

# RV SNAPSHOT: UK POLICING AND REPEAT VICTIMISATION

## Briefing Note

Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 5  
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### Background

The Home Office first supported a programme of research and development on the prevention of repeat victimisation (rv) in the early 1980's. Much of this work was published throughout the late 1980's and 1990's.

A number of important messages emerged for both the prevention of crime and the treatment of victims. This led to pressure on the police service, and other agencies, to pay greater attention to rv.

The Home Office established a small task force with specific responsibility for raising the profile of rv. Among the range of mechanisms developed for doing this was in supporting rv's adoption as one of the Home Secretary's police performance indicators (PI) for the prevention of crime. The PI was developed over a number of years from 1995 - 1998 and took an incremental approach. Its aim was to encourage the police service to address rv in a planned, evidence based and realistic way.

### The report

The report does two things:

- Gives a 'snapshot' of rv activity as at May 1999, making use of a data set originally established as part of the work of the task force, and;
- Assesses the extent to which the performance regime contributed to the development of police activity on rv.

### What did the survey show?

All forces were covered in the survey with 100% response rate. All 43 forces reported having a rv strategy of some sort or for some types of crime. Key issues were:

### Crime type

The most common crime or crime type tackled was (residential) burglary, followed by criminal damage, personal crimes and motor vehicle crime. Eight forces had a rv policy for *all* crime types.

### Definitions of RV

The task force encouraged forces to develop local definitions of rv (within a broad national framework). Forces varied in how far they used crimes of a different type or previous unreported incidents. 'Repeats' were largely defined as such if they had occurred within twelve months. Most forces incorporated two or more components into their definition of rv.

### Identifying repeats

By May 1999, most forces had made significant progress in acquiring appropriate systems for identifying repeats. The most common types of systems were:

- Computerised crime recording systems.
- Manual means of identifying repeats.
- Relying on questioning the victim.

Less frequently used systems, included:

- Crime pattern analysis systems.
- Incident logging.
- GIS systems.
- Information from other agencies.

Most forces used more than one means of identifying repeat victims.

## **Tackling repeat victimisation**

Most forces reported having developed some form of graded response, akin to the Huddersfield model, where crime prevention resources are allocated according to risk. Other activities being undertaken to tackle rv ranged from target hardening to social interventions. There were two particularly important findings:

- By 1999, 17 forces (40%) had adopted a response that involved some form of detection activity. This is particularly appropriate since around 80% of repeat burglary victims are likely to have been re-victimised by the same offender (Pease, 1998).<sup>1</sup>
- 14 forces had integrated rv prevention into a more general problem solving approach, acknowledging its broader context.

## **Conclusions**

### *Did the PI make a difference?*

The impact of the performance regime was considerable. By May 1999, *all* police forces in England and Wales claimed to have strategies in place to address rv. It is doubtful whether such progress would have been made through the diffuse process of research dissemination.

### *Will the tactics chosen by forces' work?*

The survey showed that forces' strategies incorporated a wide range of tactics, many of which were already in place prior to the development of the rv strategy. However, there was no indication that they had been adapted to address it. More importantly, was the implication that other, more evidence based responses, had not been considered.

### *More recently*

Since May 1999, two Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's)<sup>2</sup> in relation to repeat domestic burglary and repeat domestic violence have been introduced. Police forces' performance in reducing rv will now be the subject of review by Police Authorities.

## **Points for Action**

The survey highlights the impressive progress made by police forces in developing their approaches to reduce

rv. However, it also suggests that further work is needed to support forces in developing their approach. Areas for attention include the following:

- A need for more demonstration projects, which address violent crime. Domestic burglary has received a plethora of research and development projects over recent years; the same attention now needs to be directed towards the more intractable crimes of violence – domestic, racial and homophobic.
- More formal instruments designed to monitor and evaluate the impact of national changes in police policies.
- More information and formal police training on the mechanisms of crime prevention – i.e. the various activities or tactics in place to deliver the crime reduction required.
- A greater understanding of the cost effectiveness of some of the tactics introduced.
- A need for the Home Office to give further attention to an outcome measure as part of the performance regime.

## **Other related PRC research papers**

CPU Paper 46: *Once Bitten, Twice Bitten: Repeat Victimisation and its Implications for Crime Prevention.*

CDPS Paper 58: *Biting Back: Tackling Repeat Burglary and Car Crime.*

CDPS Paper 82: *Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimisation in Huddersfield.*

CDPS Paper 90: *Repeat Victimisation: Taking Stock.*

## **About the Crime Reduction Series**

The Crime Reduction Series presents research findings and guidance material relevant to practitioners involved in crime reduction at the local level and particularly the crime and disorder partnerships. The series will include work funded under the Government's Crime Reduction Programme as well as other relevant RDS work.

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<sup>1</sup>Pease, K (1998) *Repeat Victimisation: Taking Stock*. Police Research Group, Paper 90. London: Home Office.

<sup>2</sup>Local Government Act (1999).

*"The views expressed in this briefing note are those of the author, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy)."*