

# Preventing Repeat Victimisation: the police officers' guide

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## **About the Police Research Group**

The Home Office Police Research Group (PRG) was formed in 1992 and aims to increase the influence of research and development in police policy and practice. PRG activities include:

- ◆ sponsoring and undertaking research and development to improve and strengthen the police service, taking account of Home Office policy;
- ◆ identifying and disseminating good practice in consultation with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary;
- ◆ providing an information service which offers guidance on good policing practice and policing related research, and a national co-ordination and dissemination service on police initiated research.

PRG's work is published in two main series, the Crime Detection and Prevention Series and the Police Research Series, together with occasional papers and a periodical on policing research called 'Focus'.

If you would like a list of PRG papers, please fax us on 0171 273 4001.

# Foreword

Repeat victimisation is not new. Police officers have always been aware that the same people and places crop up again and again in their work. A long-term programme of research, developed by the Home Office in collaboration with the police, has enabled us to recognise properly the value to crime prevention of tackling repeat victimisation. The scope for reducing crime by focusing on repeat victimisation has been well established and attention is now concentrating on developing the most effective and efficient ways of putting it into practice.

The police are recognising the value of tackling repeat victimisation as part of their overall crime management strategy and early indications of success are encouraging. This pack provides further impetus by addressing the key issues involved in this work.

The practical guidance contained in the pack distils what we have learnt so far, reflecting the wide range of police activity on the ground. This is presented in a form which can be readily used by operational officers. Forces will find its contents timely and of great assistance in responding to the Key Performance Indicator (KPI).

I commend it to all local commanders.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Colin Bailey, QPM, LLB**  
**Chief Constable, Nottinghamshire Constabulary**  
**Chair, ACPO Crime Prevention Sub-Committee**  
**June 1997**

# Acknowledgements

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The pack draws heavily on the experience of police forces in developing their work. We would like to thank all the police staff and other agencies in Huddersfield who gave freely of their time and hospitality. The Repeat Victimisation Task Force Liaison Officers have provided ongoing constructive feedback and information.

## The Authors

Cressida Bridgeman and Louise Hobbs are members of the Home Office Police Research Group.

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# Introduction

Repeat victimisation is firmly on the national agenda. All the evidence is that focusing on preventing it can bring significant crime reductions. This approach makes effective use of limited resources in both preventing and detecting crime, and helps improve the quality of service to victims. The development of a Key Performance Indicator for repeat victimisation demonstrates the value that is placed on this work by the Home Office.

This pack sets out what we know so far about how to prevent repeat victimisation – from both research and the experience of police staff on the ground. It also draws on the work of the Repeat Victimisation Task Force – originally set up in the Police Research Group to co-ordinate initiatives in this area. The pack aims to provide practical guidance on addressing repeat victimisation, within the wider force or divisional crime strategy.

It recognises the varied crime problems and contexts where repeat victimisation arises. It does not present a prescriptive detailed workplan, but offers principles and a framework for taking work forward. Where possible, these are illustrated by practical examples of ongoing work in forces.

At the back of the pack there is information on related reading and contacts for further help. In particular, the Repeat Victimisation Task Force, now based in the Home Office Crime Prevention Agency, is available to give advice.

*The pack has been produced to help you put the theory of repeat victimisation into practice. We would like to know whether it has been helpful and what further information you would like. A feedback form is provided in the front pocket.*

# 1

## What is repeat victimisation?

A growing body of evidence shows that certain people and places suffer repeated incidents of crime. Analyses of the British Crime Survey, for example, have estimated that 4% of victims account for between 38 and 44% of all crime reported to the survey. Patterns of repeat victimisation have been found for both property and personal crime.

A substantial programme of research and development has demonstrated the scope for reducing crime by targeting preventive effort on victims. More recently, work has focused on the practical implications of this approach for crime management and policing.

### What is repeat victimisation?

The Home Office definition states:

*Repeat victimisation occurs when the same person or place suffers from more than one incident over a specified period of time.*

### What sort of incidents are we talking about?

Patterns of repeat incidents have been found for a range of offences including domestic and commercial burglary, car crime, armed robbery, domestic violence, racial attacks, bullying, assaults and criminal damage. A person or place may be revictimised by the same crime type, for example repeated burglary, or by different offence types. In particular, victims of racial incidents, bullying, domestic violence and witness intimidation may experience a variety of offences.

### What we know

Repeat victimisation is:

- ◆ *predictable* – once victimised, a person or place is more likely to be victimised again than one that has not. Furthermore, the risk of revictimisation increases the more a person or place has been victimised.
- ◆ *rapid* – second and subsequent offences follow fairly rapidly after the ‘first’ and this heightened risk period declines swiftly over time. To be effective crime prevention measures need to be put in place quickly. ‘Special measures’, for example mobile alarms, can be implemented on a temporary basis, then reallocated as the risk diminishes.
- ◆ *highest in high crime areas* – certain areas have high crime rates not because more people are victimised, but because there is more victimisation of the same people. Focusing on repeat victims therefore targets high crime areas.

### **The extent of repeat victimisation: some examples**

- ◆ **domestic burglary:** one study showed that once a house had been burgled its chance of repeat victimisation was four times the rate of houses that had not been burgled before.
- ◆ **domestic violence:** estimates are that only 10% of domestic violence to women involves an isolated event, and that the other 90% involves systematic beatings often with escalating violence.
- ◆ **crime against small businesses:** the Leicester Small Business and Crime Initiative found that of 424 businesses, 61% had been repeat victims of burglary, the average being three times in a year.
- ◆ **crime on industrial estates:** work in Trafford found that a quarter of premises on industrial estates accounted for three quarters of all burglaries on these estates.
- ◆ **motor vehicle theft:** a quarter of respondents experienced more than one incident. Eight per cent of victims accounted for 22% of incidents measured over three sweeps of the British Crime Survey.
- ◆ **racial attacks:** 67% of families on one estate in East London were repeat victims.
- ◆ **school burglary and property crime:** 98% of the total crimes recorded by 33 schools on Merseyside were repeat crimes.
- ◆ **bullying:** a study in a comprehensive school in Sussex showed that 9-10% of pupils had been bullied weekly or more.
- ◆ **computer theft:** work in Leicestershire found that over a six month period, 21% of computer thefts were repeats.

### **Why has it been hidden?**

Many individual police officers have long been aware that the same people and places crop up again and again in their work. It is only relatively recently, however, that awareness of the extent of repeat victimisation has been used systematically to target police activity.

Several factors have contributed to under-estimation of its prevalence:

- ◆ **under-reporting** – it is well known that people do not report all the incidents they suffer. Successive British Crime Surveys have also established that some crime is reported to the police but remains unrecorded. Official data are particularly likely to under-estimate the extent of repeat victimisation, as the following example demonstrates.

#### **What is the chance of a burglary appearing in police records?**

*If a household has one burglary, it has a 70% chance of appearing as a recorded burglary in police records;*

*If a household has two burglaries, there is a 49% chance that both will appear in police records;*

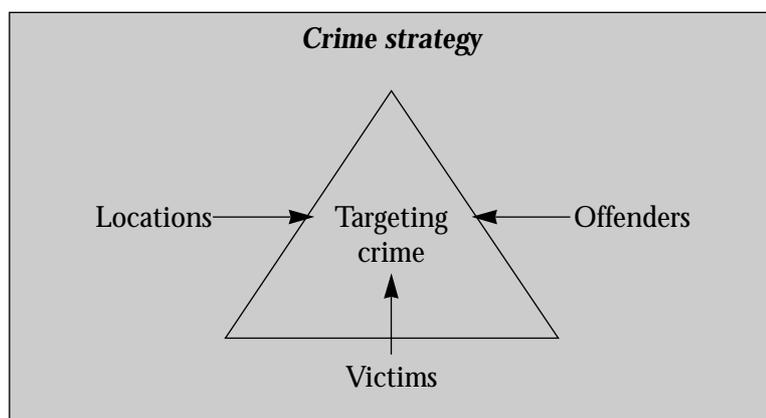
*If a household has three burglaries, there is a 34% chance that all three will be recorded (3% of people suffering three burglaries will have no burglaries recorded, 19% will have one burglary recorded and 44% will have two burglaries recorded).*

- ◆ **computer systems** – many police crime recording systems do not readily identify repeat victims.
- ◆ **working practices** – police shift systems and unit boundaries mean that different officers are likely to deal with the same victim thus reducing the likelihood of links being made between incidents.

## How can information about repeat victimisation help the police to be more effective?

Knowing about repeat victimisation directs attention to the victim, the time and possible perpetrator of a likely future crime, and helps target scarce resources cost-effectively. Analysing local crime patterns in this way can play an important part in your overall crime management strategy. Police forces adopting this approach have been able both to reduce crime and improve the quality of service to victims.

Traditionally, policing has targeted offenders and locations. Focusing on victims is one more means of tackling crime. A crime strategy that looks at all three is likely to be most successful.



## What can you do?

The approach can be adapted to local need and priorities. The Repeat Victimisation Task Force information service<sup>1</sup> shows the wide range of work that is going on in forces across the country. This varies from large scale Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funded schemes to local estate-based initiatives. Examples of ongoing work are illustrated throughout the pack.

### Examples of effective action

- ◆ **West Yorkshire Police:** reduced domestic burglary in Huddersfield division by 24% and 'other' burglary by 5%. Arrests resulting from temporary alarms increased from 4% to 14%. Improved quality of service to victims. No evidence of displacement to other areas.
- ◆ **GMP project on the Kirkholt estate, Rochdale:** 72% reduction in domestic burglary over three years. Repeat burglary down to zero within six months.
- ◆ **MPD:** racial attacks on an East London estate reduced by 12%.
- ◆ **School bullying project in London and Merseyside:** in the secondary school and two primary schools where bullying decreased, the percentage of students who said they had been bullied at all in the preceding three months fell from 62% to 47% in the London primary school, from 72% to 48% in the Liverpool primary school, and from 34% to 21% in the Liverpool secondary school.
- ◆ **Leegomery repeat burglary project in Telford:** achieved a 27% drop in burglary in a year compared to the rest of Telford where the reduction was 8%.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C: Contacts for further help

## **How do you put a repeat victimisation strategy into practice?**

This pack offers suggestions to help you develop and implement a strategy, together with contacts for further advice. In particular, you need to consider:

- ◆ how do you identify repeat victimisation?
- ◆ how do you get a co-ordinated approach both within the police and with other agencies?
- ◆ how do you know if it has worked?

# 2

## How do you identify it?

The Home Office definition of repeat victimisation allows forces to create more specific local definitions appropriate to their particular crime problems and policing priorities. This section offers some general guidance on how to establish the extent and nature of repeat victimisation locally. A step by step example of how to calculate repeat victimisation can be found in Appendix A.

### Why identify?

Identifying repeat victimisation is important for two purposes.

- ◆ You want to know the scale of the problem to decide whether it is worth doing something about and what level of resource to commit. You are likely to use historical data to establish the extent and nature of repeat victimisation locally.
- ◆ You also want to identify to be able to respond to individual victims and their circumstances. The very fact that they have been a victim means they are at risk. Information about any previous victimisation will help tailor your response further. This information needs to be available quickly.

The goal is to intervene after the first reported offence to prevent repeat victimisation, rather than waiting for a second or third.

### Defining a victim

Repeat victimisation can take a variety of forms. For example:

- ◆ the same crime has high levels of repeat victimisation across the whole force or division;
- ◆ geographical pockets, e.g. particular housing estates, have high levels of repeat victimisation in one or a number of crime types;
- ◆ particular groups of people across the whole force or division are repeat victims, e.g. ethnic minorities, witnesses in criminal cases and students;
- ◆ the same types of organisation throughout a force or division are suffering repeat victimisations, e.g. schools or hospitals;
- ◆ victims are experiencing different types of crime, e.g. a burglary followed by a theft of or from a car.

At the simplest level, your 'repeat victim' could be a person, a place or a thing, such as a car. To some extent, how you define a victim will depend on the crime type. In cases of domestic violence, for example, the victim is clearly identifiable.

### **Local definitions**

*Most forces are defining a repeat victim as a person or place that experiences a similar offence, for example a burglary followed by another burglary or attempted burglary. Some areas, however, have created broader definitions in some circumstances. Kent's strategy, for example, takes as their starting point any burglary or violent crime and then counts a subsequent victimisation of any type as a repeat. The definition of a repeat racial victim in Leicester's strategy may be a family group as well as an individual.*

Ultimately, you will want to develop a computer system capable of identifying repeat incidents for all definitions as a matter of routine. If you are going out to tender on IT, it is therefore helpful to include repeat victimisation – both people and locations – in your specification. Currently many forces are largely reliant on manual identification, so for practical reasons are focusing initially on one crime type. An obvious starting point is an existing local policing priority for prevention, using this to explore the extent of repeat victimisation.

### **Getting the information**

Key sources are:

- ◆ *Police records* – the first step is to use data from your crime recording system or incident logs, recognising that these are likely to under-estimate the extent of repeat victimisation. It is well known that police data tend to under-estimate the extent of crime – not all incidents are reported and of those reported not all are recorded – and this is particularly true with repeats. A further problem is the inconsistent way in which information is entered onto recording systems. Information about the victim or target may be missing, may be misspelt, or may simply be input in a different way (e.g. in capitals rather than lower case). All this creates serious difficulties for computers when asked to recall previous records relating to a particular address or victim.

### **Under-counting repeat victimisation**

*St John's school suffered four burglaries in three months. The following shows the information held on the police computer system.*

St John's primary	Redland Road
St John's	
Primary school	Redland Road
ST JOHN SCHOOL	

*The computer would read these as four different victims, with the effect that repeat victims would be under-counted and single victims over-counted. It is only by checking the records manually that they can be recognised as the same victim.*

- ◆ *Other agencies' records* – it is helpful to supplement police data with information from other sources. In examining school crime, for example, using local authority and individual schools' records may give you a more complete picture.
- ◆ *Asking the victim* – some police forces ask victims about their previous experiences of crime when they report incidents/offences and use this information to design an appropriate response. Many forces are treating unreported prior victimisations as 'intelligence' rather than formally reported crime.

### What do you ask the victim?

Essentially, you want information for two purposes – to respond to the particular incident and to gather data for crime pattern analysis. If your local policing priority is burglary, for example, prior burglaries and attempted burglaries should be included in your count of repeats. This will inform your resource allocation decisions. It is also helpful to ask, “Have you suffered any other type of crime during the last year which you think might be connected to this one?”

In order to undertake crime pattern analysis it is helpful to collect more detailed information, for example on the date, time of day, M.O. and so on.

### Time scale

It is suggested that a 12 month rolling period should be used, so that if a person is burgled in June then any crime suffered since the previous June could be taken as evidence of repeat victimisation.

Anything less than this may hide relevant crimes, anything more may become unmanageable. However, local circumstances may dictate a longer time period, for example a caravan park where holiday makers return year after year.

### Analysing the information

The key task is to look for patterns in your data. One of the crucial patterns is to see how risk is spread across victims (see Appendix A for a more detailed explanation). The precise forms of analysis that you carry out will depend on the type of data that you have collected – you may be focusing on your local policing priority of one crime type, or you may be looking at data across a range of crime types to inform decisions as to which to prioritise.

The first question is ‘how big is the problem’. Looking across the division as a whole is only the starting point – an overall figure of say 10% for repeat burglary ‘other’ will mask the different victimisation risks of particular geographic areas or types of location, for example schools.

More detailed guidance on the types of analysis you might like to undertake are contained in *A Practical Guide for Crime Analysts* (Tim Read, forthcoming). Broadly, the analysis is likely to fall into the following categories:

- ◆ *Location driven analysis* – this focuses on the geographical location of the incident or offence. Analysis could be undertaken either within or across offence types. As an example of the former, you may wish to identify instances of repeat domestic burglary. Here the analysis will concentrate upon the individual location of the offence. Alternatively you may wish to analyse instances of repeat victimisation across offence types but impacting upon a specific location. Identifying repeat victimisation against a school might lead to an interest in a number of different offences (criminal damage, burglary and arson, for example).
- ◆ *Object driven analysis* – this is best seen as a variant of location driven analysis, but where the location of the object is not fixed, and so cannot serve as the means of identifying repeat victimisation. A good example would be an investigation of crimes against motor vehicles which concentrated upon the individual vehicle, rather than the location of the

incident, or the identity of the owner. Again, the analysis may occur either within or across crime types.

- ◆ *Victim driven analysis* – some forms of repeat victimisation, for example racially motivated offences, will focus upon the victim, rather than the location of the offence/incident. Analysis may take place either across offence types or within a specific offence type.
- ◆ *Hot spot driven analysis* – the term ‘hot spot’ may have a variety of meanings, but at its most basic refers to a site which accounts for a disproportionate number of crimes or incidents. It may refer to a single location or site (for example, a public house or a car park) or it may refer to a wider area, such as a street or particular estate. The ultimate hot spot, the hot dot, is the individual victim who repeatedly suffers crime. Therefore, any analysis of hot spots should also consider the prior victims *within* the hot spots.

Once you have analysed your data, you can use them to inform decisions about where to concentrate policing effort. In deciding priorities, it is helpful to take into account:

- ◆ the risk of a repeat;
- ◆ the seriousness of the offence; and,
- ◆ the cost per preventive effort for the crime concerned.

For instance, consider an area in which, after a domestic burglary, the probability of a repeat within six weeks is 10%. In the same area, the chance of repeat vandalism to a car is 20%. Assuming the greater seriousness of burglary, policing effort may be assigned to the burglaries over the car damage. You should also be thinking about how practical and resource intensive it is for the police to prevent a repeat.

Information about previous victimisations not only tells you that you should take action but can also guide you as to what sort of action might be appropriate. For example:

- ◆ a series of very similar incidents might suggest the same offender and focus police efforts on detection;
- ◆ where events are not similar or may not suggest the same offender, for example a walk-in burglary where cash was stolen from a handbag followed by a break-in and a video taken. A package of measures may need to be introduced to reduce the overall vulnerability of the victim;
- ◆ where events are very dissimilar, for example where a person who had previously suffered a house burglary had their car stolen from a public car park two weeks later. Even here however, it is worth considering links – the car may have been stolen using keys taken from the house burglary, or there may be another reason such as a racial motive behind the attacks.

Essentially, the analyst and crime desk manager or equivalent need to try to establish whether there is a link between first and subsequent offences or incidents and the nature of that link. They can do this by combining statistical information with policing knowledge of the area.

*See Appendix A for a worked example, using real data on commercial burglaries, which shows how preventing repeats could almost halve the overall number of burglaries.*

# 3

## Where do you start?: developing a strategy

This section sets out a framework for forces and divisions for tackling repeat victimisation. Developing the actual type of intervention is covered in section 4.

### The force's role

While divisions will develop their own strategies to reduce repeat victimisation, the force has an important role in setting the wider framework for this.

Developing a force strategy is important because it enables:

- ◆ repeat victimisation to be set in the context of the force policing plan;
- ◆ the development of in-force performance indicators;
- ◆ economies of scale; the force may be able to take on certain tasks to support divisions, such as collation of information on repeats for dissemination to divisions, the development and maintenance of a user-friendly IT system to enable divisions to identify repeat patterns, a forcewide media strategy, and training;
- ◆ a basis for planning pilot projects effectively;
- ◆ clear lines of responsibility to avoid confusion and duplication of effort;
- ◆ an input to central operational units' planning.

The danger is that a forcewide strategy may be too prescriptive and stifle local initiative. A forcewide strategy works best if it:

- ◆ sets out the key principles by which work is implemented; and,
- ◆ involves divisional management in the development of these principles.

#### ***Check list for a force strategy***

- ◆ *set out the force's commitment to tackling repeat victimisation within the context of reducing crime overall*
- ◆ *spell out forcewide crime priorities but allow for local priorities to be tackled as well*
- ◆ *stress the need for prevention and detection to work together*
- ◆ *emphasise the importance of providing good quality of service to victims, alerting them to the risk without raising the fear of crime*
- ◆ *say what the force will do to support work at divisional level*
- ◆ *provide policy advice e.g. force policy on recording unreported crime*
- ◆ *offer a framework or menu of responses to victims e.g. the graded response*
- ◆ *recognise that the work will develop in stages*
- ◆ *stress the need to integrate this work into 'normal' policing*
- ◆ *emphasise the need to monitor progress*

## The divisional strategy

The divisional strategy reflects both forcewide and local priorities. The force strategy may require divisions to address a crime perceived as a problem forcewide, for example domestic burglary. At the same time, the division may consider that it also has other crime problems where repeat victimisation is an issue, for example commercial burglary or domestic violence.

### *Defining the problem*

The first step in developing a strategy is to define the problem to be addressed. This decision is not likely to be based solely on figures for repeat victimisation, especially as identifying the scale of repeat victimisation is currently difficult. The local policing plan is likely to have already identified priorities, and as a starting point it is probably easier to identify levels of repeats within this crime.

All staff likely to be affected by any work carried out need to be represented in the early planning process. This ensures that all the practical issues can be addressed and also helps to bring people on board.

### *Working with other agencies*

To be effective, the police often need to work closely with other agencies. Furthermore, these agencies can often provide additional information about the level of crime to create a fuller picture of the problem. It is widely recognised that building and maintaining strategic and operational partnerships can be difficult and requires time and sustained effort.

The key elements of effective, multi-agency working to prevent repeat victimisation are those that generally characterise good partnerships. They include:

- ◆ building on existing partnerships; tackling repeat victimisation can help to refocus their work;
- ◆ involving relevant organisations in the planning process earlier rather than later. This ensures the development of a co-ordinated strategy, rather than trying to tie together several different strategies at a later date;
- ◆ recognising that different organisations have different roles and priorities but that this does not preclude them working towards the same goal – in this case the reduction of repeat victimisation;
- ◆ developing partnerships that work at both a strategic and a day to day operational level. High level planning needs to be backed up by sound operational effectiveness;
- ◆ establishing clear, smooth communications to ensure information about victims is exchanged rapidly and accurately, taking into account issues of data protection and confidentiality.

### *Establishing and meeting victims' needs*

Starting out by defining what victims need and want after a crime is helpful because it ensures that the range of needs is addressed properly. It is therefore helpful to draw on the experience of a wide range of agencies to gain a fuller picture.

The implications of repeat victimisation for this process are:

- ◆ that victims are more likely to be victims again;
- ◆ any intervention has to be in place very quickly;
- ◆ heavily victimised people or places need particular attention because they are even more likely to be revictimised.

Having identified the sort of service victims need to allay fears and to prevent a further crime, it is useful to map out how far these are met by existing practice. Check for:

- ◆ gaps in service;
- ◆ overlap and duplication; this is not necessarily a weakness as it may be helpful to have different sources of help. However, it may be possible to co-ordinate them more effectively;
- ◆ whether what is available is still appropriate.

The aim is to create a comprehensive response to victims, making the best use of what services are available.

At this point, it is also helpful to identify any new developments likely to help the work to be successful. Examples could include: the local authority about to install CCTV; Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding becoming available; a strong Neighbourhood Watch scheme; or an initiative to support victims of domestic violence. Involving other agencies in the early stages is likely to help identify these opportunities.

### *Overcoming obstacles*

It is often the case that the full range of services is not available; some services simply do not exist, others are not very effective, others operate on a very small scale. It is better to acknowledge this and design work to fit around this unless the situation is likely to improve quickly. At the same time, it could be an objective of the strategy to improve the situation. For example, the strategy may want to address repeat victimisation on a housing estate where Neighbourhood Watch is not well established. A short term solution may be cocoon watch (see section 4) and the longer term aim may be to find ways to develop Neighbourhood Watch.

A problem sometimes raised by police officers is that of convincing other agencies that they need to be involved, especially the local authority. The priorities of other agencies may differ from those of the police; the key is to identify how tackling repeat victimisation can help them to address their own priorities. Demonstrating potential benefits, particularly financial savings, can be a powerful incentive to take action. Alternatively, there may be other 'levers' which you can use.

### **Examples of levers**

- ◆ *When the police and local authority in Wigan got together in the early 1990s, it quickly became apparent that the only indication of what crime was costing the local authority was the mounting insurance claims – £1.2 million in 1990-91 alone – and escalating premiums. The initial driving force for action – or lever – for the local authority was to reduce these significant financial and physical losses caused by fire, theft, accidents, burglary and vandalism. A focused, multi-agency approach achieved some significant crime reductions, for example school burglary almost halved over two years. Imaginative insurance arrangements yielded considerable savings – £1.9 million over four years – which enabled the local authority to fund new initiatives.*
- ◆ *In a major shopping street in London nearly 40% of arrests were coming from one relatively small store selling recorded music. The records and cassettes were kept 'live' within boxes and sleeves on the shop floor. The crime control strategy adopted by the store was to provide extensive store detective coverage. Initially the store was reluctant to make changes. Having highlighted the problem, the police informed the store that unless acceptable action was taken, they would exercise their discretion to caution all offenders following arrest and immediately release them. This was clearly not in the interest of the store managers who worked with the police to develop ways to reduce the opportunities for theft. Average monthly arrests were reduced by 41%.*

### **Setting objectives**

The strategy needs to set out the desired outcomes, for example the reduction of repeat victimisation by x%. There may be other targets such as victim satisfaction rates.

Setting objectives helps to plan the work in a staged way, recognising that not everything is achievable in one go. It is useful to have a mix of short and long term objectives; the long term ones will remind you of what the eventual outcome should be while the short term ones will act as 'markers' along the way. Some of the short term objectives may be process ones, for example to develop a productive partnership with Victim Support – not an end in itself but a means to an end.

When setting objectives it is important to establish how you are going to assess the extent to which they have been met. Developing a workable infrastructure for capturing and disseminating data should be given high priority at the outset. Derbyshire's repeat victimisation strategy, for example, set a short term objective to develop measuring and monitoring systems, as well as the longer term objective of reducing repeat victimisation.

It may be difficult initially to set a realistic numerical target because of the difficulties of identifying levels of repeats in the first place. If one is set then it is useful to review it periodically in the light of experience. Identifying better numerical targets may become one of the short term aims of the work.

## *Developing the police response*

If the above work has been done on a multi-agency basis then the next step is for the partner organisations to develop their particular response in line with the overall strategy.

For the police there are five key issues:

### **1. Demonstrate a high level commitment**

Successful projects are those where top management lead the way and show a practical commitment.

*In Grimsby the divisional commander participated in training sessions for officers to demonstrate high level commitment. He also signs the letters to victims informing them of the increased risk and need for prompt action.*

### **2. Develop a planned and managed response to victims, taking into account the resources available and victim needs**

Allow time for this phase and fix a realistic starting date.

### **3. Ensure the plan can work in practice**

The practical implications of the response need to be thought through: who needs to do what and when?; how does this fit in with their other work?; who do they need to communicate with and how should they do this?; and, what sort of administrative support is required?

### **4. Develop a training programme for staff**

Work in forces so far demonstrates the need for everyone involved to understand what is being done and their particular role. Experience has shown that this needs addressing just before the start date for the work, and is better done through face to face contact backed up by written material, for example force or divisional orders, aide-mémoires and posters.

Staff need to understand:

- ◆ why tackling repeat victimisation is important;
- ◆ what the force or division is going to do about it;
- ◆ what action they need to take as individuals when dealing with victims;
- ◆ why feeding back the right information in the right form is crucial;
- ◆ how they will be kept informed about the impact on crime and victims.

There may be a need for training in specific areas, for example basic crime prevention skills for generalist officers, logging and analysing data skills and so on.

*In Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, police staff and housing officers were trained together. This helped to increase awareness of each other's organisations and improved subsequent communications.*

Further advice on training can be provided by the Repeat Victimisation Task Force.

### ***5. Develop a strategy for keeping the public informed***

Tackling repeat victimisation demonstrates that the police are aware that people's experience of crime is often not a one-off event, and know how to use this information to lessen their future risk. This can therefore help to increase public confidence in the police.

A successful strategy publicised through skilful use of the media can be an effective way of enhancing public relations and customer satisfaction. It can reassure the public that the police share their concerns and are improving their performance. The media can be used to raise public awareness of repeat victimisation initiatives and other police successes.

Experience to date suggests that telling victims about their increased risk after a crime does not necessarily raise the fear of crime. Indeed, it can help them to feel they have some control when they may be feeling angry, distressed and powerless. Clearly, telling victims they are at risk needs to be handled sensitively, especially for those likely to be more vulnerable to the effects of crime such as the elderly. While telling victims may act as an incentive for them to take preventive action themselves, this needs to be backed up by action from the police and other agencies.

# 4

## How can you help victims?: practical steps

The aim is to integrate work to reduce repeat victimisation into day to day policing, so that it is simply seen as one element of your overall crime management strategy.

If your repeat victimisation problem is significant then you are likely to want to put more resources into it. However, if it is not such a large problem you may only need to modify current practice to take account of the risk of repeat victimisation, for example by changing the timing and the content of letters to victims.

### What can you do?

The sheer range of work going on across the country demonstrates the different ways that repeat victimisation can be tackled. There is no one answer. However, there are some basic principles which can guide your work:

- ◆ remember what you want to achieve – the aim is to prevent repeats, so intervention should start after the first crime not the first repeat; early intervention has been shown to be important;
- ◆ preventing repeat victimisation is about reducing crime so both crime prevention and detection need to work together to one end;
- ◆ keep measures as simple as possible; they are more likely to work;
- ◆ any action you take has to happen quickly because of the high risk period;
- ◆ you need to design your response in the light of:
  - \* the size and nature of the problem;
  - \* the resources available;
  - \* the nature of your geographical area;
  - \* the current provision for victims – build on it;
  - \* the strengths and weaknesses in your partnerships with other agencies;
- ◆ preventing repeat victimisation is not just about target hardening – you need to analyse the likely cause of the problem and design appropriate interventions;
- ◆ tackling repeat victimisation involves changing the way work is organised. If it is really going to work it needs to be built into existing structures and systems. You also need to consider the impact on different functions, especially the Crime Prevention Officer's role. This brings opportunities to integrate your prevention and detection activities.

## The graded response

This approach involves grading responses to victims according to the number of times they have been victimised in the last year. This reflects the fact that risk of revictimisation escalates with each victimisation. In the Huddersfield repeat burglary and car crime project these were set out as 'bronze', 'silver' and 'gold' responses. Conventional 'bronze' level measures such as property marking and security upgrading are received by all first-time victims. Repeat victims receive more resource-intensive 'silver' and 'gold' measures, for example focused patrolling of victimised places, and the use of high technology devices such as vehicle tracking and silent alarms. In general, the strategy moves from deflection to detection.

The graded response has been picked up and adapted by many forces. The basic framework of this approach is that:

- ◆ risk of future victimisation is judged on the number of prior victimisations not on the characteristics of individual victims;
- ◆ there is an emphasis on early intervention as effort is seen as most effective at this stage;
- ◆ within each level (e.g. bronze) the interventions are in the main familiar and well established. The difference is that they are used in a strategic and systematic way, so that the most 'expensive', high tech measures are saved for those people most at risk where the chances of detection are greater;
- ◆ it ensures that effort is sustained over time as the problem becomes more difficult;
- ◆ it is simple and clear, and officers know both what they need to do and that victims will get the help they say is available.

The graded response is simply a way of organising what is already available and using it in a systematic, planned way. If there are gaps then you might want to develop responses to fill them. While the levels of intervention are set, there is room for discretion. For example, if a first crime is particularly nasty you may want to install an alarm at this stage with a view to catching the offender. This means that someone needs to have responsibility for overseeing the response, with authority to change it as necessary.

*'We like it because it's simple to do, it's fair to victims and we know what we promise will be delivered'*

Section officer in Huddersfield

**Adapting the graded response: th**

The project aims to reduce repeated incidents of domestic violence. It builds on the West Yorkshire Police force policy (to a graded response to incidents based on police attendance in the previous twelve months. In assessing the initial intervention

The main premise is that an increase in incidents prompts an increase in the level of activity and involvement by the police police can take to supplement the force policy.

<b>INTERVENTION LEVEL</b>	<b>VICTIM</b>	<b>PERPETRATOR (Common Law O</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Gather information</li> <li>◆ Information letter (1st)</li> <li>◆ Police Watch (if relevant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ensure force pol</li> <li>◆ First official wa</li> <li>◆ Information lette</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Information letter (2nd)</li> <li>◆ Domestic violence visit by a beat manager                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on action taken re offender</li> <li>Cocoon Watch consent</li> <li>Contact family/friends</li> <li>Analyse need</li> <li>Agency contact consent</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Police Watch (2 per week for 6 weeks or as relevant)</li> <li>◆ If separated, target harden the property – second level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ensure force pol</li> <li>◆ Second official w</li> <li>◆ Police Watch (2</li> <li>◆ Information lette                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cocoon Watch</li> <li>Police Watch d</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Information letter (3rd)</li> <li>◆ Police Watch (frequency increased)</li> <li>◆ Cocoon Watch implemented</li> <li>◆ DV Co-ordinator visit                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on action taken re offender</li> <li>Cocoon Watch consent if necessary</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Engage other agencies as necessary                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency response meeting (inc. the victim)</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ DV and Child Protection Unit involvement</li> <li>◆ If separated, target harden property – third level – panic button or vodaphone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ensure force pol</li> <li>◆ Third official wa</li> <li>◆ Police Watch</li> <li>◆ Information lette                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cocoon Watch</li> <li>Police Watch d</li> <li>Other agency in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Emergency intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Implement second or third level – log level and reasons for selection</li> </ul>	N/A

Police Watch aims to provide a visible police presence to both the victim and perpetrator and involves police patrols within

Cocoon Watch requests the help and support of neighbours, family and relevant agencies in further protecting the victim by the victim, and the perpetrator is made aware of this action.

The model is flexible in that:

- ◆ the emergency intervention is used when the seriousness of an incident attended by the police for the first time require
- ◆ the attending officer can advise against the sending of any letters if the circumstances suggest they could trigger further
- ◆ it recognises the different situations of women who are living with or separated from the perpetrator. The property of

All officers have received training and have been given aide-mémoires.

Ongoing monitoring will allow the model to be adapted and fine tuned as necessary.

**the Killingbeck domestic violence project**

arrest whenever possible, to gather sufficient evidence to charge and convict, and to ensure the safety of the victim) by applying a level, the offender's history is reviewed along with information from the woman on previous unreported assaults.

and other agencies. This activity is directed at both victims and offenders. The table shows the additional range of steps that the

<b>PERPETRATOR (Criminal Offences)</b>	<b>PERPETRATOR (Criminal Offences)</b>
<p>Policy is followed Warning (if present) Level 1 (1st)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Magistrates – police request conditional bail</li> <li>◆ Police Watch (2 per week for 6 weeks)</li> <li>◆ Information letter (1st)</li> </ul>
<p>Policy is followed Warning (if present) Level 2 (2nd) Details Details</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Magistrates – police reject bail</li> <li>◆ Police Watch frequency increased if conditional bail granted</li> <li>◆ Information letter (2nd)</li> <li>◆ Bail checks if conditional bail granted</li> <li>◆ Blue fast track CPS file jacket to indicate repeat offence with covering sheet of offender's DV history</li> </ul>
<p>Policy is followed Warning (if present) Level 3 (3rd) Details Details Involvement, vodaphone etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Magistrates – bail rejected by police/ oppose bail</li> <li>◆ Police Watch frequency increased if conditional bail granted</li> <li>◆ Information letter (3rd)</li> <li>◆ Bail checks if conditional bail granted</li> <li>◆ Blue fast track CPS file used to indicate repeat offence with covering sheet of offender's DV history</li> <li>◆ Liaise with CPS</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Implement second or third level – log level and reasons for selection</li> </ul>

in the vicinity of the incident on a twice-weekly basis initially for a period of six weeks immediately following the reported incident.

by contacting the police immediately if further incidents occur. A Cocoon Watch is only implemented with the informed consent of

as a second or third level intervention;

or violence;

women living apart from offenders, for example, will be target hardened to prevent unauthorised entry.



## Identifying opportunities to intervene (routine activity theory)

The graded response provides a framework for organising a strategic response to crime. Routine activity theory helps to identify possible measures to include in the framework.

Routine activity theory states that three elements have to be present for a crime to take place:

- ◆ a suitable victim;
- ◆ a motivated offender; and,
- ◆ the absence of a capable guardian.

To prevent crime, you need to take action to affect at least one of those conditions.

### **What is a capable guardian?**

*The first two on the above list are familiar; the idea of a capable guardian may be less so. A capable guardian can be defined as someone or something other than the victim that is able to keep a watchful eye on a potential victim and may also act as a deterrent to offenders.*

*Examples from initiatives around the country include:*

- ◆ a variety of Watch schemes;
- ◆ provision of two-way pendant alarms to victims of racial attacks, domestic violence and bogus callers;
- ◆ car parks monitored by CCTV;
- ◆ industrial estates employing security officers;
- ◆ family, friends and neighbours of victims of racial attacks and domestic violence;
- ◆ patrolling officers;
- ◆ two-way communication scheme for bus drivers, backed up by a rapid response team;
- ◆ training Home Helps in basic crime prevention skills.

### **What does this mean in practice?**

In considering what interventions to put in place this model can help you to ensure that the full range of possibilities is considered:

- ◆ what will discourage an offender?
- ◆ what will make a victim less attractive to an offender?
- ◆ how can capable guardianship be introduced or enhanced?

### ***Using routine activity to develop a response***

*The Huddersfield project used routine activity theory to generate a strategy. Task groups were set up to develop measures to:*

- ◆ reduce the 'suitability' of victims, e.g. crime prevention advice, victim letter and postcode pen;*
- ◆ demotivate offenders, e.g. offender targeting, Police Watch and dummy alarms; and,*
- ◆ improve guardianship, e.g. Cocoon Watch, cameras and alarms.*

*Some of the measures aimed to affect more than one of the elements of routine activity theory. Police Watch, for example, could help to address all three.*

*A separate group was established to deal with the CPA systems to identify the problem.*

# 5

## How do you follow through?: managing the work

While forces will want to explore new interventions to prevent victims from being revictimised, the main challenge is to streamline the existing process operationally so that opportunities to prevent repeat victimisation are not missed.

Successful work on repeat victimisation depends on:

- ◆ accurate, fast information;
- ◆ a planned and managed response; and,
- ◆ appropriate and robust partnerships.

### Accurate, fast information

This involves:

- ◆ timely and accurate information about crimes and incidents, to decide on the level of response for a victim; and,
- ◆ the need for good communication flows between people and organisations so that the right action is taken at the right time.

To deliver this effectively, it is helpful to consider taking action on the following points:

- ◆ develop easy ways to record and transfer information. Where possible, incorporate additional information requirements into existing forms;
- ◆ help people to record the right information, for example through providing training, user-friendly forms, software that does not 'accept' poor information, or by limiting the number of people responsible for recording;
- ◆ identify exactly what people or other organisations need to know to do their job.

- ◆ *In Huddersfield the police found that it was not enough to tell the local authority that a window needed repairing. To avoid making two visits to the property the housing office needed exact information about the damage so they could take the right equipment and materials the first time.*
- ◆ *In Bedford the written log of repeats is automatically circulated to the crime management unit, the CPO, the crime pattern analyst and the Scenes of Crime Officer for joint action.*
- ◆ *In Grimsby crime recording is done from the scene of the crime. Officers telephone in with the details which are recorded by a small group of staff. This ensures that action can be taken quickly and that recording is consistent.*

## A planned and managed response

Developing a planned and managed response involves mapping out exactly *who* needs to do *what*, and *when*. Clear responsibilities need to be agreed, together with any degrees of discretion.

Key questions include:

◆ ***who needs to have overall responsibility?***

Ideally this should be someone who has an overview of the whole process, with the authority to make it work.

◆ ***do you need a dedicated co-ordinator?***

This will depend on the size of the problem and how much resource you want to commit. It is more likely that someone will undertake this work as part of their overall role. If so, they need time to develop knowledge and introduce effective working arrangements.

◆ ***who are the core people who will initiate action?***

Experience so far suggests that the core people include:

- \* the initial investigating officer to:
  - provide basic crime prevention advice;
  - trigger the right response;
  - feedback the necessary information; and
  - collect intelligence.

*A number of forces provide officers with an aide-mémoire to help them remember the range of information they need to collect and give.*

- \* the crime desk manager or repeat victimisation co-ordinator to decide and instigate the appropriate response;
- \* the CPO to make personal visits to *repeat* victims, work closely with the detection function to develop action-planned responses based on crime pattern analysis, and to advise and train other officers;
- \* analysts to provide prompt, relevant and user-friendly information for developing responses to victims.

◆ ***what sort of administrative backup is required?***

The main implication is the need to send letters to victims very quickly. Speed of response can be helped by standardised letters.

◆ ***what technical resources are available?***

To make best use of technical resources, decisions need to be made about how to allocate, manage and maintain them. A stock of equipment available for loan is a one-off expenditure as it can be rotated between repeat victims for the period of highest risk. If a range of staff are to use them, the equipment needs to be accessible, and there may be training needs.

◆ **how can you ensure the work happens?**

Forces are using different ways to ensure that work is carried out. Some are making responses mandatory, others use the crime desk to contact victims a few weeks after the crime to check, among other things, on the sort of response they received. Other initiatives include regular staff briefings, display boards with maps to highlight repeat victimisation problems, and reflecting the work in staff appraisals.

◆ **how can you ensure the response remains appropriate?**

The approach taken should be regularly reviewed and refined in the light of experience and the availability of more sophisticated information. It is helpful to timetable these reviews at the outset. A wide range of views from staff and other agencies will encourage an honest appraisal of all aspects of the work.

**Getting the message across**

*Convincing people initially is just the start; it takes time for change to become embedded in practice. All those involved need to know that they are making a difference and it is worth doing:*

- ◆ *tell them of successes (reductions in crime, letters from victims etc.);*
- ◆ *involve them in solving practical problems as they arise;*
- ◆ *ask for suggestions on how to improve the work;*
- ◆ *make it clear what is expected of them but give them time to adapt;*
- ◆ *ensure this work is recognised within the staff appraisal scheme.*

**Appropriate and robust partnerships**

Partnerships need to work at both a strategic and operational level. Not all partners involved at the strategic level may need to be actively involved on a day to day basis. Principles for effective partnerships were outlined in section 3. In addition, on a day to day basis it helps if:

- ◆ the right people to take action are involved;
- ◆ partner agencies understand each other's operational practices;
- ◆ there are very clear lines of communication between the key players.

**Understanding the system**

*In Huddersfield the appointment of a part time link person between the Repeat Victimisation team and local authority housing offices helped to ensure a speedy response. From his experience, he knew that housing offices prioritise their repairs as **immediate, emergency** (within 24 hours), or **non-emergency** (within a week). An immediate response cost more than an emergency, so fewer responses were coded in this way. He also knew, however, that if the housing office received a request for emergency repairs before 11am the response time would in fact be as rapid as an immediate response.*

## **Final note**

Be prepared to:

- ◆ give the project time to work; it takes time to develop new ways of working;
- ◆ honestly assess progress; new approaches do not always work first time, and this should not be viewed as failure; and,
- ◆ change or modify your approach, keeping all involved informed.

# 6

## Has it worked?: assessing what you have done

This section aims to help you assess the success of your repeat victimisation strategy. It suggests ways to make best use of limited available information.

### Why measure?

- ◆ you will want to know the impact of your work;
- ◆ you need to be able to review progress and change interventions if necessary; and,
- ◆ the key performance indicator (KPI) requires forces to address repeat victimisation.

#### *The Key Performance Indicator (KPI): the story so far...*

*The KPI is linked to the Home Secretary's third key objective for policing announced in 1993:*

*“To target and prevent crimes which are a particular local problem, including drug related criminality, in partnership with the public and local agencies.”*

*In 1995/96:*

*The police were required to show that they had developed systems to enable them to identify repeat victims for a crime of local concern.*

*In 1996/97:*

*The police were asked to develop a strategy, demonstrating:*

- ◆ *how they had identified or intended to identify repeat victimisation;*
- ◆ *how they intended to reduce repeat victimisation in cases where it is significant; and,*
- ◆ *how they proposed to evaluate their intervention.*

*In 1997/98:*

*It is expected that forces will implement their strategies, or if not yet ready will continue to develop them for implementation in 1998/99.*

### What are you measuring?

The overall outcome objectives for your repeat victimisation strategy are likely to address:

- ◆ reductions in crime; and,
- ◆ quality of service to victims.

You are also likely to have set short term process objectives to help achieve these outcomes.

To assess the extent to which objectives have been met, you will need to have thought through at the planning stages what measures might be appropriate.

Measuring the impact of work to reduce repeat victimisation is a new performance indicator for the police. This section therefore focuses mainly on how to measure crime reductions through reducing repeat victimisation.

### **Developing the measures: key principles**

There is no single measure of success. You should look for a range of indicators which together help you judge whether time and money have been well spent. In developing measures you need to consider:

- ◆ what information is readily available or can be collected at minimal cost;
- ◆ a combination of indicators which will properly reflect different aspects of the work;
- ◆ a balance of quantitative and qualitative indicators;
- ◆ how many indicators you want to develop. It may be helpful to identify at the outset the full range of possible indicators and then select those you consider key.
- ◆ the cost effectiveness of the approach.

### **Measuring crime reduction**

The overall aim of your repeat victimisation strategy is to reduce crime through reducing repeats. The more precise your definition of a repeat (see section 2) the more sensitively you can measure success. The starting point is to look at recorded crime figures for your target offence types in your division to see whether there are any changes.

Such changes might include:

#### **◆ *Changes in the crime rate (incidence)***

Has the overall crime rate for your target crime risen, fallen or stayed the same? Any changes may be a result of your repeat victimisation strategy, but equally could be associated with coincidental events, for example other police operations or extraneous factors.

#### **◆ *Changes in the number of victims (prevalence)***

Do you have a greater or fewer number of victims? Knowing this will help you to see where you have been most effective and highlight where future action should be targeted.

#### **◆ *Changes in the number of victimisations per victim (concentration)***

Has the number of times a victim has been victimised gone down?

Looking at these three aspects together will give you a clearer picture of changes in the scale and nature of repeat victimisation than any in isolation. This can be seen in the following example, drawn from an evaluation of a scheme to reduce school burglary. The scheme did not specifically target repeat victims, but using police records to examine patterns of repeat victimisation provided a more sensitive indicator of its effects.

### **Repeat burglary for Wigan schools**

*The table summarises the analysis of burglary for all Wigan schools in 1992 and 1994.*

	<b>No. of burglaries (incidence)</b>	<b>No. of schools burgled (prevalence)</b>	<b>Average no. of burglaries per school (concentration)</b>	<b>No. of repeat burglaries (as percentage of all burglaries)</b>
1992	494	124	4	370 (75)
1994	276	90	3	186 (67)

*Between 1992 and 1994 overall burglary (incidence) has fallen by 44% (from 494 to 276). The table shows that reductions in both prevalence and concentration have contributed. There has been a 27% drop in prevalence, as the number of schools being burgled has fallen from 124 to 90. There has also been a 25% drop in concentration with the average number of burglaries per school falling from 4 to 3.*

*If, however, you had only looked at the reduction in repeat burglaries (from 75% to 67% of all burglaries) you might think that the impact of the scheme on repeat victimisation had not been that effective. A more precise picture emerges from looking at all these aspects together.*

### **Putting your crime in context**

Another useful indicator is comparison of your changes in crime patterns with those of neighbouring areas or divisions, and with the force as a whole.

If, for example, your crime rate fell substantially while those of all other divisions decreased only slightly, and you were aware of no other significant operational difference other than your repeat victimisation strategy, this might suggest that it had contributed to the reduction.

### **Displacement**

A common issue with any reduction in crime is whether it has merely been displaced to 'softer targets', for example other types of offence, locations or victims. Displacement is notoriously difficult to measure, but such research as there is suggests that displacement is rarely if ever complete.

Moreover, if by reducing repeat victimisation your prevalence has increased, i.e. there are more victims, this could be viewed as a more equitable distribution of crime with fewer heavily victimised people.

There may also be a 'diffusion of benefits' with positive effects of the initiative spreading wider than where it was implemented. In Wigan, for example, the introduction of a scheme at a school sometimes coincided with noticeably fewer attacks at nearby schools without schemes.

You should examine your crime data for any signs of displacement, but in assessing the overall success of your strategy, keep the significance of this indicator in perspective.

## Measuring quality of service

Measuring your quality of service to victims helps to provide a more rounded picture of police effectiveness.

There are various ways to do this; no single approach is likely to provide the range and depth of information required. Some methods can be used periodically to provide a 'snapshot', such as victim surveys or focus groups. Others can inform practice on a continuous basis, such as solicited feedback from individual victims, and letters of complaint and appreciation. You may need to call on specialist advice within the force to develop these measures.

In relation to repeat victimisation specifically, you will want to ensure that the strategy is being delivered on the ground. Areas that you might want to explore include:

- ◆ victims' overall satisfaction with the police response;
- ◆ whether and how they were told of the risk of repeat victimisation;
- ◆ whether they were given crime prevention advice by the attending officer;
- ◆ whether they acted on advice given, and if not, why not;
- ◆ the speed and appropriateness of any follow up action.

## Other measures

To support your repeat victimisation initiative, you may have set short term goals at the start of the project. These 'process' measures can be as diverse as:

- ◆ developing the necessary performance monitoring systems;
- ◆ developing Neighbourhood Watch in high crime areas as a form of capable guardianship;
- ◆ establishing an effective working relationship with the local authority or other partners.

Some of these short term objectives will be specifically concerned with repeat victimisation while others will apply to a range of policing issues. Their success needs to be assessed on the basis of their contribution to reducing repeat victimisation.

There is some concern that with multi-agency working it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the police's specific contribution. Measures of success therefore need to relate to work for which the police can take responsibility. While the police may not be accountable for the quality of another agency's contribution, for example, they can assess the extent to which they have identified and used available 'levers' to persuade that agency to act.

### ***A range of measures***

*In Huddersfield, a range of measures was used to assess the impact of their repeat victimisation strategy. This included:*

- ◆ *survey of Huddersfield police officers;*
- ◆ *survey of domestic burglary victims;*
- ◆ *count of bronze, silver and gold responses deployed;*
- ◆ *changes in recorded repeats;*
- ◆ *changes in recorded crime;*
- ◆ *examination of displacement; and,*
- ◆ *interviews with repeat victims.*

The repeat victimisation strategy will have influenced roles and working practices. To monitor the impact on the organisation, it is helpful to solicit the views of staff at all levels on a regular basis.

# Conclusion

Awareness of repeat victimisation is increasingly being used to enhance police operations against crime. Effective integration of this work into routine operational practice poses several challenges, and the wide range of police work illustrated in this pack demonstrates forces' commitment and achievements so far.

The Home Office will continue to support the police in this work through research and development, and the Repeat Victimisation Task Force.

In the PRG series there are several reports in preparation which to varying extents focus on repeat victimisation. These include:

- ◆ the final report of the Huddersfield repeat burglary and car crime project;
- ◆ a complementary report providing a review of research, including offender accounts;
- ◆ a practical guide for crime analysts; and,
- ◆ a study of computer theft.

Work is underway in the Killingbeck Division of West Yorkshire Police to reduce repeated incidents of domestic violence. A briefing note setting out the story so far will be published over the next few months, followed by the final evaluation report next year. Findings from a repeat burglary project in Cambridge will also be available next year.

The Home Office has recently commissioned the Police Scientific Development Branch (PSDB) to identify improvements or alternatives to the Home Office alarm in preventing repeat burglary.

The role of the Repeat Victimisation Task Force is to identify and disseminate good practice, and ensure that national developments and police experience on the ground keep in step.

*Please take the opportunity to feed back your views on the pack and general repeat victimisation issues by completing the enclosed form.*

# Appendix A: Making sense of the numbers: a worked example

This example uses real data on commercial burglaries over a 12 month period to illustrate how you can calculate the level of repeat victimisation. The total number of commercial burglaries is 459.

You can use the following steps for any crime/incident data that you may have, for example domestic burglary, racial crime or vehicle crime. The same approach can be used for crime, incidents or a combination of the two.

## What do you want to know?

- ◆ Is repeat victimisation worth doing something about? How much does it contribute to the overall figure for that crime?
- ◆ What is the nature of the problem, so you can target resources most effectively? To discover this you need to see how repeat crime is distributed across victims.

## How big is the problem?

### Step 1. How many **crimes** do you have recorded?

In this example there are 459 commercial burglaries.

### Step 2. How many **victims** do you have?

If each of the 459 burglaries were suffered by a different business, we would expect to have 459 victims. However, we know that crime is not spread evenly. You can examine your records to see how often the same business names and addresses crop up. As the box on *under-counting repeat victimisation* showed, you may have to look at several fields to check whether it is the same victim.

In this case, records show that there are 250 victims altogether.

### Step 3. How many **repeat crimes** do you have?

If you have 459 burglaries and 250 victims then there are 209 repeat burglaries (subtract 250 from 459).

### Step 4. So how much of your burglary problem is down to repeat victimisation?

Two hundred and nine of the commercial burglaries are repeats, therefore 46% (divide 209 by 459 multiplied by 100) of the burglary problem is accounted for by repeat victimisation. This tells you the scale of the problem, which can inform decisions about committing resources. The figure is also useful when monitoring performance.

## What else do you need to know?

While knowing the overall figure for repeats is useful, it does not provide detailed enough information to help target resources most effectively. To do this you need to know exactly where the greatest risks of repeat victimisation are.

## How is repeat crime spread over repeat victims?

### Step 1. Group victims by number of victimisations

When working out how many victims you have overall (point 2 above) you may have listed your victims noting the number of times they had been victimised.

For example: Shoe stop: 2 crimes  
Fruity bites: 6 crimes  
All-Nite Take Away: 2 crimes

Using this information you can group victims by the number of victimisations. In this example this can be set out as follows:

No. of victimisations (a)	No. of businesses (victims) (b)
1	153
2	50
3	20
4	10
5	8
6	5
9	4
	250

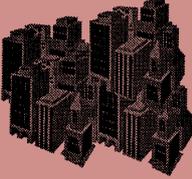
Columns (a) and (b) together show that of the 250 victimised businesses, 153 businesses were burgled once, and therefore 97 more than once (with 50 burgled twice, 20 three times and so on).

#### Remember...

- ◆ Only count victims once. In the table a business or victim can only appear once: for example, a business victimised 5 times will not be included in levels 1-4.
- ◆ Do not hide crime by amalgamating it. It is tempting to group the higher levels of victimisation together, for example to put 5+ victimisations rather than 5, 6 and 9 as on the table. However, this might hide some of the worst levels of victimisation – in this case that 4 businesses were each burgled 9 times.

**Step 2.** How do the repeat crimes spread out?

You know that there were 209 repeat burglaries. But, how do these spread out across the 97 repeat victims. It could look like:



*lots of businesses each experiencing a few crimes*

or

*a few businesses experiencing lots of crimes*



Knowing the spread gives a better idea of the likely impact you can have on repeat victimisation and the scale of the resources required.

There are two steps to this:

**Step 2.1** Multiply column (a) by column (b)

Building on the above boxes gives the information below:

No. of victimisations (a)	No. of businesses (victims) (b)	No. of burglaries (crimes) (a x b) = (c)
1	153	153
2	50	100
3	20	60
4	10	40
5	8	40
6	5	30
9	4	36
	250	459

Column (c) shows the number of burglaries for each level of victimisation. This includes first and subsequent crimes.

## Step 2.2 Subtract the first crimes to find the number of repeat crimes

As a business is only represented once in the table the numbers in column (b) represent the number of first time crimes. For example, 20 businesses have been burgled three times, and together account for 60 burglaries. Discounting the first time burglaries (20) leaves 40 repeat burglaries. Again building on the existing columns produces the information below:

No. of victimisations (a)	No. of businesses (victims) (b)	No. of burglaries (crimes) (a x b) = (c)	No. of repeats (c - b) = (d)
1	153	153	0
2	50	100	50
3	20	60	40
4	10	40	30
5	8	40	32
6	5	30	25
9	4	36	32
	250	459	209

### Conclusion: so what does this mean?

The data in this table can help managers to make informed decisions about the optimal use of resources. Detailed analysis of this kind reveals the potential crime reductions achievable by intervening at each of the victimisation levels.

If we could effectively protect all businesses after the first burglary, then we would reduce overall burglaries by 46%. Protection after the second burglary would lead to a reduction of 24%, after the third burglary of 14% and so on.

The table also shows that even if we had only prevented the four most heavily victimised businesses from being burgled after the first offence we could have reduced overall burglaries by 7%.

Because we know that risk escalates with each victimisation, this information is valuable in directing both your prevention and detection efforts. The heavily victimised businesses, for example, are obvious candidates for measures with detection opportunities, such as alarms.

# Appendix B: PRG publications on repeat victimisation

## Police Research Group Crime Prevention Series

Paper

13. **The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project, Rochdale.** David Forrester, Mike Chatterton and Ken Pease with the assistance of Robin Brown. 1988
23. **The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project: Phase II.** David Forrester, Samantha Frenz, Martin O'Connell and Ken Pease. 1990
36. **Multiple Victimisation: Racial Attacks on an East London Estate.** Alice Sampson and Coretta Phillips. 1992
45. **The Prevention of Crime against Small Businesses: The Safer Cities Experience.** Nick Tilley. 1993
46. **Once Bitten, Twice Bitten: Repeat Victimisation and its Implications for Crime Prevention.** Graham Farrell and Ken Pease. 1993
47. **After Kirkholt – Theory, Method and Results of Replication Evaluations.** Nick Tilley. 1994
48. **Preventing Domestic Violence to Women.** Rebecca Morley and Audrey Mullender. 1994
49. **Preventing Repeated Domestic Violence: A Demonstration Project on Merseyside.** Sam Lloyd, Graham Farrell and Ken Pease. 1994
51. **Burglary Reduction: Findings from Safer Cities Schemes.** Nick Tilley and Janice Webb. 1994

## Police Research Group Crime Detection and Prevention Series

Paper

57. **Thinking about Crime Prevention Performance Indicators.** Nick Tilley. 1995
58. **Biting Back: Tackling Repeat Burglary and Car Crime.** David Anderson, Sylvia Chenery and Ken Pease. 1995
- 63.\* **Preventing School Bullying.** John Pitts and Philip Smith. 1995
67. **Reducing Repeat Racial Victimisation on an East London Estate.** Alice Sampson and Coretta Phillips. 1995
70. **Crime Risk Management: Making it Work.** Cressida Bridgeman. 1996

## Other relevant papers produced by the Police Research Group

**Bridgeman, C. and Sampson, A.** (1994) *Wise After the Event: Tackling Repeat Victimisation.* A report by the National Board for Crime Prevention. London: Home Office.

**Briefing Note 4/95** *Preventing Repeat Victimisation: A Report on Progress in Huddersfield.* David Anderson, Sylvia Chenery and Ken Pease.

\* Paper 63 is no longer available. In June 1996, it was replaced by a bullying pack for schools, *Preventing School Bullying: Things You Can Do.*

A selection of briefing notes can be found in the pack's front pocket. If you would like further briefing notes or copies of the reports, please fax PRG on 0171 273 4001.

## Appendix C: Contacts for further help

Both the Home Office Crime Prevention Agency and PRG can provide advice on repeat victimisation.

### Crime Prevention Agency Repeat Victimisation Task Force

Inspector Alan Edmunds                      0171 273 2409  
Fax                                                      0171 273 4037

Inspector Joyce Green                      01772 618503  
Fax                                                      01772 613562

### Police Research Group

Louise Hobbs                                      0171 273 2248

Cressy Bridgeman                              0171 273 4237

Information Desk                                0171 273 3324

Fax                                                      0171 273 4001

The Repeat Victimisation Task Force has links into all forces in England and Wales, and can put you in touch with the current contacts.



