

THE TILLEY AWARD 2001

Project Title: OPERATION BLOCK

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Force Cumbria Constabulary

Endorsing Officer: Richard Crompton,
Assistant Chief Constable (Operations)

Contact Person: Superintendent S Murray
Force Crime Reduction Adviser
Cumbria Constabulary Headquarters
Carleton Hall
PENRITH
CA10 2AU

Tel. dd. 01768 217289
Fax 10768217290
e-mail: cumcomsaft@zoom.co.uk

WEST CUMBRIA AREA
DWELLING BURGLARY INITIATIVE
OPERATION BLOCK



P:S 883 ALAN WEIGHTMAN
PC 906 DAVID WHILD
D.O 171 ERIC FIELD
D:C 419 JASON ROBINSON

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West Cumbria Area Dwelling Burglary Initiative.

1. SUMMARY

1.1 THE PROBLEM

- The Area dwelling burglary reduction target for the period 01.04.00 to 31.03.01 was set at 6.6%.
 - By August 2000, the Area had experienced an increase of 14.4%.
- We were achieving our targets in all but dwelling burglary.
- There was little evidence of a coordinated approach to the overall problem resulting in a fragmented response.
 - There was a need to raise the profile of this type of crime.
- A need to clearly define roles and functions.
- A need to encourage ownership of the problem.

1.2 ANALYSIS

Detailed analysis was carried out to inform future activities. This highlighted distinct locations, victims, offenders and modus operandi.

- Workington town beats had the greatest concentration of offences.
 - The victims were the elderly and vulnerable living in poor accommodation.
- Offenders lived near to or in the community targeted.
- Two distinct MOs stood out -
 - Forced entry via window or door
 - More interestingly, 'roping' through the letterbox, almost unique to specific Workington beats.

1.3 RESPONSE

- ❑ The profile of dwelling burglary was raised and given priority - staff were encouraged to match individual and team objectives to that of combating dwelling burglary.

A dedicated team was formed to drive our response and to improve coordination between Community Safety and all other staff. The team was given a firm remit and a clear mission statement - "THE REDUCTION OF DWELLING BURGLARY".

- ❑ The Burglary Team and the Community Safety Department co-ordinated the approach to victims and potential victims.
 - They initiated crime prevention measures incorporating outside agencies.
 - They identified 'hotspots' and victim profiles to target crime prevention initiatives.

Partnerships were forged with local landlords and housing associations.
 - Close liaison with the press was maintained throughout.

1.4 IMPACT

- ❑ Assessment indicates that our analysis and responses have been correct
 - The ultimate aim was achieved, dwelling burglary was reduced by 9.2%
- ❑ The "roping" MO was overcome.
- ❑ Investigation and management of dwelling burglary has been improved.

2. THE PROBLEM

On 1st April 2000, Cumbria Constabulary introduced annual area crime reduction targets. The target for dwelling burglary in the West Cumbria Area was a reduction of 54 offences (6.6%) from 815 offences the preceding year to 761. For the period, 1st April 2000 to September 2000, we experienced an increase of **45 offences** (14.5%). It was the only area in which we were not reaching our crime reduction target. A response was required but before that a closer analysis of the problem was needed.

Geographically, the area covers 240 square miles. It is predominantly rural with several larger townships situated along the West Coast. These suffer from high unemployment and pockets of poor housing stock. There are concentrations of crime (in particular, dwelling burglary) in these areas. Most affected are the towns of Workington, Maryport, Whitehaven and Cleator Moor.

2.1 INITIAL REACTION

In order to address the problem we needed to understand it. We needed to identify its various elements in order to plan intervention points and develop a strategy. We had no trained analysts in the force to look at the problem. No one was taking a holistic view. To overcome this a dedicated team was formed. This encouraged ownership and coordinated our response after closer analysis of the problem. The team comprised police officers with appropriate skills in crime investigation, covert policing techniques, crime intelligence analysis and the IT skills necessary to utilize all the available IT systems. They had a laid down remit the details of which we will look at later.

In order to better understand the problem the team utilised the 'SARA' model.

3. SCANNING AND ANALYSIS

By charting the available data (up to 31.10.00) and comparing it with the previous two years, it was apparent the problem was not a one-off spike. It had been building over a period of months and was becoming a long-term problem. **(Fig.1)**

The trend predicted an average of 70 offences per month over the Area for the remainder of the sample year. However, this figure could be even greater when seasonal trends were brought into play. These showed historical spikes over the winter months of November, December and January

By looking at data split geographically, we were able to compare trends in different towns. This showed the main area of concern to be centered on Workington. Secondary problems were highlighted in Whitehaven, Cleator Moor and Maryport. **(Fig.2)**

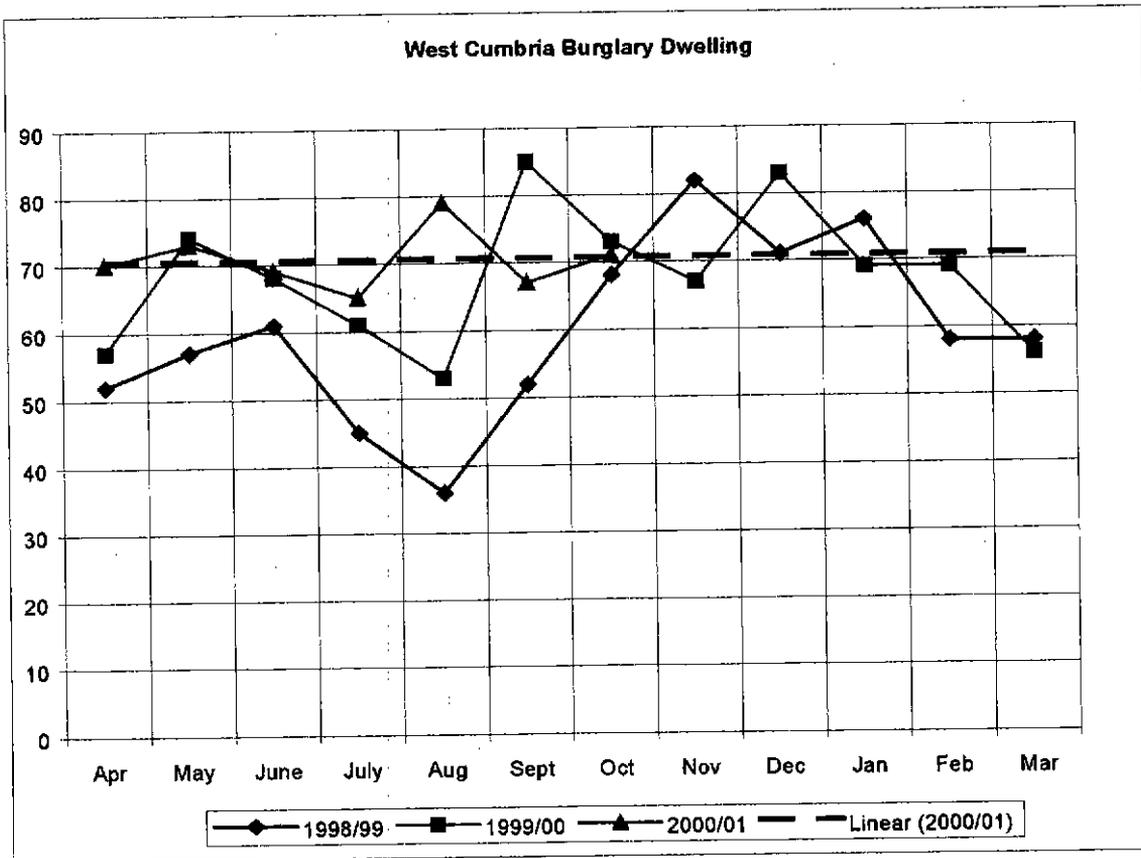


Fig.1

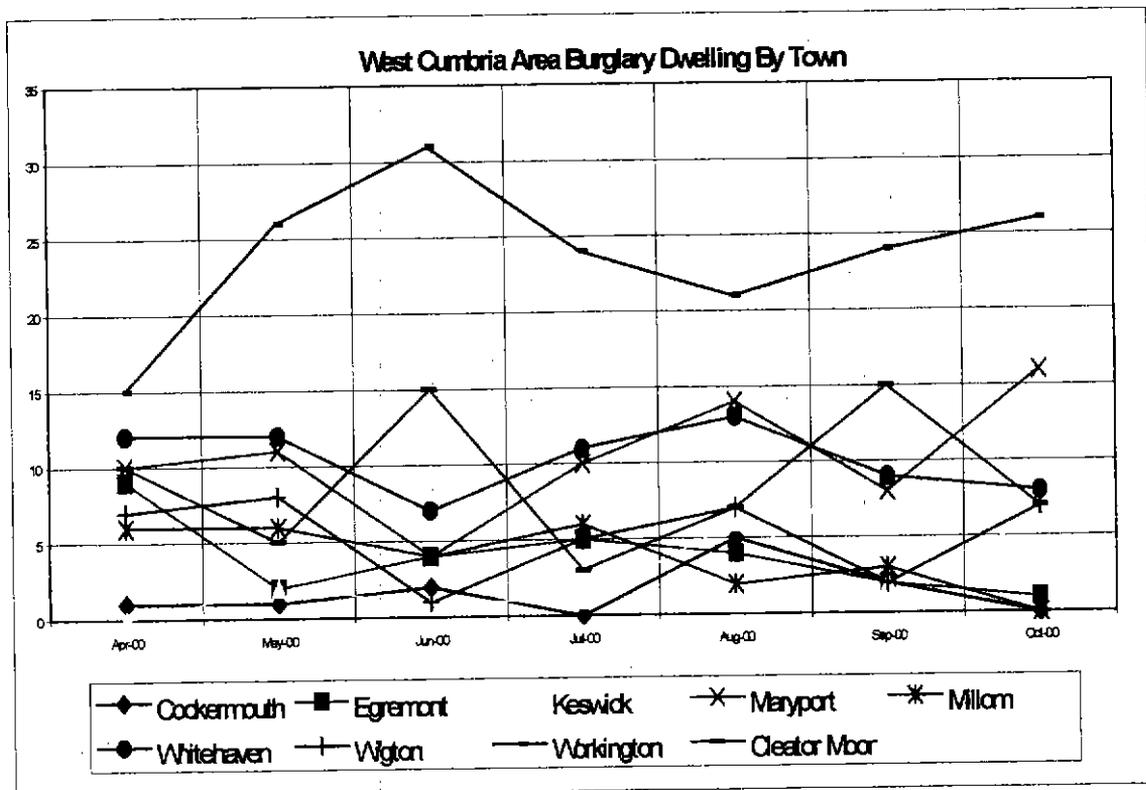


Fig.2

Comparison with the trends of the other force areas showed a downward trend for South Cumbria and a plateau trend for North Cumbria, both below the previous year's figures and on target to meet their reduction targets. Examination of their response to dwelling burglary showed no significant difference to ours: There were no short term initiatives in place and their medium to long term initiatives were community safety based incorporating outside agencies on target hardening projects, similar to those being progressed in our area. We could find no lessons to be learned from other areas and drew the conclusion that we were dealing with a localised problem.

A more in-depth analysis of all dwelling burglaries since 01/04/00 was initiated using the Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT). This focused on the key elements of incidents breaking them down into the various features of location, victim and offender.

In order to increase the effectiveness of our analysis of these features we recognised the need to coordinate our approach. Investigators needed to work more closely with Community Safety. There seemed little understanding of each other's role or area of responsibility. There was a need to define roles and encourage shared ownership.

The data used in our analysis was drawn from regular and systematic scanning of crime reports, custody records and intelligence reports.

3.1 LOCATION

- Li **For the sample period (01.08.00 to 31.01.01) there were 421 dwelling burglaries in the West Cumbria Area. Examination of these identified the 'hotspots' - 210 were attributed to 8 beats in the following towns - Workington (3 beats); Maryport (1 beat); Whitehaven (2 beats) and Cleator Moor (2 beats).**

The figures were broken down further to show the number of offences per beat and road/street. This showed a connection between offences committed in adjacent roads and beats. The table (Fig. 3) shows the Area "Hotspots" over a 6-month period and breaks linked by being on adjacent roads along with the number of roads involved.

Beat	Number of Burglaries	Number of Burglaries Linked	Links with Adjacent Roads
U04*	25	13	4
U05*+	43	30	4
U06+	30	17	5
U19+	49	15	6
V05+	18	6	3
V06+	13	6	3
V13+	12	4	2
V14+	20	20	all

*Roping.

+Forced entry

Fig.3

□ For these offences there were two distinct MO's.

- A method known locally as 'roping' - where a rope or cord is passed through a letterbox, looped round the Yale latch lock and 'jiggled' to release it. This method was used predominantly to target elderly or infirm persons living in terraced & poorly secured premises on the Workington Town Centre beats (U04 and 05).

Out of 67 offences committed in the whole area in September 20 utilized the 'roping' MO – approximately 30% of the total figure.

It targeted the elderly attracting adverse and disproportionate media was reflected in feedback from community groups and consultation meetings.

- Forced entry, utilizing a bladed instrument to spring open windows or doors, normally to the rear. Analysis showed that occupants of the majority of these premises were on low income or State Aid. They were living in housing association housing stock with poor quality uPVC windows and doors offering poor security.

3.2 VICTIMS

- **All victims in these groups were found to be the more vulnerable members of the community, predominantly, the elderly but also including young people and single parents with young families. They were those living alone, on low income and least able to protect their property. We postulated that potential victims would mirror these findings.**

3.3 OFFENDERS

▫ Offender profiling took into account actual and suspected offenders

- Intelligence supplied by the Area Intelligence Unit formed the basis of our analysis. This intelligence was generated by daily and fortnightly tasking meetings, intelligence reports and directed cell intelligence interviews.
- As well as providing information on offenders and suspects this also provided information for victim profiling in relation to targeted premises and preferred methods of entry.

- **Offenders appeared to be predominantly drug abusers, who were, or had been, on rehabilitation schemes but failed to comply. They appeared to have no desire to kick the habit". They were in their early teens to twenties and lived away from the parental home often sleeping wherever they could find a roof – in effect no fixed abode.**

Their preferred victims were those living within or nearby the community in which the offender lives.

- Based on the above analysis it was decided to concentrate our efforts on addressing the aspects of location and victim. In our opinion this was a more effective use of available resources.

3.4 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Our analysis also highlighted further issues -

- There was a need to improve co-ordination between the processes of recording, investigation and prevention of crime.
- There was no effective means of identifying and targeting offenders and potential victims.
- Community Safety was not targeted or coordinated effectively.
- The perception that the problem was an area problem was misunderstood, and this lack of understanding was based upon limited research and analysis.

The problem had now been identified as a number of localized problems resulting in an area problem statistically.

It showed a lack of effective hot spot analysis and hence a failure to respond appropriately to it.

4. RESPONSE

Based upon this newly established level of understanding a strategy (**Appendix 6.2**) was drawn up to:

- Improve effectiveness.
- Reduce dwelling burglary, ultimately achieving the 6.6% reduction target
- Improve target hardening by linking with other agencies - a priority being the addressing of the problem of 'roping'.
- Reduce fear of crime by publication of our approach and results via the media.

These effectively became the success criteria for the Area.

Burglary dwelling was raised as the top priority for area operational policing at all levels. This was vigorously promoted and supported by the area commander and management team. Strong leadership and a willingness to actively promote dwelling burglary as the overriding policing priority provided a clarity and unity of purpose for

Our response was to be threefold:

- ❑ Short term - targeting of prolific offenders to both disrupt criminal activity and apprehend offenders coupled with improvements to crime scene management and a raising of awareness of the problem.
- ❑ Medium term - soft target hardening of high-risk potential victims in partnership with other organisations such as Age Concern.
- Long term - crime reduction strategies via Community Safety in partnership with other agencies such as housing associations.

4.1 COSTING

A bid outlining costing for the initiative was presented to central headquarters' funding. This resulted in an award of £22,000, boosting local funding to a total budget of £27,342. **(Appendix 6.3)**

4.2 TARGET HARDENING

Much of the work carried out across the area was targeted at the short-term problem. Community Safety projects however were medium to long-term initiatives, many of which are still ongoing. Through them the resources of other agencies were accessed to assist with particular dwelling burglary problems within a community. The Burglary Team worked closely with them on a number of projects. An Area Analysis was prepared for the Community Safety Department which highlighted hotspot areas and the specific MO's. **(Appendix 6.4)**

4.2.1 ROPING

After consultation with the local Royal Mail sorting office and a local engineer the Community Safety officers designed a device to be fitted internally to letterboxes **(Fig. 4)**



Prototype anti roping device. **Fig. 4**

This restricted the direct opening of the letterbox preventing the insertion of an instrument capable of reaching the lock. The Needham Drive Joinery Shop, a training workshop for the unemployed within the affected community, produced a prototype.

This was field tested by the Home Security Officer from Age Concern and after minor adjustments went into production. This device, in addition to a 5-level mortise lock, has now become an integral part of front door security, for the free/low cost security scheme provided by Age Concern for houses occupied by persons over 55 years of age. 120 of these devices have been supplied and fitted by Age Concern in target hardening schemes with a further 49 being fitted by the Neighbourhood Revitalisation Caring Service (NRCS), West Cumbria. This organisation has centred its efforts on those vulnerable members of the community who fall outside the Age Concern catchment group.

Persons eligible for the service are identified in a number of ways.

The "Hotspot" analysis was used to co-ordinate a leaflet drop sponsored and carried out by NRCS, bringing the service to the attention of residents.

- Officers attending crime scenes were requested to refer victims and potential victims'. The Community Safety Department designed a form for this purpose. This is submitted to Community Safety for referral to the appropriate body - Age Concern or NRCS.
- a Referrals are welcomed and encouraged from community nursing and mental health teams. Applicants are vetted on a need basis.

4.2.2 OTHER PROJECTS

The department also worked closely with the housing associations on target hardening projects. Their properties had been highlighted as being vulnerable to forced entry via poor quality uPVC doors and windows. One such project currently in the planning and financing stage is on the Westfield and Moorclose beats of Workington (highlighted as crime hotspots). Community Safety are working closely with the housing associations on the revitalisation of this area providing target hardening advice and expertise on both home security and external architectural engineering. A bid to the Government Office Northwest is currently under consideration, which it is hoped will match local funding boosting the available funds to £27,000.

On a smaller scale localised problems are regularly passed on to local associations and authorities via Community Involvement contacts. One example of these followed observations made by officers engaged on Operation Bill (see below), targeting a burglary hotspot in Firth View Walk. Officers highlighted the problems of inadequate lighting and high fences, which created an environment more attractive to offenders. The housing association are currently upgrading and improving street lighting in the area.

4.3 BURGLARY TEAM

The initiative was driven by the formation of a dedicated team, which linked in to detection and prevention measures, improving co-ordination between Community Safety and other staff. The team was involved in problem solving in all target areas and this was made more effective by the involvement of all officers and the encouragement of contact with the community at large. This approach known as mainstreaming aimed to make all staff feel they were contributing to tackling the problem.

The Team was created on 1⁶ October 2000 with terms of reference to:

- Effective execution of the Force Burglary Reduction Strategy_ (**Appendix 6.2**)
 - a Review all undetected dwelling burglaries.
 - Q investigate all dwelling burglaries.
- Co-ordinate all planned operations.
- Provide link and work in partnership with all departments, in particular Community Involvement Department.

The team carried out a review of all previously recorded dwelling burglaries for the year. This provided valuable data for the work on victim profiling, particularly regarding premises targeted and offender MOs. It also highlighted a number of quality control issues.

- Scene of Crime Officers were not being requested to attend all reported dwelling burglaries as they should have.
- House to house enquiries were being missed because of lack of co-ordination.
 - Officers attending scenes were highlighting dubious reports, but no reasons were being given and there were no follow up enquiries, many being filed at first submission as undetected
- Errors were being made in initial and final classification of offences, due mainly to officers ignorance of the Home Office classifications. in the worst case this amounted to 6 wrongly classified offences in June, almost 10% of the month's total of 69 offences. Accounting rules meant that these mistakes were irretrievable.
- Officers attending initial reports were not conducting basic Community Safety surveys or offering on the spot advice to victims, this was despite all officers having previously been given training in this field.

It was realised that clear guidance was required. After consultation, with help/crime desk staff and officers attending first reports of crime, reference documents were prepared and sent to all beat officers. (**Appendix 6.5**)

□ **Operation "Ventrice"**

This involved local officers carrying out high visibility patrols, coupled with a "knock, knock " exercise. Information was directly requested from residents by knocking at their doors and asking about crime and offenders in the area. This was followed up by the execution of warrants resulting in the arrest of 13 persons for burglary, handling and other offences. There was a significant drop in overall crime in the area and burglaries dropped from an average of 6 per month, to 2 in November and zero in December and January.

By also including suspected offenders on "hotspot" analysis, and the encouragement of a dynamic targeting policy, subjects were vigorously targeted by all staff on a daily basis. This was progressed through daily tasking. Regular stop checks provided valuable intelligence and frustrated their criminal activities. Targeted offenders were often arrested for other offences, such as shop theft and drugs offences, resulting in bail with conditions or custodial sentences. This removed the opportunity to commit burglaries. Examples of the success of this tactic follow refer to **Fig.5** below for graphical representation.

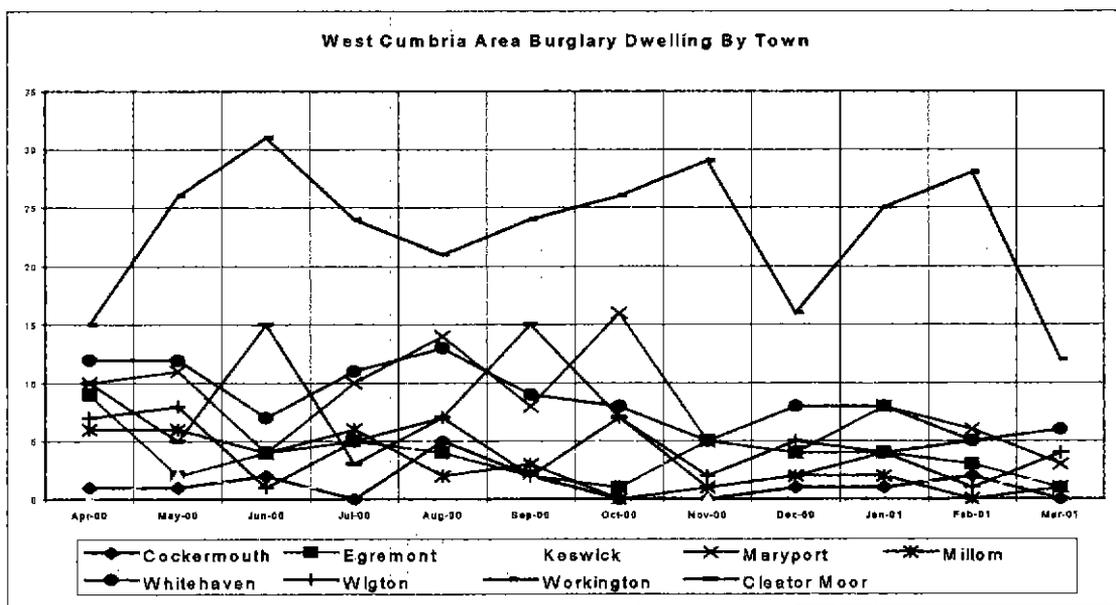


Fig. 5

- Three local criminals were suspected of committing burglaries in the Workington area during the months of October and November. Targeting resulted in two of them being placed on conditional bail and the third was recalled on licence. The burglary rate dropped from 28 offences in November to 16 in December.
- Three other local criminals were released from prison at the end of December. The burglary rate rose rapidly to a peak of 25 in Workington for January and 30 for February. Following targeting, one was remanded in custody and the other two placed on conditional bail. The burglary rate for March fell to 12 offences

This method of linking Crime Pattern Analysis with offender analysis as a basis for effective targeting is now accepted as best practice in the Area.

42.3 MEDIA

The local press were approached and an undertaking made to work together in an open and positive manner.

Over the following months a close relationship was built. Reporters were invited to accompany the team on specific crime operations and were given a first hand insight into what we were actually doing to counter local burglary problems. This led to a number of positive articles linked to requests for information. The Crimestoppers number was always included. Results generated by information from the public were highlighted in the press. **(Appendix 6.1)**.

The effect on the local area was to reduce the fear of crime. Feedback from victims reflected their feeling that something positive was being done. Members of the criminal fraternity freely admitted that they were dissuaded from targeting dwelling houses because of the reported activities of the Burglary Team in the press and the raising of public awareness caused by the articles.

5. ASSESSMENT

In addressing this strategic issue we utilized wherever possible the European Foundation for Quality Management model. We used it initially to set out our position statement and have utilized this as a reviewing tool through out. **(Appendices 6.6)**

The ultimate aim was achieved - the reduction of dwelling burglary across the area.

- This amounted to a reduction of 9.2 % (75 offences) over the previous year - a 24.2 % reduction since the inception of the initiative.
- The trend across the area now indicates a downward slope .
- There was no knock on effect. All other crime followed its pre-initiative trend and has remained within reduction targets.
- We have reduced crime significantly in all beats identified as "hotspots" in our initial analysis.
- Following the introduction of the letterbox device the "roping" MO has ceased to be a major problem in the targeted areas. **(Fig 6)** This device is being progressed by Community Safety with a view to its use in other areas.

Beat	Average per Beat Per month Prior to Initiative	Average per Beat Per Month at End of Initiative
U04	4.2	0.5
U05	7.1	0.5
U06	5	1.5
U19	7.5	1.5
V05	3	0.5
V06	2.1	0
V13	2	0
V14	3.3	2

Fig. 6

- The profile of dwelling burglary has been raised and promoted as a shared problem.
 - Internally, amongst staff and departments, by its acceptance as the main priority. This has led to a more appropriate feed of information to and from the Area Intelligence Unit and a better understanding by staff of local problems.
 - Externally, amongst our partners within the community, by our extensive promotion and involvement in crime reduction strategies.
- Improved investigation of crime increased public satisfaction.
 - Highlighted by positive feedback received by officers at crime scenes and follow up visits to injured parties.
 - A Management Information Office survey of burglary victims in West Cumbria was carried out in December 2000. This showed that 90.6% of victims were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received.
- G We reduced the fear of crime by favorable coverage of our successes in the press..
 - Measured by favorable feed back from the public both directly to team members and via local community forum.
 - By the promotion of crimestoppers and requests for information coupled with the feedback of positive results, we have engendered a feeling of empowerment to the general public. We received 7 Crimestopper calls specific to burglaries in the Workington area during the initiative compared with none for the previous 12 months.