services for older people among other agencies, both within the target area population or elsewhere.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

As the average life expectancy rises and the older population expands, crimes mostly distributed among older people such as distraction burglary, will continue to demand crime prevention attention. This concluding chapter discusses the research findings within the context of targeting resources towards older people.

'Age' and 'risk'

This research concludes that although it is appropriate for anti-distraction burglary projects to focus upon older people, in so doing, they might distinguish between 'younger' older people and 'older' older people. Whilst the data presented here show that people over the age of 65 account for 86.5 per cent of victims, those over the age of 75 equate to 72 per cent of victims. Hence, despite being 11 per cent fewer in population within the target area (see Table 1.1), people within this latter age group are over five-and-a-half times more likely to suffer a distraction burglary than those aged between 65 and 74 (14.6% of victims).

This finding indicates that, when using age as a basis for distributing finite resources, distraction burglary reduction initiatives could most usefully target people aged 75 and over. This emphasises the potential for initiatives to prioritise between the age ranges that fall within the social category 'older people'. There is a danger that if all 'older people' are considered to be at equal risk, then projects may take the easy option and engage predominantly with those 'younger older' people who are easier to access. This may not be the most efficient use of crime prevention resources because, as described earlier, those 'older older' people most at risk from distraction burglary are also likely to be the hardest to reach. However, general raising awareness campaigns should not exclude those outside this age range, as it is important to 'catch people early' in order to enable them to internalise crime prevention messages over a longer-term (see Thornton and Hatton, 2004).

Intelligence-led crime prevention: emphasising 'vulnerability' over 'age'

Age clearly matters within distraction burglary victimisation, but there are valid reasons to question the coherence of 'older people' as a unit for analysis and, therefore, as the basis for policy implementation. Older people are heterogeneous and as diverse in their personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours as any other age group (Bytheway, 1995). Whilst the circumstances of some, especially those living alone, leaves them relatively exposed to distraction burglary, the circumstances of others do not. It can be argued that vulnerability, linked to the ageing process, is a more reliable predictor of risk than age itself. Confusion between the two must clearly be avoided because although 'old age' overlaps with 'vulnerability', the two are not synonymous.

In assessing 'vulnerability' it is important not to exclude other fields of enquiry (Pain, 2003), as the *known* profile of distraction burglary victims also varies according to gender and ethnicity. Future research and practice into distraction burglary should explore factors beyond age that might also shape the distribution of victimisation. Gaining this knowledge, especially at a local level, will enable the development of more 'intelligence-led' approaches towards allocating crime prevention resources. Indeed, if the targeting of victims by offenders is highly selective then scope exists for the distribution of crime prevention resources to be informed by a similar degree of selectivity.

Other relevant factors are likely to be:

- socio-economic status;

- location of residence;

- household and tenure type;

- domestic living circumstances;

- physical and mental health capabilities; and

- everyday lifestyle routines and practices.

Consideration of these other factors brings at least four interrelated benefits. Firstly, as suggested, it enables crime prevention strategies to be more intelligence-led in the distribution of finite resources. Secondly, it implies that personal circumstance and specific types of behaviour are primary determinants of victimisation, which is important to recognise because behaviour can be addressed and rectified, but the ageing process cannot. Thirdly, it helps to reduce the stigma resulting from labelling 'the elderly' as generically vulnerable.[34] This culturally reproduced stereotype, as suggested here, not only informs the offender's construction of older people as 'suitable targets', but older people themselves absorb and internalise it. If older people are told they are vulnerable, then vulnerable they will be, not least because 'the bully always goes for the weak' (see Simey cited in Midwinter, 1990: 52). Finally, it helps to prevent the exclusion of other high-risk groups from crime prevention discourses. For example, some police officers suggest anecdotally that younger victims of distraction burglary tend to be characterised by cognitive, health and mobility problems.

Avoiding 'theory failure': understanding the behaviour of older people

Beyond 'getting the grease to the squeak', crime prevention projects are also required to consider the mechanisms by which they anticipate 'the grease stopping the squeak'. This requires a theorisation of the transformative potential of an intervention, which makes explicit the assumptions that underlie the intended mechanisms of change. Theory failure arises where interventions are correctly implemented, but fail to effect the anticipated change because of weaknesses in the assumptions underpinning an intervention.

Such (theoretical) considerations are particularly important for interventions designed to affect older people. The tendency for policy and practice to be over-paternalistic towards them risks misplacing assumptions about their behaviours, attitudes and experiences. Similarly, as stated earlier, treating older people as a homogeneous group reinforces stereotypes and any ensuing policies are unlikely to recognise diversity and thus may not fit with the reality of their lived experiences (Anderson, 1998: 48).

If crime prevention projects do not engage with the full range of factors that mould older people's behaviours then implemented interventions risk experiencing 'theory failure'. Avoiding this outcome requires projects to look beyond stereotypical notions of older people's behaviour, for example, that a failure to use security locks is a result of carelessness, forgetfulness or naivety. While some older people's behaviour will conform to the stereotype, many others will not. Another example of this transferable lesson is that whilst some older people may keep sizeable amounts of money at home because they prefer 'dealing with cash', others may do so to conceal it from officialdom and thus avoid reductions in welfare benefits or increased tax liabilities.

If the instrumental reasons that underpin the 'risky behaviour' of many older people are misunderstood then their susceptibility to distraction burglary cannot be fully addressed. This observation emphasises the importance of consultation and representation, and reminds us to question continually the assumptions that we draw about older people and their diverse behaviours.

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[34] This report has intentionally avoided the use of the term 'the elderly', wherein an adjective is misappropriated as a noun and thus 'people' become treated as 'things' (Fennel *et al.*, 1988).

'Implementation' as 'outcome': sustaining short-term initiatives

The LDBI was a two-year crime reduction project, which gained a sizeable government grant to combat distraction burglary in Leeds. While such funding arrangements enable the provision of 'pilot' or 'demonstration' projects, they are open to criticism for their short-term outlook (see Chapter 4). A main aim of the LDBI was therefore to stimulate longer-term crime prevention activity within other agencies and thereby leave behind a sustainable legacy.

As shown earlier, the project successfully promoted the anti-distraction burglary agenda across a range of statutory agencies, private companies, voluntary bodies and community groups. It raised the profile of this agenda within these organisations and equipped them with crime prevention resources, equipment and knowledge, thus enabling them to continue the work of the project after its demise. Examples include, the Feeling Good theatre company prolonging its distraction burglary performances and neighbourhood wardens continuing to show the LDBI's crime prevention videos to older people in the target area.

Although the longevity of the distraction burglary reduction measures within these organisations is difficult to assess, tangible evidence of the LDBI's sustainability is found in the National Lotteries Commission grant which the steering group gained to undertake further 'community' work around distraction burglary prevention issues. Also, West Yorkshire Trading Standards now employ the co-ordinator who continues to campaign for more stringent regulation of cold-calling agencies and more effective partnerships to reduce incidents of distraction burglary and domestic contractor fraud. Other aspects of the project have similarly attracted continuation funding, including the specialist detective and the domestic contractors' registration scheme, from West Yorkshire Police and Leeds City Council respectively. Through promoting organisational change, 'the outcomes' associated with the LDBI can be understood as 'implementation' within other partner agencies. Hence, the crime reduction benefits of the project are likely to continue to be felt across the target area, albeit less intensively over time.

Concluding remarks

Although distraction burglary is only a small proportion of overall burglary dwelling rates, the offence is especially pernicious. Not only does it involve trickery and sometimes violence (or the threat of it), but also the short- and long-term impacts upon the victims' physical, emotional and mental health can be devastating. Much of this trauma is hidden by the fact that distraction burglary statistics merely record the acquisitive dimension of the offence. The violent assaults and robberies that sometimes feature within 'distraction burglaries' are recorded under separate offence categories. Hence, looking at the offence through the lens of 'burglary statistics' gives a blinkered view that fails to highlight its seriousness. Similarly, if distraction burglary is a trigger event responsible for the terminal decline of some victims then the gravity of the offence is being greatly undermined by the short-term gaze of the criminal justice system.

In sum, the LDBI successfully promoted the anti-distraction burglary agenda, impressing upon the public the seriousness of the offence. For this it received much attention at a local, regional and national level, thus raising its own profile while also demonstrating transferable examples of good crime prevention and detection practice. Importantly, the impact of raising the profile of distraction burglary and establishing a dedicated policing post upon reporting and recording practices, meant the project was always unlikely to meet its target objective of decreasing the incidence of distraction burglary by 75 per cent. Despite this, the project occurred simultaneously with an overall fall in the recorded rate of distraction burglaries, both in the target area and the rest of the force area. Although the *identifiable* impact of the project on crime statistics was statistically insignificant, the recorded reduction nevertheless represents the saving of a considerable amount of personal misery and degradation of quality of life, if not the foreshortening of lives. For this alone, the financial costs of the LDBI were a relatively small price to pay.

Key examples of good practice

Partnerships

The project:

- established an effective multi-agency approach towards crime prevention;

- gave pre-existing voluntary structures a significant stake in implementation;

- was managed by a motivated and resourceful co-ordinator;

- accessed expert knowledge of older people via a clinical psychologist and the voluntary sector;

- mobilised a breadth of public, private and voluntary groups in support of its overall objectives; and

- created strategic alliances between disparate agencies that 'joined up' service provision for older people.

Interventions

The project:

- developed innovative methods of delivering safety advice to older people, for example, through drama performances;

- delivered crime prevention messages within the context of social and leisure events, thereby gaining access to some 'hard to reach' members of the public;

- encouraged interactive approaches to raising awareness about, and combating, distraction burglary;

- promoted doorstep behaviour by which people can enhance their safety;

- developed strong media connections to promote and support its objectives;

- produced a range of crime prevention videos to equip frontline agency personnel with practical safety advice;

- funded a specialist detective with a cross-divisional remit, who followed best-practice procedures for interviewing older victims of crime;

- funded a specialist Scenes of Crime Officer who enabled a faster and more thorough response to forensic searches; and

- established a voluntary registration scheme of domestic contractors that reassured people about the trustworthiness of participating companies.

Outcomes

The project:

- stimulated self-regulation within agencies whose staff rely upon gaining entry to people's dwellings;

- motivated replica crime prevention initiatives across the wider force area, as well other regions;

- promoted the reducing distraction burglary agenda within a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and groups;

- gave a national profile to the need for tighter regulation of the doorstep cold callers; and

- gained additional funding from various local and national agencies to sustain elements of good practice.

Recommendations

This report outlines much good practice undertaken by the LDBI, specifically with regard to the methods by which victims might protect themselves and partner agencies can develop crime prevention campaigns. Its broader lessons for policy and practice are summarised here.

Drawing on the findings of the research it is recommended that

- crime and disorder partnerships, wishing to harness multi-agency interests in support of reducing distraction burglary, allocate responsibility for developing partnership structures to a 'Champion'; by encouraging personal ownership over distraction burglary, strategies aimed at its prevention are less likely to slip between the gaps of 'partnership working'.

Police forces are recommended to carry out the following tasks.

- Create inter-force structures to enable the development of more efficient mechanisms of information sharing about the activities of highly mobile distraction burglars. Operations Liberal and Litotes represent pre-existing blueprint models of such structures of regional police co-operation.

- Create intra-force structures to facilitate the cross-divisional collation and dissemination of crime intelligence about local incidents of distraction burglary. Appointing a specialist, 'offence-based' detective with cross-divisional responsibility for undertaking initial enquiries can greatly facilitate this outcome.

- Develop partnership links with agencies that routinely receive useful intelligence from the public about the activities of distraction-type offenders, including the utilities companies, Trading Standards and Social Services. The speed that relevant information about 'attempt' or 'actual' distraction burglaries can be transferred to the police is seemingly crucial to the crime prevention and detection value of such inter-agency alliances.

- Encourage greater use of the 'delayed interview procedure' to improve the quality of evidence obtained from victims found in high states of emotional anxiety. Two caveats accompany this recommendation. Firstly, the investigating officer should obtain the victim's consent in order to reduce the risk of re-igniting any post-offence trauma during the second visit. Secondly, the first 'light-touch' interview should gain sufficient detail from the victim to ensure that urgent forensic examinations are appropriately directed – post-offence contamination of crime scenes regularly impedes distraction burglary investigations.

Distraction burglary reduction partnerships are recommended to implement the following suggestions.

- Establish mechanisms for consultation and information exchange with agencies delivering services to older people, such as health agencies, Social Services, social registered landlords, the police, voluntary organisations, community groups and older people's clubs. By engaging with these agencies, partnerships can improve their access to 'at risk' individuals in order to better target crime prevention resources.

- Establish mechanisms for representing and consulting older people. Practitioners are advised to question common assumptions about older people and their behaviour. If the instrumental reasons that underpin the 'risky behaviour' of many older people are misunderstood then their susceptibility to distraction burglary cannot be fully addressed.

- Focus upon vulnerabilities rather than age as the principal characteristic upon which to distribute crime prevention resources. This requires recognition of the diversity found among older people and their different levels of risk. Such an approach enables interventions to be more appropriately tailored and targeted to the needs of individuals and communities.

- Develop holistic educational campaigns that raise awareness about all the dimensions of distraction burglary. The various guises exploited by offenders are a useful entry point from which to explore these dimensions. These include:

    - bogus utility worker;

    - bogus public servant;

    - bogus domestic contractor;

    - other bogus worker;

    - other (non-bogus official) types of distraction.

    Although offenders' modes of deception and distraction can be usefully categorised, it may be helpful for crime prevention projects to break down stereotypical understandings of 'distraction burglary' and 'distraction burglars'. The manner of the distraction can vary according to the offending strategy. Sometimes 'distractors' try to gain entry to the dwelling, other times they entice the occupant outside. The characteristics of the offending group also vary. Offenders are not gender-specific (i.e. not always men), nor age-specific (although younger offenders tend to restrict their involvement to 'other types of distraction'), nor do they always work in pairs.

- Promote safety routines (e.g. doorstep etiquette) through interactive and discursive methods that encourage 'deep' learning. These practices also help challenge stereotypes, whilst avoiding a paternalistic approach.

- Manage the content of media strategies in order to depict positive images of older people that prioritise their strengths over their weaknesses. Headlines portraying older people as 'easy prey' risk reinforcing unhelpful notions of vulnerability, both within the minds of older people and the offenders targeting them.

- Develop innovative and systematic implementation strategies that access 'hard to reach' older people. This is crucial because whilst it may be relatively difficult for agencies to engage with those who are socially isolated, cognitively impaired and physical immobile, these characteristics are also considered to be indicators of heightened risk to distraction burglary victimisation.

It is recommended that future research and practice explores:

- other factors beyond age that might also shape the distribution of distraction burglary victimisation (e.g. the spatial dimension, health dimension, household tenure type, etc); such analyses will enable the development of more intelligence-led approaches towards allocating finite crime prevention resources;

- the longer-term physical impacts of distraction burglary upon older victims: if distraction burglary is a trigger event responsible for the terminal decline of some victims then the seriousness of the offence is being greatly undermined by the short-term gaze of the criminal justice system.

Appendix A. Non-implemented interventions

Learning lessons from crime prevention initiatives involves understanding 'what did', as well as 'what did not', happen. Here, the interventions that the LDBI considered implementing, but did not, are briefly highlighted.

Window display notices

The bid document detailed a proposal to distribute window display notices in older people's dwellings. These were intended to deflect offenders by informing them that cash and valuables had been removed from individual premises. After discussions with partners, notably the voluntary sector, it was decided not to pursue this strategy. This was because window display notices might draw an offender's attention towards a 'suitable target'. Hence they were viewed as contradictory to the aims of the project's environmental work, which sought to make older people's homes less conspicuous.

Banking protocol

The LDBI had planned to hold discussions with the banking sector over the possible development of an audit system on the bank accounts of vulnerable older people. The aim was to highlight any suspiciously large withdrawal requests and, prior to any transaction, subject them to scrutiny by a third person, such as a relative or bank employee. This audit system was not universally intended. Instead it was considered appropriate only for those people considered 'at risk' of acquiescing to repeated financial demands from unscrupulous domestic contractors. The rationale for this proposed intervention was that offenders gain the greatest sums of money through 'milking' bank accounts rather than distraction burglary.

This intervention was, however, not developed. The national distraction burglary task force led negotiations with banking representatives on this proposal and encountered a degree of resistance. Concerns were also expressed that such an audit system might impinge upon the rights of those older people that were nominated for the scheme.

Credit union

Given that distraction burglars usually steal cash, the LDBI wished to persuade older people not to keep cash savings in the home. However, it was widely suggested that some older people prefer not to use banks, not least because of the inconvenience of travelling to withdraw money. Hence, the LDBI sought to enter a partnership with the Leeds City Credit Union and thereby promote it as a more mobile and community-orientated financial institution with which older people could deposit money. However, due to work demands and time constraints this aspect of partnership work went undeveloped.

Prison rehabilitation

In seeking to pursue a holistic approach to crime prevention, the LDBI held preliminary discussions with a local prison governor, with a view to implementing a rehabilitation programme for convicted offenders. However, the time constraints of the initiative prevented this work from being furthered.

Appendix B. Calculation of intensity measure

Tables A1 and A2 outline the calculations of the monthly intensity values for two of the implemented interventions, namely target hardening and the Feeling Good theatre group.

Table A1: Intensity measure for target hardening intervention

	Proportion of output	Intensity measure
Apr-01	0.00	0.0000
May-01	0.02	0.0044
Jun-01	0.04	0.0088
Jul-01	0.05	0.0133
Aug-01	0.07	0.0177
Sep-01	0.09	0.0221
Oct-01	0.11	0.0265
Nov-01	0.13	0.0309
Dec-01	0.14	0.0354
Jan-02	0.18	0.0442
Feb-02	0.21	0.0530
Mar-02	0.25	0.0619
Apr-02	0.28	0.0689
May-02	0.31	0.0760
Jun-02	0.34	0.0849
Jul-02	0.38	0.0940
Aug-02	0.42	0.1036
Sep-02	0.46	0.1135
Oct-02	0.50	0.1241
Nov-02	0.55	0.1368
Dec-02	0.61	0.1503
Jan-03	0.66	0.1644
Feb-03	0.73	0.1800
Mar-03	0.79	0.1959
Apr-03	0.85	0.2114
May-03	0.91	0.2256
Jun-03	0.97	0.2397
Jul-03	1.00	0.2475
Aug-03	1.00	0.2475
Sep-03	1.00	0.2475
Oct-03	1.00	0.2475
Nov-03	1.00	0.2475

The second and third columns in Table A1 show the cumulative total of properties target hardened as a proportion of the total. Column three converts this proportion into an intensity value. It does so by multiplying the proportion of output by the percentage of total project resources allocated to the intervention, which for target hardening was 24.7 per cent. As the effect of the intervention is likely to last for sometime into the future the intensity measure continues to take its maximum value even after the project ends.

Table A2: Intensity measure for Feeling Good theatre intervention

	Proportion of output	Intensity measure
Apr-01	0.000	0.0000
May-01	0.000	0.0000
Jun-01	0.000	0.0000
Jul-01	0.000	0.0000
Aug-01	0.000	0.0000
Sep-01	0.000	0.0000
Oct-01	0.000	0.0000
Nov-01	0.038	0.0012
Dec-01	0.038	0.0012
Jan-02	0.038	0.0012
Feb-02	0.038	0.0012
Mar-02	0.038	0.0012
Apr-02	0.050	0.0015
May-02	0.063	0.0019
Jun-02	0.050	0.0015
Jul-02	0.088	0.0027
Aug-02	0.050	0.0015
Sep-02	0.050	0.0015
Oct-02	0.075	0.0023
Nov-02	0.038	0.0012
Dec-02	0.075	0.0023
Jan-03	0.050	0.0015
Feb-03	0.050	0.0015
Mar-03	0.025	0.0008
Apr-03	0.025	0.0008
May-03	0.025	0.0008
Jun-03	0.025	0.0008
Jul-03	0.025	0.0008
Aug-03	0.013	0.0004
Sep-03	0.013	0.0004
Oct-03	0.013	0.0004
Nov-03	0.013	0.0004

In general, the output associated with the Feeling Good theatre intervention relates to the number of performances each month. However, these performances may continue to influence the audience's behaviour for several months after they had taken place. Again, the proportion of output each month has been converted to an intensity measure according to the percentage of total resources accounted for by the intervention.

While the calculation of each individual intensity measure attempted to account for any longer-term effect of outputs occurring in particular months, they did not address the possibility of the cumulative impact of interventions over time. For example, a particular level of output at the early stages of the project may have had a different impact to the same level of output at a later stage due to many factors, including general awareness of the intervention amongst the targeted population and improvements in implementation processes over time.

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