
ROTHERHAM COMMUNITY
SAFETY DEPARTMENT

together we can make a difference"

Tilley Award 2002

The Autocrime Project

Category: Crime & Disorder Reduction
Home Office Priority Area: Vehicle Crime

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Summary

The Autocrime project was created following a crime survey which took place in 1997 as part of a bid for funding under the then Government sponsored 'Rural Challenge' scheme. This survey, along with local consultation work and analysis of Police Crime Statistics identified vehicle crime in the 'Rotherham South' area as one of the main concerns for the community.

This project was managed by the South Yorkshire Police and had two main objectives;

- The provision of defensive measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of target groups suffering car crime.
- Improving the quality of life for residents in the area by reducing crime and preventing repeat victimisation.

The method of meeting the aims of the project centred on providing, free of charge, of vehicle security devices along with Crime Reduction advice relating to vehicle security.

A criterion for identifying suitable recipients for the security devices was agreed.

The project commenced on 1st June 1998 and over the next three years a total of 241 security devices were issued. This accompanied a reduction in the incidence of theft of vehicles in the target area from 324 in the first year down to 113 in the third year. This represented an overall reduction of some 65% in vehicle related crime during the life of the project in the target area during the life of the project.

Recipients of the security devices have been subject to ongoing surveys and this has consistently proved that in 100% of cases none of their vehicles had been stolen, whilst the device was being used.

As a result of the success of the project further funding was obtained in order to both continue the project and to expand it across the whole of the Rotherham Borough area. Other existing vehicle crime reduction initiatives were linked to the expanded project including the 'Vulnerable Vehicle' scheme, 'Vehidewatch 25' and 'Vehiclewatch'.

The project is progressing well and reports of vehicle thefts are continuing to decrease.

Background Information

In 1994 the then Minister of the Environment & Countryside launched a scheme entitled *Rural Challenge*. The Minister announced that additional resources would be made available to the Rural Development Commission (now Yorkshire Forward) to launch a competition designed to promote new partnerships which would make a significant impact on particular rural economic and social problems in Rural Priority Development Areas (RDAs).

The commission could make awards of up to £1 million pounds for those local partnerships in RDAs which submitted the best proposals for tackling particular economic and social problems.

The area of Rotherham designated a Rural Development Area (South Rotherham) covers approximately 57 square miles and population of around 22,000 people representing some 10% of the total Rotherham population.

The main populated areas covered by the scheme are the villages of Kiveton Park, Wales, Todwick, North and South Anston, Harthill and Thorpe Salvin.

Although classed as rural, South Rotherham had in the past largely depended on heavy industries such as coal mining and the steel industry for employment. The radical restructuring of these industries from the 1970's on has had a profound and lasting effect on the area. The accelerated decline of employment opportunities coupled with wider social and economic changes led to high unemployment and bleak job prospects especially for young people.

There was a rising crime rate in the RDA during 1996/7 and a crime survey conducted at the time highlighted that the community felt the single highest priority for the improvement of the quality of life was the reduction of crime. Most of the other priorities were associated with young people.

An extensive consultation with local community took place including a survey of 3,000 households was carried out and the 'South Rotherham Young People and Community Safety Programme', was born.

A bid was submitted to the Rural Development Commission and resulted in an award of some £750,000, to commence from 1st April 1998 for a period of three years. The programme design was aimed at improving the quality of life for people in the South Rotherham RDA through the reduction of crime,

enhancement of community safety and the development of young peoples' participation in their communities.

There were a total of seventeen planned projects involving partnerships between the community and voluntary and statutory organisations.

The crime survey along with the consultation work that was carried out highlighted, as stated, concerns about increasing crime. One of the main areas of concern was in relation to vehicle crime. This led to the creation of the Autocrime Project.

The Autocrime Project

This Project was managed by the South Yorkshire Police and had two main aims:

1. The provision of defensive measures aimed at reducing the likelihood of target groups suffering car crime.
2. Improving the quality of life for residents in the Rural Development Area by reducing crime and repeat victimisation.

The method of meeting the aims of the project centred around the free provision of vehicle security devices along with professional advice regarding vehicle security.

The chosen security device for the project was the *Autolok 2000* (see appendix 1,) which met both the *'sold secure'* and *Thatcham'* security standards.

The device provides a physical and visible deterrent to all but the most determined of criminals and is very difficult to remove without causing extreme damage.

The criteria used to identify suitable recipients for a vehicle security device was:

1. They reside in the South Rotherham target area **or**
2. They work in the South Rotherham target area **and**
3. They had been victims of vehicle crime.

A pro-forma letter, (appendix 2) was devised for the recipients of the locks, which provided details of the project, some basic vehicle security advice and a named contact in case of any queries.

In addition we devised another form which incorporated a receipt and disclaimer, (appendix 3) which the recipients were requested to sign when provided with an *'Autolok 2000'*. This was also used as a record of whom the locks had been issued to and for auditing purposes.

The Inspector in charge of the area carried out the administration of the project with monthly performance updates being provided to the manager in

Autolok 2000 supplied by Solon Security Ltd, of Greenfield, Fiintshire.

THE AUTOLOK PROJECT - TILLEY AWARD 2002

overall charge of the scheme. This was extended to every two months as the scheme progressed.

The actual delivery of the security devices to the recipients was carried out by the two local community Officers based at Kiveton Park section Station.

There was also regular input and liaison with the District Crime Reduction Officer who assisted with the targeting of the Autocrime 'hotspots' so we could direct the delivery of the vehicle security devices to those areas. This was linked to our problem solving approach to Policing and became an integral part of our operational efforts to target car crime in the South Rotherham Area.

As shown in the graph (appendix 4), vehicle thefts in the area was on an increasing trend, with an average of some 428 offences each year² for the five years preceding the project.

The Autocrime project actually commenced on 1st June 1998. In the first 12 months - 1st June 1998 to 31st May 1999 - there were **324** vehicles stolen or taken without the owner's consent in the target area. We had issued a total of 43 vehicle security devices.

In the next period - 1st June 1999 to 31st May 2000 - there were **195** vehicles stolen or taken without the owner's consent in the target area. This represented a reduction of some **40%** (129 less offences) over the first period.

We had issued 98 vehicle security devices during that period, making a total of 141 issued during the project to that point.

In the final period - 1st June 2000 to 31st May 2001 - there were **113** vehicles stolen or taken without the owner's consent. This represented a reduction of some **42%** (82 less offences) over the second period.

We had issued 100 vehicle security devices during that period. We therefore issued a total of 241 Autolok 2000 vehicle security devices during the project.

Over the three years that the project had been in operation this showed a total of **211** less offences (see Appendix 5) and represented an overall reduction of some **65%**.

² For the purposes of this project the 'year' was 1st June to 31st May.

We have followed this by telephone surveys based on the same format and the results have continued to be excellent. The final survey at the conclusion of the project has showed that the percentage of people who used the vehicle security device every time they left their vehicle unattended had reduced to 60%. Though It was very pleasing to find that it had remained the case that none of the recipients we surveyed had, had their vehicle attacked or stolen whilst the vehicle security device was being used.

The Next Stage

The project has been so successful we made further bids for funding to both continue it in South Rotherham and expand it across the whole of the Rotherham area. This is an area of some 200 square miles and contains a population of around 250,000 people. It also includes the Rotherham town centre and highly populated residential areas around it.

In October 2001 we were successful in obtaining £9,000 from the South Yorkshire Police authority, Community Initiatives Programme (C.I.P). This allowed us to purchase a further 225, Autolok 2000 devices. This was for the whole of Rotherham Borough.

In addition we obtained ; 14,000 from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (N.R.F), this enabled the purchase of a further 350 devices. More funding came from applications to Yorkshire Forward and Objective One, which provided the funds to purchase 700 extra units for issue over 2002, 2003.

We now decided to follow a more focussed criterion than previously. Based upon Home Office and Crime Reduction advice we altered the allocation policy to include:

- To target motor vehicles which had been registered prior to `M' plate or 1995 which in general were not subject to legislation requiring manufacturers to fit immobilisers as standard and therefore making them more vulnerable to attack.
- To focus on crime hotspots where both the victims of car crime and those owning pre- 1995 vehicles would be offered a security device.

All victims of car crime whose vehicles align with this profile are automatically sent a letter at the point of recording the crime; this raises awareness of the project and offers the security device. A voucher is enclosed which the recipient takes, along with the registration document for the vehicle in question, to the joint police, community and Neighbour hood Watch shop, `Out of the Blue' in Rotherham town centre. There the voucher is exchanged for an Autolok 2000 device free of charge.

The shop is an innovative venture, staffed by volunteers from the community offering a broad range of crime prevention items for sale along with associated advice literature. This has proved to be the ideal outlet for the distribution of the devices.

We have taken steps in order to link in our other car crime reduction projects namely:

- The Vulnerable Vehicle Scheme. This targets vehicles seen by patrolling officers or Neighbourhood Watch members, which are insecure, or with valuables on display. The registered keeper is sent a letter advising on aspects of vehicle security.
- Vehiclewatch 25 Scheme. This is designed to increase the likelihood of a stolen vehicle being seen and stopped by police. Because the known target age group of offenders is below 25 years of age, the scheme enables owners who are over that age and whose vehicles are never driven by anyone in that age bracket to join. They are provided with reflective Vehiclewatch 25 stickers to place on the front and rear of their cars. If the police then see someone driving who is apparently under 25 it will be stopped.
- Vehiclewatch scheme. This operates along the same lines but applies to the motorist who doesn't normally use his vehicle between midnight and 5am.

Once this union had been achieved we set about targeting the identified 'hotspots' with this package of car crime reduction initiatives, (see appendices 6,7,8).

The baseline figures for car thefts throughout the Rotherham Borough during the previous five years, and during the life of the project a very pleasing downward profile has emerged, (see appendix 9). At its height in 1996/1997 there were 2786 offences, which by 2000/2001 had dropped to 1523.

By close scrutiny of the crime statistics by the Crime Analyst we were able to identify those areas of the District where the downward trend was not quite so evident.

This process of evaluation and moving the focus is a continual one, this provides us with the flexibility to add or remove hotspots where appropriate to do so. To move the attention to a different area is a simple and speedy process, which has no resource implications for our team.

A survey of 100 Autolok 2000 recipients was carried out in April 2002 in order to monitor the use and effectiveness of the project. Recipients from each year of the project's life were selected at random in order to yield a cross-section of information from across the District.

We achieved a higher than average response rate of over 60% which indicated that 100% of the respondents have been free of car theft since being issued with their devices. 80% of those responding said the project had raised their awareness and understanding of car crime. 52% of those who replied had been the victim of car crime two or more times prior to being issued with their device.

One of the respondents wrote, " **I feel very confident leaving my vehicle now because, being disabled I would be more handicapped with no car. Please pass on my thanks to Autolok 2000 and your personnel.**"

■ This project has received very positive press coverage throughout, which, in addition to raising the profile of the project, also help promote one of our initial aims by reducing the fear of crime (see appendix 10).

Overall this project has been very well received by the community in Rotherham and has in our view had a positive impact upon the crime figures in the Borough.

Appendix 1



Autolok 2000 security device in
locked position on steering
wheel

Appendix 2

*Inspector Steve Lavin,
Dinnington Police Station,
Loughran Road,
Dinning-ton S25 2PP*

01709 832700

I am aware of your recent, unfortunate incident when your vehicle was attacked and I can assure you that we are doing everything possible to find the persons responsible and bring them to justice.

However, in addition to this, there is a current project being run jointly by the Police and the "**Challenge Partnership Group**" (C.P.G.) which is more involved with Crime prevention rather than detection.

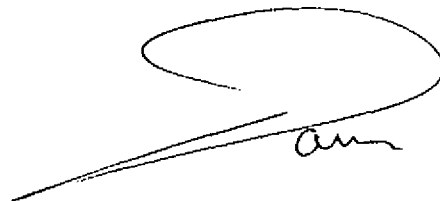
The C.P.G. Is a steering group responsible for the delivery of a number of Community based projects funded by the Rural Development Commission, one of which is the 'Auto crime prevention' project.

Because you have had the misfortune to suffer from vehicle crime, you have been selected to receive a recommended security device, free of charge.

It must be remembered that this device alone, will not secure your vehicle. All the other standard security methods must be employed in addition to this device.

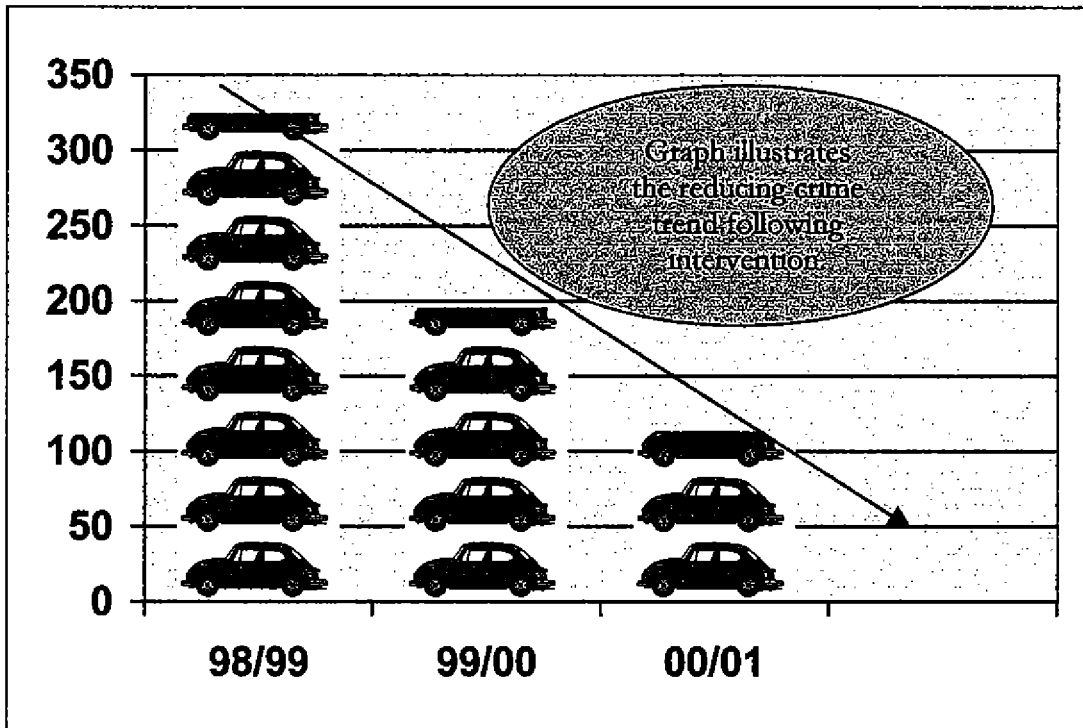
- Always lock your car when it is unattended
- + Always place valuables out of sight
- Where possible, do not leave your car in unlit or remote areas
- Always activate alarms and immobilisers when the car is unattended
- Use the security device at all times: even when leaving the car for short periods

You will be contacted at a later stage to ask you a few brief questions about the device and how you have used it. Please contact me if you have any difficulties with the device or if you wish to discuss any matter relating to vehicle security.



Inspector Steve Lavin


Appendix 5



Appendix 6

Form for use by
Police and
NHW members.

Application form for
membership of
vehicle 25 scheme.

 **South Yorkshire**
POLICE
JUSTICE WITH COURAGE

**VULNERABLE
VEHICLE
SCHEME**

WORKING FOR
SAFER COMMUNITIES

REG NO _____

MAKE _____

DATE/TIME _____

WHERE SEEN _____

REASON _____

YOUR NAME _____

PC / TW / SC / OTHER _____
Delote as not applicable

VEHICLE 25+

Vehicle Watch 25+ is a scheme designed to increase the likelihood of a stolen vehicle being spotted and stopped by the Police. If you are aged over 25, own a vehicle and live or work in Rotherham you can attach reflective Vehicle Watch 25+ stickers to the front and rear windcreens. If the vehicle is seen being driven by someone apparently under the aged of 25 it may be stopped and checked.

**ROTHERHAM VEHICLE WATCH 25
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Title _____

First name _____

Surname _____

Age _____

Home or work address _____

Area _____

Town _____

POSTCODE _____

Vehicle make _____

Vehicle model _____

Registration number: _____

Colour _____

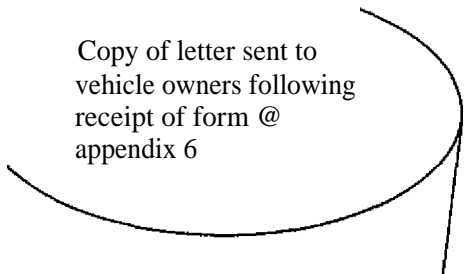
Date joined: _____

Have you been a victim of car crime previously? If so, please tick check box

Please return form to:-
Vehicle Watch Administrator,
Rawmarsh Police Station,
Green Lane,
Rotherham
S62 6JW

Appendix 7

Copy of letter sent to
vehicle owners following
receipt of form @
appendix 6



Rotherham

Dear

Over recent months Rotherham area has seen a reduction in theft of motor vehicles. However, there has been a worrying increase in the theft from unattended motor vehicles. By far the largest proportion of crime remains the area of theft from unattended motor vehicles. Criminals will always seize the opportunity to steal property left on display in insecure or unattended motor vehicles.

Records show that you are the registered keeper of the below vehicle:

On your vehicle was seen at

With property on display

Rotherham Police would like to take this opportunity to work with you to deter these criminals. It may only take a few seconds for a thief to steal your vehicle, but even less time to remove property from it. We do not want you to become a victim of crime.

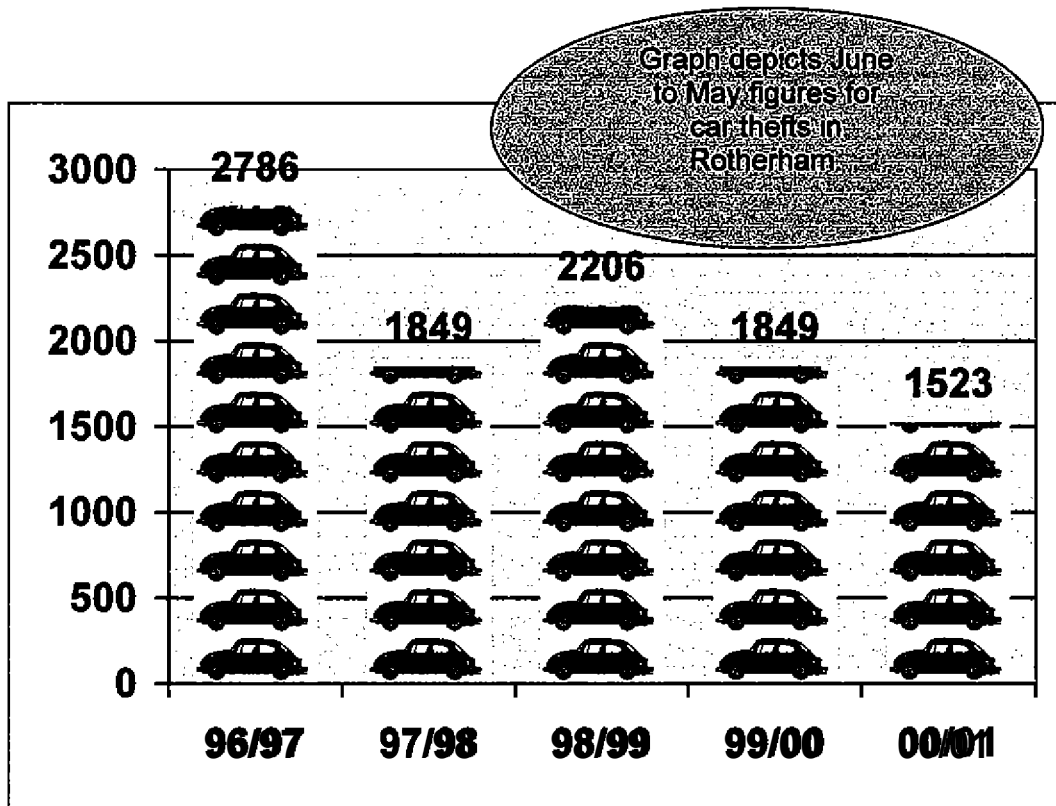
We have enclosed a sticker which we recommend you place in your driver's door window as a reminder to yourself to secure your vehicle and remove all property. We have also included some Home Office literature, which gives some simple crime reduction advice.

I thank you in anticipation of your support to reduce crime within the Rotherham area.

Yours faithfully

Andy Brooke
Chief inspector
(partnership and Support)

Appendix 9



LI

Appendix 10

Steering lock helps huge cut in crime

11TC:frst pccsphi wip hays hail a car

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Inspector Stove Lavin with links olott In Rotherham.

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PERIOD	VEHICLES STOLEN	LOCKS ISSUED	CRIME DOWN

Positive press coverage of scheme.