

"A P.O.P. Against Burglary"

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Abstract

Having a P.O.P. at Burglary

Operation Swordsman

Burglary on Brompton Division had risen 4.28% compared with the same period in 1997. In April 1998, in line with the Home Office and Metropolitan Police Service objectives, we were set the challenge of reducing burglary by 7.4%

To define the problem research into the burglary increase was conducted by the Problem Solving Team based at Kensington Police Station, the project was led by Sergeants Gwillim and McInnes. Local intelligence systems and the Crime Reporting Information System (CRIS) were interrogated. Recognising that not all crimes are reported to the police, the local authorities, residents and businesses were canvassed to enhance the accuracy of the data, this allowed the precise identification of 'Hotspots'; areas where burglaries were most prevalent. When analysed it was established that the Courtfield Ward, located in the Earls Court area was suffering from 86.6 burglaries per 1000 households. This was an extremely high rate.

We examined all aspects of the crime and the current burglary reduction policy. We found that traditional crime reduction methods were employed which provided a short term deterrent...lzul_nQ.. sting impact on the problem, therefore providing no real solution.

Our goal was to provide an immediate reduction and to lay the foundations for a long term strategy to eradicate burglary. In response to this the Kensington Sector team introduced the following Mission Statement:

To reduce burglary in the Courtfield Ward by 10%, between 1st November 1998 and 31st January 1999 and ensure a downward trend was maintained.

A holistic approach was adopted. We raised the awareness of this crime to both local residents and those responsible for accommodating such, promoting target hardening and thus creating the belief that **'together we can banish the burglar'**. Two hotspots were identified, the secondary was patrolled by high visibility policing to dispel the offers into the rim- hots ot, where a sterile zone was create . The second aspect was to raise the standard of initial investigation and increase the quality of intelligence gleaned.

The results of this operation were excellent, a total reduction of 32.8% was achieved within the .time..scale.

To promote target hardening and therefore to encourage future crime reduction, over 400. sons-recived crime prevention advice

The impact of this operation was astonishing, support was achieved from all sections of the community, including sponsorship from a local estate agent and favourable excerpts in the local press.

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Having A P.O.P. At Burglary

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Introduction

Brompton Borough Command Unit is a busy inner city division consisting of three sites, with a police station at each. To the North of the Borough is Notting Hill in the centre is Kensington and in the South is Chelsea. The demographics of the Borough require that the different stations respond to policing needs in varying ways. At Kensington Police Station, which is split into two sectors, North and Central, is a Problem Solving Team that was established in April 1998, in order to tackle crime and disorder issues that effect the quality of life of local residents.

In April 1998 in line with Home Office and Metropolitan Police Service objectives Brompton Division was set the challenge of reducing the annual burglary rate by 7.4%. By October 1998 local residents, particularly at Sector Working Groups, were voicing concerns that residential burglary was on the increase, this was reiterated by the increase of reported crime to police. At this time, the number of incidents of robbery occurring on the sectors was decreasing, whilst a positive strategy implemented to tackle disorder and drug misuse in the vicinity of the Earls Court Underground Station was proving successful.

Recognising that burglary is a crime that frequently causes great distress to victims, leaving them feeling vulnerable within their own home in the knowledge that a stranger has violated and even on occasions ransacked their home. It was decided to focus all the resources of the Problem Solving Team to deal with this type of crime.

The team lead by two sergeants, PS Gwillim and PS McInnes began to systematically analyse the problem, to establish the root causes, thus allowing these to be tackled to create a long term solution. This led to the implementation of Operation Swordsman which had the following stated objectives:

- Reduce the incidents of reported burglary within the Kensington Sectors.
- Increase the security of premises to prevent crime, a strategy known as 'target hardening'.
- Improve the Quality of Life for local residents.

Research Technique

At the outset of this operation it was recognised that not all crime is reported to police, therefore to make the research more reliable local residents, businesses and associations, including Neighbourhood Watches and Sector Working Groups were consulted. The information obtained from these groups was combined with that from the Metropolitan Police Crime Reporting Information System (CRIS) which allowed

an accurate picture of the crime problem to be established.

Research Results

An examination of the data within the CRIS system was conducted revealing that burglary crime on Kensington sectors, between June to September 1998 had risen by 4.28%, this being in comparison to the same period the year previous (*see table (a) page 11 for a breakdown of this figure*).

The crime was analysed by PS Gwillim and the data was placed onto maps, allowing a visual display of the information. The results were startling, revealing that a large amount, of the burglaries were occurring within one small and well defined area. This locality formed the basis of a small local authority area called the Courtfield Ward (*see appendix (a) at page 10 for a visual display of the area*). The burglary crime occurring in this small area was compared to the crime within the two Kensington sectors, this revealed that over 27% of reported crime occurred in this area (*for a breakdown of figures see table (b) page 11*).

When the burglary rate was compared to the number of households in the area it was found there were 86.6 allegations of burglary per 1000 households. This figure is high compared to the national average.

Premises profiling; establishing the type of premises most frequently burgled was undertaken. This was completed to allow resources to target premises to induce target hardening, that is, improve security measures to prevent crime. To do this the Permanent Beat Officer covering the area, along with Crime Prevention Officers and local residents were consulted. The information from these and the CRIS system highlighted three specific types of property that were frequently the target of burglars.

- 1. Multi occupancy dwellings** - The majority of reported burglaries occurred at multi occupancy building. The victims found residing in these were mainly employed, privately renting the flats from letting agents or individual landlords. These landlords had been notorious reluctant in the past to provide adequate security to the premises, often due to the nature of the lettings which tend to be short term, this is also influenced by the tenant who generally would not spend their own money on security improvements. The offences committed at this type of building primarily occurred between 5 am and 7pm, when the victims were at work. Entry to the premises was usually gained via the communal door, either surreptitiously or by force. Once inside the offenders have more time to force entry to other premises, as they are shielded from view from the street and are therefore harder to detect.
- 2. Hotels and Hostels** - There are a large number of hotels within the Sector, all of which have varying degrees of security. It was identified that the smaller hotels tended to have no professional security and were unaware of the risks of burglary.
- 3. Building Sites** - Including houses under renovation were frequently targeted by burglars. This was often seen at premises enclosed by scaffolding which permitted access to windows that were normally secure by way of natural positioning.

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Once the vulnerable venues had been identified attention was turned towards examining the *modus operandi* of crimes. From studying the CRIS reports it was apparent that a number of the burglaries had common threads, a bag removed from the venue, small items normally cash, CDs and jewellery were stolen. This indicator suggested that the offenders were not using vehicles to assist their escape. If this assertion was correct, then the offenders must have lived locally or travelled by public transport. It was then decided to undertake basic offender profiling of burglars, this analysis was conducted on persons having convictions for burglary offences that were known to be frequenting the area.. It was established that the majority of these persons did not live within a distance that enabled them to walk to commit crimes, therefore using public transport to travel to and from the location, was the most likely scenario.

Whilst conducting our research numerous crime reports were examined, this led to a startling realisation concerning the poor quality of initial investigations of burglaries. This has subsequently been highlighted by CIS consultants who are currently implementing Metcme, a desired method of crime investigating, to Brompton Division. The reason for the poor quality of investigation was examined, finding that the initial investigation is usually carried out by police on patrol duties. These officers are responsible for responding to all calls from the public and are often under resourced and under pressure. When challenged these officers saw their role as reporting and not investigating officers. In practice this was leading to allegations of burglary having little, if any investigation, this obviously has a serious implication on how many crimes are solved.

When asked about the service they provided, beat officers complained that they often did not have the time to offer crime prevention advice. Working in an inner London Borough many of the officers were walking and did not have the capacity to carry any crime prevention literature to leave with the victim:

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Having analysed the CRIS reports it was established that many did not contain sufficient details about the type of venue, which should be used to allow accurate and timely location profiling, thus crime trends were harder to detect.

Previous local burglary operations were examined in order to establish best practices. It was found that most had targeted specific areas using plain clothes officers to identify and arrest suspects. High Visibility policing of a targeted area had also been deployed as a deterrent to potential burglars. Research of these results showed that both methods had merits, however, their effectiveness was normally limited to the duration of the operation and then only in the hours which the officers were deployed.

Implementation

Having identified that a large percentage of crime was occurring within a small area it was decided to solely concentrate on this location. In doing this it would have a more immediate and measurable impact, once implemented good practices could then be adopted throughout the Borough.

The decision was made to implement the following mission statement :

To reduce burglary in the Courtfield Ward by 10% between 1st November 1998 and 31st January 1999 and to ensure a downward trend was maintained.

In order to achieve this target a holistic approach was adopted. This focused around raising the awareness of 'crime to local residents and those responsible for accommodating them, promoting target hardening and working in partnership with local agencies and residents to create the belief that **"together we can banish the burglar"**. This was complimented by the creation of a sterile area, dissuading offenders entering the designated hotspot. This approach is further expanded upon below, indicating the methods used and the reason for adopting them.

Burglary Investigation Vehicle - A vehicle Aedicated to the initial investigation of all burglaries on Kensington Sectors was introduced to improve the standard of burglary investigation. It was staffed by two officers experienced in criminal investigation. These officers were solely responsible for the initial investigation at the scene of burglaries, as such the officers were able to spend as much time as necessary trying to trace witnesses to the incident, gathering information and narrowing down the time of offences. At the same time the officers were trained to carry out crime prevention surveys at the victims' premises to reduce the likelihood of repeat victimisation and to provide reassurance to the victim. In the search for witnesses, neighbours were visited who were also offered crime prevention advice and surveys. This would have the long term effect of target hardening in the area.

When not engaged in investigating crime, the burglary car was responsible for identifying vulnerable premises and ensuring crime prevention advice was offered to the occupants. The officers deployed to this vehicle generated a vast amount of intelligence, this allowed quick and accurate assessment as to what type of premises would be targeted by burglars. This information was fed into daily briefings for officers patrolling the area, it also allowed similar premises in the area to be visited in order to prevent a crime occurring there.

The impact of this vehicle was immediate and continuous. It completed over 30 residential crime prevention surveys in the area and distributed over 500 crime prevention packs. The standard of investigation was extremely high, which was shown by the fact that it was able on one occasion to recover a quantity of stolen property from a nearby shop, which led the officers to identify and arrest the offender. A separate case saw the officers identifying a suspect for a burglary they had investigated, when arrested this male admitted taking the property concerned.

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The research into property profiling had recognised that multi occupancy buildings were frequently targeted by burglars. Local estate and property management agents were liaised with to discuss and address the problem. Many of those contacted were aware that residents, on occasions, allowed entry to buildings to unidentified callers. This was not the only facet of concern regarding communal entry doors. Many of the doors have a self closing mechanism which requires regular servicing and must be adjusted according to the season, on many occasions officers found these devices to be faulty, thus allowing free access to the premises.

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Officers sought ways to combat this widespread but simply resolvable problem. It was decided that a crime prevention pack should be prepared for local residents. The pack contained a letter explaining the initiative (*for a copy see appendix f at page 16*), the booklet 'Your practical guide to crime prevention', two stickers, one designed for communal doors, warning residents not to let strangers enter via the intercom system and informing them to close the street door securely on entering/leaving the premises. The second sticker was designed to be displayed within the individual flats, warning the occupant to check the identification of callers carefully (*for a copy of the stickers see appendix g at page 17*) In addition the packs also contained property marking pens and a leaflet warning of burglary artifice. Residents were encouraged to display posters in communal areas to highlight the awareness to all persons residing in the property.

On identifying the faults with communal doors, officers approached estate and managing agents requesting that the or closures on buildings in their care, be regularly maintained and adjusted to reduce the number of burglaries in the area. This advice was generally adopted. In addition they were offered fifty crime prevention packs per agent to pass on to new tenants in the area. This part of the initiative was well received by those in the property trade, as a result the Division was offered sponsorship from an estate agents to display a crime prevention article in a local paper.

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This section of the project was deemed successful by the amount of crime prevention advice implemented in the area, as such it was expanded to include targeting of accommodation not rented through agencies. To achieve this local establishments including the Imperial College were contacted, this allowed a list of addresses of student accommodation to be compiled and later targeted.

Initial target hardening was conducted by using the crime prevention packs and crime prevention surveys for victims and their neighbours. It was felt that additional information should be available to all residents in the area. A mail shot was considered but it was felt that this may be considered junk mail and discarded unread. Enquiries were made with police stations in other Metropolitan districts to establish how they promoted crime prevention advice.

Hillingdon Division was found to have a large single decker bus converted to a mobile crime prevention showroom. Having analysed the alternatives it was decided that this would be the most appropriate way to promote crime prevention advice in the area. The vehicle was acquired on hire and was placed outside local supermarkets during the mornings and in the 'Hotspot' during the afternoon/evening. The location of the bus

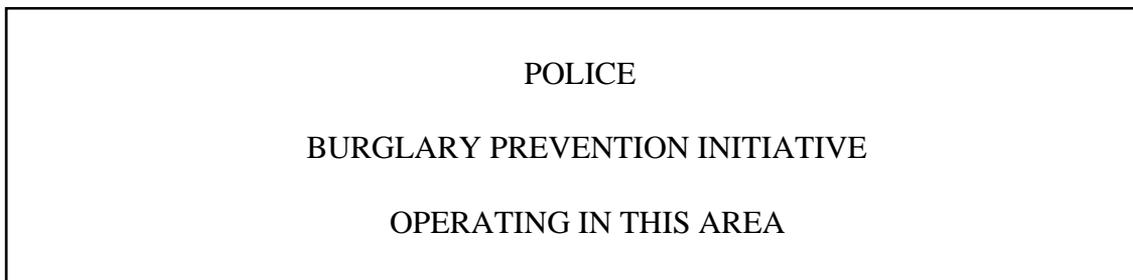
was advertised in the local press and by leaflets being posted to all premises in the 'Hotspot' area. The Mayor and Borough Commander showed their support for the operation at a press conference that was attended by the local press and the Met Police internal newspaper, The Job. (A copy of the published article is attached as appendix h, page 12, a subsequent copy of a letter received from the mayor is attached as appendix c page 13)

The response from the local community to this part of the initiative was fantastic. Over 350 persons attended the bus and were provided with crime prevention advice. Over 250 ultra violet pens were distributed to a wide spectrum of the community ranging from the aristocratic Lord Suffolk to a lone pensioner who resided in a one bedroom council flat.

Hotels and hostels in the area were visited and time was spent offering crime prevention advice to them, especially to the smaller establishments who had little or no security measures in place to prevent crime.

To further promote crime prevention to the public an officer became conversant in the Bumblebee Imaging System; a method to aid recovery of stolen property. The officer then attended local Neighbourhood Watch meetings and gave a presentation on this and crime prevention issues.

An innovative idea of creating a sterile area was adopted, this was surrounded by street signs displaying:



The street signs were strategically repositioned on a frequent basis, in order to confuse the offenders. They were extremely effective, even within the area, the signs purported that they were, thus keeping offenders guessing. (A photograph of the signs can be seen in the press release attached as appendix d, page 14).

A secondary hotspot was identified and uniformed officers patrolled in high visibility jackets to displace the offenders into the primary hotspot which was patrolled by Iain C O T i c e r s who is able to catch offenders in the commission of crime. All officers were encouraged to speak to as many persons in the area as possible. This had positive benefits in that it informed local residents of the operation, thus reducing their fear of crime. This open advertising of the operation was intended to warn offenders that no where was safe to commit crime.

Several short initiatives were run throughout the three month period. These varied in nature. The original research had indicated that burglary offenders travelled to the targeted area by transport. To tackle this, observations were kept on two tube stations in the locality. Potential suspects were then targeted leaving the tubes and either placed under surveillance, or spoken to by uniform officers.

The operation was assessed on a daily basis, allowing intelligence and changing trends to be highlighted. One specific trend concerned overnight burglaries from building sites. Officers engaged on covert duties established that a particular building site in the 'Hotspot' was a cause for concern as a number of burglaries were being committed inappropriately, at other building sites and times. There was insufficient evidence to arrest any of the builders, but it was felt that they may be committing other offences including DSS fraud. The site was therefore visited by police officers and QSS staff, three workers were prosecuted for illegally claiming benefits, whilst all workers were offered property marking a vice, with tools being marked in-situ. This simple operation was extremely effective, leading to intelligence on the workers being obtained, but more importantly, the problem of building site burglary ceased immediately.

Manpower restraints meant that the Kensington Problem Solving Team were unable to sustain constant patrolling of the targeted area. In order to achieve this officers working Sector days were fully appraised of the current stage of the operation and then tasked to patrol the area.

Costing - At the outset of this operation funding was requested to cover overtime to deal with prisoners and to permit extended tour of duties. This was essential as the analysis had revealed that the optimum period that crime was being committed was between 9am and 7pm. In total £3000 was spent in this manner.

Results - Criteria

In assessing the result of this operation it is essential to understand the criteria selected to measure its success. These were:

1. To reduce incidents of burglary in the Courtfield Ward by 10%.
2. To introduce target hardening to the area to prevent future crime.
3. To improve the quality of life for local residents.
4. To improve the standard of initial investigation and crime prevention, at scenes of burglaries.
5. To arrest and/or gain intelligence on offenders

Result - Analysis

Crime Reduction - The initial mission statement set the target for reducing burglary, our ultimate aim was to reduce burglary by 10%, doing so at a time when burglary was rising by 4.2%. The reported crime was analysed at the conclusion of the operation and showed a reduction of **32.84%** in a three month period. It was also pleasant to note that the local community noticed the difference. The method of achieving this figure was to compare the November 97 to January 98 reported crime figure with the

November 98 to January 1999 figure, in doing so it allowed a like for like comparison, this was essential as historically the area suffers an increase in burglary during the Christmas period (*for a visual representation of the reduction see appendix e, page 15*).

Target Hardening - The theory behind target hardening is to dissuade offenders from committing crime by making' it harder for them to do so. It is impossible to measure the true impact that this strand has had on reducing crime. It was therefore decided to assess the success of this part of the operation by measuring the number of people receiving crime prevention advice. In total over 400 persons participated, the majority receiving this at the crime prevention bus situated in the hotspot. A total of 30 victims of burglary received crime prevention surveys, which assisted to prevent repeat victimisation. It is hoped that this advice has been adopted, in order to further reduce crime in the future.

Quality of Life - On initiating this operation it was recognised that any changes to residents' quality of life could only be assessed by those residents. In order to achieve this officers consulted with residents, before during and after the implementation of this operation. Their comment were greatly received and have virtually all been positive. Generalised the comments li ~vo main_factors at have improved their lifestyles, these being, the crime prevention received during the operation which, where adopted has left them feeling less vulnerable. The increased police presence has led to a reduction in the fear of crime, this has been accentuated by the presence of the street signs.

Improved Standard of Initial Investigation and Crime Prevention - This primary objective was essential in order to assist solving crimes and aiding the early identification of crime trends: The officers deployed to the burglary car undertook this role, which was pivotal to the success of the operation. The success can be seen by the arrest of two burglars for separate offences and the recovery of stolen property, this only occurred as the officers were suitably qualified, experienced and conscientious. Crime prevention has been one of the main strands to this operation, which has been passed to over 400 local residents. Adopting the principle of: **`Its nice to arrest a burglar, but its better to reduce the number of victims'**.

The total arrests made by officers from the Problem Solving Team and those tasked to patrol the area throughout the three month period totals 204. These were for a variety of offences ranging from possession of drugs to robbery. It was especially pleasing to note that ten of the arrest were made for burglary.

Conclusions.

Operation Swordsman was a strategy developed after a systematic analysis of a problem, which when identified lent itself to a dedicated response, It encompassed all the good components of traditional policing implemented in an innovative style.

Links were established with the local community at an early stage and a trust developed with business and residents alike. New ideas were welcomed and developed, ensuring that the operation was dynamic and conceived on a more holistic plane.

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The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has a Community Safety Team, this was established to assist members of the local authority to work in conjunction with police officers to tackle crime. This unit has recently received substantial funding from the Home Office to implement a strategy to tackle crime on the Kensington Sectors. Their strategy has encompassed much of the innovative methods adopted by this operation.

The operation has been seen to be extremely successful, local residents now feel less vulnerable within their premises and when leaving them unoccupied. Police figures show that burglary has decreased by a substantial **32.8%** in a three month period, This is a truly remarkable feat which will continue with the assistance of the implemented crime prevention advice.

Operation Swordsman involving police officers, residents and businesses has been successful at " Having a P.O.P. at burglary ".

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Operation Swordsman

Appendix A



Key

Courtfield Ward

Table 1.

Comparison of burglary rate between May and October 1998 with the same period the year previous.

Month	Year 1997 (no. of burglaries)	Year 1998 (no. of burglaries)
June	122	121
July	106	108
August	102	125
September	137	133
Total	467	487

Thus burglary crime increase is comparison between the 1997 and 1998 total

This indicates an increase of 4.28%_

Table 2.

Comparison to allow total burglary crime rate on Kensington Sectors to be compared with Courtfield Ward.

Month - 1998	Kensington Sectors No. of burglaries	Courtfield Ward No. of Burglaries
April	86	20
May	106	32
June	121	33
July	108	39
August	125	41
September	133	23
Total	679	188

Thus the percentage of all burglaries occurring within the Courtfield **Ward** = 27.7%