

GOLDSTEIN AWARD
SUBMISSION 2004



Tackling vehicle crime in the City
of Portsmouth, England, using a
Problem Solving approach.

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1 June 2004

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee
School of Criminal Justice
Rutgers University-Newark
123 Washington Street
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Dear Sir

**Goldstein Award 2004 – Operation Cobra: Tackling Vehicle Crime in the City of
Portsmouth**

Please find attached an entry for the Goldstein Award 2004, entitled Operation Cobra.

This entry is submitted for consideration with my approval. I consider the results of the project to be both accurate and attributable to the project.

Yours sincerely

Simon Cole
Assistant Chief Constable, Territorial Operations

The News, Portsmouth
The News Centre
Hilsea
Portsmouth
PO2 9SX

25 March, 2004

Chief Inspector Julie Earle,
Fratton Police Station,
Kingston Crescent,
PORTSMOUTH,
PO2 8BU

Dear Julie,

OPERATION COBRA – PARTNERSHIP ENDORSEMENT LETTER

I am editor of The News, Portsmouth, a daily newspaper which sells approximately 66,000 copies six nights a week and is the largest selling newspaper on the south coast.

Our circulation area covers Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, Havant, Waterlooville and parts of West Sussex.

Crime is an issue which is tremendously important to our readers. Their concerns on the subject are reflected almost daily in the stories and letters that fill our newspapers. With this in mind I was keen to find out more when Hampshire Police first approached us concerning a major initiative on car crime. Such crime is rarely headline news but it is the type that not only has a financial affect but also a "quality of life" impact on the individual victims and the communities where it is prevalent.

Fairly quickly I saw the potential for a strong partnership between the police and ourselves and a way in which we could empower our readers to make a difference.

I was also impressed with the way the police quickly took on board the need to adopt a high profile with this campaign. Access to officers and information (even that which did not always reflect well on the force) was never denied. In addition the "naming and shaming" element of the operation had real power. Stories without names and faces have very little lasting effect on the public conscience so the co-operation we received in ensuring persistent car thieves appeared in our columns helped send a very clear message to the criminals.

Also the stories of victims and the clear and simple information about the crime and how to combat it had, in my opinion, the gradual effect of forcing our readers to sit up and take notice and then do something to fight back.

The strength of the database information the police built up on the pattern of car crime was tremendously impressive and gave our readers a very clear picture of the scale of the problem and where it was taking place. Sometimes police forces can be loathe to part with such detail but here was a great example of how such information can have a positive impact on a crime fighting initiative, which, by the nature of the beast, must involve the public if it is to have any chance of succeeding.

In my view Operation Cobra is a textbook example of co-operation between media and police for the good of the community they both serve.

Yours sincerely

Mike Gilson

Chief Executive's Office

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Our Ref: JAW/vc/LL520

25 March, 2004

Chief Inspector Julie Earle,
Fratton Police Station,
Kingston Crescent,
PORTSMOUTH,
PO2 8BU

Dear Julie,

OPERATION COBRA – PARTNERSHIP ENDORSEMENT LETTER

As Head of the Chief Executive's Office, I am responsible for Portsmouth City Council's Crime and Disorder Unit including the strategy team responsible for developing the city Crime and Disorder Strategy and reporting to the Crime and Disorder Strategic Partnership.

The Crime and Disorder Strategy for Portsmouth (2002/2005) has 5 core principles including tackling vehicle crime. Our target is to reduce the Vehicle Crime rate by 17% from the 2001/02 baseline. Each priority is supported by a multi-agency "priority group" responsible for developing annual action / delivery plans that will achieve our targets.

Despite being a priority and focus for the Crime and Disorder Strategic Partnership, in the first year of the 2002 – 2005 strategy, vehicle crime continued to rise (increasing 16% in the first year) and we were not on line to meet our target reduction. The existing action plan needed to be reviewed and revised. Operation Cobra was launched in 2003 in response to this.

Operation Cobra is a police led multi-agency initiative that has driven forward the strategic response to vehicle crime. Since Operation Cobra was launched, there has been a substantial decrease in vehicle crime (and this has already reached beyond the target reduction for the strategy).

Operation Cobra is a strategically planned programme, based on crime pattern analysis and evidence based practice. The action / delivery plan combines "quick wins" with long term sustainable actions.

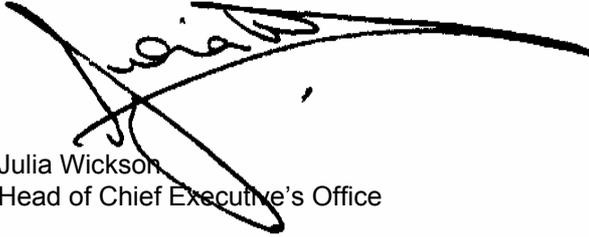
Portsmouth City Council has worked in partnership with the police to deliver parts of the plan including:

- City Engineers and Parking Services redesigning car park areas (for example cutting back shrubs and trees) and jointly developing an additional secured by design car park
- Enforcement officers across the authority increasing vigilance and reporting incidents
- Neighbourhood Wardens in the north of the city, working with the local community highlighting key campaigns and property marking
- Supporting specific PRIME initiatives in "hot spot" locations
- Working with the police press unit to support a proactive media campaign

Operation Cobra has been extremely effective and is directly responsible for the turnaround in vehicle crime. The combination of enforcement and prevention work has led to some dramatic “quick wins” but is underpinned by prevention work that will lead to sustainable results. It demonstrates the importance of effective partnership working based on informed analysis and evidenced based practice.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Wickson', written over a large, stylized, sweeping flourish that extends to the right.

Julia Wickson
Head of Chief Executive's Office

SUMMARY

OPERATION COBRA – TACKLING VEHICLE CRIME IN THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated cities in Europe with 187,000 residents, and over 5 million visitors a year.

During 2002/03 vehicle crime across Portsmouth increased by 16%, at a time when there was a downward trend nationally.

A Crime Reduction Officer and Analyst conducted a review of vehicle crime April – December 2002, to define the problem fully and establish the underlying causes to inform a tailored response.

A number of issues were identified, including:

- Cars registered between 1989 – 1998 were most at risk. They lacked adequate security, often because victims were unable to fund security products, or were unaware of the problem in their area.
- Valuable items were left on view, particularly in areas where victims had stopped for short periods and were otherwise distracted i.e. hospitals, entertainment areas.
- 'car stereo systems' lacked security marking.
- young offenders took older faster vehicles short distances.
- vehicle crime was concentrated in many repeat locations that had not been previously identified.

In response to the analysis, the Operation COBRA Vehicle Crime Strategy was developed with Crime and Disorder partners, to achieve long term problem resolution.

Key areas included:

- Maximising forensic potential and intelligence gathering.
- Focussing intelligence led action through Tasking and Co-ordinating Group to direct offender work and initiate localised Problem Resolution in Multi-agency Environment (PRIME) projects.
- Developing an extensive three tier Crime Reduction Strategy, placing a hitherto unprecedented emphasis on sustainable victim and location work (triggered by a data base monitoring vehicle crime levels in individual streets).
- Initiating a high profile Media Campaign.

In the first nine months of Operation COBRA there has been a significant reduction in the targeted vehicle crimes, compared with the same period in the preceding year:

- 25% reduction in the 'taking of' G – R registered vehicles.
- 33% reduction in thefts from vehicles.
- 37% reduction in vehicle crime in those streets that had experienced 19 or more vehicle crimes April – December 02.
- 58% reduction in vehicle crime in those streets that experienced between 5 and 18 vehicle crimes April – December 02.

Overall vehicle crime in Portsmouth has fallen by 31% from 3235 to 2235 vehicle crimes.

The principles of Operation COBRA are now being replicated within the BCU to tackle other crime issues and incorporated into the Force's Vehicle Crime Strategy.

OPERATION COBRA –

TACKLING VEHICLE CRIME IN THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated cities in Europe. The population of 187,000 live in 80,000 households, 11,000 of which are owned by Portsmouth City Council. Two areas of the city are receiving additional government funding from the Single Regeneration Budget.

Portsmouth is home to the Royal Navy, it has numerous entertainment and tourist venues, a Premiership Football Club, an award winning shopping complex and a University. Approximately 5 million visitors are attracted to the area each year. On a typical weekend approximately 26,000 local people and visitors are drawn to the cities entertainment areas. Throughout the city there is relatively little off street car parking and vehicle crime is endemic.

Portsmouth vehicle crime overview

Year	Vehicle crime total	Taking of vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Rate per 1000 population
1999 / 2000	4012	1320	2692	21.42
2000 / 2001	3520	1174	2346	18.79
2001 / 2002	3631	1173	2458	19.41

In response to consultation with residents, and in pursuit of the National Vehicle Crime Reduction Target, the Crime and Disorder (CAD) Strategy for the city of Portsmouth (2002 – 2005) has reducing vehicle crime as one of its five priorities. Annual targets have been set to achieve a reduction in vehicle crime of 17% over three years.

Portsmouth Crime and Disorder Strategy vehicle crime reduction targets

Year	Reduction target
2002 / 2003	6%
2003 / 2004	6%
2004 / 2005	5%

The CAD Strategy identified the following as work that was already being undertaken to address the vehicle crime problem:

- Targeting known offenders.
- Supporting designing out crime principles through the planning process.
- Introduction of Neighbourhood Wardens in the Paulsgrove and Wymering areas of the city.
- Multi-agency co-operation through the “Communities Against Drugs” initiative.
- Arrest Referral System to break the cycle of offending and drug related crime.
- Use of CCTV system and development of Secured Car Parks.
- Extension of traffic wardens scheme and Abandoned Vehicle Unit.
- Crime Concern and Auto Glass prevention scheme.
- Youth crime prevention work.
- Fire Service education initiatives.

The additional activities that were identified as needing to be undertaken to meet the CAD Strategy targets were:

- Identify what works elsewhere
- Conduct analysis to identify areas requiring additional CCTV coverage
- Identify areas in the heart of Portsmouth in need of situational improvements
- Increase use of court orders to deter offenders
- Increase number of Secured Car Parks

After the first 9 months of the Strategy it was clear that vehicle crime was rising and the 6 % reduction target would not be met, in fact a 18.8% increase was projected for year end 02/03.

Portsmouth vehicle crime figures April – December 2002

Period (9 months)	Vehicle crime total	Taking of vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Extrapolated Rate per 1000 population (12 month period)
Apr – Dec 2002	3235	900	2335	23.02

A significant re-evaluation of the vehicle crime problem was required. A Crime Reduction Officer overseen by Crime Analysts therefore conducted a review of the April – December 2002 vehicle crime. Statistical data and other related information was gathered from a variety of sources to define the problem fully, and to establish the underlying causes to inform a more focused response. Sources of data included Hampshire Constabulary Performance data, Portsmouth Strategic Assessment reports 2001/ 2002, Crime and Disorder Audit, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Federal database, and data from Crime Stoppers, drugs intelligence and Portsmouth City Council (Engineering and Design, Leisure and Tourism, Trading Standards, CCTV Office, Housing Service, Marketing and Tourism). Informal scanning was conducted with Residents Association Consortium, Neighbourhood Watch, Age Concern, City Hoteliers, and Motor Trade representatives amongst others.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Vehicle crime information from April – December 02 was scanned, to define the problem as it relates to Victims/Targets, Locations and Offenders.

VICTIMS / TARGETS breakdown of the 2335 thefts from vehicle:

Number of crimes	Property stolen
742	Car stereo systems
761	Handbags, briefcases, luggage, purses
682	Car parts - wheel trims, wheels, other
336	Mobile phones
180	Valuables – cash and jewellery
170	Power tools, tools
128	Electrical items – lap tops, televisions

Golf clubs, shopping baskets, sunglasses and documents were also stolen.
938 of the victims were parked near their home addresses.

The primary methods of theft were:

Methods
Smashed window
Door bent
Lock breached (jiggler)
Insecure

VICTIMS / TARGETS Breakdown of the 900 vehicles taken without consent:

- 865 vehicles were registered between 1986 – 2000
- 453 of those were in 1989 – 1997 (G – R range) i.e. 50% of problem
(See Appendix 1)
- 35 vehicles in recent age groups (virtually all of these being mopeds)
- Three types of car represented 25% of overall problem (226 vehicle crimes)

Total No	Vehicle
98	Ford Escort
60	Ford Fiesta
68	Vauxhall Astra

- 514 of the victims of stolen vehicles were in 20 – 39 age range (295 men / 119 women)
- Most vehicles were stolen from near the victim's address
- There was a pattern of stolen vehicle movement between the two SRB areas
- Stolen vehicles had not been immobilised

LOCATIONS breakdown of all 3235 vehicle crimes (**See Appendix 2**):

- 22% of crimes occurred in 712 streets (one crime per street)
- 29% of crimes occurred in 346 streets (two to four crimes per street)
- 39% of crimes occurred in 155 streets (five to eighteen crimes per street)
- 10% of crimes occurred in 12 streets (nineteen to thirty eight crimes per street)

As can be seen 49 % of vehicle crime was occurring in just 175 of Portsmouth's 1,600 streets, and vehicle crime within many of these streets could be focused down to hot dots.

1575 criminal damage and 384 vehicle interference offences were also scanned.

Seasonal risks:

- Portsmouth and Southsea Show (August)
- Tourist season (June – September)
- University Graduation (July)
- Great South Fun Run (variable)
- Firework display (November)
- Christmas (December)

High-risk locations – short stops:

- Hospitals
- Doctors surgery
- Cinemas
- Sports clubs
- Shops
- Theatre
- Cafes
- Tourist attractions

OFFENDERS breakdown:

- 236 offenders arrested.
- 436 vehicle crimes detected.
- Offenders predominantly aged between 17 – 23 years.
- "Taking of " offences were committed by 15 – 20 year olds, mostly 18year olds.
- Repeat offenders travelled across Portsmouth, others committed crime local to their home.
- 44 of the offenders (18%) had a provable drug relationship. Empirical evidence suggests vehicle crime is drug related.
- Legitimate outlets used to dispose of stolen goods.

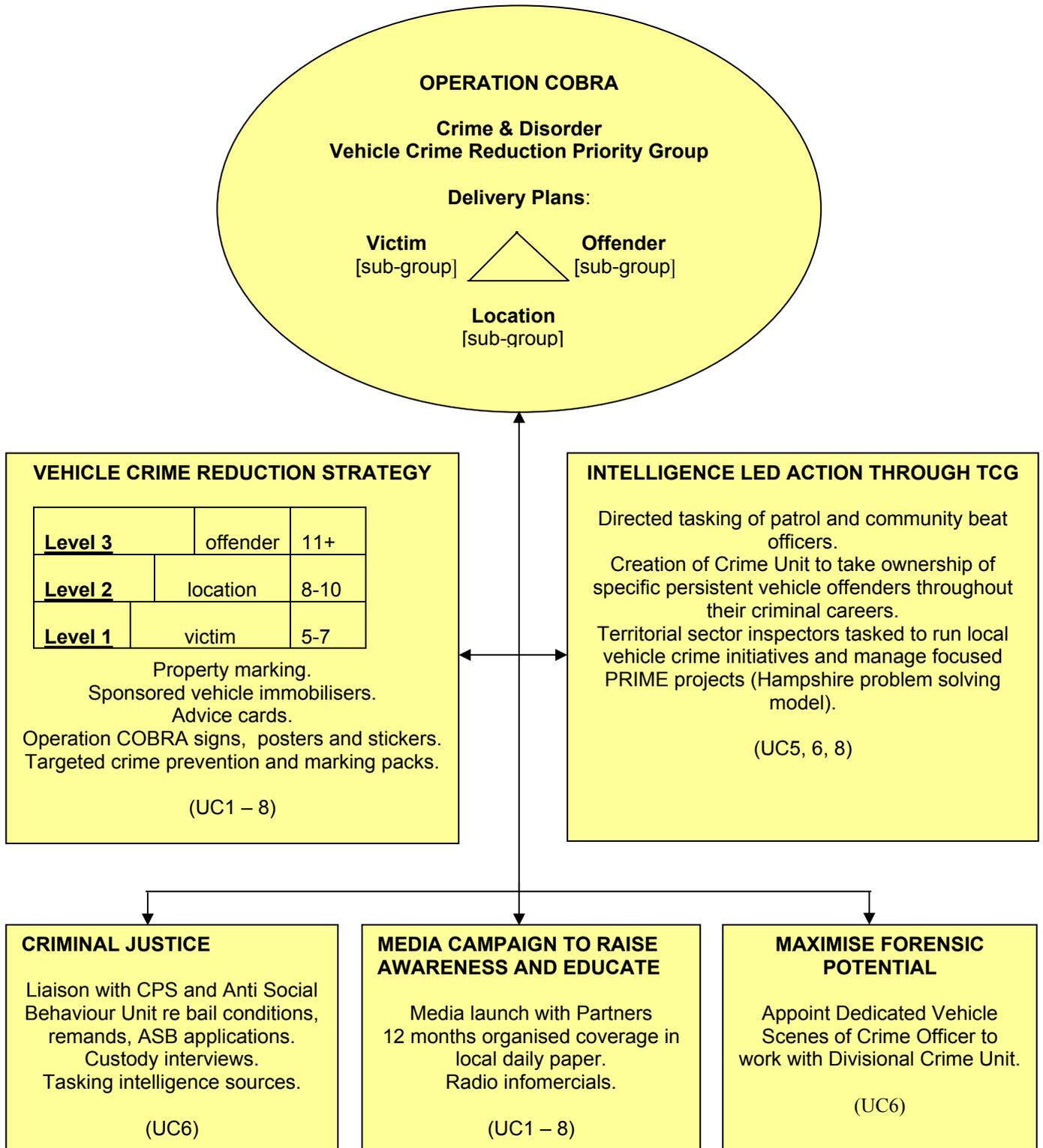
ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION

	TARGETS	Underlying Cause (UC)
UC1	<p>Taking of vehicles</p> <p>Cars manufactured in the G – R period not manufactured with emphasis on security. The cars most at risk were small, fast and easy to steal. In vehicles manufactured since 2000 the use of electric immobilisers has reduced unauthorised taking. Theft of these cars has been limited mainly to where the theft of the keys has occurred. People who cannot afford additional money for security own many of the stolen cars.</p>	<p>An absence of physical security, and in some areas the victims inability to fund security products.</p>
UC2	<p>Theft from vehicles</p> <p>The radios/ CD systems in older cars are more at risk as they are easily removed. Modern systems are integral features of the vehicle and incorporate security systems rendering them worthless once removed from the vehicle. No evidence of property marking.</p>	<p>Radios / CD systems not property marked either at the time of purchase, installation or subsequently are suitable targets.</p>
UC3	<p>Items left on public view in cars provide opportunity for thieves. Mobile phones are a major loss and these small items are often overlooked especially when stopping for short times.</p>	<p>Property is left on seats in cars, especially when victims leave the car in a hurry or are distracted.</p>
	VICTIMS	
UC4	<p>Victims are both residents and visitors to the city. The largest victim group are in the age ranges 20 – 30. This indicates a group of men and women who are in a hurry, both at work, home and at play. The absence of care and a hurried lifestyle are the main features evident. In some areas where risks are high, they are unaware of them.</p>	<p>The absence of care by victims with a busy lifestyle and lack of awareness of high risk, leaves victims vulnerable.</p>
	LOCATIONS	
UC5	<p>Some street locations experienced highly disproportionate levels of vehicle crime. This indicates that crime is concentrated and manageable and dispels the theory it is “all over the area”. Previously, hot spots were identified using only 3 months data.</p> <p>Within identified street (hot spots) it was possible to identify smaller hot dots where risk was concentrated even further. Identifying hot spots using longer-term data provides greater focus. Many of the locations experienced only one type of vehicle crime.</p> <p>Overgrown bushes and trees, poor lighting and access routes were a contributing factor in sample areas.</p> <p>Crime was found to be higher in the streets surrounding Secured Car Parks. There was no advertising for the Car Parks.</p>	<p>Lack of long-term analysis of hot spots.</p> <p>Victims are unaware of the risk at certain locations.</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of crime issues by those responsible for maintenance at locations.</p> <p>Poorly advertised Secured Car Parks</p>

OFFENDERS		
UC6	<p>Vehicles are taken for short journeys and abandoned, in particular in the SRB areas. Vehicles are burnt out in residential areas where there are children. A small group of prolific offenders are responsible for a large proportion of thefts from vehicles. 18 year olds are more involved with taking cars. Peer pressure, local crime culture and a small number of prolific offenders with a provable drug history are at the core of the problem.</p> <p>There has been no team responsible for targeting vehicle offenders or detecting offenders through forensic means.</p>	<p>Local culture, peer pressure, drug related.</p> <p>Vehicles taken for 'excitement' rather than gain.</p> <p>There has been a lack of targeted police response. and limited staffing made available to obtain forensic evidence.</p>
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT		
UC7	<p>There has been public apathy. Neighbourhood Watch does not operate effectively. In the highest crime areas there is an atmosphere of fear and concern. The public fear of vehicle crime is high but the expectation of the police is low. There is a market for stolen goods in the area and a general view that goods are easily disposed of to the community generally.</p>	<p>Public apathy contributes to a lack of surveillance / guardianship and assists disposal of stolen goods</p>
ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES		
UC8	<p>A perception that vehicle crime was not a priority, that it occurred all over the city, and as it was opportunistic was totally unmanageable. Crime Reduction Officers had concentrated on general responsibilities. Crime reduction was mainly focused on detection effort and was based on weekly identification of hot spots (based on three months data).</p> <p>Vehicle crime had not been given priority in local news reports.</p>	<p>Apathy by the police and public, lack of focus on the real problem, poor media reporting, unfocused crime reduction activities.</p>

RESPONSE

In response to the analysis the Operation COBRA Vehicle Crime Strategy was developed to focus activity in the key areas, in order to achieve long term problem reduction. COBRA shifted the emphasis of work away from predominantly offender based activity, to address all aspects of the problem triangle resulting in much greater emphasis on targeted victim and location work.



A number of specific objectives were set to assess the performance of Operation COBRA:



Prior to the launch in April 2003 a three month preparation phase was undertaken in which the following activities were undertaken;

- Corporate Operation name adopted and publicised.
- Chief Inspector appointed Vehicle Crime 'champion'.
- Crime Reduction Officer appointed Co-ordinator.
- Local daily newspaper Editor agreed full support for Operation over the entire 12 months that COBRA was intended to run.
- Victim Help line set up to the Co-ordinator.
- Portsmouth City Council and Police Magazine articles published.
- Road shows involving police and residents organised.
- Residents Group briefings undertaken.
- Radio / TV broadcasts.
- Poster campaign in police stations, residents groups, and Local Authority foyers.
- Promotional briefings to all operational staff by Chief Inspector and / or Co-ordinator.
- Sample Operation COBRA crime reduction packs distributed with an explanatory letter to all police and support staff. Same to 220 Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators.
- Ultra violet "key fob" readers supplied to all officers in support of property marking initiatives.

£30,000 funding was agreed to purchase goods and services in support of the strategy:

- COBRA packs – UV marker pen and labels, key ring, mobile phone and vehicle marking cards, warning notices – in car, window stickers.
- Customised street warning signs A4.
- Parking meter signs – picture style.
- Autolock "seconds" – immobilisers for distribution/sale to target groups.
- UV key fob readers.
- Infomercials on the local radio stations.

Operation COBRA was officially launched in April 03 by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth. The key elements of Operation COBRA were:

- Maximising forensic potential and intelligence gathering.
- Focussing intelligence led action through the Tasking and Co-ordinating Group to direct offender based work, and initiate localised Problem Resolution in Multi-agency Environment (PRIME) Projects.
- An extensive three tier Vehicle Crime Reduction Strategy placing a hitherto unprecedented degree of emphasis on sustainable victim and location work.
- Initiating a high profile Media Campaign.

The Vehicle Crime Reduction Strategy element of Operation COBRA warrants more detailed explanation:

A user friendly database of twelve months worth of vehicle crime information was built. The database was capable of identifying the key locations, enabling a mini problem solving analysis to be conducted to inform problem solving work at the individual street/car park level.

The incidents of vehicle crime in any given location were monitored and a tiered response planned:-

Level 1 – (5-7 vehicle crimes occurring in rolling 12 month period) Victim Response	Level 2 – (8-10 vehicle crimes occurring in rolling 12 month period) Location Response	Level 3 – (11+vehicle crimes occurring in rolling 12 month period) Offender/PRIME Response
Identify target area and empower local residents to tackle problem. Beat Officer to provide Operation Cobra crime reduction packs, and support specific action to tackle issue.	Continued Level 1 victim care/empowerment. Crime Reduction survey of location. Appropriate partnership inspection where crime generators identified for action.	Continued Level 1 and 2 action. Referral to TCG via crime analyst. Sector Inspector tasked to take ownership for comprehensive problem solving (PRIME) initiative.
Display customised warning messages on laminated posters in premises within high risk area. (Shop windows, doctors surgeries, as appropriate).	Environmental/situational changes agreed, implemented and monitored	
Distribute/sell physical immobilisers to target group.		
Display Partnership metal street signs warning ‘thieves take chances you give them – secure your vehicle and remove your valuables. Make Portsmouth safer’.		

Complementary Partnership activities to promote vehicle crime reduction:

Activity	Partners
Property marking at point of sale (UC2)	Halfords, Sextons Security, Les Smith Accessories, Road Radio.
Security products discounted (UC1)	Trading Standards vetted businesses - Sextons, Autolock.
Focused Property Marking Road Shows (UC1, 7, 8)	Residents Association Consortium, ASDA, Sainsbury, Gunwharf Secured Car Park, Portsmouth City Council.
Picture warning signs (jointly designed to respond to the needs of foreign visitors) erected on 247 Council parking meters (UC3 –5)	Police, Portsmouth City Council Parking Office, Department of Leisure and Tourism.
Talking parking meters developed by Portsmouth City Council and installed in 295 machines. (UC4, 7)	Police, Portsmouth City Council Parking Office.
COBRA crime reduction message (jointly designed) on all Resident's Parking Permits (UC1 – 4)	As above.
Rigorous name and shame policy on offenders (UC 6–8)	News Editor, Police.
Series of infomercials on local radio throughout year to coincide with identified seasonal risks.(UC1 – 4)	Radio Station, Police.
COBRA pedal cycles with liveried regular and Special Constabulary officers, providing crime reduction advice/materials at key events Mirroring successful project in Belgium. (UC1 –5)	Police, Special Constabulary, Event Organisers.
Second hand shops scanning all incoming property for ultra violet markings and mark all outgoing property (UC7)	Cash Converters.

The strategy in action

During the period April to December 2003, 250 streets were identified where 5 or more vehicle related crimes had occurred. These became the subject of focused problem solving activity at the appropriate level.

Specific examples:

The **Southsea Show** encourages visitors from all over the UK, many with vehicles. In previous years vehicle crime has risen around the location of the show. Local radio infomercials were broadcast to heighten awareness. A group of volunteers (Specials and regular officers) formed COBRA cycle patrols. These were liveried and carried Operation COBRA packs and worked in conjunction with event security to welcome visitors and give crime reduction advice. This idea originated in Belgium and was identified by Home Office Crime Reduction College as good practice. This initiative was well received by the public, organisers and the Tourism Manager. Vehicle crime halved compared to the preceding year.

Kensington Road, was identified as a Level 2 area. A mixture of damage to, and thefts from vehicles, was identified and once analysed was located to a very small area in a long road. Analysis showed that the underlying cause of the problem at this location was one of under age drinking by juveniles. The Community Beat Officer Worked with Trading Standards, residents, Licensees and the Anti Social Behaviour Team to cut off the supply of alcohol and achieve a significant reduction in vehicle crime.

Portsmouth City Council **Victory Car Park** had been subject to 26 crimes in a nine month period. Residents parked all day whilst they used a Hovercraft service to the Isle of Wight. Despite two CCTV cameras at the site crime continued. Warning notices were erected and COBRA packs issued at the Hover Station. Overgrown bushes were providing cover for thieves throughout the car park. The Council Parking Manager arranged for co-ordination of the total removal of bushes and replacement with decorative railings at cost of £12000. Vehicle crime has reduced by 75 %.

ASSESSMENT OF PROCESS

The outputs that were expected to achieve the objectives were constantly monitored, the outputs included:

- 70 newspaper articles published some on three pages of The News (**see Appendix 3**).
- 20 focused Property Marking Road Shows undertaken jointly with Residents association Members.
- 5500 crime reduction COBRA packs targeted to residents/ occupiers in hot spots.
- 1000 packs provided to the public generally.
- 650 mobile phones property marked by Neighbourhood Wardens.
- 10 immobilisers issued to target group.
- 247 picture signs put on parking meters.
- 350 street warning signs erected by Portsmouth City Council staff.
- 280 forty second infomercials broadcast on local radio at high risk times.
- 1 new Secured Car Park achieved in a hot spot area.
- 175 calls made to Crimestoppers (for Portsmouth), an increase of 52%.
- 297 offences 'cleared up' by 198 offenders. 34 specifically targeted for arrest by pro active team. 16 of the offenders definitely 'drug related'.

The process by which the outputs were achieved was also assessed, and modifications made as the project progressed. Examples being the need to reduce the additional workload that Community Beat Officers had undertaken in respect of Level 1 activity, this workload was then jointly completed by the COBRA co-ordinator and the Community Beat Officers in partnership.

OVERALL CRIME REDUCTION SUCCESS in the first nine months of Operation COBRA as compared with the same period in the preceding year

- **Objective 1 (to increase public awareness of commitment to car crime reduction and their part to play)**
A MORI survey in January 2004 shows 38% of those surveyed in Portsmouth had heard of the Operation, and 68% of this had heard about it from coverage in the local daily paper.
- **Objective 2 (target - 15% reduction in taking of vehicles of G - R registration)**
25% reduction achieved. (418 crimes reduced to 314) (see Appendix 1)
- **Objective 3 (target - 15% reduction in thefts from vehicles)**
33% reduction achieved. (2335 crimes reduced to 1550) (See Appendix 4)
- **Objective 4 (target - 15% vehicle crime reduction in those areas with 19 or more crimes during April – December 2002)**
37% reduction achieved. (325 crimes reduced to 202) (see Appendix 2)
- **Objective 5 (target - 15% reduction in vehicle crime at locations where there are 5 or more crimes)**
58% reduction achieved. (1598 crimes reduced to 937) (see Appendix 2)

At the end of the first year of the Portsmouth Crime and Disorder Strategy 02/05 the 6% vehicle crime reduction target had not been met, in fact a 16% rise had occurred. In the second year of the Strategy following extensive scanning and analysis Operation COBRA was launched, and after just nine months a 31% reduction in vehicle crime had been achieved compared to the previous year (see Appendix 4). This reduction was sufficient to more than recover the performance of the previous year and put Portsmouth Crime and Disorder Partnership squarely back on track to achieve the three year Strategy targets.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- Performance champion to drive operation forward and be accountable.
- Dedicated Crime reduction Officer to co-ordinate.
- Adopting a problem solving approach.
- Commitment of partners.
- Establishing a user friendly and comprehensive database of vehicle crime information capable of informing problem solving work.
- Focusing activity where the greatest reduction opportunities exist.
- Developing crime reduction potential of victim and location focus.
- The development of a communications strategy which included local media at the planning stage, and achieved the Editor's commitment to support the operation throughout the 12 months [see Appendix 3].

- Developing a brand identity (all signs, newspaper articles, posters , etc. relating to operation COBRA had a common, distinctive and impactful logo which became synonymous with vehicle crime reduction to both potential victims and offenders) [see Appendix 5].

IN CONCLUSION

Whilst COBRA itself was always intended to be a year long Operation, the principles of Operation COBRA are now firmly embedded into the long term strategy to tackle vehicle crime in Portsmouth, and in fact the principles used are now being replicated within Portsmouth to tackle Burglary Dwelling offences. The Portsmouth Crime and Disorder Partnership have allocated funds from the Safer Communities Budget, to continue the vehicle crime reduction work in 04/05. Portsmouth Council for Community Service has volunteered to manage a project of volunteer COBRA bike riders for Summer 2004. The Operation has also been incorporated into the Hampshire Police 'Safer Vehicles Strategy' that was launched across Hampshire Constabulary in Spring 2004.

The cost to society of each vehicle crime is estimated by the British Home Office to be £1,000. In the first nine months of Operation COBRA, in comparison with the same nine month period in the previous year, the number of vehicle crimes in Portsmouth fell from 3235 to 2235, representing a cost saving of £1,000,000. The true worth of this problem solving approach, however, is in its value to the people of Portsmouth, where one thousand less people have experienced the misery and inconvenience of being victims of vehicle crime.

[It is worthy of note that the crime reduction success of Operation COBRA has continued beyond the nine month period examined in this report. At the end of the 2003/04 year, the vehicle crime total for Portsmouth was 3,008 compared with last year's year end total of 4,228, representing a 29% reduction overall. Portsmouth BCU is one of ten BCUs within Hampshire Constabulary, the vehicle crime reduction total for the 2003/04 was 1,400 offences, Portsmouth BCU's contribution to that reduction was 1,220 of those offences.]

The success of Operation COBRA is entirely attributable to the use of the Problem Resolution in Multi-agency Environment model and has produced long term sustainable reduction. The success of COBRA has been invaluable in demonstrating the effectiveness of the problem solving approach to police officers and agency partners.

REPORT CO-AUTHORS:

Julie EARLE
Chief Inspector Territorial Operations
Portsmouth BCU

Alan EDMUNDS
Crime Reduction Officer
Portsmouth BCU

AGENCY & OFFICER INFORMATION

1. Operation COBRA was adopted across the Portsmouth Basic Command Unit and involved officers from all departments and levels. The methodology is now being transferred to tackle other crimes within Portsmouth, and Operation COBRA has been incorporated as good practice into the Hampshire Police 'Safer Vehicles' Strategy which has recently been launched across the whole Force area.
2. Problem Resolution in Multi-agency Environments [PRIME] the Hampshire Constabulary name for Problem Oriented Policing is established as a policing style within the Constabulary. PRIME seminars have been held at a Force level. More detailed PRIME training has been provided to Community Beat Officers. Each Basic Command Unit has a trained PRIME Co-ordinator Sergeant post, part of the functions of this post are to provide local training to police officers of all ranks and to partners in other agencies, authorities and amongst the voluntary sector workers.
3. Problem Solving is an integral part of the Hampshire Constabulary Policing Style. There are no additional incentives for engaging in problem solving, it is part of the culture and there is an expectation that officers will routinely use a problem solving approach in order to deliver long-term sustainable solutions.
4. PRIME training support booklets are available to all officers. Each officer in the Force is issued with a cover for their patrol notebook which explain the SARA problem solving model, and the use of the PAT triangle.
5. No problems encountered with the model.

6. Financial Budget

£30,000 from the Basic Command Unit Devolved Budget was devoted to financing the COBRA operation. The majority of this budget was spent on COBRA crime prevention packs, ultra violet key ring scanners, and a wide variety of targeted COBRA signs for streets, car parks, parking meters and for display in commercial and residential premises.

Funding for individual pro-active vehicle crime operations was bid for from the BCU pro-active budget. Costs in this year were less than in previous years, due to the use of a fully targeted response for the first time, concentrating effort where maximum return was achievable.

Human Resources

A Chief Inspector from the Basic Command Unit was identified as the Vehicle Crime Performance Champion and ran Operation COBRA as part of her day to day role, co-ordinating activity across the different disciplines. This Chief Inspector was held accountable for vehicle crime performance.

A Crime Reduction Officer from the Basic Command Unit was dedicated solely to vehicle crime reduction and co-ordinated the COBRA work with partners.

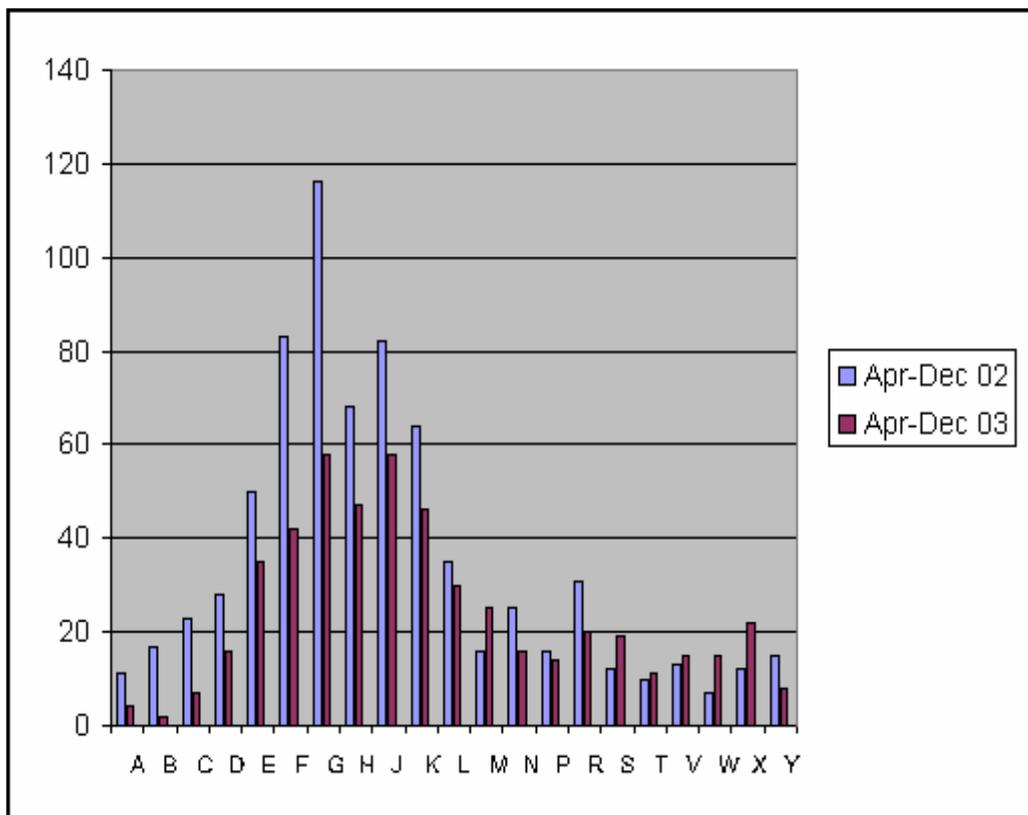
A uniform officer was identified as a dedicated Vehicle Scenes of Crime Officer to maximise forensic recovery.

All other human resources contributed to COBRA as part of their day to day role, and were not specifically dedicated solely to COBRA.

7. a) Julie Earle Alan Edmunds
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**COMPARISON OF VEHICLES TAKEN WITHOUT CONSENT
BY YEAR OF REGISTRATION 2002/2003**

	Apr-Dec 02	Apr-Dec 03
A	11	4
B	17	2
C	23	7
D	28	16
E	50	35
F	83	42
G	116	58
H	68	47
J	82	58
K	64	46
L	35	30
M	16	25
N	25	16
P	16	14
R	31	20
S	12	19
T	10	11
V	13	15
W	7	15
X	12	22
Y	15	8



Concentrations of vehicle crime April – December 2002

Crimes	No of Locations	Cumulative crime	% yield
38	1	38	
32	2	64	
28	2	56	
26	3	78	10%
25	2	50	
20	1	20	
19	1	19	
18	4	72	
17	5	85	
16	2	32	
15	2	30	
14	6	84	
13	5	65	
12	5	60	39%
11	5	55	
10	6	60	
9	16	144	
8	5	40	
7	23	161	
6	30	180	
5	41	205	
4	72	288	
3	89	267	29%
2	185	370	
1	712	712	22%
	Total 1225	Total 3235	100%

Concentrations of vehicle crime April – December 2003

Crimes	No of locations	Cumulative Crime	% yield
35	1	35	
28	1	28	
27	1	27	6%
21	2	42	
18	2	36	
17	2	34	
16	2	32	
15	2	30	
13	1	13	
12	4	48	
11	4	44	36%
10	3	30	
9	6	54	
8	9	72	
7	17	119	
6	28	168	
5	25	125	
4	41	164	
3	92	276	37%
2	188	376	
1	482	482	21%
	Total 913	Total 2235	100%

NEWS HEADLINES – April 2003 – December 2003 – All at least half a page in local newspaper

April

- Editors comment – We support crackdown on everyday car crime – but want to go further
- Every half hour there's another car crime victim. Will you be one of them? Find out how you can help stop thieves with Operation Cobra
- Hot spots targeted
- Key to car crime is close to home – (housebreakers may just be after your car keys)

May

- Cobra targets car crime reptiles
- No crime too small in the battle to beat the villains
- Police warn owners as thieves target soft-tops
- The car crime cracker (new vehicle scenes of crime officer)
- Robbers target tools left in company vans
- If you're involved in car crime, your face could be the next one we publish
- Cobra strikes again (full front page with photo of offender)
- Drivers warned 'Leave it and they'll steal it' – (introducing new street signs)

June

- Crackdown brings about huge drop in vehicle crime (3 month on)
- Shops join crime crusade (Cash Converters and second-hand shops marking and checking goods)
- Don't give the thieves a chance, drivers urged
- Youngsters could pedal the anti-crime message (promoting Cobra bikes)

July

- Three day car crime spree one of the worst ever

August

- Booze cut off halts vandals
- Crime initiative helps to crack down on nuisance teenagers by blocking their alcohol supply
- Police to get pro-active in car crackdown – summer road shows roll out
- Cobra cops to help tourists
- Cobra sting to target car criminals at show (Cobra bikes)
- Cobra team shows it can bite (Cobra bikes – Force newspaper)
- Yet another good result for police as car crimes fall
- High profile policy see fall in crime during show

September

- Big drop in car crimes
- Toys for thieving joy riders – police believe children behind a spate of moped thefts

October

- Car crime slashed as Cobra tightens coils on offenders (6 months on)
- Make your mark and help beat the thieves (property marking)

November

- The anatomy of a 'Minor' crime (2 pages) cost of crime
- Last chance to go straight (Prolific car thief, a key target of crackdown, avoids jail)

December

- Don't give the car thieves any early Christmas gifts

OPERATION COBRA: First man faces court as part of police crackdown on persistent vehicle crime

If you're involved in car crime, your face could be the next one we publish...



by Michael Short
The News

HE was a one-man crime-wave who made motorists' lives hell for years, smashing his way into their cars to take whatever he could to feed his drug habit.

Now Patrick Clarke has become the first person in Portsmouth to face the courts as a result of the Operation Cobra crackdown on car criminals.

And police chiefs sent out a message to other offenders: 'If you steal from cars, this will happen to you.'

Clarke, 22, has been raiding vehicles across the city since he was a young teenager.

Yesterday, Clarke, of Sultan Road, Buckland, appeared in court, facing 10 counts of stealing from cars - including some offences committed while he was on bail.

Police say Clarke started as a child, breaking car windows and reaching in to grab what was on show. It's an opportunist pattern he has followed for more than five years, spotting goods in a car and taking them.



Operation Cobra targets main offenders

OPERATION Cobra was launched by Hampshire police last month to attack car crime.

The long-running initiative is aimed at targeting the main offenders responsible for the bulk of a crime which costs the local economy some £35m every year.

But a big part of the special operation is centred on educating the

public about car crime issues.

In the coming months motorists will be subject to a series of awareness-raising projects designed to stop people leaving valuables in cars and providing easy targets for thieves.

The News is backing Operation Cobra to drive down car crime which affects 200 readers across our communities every week.

Police said he might only have gone to the shop for a bottle of milk - but if he saw something in a car he could sell, he would take it there and then.

Over the years he has had dozens of convictions - when he appeared in court last November he asked for another 15 offences to be taken into account.

When heroin came along the thefts became more deliberate.

Whenever he needed a fix, he would pick out a car almost at random, stealing so that he could swap a car stereo or mobile phone for a £20 wrap.

Clarke's huge criminal record led to police targeting him so

they could get him behind bars. And when he snatched £100 of CDs from a Renault Clio on April 28, a police surveillance team was watching.

The police action is part of a crackdown on car crime which has become a main aim of Portsmouth's senior officers.

They have launched Operation Cobra to strike back at the car criminals, rounding up the main offenders and teaching the public how to avoid falling victim to the jackals.

As part of Cobra, a dedicated forensics officer checks cars which have been broken into or stolen for fingerprints or DNA evi-

dence. The discovery of a fingerprint on a vehicle crime victim's glovebox helped police to link Clarke to other crimes carried out in September last year.

District Judge John Woollard said Clarke would have to undergo a drug treatment and testing order - a special course to get crooks off drugs.

And he warned; 'You are going to prison unless you can prove to me that the drug treatment and testing order is going to work. If not you are going to prison, can I be any clearer than that?'

Clarke will return to court on June 25 to see if the order has had any success.

OPERATION COBRA: Officers offer written advice to motorists after dozens of sports cars are raided or damaged

Police warn owners as thieves target soft-tops



by Michael Short
The News

POLICE are writing to 300 owners of soft-top cars warning them of the dangers posed by car thieves.

In recent weeks dozens of sports cars, including vehicles such as Mazda MX5s and MGs, have been broken into by people using knives to slash the roofs.

Now officers working on Operation Cobra - a police initiative to cut car crime - are sending out letters to make owners of soft-top cars more aware of the problem.

They are also sending out special pens so the motorists can mark their property with ink which only shows up under ultra-violet light.

Crime reduction officer Alan Edmunds, who is helping to run Cobra, said: 'We are sending out 300 letters to soft-top car owners in certain areas where they are more at risk.'

He added: 'We are also sending the property-marking pens and a Steer Clear leaflet which will give them advice - a lot of these break-ins occur



Pete Brown estimates the damage to the soft-top of a Vauxhall Astra

PICTURE: JONATHAN BRADY (032169-90)

OPERATION COBRA

THE News is backing Operation Cobra, the police campaign to reduce car crime in Portsmouth.

As well as looking at crime in the city, **The News** is also looking at the issue of car crime in the rest of our

communities, from Gosport to Chichester.

In the coming months we will be highlighting what police are doing to combat the widespread problem in the south, and reveal how victims are being affected.

We will also be carrying plenty of help and advice for readers on how to avoid becoming a victim of car crime - with tips such as parking in well-lit areas and not leaving valuables in show in your vehicle.

because people leave valuables on display.' He explained that car owners who were being sent the information lived in areas where they were more likely to fall victim to car criminals.

Other soft-top car drivers will be able to get the same information by calling a free

hotline number set up by the police as part of Operation Cobra.

He added: 'We are putting some advice on there so people can ring it and find out how to help prevent someone targeting their car.'

Police targeted the owners after searching computer files

held by the DVLA in Swansea. They have taken the step because almost 50 soft-top vehicles have been broken into or damaged over the past few weeks.

One victim, carpenter Justin Bailey, has decided to sell his Vauxhall Astra convertible after it was targeted when

he parked it outside his parents' house in Festing Grove, Southsea. The would-be thieves slashed the roof of the soft-top twice and caused more than £1,000 damage.

Mr Bailey, 31, of Ebery Grove, Copnor, said: 'Luckily nothing was stolen but this is just more than I can handle at the moment.'

'I've only had the car since November, but I can't be bothered to go through the hassle and worry of this happening every time I park the car.'

'I don't think the people who do things like this realise just how much grief they cause the owner of the car.'

■ The Operation Cobra hotline number is 0800 5875750.

POLICE: Officers ask second-hand dealers to introduce new measures to ensure stolen goods are not sold to the public

Shops join crime crusade

SECOND-HAND shops are being lined up to help police in the fight against crime.

Detectives want second-hand dealers to bring in new controls that could stop thieves and burglars trying to pass their ill-gotten gains to the traders. They hope such measures will drive down the market for stolen goods in Portsmouth.

Detective Sergeant Ken Littlewood from Portsmouth's new Crime Unit - a 12-strong

by Michael Short
Crime reporter

police squad targeting burglary and vehicle crime - said: 'We will be carrying out visits to second-hand shops and seeking their assistance and co-operation.'

'We want them to start keeping books and records of what is being sold and who is selling it, which can be inspected by the police. There is no law giving us this power so it would be an informal agreement, but it would deter peo-

ple trying to sell stolen goods. The vast majority of these traders run an honest business but there are some items which get through these shops - we recently recovered items from a second-hand shop in North End which had been taken in a burglary, although it was with the shop's help.'

He added: 'When you deal with burglaries it is hard to recover items which have been stolen but we're trying hard to rectify that.'

'We are not naive enough to think it will stop people com-

mitting crime but it will help us to bring them to justice - and they won't be able to commit crime if they are in prison.'

Det Sgt Littlewood added: 'If people are receiving stolen goods it is encouraging others to steal. We know a lot of stolen property goes through private individuals and ordinary members of the public. If they are receiving stolen goods they will be treated quite robustly - what they are doing is buying other people's misery.'



OPERATION COBRA

THE plan to get second-hand dealers to back police in the fight against crime could deter car thieves from breaking into vehicles - because they have no-one to sell their goods to.

The initiative would be the latest in a string of projects designed to fight back against vehicle crime and the people behind it.

Hampshire police are running a high-profile campaign, codenamed Operation Cobra, which aims to catch the main offenders who make life hell for motorists.



COBRA CRACKDOWN - PC Andy Burnham and Sgt Fiona Voller with bikes and specially designed tabards proving a success in cutting vehicle crime in Portsmouth.

Cobra team shows it can bite

POLICE in Portsmouth are looking to expand a scheme to crackdown on vehicle crime that was trialled at this year's Portsmouth and Southsea show.

The Operation Cobra bike patrols, staffed by Specials and beat officers were used over the three-day event as part of Portsmouth Basic Command Unit's 12-month crackdown on vehicle crime.

The patrols were used in areas near the show to push home the message to car drivers that they should not leave property on show in their vehicles.

The riders wore yellow tabards with the Operation Cobra logo on them and were handing out Operation Cobra packs that included vehicle crime reduction advice and a property-marking pen to members of the public.

The patrols were shown to have a great effect. During last year's show there were 46 reports of vehicle crime in total.

This year this was more than halved with 20 being reported. Last year there were 18 thefts from vehicles, this year there were eight.

Thirteen cars were stolen over the period of the show last year. This year there was just one.

"These bike patrols have proved to have had a great effect on the number of vehicles that were stolen and broken into," said Chief Inspector Julie Earle, who is heading up Operation Cobra.

"The patrols were being held as a pilot and we will now be looking to make them a permanent feature to assist the police in our crackdown against vehicle crime."

CRIME: Initiative helps to crack down on nuisance teenagers by blocking their alcohol supply

Booze cut-off halts vandals

by Michael Short
Crime reporter

BEAT bobbies have halted a 40-strong teenage gang's crime-wave - by cutting off their supply of booze.

Officers have clamped down on off-licences and other traders and are planning to bring in Trading Standards officers to reinforce their message about selling alcohol to underage youths.

Police have also stepped up patrols and spoken to the youths responsible for a string of problems near College Park in North End, Portsmouth.

The area was plagued by vandalism and car crime, but police say there have been no incidents for weeks.

Police say their car crime initiative, Operation Cobra, can take the credit for bringing the youths under control.

Beat officer PC Marcus Caytor said: "Under the initiative we get all sorts of wonderful printouts showing us patterns and trends, and we were able to identify certain areas. It soon became obvious that a lot of damage to the cars and some of the thefts were because of these youths getting drunk."

OPERATION COBRA

OPERATION Cobra is a police initiative which aims to slash car crime by educating the public about prevention.

Officers are passing on safety tips to the public and a hotline has been set up for people to ring for information.

Another major part of

Cobra is the crackdown on repeat offenders. Officers have even placed some of the area's worst car thieves under surveillance to catch them in the act.

In its first three months the initiative - which is being backed by *The News* - has halved car crime in Portsmouth.

On one night alone a youth left the park and scratched eight cars in Kensington Road. He then damaged another four vehicles at a nearby garage forecourt.

PC Caytor said: "Since I joined the beat in July our biggest problem has been juvenile nuisance at College Park and it was obvious these youths were behind a lot of the car crime - they were coming out drunk, scratching cars."

"But it's not just damage, they are stealing from them as well. I

took the view that we could solve this car crime by tackling the youths."

"The way we have done that is by addressing the alcohol situation. You have them stealing crates of beer from shops or goading adults into buying it for them."

"Then they are going to the park, where it's dark, and getting hammered."

"We've spoken to licencées in the area and told them to do their best and we're working with Trading Standards on this."



Car vandalism problems have been tackled by cutting off alcohol to youths

THE LATEST OFFENCES

POLICE have had the following car crimes reported to them in the past 24 hours:

■ **STOLEN:** A Piaggio 124cc moped was taken from outside a house in New Road, Buckland, between 11pm on Thursday and 5.30am today.

The registration number of the missing bike is P697 PTR.

■ In Portsmouth, another four vehicle crimes have also been reported as taking place in North Street, Portsea; Priory Crescent, Milton; Church Street, Landport; and Kings Road, Southsea.



Car crime slashed as Cobra tightens coils on offenders

by James Glover
Crime reporter

CAR CRIME in Portsmouth has been slashed by a third in the first six months of a campaign to tackle vehicle attacks in the city.

Operation Cobra celebrates its six-month anniversary this week and police in Portsmouth are delighted that car crime is falling fast.

A total of 1,484 acts of vandalism and thefts of vehicles have been reported since the operation was launched in April - more than 700 fewer than during the same period last year.

Police are toasting the speedy success of Operation Cobra, but officers are not complacent.

They are warning that their job is only half done and they will continue to drum up support for the 12-month campaign.

In 2002, there were more than 2,500 thefts from vehicles and more than 1,100 cars stolen from city streets - and the problem was getting worse.

In the six months from April to September last year, a total of 2,218 car crimes was reported.

Senior officers decided enough was enough and joined forces

There'll be no let-up now, say police



The News reports a success, May 24

POLICE have said there will be no let-up as they move into the second half of the 12-month operation against vehicle crime.

Officers have turned their attention to a worrying rise in moped thefts in recent months and have vowed to catch every offender responsible. The mopeds are believed to be stolen by

youngsters as they are disappearing all over the city in a trend that seemed to start when schools went back.

Anyone with information about vehicle crime is asked to contact Hampshire police on 0845 0454545 or through the anonymous Crimestoppers line on 0800 555111.

with The News and Portsmouth City Council to launch the operation aimed at targeting criminals and reminding the public to keep their vehicles and items secure.

They also set up a series of crime-busting initiatives, including using undercover officers to catch car crooks in the act and working with the city council to install extra street lighting and CCTV cameras at crime hotspots.

Bobbies have also been given ultra-violet light keyrings to scan driving licences to see if they are counterfeit or examine items in cars to see if they

have been stolen after being specially marked.

Chief Inspector Julie Earle, who is leading Operation Cobra, said: 'We're exceedingly happy with the results but we're only halfway through the job. We can't be complacent. We must keep on targeting key areas and getting the community to keep their vehicles secure.'

Mike Gilson, editor of The News, said: 'The success of Cobra shows how well partnerships between the police, The News and the people can be in tackling crime.'

'The war hasn't been won yet, but together we have managed to fight the disease that is car crime in the region.'



16, 2003

COBRA: Undercover teams targeting criminals are reducing number of incidents

Yet another good result for police as car crimes fall

by Michael Short
Crime reporter

CAR crime in Portsmouth is still falling thanks to an initiative, backed by The News, which targets thieves and helps the public to keep themselves safe.

Police recorded just 206 car crimes in July - well down on the 420 incidents they logged in the month before the scheme started, and far less than the 521 recorded for the same period last year.

It's the fourth month in a row that car crime has fallen.

And police chiefs say the good results are all down to Operation Cobra.

Crime reduction officer Alan Edmunds, one of those behind Cobra, said: 'It's another good result for us but there is a lot of hard work being put in.'

'I think the criminals know what we're about and they are sitting up and taking notice.'

HUGE NUMBER OF CASES BEFORE COURTS



SCORES of car criminals from across Portsmouth have been arrested since the start of Operation Cobra - many of them are still going through the court system.

Teenage thief Billy Currie, of Ludlow Road, Paulsgrove, Portsmouth, was caught on CCTV cameras as he stole from a woman's car.

But both the victim and the police were angered when magistrates only told him to pay costs and compensation - even though he had

a history of offending and was serving a community punishment at the time.

But serial crook Patrick Clarke, of Sultan Road, Buckland, Portsmouth, was finally jailed in July after years of bringing misery to motorists.

The 22-year-old, who is one of our worst car criminals, had earlier escaped jail because he was trying to get off drugs.

But he was sent down for a year after continuing to steal to feed his habit.

Since Cobra started in April, car crime has nearly halved. That's because undercover teams have been targeting known car thieves while police have tried to raise public awareness and teach people not to leave valuables in their cars.

Information stalls have been set up at supermarkets and shopping centres. And special packs have been handed out. Neighbourhood Watch groups have been spoken to and teams of volun-

teers have even cycled around the city handing out advice to people in the streets.

In one case, beat officers targeted local youths to stop them getting drunk in a park.

Their action led to a dramatic fall in the number of incidents involving drunken teenagers damaging cars.

Mr Edmunds said: 'We are catching people - we arrested 37 in the first month - but the main thing is telling people not to leave things in their cars.'

That message has helped car crime to fall to just 206 incidents last month.

But Mr Edmunds said that people should not get complacent.

He said: 'We've noticed a new trend - people reaching into cars and taking mobiles because windows have been left down or the owners have left their vehicle for a few minutes.'

'The simple remedy is don't do it.'

COMMENT Page 4

OPERATION COBRA: Police signs warn motorists when thieves operate in car crime hotspots

Drivers warned: 'Leave it and they'll steal it'

by Michael Short
Crime reporter

MOTORISTS in car crime hotspots are being targeted by police in a bid to clamp down on thieves.

As part of the car-crime crackdown by Hampshire police codenamed Operation Cobra - police in Portsmouth are putting up eye-catching yellow and black posters in areas known to be bad for thefts.

The signs carry the message: Thieves take the chances you give them and warn car owners that their street is being targeted.

Portsmouth crime reduction officer John Beaumont said: 'What we are doing is identifying hotspots, the streets that have particularly high car crime problems.'

'We are putting these signs up to tell the residents and people who park in those areas that they are hotspots and they should be aware of car crimes taking place there.'

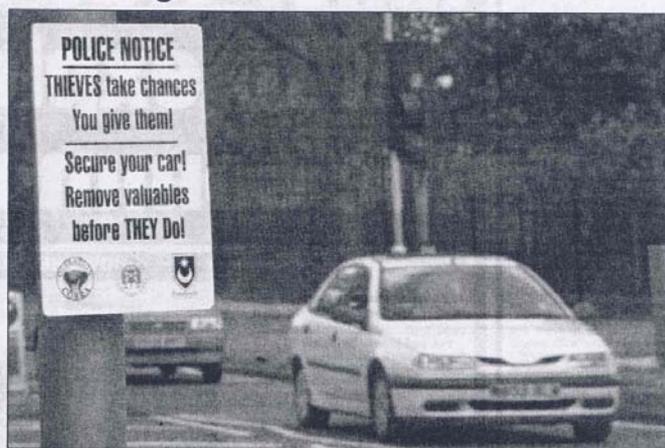
He added: 'It's a little nudge to the conscience, telling them not to leave things in their cars.'

As part of Operation Cobra, police are planning to focus their attention on different parts of the city, targeting areas which are among the worst for vehicle crime before moving their attention to other problem zones.

PC Beaumont said: 'It's intended that these signs will go up and come down on a regular basis, it's a short, sharp dig to the conscience of anyone living or working in these particular streets which have a problem at that particular time.'

His colleague Alan Edmunds said: 'One of the main thrusts of Operation Cobra is to concentrate on the worst-affected areas.'

'Then it's a case of getting people who live and work in those areas to realise



A sign on Copnor Road, Portsmouth, warns drivers to beware of car thieves PICTURE: MATT SCOTT-JOYNT (032384-23)

OPERATION COBRA

OPERATION Cobra, which was launched by Hampshire police in April, is not just aiming to educate the public.

Senior officers are just as keen to identify the hardcore of main offenders who are responsible for the bulk of car crime across our

communities. Police are using undercover teams to keep some offenders under surveillance - one 17-year-old youth was brought before Fareham Youth Court on Monday after a police officer watched him throw a brick through the window of a car so he could

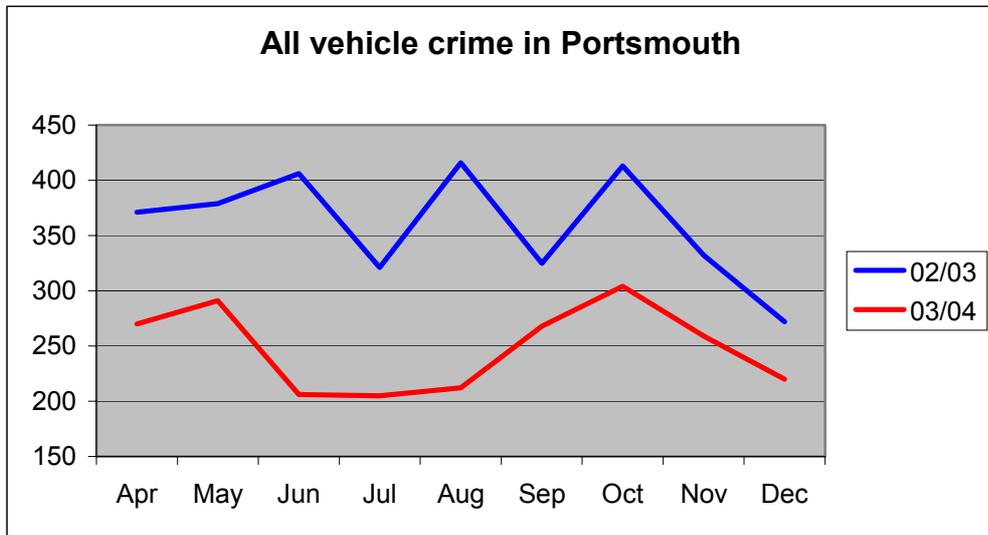
steal a mobile phone. Police are also using decoy vehicles to catch thieves - the cars are left in streets with valuables such as mobile phones on show. When the opportunists break into the cars they are quickly rounded up by watching police officers.

they cannot keep on presenting opportunities to thieves who think nothing of smashing a car window to get what they want.

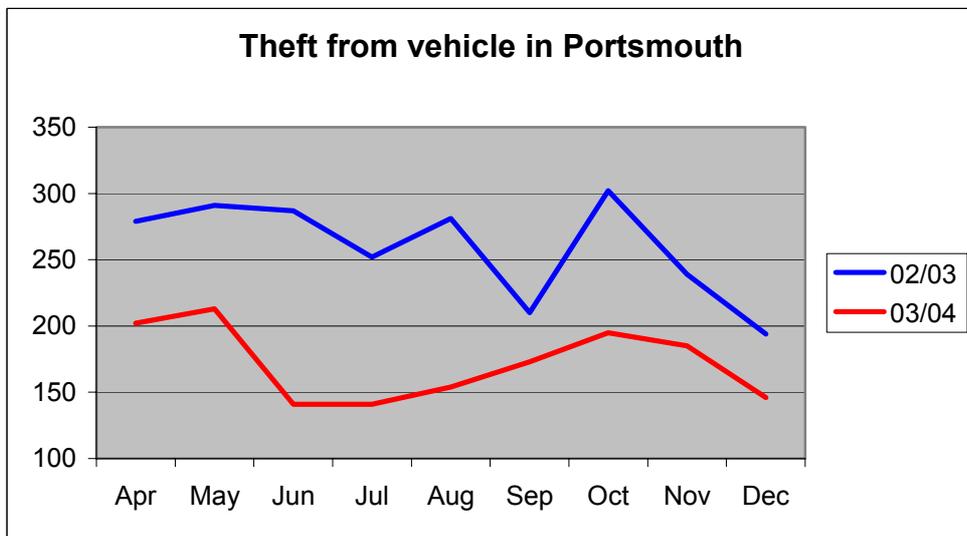
'If they see something in a vehicle they will take it. But if people stop leaving things in their cars then it will limit the opportunities and should cut the amount of crime.'

VEHICLE CRIME REDUCTION STATISTICS

	02/03	03/04
Apr	371	270
May	379	291
Jun	406	206
Jul	321	205
Aug	416	212
Sep	325	268
Oct	413	304
Nov	332	259
Dec	272	220
TOTAL	3235	2235



	02/03	03/04
Apr	279	202
May	291	213
Jun	287	141
Jul	252	141
Aug	281	154
Sep	210	173
Oct	302	195
Nov	239	185
Dec	194	146
TOTAL	2335	1550





Older vehicles are more at risk of being stolen!!

Reduces the risk – fit an immobiliser

Operation Cobra – bite back at car thieves, don't leave property on view



Targeting Vehicle crime in Portsmouth



Cash Converters support Operation Cobra by security marking mobile phones and car radios at point of sale

If we mark it – you may keep it!

Operation Cobra – bite back at car thieves, don't leave property on display



Targeting vehicle Crime in Portsmouth



Do you want advice on how you can prevent yourself becoming a victim of vehicle crime?

Call the Operation Cobra FREEPHONE HELPLINE NUMBER

0800 58 75 750



“Operation Cobra – bite back at car thieves, don't leave property on display”



Shoppers THIEVES SHOP AT XMAS TOO!



If you leave things in your car, they may be shopping from you! If you can see it a thief can too!



Targeting Vehicle Crime in Portsmouth
A local police partnership message





“Operation Cobra – bite back at car thieves, don’t leave property on display”



Targeting Vehicle Crime in Portsmouth



