

West Cumbria Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

Tilley Awards 2004

Gray Street Lights – Thefts from Unattended Motor Vehicles

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Vehicle Crime Tasking Group A Partnership Approach

Our Aim – To reduce incidences of thefts of property from vehicles on Gray Street, Workington

SUMMARY

The Vehicle Crime tasking group is made up of very active representatives from all of the statutory Crime and Disorder partners in West Cumbria. It meets regularly to progress Action Plans that were drawn up following training on the problem solving approach delivered in November 2002.

Theft from unattended motor vehicles in Workington was identified as the clear priority by the group, and through initial analysis, Gray Street in Workington was highlighted as the worst hotspot area for this type of offence.

The area is one of high-density housing, close to the town centre, with approximately 90 houses as well as several small businesses. It is also a pedestrian route to other housing estates.

The first question we asked ourselves “Why Gray Street?” Through the analysis process we found that the area had poor street lighting, few garages, and no off street parking provision. It had easily accessible desire lines and most incidents were found to be committed during the hours of darkness. We were also conscious that we needed to solve the problem, not just displace it.

A detailed survey was carried out with residents, following which we drew up an action plan using the SARA model as a framework. The objectives that made up the action plan were:

- To upgrade the existing street lighting
- To display Crime Prevention signs on street lamps and in business premises
- Letter drop to all households introducing Neighbourhood Watch

The Gray Street initiative cost approximately £14,500 in monetary terms, together with time committed from all of the partners. However, between January – December 2002 approximately £5,000 of property was stolen from vehicles on Gray Street.

Since implementation of the scheme, there have been no reported incidences of thefts from motor vehicles on Gray Street. In the corresponding period of 2003 there were 9 reports, and in the corresponding period of 2002 there were 7 reports.

INTRODUCTION

One of seven tasking groups working under the umbrella of the West Cumbria Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Vehicle Crime tasking group is made up of active representatives from Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils, West Cumbria Area Police, Capita (on behalf of Cumbria County Council), British Transport Police, Cumbria Fire Service, and several other organisations within the Lake District National Park.

The group was formed as a result of the Community Safety Audit and Strategy process in 2001/2 and meets on a regular 6 weekly basis to monitor progress on its action plans. Everyone who attends the group is encouraged to provide updates in their area of work and this enables the group to understand the wider picture of vehicle crime, be it abandoned vehicles, burned out vehicles, thefts, or highway issues.

A team of analysts, based at Cumbria Police Headquarters, supports each of Cumbria's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Known as Cumbria Partnership Support (CuPS), they provide audit and analysis information for each of the tasking groups.

SCANNING

In November 2002, the West Cumbria Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership held the first of six full day training sessions, facilitated by Crime Concern to focus on problem solving techniques and using the SARA model to work towards action plans.

The training provided each of the tasking groups the necessary tools to adopt the successful methods being used elsewhere and provided a starting point to work from. Some of the Vehicle Crime representative group had no previous experience or knowledge of the problem solving process, so it was a steep learning curve and required commitment, enthusiasm and team spirit.

The group began by collating audit and other relevant data, initially for the previous 3 years, which was useful to show trends on previous years and then we received data up to December 2002, on vehicle crime for all of West Cumbria. Initial data from the Cumbria Partnership Support team (CuPS) showed that thefts *from* vehicles were a much bigger problem than thefts *of* vehicles.

The group looked at:

- How many incidences per year were occurring?
- Regional and national trends.
- Where further hot spot areas were developing.
- Was the problem growing in those hot spot areas?
- Whether communities had raised any concerns about vehicle crime through any channel.

The results of this were that:

- Compared to national figures West Cumbria was less than average.
- The problem was growing in urban areas and reducing in rural areas.
- The greater the population the greater the problem.
- There was a growing problem in hot spot areas.
- No complaints had been received from community groups concerning vehicle crime.
- There had been no surveys on vehicle crime conducted with residents, visitors or businesses.

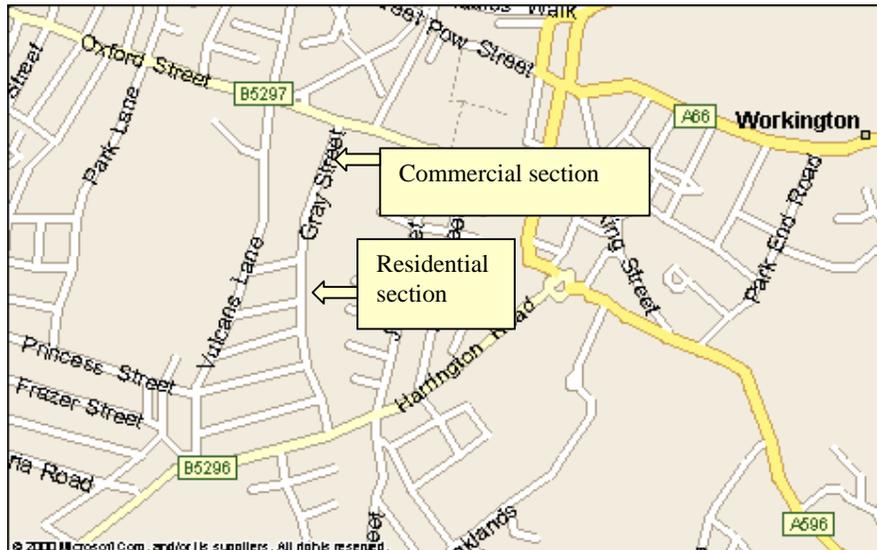
ANALYSIS

The CuPS data was presented in map format with 500m grids colour coded as to the density of crime per square, presenting a more accurate picture of crime than that produced on ward or beat boundaries. This gave an instant indication on which were the long-term problem areas and where the group needed to focus attention.

Further analysis of the hottest cells on the grid maps produced levels of vehicle crime by street from 1998 to 2002 inclusive. Gray Street in Workington, which cross cut two of the hot cells had by a clear margin the highest incidences of thefts from motor vehicles in West Cumbria.

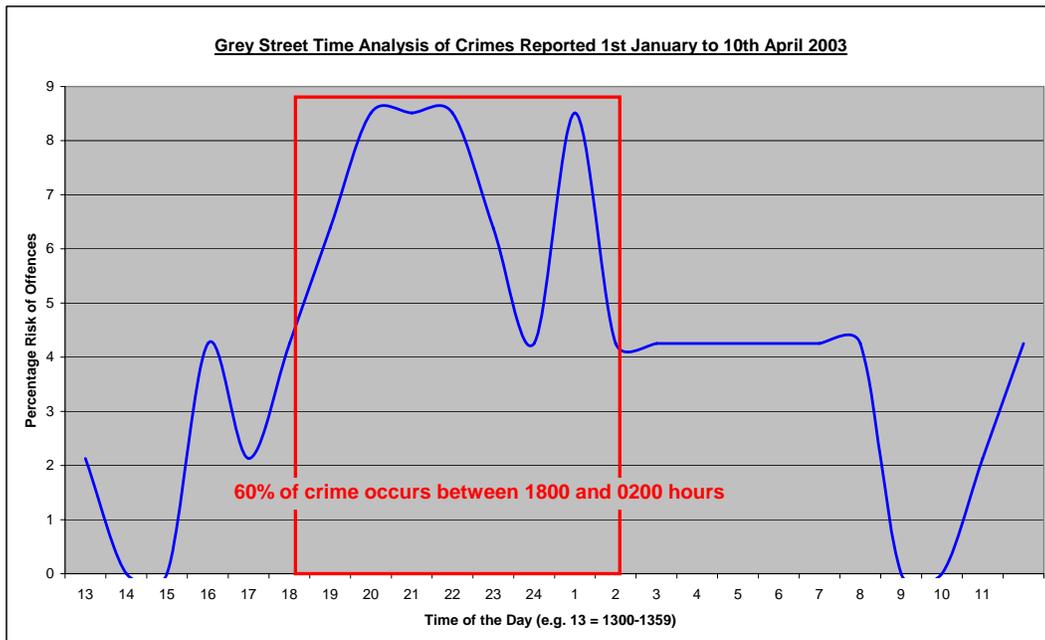
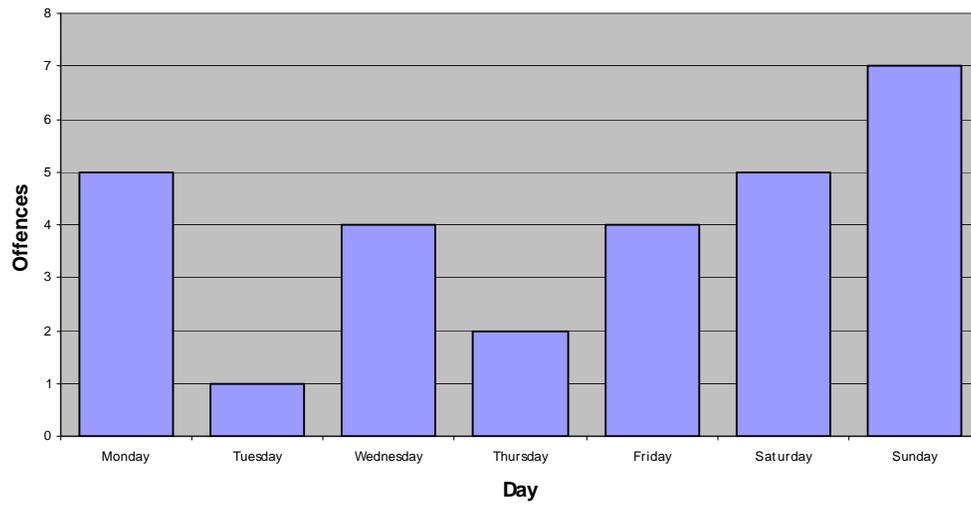
Gray Street is approximately 300 yards long, and is made up of 90 terraced houses on both sides of the road at one end of the street, and several commercial premises at the other end. The street has a one-way system in operation from the commercial end heading towards the houses and then becomes two-way at the first house.

From January 2002 to December 2002 approximately £5000 worth of property was stolen from vehicles on Gray Street, Workington. Items included a television, audio equipment, rucksacks/bags, shoes, clothing, and mobile phones, but cash was the single highest value item.



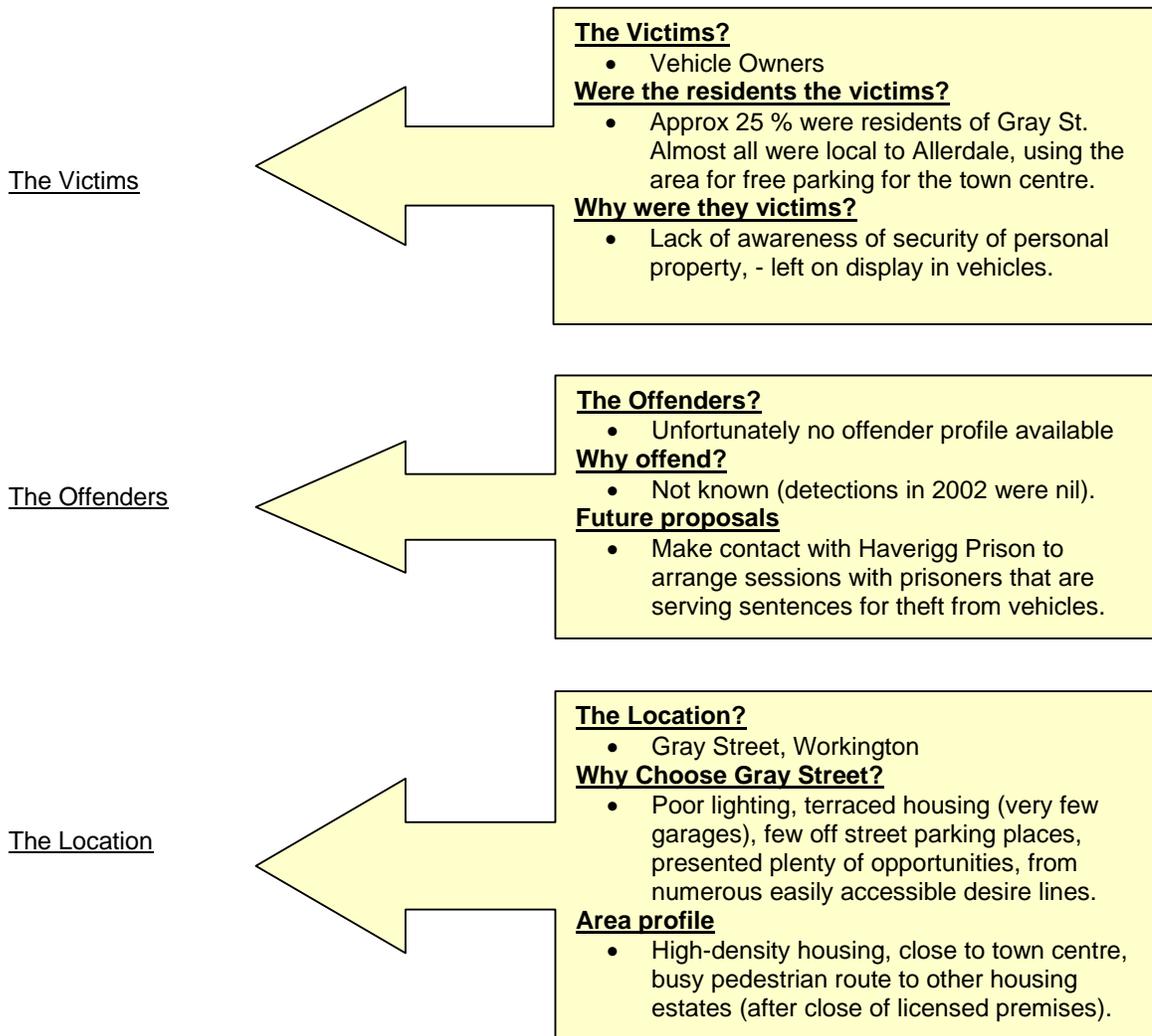
It was clear from the CuPS analysis that most of the offences were occurring between Friday and Monday, and during the hours of darkness, as the following charts show:

Offences by Day of Week



PROBLEM ANALYSIS TRIANGLE

We considered the problem analysis triangle and its three aspects, the victims, the locations, and the offenders.



RESPONSE

The group's response was centred around the 3 aspects of the problem analysis triangle:

- Preventing future occurrences by deterring offenders.
- Raising awareness of potential victims
- Making crime locations less conducive to problem behaviours.

The group set about creating an action plan to try to combat the incidences of theft from motor vehicles in Gray Street, Workington.

Priority/Aim: To reduce the incidences of thefts of property from motor vehicles in Allerdale

Objective	Action	Input Target	Output Target	Milestone Target	Outcome Target	Responsibility	Timescale
1. To reduce thefts from vehicles in Gray St, Workington	Upgrade existing street lighting	£7000 capital costs Staff time contribution	To install new and where appropriate upgrade existing lamps to High Pressure Sodium (white light)		A reduction in the number of thefts from vehicles in Gray Street over the period 2003/4	CDRP Vehicle Crime Group. Capita dbs	30 June 2003
	Display Crime Prevention signs on street lamps and in business premises	£400 installation costs	Mount permanent signs on lamp columns and distribute posters to business premises	End of April 2004 –subject to approval of highways authority		David Thompson	30 April 2004
	Letter drop to all households introducing Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	Existing Police / Borough council resources	To set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme if residents approve	End April 2003 – Resident and Watch Scheme approval required		David Thompson Tony Smith	June 2003

PROGRESS ON THE ACTION PLAN

The group recognised that the impact of this type of crime goes beyond the financial loss to the victim, in having an impact on the fear of crime and quality of life of both residents and visitors to the town. It was well known that Gray Street was not immune from other types of crime in addition to vehicle crime.

Following the problem solving approach and taking into account the findings of Home Office Research Study 251 – Effects of Improved Street Lighting on Crime – A Systematic Review (August 2002), the tasking group produced an action plan for Gray Street, (one of 6 plans seeking to address vehicle crime across West Cumbria). The key element to the Gray Street plan was the upgrade of the old low-pressure, orange sodium lighting, to high-pressure, white sodium lighting. Early indications were that this could be achieved by installing ‘slipper columns’ on the existing concrete lampposts, thereby extending their working life by another 25 years.

However, Capita conducted a survey and it was established that to raise the standard to above and beyond present day regulations additional lighting columns would be required. These new levels of lighting would provide a deterrent to potential thieves.

The maximum amount the Partnership tasking group had at its disposal was £5,000 - an amount intended to help take forward its range of action plans to reduce vehicle crime across West Cumbria. However the group considered the impact that the proposal would have on the Living Environments element of the Workington Regeneration Project, and in particular the aim to create a town centre free from crime and the fear of crime, and submitted a bid for £9,000 Single Regeneration Budget funding. It was also hoped that the time invested by the major partners in working on the project could be taken into account as matched funding. This bid, while adding to delay, was ultimately successful.

Consultation with the community was seen as important and initially took the form of a letter seeking their views. The response from residents, while low in numbers, was nevertheless unanimously in favour of the project and was with one exception, from senior citizen residents. Members of the group subsequently carried out a door-to-door survey in Gray Street to obtain a more representative and complete view, and also with the intention of raising the awareness of the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch. The response was almost unanimously in favour of upgrading the lighting, and while there was interest in Neighbourhood Watch, unfortunately there were no individuals who felt able to act as co-ordinator(s).

In cooperation with Allerdale Borough Council permanent street signs are to be erected in Gray Street, to remind motorists not to leave valuables in their vehicles. Posters have already been displayed in the business premises. A separate action plan intends to explore the possibility of parking wardens assisting in the flow of intelligence to the Police following the introduction by the Borough Council of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement. The Group has also introduced a Crimestoppers Campaign across West Cumbria, with a view to informing policing initiatives under the National Intelligence Model, to impact on offenders and also benefit Gray Street.

It was felt that, as a package of measures, these would have significant potential to reduce vehicle crime on Gray Street, without necessarily displacing crime to adjoining areas, which do not have the same contributing factors that currently exist in Gray Street.

The street lighting was installed in early December 2003; and has made a major difference to the lighting levels on the street during the hours of darkness.

Several members of the group visited the residents again in January and asked how much they felt the additional lighting had improved the area. Residents commented that they felt much safer when coming out of their homes at nighttime, and suggested that they were confident that their car would be found in the same condition they left it the night before.

ASSESSMENT

**Did we make a difference and did we impact on the problems with this action plan?
Yes, undoubtedly.**

The residents on Gray Street certainly think so; they have told us how successful they feel the scheme has been. They feel safe on their own street at night.

Since the scheme was implemented, to date, there have been NO reported incidences of thefts from motor vehicles on Gray Street (Corresponding period last year – 9, previous year 7). Additionally, monitoring of incidents and feedback from residents also reflects a reduction in other types of incidents such as public order. Assessment is on-going and will include checking other areas for displacement, and a follow –up survey.



Although the scheme is only three months old, we have publicised it from the beginning, we have been making sure people are talking about it, and it was used as an excellent example of Partnership working at a recent meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership. The success of the scheme will be monitored over the next 12 months; through scanning and analysis of refreshed data on a quarterly basis, which allows us to see what vehicle crimes are taking place, and monitor areas for growing hot spots.

Grey Street has acted as a good model of how to effectively problem-solve by joint agency activity. We will build on this in the future.

REFERENCE

HOME OFFICE RESEARCH STUDY 251 –Effects of Improved Street Lighting on Crime – a systematic review (August 2002)