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Assessing the impact of the Reducing Burglary Initiative in southern England and Wales

2nd edition

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Home Office Online Report 42/04

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Acknowledgements

This report presents the findings of the Southern Consortium outcome evaluation of Phase I of the Reducing Burglary Initiative, as managed by the Criminal Policy Research Unit at South Bank University. The authors would like to thank all the project managers and related personnel who made the evaluation possible. We are also grateful to the researchers and consultants who we worked with. At South Bank University the other members of the research team were: Martin Cherrett, Moritz Flockenhaus, Ian Hearnden, Carol Hedderman, Jessica Jacobson, Charlotte Kay, Christine Magill, Lee Maitland, Chris Sarno, Marianne Thompson, Sarah Todd and Claire Williams. We would also like to thank our partners in the Southern Consortium who provided invaluable advice and guidance.

Particular thanks go to the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

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Summary

This report summarises findings about the impact of Reducing Burglary Initiative projects covered by the Southern Consortium. It considers what worked in reducing domestic burglary and aims to explain the factors underlying this success. The issues of whether interventions were theoretically robust, and how intensively they needed to be implemented in practice to achieve any impact are examined.

Projects tended to be more successful if the underlying theory of interventions was clearly thought through so that they complemented rather than contradicted each other. If this was the case, so-called 'packages' of interventions were most effective when designed to be relevant to the local area in terms of the local community, local offending and to management experience. The 'dosage' of an intervention needed to be considered so as to maximise effect, taking into account financial and personnel restrictions. Combinations of short- and long-term interventions were found to have a more sustainable impact on offending.

Other internal and extraneous factors are considered that may have acted to the benefit or detriment of implementation. These may have masked the impact of successful projects from the evaluators, or given the spurious impression of success. The projects could be undermined by changing operational and community priorities. Despite the wide range of problems that projects had with implementation, the Southern Consortium SDPs proved that successful projects were possible.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Southern Consortium outcome evaluation of Phase I of the Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI).¹ Twenty-one Strategic Development Projects (SDPs) were evaluated across southern England and Wales, although the number of projects was effectively reduced to twenty when two within the same local authority district were amalgamated. The Criminal Policy Research Unit at South Bank University managed the evaluation.²

In the first phase of the Reducing Burglary Initiative areas were expected to meet two criteria of eligibility before they could apply for a £60,000 Home Office grant. Projects had to focus on areas covering between 3,000 and 5,000 households and have a burglary rate of at least twice the national average (Curtin *et al.* 2001; Tilley *et al.* 1999). Non-geographic 'virtual communities' that shared common socio-demographic characteristics were also considered. The full list of projects is shown in Table 1.1 in relation to the number of households per project and the burglary rate pre-project implementation. Of the twenty projects evaluated by the Southern Consortium, eleven matched the household total requirement and a further three were within 750 of this target. Six had a burglary rate below the standard of twice the national average (54 per 1,000 households).

The household total was not within, or near to, the required limit for six projects. This was not relevant for the Phase 1 - 3 SDP as it was based on a 'virtual community' of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), irrespective of where they were located within the city. In contrast, the Phase 1 - 8 SDP had a low household total (n=193) as it focused on just a single street that had an identifiable burglary problem. For the Phase 1 - 4 SDP the original target area was one police beat covering a total of just 1,662 households. This was expanded to cover two-thirds of the city as its single intervention of improving police intelligence could be applied to a wider area. Although this project's original area was far below the Home Office threshold, its level of burglary was very high at 132 per 1,000 households (April 1998-March 1999). While such changes were not officially sanctioned, some latitude was used locally so as to better focus project resources. However, in the case of the Phase 1 - 4 SDP the newer and much larger project area had a below-average burglary rate of 24 per 1,000 households. The Phase 1 - 5 SDP also implemented a single intervention, involving offender referral and drug treatment. In this case its coverage was expanded to cover offenders who were not burglars.

Where projects extended their coverage to include other areas (as in Phase 1 - 4), data were collected, where possible, for this larger area. However, the evaluation was funded to look at a set target offence tackled over a set period of time. Where projects were extended to other offences (as in Phase 1 - 5) it was not possible to assess impacts beyond these limits. Similarly, many projects overran and conceivably impacted on local burglary figures in the second, or even third year. While this is acknowledged, it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to assess such longer-term impact. In this report, where projects are said to have plausibly had an impact, this is within the first 12 months.

¹ The RBI formed a major strand of the Crime Reduction Programme. Results of the Southern Consortium RBI process evaluation are to be published separately (see Hamilton-Smith (ed.) 2004).

² Other consortium members were: Matrix MHA Research and Consultancy, University of Bristol, Cardiff University, and University of Kent at Canterbury.

Table 1.1: Southern Consortium Strategic Development Projects

SDP	No. of households (1991 census unless otherwise stated)	Burglary rate per 1,000 households*
Target number of households = 3,000 to 5,000		
Phase 1 - 10	3,560	52**
Phase 1 - 17	3,557	89
Phase 1 - 1	4,126	54
Phase 1 - 11	4,182	58
Phase 1 - 6	4,909	63
Phase 1 - 16	3,113	43**
Phase 1 - 9	3,076	147
Phase 1 - 19	3,483	68
Phase 1 - 7	3,216	83
Phase 1 - 15	4,117	52**
Phase 1 - 12	3,453	65
Projects near to the target number of households		
Phase 1 - 13 (2 SDPs)	11,267	53**
Phase 1 - 20	5,254	69
Phase 1 - 14	2,760 (1999 council figures)	63
Other projects		
Phase 1 - 18	1,564	~
Phase 1 - 2	6,258	88
Phase 1 - 4	56,436	24**
Phase 1 - 3	Virtual community	n/a
Phase 1 - 5	93,841	42**
Phase 1 - 8	193	113 (ward figures)

Notes: Where possible burglary rates are drawn from the twelve months pre-bid (April 1998-March 1999). Otherwise they are as provided in the project proposal.

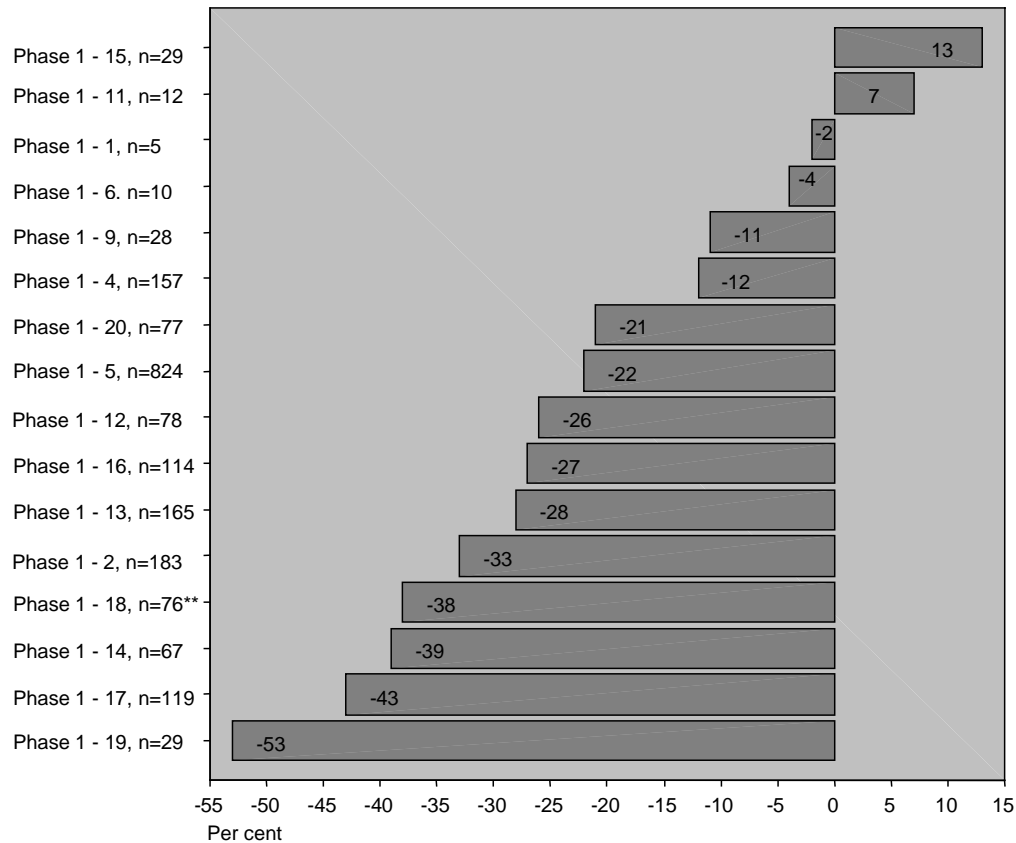
* Burglary figures were drawn from police-defined areas that most closely matched the target area (these were not always coterminous).

** SDPs where the burglary rate was below the initial target for funding – 54 per 1,000 households (2x the national average).

~ The Phase 1 - 18 target area covered four estates although two of these were changed from those listed in the project proposal. The original area had a household total of 2,101 and a burglary rate of 84 per 1,000. Burglary figures for the precise target area as implemented were not available. However, analysis of data for the two police beats that contained the target revealed a high level of burglary across the entire area.

Nineteen out of twenty SDPs were implemented to varying degrees within this 12-month period. By comparing the level of domestic burglary recorded pre-implementation to that after the SDPs started, it was possible to measure changes recorded over the project period (see Figure 1.1). As Hough *et al.* (2004) have observed elsewhere, some SDPs encountered problems in providing the evaluators with accurate and timely data. However, a pre- and post-implementation comparison was possible for sixteen of the projects. Fourteen of these recorded a fall in burglary and two an increase during the first 12 months of implementation. The average change from the pre- to post- period was a fall of 21 per cent.

Figure 1.1: Percentage changes in domestic burglary from 12 months pre-implementation to the first 12 months of each project*



Notes: * Figures were available for 16 out of 20 SDPs. There were insufficient data for a meaningful comparison in three projects, and in one there was no significant implementation. (The numerical change in offending is shown alongside each project name.)

** Due to data restrictions this is a comparison between the first 7 months of implementation and the corresponding period in the previous year.

These headline figures may tempt the reader to conclude that the RBI was entirely responsible for this success; however, this could be overselling the initiative’s impact. There were many internal and extraneous factors that needed to be considered before determining *plausible* impact – both while setting up projects and during implementation. Most obviously, if an initiative was not implemented it could not have contributed to *any* decrease in burglary. Process issues that could hinder or maximise the chances of success are considered in a separate report (see Hearnden *et al.*, 2004; Millie *et al.*, 2004). For this report the appropriateness of interventions to local projects is discussed in relation to how an intervention might work in theory and how intensively it needed to be implemented in practice. How changes in burglary totals related to area-wide trends is also considered, as is the possibility of geographic or functional displacement.

2. Plausible impact

For reasons discussed elsewhere (Hough *et al.*, 2004) all three evaluations were able to attribute cause and effect with less confidence than originally expected. In view of this, it makes more sense to refer to 'plausible effects' than to make exaggerated claims about effectiveness. To say that a project had a plausible effect is ostensibly a subjective decision. However, for each project this judgement was based on objective analysis of local crime figures, set beside detailed information collected about the projects. Particular attention was paid to the level of implementation, and to the timing of implementation. For projects where only one intervention had a plausible impact on domestic burglary, work done under other interventions may have had a consolidating effect.

Plausible impact of individual interventions

There was no set number of interventions for each project. In fact, the number of individual interventions in proposals ranged from one to twelve. Projects with several interventions tended to use the £60,000 grant as leverage to draw in other sums, with the total crude cost of projects ranging from £63,000 to £609,000 (Mallender *et al.*, 2002). The types of intervention can be divided into six main crime prevention categories, listed below (see also Tilley *et al.*, 1999). Also included were plans that were listed as interventions, but were more about approaches taken to implementation than crime prevention or reduction techniques in their own right. Interviews with project personnel in some areas suggest they did not always recognise this distinction.

Box 2.1: Interventions

- **Location-specific situational crime prevention:** enhancing the physical security of households through improved locks, doors and windows; installing alarms and visible cameras.
- **Area-wide situational crime prevention:** reducing access to areas through the gating of alleyways; environmental improvements to deter burglary; street-lighting improvements.
- **Stakeholding:** watch schemes; publicity; educational campaigns; tenant or landlord registration; resident involvement schemes.
- **Enforcement:** high visibility policing; improved gathering and use of intelligence; disrupting offender behaviour; use of restriction orders, such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and eviction orders; witness protection schemes.
- **Offender-based schemes:** youth diversion projects; drug rehabilitation; supervision and treatment of offenders.
- **Property marking:** property marking and registration; property storage; property marking with associated window stickers.
- **Other:** victim support programmes; improvements to management; improved inter-agency working.

All of these approaches have their place in crime reduction. However, their suitability depends on the local problem and characteristics of the local area. Projects where this was recognised tended to be the more successful ones.

Table 2.1 outlines the level of implementation and 'plausible impact' of each SDP, broken down by individual intervention. These are divided between those planned but not implemented, those implemented but with negligible or limited impact during the evaluation period and those implemented with a plausible impact on the local burglary rate.

Table 2.1: Level of implementation and plausible impact of individual interventions

SDP	Location-specific situational crime prevention	Area-wide situational crime prevention	Stakeholding	Enforcement	Offender-based schemes	Property marking	Other	Plausible impact on SDP
Phase 1 - 18			0	0 X X X				0/5
Phase 1 - 2	0 0		0	✓ ✓			0	2/6
Phase 1 - 10	0	0	0 X X	0 0 X X	X X	0		0/12
Phase 1 - 17	✓ ✓	✓ 0			0 0 0			3/7
Phase 1 - 1	0		0 0		X	✓		1/5
Phase 1 - 11	0	✓ 0	0 0 0	0 0		0		1/9
Phase 1 - 13	0		0	✓ ✓ 0 X	X			2/7
Phase 1 - 20	✓ 0		X X X	0 X X				1/8
Phase 1 - 6	0		X X	0 0	X			0/6
Phase 1 - 4				0				0/1
Phase 1 - 16	✓ 0		0 0	0	0		0	1/7
Phase 1 - 3	0		0 0 0	0				0/5
Phase 1 - 9		✓	0 X	X		0		1/5
Phase 1 - 7	X	X	X X X X	X				0/7
Phase 1 - 19		✓ ✓	0			0		2/4
Phase 1 - 15	0		0	0				0/3
Phase 1 - 12	0		0	0	0		0	0/5
Phase 1 - 5					0			0/1
Phase 1 - 8	0	0	0 0 X	0 X X	X			0/9
Phase 1 - 14		0	0 0 0	✓ ✓	0	0	0 0	2/10
Interventions implemented	17/18	10/11	23/36	21/33	7/13	6/6	5/5	89/122
Plausible impact of strategy	4/18	5/11	0/36	6/33	0/13	1/6	0/5	16/122

Notes: X = Planned but not implemented.
 0 = Implemented but with negligible or limited impact during the evaluation period.
 ✓ = Implemented with a plausible impact on the local burglary rate.

The twenty projects consisted of 122 planned interventions, of which nearly three-quarters (n=89) were implemented to varying levels. However, only 13 per cent (n=16) were implemented in a way that could plausibly have impacted the local burglary rate within the evaluation period (as shown in Table 2.1). Although none of the offender-based or stakeholding schemes were thought to have had an impact, the nature of such interventions meant that impact was possible in the longer-term after the evaluation period. The interventions that had a plausible impact within the first 12 months were contained within ten of the projects. Six of these projects were largely focused on situational measures, three on police enforcement and one on property marking.

Of these ten projects, five (Phase 1 - 2, Phase 1 - 17, Phase 1 - 13, Phase 1 - 19 and Phase 1 - 14) contained interventions that were implemented on a wide enough scale, or in enough strength, to have plausibly impacted the whole target area. For the remaining five (Phase 1 - 1, Phase 1 - 11, Phase 1 - 20, Phase 1 - 16 and Phase 1 - 9) impact was limited to the specific streets or households targeted by an individual intervention. In Phase 1 - 1 for example, impact was restricted to a limited number of streets where households were offered property marking (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: Phase 1 - 1 SDP

A property marking intervention was the aspect of this project that was implemented most effectively, with the full target of households visited and property-marked. Although there was very little change in the level of domestic burglary across the whole project area after implementation, there was evidence to suggest that burglary fell in the specific streets and blocks targeted for property marking. The property marking plausibly contributed to this fall. Potential burglars may have been deterred by intervention publicity and by window stickers used that labelled a house as 'postcode protected'. The fact that it was the police who visited each household to do the marking may have been just as important, effectively making the intervention one of high visibility policing. Other police operations in the area at this time may also have been an influence.

Before examining the characteristics of successful projects, and successful interventions within projects, the relationship between what occurred in the target areas and area-wide trends and possible displacement will be examined.

Plausible impact in relation to area-wide trends and displacement

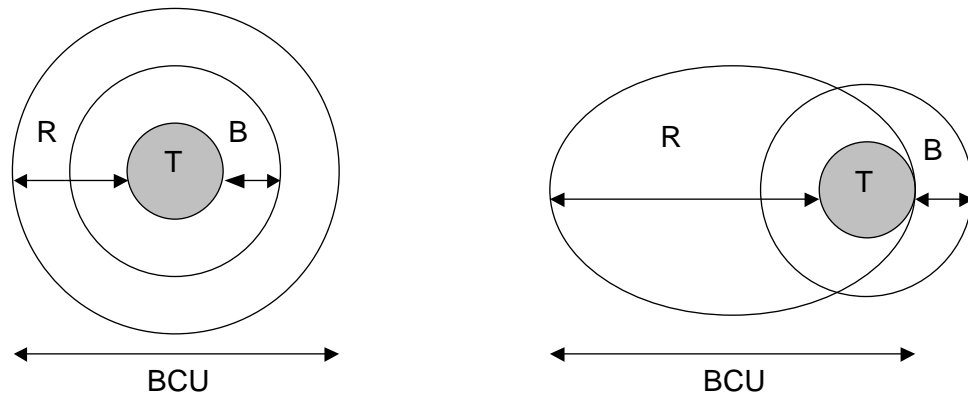
Originally it was envisaged that, in addition to reference areas, the evaluators would use comparison areas that were separate from the target areas, but had similar socio-demographic characteristics. However, the identification of suitable sites that were free of alternative crime reduction or regeneration funding proved an impossible task. As a result, the use of comparison areas was dropped.

Instead, in examining whether an SDP achieved any plausible impact, the main approach was to look for changes in burglary levels in the target area, before and after intervention, expressed as a proportion of all burglaries in the basic command unit (BCU)³ or equivalent area within which the target area was located. This was to determine whether changes occurring in the target area were different to the area-wide trend. The BCU minus the target area was termed the reference area.

To test for possible geographic displacement the level of burglary in the target area was compared to that occurring in a buffer area of police beats surrounding the target area. The spatial relationship between the target, buffer and reference areas is shown in Figure 2.1. This is first shown as an idealised pattern. Secondly, the relationship between the areas is shown in the more common form, with the target area not sitting neatly at the centre of the BCU. Where this was the case, the buffer area included beats from adjoining BCU areas. In both instances the buffer and reference areas were overlapping. This however did not affect measurement as the areas were used for different impact calculations. For projects implemented across whole towns or cities, the inclusion of a meaningful buffer area was not always possible.

³ A BCU is a geographically defined police unit, previously referred to as a division or subdivision. Some forces use the term Operational Command Unit (OCU).

Figure 2.1: The relationship between the target, buffer and reference areas



a. Idealised pattern

b. Usual pattern

T = target, B = buffer, R = reference

In simple terms, if the target area was responsible for ten per cent of the burglaries in the BCU (T + R) before the intervention and five per cent of burglaries after, this would indicate possible success, taking into account the BCU-wide trend in burglary. By comparing the situation in the target area with that of the much larger reference area it is possible to calculate a maximum possible saving in domestic burglary resulting from intervention. This figure is the maximum as other factors may have contributed, such as other investment programmes or police operations. The maximum saving is derived by subtracting the actual level of burglary recorded from the expected level (T expected), based on that recorded in the previous year. How this shift in share is calculated is shown below:

$T_1 / (T_1 + R_1)$ = burglaries in the target area as a proportion of all burglaries in the BCU (target plus reference) for the year pre-implementation

$T_2 / (T_2 + R_2)$ = burglaries in the target area as a proportion of all burglaries in the BCU for the first 12 months of implementation

T expected = $(T_1 / (T_1 + R_1)) * (T_2 + R_2)$

This is more clearly explained using examples. Table 2.2 shows the level of burglary recorded for the Phase 1 - 14 SDP.⁴ By using the above formula, the maximum possible saving that could be attributed to the SDP (expected minus actual) is calculated as 55 offences.

⁴ For a project summary see Home Office (2003a).

Table 2.2: Phase 1 - 14 SDP – shift in share of burglary dwelling in the target area as a proportion of the BCU

Phase 1 - 14 SDP	Year pre-scheme 1998-1999	First year of scheme 1999-2000
Target	$T_1 = 173$	$T_2 = 106$
Reference	$R_1 = 2202$	$R_2 = 2098$
BCU (target plus reference)	$T_1 + R_1 = 2375$	$T_2 + R_2 = 2204$
Target as a proportion of BCU	$T_1 = 7.3\%$	$T_2 = 4.8\%$
Expected number for target area	-	T expected = 161
Maximum saving in burglary dwelling	-	$161 - 106 = 55$

The standard error of the difference between the two proportions (T_1 percentage minus T_2 percentage) was calculated to assess whether the difference between them was statistically significant. For the Phase 1 - 14 SDP the maximum saving of 55 offences was significant at the one per cent level.

To test for possible geographic displacement, burglary in the target area was compared to a buffer area – this was usually smaller than the reference area and typically comprised the police beats that adjoined the target. The same ‘shift-share’ approach was used as explained above to determine whether there was any possible movement between the target and buffer. It was decided to compare the level of burglary in the target area with each buffer beat individually – as well as collectively – in anticipation that shifts in offending were likely to be far more complicated than a simple swap from the target to the buffer. This is exactly what was found. Again using the Phase 1 - 14 SDP as an example, Table 2.3 demonstrates how difficult it was to attribute cause and effect with any certainty.

Table 2.3: Phase 1 - 14 SDP – shift in share of burglary dwelling between the target area and the buffer area

Area	Year pre-scheme 1998-1999	First year of scheme 1999-2000	Shift in share
Target beat A1	$T_1 = 173$	$T_2 = 106$	-58*
BCU. A			
Buffer beat A2	170	310	+149*
Buffer beat A3	70	56	-10
Buffer beat A4	341	229	-95*
BCU. B			
Buffer beat B1	97	106	+14
Buffer beat B2	143	136	0
Target plus buffer	$T_1 + B_1 = 994$	$T_2 + B_2 = 943$	-

* Significant at one per cent level (standard difference test).

In the case of the Phase 1 - 14 SDP the fall in burglary (here indicated by a relative decrease of 58 offences) occurred at the same time as a significant increase in buffer beat A2 and a similarly large fall in buffer beat A4. It is here that the statistical evidence had to be set beside field observation and the views of those managing the project. When asked to give possible reasons for a fall in burglary in buffer beat A4, the police project managers stated that they

had evidence of the same known offenders operating in both areas. Once these known offenders had been targeted and arrested as part of the RBI, there was thought to be a positive impact in both areas. The evidence of possible displacement from the target to buffer beat A2 was supported by the independent judgement of the local police, who were fully aware of this shift in offending to a neighbouring estate. This offending was presumably by a different group than that targeted and arrested as part of the RBI. The existence of both a diffusion of benefits to one area and a displacement to another is possible. However, other shifts within the buffer zone, caused by factors totally independent of the SDP, cannot be discounted.

The third approach to test for possible impact was to consider functional displacement or 'crime switch' – that is a switch in offending to other related property offences as a result of burglary becoming 'too hot'. The same shift-share approach was used, this time comparing domestic burglary in the target area with other property crime⁵ in the target area. For the Phase 1 - 14 project this revealed a significant relative fall in domestic burglary of 42 offences⁶, while at the same time the only significant increase occurred in theft and handling offences (+34 offences⁷). There may have been a shift in offending from burglary to theft and handling as a result of SDP activity; however other reasons cannot be discounted, including wider changes in offending behaviour.

Bringing all the evidence together for the Phase 1 - 14 SDP, when the target area was seen as a proportion of the whole BCU, there was a decrease of 55 offences over what was expected during the first 12 months of the project. The level of implementation achieved by this project, along with evidence from aggregate and disaggregate crime data analysis, point towards the SDP having plausibly contributed to this fall. For example, the timing of the largest falls in burglary coincided with the most intense police activity. There was also a possible diffusion of benefits to one neighbouring area. Although this success was affected by some geographic displacement and possible crime switch to theft and handling offences, the net saving in domestic burglary outweighed any increases in a buffer area, or in other property crime. Although the fall in burglary, relative to the BCU, was 55 offences, the annual figure fell by 67 from 173 to 106. At the same time, the yearly total for burglary offending in the buffer zone increased by just 16 offences and other property offending increased by seven.

The pattern that occurred in the five most successful projects is shown in Table 2.4. All displayed evidence of a plausible impact across the whole target area.

⁵ Including burglary non-dwelling, theft and handling offences, robbery and criminal damage.

⁶ Significant at one per cent (standard difference test).

⁷ Significant at five per cent (standard difference test).

Table 2.4: The five most successful projects – Changes from the year pre-project to the first 12 months of implementation

		Phase 1 - 2	Phase 1 - 17	Phase 1 - 13	Phase 1 - 19	Phase 1 - 14
Annual change	Burglary dwelling - target area	-183	-119	-165	-29	-67
	Burglary dwelling - buffer area	-23	-204	No buffer areas	+15	+7
	Other property crime - target area	+285	+253	-215	+6	+16
Maximum saving (shift in share)		92*	58*	2 [#]	15	55*
Displacement	Evidence of geographic diffusion of benefits	Yes	Yes	Yes (to rest of town)	No	Yes
	Evidence of geographic displacement	Yes	No	n/k	Yes	Yes
	Evidence of functional displacement	To theft/ handling	To theft/ handling	Diffusion of benefits to theft / handling	To burglary non- dwelling	To theft/ handling

Notes: * Significant at one per cent standard difference test.

[#] The full reduction attributable to the project is likely to be greater as some project activity occurred town-wide, thus possibly impacting on burglary levels in the reference area.

There was evidence of both geographic displacement and diffusion of benefits, although a diffusion effect was more likely in these more successful sites. Where there was evidence of functional displacement, this tended to be towards theft and handling offences. When burglary in the target area was seen as a proportion of that occurring in the target plus reference area, both Phase 1 - 13 and Phase 1 - 19 SDPs recorded low shifts in share. In these cases, this did not mean the projects were any less successful. The figure for Phase 1 - 19⁸ (15) was low as the target area comprised only a few streets. The Phase 1 - 13 SDP incorporated high visibility policing activity specific to the target area and the use of a police 'burglary team' across the whole town. The burglary team had the task of targeting known offenders and had use of a vehicle that was solely used for burglary work. The effect of this police activity was a plausible impact across both the target and reference areas. As a result, when domestic burglary in the target area is seen as a proportion of the whole town (target plus reference area), only a small (2) proportional change was recorded.

All five projects implemented interventions in combination, namely location-specific and area-wide situational measures, police enforcement and stakeholding measures. Key to their success was how these measures complemented each other, both in terms of theory and implementation.

⁸ For project summary see Home Office (2003c).

3. Suitability of interventions to local projects

The two ingredients for a successful project are sound theory and effective implementation. Failure arises when either or both of these are absent. A key consideration is an intervention's relevance to the local area. An example where an intervention was relevant to the local area was the alley-gating scheme run by the Phase 1 - 19 SDP.⁹ This area was characterised by rows of Victorian terraced housing which typically had alleyways running to the rear of properties. The police had identified rear access as the primary *modus operandi* and, by installing lockable gates to the entrances of these alleyways, access was restricted to key-holders, in other words, those living there (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: A lockable alley-gate installed as part of the Phase 1 - 19 SDP



The fitting of gates was complemented by the installation of secure fencing. Both approaches had the same theoretical basis of restricting offender access. This intervention 'worked' in that it plausibly contributed to a reduction in domestic burglary from 55 offences in the year before implementation to 26 during the first 12 months of the project. However, this approach comes with some caveats. The theory is only suitable for the type of property that has alleyway access and where there is a stable population.

The Phase 1 - 9 SDP ran a similar scheme in an area with a large student population (see Box 3.1). The project management recognised the potential difficulties in introducing such a scheme with a transient population. Gates were provided that were self-closing and self-locking and, while each lock was unique, sufficient keys were provided for residents of each adjoining house. It later proved difficult keeping track of the number of keys and whether these had been lost. Over time, residents were also found to leave alley-gates propped open. While it was considered that this intervention had a plausible impact during the life of the evaluation, these issues could have hindered longer-term success. The crime prevention theory was sound, but was possibly targeted at the wrong area. This was also the case for a postcode property marking campaign in Phase 1 - 9. Although the police thought that many people did mark their property, it was felt that students, who tended to live in the area for only a year or two, would not want the postcode to remain on property after leaving. One alternative would have been to have items marked with a student's university number as this would at least have relevancy for the whole duration of his/her study.

⁹ For guidance notes on installing alley-gates see Johnson and Loxley (2001).

Box 3.1: Phase 1 - 9 SDP

The main focus of the Phase 1 - 9 SDP was the fitting of alley-gates to suitable Victorian properties. The area had a large student population. Analysis done by the local police showed that a large number of domestic burglaries were being committed using the alleys for both entry and escape. It was hoped that by providing a solid physical barrier, burglary would be reduced. In total, 103 lockable gates were fitted in a clearly defined neighbourhood. However, the gates were not always welcomed, leading to the project team adopting a fairly autocratic approach to ensure that the intervention was implemented as fully as possible.

The tracking of some property owners also proved difficult. If this scheme were to be replicated it would have to be with full resident co-operation. In this example, by the end of the evaluation period three alleys remained ungated through which burglars could still operate. Reasons given were for wheelchair access by one resident and concern from another who had previously been attacked in an alley. Once installed, some residents chose to prop gates open. The project tried to engage a local Street Watch group to address some of these issues, but with limited success.

Despite these problems, within the streets covered by the scheme, there was evidence of a fall in burglary in the targeted properties, although it was possible that some of this may have been displaced to unprotected households within the rest of target area.

An example of theory failure was a publicity campaign that formed part of the Phase 1 - 11 SDP. The project contained interventions that were in conflict with one another. The main focus was the highly publicised use of internal (covert) and external cameras and alarms. The theory was based on the idea that associated publicity would create uncertainty amongst offenders as to which properties were protected. This failed on two counts. The initial problem was in the wording of the publicity. Signs were erected on lampposts throughout the target area with the tagline 'Are you sure?' These were targeted at offenders but misread by some residents as 'Are you sure you are safe?', thus increasing anxiety in the community. Assuming offenders read them the same way, the campaign would be unlikely to deter them. The second problem was that if offenders were to be deterred from offending then increased detections, normally hoped for with covert surveillance, are less likely. The implications of the publicity campaign on the surveillance had not been fully anticipated.

Phase 1 - 11 SDP was an example where individual interventions effectively worked against each other. For both Phase 1 - 14 and Phase 1 - 17 (see Home Office, 2003a; 2003b) interventions had worked together, leading to a fall in burglary. For the Phase 1 - 17 SDP this was because the interventions were right for the local situation and depended on compatible mechanisms for reducing burglary (see Box 3.2).

Box 3.2: Phase 1 - 17 SDP

The Phase 1 - 17 project was principally successful in implementing situational measures. One intervention, based on the alley-gating of areas of suitable property, led to 44 lockable gates being installed. Two further target-hardening interventions were run, providing electronic door entry systems to four blocks of houses of multiple occupation and new locks and other security measures to 156 properties belonging to elderly residents. Although research has shown that the elderly are usually some of those least likely to become burglary victims (Tseloni and Pease, 1998), there was certainly concern among these residents, who in some cases had raised their fences or installed barbed wire on fences for protection. Priority for target-hardening went to recent burglary victims.

For the Phase 1 - 17 project it was the impact of all three of these interventions working together in reducing the number of unprotected targets that had a plausible impact on burglary offending. This effect was consolidated by running local youth diversion projects and the installation of some street lighting. The project had a plausible impact across the entire target area.

For Phase 1 - 14 SDP the combined effects of different interventions were carefully designed to ensure that they complemented each other. Phase 1 - 14's initial focus was on enforcement with the linked interventions of high visibility policing and targeting of known offenders – through arrests, bail enforcement, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and evictions. These approaches were right for this estate, as intelligence had revealed that the most prolific offenders were living in, or near to, the target area. Any reduction in offending gained from this initial *crackdown* was to be *consolidated*¹⁰ by community-based interventions including property marking, a youth diversion programme, environmental improvements based on situational crime prevention principles and measures to improve community stakeholding. The crackdown measures plausibly made a direct contribution to a reduction in domestic burglary of 67 offences from the year pre-implementation to the first twelve months of the project. The community-based measures had a longer-term impact and thereby consolidated these gains. The creation of a *package* of both short- and long-term measures was more effective than concentrating on just one intervention type, as the effect was more sustained. What helped in this example were the enthusiasm of local management and their prior experience of inter-agency working (see Jacobson, 2003). Their knowledge of offending patterns in the local area was also important.

A related issue was the availability of suitably experienced managers. As the Phase 1 - 14 example demonstrates projects work better if they make best use of management knowledge and experience. Other authors (Bennett and Durie, 1999; Hedderman and Williams, 2001) have observed that projects with a local 'champion' tend to be most effective in getting interventions completed. Although this cannot be guaranteed for future projects, the five most successful projects (Phase 1 - 2, Phase 1 - 17, Phase 1 - 13, Phase 1 - 19 and Phase 1 - 14) all had strong leadership.

In the Phase 1 - 8 SDP, one intervention was undermined by another. The project initially planned to use high visibility policing as a means of deterring offending. However, this was undermined by the project's decision to base its choice of intervention on the results of public consultation. Community relations with the police were generally poor in this estate leading to residents seeing High Visibility Policing (HVP) as an unwanted intrusion. As a result this intervention was dropped.

Other projects looked sound as originally planned, but in the form they were implemented they would never have been expected to impact on the local burglary rate. An example of this was a drug-referral programme set up under the Phase 1 - 5 SDP. The underlying theory was that an increased level of domestic burglary was linked to an increased drug dependency amongst young people. By identifying offenders held in custody who funded a drug habit by burglary, and referring them to a drug treatment programme, the ultimate aim was to reduce burglaries by reducing the level of drug dependency. As the scheme unfolded it became evident that a narrow focus on burglary was unachievable as too few offenders fitted the selection criteria in the original target area. The project evolved into a broader-based attempt to engage with all offenders arrested by the police who might benefit from drug treatment. This was irrespective of where in the city the offender lived and regardless of offence type committed. While this was undoubtedly a reasonable use of resources, it made it extremely unlikely that there would be measurable reductions in aggregate burglary rates.

The key points that were identified by looking at the suitability of interventions to local projects are:

- the precise theory mechanism of each intervention needs to be clearly thought through;
- projects need to be relevant to the local area in terms of the local community, local offending and management experience;
- interventions can be more effective when implemented in packages;
- interventions which are employed together in packages must complement each other.

¹⁰ See Wright and Pease (1995).

4. Intervention dosage

Assuming that the proposed strategies for reducing burglary are sound in principle, it is helpful to consider the dosage of individual interventions. In other words, how plausible was it that, when interventions were administered in the amounts that they were, these would have had an effect on burglary rates? Intervention dosage can be divided into three inter-dependent concepts.

- *Coverage* – or the spread of a planned intervention. This can be seen in terms of appropriate geographic cover while taking into account the availability of resources. For example, does a project intend to provide target-hardening to all properties in a specified area, just to recent victims of burglary, or perhaps to those identified as potential future targets by studying offender *modi operandi*?
- *Intensity* – is more to do with the numbers involved, for example, the number of police officers deployed in a programme of high visibility policing, or the number of households fitted with new locks – or even the number of locks installed per house.
- *Duration* - refers to the time period covered by an intervention, For example, is a programme of HVP planned for one month, or would it have a more sustained impact if divided into four separate one-week periods?

There is no set coverage, intensity or duration for a particular intervention type to work. However, all three concepts need to be considered so that interventions can be planned that are appropriate to local characteristics. Interventions based on situational measures often encountered issues of coverage. For example, the Phase 1 - 12 SDP selectively target-hardened properties based on prior victimisation, on whether they were located in identifiable hot-spots, or if they were 'deemed to be at risk' by having insufficient security.¹¹ Taking into account available resources, focusing on those considered most at risk of victimisation was more sensible than trying to cover the whole target area. By the end of the project 64 properties had received new locks to doors and windows. This represented just 1.9 per cent of households in the target area.¹² From the year pre-implementation to the first twelve months of the project domestic burglary fell by 78 offences. If those target-hardened were all recent victims of burglary then this intervention may have contributed to this fall in burglary (Farrell and Pease, 1993). However, as only ten of the targeted households were prior victims (0.3% of the household total), this dosage was too low to have plausibly contributed to this reduction. There was also too little publicity for the initiative to have had any deterrent value.

An example where an intervention worked best with 100 per cent coverage was with the alley-gating and fencing scheme implemented by the Phase 1 - 19 SDP. The aim was to completely encircle a specified area restricting access to keyholders only. The project successfully installed new lockable gates to all alleyways, with remaining vulnerable areas fenced off, protecting an estimated 583 properties from rear-entry burglary.

Enforcement interventions were those most susceptible to problems with the intensity and duration of implementation. For example, eight of the twenty projects ran HVP programmes. However, the duration of personnel deployment ranged from two weeks to seventeen months. The intensity of the intervention, as measured by the number of personnel involved, ranged from just two officers to twelve (see Table 4.1).

¹¹ Categories based on Tilley and Webb (1994).

¹² Based on 1991 census figures.

Table 4.1: Projects that implemented 'high visibility policing': duration and intensity

SDP	Duration	Intensity	Notes
Phase 1 - 18	40 weeks	2 rangers	Patrols by a private security company
Phase 1 - 2	74 weeks	2 officers	Working as part of a 'burglary team'
Phase 1 - 14	14 weeks	4 officers	
Phase 1 - 13	16 weeks	3-6 officers	
Phase 1 - 20	2 weeks	d/k	Suspended due to lack of resources
Phase 1 - 6	19 weeks	d/k	Spread over 10 months
Phase 1 - 3	8 x 2 days	8 officers, specials and assessors	'High Impact Policing' operations – each focused on a single street
Phase 1 - 14	13 weeks 65 weeks	9-12 officers 2 officers	

While the two weeks of HVP in Phase 1 - 20 were unlikely to have had as much of an impact as the thirteen weeks initially put into place in the Phase 1 - 14 project, it would be an oversimplification to say that the most successful projects were generally associated with concentrated enforcement efforts. Just as important was the HVP *coverage*, or *what they did with them*. For example, in the Phase 1 - 13 SDP a series of 'High Profile Policing' operations were put in place with the objective to disrupt offender behaviour and to conduct a property marking campaign (see Box 4.1). However, for all HVP work, any impact on offending tended to be restricted to the short-term. Analysis of crime records for the Phase 1 - 14 project showed that a period of HVP prior to the project had resulted in a fall in domestic burglary. However, once policing had returned to normal levels, so did the level of offending. Maintaining HVP in the long-term, in the intensity initially used in this project (nine to twelve officers), would not have been sustainable due to cost implications. Instead, the project managers decided to follow this initial *crackdown* with the deployment of just two dedicated officers for the rest of the project period alongside running a package of *consolidation* measures. It is possible that the lower intensity, while being more sustainable, may also have been just as effective in the longer-term.

The key points regarding intervention dosage are:

- the dosage of an intervention needs to be considered so as to maximise effect;
- the coverage, intensity and duration of an intervention has to be appropriate to local conditions taking into account personnel and financial restrictions;
- combinations of short- and long-term interventions can have a more sustainable impact on offending, providing they are complimentary.

Box 4.1: Phase 1 - 13 SDP

The Phase 1 - 13 site comprised two SDPs managed and evaluated as one. The target area occupied approximately 40 per cent of the town. The level of domestic burglary fell across the whole town during the implementation period, although the fall was greater in the target area.

Key to the project was the police work associated with high visibility policing/police disruption and the use of a dedicated 'burglary car' to attend burglary scenes-of-crime. The benefits of these activities were consolidated by a successfully implemented property marking campaign and publicity programme. Extra analytic resources were available utilising specialist 'InvestigAide' software (see Jacobson *et al.*, 2003), although project staff did not believe any reduction in burglary could have been attributed to this. The main advantage of the SDP was that resources were 'ring-fenced'.

The activity of the project plausibly contributed to the decrease in burglary in the target area. The SDP may also have benefited the wider area as the 'burglary car' was used across the whole Chiltern Vale police area. There may also have been a dispersal of benefits to non-dwelling burglary and to theft and handling offences.

5. Other influences

During the course of the evaluation various internal and extraneous factors were found to have acted to the benefit or detriment of implementation. These may have masked the impact of successful projects from the evaluators, or gave the false impression of success. Projects were also found to have been hindered by changing operational and community priorities.

Factors that could mask project impact from the evaluation

Identifying project outcomes was often complicated by the presence of other crime reduction and regeneration activity in the area. On the one hand these could simply mask genuine success or genuine failure; on the other hand, they could actually complement and thus enhance projects' impact. The Phase 1 - 4 SDP exemplifies a project whose ineffectiveness during the life of the evaluation was masked by other activities.¹³ This involved a single intervention designed to improve police intelligence and thus match burglaries to known offenders more effectively. The project aimed to reduce domestic burglary by 30 per cent. Although the area saw a fall of 12 per cent in the project's first year, there were other much larger initiatives and operations in the area that *overwhelmed* any effect the SDP may have had. Close inspection revealed that little of the reduction in burglary could be attributed to the SDP, as feedback suggested the information generated was not acted on. The full list of other projects operating in this SDP area was as follows:

- a police drug arrest referral scheme;
- a force-wide anti-burglary police operation lasting for two months;
- the city-wide 'Valuing Young People' project, funded by the Single Regeneration Budget;
- a European URBAN Community Initiative, including
 - target-hardening work, including lighting and gating
 - a programme of marketing to promote a positive image for the area
 - Support for a 'community development trust' to represent the local community;
- various other projects aimed at community involvement, education and training.

While a well-planned project can generate extra value to a wider programme of work, it could be duplicating, or even conflicting with, existing work. The Phase 1 - 16 SDP, involving a programme of target-hardening, provides a further example. The target area contained estates that were undergoing, or were due to have extensive refurbishment. This refurbishment already included improvements to windows and locks (duplicating SDP effort). Other estates were due for demolition (conflicting with the projects target-hardening programme).

There are two sorts of lesson arising from this. One relates to evidence building: it is very hard indeed to identify what works and what does not when several programmes are operating in parallel. The other relates to programme management: it is probably inefficient to implement a large number of unco-ordinated interventions in one area, whilst leaving other areas completely uncovered. Types of overwhelming factors that we found are:

- other police operations;
- local regeneration programmes;
- other crime reduction projects;
- other community projects.

¹³ While the project's steps to improve burglary intelligence may not have had much impact during the evaluation period, due to the time taken for such systems to prove their worth, there may have been some longer-term benefits.

Factors that could undermine project effectiveness

In Phase 1 - 10 SDP other activity *undermined* the effectiveness of a particular intervention. The project aimed to 'adopt a problem solving approach to law enforcement' centred on the use of dedicated 'Burglary Investigation Officers'. However, five months after the start of this intervention, the sector policing model followed in the West Midlands was enhanced with the introduction of 'micro-beats'. Under this approach each police beat was subdivided into smaller areas allocated to specific officers. This required a shift from offence-based to more area-based policing. As a result, the use of Burglary Investigation Officers ceased.

Intervention implementation can be further undermined by staffing issues.¹⁴ As discussed above, projects can be hampered by weak management. Similarly, the time taken for management and personnel to develop skills may hinder efficiency and consequent effectiveness. Progress can be further delayed by competing pressures on management and personnel time and by poor monitoring and staff accountability. In the Phase 1 - 14 project, for example, competing pressures on personnel led to officers being taken away from a property marking intervention to cover a local murder incident desk, thus slowing implementation.

The Phase 1 - 11 SDP included provision for community consultation. Although this was mainly focused on residential burglary, discussions soon developed into a forum for residents to raise other issues they were concerned about, such as environmental improvements, refuse collection, parking problems or illegal conversion of properties into HMOs. If the project responded to the identified needs of the local community, it would have undermined its original focus.

The experience of the Southern Consortium SDPs showed that projects could be undermined by the following factors:

- other policing priorities/changes in police practise;
- local community priorities;
- management and personnel skill levels;
- lack of staff accountability;
- time pressures on management and personnel.

¹⁴ For a fuller account of process issues see Hamilton-Smith (2004).

6. Conclusions

This report considered what worked in reducing domestic burglary and what explained such success in the sites across southern England and Wales. While there is no set intervention or combination of interventions that is guaranteed to work for future projects, SDPs tended to be more successful if the underlying theory was clearly thought through so that interventions complemented rather than contradicted each other. Interventions were most effective if consideration was given to their theory and if structures were in place to ensure implementation. This may seem like stating the obvious, but interventions did fail when one or both of these were absent. Both theory and implementation need to be relevant to local community, policing and offending characteristics. Key to this is the dosage of interventions, taking into account the availability of funding and personnel. Rather than focusing on just one approach, 'packages' of complementary interventions were found to be most effective. Combinations of short- and long-term interventions were also found to have a more sustainable impact.

This is where it is important to have strong and experienced leadership that can choose and adapt interventions, making them relevant to the local situation. A project can be undermined by a lack of experience or poor leadership. For some projects, such as Phase 1 - 17 and Phase 1 - 14, the existence of established inter-agency links also proved important.

Of the twenty Southern Consortium SDPs, half had a plausible impact on domestic burglary during the evaluation period. Nonetheless, many projects overran and conceivably impacted on local burglary figures after the evaluation was completed. Of the ten projects that had a plausible impact during the evaluation period, five contained interventions that were implemented on a wide enough scale, or in enough strength, to have had a plausible impact across the whole target area. For the remaining five, impact was limited to the specific streets or households targeted by an individual intervention. The types of interventions that were most likely to succeed were based on situational measures and police enforcement. Impact could be enhanced if these were consolidated by other interventions implemented as part of a package of measures, including property marking and community stakeholding.

There is always going to be the possibility that by targeting resources onto a particular crime type, within a specified geographic boundary, there is the risk of displacing crime to other offence types or to other areas. However, while this will have to be considered when implementing future projects, it is worth noting that four of the five most successful projects showed signs of a geographic dispersal of benefits (and one showed signs of a benefit to theft and handling offences). When projects were more successfully implemented, the wider gains appear to have outweighed any displacement.

Projects need to be seen in the context of other police operations and regeneration activity in the area. As well as overwhelming evaluation, such activity can undermine the effect a reducing burglary project may have. Nonetheless, projects can possibly bolster the impact of existing initiatives if they are clearly designed to complement one another. Projects should at least avoid duplicating activity that is already planned under other funding programmes.

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Produced by the Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office

This document is available only in Adobe Portable Document Format (**PDF**) through the RDS website

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ISBN 1 84473 329 7

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Errata

The text 'Phase 1-14' has been amended to 'Phase 1-10' in table 1.1 (page 2), table 2.1 (page 5), and on page 18.