

Surrey Police- Operation Blink

Goldstein Awards Submission 2023

1. Summary

Scanning

In early 2021, the county of Surrey in the United Kingdom (UK), as well as much of the world, was experiencing a significant increase in catalytic converter thefts (catalytic converters are valuable pieces of metal attached to vehicle exhausts). Thieves would jack up a vehicle in broad daylight and cut the catalytic converter away in a few seconds. Thieves were brazen and there were few witnesses, suspects, or arrests. This was having a profound impact on victims, with thefts causing significant vehicle damage, leaving them without a mode of transport. Various partners were identified who had also noticed an increase in the problem and were keen to support.

Analysis

It became clear that a key cause of the problem was the public's lack of awareness of catalytic converter thefts. People did not recognise thefts because they looked like genuine vehicle maintenance and most had never even heard of a catalytic converter. It was hypothesised that a lack of awareness was leading to a lack of reporting via 999. This meant that the force was not able to identify suspect vehicles and make arrests, which in turn led to a low-risk-high-reward situation, increasing the number of thefts.

Response

Based on the hypothesis, most of the responses related to public education as to the signs of catalytic converter theft and to report it via 999 immediately. This included social media content, a video, signs, flyers, interviews, presentations, and an ad-van campaign. Each of these communication mediums focused on the core message of: this is what catalytic converter theft looks and sounds like (a vehicle jacked up on one side, someone underneath, and the sound of metal being cut), please call 999 as soon as you notice it.

Assessment

After an intensive communications campaign, calls reporting catalytic converter thefts via 999 increased by 171.32%, leading to a 119.70% increase in suspect vehicles identified. This led to 13 arrests in a short space of time, compared to one in the previous five-and-a-half months. The increase in arrests, with more people noticing the crime and police quickly attending the scene, led to an increase in risk. This resulted in a 63.92% decrease in catalytic converter thefts, with an estimated public saving of £310,500. Learning from the operation was shared with other forces, and directly influenced other campaigns, including the 2022 campaign by British Transport Police, who are the national lead for catalytic converter theft.

2. Description

Scanning

Approaching the problem

Catalytic converters (see Figure 1) are pieces of metal that are legally required on all UK vehicles that are not fully electric. They contain valuable precious metals (palladium, platinum, and rhodium) that clean harmful emissions from a vehicle's exhaust. Since 2019, [news articles have highlighted a rise of catalytic converter thefts](#) in the UK, which is largely attributable to the [increase in price of these metals](#). Pertsev (2021)¹ highlighted that this rise in thefts has also been seen around the world, with [The New York Times](#) picking up on this increase.

A theft primarily involves thieves jacking a vehicle up on one side, sliding underneath, cutting the catalytic converter away with a power tool, and driving off in their own vehicle. This can take as little as [one minute](#). Thieves can sell catalytic converters for hundreds of pounds, whilst the [average victim cost is £1,500](#).

By late 2020, the rise in thefts and links to Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) was leading to increased attention from police forces around the world. In 2020, 1,169 thefts were reported in Surrey², with an increase again in early 2021 (see Figure 2). Surrey Police's Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) identified that this was significantly impacting residents, helping organised criminality, and putting the force's reputation at risk. As a result, they decided to work with the force's Problem Solving Team to identify an appropriate response.

¹ Pertsev, R. (2021). INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ANTI-THEFT OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS INSTALLED IN CARS. Archives of Criminology and Forensic Sciences, 3, 65-71.

² A county located in the south of the UK, with a population of approximately 1.2 million.

Research

To understand the problem, police data, online articles, and social media were researched. Additionally, other forces, Toyota, Neighbourhood Watch (NhW, a volunteer organisation who look to make neighbourhoods safer), and partners at local meetings were engaged with. The national working group for catalytic converter theft was also attended.

Searching Surrey Police's database for catalytic converter thefts was not straightforward, as there was no consistent recording process. From research, the following key points were established:

Offender

- OCGs travelling from outside Surrey accounted for most thefts.
- They worked in small groups, were brazen, and sometimes used violence if approached.
- They often used false registration plates on getaway vehicles, making them difficult to trace.
- Only 8.73% of Surrey thefts had a suspect vehicle identified in 2020.
- Only one arrest was made between November 2020 and late April 2021, reflecting the national picture of infrequent arrests.
- Little was known about catalytic converter disposal following a theft. This likely involved online sales, ports, and scrap yards.

Target/victim

- Most vehicles targeted were hybrid cars (Toyota Prius/Auris, Honda Jazz/CR-V, and Lexus RX), as they produce cleaner emissions, resulting in less corroded (more valuable) precious metals.

- Vehicles tended to be older (2000s), due to fewer precious metals being required in newer vehicles and design changes limiting access.
- Due to this and a global move toward electric vehicles (which do not require catalytic converters), this crime will eventually be 'designed out'. However, catalytic converter thefts are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
- The average victim age was 52.
- [Covid-19 pandemic keyworkers were often targeted](#), as hospital and supermarket car parks provided numerous target vehicles.
- The crime was having a profound impact on victims (see Figure 3), with the damage often writing vehicles off.

Location

- Car parks were frequently affected due to the number of potential targets present. On one day, thieves stole 10 from one hospital.
- Thefts were clustered around the M25³ (see Figure 4) due to good ingress/egress routes and proximity to London, where many OCGs are based.
- Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Wisley⁴ was the most affected location (almost three times as many thefts as the next).

Times

- Thefts were rising in Surrey (see Figure 2), with 3.19 per day in 2020 and 4.49 in early 2021.
- Offending decreased during the first Covid-19 lockdown, likely due to restrictions limiting free movement.

³ A major UK motorway, which encircles London.

⁴ Large gardens where the public pay to visit.

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- There was an offending peak during the day (10:00-15:00), likely due to car parks being fuller.

Partners

A number of partners were identified:

Partner	Involvement
Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) ⁵	Aware of public concern
Crimestoppers ⁶	Aware and willing to support
Toyota	Keen to discuss the problem
RHS Wisley	Most affected Surrey location and keen to protect visitors
NhW	Keen to spread crime prevention advice
Forensic marking companies	Looking to promote products that uniquely mark catalytic converters
Local vehicle garages	Could forensically mark catalytic converters
Surrey's Chamber of Commerce ⁷	Good access to businesses with car parks
Metal scrap yards	Could be purchasing stolen catalytic converters, but likely seeking to prove their legitimacy

⁵ An elected individual who holds police forces to account.

⁶ A charity organisation committed to increasing the reporting of crime.

⁷ An organisation dedicated to supporting businesses in Surrey.

Defining the problem

To conclude scanning, a specific problem definition was formulated:

“Surrey has a significant problem with small groups of organised criminals jacking up vehicles and very quickly/easily cutting catalytic converters away with electric tools.

This often occurs in car parks in the middle of the day. Few arrests take place as offences are often reported a while after they have taken place”.

Analysis

The Problem Analysis Triangle

To analyse the information gathered, the problem was broken down using the Problem Analysis Triangle (see Figure 5). Considerations were made for why the problem was continuing and how this might inform prospective responses.

Target/victim

Victims appeared largely unaware of what catalytic converters were or whether their vehicle had one, so they were surprised to be informed of the theft by their breakdown service. As they did not know it existed, they could not protect it. It was also pertinent that the average victim age was 52. Police force’s crime prevention advice had so far largely involved social media posts, but [research indicates that UK social media use decreases from age 55](#). To reach a wider cross-section of Surrey residents, different communication methods were required.

It was not just victims that had a lack of knowledge around the existence of catalytic converters. It seemed that the entire population of Surrey was equally as unaware. On behalf of Surrey Police, RHS Wisley surveyed their customers, finding that almost all of them had never heard of this crime. This lack of knowledge, combined with thefts appearing like legitimate vehicle maintenance, was leading to a significant lack of capable guardians. With most thefts occurring in busy car parks in the middle of the day, *potential guardians* would be present, but they were not equipped to be *capable guardians*. This was evidenced by only 5.3% of 2020 thefts being reported immediately via 999- people did not recognise and report the crime. To create capable guardians, who could provide some 'informal surveillance', key information needed to be shared with the public.

Where members of the public were aware of the crime, existing target hardening solutions were not forthcoming. One such solution was a [Catloc](#), a device that can shield catalytic converters from thieves. Unfortunately, they were expensive and there was little evidence regarding their effectiveness⁸. Considering the number of potential targets across Surrey, it was unlikely that enough Catlocs could be purchased to significantly reduce thefts.

Offender

With so few people recognising the crime and calling 999, there had been few arrests (one between November 2020 and late-April 2021). This meant that thieves became brazen, not expecting to be caught. Considering Rational Choice Theory, an

⁸ Since Operation Blink, Catloc have designed [more affordable products and achieved Sold Secure Gold standard](#).

offender's cost-benefit analysis was very straightforward: it was easy to complete, with low risk and high reward.

Avenues for catalytic converter disposal were considered. If it was harder for thieves to sell them, there would be less benefit in stealing them. Unfortunately, there were few Surrey scrap yards that could legally purchase catalytic converters and there was a national knowledge gap regarding disposal routes. Intelligence did not identify any suspicious Surrey locations for disposal, so it was determined that Surrey could not greatly influence this aspect of the problem.

Pertsev (2021)⁹ correctly highlighted that legislative bodies must take action to make catalytic converter disposal harder. But with the resources available to Surrey Police at the time, it was clear that changing national legislation was out of the force's reach and would not lead to any immediate respite for the Surrey public.

Location

Surrey was likely targeted due to its proximity to London (where many OCGs are based) and because there are several major ingress/egress routes linking it to five bordering forces. This may explain why it was suffering more thefts than neighbouring forces Hampshire and Sussex (see Figure 6).

Thieves frequently visited car parks, as there were always multiple target vehicles present. Car parks were reviewed to identify any similarities, but apart from being located near to major roads, there were few similarities identified. It was clear that presence of ANPR cameras did not deter thieves, as without witnesses, the offence timeframe was broad, with numerous vehicles entering/exiting the car park in

⁹ Pertsev, R. (2021). INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ANTI-THEFT OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS INSTALLED IN CARS. Archives of Criminology and Forensic Sciences, 3, 65-71.

this time. This meant that the force would not be able to identify suspect vehicles, again emphasising the need for capable guardians. Any awareness campaign should also be targeted to car park managers and staff at the location (e.g. supermarket staff), so they could act as location managers.

Thefts were also occurring in residential areas, but these appeared more opportunistic. Furthermore, proposed increases in guardians should have the same effect in residential areas, with many people residing near to these thefts.

It was evident that the force could improve the way it identifies vehicles using false registration plates from ANPR data. One colleague had found a particularly effective way of doing this, but this tactic had not been widely shared.

Previous Responses

Responses from several forces were evaluated as part of Operation Blink. Unfortunately, few had been formally assessed, making it difficult to identify which should be adopted in Surrey. Success often appeared to be measured by whether the response had taken place (e.g. forensic marking kits were handed out). The most significant responses were evaluated:

Response	Description	Evaluation
Patrols	Targeted patrols.	Very few positive outcomes observed, but neighbourhood teams were keen to conduct them.

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Social media advice	Tell the public to park under a light (so thieves are seen), not park up a kerb (so thieves cannot easily access catalytic converters), and purchase a Catloc.	Lights do not assist with offences during the day, thieves almost always brought car jacks with them so avoiding kerbs would not assist, and Catlocs were expensive.
Scrap yards	Visit scrap yards to confirm lawful activity.	There were only a few relevant Surrey locations.
Forensic marking	Uniquely mark catalytic converters so they are identifiable if stolen, increasing the risk for thieves. Some forces sent letters to owners of particular vehicles, signposting to garages who would mark it for free (force-funded).	This could assist with detection rates, but suspects would need to be identified first. It may increase the risk for thieves.
Public awareness	Public awareness days involving catalytic converter marking.	There was little information to explain what else took place within awareness days.
Targeted ANPR	Norfolk Police focused solely on ANPR.	Norfolk had success, but the county's geography meant that thieves often used one of a few major roads, which were all well covered by ANPR. This was

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		unlike Surrey, where there are numerous busy roads.
Signage	The only sign identified was from Runnymede borough within Surrey (see Figure 7).	The sign did not explain what a theft looked like, the cartoon burglar may have been confusing, it only suggested reporting suspicious activity (not defining what this was), and it did not direct them to call 999.

Few responses highlighted the specific signs of catalytic converter theft. In early 2021, the British Transport Police (BTP), national leads for catalytic converter theft, provided forces with a communication package for the 2021 national catalytic converter theft week of action (including Figure 8). This content was not in line with Operation Blink’s findings, as it did not demonstrate what a theft looked like or signpost to 999. It also included the typical messaging seen across social media, which was not believed to be effective.

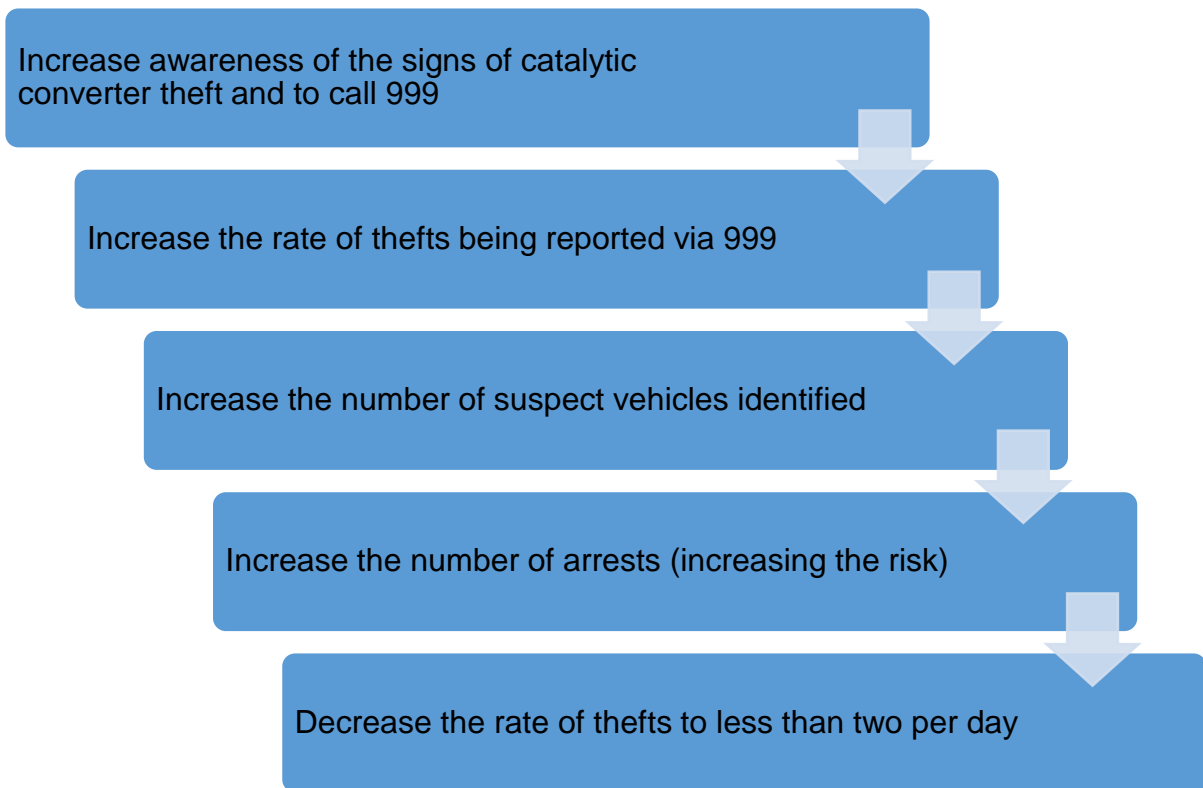
Understanding the problem's cause

It was hypothesised that the following chain of events were permitting catalytic converter thefts to continue:



Setting objectives

Based on this hypothesis, the following objectives were set:



Response

Pilot

Analysis identified that alerting the public to the signs of catalytic converter theft and how to report it must be at the centre of any potential responses. Before these were implemented across Surrey, a pilot was established with RHS Wisley (the most affected location), with the following responses tested:

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Response	Description	Outcome
Presentation	A presentation was delivered to RHS Wisley employees, explaining what catalytic converter theft was, how to spot it, and to call 999.	Positive feedback was received. Staff subsequently twice identified a theft in progress, calling 999.
Patrols	The local neighbourhood team and RHS Wisley were both keen on patrols.	Patrols did not yield positive responses, so this was ended after a short while. In one incident, thieves waited for police to leave before offending.
ANPR	Temporary police owned ANPR cameras were placed on RHS Wisley's entrance/exit.	When staff reported the two thefts in progress, they failed to obtain the suspect vehicle registrations. However, as they knew the vehicle description and time of the thefts, officers could identify the registrations from the ANPR data. This emphasised the importance of education alongside ANPR. RHS Wisley have subsequently sought to purchase their own ANPR.
Signs	Multiple sign designs were created and 415 customers voted on	Sign 3 received easily the most votes, likely because it clearly stated that the image was catalytic converter theft. Very few customers had heard of the crime,

	which had the clearest message (see Figure 9).	but many said they would now confront thieves (highlighting the importance of telling the public not to approach thieves, due to possible violence).
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In the year before the pilot, RHS Wisley suffered one theft every 6.6 days, with 3.8% reported via 999. In the following five months, this was one theft every 13.9 days, with 16.7% reported via 999. This provided confidence in Operation Blink’s hypothesis.

Force-wide response

Based on the pilot’s success, Surrey’s PCC provided £12,500 to replicate this on a force-wide scale. Most responses were implemented between 18/04/2021-30/06/2021.

Education

As highlighted above, educating the public was at the centre of Operation Blink. The following responses were created to directly implement this:

Response	Description
Presentation	A short PowerPoint presentation was created to explain what catalytic converter theft was, how to spot it, and to call 999. This was shared with partners and the public.
Signs	1,000 signs (see Figure 10) were placed on lampposts across the county in key target locations.

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Flyers	Flyers (see Figure 11) were created to highlight to specific vehicle owners that their vehicle was at risk.
Social media	New social media content was designed to focus on the key messaging (see Figure 12).
Interviews	Interviews were held with BBC Radio Surrey , GetSurrey , and Surrey Chambers of Commerce . The latter was also published in a magazine .
Video	With support from Toyota, a mock theft video was created .
Ad-van campaign	With support from Crimestoppers, Toyota, and NhW, numerous locations across Surrey were visited over three days, with a digital ad-van displaying videos of thefts and campaign messages (see Figure 13). Toyota brought a Toyota Prius, car jack, Catloc, and catalytic converter to demonstrate a theft to the public.
Force website	A force webpage was created for catalytic converter theft prevention messaging.

Other responses

Alongside the education-led responses, several other responses were employed:

Response	Description
Forensic marking	2,160 SelectaDNA kits were provided to neighbourhood teams to arrange the unique marking of frequently targeted vehicles at local garages. Letters were sent to vehicle owners, signposting them to garages and providing them with the key educational messaging (see

	Figure 14). It was hoped that this would increase the risk for thieves, but it was primarily seen as another way of getting the public talking and learning about the key educational messaging.
Scrap yard visits	Locations approved to purchase catalytic converters were visited to confirm their legitimacy. No issues were raised.
ANPR	Intelligence teams received training on identifying correct vehicle registration numbers from false registration plates.
Data recording	A 'THEFT – OF CATALYTIC CONVERTER' occurrence type was created in Surrey Police's database, to ensure better recording and searching.

Assessment

Measuring the impact

To assess the impact of the responses, baselines associated with the objectives were re-measured (see Figure 15). Firstly, the percentage of thefts reported via 999 was measured. An increase would indicate more people being aware of the signs of catalytic converter theft and immediately reporting it. Comparing 2020 figures with the response rollout period (18/04/2021-30/06/2021), there was a 171.32% increase (from 5.30% to 14.38%)¹⁰. The effect of this on the rate of incidents with a suspect vehicle recorded was then measured, with a 119.70% increase in the same timeframe (from 8.73% to 19.18%).

¹⁰ New social media messaging was trialled in early 2021, so the 2020 rate was used as a baseline.

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During the response rollout, Surrey Police arrested 13 people for catalytic converter theft. This was a significant increase on one arrest in the previous five-and-a-half months, and was a direct consequence of people recognising and reporting the crime in progress, with pursuits and investigations then following.

In the year leading up to Operation Blink, there were 3.52 catalytic converter thefts in Surrey per day. In the three months after the responses had concluded (01/07/2021-30/09/2021), Surrey experienced 1.27 thefts per day (see Figure 16), a reduction of 63.92% (207 fewer thefts than anticipated). It is believed that more people recognising and reporting the crime, a higher level of immediate police attendance, and a higher volume of arrests led to an increase in risk, which was a substantial deterrent for thieves. The public were directly reducing the prevalence of this crime by completing informal surveillance for the force.

It was important to compare these results with other forces, to identify how effective the education-led response was. In April 2021, numerous UK police forces, including Surrey, took part in a national week of action to tackle catalytic converter theft. This intensive focus led to successes around the country, with OPAL recording a national catalytic converter theft reduction of 39%¹¹. Surrey's 63.92% reduction was significantly higher than this, and was a notable contributor to the national reduction.

Figures obtained from local forces identified that despite typically having a far greater problem, Surrey recorded fewer offences than the neighbouring Hampshire and Sussex after the response rollout (see Figure 17). Both these other forces did see reductions, but these were far more modest than in Surrey. It may have also

¹¹ From OPAL's 07/01/2022 Review of Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime Overview, ref. Opal/2022/1

been that a diffusion of benefits occurred, with the perceived risk from Operation Blink's work filtering out to neighbouring forces.

Measuring the cost effectiveness

£12,363.60 was spent on signs, flyers, and SelectaDNA marking kits. It is difficult to measure operational costs, with various teams involved, but it is important to note that many responses (e.g. interviews and social media content) did not result in additional force costs, whilst Crimestoppers paid for the ad-van campaign.

To calculate total public savings, the cost of an average catalytic converter theft was estimated at £1,500, [using Admiral's valuation](#). With the estimated reduction of 207 thefts in a three-month period, this saved the public £310,500, resulting in a net saving of £298,136.40. Additional savings can be considered through ineffective police patrols being discouraged, fewer police investigations being required, the reduced emotional impact on victims, and a steadier reduction in offences in the months after this.

It is important to review the most expensive response utilised, the SelectaDNA catalytic converter marking kits (£8,553.60), as many other forces have also used this response. The cost of 379 kits equates to one theft, suggesting it is a cost-effective way of reducing thefts. However, there is no formal way to confirm how many thefts they prevented, so it is difficult to fully endorse them. For future use, it is recommended that they form part of the wider response, as this operation did by using them as a tool to engage with the public about the signs of catalytic converter theft (see Figure 14).

Looking ahead

Internal

After the positive results identified between April and September 2021, there was a slight increase in thefts in October 2021, but they were more localised hotspots, at night, in residential areas. It appeared that displacement may have occurred, with thieves now requiring the cover of darkness because of the increase in public awareness. To combat this, the learning and resources from Operation Blink were shared with the few local neighbourhood teams that were suffering from the increase, so they could react to local hotspots and target their messaging to educate highly localised populations. These teams were able to identify hotspots themselves because the newly created 'THEFT – OF CATALYTIC CONVERTER' occurrence type in Surrey Police's database was being used well. This targeted response resulted in an increase in the rate of 999 calls and thefts decreased. Thefts in Surrey since this period have consistently remained well below the peak of early 2021.

Using the learning from Operation Blink and additional research, a tactical menu was created for theft from motor vehicles. Tactical menus are documents produced by Surrey Police's Problem Solving Team that contain evaluations of responses in relation to a specific crime type, so officers can easily review previous responses when tackling problems. A short guide on tips for using an ad-van was also created for officers to learn about this tactic.

External

Learning was also shared externally, with other forces, partners, and the public, to enable wider awareness and education. This influenced several police-led

campaigns, with many using the images created by Surrey to demonstrate what a theft looks like and with [West Yorkshire Police creating presentation slides based on Operation Blink's own presentation](#).

The most influential endorsement came through BTP's 2022 national campaign, which can be seen by comparing their 2022 (see Figure 18) and 2021 content (see Figure 8). BTP also emphasised Operation Blink's key messaging in their 2022 force guidance, stating "*we want people to know the key signs of a catalytic converter theft being committed and report it as soon as it's happening*"¹². In addition, the video created alongside Toyota was nationally endorsed by the National Police Chiefs Council in early 2022. Operation Blink was recognised at the UK's National Problem Solving Awards (the Tilley Awards) in October 2022, where it won the Neighbourhoods category.

For forces looking to problem solve catalytic converter theft, it is advised that to build on Operation Blink's work, they should obtain data from breakdown and insurance companies as part of their scanning. This was not completed as part of Operation Blink, but may have assisted in understanding the true extent of the problem (i.e. if many thefts were unreported to police). Furthermore, a public survey measuring catalytic converter theft awareness could also assist with confidence in the education response (i.e. if more people report being aware of the crime after the response).

At the time of writing, the global situation relating to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is ongoing. With considerable economic sanctions being imposed on Russia, their future exportation of goods may be limited. This represents a concern

¹² BTP's Catalytic Converter Week (10/02/2022-16/02/2022) Comms Briefing

for catalytic converter thefts, [as Russia is one of the largest producers of precious metals](#), meaning that the price of these metals may rise exponentially. Forces should therefore be wary of future catalytic converter theft increases.

3. Agency and Officer Information

Key Project Team Members:

- Problem Solving Tactical Advisor Matt Sessions, previously of Surrey Police, now of Warwickshire Police.
- Temporary Detective Chief Inspector Kate Hyder of Surrey Police.

Key Contact Person:

- Name: Matt Sessions
- Position/Rank: Problem Solving Tactical Advisor (Police Staff)
- Email: matt.sessions@warwickshire.police.uk

4. Appendices

Figure 1: A catalytic converter



Figure 2: Surrey catalytic converter thefts per day

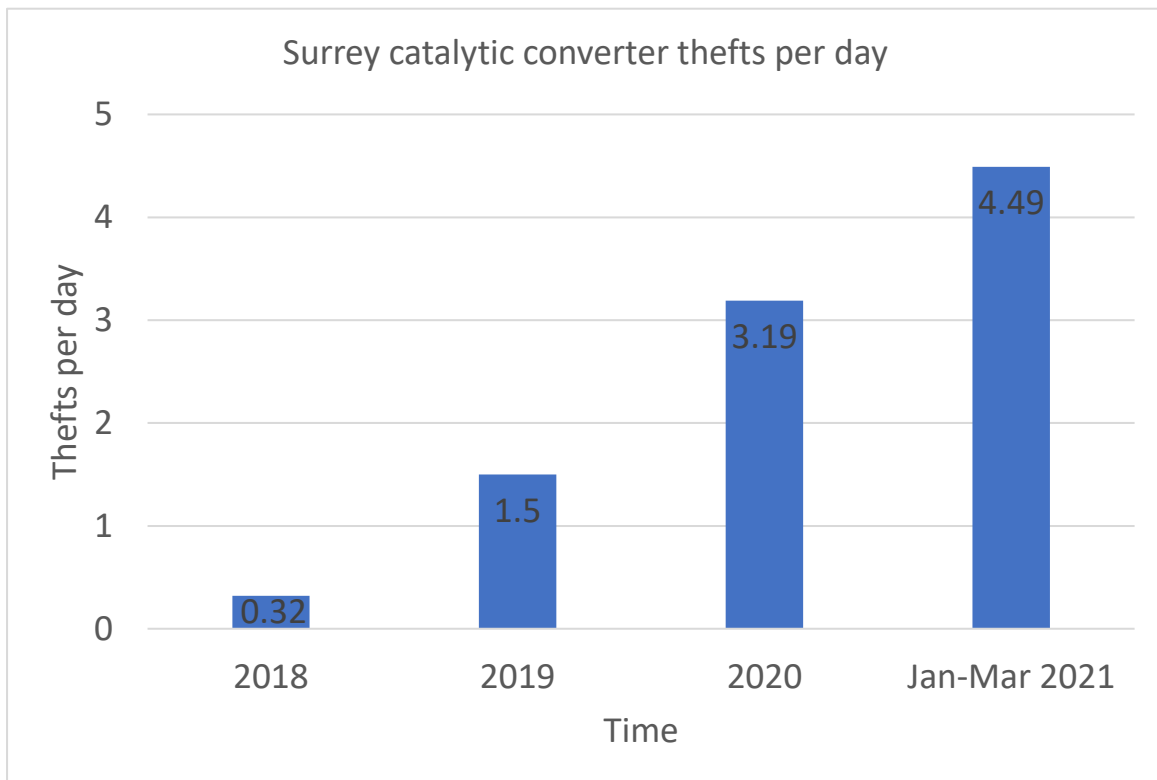


Figure 3: Victims' social media comments

Yes I had mine done last friday in chertsey, they are thinking about writing off my car and I need it for work as I'm a caregiver and I'm absolutely devastated x

Too late ... mine was stolen two weeks ago in a well lit area .. in a busy culdesac .. outside my flat .. in fact outside my bedroom .. Only about 15ft away !! I was in and didn't hear anything .. Plus they did another car next to mine !! My car was a fraction away from being written off. My MOT garage fixed it with a cheaper version that the the thieves don't want as it's not worth anything .. and saved my car .. these thieves they don't care about the fact that we can lose our transport .. SOOO grateful for the AA who's help was invaluable and to CHERTSEY MOTS 4U for all their FANTASTIC help in getting my car back on the road .. Thankyou all 😊😊😊😊😊

I had mine stolen a few months ago,the car was on my drive 6.45pm;it would have cost me just over £1,000,my insurance didn't want to know,long story short I am now without a car,very inconvenient as I only get bus my way every other Ash Wednesday if you're lucky.

Just read that 2 men have been arrested in tadworth for cat conv thefts. They need to be made an example of... this crime is getting out of hand. My car was targeted twice within 8 days from my driveway in reigate! I am a single mum and this is just wrong. Despite dashcam footage of these men, nothing was done.

Figure 4: Map of Surrey thefts (01/04/2020-31/03/2021)

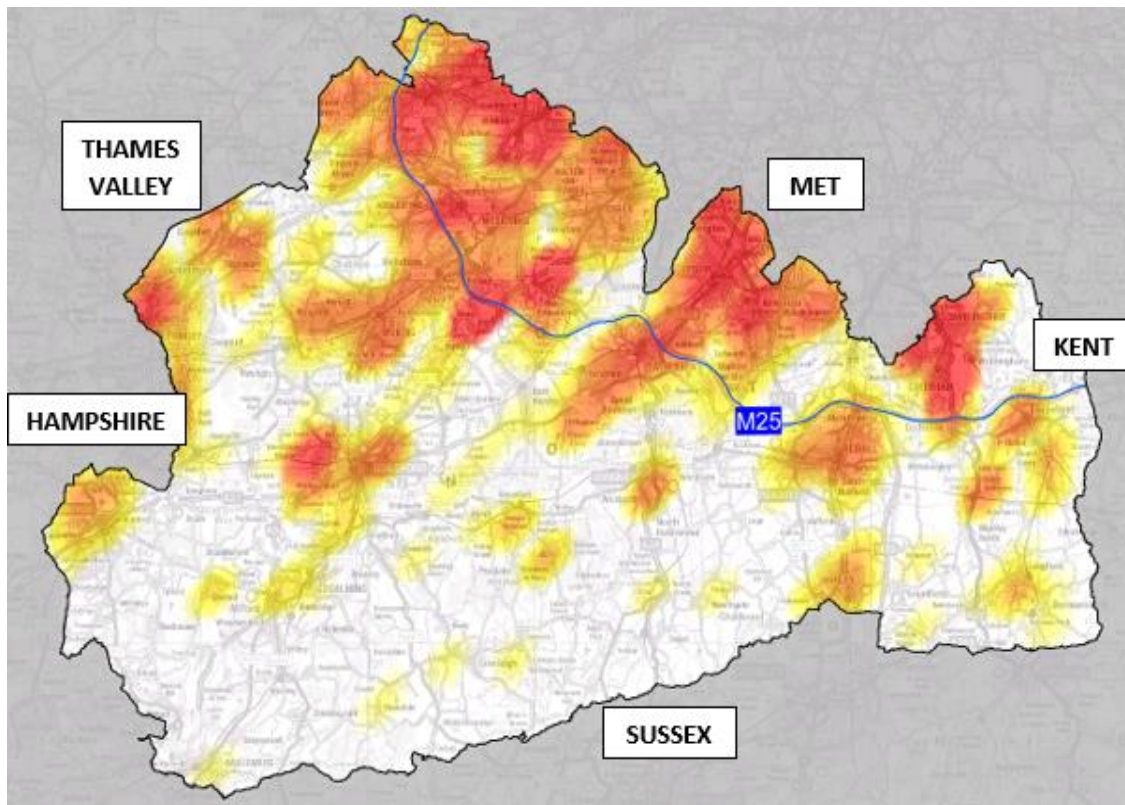


Figure 5: The Problem Analysis Triangle

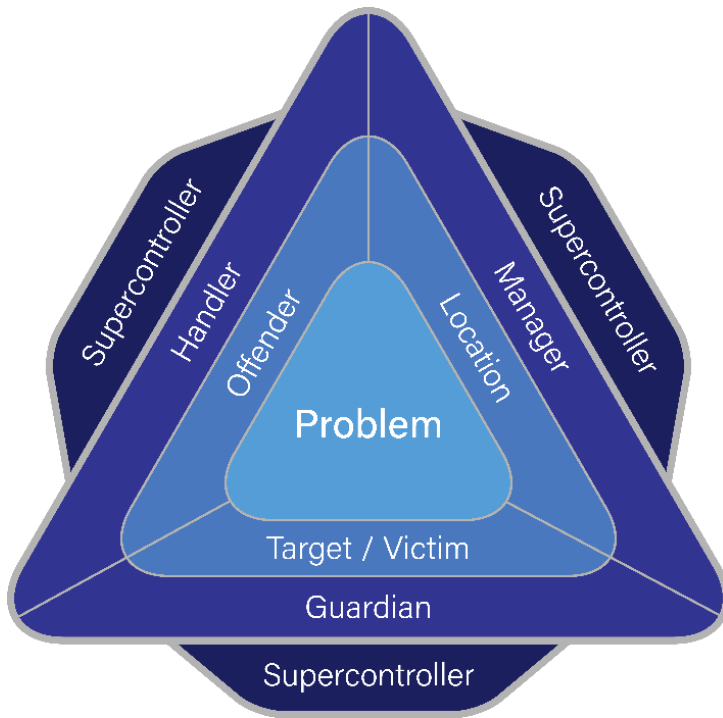


Figure 6: Rate of catalytic converter thefts in Surrey and other local forces

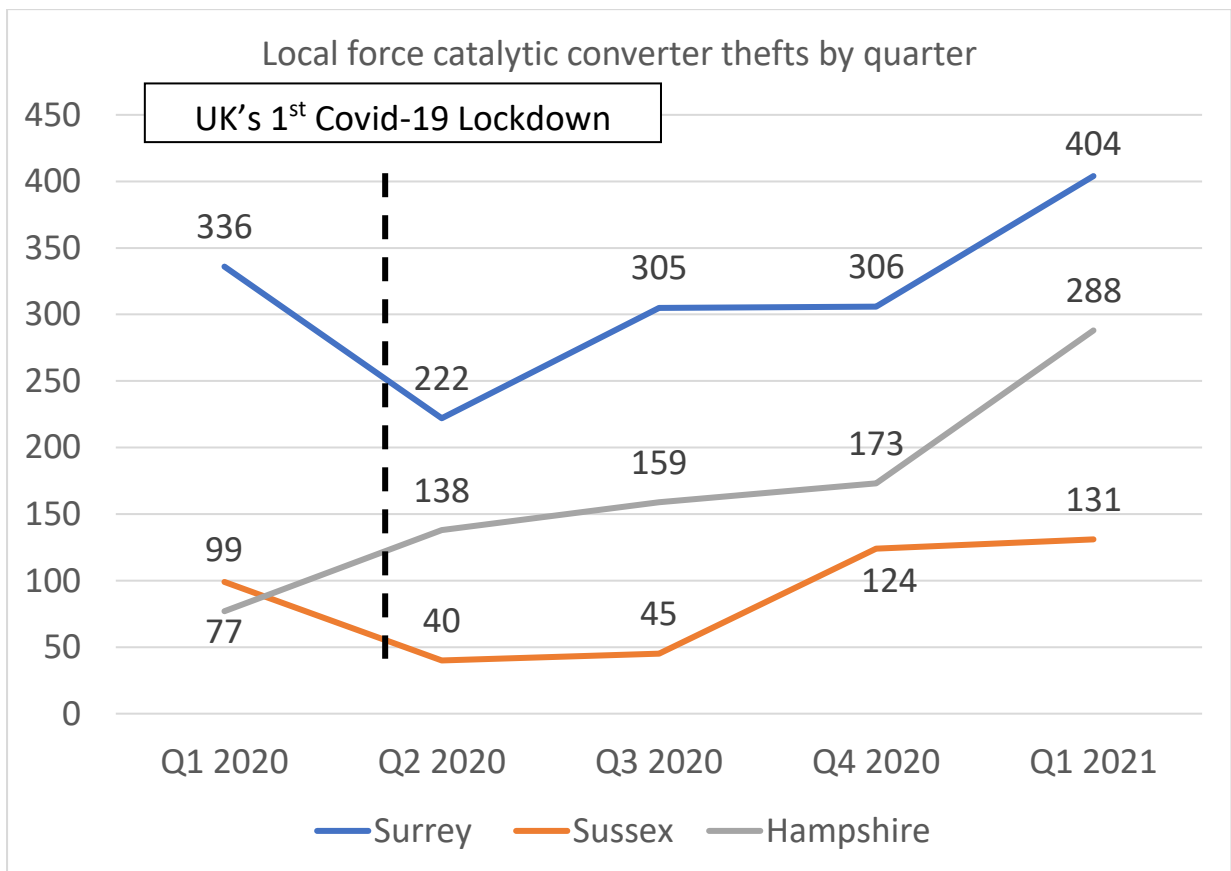


Figure 7: Runnymede's catalytic converter sign



Runnymede Beat (Surrey Police)

Photos from Runnymede Beat (Surrey Police)'s post in Mobile Uploads · 20 Sep 2020 · 🌐

Figure 8: British Transport Police's April 2021 content

PROTECT MARK PARK

Protect your car by asking your dealer if they can give you any advice on locks or guards that are approved by the vehicle manufacturer and tested to Sold Secure Gold.

Mark your catalytic converter with a forensic marker and register your converter to make it harder for thieves to dispose of.

Park your car somewhere well-lit and overlooked, amongst as many cars as possible. Try to park so the converter can't be easily reached - close to a wall or fence. Try not to park at the end of the row if there are free spaces.



If you're a victim of catalytic converter theft,

Call 101

If at a railway station, call British Transport Police on

**0800 40 50 40
or Text 61016**



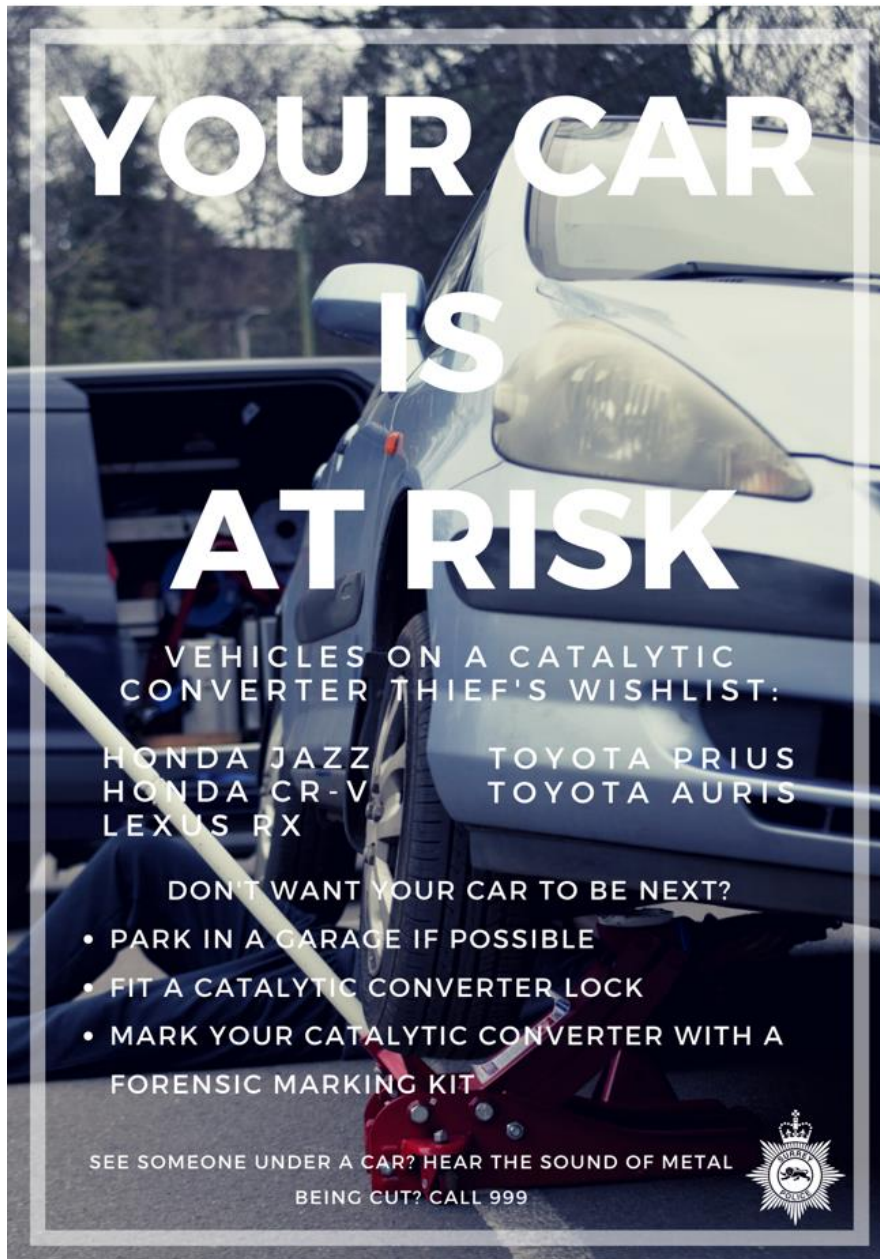
Figure 9: Testing the signs



Figure 10: Catalytic converter theft awareness sign



Figure 11: Catalytic converter theft awareness flyer

A flyer with a background image of a car's front end and a red catalytic converter lock. The text is overlaid in white. The main headline reads 'YOUR CAR IS AT RISK'. Below it, it lists vehicles on a thief's wishlist: Honda Jazz, Honda CR-V, Lexus RX, Toyota Prius, and Toyota Auris. It then provides three tips: park in a garage if possible, fit a catalytic converter lock, and mark the converter with a forensic marking kit. At the bottom, it says 'SEE SOMEONE UNDER A CAR? HEAR THE SOUND OF METAL BEING CUT? CALL 999' and features the Surrey Police logo.

**YOUR CAR
IS
AT RISK**

VEHICLES ON A CATALYTIC
CONVERTER THIEF'S WISHLIST:

HONDA JAZZ
HONDA CR-V
LEXUS RX

TOYOTA PRIUS
TOYOTA AURIS

DON'T WANT YOUR CAR TO BE NEXT?

- PARK IN A GARAGE IF POSSIBLE
- FIT A CATALYTIC CONVERTER LOCK
- MARK YOUR CATALYTIC CONVERTER WITH A FORENSIC MARKING KIT

SEE SOMEONE UNDER A CAR? HEAR THE SOUND OF METAL
BEING CUT? CALL 999




Figure 12: Social media image examples



Figure 13: The ad-van campaign



Figure 14: Letters to target vehicle owners



Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you as I believe that you are the current owner of a *****. If you have sold or scrapped your vehicle you are required to inform the DVLA of change of ownership.

If you are still the current owner of a ***** I would like to advise you that analysis of official police figures over the last 12 months shows that your make and model of vehicle has seen one of the highest number of catalytic converter thefts in the county. Catalytic converters form part of the exhaust system and their thefts are mainly due to the value of the metals contained within them. Catalytic Converter thieves usually work in pairs or groups and often wear high vis. They will usually jack the car up on one side and you will often hear a electric saw whilst they are cutting the catalytic converter off. If you see and hear something that sounds like a catalytic converter being stolen, call 999 and give Police details. Please do not approach the individuals, as previously they have threatened or used violence against the public.

Funded by the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, we have organised several local garages where you can take your vehicle into and they will mark your catalytic converter with a unique security marking and register it for free. This marking will assist Police in identifying a catalytic converter and where practical the return of it to the lawful owner. These kits come with free stickers you can place in your vehicle window, to deter criminals. Should your catalytic converter be stolen, it will also assist in the prosecution of the thieves and the prosecution of those persons that knowingly handle stolen catalytic converters.

The details of the participating garages in your area are *****

Yours sincerely,

Figure 15: Change in rate of 999 calls and suspect vehicles identified

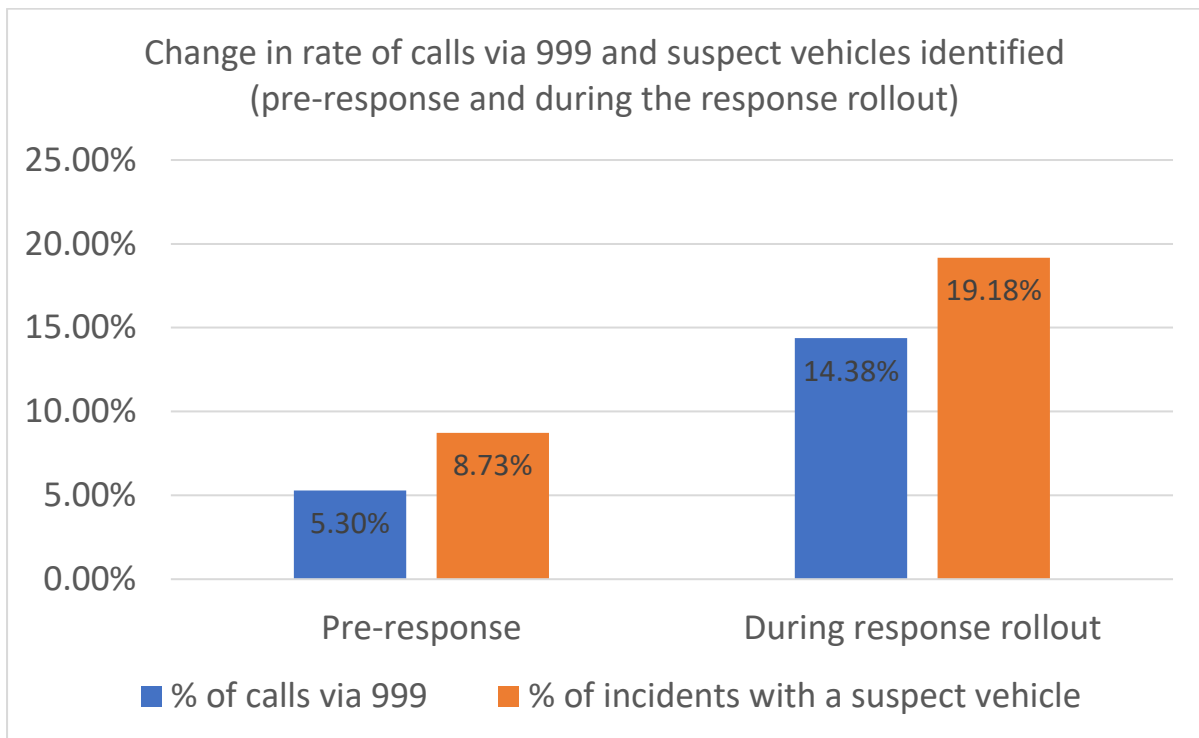


Figure 16: Change in rate of catalytic converter thefts

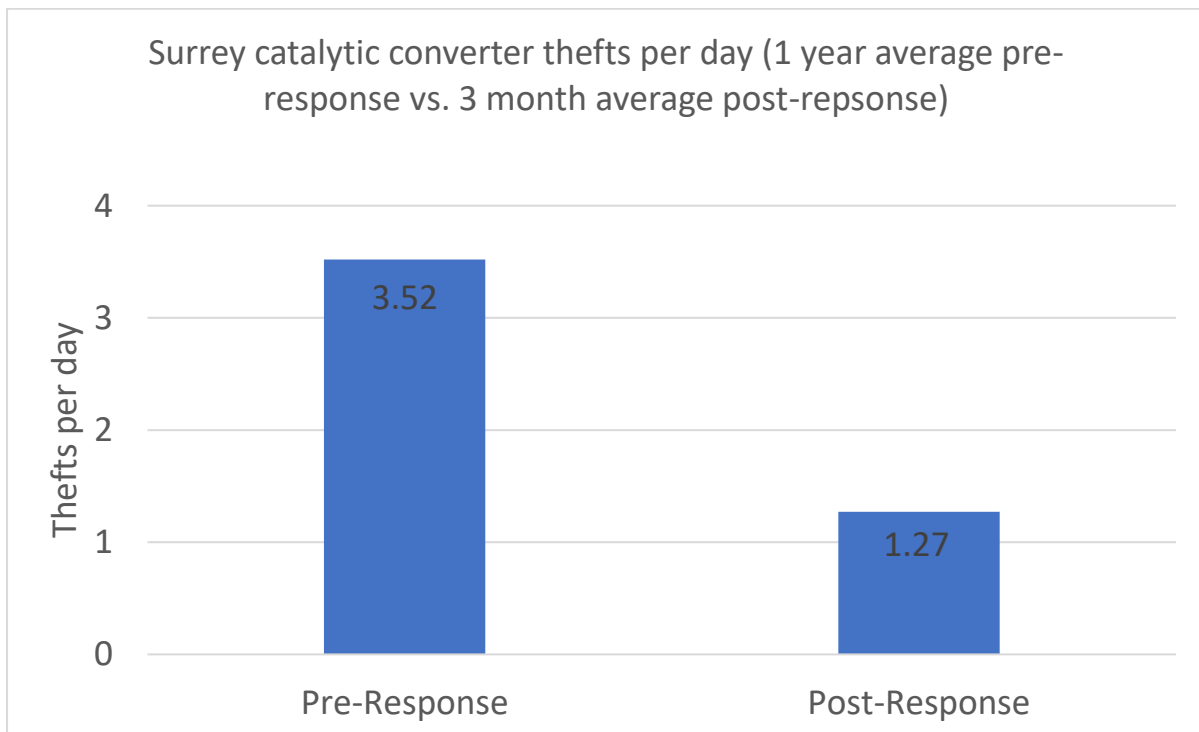


Figure 17: Change in rate of catalytic converter thefts for Surrey and local forces

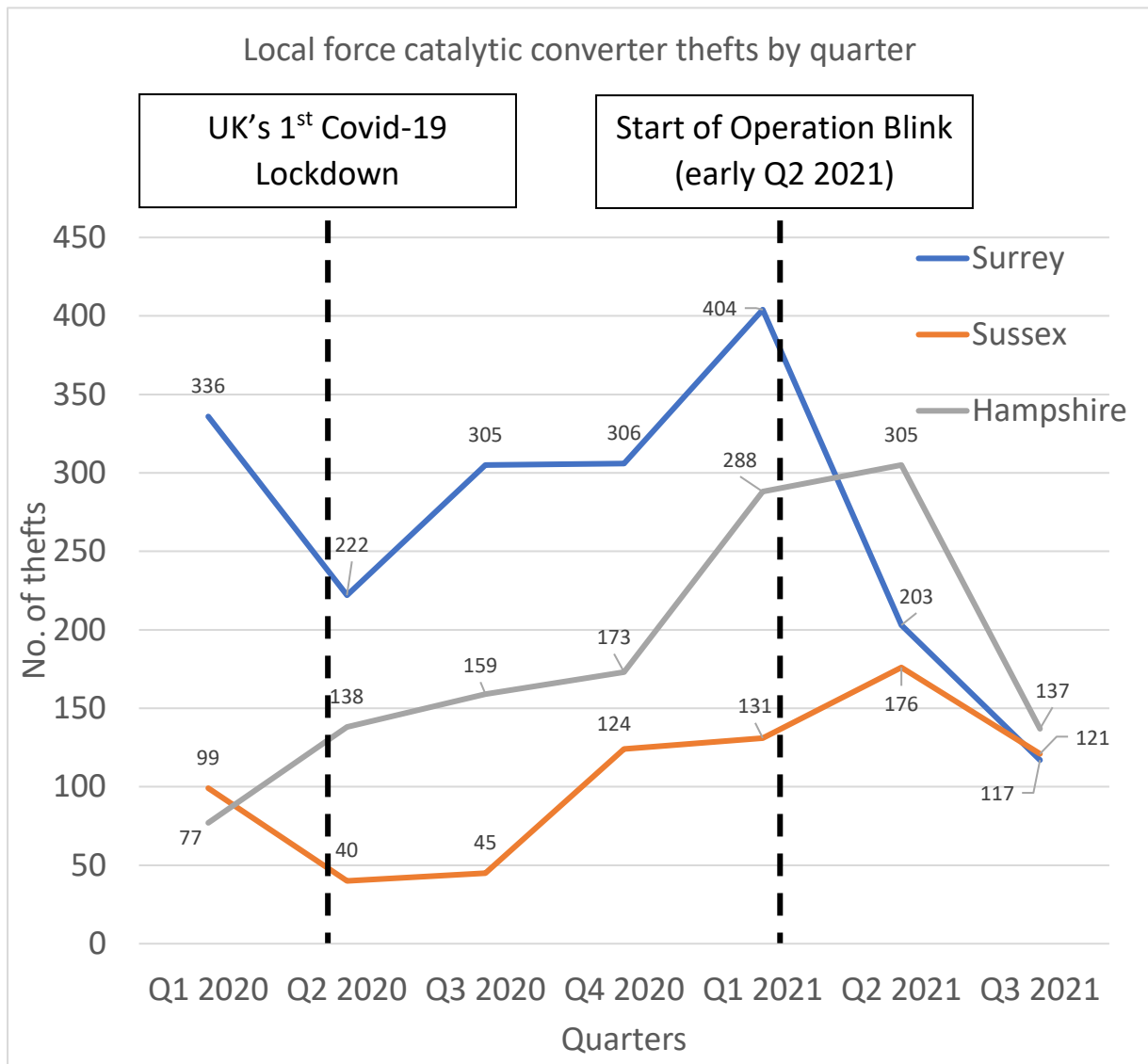


Figure 18: British Transport Police's 2022 content

Signs of catalytic converter theft

! Metal thieves operate in this area.



The illustration shows a black silhouette of a car on the left. A blue curved arrow points from the car towards a blue catalytic converter on the right. A black hand is shown cutting the converter with a tool.

- 1** Spotted someone under a car?
- 2** Heard metal being cut?
- 3** This could be a catalytic converter theft in progress – call 999

 **NPCC**
National Police Chiefs' Council

 **BRITISH
TRANSPORT
POLICE**