

Goldstein Awards 2020

Application Form

West Mercia Police – United Kingdom

Project – “We don’t buy crime”



Summary of application

Scanning:

Objective: A significant reduction (30% +) of burglary dwelling houses in the town of Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, within a 12 month period, and a sustained reduction over a measured period of 5yrs.

One of the most harmful events to the community is the burglary of their own home.

Victim's feels violated, neighbours feel a heightened fear, the community become concerned for the safety of their environment, and the demands on the police are significant.

Once a burglary occurs the chances of another doubles – 41% of all domestic burglaries were within 5 days and 500m of another burglary.

The previous response was one of 'responding' after the event and preventative patrols. There was no community ownership.

Burglary within the town was at a disproportionate rate compared to the size, and this became our focus for the pilot project – *"We don't buy crime" – ("WDBC")*

Analysis:

We used many methodologies to understand the causes of the problem, why certain houses were chosen, why certain areas were chosen, and particularly relevant, why do victims get re-victimised.

Working Hypothesis

Cleobury Mortimer is being targeted due to its rural location, connecting road routes, and being an affluent area. Burglars are travelling by car, but are from the 'greater surrounding area'. It lacked guardianship due to reduced police numbers and lack of 'community ownership'. Inadequate changes are made following a burglary, encouraging easy re-offending of the same premises. The offending occurs to steal property which can be easily turned into cash, with inadequate ability to trace later.

Response:

The project proposed a response to address all stages of the offending process, with an exit strategy that would provide an ongoing 'community ownership' of the guardianship, and so create a demand reduction and a sustainability

The project decided to take the property marking tactic but align it across the victim, the location and the offender, in a structured problem-solving way, involving the community themselves to deliver much of it.

We focused on four elements:

1. Improve SmartWater property marking.
2. Increased crime prevention engagement.
3. Increased access to UV light identification.
4. Harden the stolen goods market.

Assessment:

The immediate affect over the initial 12 months has seen a reduction in Burglary of 83%, with a sustained reduction year on year, currently showing 50% less incidents than pre-project.

The ongoing guardianship has moved to the community themselves reducing the demand on resources considerably and sustainably.

Number of words: 399

Description of project**Scanning:****General description.**

We don't buy crime describes the responses that have been implemented following a problem-solving approach to reduce burglary, and in particular, repeat victimisation of burglary of people's homes. The project was piloted by this problem-solving approach and successful responses rolled out to other areas using best practice identified from collating an evidenced base.

The project was piloted in 3 areas and assessed against a 4th area where the project was not implemented. We piloted in one rural town, Cleobury Mortimar and 2 urban estates, Sutton Hill and Leegomery, which are shown to be deprived areas of Telford.

The analysis and responses were the same across all the project pilot areas, but for the purposes of this report, we will show and explain the methodology, processes, and problem solving thinking of the project by concentrating on Cleobury Mortimer only.

Objective

The overall significant reduction (greater than 30%) of burglary dwelling houses in the town of Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire within a twelve-month period, and a sustained reduction of a similar percentage over a measured period of 5yrs.

Scanning

The project identified that one of the most impactful and harmful events to the community is the burglary of their own home.

The victim feels violated within their 'safe place', neighbours feel a heightened fear of crime, and the general community become concerned in the safety of their environment. A perceived lack of confidence in the police is generated from this fear of crime, and the demands on resources are high.

Research shows that 73% of victims are considerably fearful and 40% of female victims being fearful of being alone in their own homes (Maguire 1980). Within West Mercia Police, this fear is supported by between 7-15% of burglary victims are re-victimised.

Once a burglary has occurred figures show that the chances of another occurring has doubled – 41% of all domestic burglaries were within 5 days and 500m of another burglary.

The burglary of dwelling houses within the town of Cleobury Mortimer at a disproportionate rate compared to the population and size of the town.

The previous response to the problem from a police viewpoint was one of 'responding' after the event and routine patrols as a preventative measure. There was no collective community involvement or ownership within the community or the businesses and partners agencies.

Without a well-considered, different response this demand on police resources would continue unchecked, causing harm to the community and damaging the confidence in the police.

A call from a victim to the police impacts on resources as follows:

Total estimated cost of 1 x reported house burglary – £4906.25, and equates to approx. 4 hours of staff time.

Secondary benefits are the reduced cost to insurance companies, the reduction in risk of escalation of incidents that may cause injury, impacting on Health Service resources.

Analysis:

In analysing this problem, we sought to use many theories and methodologies to understand the causes of the problem, why certain houses were chosen, why certain areas were chosen, and particularly relevant, why do victims get re-victimised.

We aimed to avoid assumptions and to think afresh.

We used the following methodology

- Questioning using 5WandH to establish what we knew and what we didn't.
- Problem Analysis Triangle to fully understand the influencers of each element
- Random Activity Theory to understand the relevance of the environment
- Rational Choice Theory to understand the predictability of the problem.
- Crime elements required.

WHAT

The burglary of dwelling houses within the town of Cleobury Mortimer at a disproportionate rate compared to the population and size of the town. In the 12-month prior to the project, the town of Cleobury Mortimer suffered a 120% rise in residential burglaries. Whilst the number of reported burglaries was not that high (11), this was grossly disproportionate compared to the size of the town. The rise in burglaries were a cause for concern by residents, and with the closure of many of the local police stations, many of the residents reported feeling vulnerable.

HOW

The burglaries were most commonly reported at large detached houses. The most common means of entry was by smashing the rear patio doors or gaining entry via open windows in later burglaries. The burglaries were most frequently untidy in their nature with items such as jewellery and electrical items most commonly stolen.

WHO

CLEOBURY TOWN CENTRE :

AGE OF VICTIM	NUMBER
1 – 20 YEARS	0
21 – 40 YEARS	4
41 – 60 YEARS	8
61 – 80 YEARS	5
OVER 80 YEARS	1
ALL BURGLARY DWELLINGS HAD ONE VICTIM RECORDED ONLY	

WHERE

Cleobury Mortimer is a market town and civil parish in Shropshire, England, which had a population of 3,036 at the 2011 census, and is one of the smallest towns in Shropshire. It is a rural town to the West of Birmingham and South of Telford.

The Clee Hills, the highest hills in Shropshire, are nearby and the Wyre Forest lies between the town and Bewdley.

The border with Worcestershire is a mile to the south.

A main road, the A4117 Kidderminster to Ludlow road runs through the centre of the town. The B4363 road links it to Shrewsbury in the North of the County

It has no train connections, the nearest mainline stations at Ludlow and Kidderminster.

There is a regular bus service that runs between Ludlow and Kidderminster, calling at Cleobury –

KIDDERMINSTER TO LUDLOW: 6 SERVICES PER WEEK DAY, CALLING AT CLEOBURY MORTIMER BETWEEN 8AM AND 6PM. (8AM TO 6PM SATURDAYS, NO SUNDAY SERVICE).

LUDLOW TO KIDDERMINSTER: 6 SERVICES PER WEEK DAY, CALLING AT CLEOBURY MORTIMER BETWEEN 7.40AM AND 5PM (9AM TO 5PM SATURDAYS, NO SUNDAY SERVICE).

WHEN

The burglaries were most commonly recorded overnight when the increase in offending began. On one occasion, the burglar was disturbed by the occupant at 02:40hrs and fled the scene. All burglaries recorded after this date were daytime or evening burglaries, when the homeowners were now in the house.

TIME OF OFFENCE	NUMBER
BETWEEN MIDNIGHT & 8.00AM	7
BETWEEN 8.00AM AND 12.00 NOON	3
BETWEEN 12.00 NOON AND 5.00PM	4
BETWEEN 5.00PM AND MIDNIGHT	4

DAYS OF BURGLARY DWELLINGS	NO.
SUNDAY	2
MONDAY	4
TUESDAY	4
WEDNESDAY	3
THURSDAY	2
FRIDAY	1
SATURDAY	2

WHY

It was considered that Cleobury was becoming a target because of the reasonably good travel links between the towns of Kidderminster and Ludlow. It was a large distance away from the nearest police station and has a large number of roads and lanes out of the town, should the offender(s) need to make good their escape.

Tackling of minor incidents and early intervention has suffered over the last decade leading to an increase in escalating offences, supporting the '*broken window theory*' (Wilson and Keeling).

A failure to increase the guardianship or change the environment after a burglary creates an opportunity for further offences to be committed. But now this can happen with prior knowledge that stolen items will have been replaced, an awareness of the layout of the property has been obtained, a prior understanding of best ways to enter the property is known, and the best times to commit the offence can be predicted. The risk of getting caught against the gains is outweighed, supporting the '*Rationale Choice Theory*'.

If the appearance of a crime scene remains unchanged, and an increased guardianship is not visible, then the offender remains 'familiar' with the environment and is comfortable to continue committing crime. This supports the '*Routine Activity Theory*'

All of the elements above were present within Cleobury Mortimer prior to this project.

Crime elements

We analysed the elements required for a burglary to happen, in order to fully understand how we could effectively respond.

1. An offender
2. A dwelling house or flat
3. Removable property with a value, within to steal
4. A successful method of entering the property
5. Possession of any tools required to enter
6. A safe exit from the property
7. Ability for offenders to travel to and from the crime scene
8. Place to store stolen property
9. An ability to dispose / realise the stolen property

Understanding what was happening and why, and then focusing in on these elements allowed us to define the pinch points that could be influenced.

We then researched who could influence the 3 elements of the problem-solving triangle.

Offender

Who - Burglar, assisting driver, handler.

Influencers– Family, friends, police, probation, school staff, sports clubs, youth workers, IOM teams, social services, retail associations

Victims

Who – Householders, landlords, Insurance companies, Police, legitimate second hand retailers.

Influencers – Landlords, councils, security companies, neighbours, family, police, wider community,

Location

Where – The household, The Street, The Town, main road routes.

Influencers- House owners, Landlords, Councils, Neighbours, delivery drivers, postal staff, business groups, schools, highways dept.

Working hypothesis

Cleobury Mortimer is being targeted due to its relative rural location and having good connecting road routes, as well as it being a fairly affluent residential area. Burglars are travelling by car to commit the offences, but are from the 'greater surrounding area'.

It is lacking from guardianship due to reduced police numbers that hasn't been replaced by a 'community ownership' plan. Inadequate changes are made following a burglary, encouraging easy re-offending of the same premises.

The offending occurs to steal property which can be easily turned into cash through selling on.

Response:

Following a detailed analysis of the root causes and drivers of the problem, the project proposed a response to address all stages of the offending process, with an exit strategy that would provide an ongoing 'community ownership' of the guardianship, and so create a demand reduction and a sustainability.

Strategy

We referred to the 25 techniques of prevention to guide the strategy.

1. We would increase the effort the offender would have to make
2. We would increase the risk of the offender being caught
3. We would reduce the rewards the offender would expect to make

And, we would publicise that this was happening through clear signage and consistent messaging.

We would deliver the project through community volunteers, special constables and in partnership with The Town Councils and a commercial partnership with SmartWater Ltd. This allowed the project to be delivered with little increased resources from the police.

We identified that previous property marking initiatives had been unsuccessful due to the activity stopping with the victim merely marking their property, with victims feeling that it did not increase the chance of property recovery, or better still, prevention of the offence.

We believed that by extending this offering, and doing an old tactic differently, we could stretch the effect and success.

The project decided to take the property marking tactic but align it across the victim, the location and the offender in a structured problem-solving way.

We aimed to deliver on four main areas, the thread being 'marked property'.

1. Increase and improve SmartWater property marking.
2. Increased crime prevention engagement.
3. Increased access to UV light identification.
4. Harden the stolen goods market.

With an overarching visible campaign known as ***"We don't buy crime" – ("WDBC")***

Delivery

1. Increase and improve SmartWater property marking

SmartWater is a traceable liquid and forensic asset marking system that is applied to items of value to identify thieves and deter theft. The liquid leaves a long lasting and unique identifier, whose presence is invisible except under an ultraviolet black light. The marking can immediately identify where and when an item was stolen from.

Other property marking products are available, but the project team decided to go with SmartWater due to a good reputation and working partnership with other forces, and in the desire to provide an evidence-based study based on one consistent product.

A victim of a reported burglary would be visited and provided with a free crime prevention pack consisting of a SmartWater marking kit, and WDBC branded crime deterrent stickers

This would prevent re-victimisation by 'changing' the appearance removing the familiarity for the offender and improving the guardianship.

2. Increased crime prevention engagement.

Following a burglary, the near neighbours would also get free crime prevention packs, containing the same signage, but issued with a UV marking pen instead of SmartWater. The literature sought to empower the neighbours to take advanced crime prevention action and to raise their sensitivity to notice and report suspicious activity. The window signage also highlighted that the change of landscape and increased guardianship had occurred.

Community volunteers were used to deliver these packs, encouraging engagement, bonding a community, and reducing the resource burden from the police.

In addition, clear WDBC signage was displayed at main routes into the town and at highlighted pinch points entrances and exits.

3. Increased access to UV light identification.

Despite decades of advice for the public to UV mark their property, the police have never been equipped routinely to carry UV detection torches. The deterrent factor of the marking was hugely reduced by the well-known inability of the police to carry out on the spot checks of suspect property.

For the marking project to be a seamless and joined up response we needed to provide this facility, and the project provided all frontline staff with UV torches and training into Identifying UV markings. The ability to now do this was published under the WDBC banner letting offenders know the increased likelihood of successful stop and searches.

4. Harden the stolen goods market.

Following the increased marking of property, this strand of the strategy aims to restrict the disposal of stolen goods, making the crime less profitable and increasing the chances of getting caught. It also increases the chances of recovering property for the victim, and so provides the encouragement to others to 'mark' their property.

The WDBC project developed a strategy of engagement with second hand goods retailers, to reduce the ability to buy stolen goods, to identify offenders, and to recover stolen property.

The project obtained support to develop a standard operating procedure, through wide talks with The National Pawn Brokers Association, CEX, Cash Converters and other independent outlets who were keen to help legitimise their industry.

The basics of the standard are:

- Each outlet agreed that two forms of ID - one with an address and one with a photo – would be obtained from each seller, and that a copy would be made and retained by the store.
- Advice and guidelines were issued on what probing questions to ask the seller.
- The store would display the "We Don't Buy Crime" posters, working in association with the police.

The project went on to develop an alert system to stores signed up to WDBC, that would send timely and targeted warnings to look out for specific recently stolen goods. The IT software also created a data base of dealers. This IT system was developed and funded by Smart Water, further saving the police budget, and achieving our objectives through working with the business community.

To raise awareness of WDBC and the effectiveness of Smart Water, the project encouraged other agencies that used the product to publicise their successes in order to accelerate the traction and awareness of our project. For example, Telford and Wrekin Council had success using SmartWater on fly tipping operations and sharing this information strengthened the overall deterrent effect.

Assessment:

In summary, the response provided a joined-up approach to prevent re-victimisation, prevent further offences to the surrounding area, enhancing the police ability to detect property, and providing a systematic and improved ability to identify and recover stolen goods.

This had been achieved through working partnerships with the businesses, Councils, retailers' associations, and our largest and most important partner, the community itself.

The original objective to reduce the crimes within 12 months has been achieved.

It is estimated that a burglary report and investigation costs £ 1270. In the years 2011-2015, pre project there were 12 burglaries within the control area, and this reduced to 6 during the project 2015-2018.

This has therefore produced a demand saving of:

£29,437.50 and time saved as 24hours approx. (3 x shifts)

This is for a small control area of Cleobury Mortimer – as the project rolls out and similar results are being seen, the demand reduction is significant.

In addition, a survey was conducted that showed the *fear* of being burgled had reduced by 11% in the area covered by WDBC as oppose to the control area. Interestingly the survey also demonstrated that the fear of all crimes had reduced by a similar percentage, including robbery and rape.

Along with a reduction in the fear of crime, we saw an increase in satisfaction and confidence in the police in the area covered during the project.

Testimonial from Parish:

“As the Parish Clerk and also the Chairman of the crime reduction group this was a massive project for Cleobury Mortimer, trying to make residents feel safe and secure. A lot of the burglaries we had were from people from outside and coming through, so they were hard to trace and as we no longer have a police station this was seen as a good way forward with the community getting fully involved.” Matt Sheehan Parish Clerk.

Mr Sheehan, said that “the Parish Council were still receiving only positive feedback from the community with regards to the We Don't Buy Crime project and that the general feel in the community was that the scheme had made it a safer place to live and had reduced residential burglary in the area”

Although these are overall figures, the survey did show that once a person has become a victim, they are more fearful of crime and less satisfied with the police. This is understandable, but the project has learned from this assessment and have put further victim support in place to try and address this.

It is difficult to assess which element of the responses have attributed to the success of the project, as each response was aligned to the other. Suffice to say, that by changing the appearance of the environment and overtly stating that the victim has 'changed something', certainly has prevented offences.

Again, although difficult to assess in numbers, we have to be aware that the increased activity within the neighbourhood following a burglary may have been an attributing factor. We also consider that the volunteers have created a greater cohesion amongst the community, and this together with overt signage has raised awareness of the public who are more sensitive to suspicious behaviour.

It is strong evidence that moving a problem towards 'community based self-policing' is very effective.

Given the reduction in crimes through the tackling of the environment, the guardianship, and hardening the ability to profit from the crime, we can conclude that our hypothesis was proved correct.

Further assessment

The success of the WDBC project has now been rolled out to 136 towns and villages, rural and urban with a total of 50k Smartwater kits registered, showing an overall average burglary reduction of 60% across West Merica.

The role out was implemented after independent endorsement that the responses within the project had been successful. We sought academic support from Warwick University to assess the impact and provide the project with an independently assessed evidence base. The assessment concluded that burglary reduction in the areas covered by WDBC averaged 38% compared to areas not covered.

Interestingly, the research also demonstrated not only the reduction of crime, but crucially a reduction in the fear of crime – not just burglary, but all areas of crime risk – and an increase in confidence in the police.

The other areas consisted of rural areas similar to Cleobury Mortimer, but also housing estates in deprived areas. In particular, Sutton Hill, Telford is an area in the top 1% of the country's deprived areas and has been a persistent burglary hotspot for many years. Without any other changes in how the area was policed, the WDBC project produced a drop from 180 burglary dwellings to a new low of 55 which is a resource saving of £613,281.25. This was against a backdrop of improved crime recording and the rise of homes of multi occupancy, which by design tends to increase repeat offending.

Displacement has been considered, but it is felt that due to the overall reduction across the WDBC areas that a 'like for like' displacement is not occurring as we are not experiencing a rise in other areas.

The rate of house burglary across the force continues to fall, seeing a 17% drop in 2019-2020 against the previous year.

So far in 2020, from Jan to May we have seen a further reduction of 26% against previous year (albeit this captures the Covid19 lockdown period).

Future plans

The proven success of WDBC has attracted Police and Crime Commissioner funding to continue to roll out the project across West Mercia Force. There is also ongoing engagement with other forces via the NPCC National Burglary and Acquisitive Crime Groups, and a take up from other police areas has followed.

As the project sought to involve the commercial sector and the community, the sustainability of each roll out is achievable and will in turn reduce demand.

The reduction in burglaries and theft has seen an increase in public confidence and an increased police visibility due to a reduction of acquisitive crime demand and an uplift in community members taking ownership with local partners to become or maintain their 'We Don't Buy Crime' area.

Continuous engagement with the communities is maintained through WDBC social media platforms, with large following on Twitter and Facebook.

The success of this project to problem solve and reduce demand was acknowledged in March 2020 by winning the partner category of The Tilley Awards in the UK.

Number of words: 3586

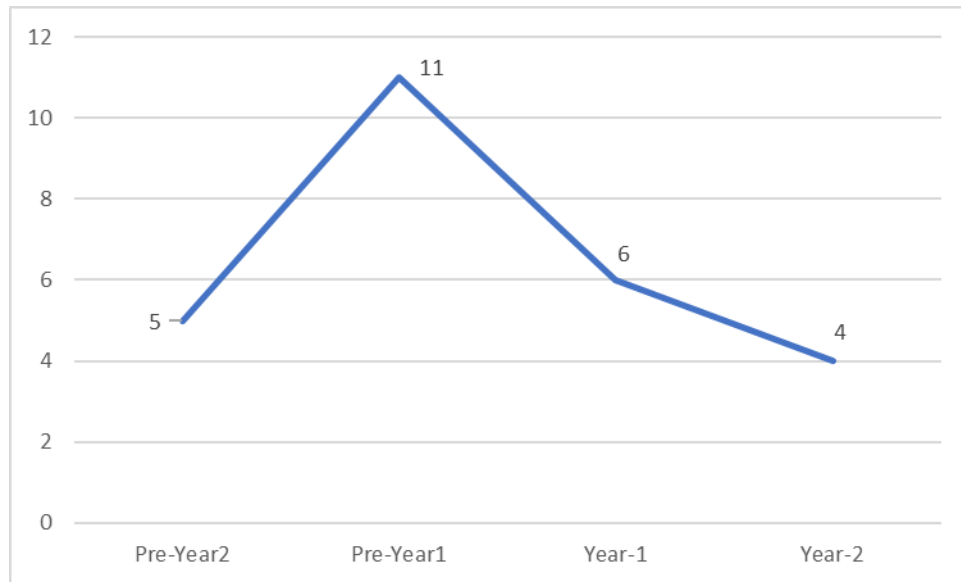
Appendix – graphs charts and images



'We Don't Buy Crime' Logo

Reported crimes in project pilot area – 2 years prior to project and 2 years after

Year	Dates	Residential Burglaries	Percentage Change
Pre-Year2	Nov 13 – Oct 14	5	N/A
Pre-Year1	Nov 14 – Oct 15	11	+120%
Year-1	Nov 15 – Oct 16	6	-45.5%
Year-2	Nov 16 – Oct 17	4	-33% (-63% against pre-year1)

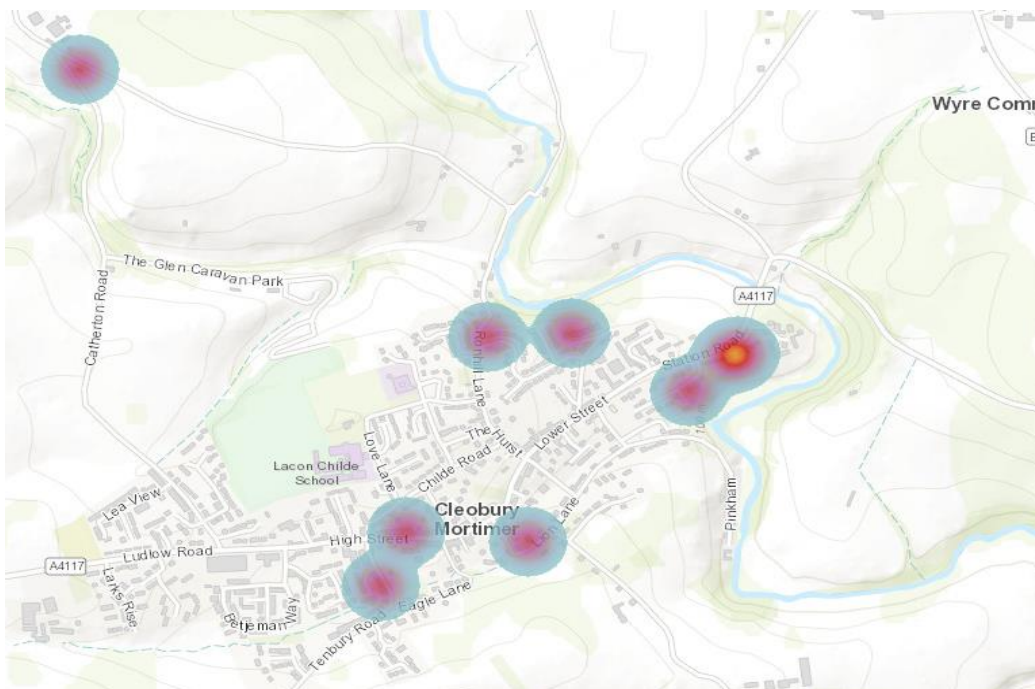
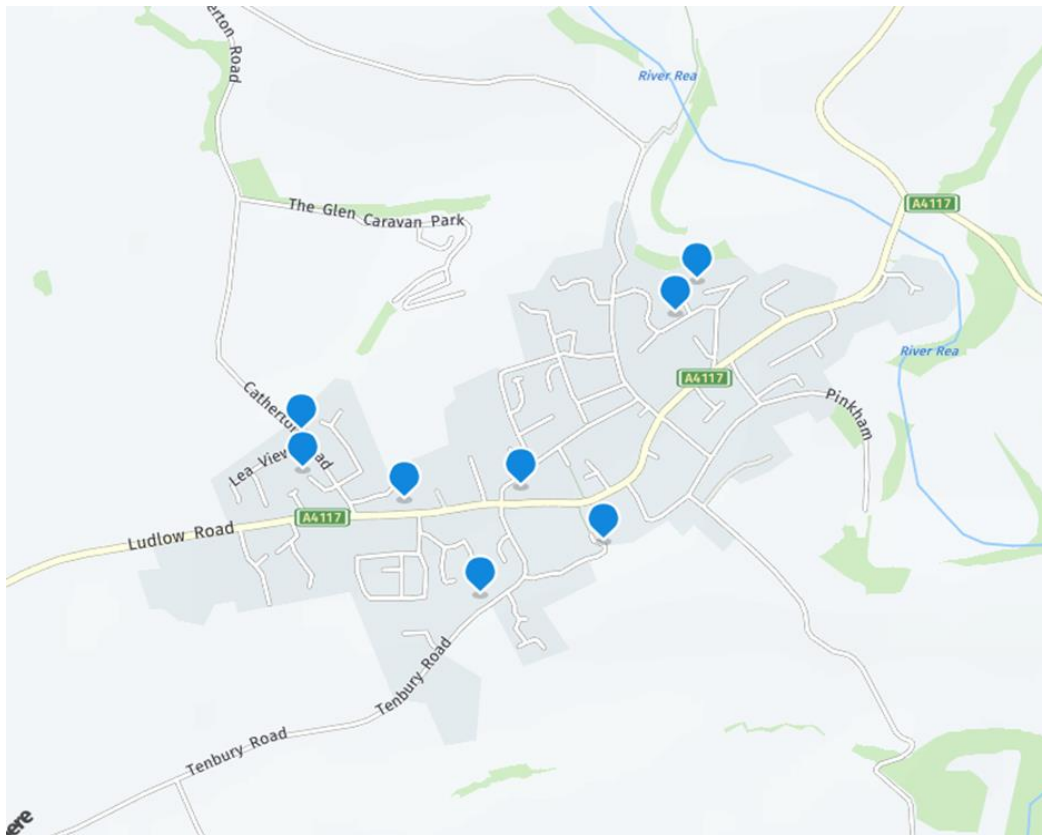


TYPE OF PROPERTY STOLEN (MOST FIRST)	PROPERTY ENTERED (MOST FIRST)
CHAINSAWS/TOOLS	HOUSE
CLOTHING	FLAT
JEWELLERY	CARAVAN
PURSE/CASH	
I-PAD/LAPTOP	
CAR & KEYS	

Type of dwelling and property stolen within project pilot area.



Geographical location of pilot project.



Hotspot location of burglaries within pilot area.

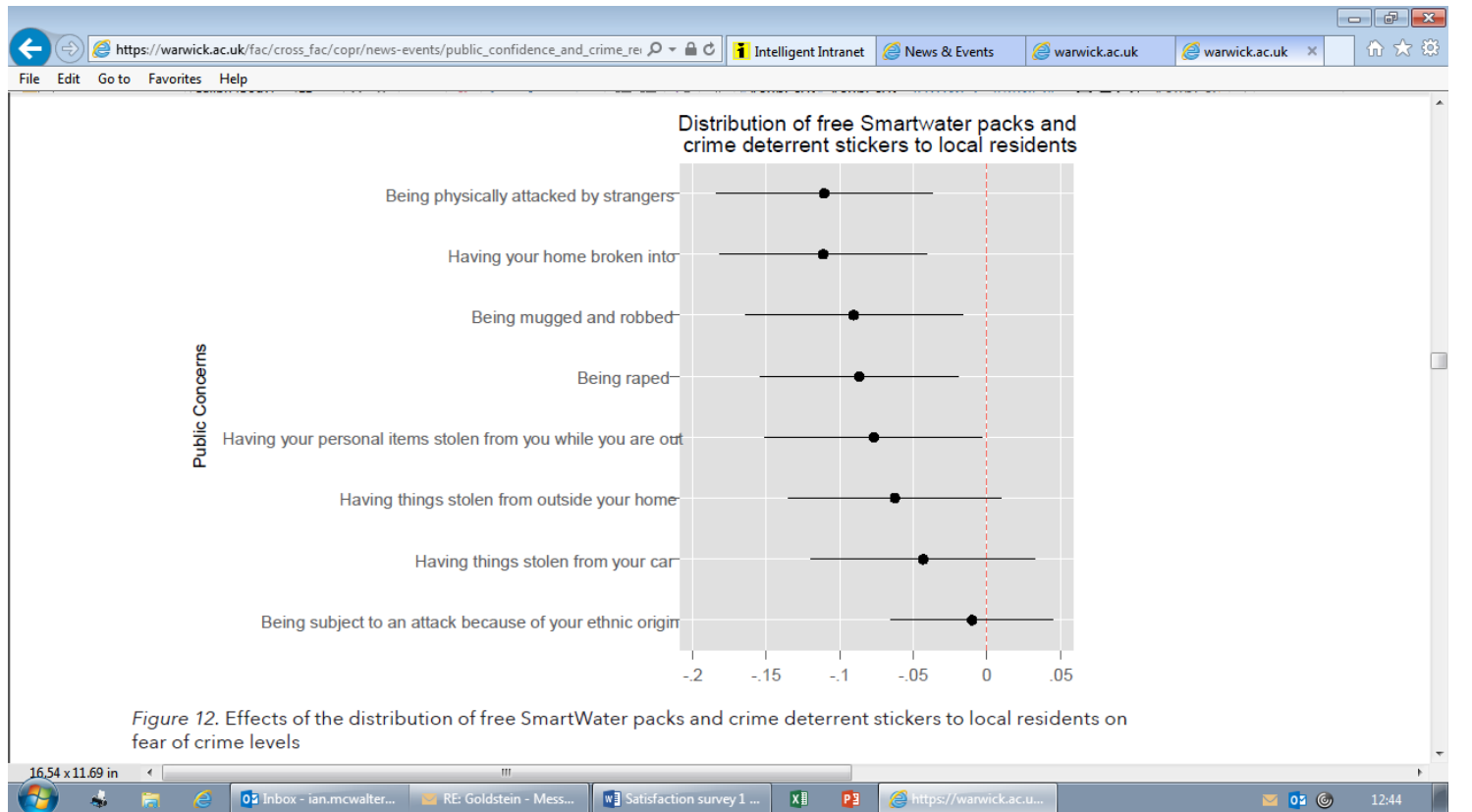
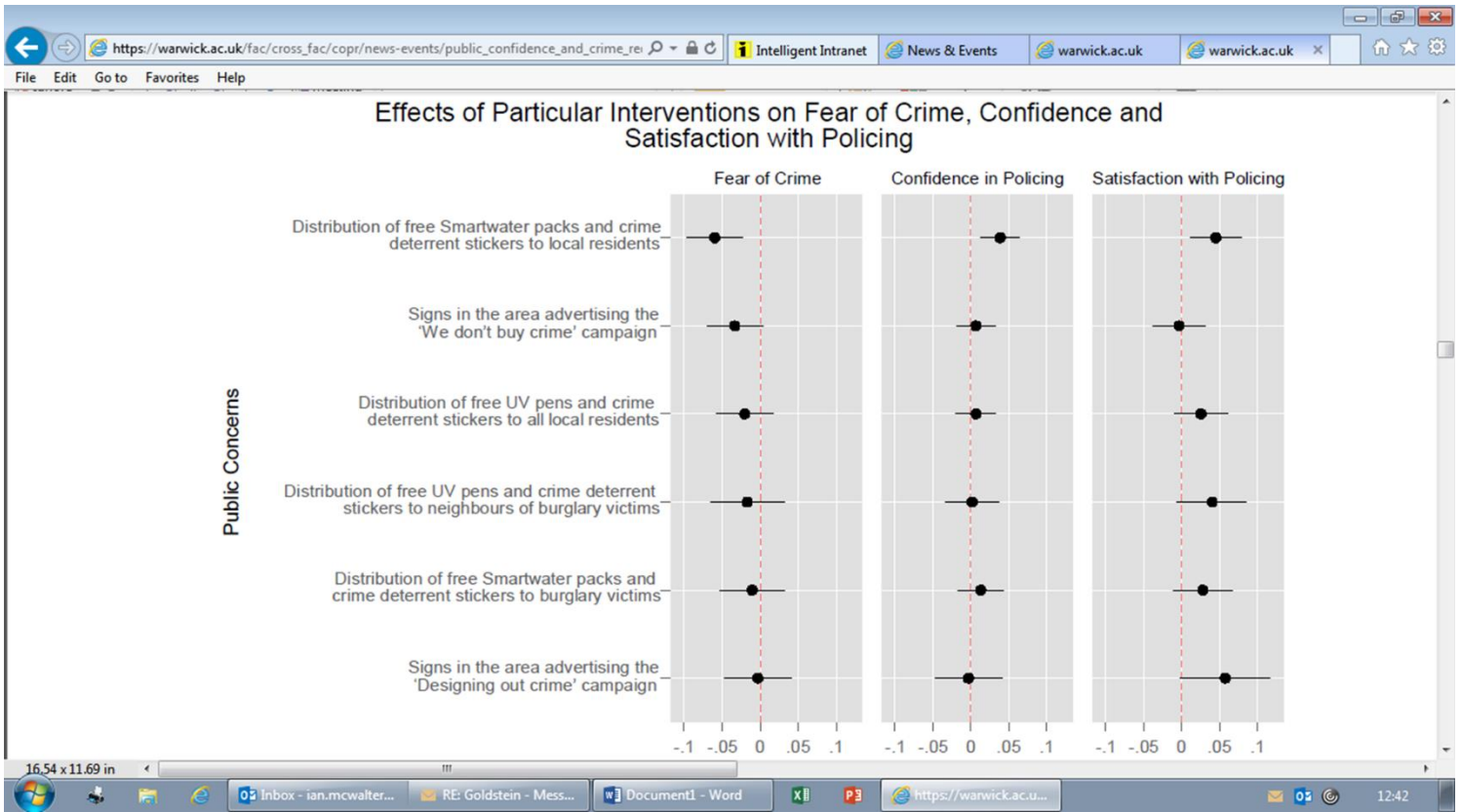


Figure 12. Effects of the distribution of free SmartWater packs and crime deterrent stickers to local residents on fear of crime levels

