



Operation Strongbow 'Tackling Bogus Offending'



**Submitted for consideration of the 'Tilley Award' by
DI Colin Tansley
Force Intelligence
Cleveland Police**

**Endorsed by
Detective Chief Superintendent John Kelly
Head of Crime
Police Headquarters,
Ladgate Lane,
Middlesbrough
TS8 9EH
01642 301716**

colin.tansley@cleveland.pnn.police.uk

Summary

Tackling Bogus Offending in Cleveland

Bogus official and distraction burglaries are disgraceful crimes carried out by criminals with no conscience. Their targets are mainly the elderly and vulnerable who are deceived into inviting thieves, who often pose as utility officials, into their homes.

Statistics suggest that the majority of victims are women in their 80's who live alone. Once they have been duped the offence will often leave them psychologically damaged, wary of strangers, and frightened of a knock at their door. Many older people retreat into themselves, becoming virtual prisoners in their own homes, with the prospect of an early death is a very real possibility.

The people who carry out these crimes are professional criminals, well versed in the forensic techniques available to the police and can travel hundreds of miles in one day to visit targets "traded" with each other. They are well aware that older victims do not, as a rule, fulfil the stringent evidential requirements placed on witnesses by the criminal justice system. Confusion and fear often set in after an attack aggravated particularly when an identification procedure is required.

Such offences are on the increase and because of the combined factors outlined above, make detection extremely difficult.

Force intelligence staff were able to highlight this problem due to the successful introduction of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) underpinned by implementation of processes and analytical products.

In June 2003 Operation Strongbow was introduced in the Cleveland Police area. It was clear though that a purely enforcement approach would only derive short-term benefits and not a lasting solution to an issue that had been endemic in the United Kingdom since the early 1960's. Early in the project, steps were taken to engage appropriate partners.

The SARA (scanning, analysis, response and assessment) continues to be used to enhance and improve the multi-agency working that has been successfully introduced to counter the growth in offending, prevent and reduce such crimes, at the same time educating and empowering older people.

In seven months Cleveland Police has achieved an improvement in the detection rate from 3% to 33%, 17 offenders have been arrested and charged with offences, the intelligence picture has been complemented, awareness has been raised at a number of levels and various bodies are vigorously working towards other responses to tackle other issues associated with the problem.

Introduction

The Cleveland Police area covers 230 square miles and is divided into four territorial Districts of Hartlepool, Langbaugh, Middlesbrough and Stockton, all coterminous with the four unitary boroughs. This allows for better integration of policing and local government services and, in turn, increases the opportunities for partnership working.

More than 500,000 people live in the area, which is a mix of large urban conurbations, with high-density populations, and several smaller rural communities. Several socio-demographic characteristics exist which require enhanced levels of policing to combat the fear of crime.

They include:

- A population volume of 9.3 people per hectare, as compared with the national average of 3.5. In Middlesbrough this figure rises to 27 people per hectare.
- High rates of unemployment, 9.3% of people eligible for work are unemployed, the national average being 3.9%
- High proportions of single parent households, 5.5% compared with the national average of 4.3%

Of particular relevance to the problem in hand, and according to the 2001 census, 98,500 people over retirement age live in the Cleveland Police area, and, in keeping with the national average, around 15% of the total population are households where a pensioner lives alone.

Scanning



Cleveland Police began full implementation of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) in August 2002. The project is headed by the Director of Intelligence, with day-to-day management assigned to a Detective Inspector based at Force Headquarters. A team is in place from across the organisation from a variety of departments with a broad range of specialisms. Regular meetings set out to ensure the exacting standards of the model are firmly in place for Spring 2004.

The NIM has several aims and objectives, but fundamental to its success is a corporate and standardised approach to intelligence, with ownership and accountability at all levels.

Crime recording in its purest form is essentially data collection, feeding and informing the intelligence process. Without the highest standards of information gathering the organisation can swiftly move to a 'garbage in, garbage out' syndrome, in turn crippling and hindering the proper investigative process.

Over several years and for a host of reasons the 'investigation' of crime has become secondary to the 'recording' of crime. In common with many police forces in the UK the ability to follow up complex crimes in Cleveland was proving extremely difficult - not least in the area of 'bogus' crime, a type of offence also referred to as 'artifice', which involves offenders gaining entry to a dwelling by way of a trick or deception, or charging vastly inflated prices for sub-standard building or gardening work.

Offenders involved in this type of offence are well versed in the art of gaining the confidence of vulnerable and older people by using a range of methods. These were known to include, posing as utility officials, workmen and gardeners. Their web is vast, far reaching and known to extend nationwide.

Pockets of good practice exist in the UK to tackle the problem (Operation Litotes and Liberal as examples) and that expertise and assistance is acknowledged. However, most police and other agency responses are fragmented in nature and lack a truly co-ordinated approach.

In January 2003 each Force in the Northern Regional Intelligence Group (RIG), consisting of Cleveland, Durham, Northumbria and North Yorkshire, were tasked with preparing a Problem Profile relating to bogus official and distraction burglary, reviewing in particular the period January-November 2002.

Subsequent comparison of the analysis showed obvious similarities in terms of modus operandi, victims, times and days. As a result Distraction Burglary was entered onto the agenda for the region and became a part of the control strategy.

Although Cleveland's Problem Profile at that time showed that distraction burglary accounted for only 2% of reported house burglaries, there was a general upward trend coupled with the suspicion that a large number of such crimes were going unreported.

This aspect of victim characteristics is strongly suspected to be due to a fear amongst older victims in particular, of losing their independence and being moved to sheltered accommodation if family members discovered that they had been subject of such a crime.

An officer based at one of the four Districts in the force had been employed as a data collection officer for some years. His role was to revisit victims of house burglary and gather further information to help in the investigation. He had become acutely aware of the problem of distraction burglaries and was particularly concerned about the rise in this area of crime.

In an email to the Director of Intelligence the officer explained how an initiative being piloted in the South West of England (Operation Litotes) was proving to be effective method of responding to the problem. A visit was arranged; information was brought back to Cleveland with workshop sessions held to develop innovative ideas as to the best way forward.

In June 2003 the Head of Crime decided to second an officer to the Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) at Headquarters. The officer, an experienced detective, who at that time was employed in the crimes desk at Stockton District was tasked to revisit the scenes of all distraction burglaries committed since January 1st of that year.

Using a questionnaire detailed and in-depth information would be gathered and fed into a database maintained by the FIB. The data would include an expanded MO, descriptive details of the suspects and the tenure of the property.

Albeit historical, this information would provide the force with a foundation upon which to conduct analysis, formulate responses and conduct an ongoing assessment in order that a culture of continuous improvement was inbuilt.

Other key decisions were made at an early stage. Firstly, the analyst employed on the burglary desk in the FIB was tasked via established NIM processes to prepare an up-to-date and current 'problem profile'. Using these analytical techniques and products as prescribed by the NIM the SARA methodology would be better informed, in the future driving a vigorous, intelligence-led approach to the problem.

A Detective Inspector, who already had responsibility for NIM implementation, was appointed as manager for the project. Operation Strongbow had taken its first early steps, and with a detection rate of 3% and an ever-growing crime rate there was much to be done.

Analysis



Early scanning and research concluded that to effectively address the complex problem of bogus offending a multi-faceted approach had to be adopted. The police could not go it alone if the operation was to be successful. The advice and assistance of an expert in the field was sought at an early stage and [REDACTED] an ex Detective Chief Superintendent was contacted.

[REDACTED] had investigated the vicious murder of [REDACTED] in Leeds in 1997. Although the murder remains undetected it is strongly suspected that those responsible were 'bogus' offenders.

Prior to retiring from West Yorkshire Police he compiled extensive research for the Home Office, this proved invaluable to the analysis stage of the process. Now employed by the North of England Trading Standards Group he is well respected and continues to be influential in the area of advising on policy. Latterly, lobbying parliament for legislation to combat the insidious nature of the offenders.

His findings mirrored almost exactly that of the analysis conducted in the FIB. Victims were predominantly female, living on their own and aged 80 years or over. Offenders were invariably professional, ruthless and targeted the older people who lacked the informal support networks most take for granted.

They tended to be easy prey for the offenders, being easily intimidated, conned and often bullied.

The offenders have a far-reaching network, sharing information about their illicit financial gains. Crimes were often suspected of being planned in advance, making the prospect of some victims being targeted again and again a distinct possibility.

And the prospect of an untimely death following a visit from this type of offender had to be uppermost in the minds of the agencies dedicated to responding to this type of crime.

Between January and June 2003 Cleveland Police had received and responded to around 150 complaints of bogus official and distraction burglary. However, it was already known that a large number of offences went unreported.

There are many reasons for this; already mentioned, the fact that older victims feared that their family would take away their independence and place them in sheltered accommodation. This was aggravated by the belief that the offenders may return if the offence was reported to the police, and the victims themselves would be ridiculed as incapable of handling their own affairs.

Response



A number of responses were formulated and a summary follows below. It has to be explained that the 'assessment' phase of SARA was ever present and whilst difficult to evidence, the gradual build up of responses came about due to a continual assessment that was inbuilt from inception of the project. This will be expanded upon in the next section.

It was evident that a response based on purely on traditional police methods would achieve little other than disruption, several arrests and a smattering of intelligence.

Cleveland Police are fortunate to have an enviable and dynamic network of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) operating in the districts. Multi-agency working had a firm foundation in Teesside and there already existed a willingness to utilise the partnership approach to tackle crime and disorder.

It was decided at an early stage that this relationship had to be exploited to its full potential, in order that the project could be underpinned and supported. Prevention, reduction and enforcement were essential, intertwining elements of the strategy.

In September 2003 a partnership briefing on Operation Strongbow was organised at Police Headquarters. Numerous parties were invited, these included all CDRP community safety coordinators, Age Concern, Help the Aged, Safe in Tees Valley, Victim Support, Energywatch, various utility companies, Trading Standards, Housing Improvement Agencies, HM Customs and Excise, surrounding police forces, with representatives of the Cleveland Police Authority also in attendance.

The briefing included a presentation by [REDACTED] regarding the tragic murder of [REDACTED] and how as a result he was forced to conclude that society was letting older people down.

He was adamant that simple changes would reap huge benefits. He spoke of agencies compounding the problem of bogus offences when providing their representatives with identity cards that the older eye cannot read. He explained how older people are 'groomed' by agency representatives into believing that the offender will not return and are lulled into a false sense of security.

The audience were left under no illusion that responsibility lay firmly at the door of responsible agencies to make the necessary changes.

Next came an overview of the position in relation to Operation Strongbow, and proposals for the future. A project group had been formed in June and was predominantly made up of police staff. This required reshaping.

At its head would sit an executive group responsible for the strategic overview. Three sub groups were suggested to address each aspect of the crime triangle, i.e. victim, offender and location.

Following the briefing a representative of Social Services agreed to chair the victim group, Trading Standards took responsibility for the offender group and the location group was adopted by Safe in Tees Valley.

Meetings of the executive group are held bi-monthly, with chairs of the sub-groups being represented. Sub groups hold their meetings the following month and bi-monthly thereafter to ensure a constant exchange of information exists between all groups.

An action plan has recently been formulated, with short, medium and long-term aims. The objectives are many and varied (see appendix). For example it is an aim of the victim group to make it easier for older and vulnerable people to report crime; the offender group are expected to co-ordinate their efforts to target offenders; while the development of a

meaningful and appropriate crime prevention pack for older people is allocated as an action to the location group.

At a tactical level it was a fundamental principle that the initial response by the police had to be improved in order to maximise opportunities for detection of the offence. For this reason a **'trigger plan'** (see appendix) was introduced and set out 'minimum standards' that are expected of communication centre staff, responding police officers, their supervisors and scenes of crimes officers (SOCO).

Officers attending are tasked with ensuring that the needs of the victim are taken into account; that full details of the suspect and the offence are obtained; a witness statement taken; house-to-house enquiries carried out; SOCO called in for every case and that consideration is given to an E-fit image.

Operation Strongbow became a standing agenda item at the Level 2 Tasking and Co-ordination Group (T&CG). This was a critical component of the strategy, and undertaken for several reasons.

Firstly, the nature of the offender was such that they crossed district and force boundaries. It was already recognised that Districts, operating in isolation when tackling the problem, were not achieving noticeable degrees of success. A co-ordinated approach was essential to connect and swiftly act upon an identified series.

In the past it had been left to the various Districts to link crime series (crimes thought to be committed by the same offender or group of offenders). But with a growing list of priorities in other areas of volume and drug related crime this was proving extremely difficult for Districts to do.

Secondly, the very nature of the meeting had an inbuilt system of accountability and ownership - an ideal forum for the Head of Crime, and chair of the meeting to ensure that key staff and managers were left in no doubt that bogus crime was a priority.

Finally, analytical products in the form of target and problem profiles could be actioned from the meeting to either Level 1 (Local) or Level 2 (Cross Border) resources. The NIM became a platform to drive forward the intelligence and analysis produced from both the Strongbow team and the FIB.

One of the recurring and predominant features of the offender was the need to be mobile in order to travel the distances required to avoid detection. Recognised early in the analysis this became key to the disruption and intelligence gathering tactics.

██ had been delivered to the force some months earlier and was proving to be an effective means of denying criminals the use of the roads. A 'bogus' database was developed and populated with suspect vehicles; processes were put in place to pass the data regularly to the ██████████

The links between bogus property repairers and bogus officials had become evident in a number of offences. It was strongly suspected that a large number of these offenders had embedded themselves into the travelling community. Several 'temporary' caravan sites were located throughout the Cleveland Police area and vehicles fitting the descriptions of those believed to be involved in crime were appearing on the sites.

Via the Level 2 T&CG an intelligence requirement was developed and disseminated. Based on analysis conducted in FIB, a profile had been prepared of the typical bogus offender and vehicle. This was placed on the dedicated intranet web page. Officers were tasked to notify the Strongbow office whenever they sighted a van bearing livery describing property and garden repairs, particularly where a mobile phone number was displayed without a business

address. Wherever possible it was requested that the vehicle was stopped and checked with the driver and occupant details obtained.

Operation Wexford, piloted to evaluate the worth of a partnership approach when tackling 'bogus' vehicle borne offending was launched on the 5th November 2003. Cleveland Police [REDACTED] complemented by Trading Standards, the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA), HM Customs and the Benefits Agency as a combined force set out to tackle the bogus offenders.

Use of the media was also recognised as an important tactic to raise awareness of the crime, educate older adults and celebrate the successes of the initiative. The Force press officer was seen as an essential member of the Executive Group and has proved invaluable in regularly arranging press interviews and features. To date there have been numerous appearances on both national and local television news, Crimestoppers and press items in local newspapers.

Two other experienced detectives were seconded onto the team to provide the much-needed degree of pro-activity required at Level 2. They were able to gather information and liaise with colleagues at the Districts. This proved effective, as they were able to organise intelligence gathering and arrest operations.

To prevent offences and assist older people steps were taken to improve the means of identification of those officers assigned to the Strongbow team. This was seen as extremely important, through the media the police and other agencies were urging people to carefully scrutinise identity cards. But most were reliant on the traditional pocket sized type.

Arrangements were made for Strongbow officers to attend the photographic studio and have their warrant cards expanded to A4 size and laminated. This instantly proved to be of use when one of the officers attended the home of an older person who had been a victim of crime. In accordance with the advice she refused entry to the officer until identity had been properly established.

She was unable to read small print. The larger version was posted through the letterbox and the victim was only then able to assess the officer's credentials.

Constant policing of the quality of the crimes submitted by first responding officers, and in some cases the lack of crimes being recorded, was an important element and necessary to ensure that evidential and intelligence opportunities were optimised.

On a daily basis the Strongbow team trawled incident and crime recording systems to ensure that qualitative data had been obtained, checking in particular that where a crime had been reported the trigger plan had been complied with. It became apparent that on some occasions officers did not recognise the relevance of entering suspect details into the appropriate field of the crime report.

This had the effect of disadvantaging analytical staff when comparing offences and was hampering efforts to make progress in linking crimes. As a result the Head of Crime despatched a circular to all officers and crime desks reminding them of their responsibilities.

Improving the communication flow continues to be an integral part of the Strongbow approach. At the Executive Group meeting a tactical update is given on enforcement activity and current arrests, this has been well received by agency representatives and tends to reinforce the positive effects of the tactics that have been adopted so far.

In December 2003 all operational officers in the force were issued with the Strongbow 'Top Ten' targets. These individuals had all been identified through intelligence and analytical work as being strongly suspected of committing bogus offences. This leaflet also included the trigger plan, the definition of an artifice crime and folded down into pocket size.

Its use proved invaluable. Within days of the issue two of the targets were located and arrested in an operation co-ordinated from Operation Strongbow with the assistance of District CID officers.

In January 2004 Cleveland Police hosted a regional intelligence-sharing meeting between surrounding police forces. It was immediately apparent that offenders were traversing force boundaries. Descriptions, methods of operating and vehicles bore striking similarities. As a result a contact sheet was formulated with a resounding agreement reached that the meetings should be formalised and held on a regular basis. This is now in place and has already contributed to an enhanced ability to share information with identified single points of contact, extension of the [REDACTED] and the development of a regional network analysis chart.

Assessment



As stated earlier, the assessment phase of SARA has been inbuilt throughout the operation. A cyclical process allowing the framework to be continually improved, along with the ability to modify various responses is now firmly established evolving from regular meetings, consultation exercises and briefings of staff.

A results analysis was commissioned via the FIB. This has reported that in the time period 1st July 2003 and 16th February 2004 105 bogus official and distraction offences have been reported in the force area, equating to 2.56% of the total number of house burglaries. However, a degree of miscategorisation is evident and when the keyword 'Strongbow' was applied as a search on the crime system [REDACTED] it yielded 158 bogus offences. Of that number 52 have now been detected, and represents an overall detection rate of 33%.

A total of 17 offenders have been arrested in a 7-month period, the majority being male and aged between 22-30 years. The analysis has shown that they are likely to commit more than one offence, often on the same day. There is evidence of multiple offending with one man arrested and charged with 36 offences. Another offender has been arrested in connection with 34 'water board' offences, but due to a lack of evidence the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) discontinued the case.

Repeat victimisation is also highlighted, with five persons being targeted on more than one occasion. Equally, locations (streets in this instance) have been subject of repeated visits. This phenomenon will assist in the development of crime prevention and reduction, by examining the characteristics that may contribute to a further offence.

Recent analysis has detected a 50% decline in reported crime, with some anecdotal evidence of older people turning bogus callers away from their doors.

Since Strongbow's inception awareness amongst Police officers and staff has grown considerably. Intelligence submissions have been actively encouraged in a variety of ways, the intranet, the top ten leaflet and requests made at the tasking and co-ordination meetings. This has alerted officers to the need and has resulted in 237 logs being entered onto the system specifically around bogus offending.

Operation Guardian Light in the Langbaugh District set out to reduce the fear of crime amongst vulnerable and elderly victims. People living in sheltered accommodation in the South Bank area were contacted, reassurance was provided to older people by providing advice and practical suggestions for preventing instances of bogus official type incidents. All areas were covered with approximately 100 people visited. Every home was given a 24-hour timer, information pack/leaflets and a security marker pen. There was a positive response from the public, with visits generally well received. As well as providing practical advice, it fostered good community relations with local residents who were thankful and appreciative of the visits.

Funding bids submitted to Government North East have reflected the need for a partnership clerk. This role is envisaged as liaising closely with partnership agencies. It is firmly the view of the Executive Group that agencies such as Health could be harnessed in this way to offer a health care assessment of older people who fall victim, thus furnishing them with appropriate measures to ensure their future well being.

Trading Standards have been approached with a view to seconding a member of their staff to the Strongbow team. The reasoning behind this approach being to share information, and compare the working practices of bogus property repairers and other types of bogus offenders, this particular proposal is ongoing.

In conclusion, it is the view of the Force that this innovative approach has made major inroads into the problem of bogus offending. Strongbow was never intended to be a short-term operation, but it has demonstrated in a small time frame, that by going back to basic

investigative methods, having dedicated officers and structures supported by the National Intelligence Model positive results can be forthcoming.

The partnership approach will continue to develop and the benefits will manifest themselves over a greater time frame. However, firm foundations have been laid for a proactive, intelligence led and effective framework to enable agencies to contribute to the prevention and reduction of this horrendous crime. Older people have a right to enjoy their remaining years in peace and quiet, untroubled by greedy and manipulative criminals. Operation Strongbow has drawn a line in the sand to accord that right to them.



Appendices

Operation Strongbow

Trigger plan updated November 2003

Operation Strongbow is an initiative being piloted by this force to tackle the problem of bogus official and distraction burglaries with both a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach. It will mirror best practice from across the country and will be a long-term operation. Whilst still in its infancy a small team of officers in conjunction with a dedicated analyst are already working on gauging the scale of the problem.

Last year the force recorded in the region of a 150 crimes of this nature, in the first six months of this year we have almost reached that number already. It has to be stressed that these offences are invariably committed against some of the most vulnerable people in society; the elderly and infirm, the average profile being an 81-year-old female living alone. Aside from the trauma of the burglary many of these incidents also have the potential to cause serious harm or even the death of the victim, Studies demonstrate the post trauma suffered with victims becoming virtual prisoners in their own homes, too frightened to open their door to anyone.

Partnership working is vital to the success of this operation and work is ongoing to engage appropriate agencies, a project group has already been formed and is driving this matter forward. One of the key issues to address for the police is the **initial** investigation when such offences are reported. For this reason a trigger plan has been produced and circulated to Districts and the Control room. The plan details the minimum standards for such offences and must be strictly adhered to by officers and supervisors in order that we as a force obtain the best possible evidence to bring offenders to justice. The trigger plan can now be accessed via this web site. It should be noted that this will evolve over time as expertise grows in this area and it will be important for staff to familiarise themselves regularly and be aware of any updates, which will in the future be publicised here.

Trigger plan updated November 2003

The Strongbow team is now made up of the following officers;

DC Mick Dent

DC Geoff Tate

DC Delia Martin

Telephone extension **1749**

The team is supported by [REDACTED] an intelligence analyst from the Force Intelligence Bureau. Strongbow officers have now taken on the responsibility for the re-visits of bogus official, distraction burglaries and other aspects of artifice crime as appropriate.

Regular liaison takes place between the team and other forces regionally and nationally. As a consequence they have an up to date and current knowledge of current series, trends and targets and can be contacted for advice and guidance.

There are a number of issues that again need highlighting in relation to these types of offenders and offences.

Officers and supervisors must bear in mind that the offenders who commit bogus official and distraction type burglaries often diversify into other sorts of offences such as bogus property repairs, well aware that they are operating within a 'grey' area of the law.

The definition of an artifice crime is as follows;
Any crime involving a trick, action or falsehood that enables a dwelling to be entered with intent to steal OR property is stolen (Burglary) OR where a person is deceived into parting with property, which as a payment is disproportionate to the goods or services delivered, (to include attempts).

There have been a number of incidents in the force area recently where vulnerable older people have been the victim of deceptions, intimidation and even conduct verging on blackmail and the appropriate police action has not been taken. Officers are reminded that positive action is pre-requisite and a victim-oriented approach as per the National Crime Recording Standards must be adopted.

Despite a number of reminders there are still instances where suspect details are not being entered on crime reports. During the commission of this type of offence there will always be a degree of interaction between the suspect and the victim and in the majority of cases a description of some sort will be available. This **must** be entered onto the crime report, as it will ultimately assist in detecting the offence.

Work is presently ongoing to develop procedures with Trading Standards to combat doorstep selling by unscrupulous individuals and companies.

The following are to be considered as **MINIMUM** Standards for the response to and investigation of Distraction Burglary/Bogus official crimes. Supervisors are expected to ensure compliance with the plan.

CONTROL ROOM: The operator taking the initial call MUST

1. Obtain as much information as possible, as the offenders may still be in the vicinity. Consideration must be given to despatching additional units to conduct an area search.
2. Ensure that the Intergraph Event Message and scratch page is endorsed with "Operation Strongbow" as soon as possible. This assists both the Strongbow team and SOCO officers.
3. If the offence was recent, obtain a detailed description of the offenders and vehicles as the offenders may commit many offences in a day and several in the same area.
4. Circulate the description as widely as possible, and consider alerting the Control Rooms of neighbouring Forces.
5. Be aware that older people can be very "house proud" and need to be reminded not to tidy up to preserve the scene.
6. Ask the victim if the suspect has handled any item and emphasise that it should be secured for forensic examination.
7. Consider asking the victim(s) to record their recollections on a piece of paper as soon as possible. This can be done by a family member or neighbour- whoever is first on the scene. Remember that this item is will be subject of disclosure in any future proceedings and should be seized by the first officer on the scene, where appropriate continuity of evidence must be demonstrated in witness statements.
8. A Scientific Support Officer **MUST** attend the scene of all distraction burglaries, whether entry is gained or not.

The FIRST OFFICER at the scene MUST

1. Give the victim time to recount the events in their own words and at their own pace.
2. Obtain a statement which includes previous suspicious callers, whether a victim previously, detailed description of offenders particularly facial descriptions, tattoos etc.
3. Consider E-Fits if there is doubt on whether an E-Fit is appropriate contact scientific support and seek specialist advice. E-fits may not be suitable in every case and will depend on individual witnesses and their recall. However, if a request is to be made it must be faxed on the appropriate

form before retiring from duty. To obtain best evidence the E-Fit must be completed within 36hrs

4. Conduct house to house enquires in the immediate vicinity, not only may there be potential witnesses to the incident but the offender(s) may have called elsewhere
5. Seize and properly handle evidence proving continuity, and avoiding cross contamination.
6. Statements must either be faxed to (ext 1284) or photocopied and forwarded to the Operation Strongbow team at Force Intelligence.

SUPERVISORS MUST

1. Proactively manage enquiries of this nature. They are to ensure that house-to-house enquiries have been undertaken, that a witness statement is obtained containing detailed descriptions, details of previous suspicious callers or if they have been the victim of a similar offence previously. They are also to ensure that contact is made with District CID and in appropriate cases their assistance is secured in the investigation.
2. Ensure that consideration has been given to the production of an E-Fit and ensure that requests are faxed to the Scientific Support Unit Office before the end of the tour of duty. The E-Fit must be composed within no more than 36 hours of the crime having taken place. Supervisors must ensure that a copy of the E-Fit and statement is submitted to the District point of contact suitably endorsed with the crime number.

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT MUST:

1. Examine / look for the following outside the home:
 - a. Footwear impression in gardens / flower beds
 - b. Exterior windows
 - c. Front / rear doors including letter boxes / garden gates
 - d. Cigarette butts / chewing gum
2. Be considered when gathering evidence inside the home:
 - a. Bear in mind the latest advances in DNA techniques and that these offenders do not normally wear gloves
 - b. Examine all items handled by offenders for fingerprints, including pots/pans, under sinks, taps, work surfaces, cupboards, wardrobes, banister rails, tops of doors etc.
 - c. Examine paper work handled by offenders
 - d. Examine drinking utensils for fingerprints
 - e. Be aware of forensic evidence such as fibres, cigarette butts and glove marks etc.
 - f. DNA has been found even after a cup used was washed, dried and put away.

ALL OFFICERS / SUPPORT STAFF:

1. These types of offences are often committed on vulnerable members of society; ANY information in relation to the persons perpetrating such crimes must be submitted on an intelligence log.
2. Once a statement has been obtained, the original (unless forming part of a prosecution case) must be stored at the District COG with the crime.

Return to the [Force Intranet](#)

Operation Strongbow – Action Plan

Executive

1. Executive Group				
Ref	Action	Owner(s)	Status	Timescale
1.1	Form executive and three sub-groups	DI Tansley	Completed	
1.2	Explore and identify funding streams to develop project	All	Live	
1.3	Exploit media opportunities	All	Live	
1.4	Improve agency responses to bogus official/distraction/bogus property repairs	DI Tansley and chairs of sub-groups	Live Decem	ber 2004
1.5	Promote Strongbow to all relevant bodies and agencies	All	Live	

Victim

2. Victim Group				
Ref	<u>Action</u> Ow	<u>ner(s)</u> Status	<u>Timescale</u>	
2.1	Explore and identify sources of funding	Chair and members	Live	
2.2	Engage appropriate agencies that can assist victims and potential victims of bogus official/distraction burglaries and bogus property repairs.	To be allocated	Live	
2.3	Examine the various initiatives developed by the North of England Trading Standards Group to educate and empower victims.	To be allocated	Live	
2.4	Examine the viability of video interviewing older victims of bogus offences	To be allocated	Live	
2.5	Identify and network with non-statutory bodies who are in a position to assist older victims and potential victims	To be allocated	Live	
2.6	Develop the education and awareness of older and vulnerable victims in relation to bogus crime	To be allocated	Live	
2.7	Engage the Health service to develop protocol for health assessments following bogus offences	To allocated	Live	
2.8	Explore means of reporting crime via other agencies/bodies from older people	To allocated	Live	

Location

3. Location Group				
Ref	Action	Owner(s)	Status	Timescale
3.1	Explore and identify sources of funding	Chair and members	Live	
3.2	Engage the most appropriate agencies who can assist in preventing/reducing offences of bogus official/distraction/bogus property repairs	To be allocated	Live	
3.3	Develop meaningful and corporate crime prevention measures that are appropriate for older people	To be allocated	Live	
3.4	Examine the viability of cocoon watch schemes	To be allocated	Live	
3.5	Examine and recommend the most appropriate target hardening measures	To be allocated	Live	
3.6	Examine how best use can be made of the extended police family to reduce the fear of crime amongst older people	To be allocated	Live	
3.7	Promote the use of easier to read identity cards for utility companies, police etc	To be allocated	Live	
3.8	Evaluate the potential for implementing localised approved trader schemes	To be allocated	Live	

Offender

4. Offender Group				
Ref	Action	Owner(s)	Status	Timescale
4.1	Explore and identify sources of funding	Chair and members	Live	
4.2	Engage the most appropriate agencies to deter and prosecute those offenders who commit bogus offences	To be allocated	Live	
4.3	Identify and target offenders at Level 1 and Level 2 making best use of other agencies, multi-agency partners GAIN network etc	To be allocated	Live	
4.4	Examine the most effective means of responding to bogus property repairs	To be allocated	Live	
4.5	Make best use of technology to detect offences, crimestoppers, forensics, ANPR etc	To be allocated	Live	
4.6	Develop innovative techniques to detect/disrupt bogus offences	To be allocated	Live	