

PERFORMANCE AUDIT



# 'A safer place': revisited

A review of progress in property risk management  
in schools

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## The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body, which through the audit process, assists local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has five main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- reviewing the management arrangements which audited bodies have in place to achieve value for money
- carrying out national value for money studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information which they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 34 joint boards (including police and fire services). Local authorities spend over £9 billion of public funds a year.

## Audit Scotland

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to both the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Executive and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to the study advisory group, who provided valuable and constructive advice throughout the study. Membership of the group is listed in Appendix 1.

We would like to thank Anne Brooks for her contribution to the study through consultancy advice and support. We would also like to thank all the head teachers who responded to our survey, and to council staff who took time to talk to us during

This study was managed by Miranda Alcock, under the overall management of Lesley Bloomer, Director of Performance Audit (Education, Enterprise and Justice). The Accounts Commission takes full responsibility for the contents and recommendations in this report. Any questions should be addressed to Miranda Alcock, e-mail [malcock@audit-scot.gov.uk](mailto:malcock@audit-scot.gov.uk), tel 0131 477 1234.

## Executive summary

Councils hold a large property portfolio, and schools are a significant element. In total, Scottish councils manage some 2300 primary schools, 400 secondary schools and nearly 200 special schools, accommodating over 750,000 pupils. Understanding and managing property risk effectively can help councils minimise both disruption to education and financial losses.

In January 1997, the Commission published '*A safer place: property risk management in schools*', reporting the findings of a national value for money study of property risks in schools. That report:

- identified that crime is the major risk to school property; at that time, councils were losing some £12 million a year from property crime in schools
- encouraged councils to adopt a corporate commitment to risk management
- set out a framework for action, making specific recommendations on how councils should reduce avoidable losses by taking steps to protect schools most vulnerable to property crime.

This report follows up the 1997 study, providing an up-to-date picture of school property crime, and reviewing councils' progress in implementing the recommendations from '*A safer place*'.

### School property crime in 2001

The cost to Scottish councils of vandalism and fire in schools has reduced from £12 million a year in 1994/5 to £8.3 million in 1999/2000. However, there is wide variation in the level of the problem across Scotland, with 70% of the total recorded costs coming from nine councils. Vandalism alone cost some councils on average over £3,000 per school in 1999/2000, while in other councils average costs were less than £500 per school.

All councils have made some progress towards implementing the recommendations from '*A safer place*', but it is variable. Among councils with high or medium levels of vandalism costs, Dundee City, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City and South Lanarkshire councils have made good progress in implementing the recommendations. However, Aberdeenshire, Fife and North Ayrshire councils need to do more to reduce the losses to their schools from vandalism.

Most councils have adopted a corporate policy on risk management, and developed corporate working groups to take forward property risk management in schools. However, over half of all councils do not formally report their progress to councillors.

### Reducing crime-related risks to schools - a management challenge

Targeted and well-managed investment, based on proper risk assessments, can have a major impact on reducing costs from vandalism in individual schools. To achieve these benefits councils need to establish effective information systems, undertake cost benefit analysis of potential solutions,

support local initiatives in schools and monitor the impact of the measures introduced.

- A third of all councils (11 authorities) have yet to develop a central information system, instead relying on a number of different databases in different departments for their information. These councils have found it difficult to bring together the information they need to prioritise their activity where it would be most effective.
- Five councils - Dundee, East Lothian, Glasgow, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian - have developed a sound approach to cost benefit analysis when taking decisions about measures to tackle school vandalism. However, apart from these five authorities, councils do not systematically undertake a cost-benefit analysis of possible solutions prior to implementation.
- There are many examples of creative approaches to reducing vandalism within individual schools, often working in partnership with the local community and the police. Implementing appropriate local solutions, including, for example, the move to community schools, can make a significant impact on reducing losses and the disruption to teaching caused by vandalism.
- There has been significant investment in improving security measures, but monitoring the impact of this investment is not always systematic. Among councils where losses from vandalism are high (ie, greater than £3,000 per school per year), Fife and West Dunbartonshire councils did not have procedures in place to monitor the effectiveness of measures taken in specific schools.

Reducing vandalism requires a partnership approach involving parents, teachers, school support staff and pupils as well as a range of other agencies, such as police, fire and insurance companies. One example of the benefits of partnership working between agencies can be demonstrated within the Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade areas, where there has been a reduction of malicious fires in schools over the last five years.

## Conclusions

While the benefits of investment within individual schools can be demonstrated clearly, the relationship between investment and total costs to councils is more complex. At a council level, there is no evidence of a direct relationship between overall financial and managerial investment, and costs from vandalism. Vandalism levels are affected by many factors, some of which are outwith the direct control of the council; for example, displacement of vandalism activity from other areas onto school buildings, and local social and cultural factors.

Where councils experience significant vandalism problems, investment should continue.

- Risk management should be planned, systematic and sustained. Councils should continue to invest in effective information systems and monitor the risks to individual schools regularly.
- A cost-benefit analysis of potential solutions should be carried out before implementing specific measures, and councils should evaluate the impact of any investment made, using the information to inform future activity.

- Councils should invest in developing and strengthening partnerships at both a strategic and local level.
- Councils should use the opportunities of new build or refurbishment to design out risk of crime.

# Introduction

## Background

Councils hold a large property portfolio, and schools are a significant element. In total, Scottish councils manage some 2,300 primary schools, 400 secondary schools and nearly 200 special schools, accommodating over 750,000 pupils. Understanding and managing risk effectively can help councils minimise financial losses, and the disruption to service that can be caused by adverse events.

In January 1997, the Commission published '*A safer place: property risk management in schools*', reporting the findings of a national value for money study of property risks in schools. That report:

- identified that crime is the major risk to school property; at that time, councils were losing some £12 million a year from property crime in schools
- encouraged councils to adopt a corporate commitment to risk management
- set out a framework for action, making specific recommendations on how councils should reduce avoidable losses by taking steps to protect schools most vulnerable to property crime.

To assist councils and head teachers in implementing the recommendations from '*A safer place*', the Commission produced a handbook containing practical guidance on property risk management, which was distributed to all head teachers in Scotland during 1997. The Commission produced further guidance for councils on risk management in 1999, in the management paper '*Shorten the odds: a guide to understanding and managing risk*'.

Following publication of '*A safer place*', local audits were undertaken in over half the councils in Scotland. These suggested that councils were starting to take steps to improve their management of risks relating to school property.

Now, four years on from the publication of '*A safer place*', the Commission has conducted a national follow-up study, to assess progress in implementing the recommendations made in that report.

## Financial investment since 1997

Since the publication of '*A safer place*', there has been considerable investment designed to improve safety and security in schools.

Following Lord Cullen's Inquiry into the events at Dunblane primary school in March 1996, the Secretary of State for Scotland introduced a specific grant totalling £30 million over the three years to 1999/2000 (£10 million each year). With 25% match funding from councils, a total of £39.9 million has been made available to invest in providing a safer environment for pupils and teachers. As well as improving safety, some of the physical measures taken by councils, for example, installing CCTV cameras, will have provided protection from property crime.

In addition to the specific grant, 40% of councils have also used funds from other sources to support or develop their activities. Several councils have been successful in acquiring additional funds from the Scottish Executive CCTV Challenge Funding. Others have accessed funds from sources such as Scottish Power - to link schools through CCTV (Glasgow), New Deal - for repairs and maintenance (Scottish Borders) and National Grid for Learning - to extend alarm systems (Glasgow).

In total, an estimated £44 million from all sources has been invested over the last three years to improve safety for teachers and pupils and to protect school buildings.

From 1 April 2000, the full grant of £13.3 million (which includes the 25% match funding from councils), has been incorporated into GAE, and is no longer ring-fenced for spending on school security.

### Study methodology

The findings in this report are based on audited information from all councils, providing evidence of the progress made in implementing the recommendations from 'A safer place'. We also repeated the survey of head teachers conducted for 'A safer place', covering the same representative sample of 200 schools who responded in 1996. Responses were received from nearly 158 schools (105 primary and 53 secondary), drawn from 11 councils. In addition, visits were made to a number of councils to gather information for the case studies and examples of good practice.

The findings and recommendations from the national report will be complemented by reports to individual councils, prepared by their local auditor. These will be based on the audit findings, and will identify both good practice and areas for improvement, within a local context.

### Report structure

This report presents the findings from the follow-up study. It is arranged into the following sections:

- **Overall progress** - provides an updated picture of school property crime and a summary of the progress made by councils in implementing the recommendations from 'A safer place'.
- **Reducing crime-related risks to school property: a management challenge** - reviews the specific action taken by councils.
- **Conclusions** - draws conclusions from progress made to date, and summarises the recommendations for future action.

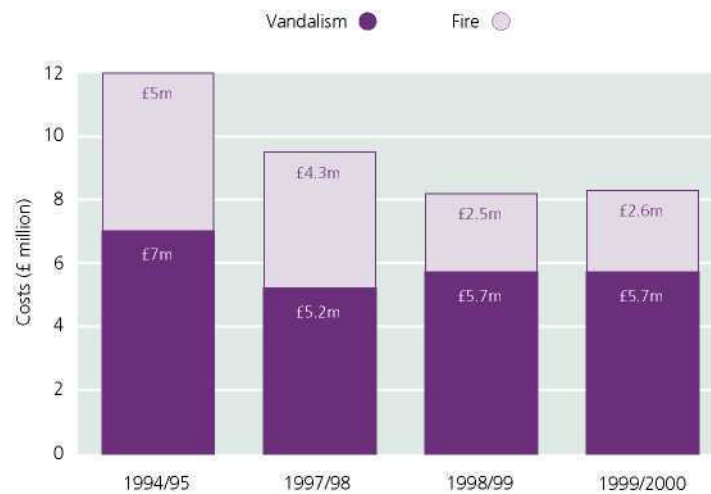
## Overall progress

### School property crime in 2001 - an updated picture

Property crime, primarily from vandalism and fire, continues to be a significant problem in some areas of Scotland. While there has been a reduction in the total costs to councils since 1994/95, in particular in relation to losses from fire, the costs of vandalism show little variation over the last three years (Exhibit 1).

#### Exhibit 1: Costs of school property crime

The costs of school property crime have reduced since 1994/95.



Source: Audit Scotland audit returns

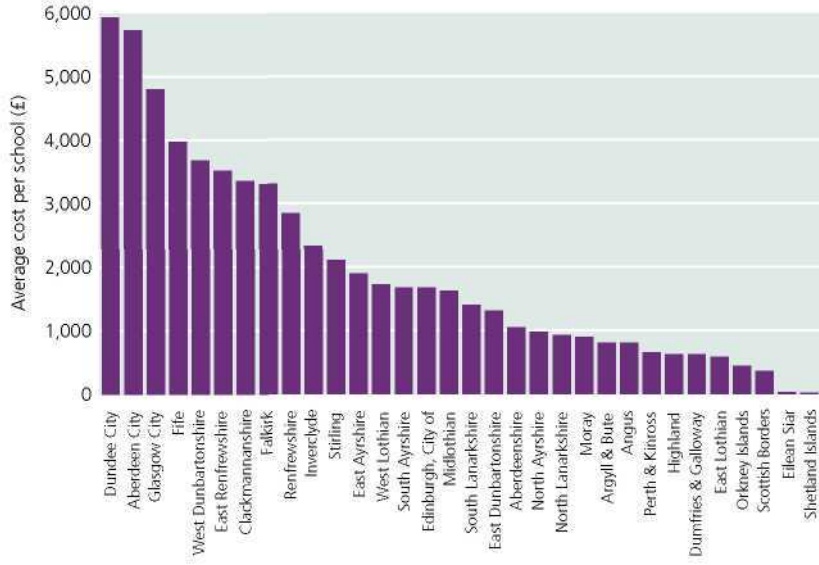
Most costs from vandalism are the result of numerous small incidents, in particular from broken windows. In contrast, costs from fire tend to be from a few, serious incidents in individual schools. In the last three years, 16 fires in schools have resulted in over £8 million worth of damage.

Property crime in general is a more serious problem for some councils than others - 70% of the total recorded costs (vandalism and fire) come from nine councils. Vandalism alone cost some councils on average over £3,000 per school last year, while at the other end of the scale, costs averaged less than £500 per school (Exhibit 2). Exhibit 3 shows the total costs for vandalism per council in 1999/2000, and how that translates into cost per pupil.



**Exhibit 2: Vandalism costs per school in 1999/2000**

Levels of vandalism vary across councils.



Source: Audit Scotland audit returns

**I Exhibit 3: Vandalism costs for councils in Scotland in 1999/2000**

Vandalism is a more serious problem in some councils than others. The table includes the total costs for 1999/2000 incurred by each council and costs per pupil.

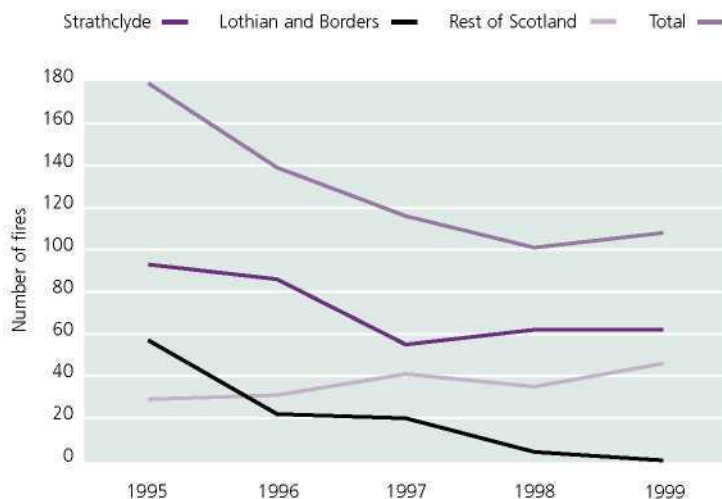
Council	Total cost of vandalism in 1999/2000 (£)	Total cost per pupil in 1999/2000 (£)
Aberdeen City	458,000	17
Aberdeenshire	187,400	5
Angus	55,000	3
Argyll & Bute	79,800	6
Clackmannanshire	80,400	11
Dumfries & Galloway	79,500	4
Dundee City	308,000	15
East Ayrshire	113,300	6
East Dunbartonshire	64,900	3
East Lothian	23,400	2
East Renfrewshire	116,000	7
Edinburgh, City of	234,300	5
Eilean Siar	1,000	<1
Falkirk	208,000	10
Fife	722,000	14
Glasgow City	1,327,100	17
Highland	135,300	4
Inverclyde	102,100	8
Midlothian	74,000	6
Moray	47,700	3
North Ayrshire	64,400	3
North Lanarkshire	154,600	3
Orkney Islands	12,000	4
Perth & Kinross	58,000	3
Renfrewshire	201,500	7
Scottish Borders	28,700	2
Shetland Islands	300	<1
South Ayrshire	96,500	6
South Lanarkshire	216,300	5
Stirling	117,500	9
West Dunbartonshire	161,600	10
West Lothian	137,200	5

Source: Audit Scotland audit returns

The overall reduction in costs from fires illustrated in Exhibit 1 is reflected by a reduction in the number of malicious fires in schools in the Strathclyde and Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade areas, although this reduction has not been reflected in the rest of Scotland (Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4: Trends in malicious fires in schools**

There has been a significant reduction in the number of malicious fires in schools over the last few years in Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade areas.



Source: Scottish fire brigades

Both Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders Fire Brigades have made significant investments in developing partnerships with the councils in their Brigade areas. Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade have benefited from a seconded teacher from City of Edinburgh Council to assist in their educational programme.

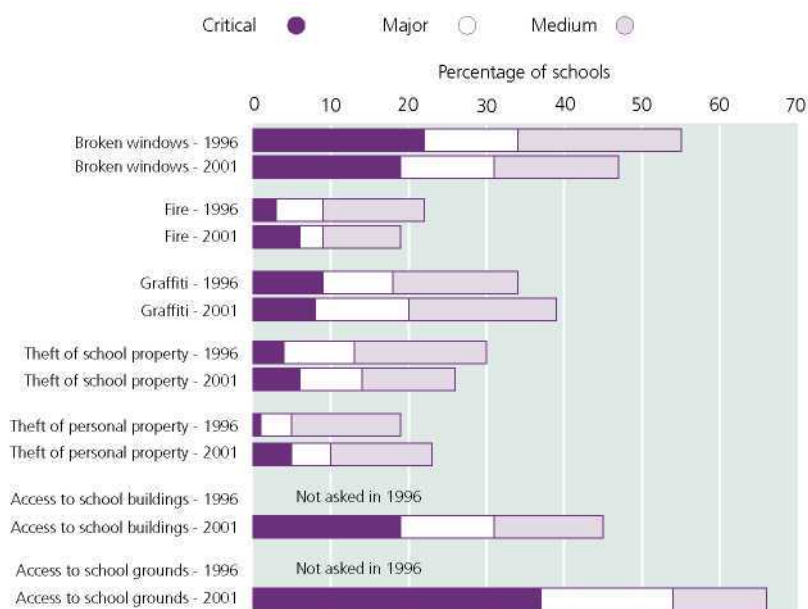
**Head teacher perceptions**

Most head teachers perceive the problem of property crime in schools as staying the same or getting better. In our survey of head teachers, we asked them whether they considered the problem of vandalism in their school had increased, decreased or remained the same in the last three years. A third of respondents consider the problems have decreased, and a further half that they have stayed the same. Only 15% reported that the problem was worse now than three years ago.

The survey of head teachers also found that the relative importance of different kinds of property crime has remained the same, with broken windows still considered the most serious problem. This is illustrated in Exhibit 5 overleaf.

However, the most serious concerns for head teachers related to access, in particular access to school grounds, which was not included in the 1996 survey.

Exhibit 5: Head teachers' perceptions of the relative importance of types of property crime



Source: Audit Scotland survey of head teachers

### Councils' progress in tackling vandalism and property crime

'A safer place' made a series of recommendations on the actions councils should take to reduce avoidable losses from crime-related risks to school property. These recommendations included:

- adopting an organisational commitment to risk management
- improving risk management awareness and education
- identifying specific risk areas
- developing effective information systems
- taking steps to counter vandalism
- providing corporate support for local solutions
- improving controls over access to schools
- minimising the incidence of false/faulty alarm calls
- designing crime out of new or refurbished schools.

Those councils where vandalism continues to be a serious problem need to ensure they are implementing fully the recommendations from *A safer place*, in order to reduce the costs as much as possible. In those councils where vandalism is only a minor problem, less activity might be expected, reflecting the lower level of risk.

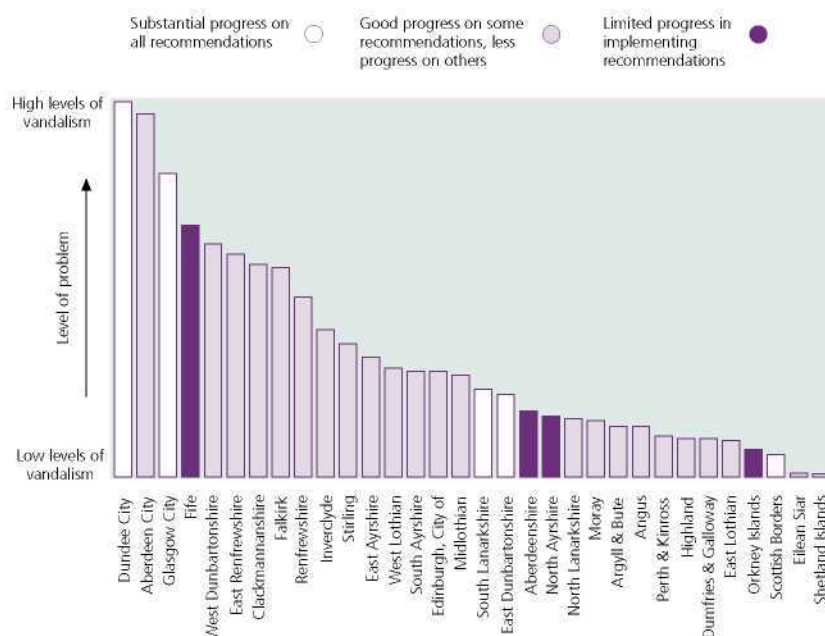
All councils have taken some steps to improve security and reduce property crime through implementing these recommendations. Using average annual costs of vandalism per school as an indicator of the size of the problem, Exhibit 6 illustrates the extent to which councils have implemented the recommendations from *A safer place*.

Progress towards implementing the recommendations has varied between councils, and there is no clear link between level of vandalism experienced and progress made. In those councils with high vandalism costs, Glasgow City and Dundee City have made significant progress in implementing the recommendations. However, Fife Council needs to do more to reduce the extent of losses being suffered from vandalism to schools.

While the financial case for taking specific action in councils with lower levels of vandalism is less strong, East Dunbartonshire, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire councils have all made good progress in implementing the recommendations. Amongst councils with lower, but still significant levels of vandalism, Aberdeenshire and North Ayrshire have made limited progress and need to take further action to implement the recommendations.

**Exhibit 6: Implementation of recommendations from 'A safer place'<sup>1</sup>**

Councils' progress in implementing recommendations, against cost of vandalism per school in 1999/2000 as an indicator for the seriousness of the problem to the council.



Source: Audit Scotland survey

In most councils, progress has been more variable, with some recommendations implemented fully, but others requiring further action. For each individual council, the specific areas requiring action will be identified through the local audit report. It is of particular importance that those councils with high or medium vandalism costs act quickly and effectively to implement their local action plans, in order to reduce the costs to their schools from vandalism.

The following section reviews in more detail the progress made against the key recommendations from the 1997 study, and the continuing management challenge facing councils in tackling property crime.

<sup>1</sup> Implementation of the recommendations was assessed by scoring performance against a series of progress statements providing evidence that the recommendations had been implemented. Performance was scored on a scale of one to four; one = no progress, four = full implementation. Councils with an average score of >3.25 are coloured white, those with an average score of <2.25 are dark purple. The average scores of the remaining councils were >2.25 and <3.25. Audited scores for all the statements were agreed by the council.

# Reducing crime-related risks to schools - a management challenge

## A corporate approach

Both 'A safer place' and 'Shorten the odds' encouraged councils to adopt a corporate commitment to risk management. 'A safer place' recommended that councils establish a policy on risk management, agreed by councillors, and develop a core risk group of officers, with associated sub-groups tasked with tackling specific issues, such as vandalism and security in schools.

A shared corporate approach is important if risks are to be identified and managed systematically and consistently across the council.

All councils have progressed a corporate approach to risk management since 1997, usually involving the establishment of a corporate working group.

However, we found that:

- 11 councils do not yet have a corporate policy on risk management, agreed by the council. These councils are: Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Renfrewshire, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Stirling, and West Dunbartonshire.
- nearly half (15) councils had not established clear lines of responsibility for implementing corporate policy or monitoring progress on risk management.

More progress has been made in relation to the specific area of property risks in schools. Twenty-four councils have established formal arrangements and clear lines of responsibility within the council for addressing this issue. However, over half of all councils do not formally report their progress on reducing risks to school properties to councillors.

Auditors reported examples of activity which had been initiated in councils but not sustained, including, for example, the early establishment of working groups which no longer met, or successful initiatives which had stopped because of personnel changes.

## Recommendations

*Councils should review their corporate approach to risk management to ensure they have mechanisms in place to monitor changes in the level of school property crime, and to develop and implement appropriate policies for reducing avoidable losses.*

*Councils should ensure that levels of property crime in schools and the action that has been taken to minimise the costs are reported to the relevant council committee, at least on an annual basis.*

Effective management of risks requires councils to:

- understand the problem by *identifying the risks* to schools
- **take appropriate action** to minimise the risk - targeting resources on areas where the problem is the greatest
- **monitor** the effect of the actions taken.

We look at each of these in turn below.

### Identify the risks

Vandalism is often targeted at the same schools again and again, resulting in a limited number of schools accounting for a high proportion of the total losses. In 'A safer place', we recommended that before embarking on a programme of action, councils should identify which schools were most at risk by conducting a programme of risk assessments in schools.

Across Scotland, all councils have reviewed the safety and security measures in their schools to comply with the government's conditions for the specific grant. However, a fifth of councils have no plans for ongoing and regular risk assessments to take place.

The information used to build an overall property risk assessment for each school will come both from the individual property risk survey of schools (covering, for example, adequacy of signs, access controls, lighting, landscaping, door and window construction), and also from councils' own information systems (for example, repair costs from vandalism).

### Effective information systems

Traditionally councils have relied almost exclusively on property maintenance records for their information on levels of vandalism. 'A safer place' recommended that councils develop central information systems, collating all the relevant information on property risks for individual schools, including the location, type and frequency of incidents, and cost of losses from property crime.

Implementation of this recommendation has varied across councils. A third of all councils (11 authorities) have yet to develop a central information system and tend to rely on a number of different databases in different departments for their information. For example, property repairs may be held in housing or property services, insurance claims held in finance and information on minor damage may be held in individual schools or education departments.

In these cases councils have found it difficult to bring the information together to build a complete picture, to enable them to prioritise their activity to where it would be most effective.

Exhibit 7 provides three examples of good practice in the use of centralised information systems in targeting resources towards areas of greatest risk.

### **Exhibit 7: Using risk assessment information to prioritise risks to schools**

Risk assessments are based on a range of information which should be combined to identify those schools most at risk.

**Angus Council**, working in conjunction with their insurance company, has developed a database which records all reported incidents of vandalism across the council area. The council has developed an internal 'self-insurance fund', to which all departments contribute, at a level based on previous claims history. This provides an incentive for departments to improve their management of risks, in order to reduce their future payment requirements, and leads to improved record keeping. (*Similar funds are operated by some other councils*). The database also uses information from Tayside Police on other vandalism, including location, type of vandalism and date of incident. The information from the database is supplemented by an annual survey of head teachers seeking their views on security and priorities for future action, by risk surveys, and the risk assessments carried out by the insurance company. This comprehensive approach to data collection allows the council to build a picture of problem areas, or recurring incidences, and to take an holistic and planned approach to tackling vandalism. For example, they may take action to reduce vandalism in a school and the surrounding area in tandem, and in partnership with the police, reducing the potential for displacement of the problem.

**Dundee** schools are risk assessed by a working group involving property management, fire, police, health and safety and school management. The information from these assessments is combined with centrally held data to identify schools most at risk and to prioritise activities. The risks are reviewed on a regular basis by the Education Risk Management Group, recognising that the pattern of losses may change overtime. Resources are targeted to those areas at greatest risk.

In **Highland Council**, school security related information from risk assessments and crime prevention reports is collated into a database. The database can be queried to produce a table of schools ranked in order of greatest recorded loss (ie, theft, break-ins, vandalism, etc). The work required is categorised into nine main elements (eg, externals, doors, entrances, windows, etc). As well as managing ongoing work, the database has been used to identify the most frequently requested work (door entry systems and locks, panic buttons, security marking and personal safety training). This information was used in the Education Services Strategy to target resources to schools.

### **Recommendation**

*Councils should ensure they have effective, centralised information systems and a systematic approach to conducting risk assessments to enable resources to be prioritised and targeted at those schools most at risk.*

#### **Use of cost benefit analysis**

Risk assessments will identify those schools most at risk from vandalism and property crime. Once the problems in individual schools have been identified, and prioritised, the council needs to determine the best solution to tackle those problems, relevant to the circumstances of each school.

'A safer place' recommended that councils undertake a cost-benefit analysis of different measures, and adopt a 'spend to save' philosophy to tackle school vandalism. A number of councils, notably Dundee, East Lothian, Glasgow, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian have developed a sound approach to cost benefit analysis - assessing losses, alongside more qualitative information. Two examples of cost benefit analysis are illustrated in Exhibit 8.



### Exhibit 8: The impact of cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis can help councils implement effective solutions to tackling school vandalism.

**Glasgow City Council** undertakes regular reviews of security guards for schools. Resident guarding is expensive, but appropriate in some circumstances. The cost for resident security guarding of a school is around £25,000 to £30,000 a year. Switching to mobile patrols where possible can result in substantial savings. The mobile patrols are carried out by the council's own security staff, who also arrange resident guarding where necessary. The use of mobile guards enables more schools to be covered from the same limited budget, and has the potential of achieving greater savings by linking schools to an existing 'patrol route', thus reducing the cost per patrol.

One south side school, which had resident guards since 1998, was put on to a mobile patrol route in August 2000, resulting in a saving of £20,000 per year. A flexible management approach is used; in another school, for example, which was temporarily subject to intensive vandalism, resident guarding was introduced for short periods, until the attacks subsided. If resident guards had been in place over the total period of these attacks, the cost would have been £8,000. By using a mixture of mobile and permanent guards, the cost was £5,440 (£3,900 for permanent guards, £1,540 for mobile ones).

In **Dundee City Council**, one primary school is situated in a large densely populated post-war housing estate on the periphery of Dundee. The school has suffered severe vandalism over the years. When classroom windows are broken, not only does it cost the council in glazing repairs, but in many instances classes may have to be decanted. The number of window panes broken in any one incident can vary from one to over twenty. The council reviewed the cost of polycarbonate versus traditional glass.

Polycarbonate is three times as expensive as glass (£105 per square metre as compared to £35 per square metre). However, the polycarbonate resists missile/projectile attack thereby reducing the vandalism incidents and the subsequent disruption to school classrooms. Most of the windows in this school have now been re-glazed with polycarbonate, with glass remaining on only a few high level windows.

The additional cost of installing polycarbonate instead of glass in the school has been £10,000. As a result of this investment, the cost of repairs last year was £1,302 (for 11 incidents). The average cost of repairs at four similar schools in Dundee last year was £6,750 (number of incidents per school ranging from 47 to 250). This suggests that the cost of the investment may be recovered over two years.

The installation of CCTV can be an effective measure to reduce vandalism. However, this may involve high levels of initial capital expense, so a cost benefit analysis is of particular importance. Piloting the approach is one way of doing this, as illustrated in Exhibit 9.

### Exhibit 9: Good practice in piloting the installation of CCTV

Clackmannanshire Council used a mobile CCTV camera to assess potential savings before installing a permanent system.

The Alloa CCTV Management Group was established to monitor the town centre CCTV system and includes representation from Clackmannanshire Council services, including Finance and Education, as well as the Police. One mobile CCTV camera was made available to Education and Community Services through this group. The service used vandalism information from the Property Maintenance section and the Police to identify Alloa Academy as the best location to use the mobile CCTV initially.

The camera was installed from December 1997 to mid 1999 with a direct link to the police station. This had a dramatic effect on the level of vandalism costs. In April to August 1997 the vandalism costs at Alloa Academy were over £7,000; for the six months from April to August 1998 these dropped to below £1,000. The mobile camera was then moved to another school and the costs rose again to almost £13,000 in 1999/2000. This information formed the basis of a successful bid to the *Making our Communities Safer* Challenge Fund for a permanent CCTV presence at Alloa Academy.

However, apart from those councils mentioned above, councils do not systematically undertake a cost-benefit analysis of possible solutions, prior to implementation.

### Recommendation

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*Councils should examine the costs and potential benefits and savings from different options available to them in deciding appropriate measures to tackle vandalism.*

### Take action to minimise risk

In 'A safer place' we outlined the actions councils should take to minimise the risk of property related crime. These included:

- improving risk-management education, training and awareness;
- taking steps to counter vandalism and improve controls over access to schools;
- providing corporate support for local solutions;
- designing crime out of new or refurbished schools.

### *Improving risk management education*

'A safer place' recommended that councils put in place training for a range of staff: for councillors and key officers who lead the councils' commitment; for head teachers, particularly in risk assessment and management; and for support staff, including janitors, in risk management and the use of equipment - particularly when it involves new technology.

Generally councils have made good progress in implementing this recommendation. Most training has concentrated on head teachers and officers with specific responsibilities for school property. Limited training has been provided to councillors.

All councils have trained their janitors in the use of new equipment installed in schools, and in about half of all councils this training has been incorporated into the induction programme for janitors.

A number of councils have also reviewed their janitorial services, including the janitors' responsibilities for school security. For example Midlothian Council has developed a cluster approach with head janitors responsible for a number of other janitors working in a school cluster; job descriptions have been revised, clarifying janitors' responsibilities in relation to security. They also provided training for janitors in safety and security. The janitors now play a crucial role in identifying particular security risks, and in siting, installing and managing school security equipment.

The new Fire Precautions (Workplace) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 have placed a legislative requirement on education authorities to carry out fire risk assessments in all schools. These assessments must be documented and copies of the assessments sent to the local fire authority. Procedures to revisit establishments at regular intervals must also be established. The introduction of these Regulations reinforces the need for ongoing risk management training, to ensure assessments are carried out competently.

### Recommendation

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*Training should be an ongoing process. Councils should review the training needs of key staff regularly, and implement additional training as required.*

### Access controls and physical measures to counter vandalism

'A safer place' recommended that physical security measures should be part of an anti-crime package designed to protect the physical structure of the school and its contents, and to provide a safe environment for the pupils, staff and members of the community who use its facilities.

In recent years there has been considerable investment in security measures in schools. The repeat survey of head teachers asked for information on protection measures in the schools surveyed (Exhibit 10).

There has been considerable investment in security measures in schools since 1996. Percentage of primary and secondary schools surveyed with the following measures.

Measure	Primary (%)		Secondary (%)	
	1996	2001	1996	2001
CCTV	10	26	17	81
Control over visitors access	48	93	56	92
Glazing substitutes	34	41	47	46
Intruder alarm	70	88	90	92
Security fencing	9	32	14	44
Security lights	53	79	63	85

Source: Audit Scotland Survey of head teachers

Installing CCTV can have a significant impact on levels of vandalism. Many councils have examples of how CCTV in individual schools, when effectively managed and installed, has been a factor in reducing the level of vandalism. Exhibit 11 is one such example.

#### Exhibit 11: Impact of CCTV

Installing CCTV in a school, in conjunction with other measures, can help reduce the level of vandalism.

##### Highland Council

In 1997, one primary school, with a roll of 340 pupils, was identified as being a school particularly at risk, with 123 major vandalism incidents, nine incidents of theft and 15 break-ins. A range of types of work were required in order to upgrade the school, ranging from gates, fencing, door entry, locks, CCTV, signage, panic buttons and security marking. Monitoring shows that in 2000/01, vandalism was reduced to negligible levels, with only four minor incidents.

All councils have developed policies and procedures on controlling access to schools, and have taken steps to secure the access to school premises. Measures introduced include: securing access points, providing electronic entry systems, providing badges for staff and visitors, insisting on visitors signing in and out, reducing the number of entrances to one and moving secretarial staff to the front entrance where practical.

However, despite this investment, access control continues to be a concern for schools, in particular where there is out of hours letting and/or open access to school playing fields. In our survey of head teachers - 60% identified access to school grounds as being a major concern to them and 35% identified access to school buildings as a major problem.

### *Provide corporate support for local solutions*

Every school is different and there can be no single solution. 'A safer place' identified that, to be effective, a crime reduction strategy needs the commitment of the school and its community, adequately supported by the council.

Councils have progressed well in this regard. Nearly all councils have actively encouraged their schools to work with local communities to develop a shared understanding of the need to protect schools from crime. Schools have developed a range of projects to encourage pupils and the local community to get involved in protecting the school from crime.

Many local projects use an 'adopt a school' model, where the school and the council encourage the local community, including the neighbourhood watch and school neighbours, to 'look after' the school, looking out for problems, especially outwith normal school hours, and reporting them to the police. Other anti-vandalism initiatives may be run on an area basis, for example, Dundee City Council's 'Where are your kids tonight?' campaign, and the East End Vandalism Forum in Glasgow, which involves a wide range of partners, and offers diversionary activities, plays and other cultural events. This partnership approach to combat vandalism is due to be rolled out to other areas of Glasgow.

Changing how the school is used, can also have a significant impact on levels of vandalism. Exhibit 12 illustrates the impact of such a move in one school in South Ayrshire Council.

#### **Exhibit 12: Changing the use of a school can affect levels of vandalism**

Turning Kincaidston Primary School into a community school had a significant impact on vandalism levels.

##### **Kincaidston Community School - South Ayrshire Council**

In 1998, South Ayrshire Council changed the use of Kincaidston Primary School to a community school. The Council's focus was the development of a community school, with anti vandalism activity being a small, but significant, element of the changes implemented.

Significant efforts have been made over the last two years to integrate school activity into the wider community, and the wider community into the school. A range of activities and initiatives has been adopted to achieve this:

- refurbishment based on the pupils' priorities
- adult learning sessions had in the school in the evenings
- introduction of a breakfast club and after school activities
- development of an open door policy for parents, encouraging their active participation
- closer relationships forged with relevant external agencies to support the families of pupils
- appointment of a community school development worker to organise events and out of school activities.

Prior to becoming a community school, the school experienced considerable vandalism problems, suffering 86 incidents of broken windows, and an attempted arson attack, over one summer. The community policeman now has a high profile in the school, reacts quickly and talks about each individual incidence of vandalism - to encourage the promotion of a positive environment, and make it socially unacceptable to vandalise the school. The school has since experienced a significant drop in vandalism, with no broken windows reported in 2000.

The head teacher and janitor need to be involved in decisions designed to improve security in schools, since they know the school best. All councils consider they have made significant progress in consulting with head teachers in identifying problems and agreeing appropriate solutions. However, the survey of head teachers indicates that a third of head teachers still do not feel adequately consulted about risk management decisions. This proportion has not changed significantly since the 1996 survey (Exhibit 13).

**Exhibit 13: Proportion of head teachers feeling fully involved in local risk management decisions**

The proportion of head teachers who feel involved in local decisions has not significantly changed since 1996.

	1996	2001
Feel adequately consulted	65%	62%
Don't feel adequately consulted	35%	38%

Source: Audit Scotland survey of head teachers

Our survey also found that individual schools are often not aware of the overall costs of vandalism to their school: 75% of head teachers were unable to provide a cost for the previous year (although in some of these schools vandalism costs may be minimal). Councils need to ensure that head teachers and other school staff are kept informed of progress in tackling vandalism, and of the impact that different approaches have had on the problem.

Reducing crime-related risks to schools is not just a council activity- other agencies are also involved, in particular the police and fire services. Most councils and police forces are now working in partnership on a range of issues, including anti-vandalism and theft. All forces in Scotland have police officers seconded to councils, where they work on a range of issues including providing advice and training to pupils and staff about crime prevention, and assisting councils with identifying particular problems and developing solutions. Fire Brigades also work closely with councils to advise on fire precautions and to improve fire safety education. In our survey of head teachers, 97% indicated that they had developed good partnership working with their community police officers, and 51% with their local fire officers.

Some councils have been particularly innovative in working with fire and police services to educate school pupils about vandalism and fire risks, and in some instances, this has been incorporated into the overall curriculum development. Examples include the STEPS programme developed by Strathclyde Police, Grampian Police Box, and the fire education programmes developed through Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade. Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade has a seconded teacher to assist in their fire education programme.

## Recommendations

*Councils should ensure that head teachers and other school-based staff are involved in decisions to improve security in their schools, and kept informed of progress.*

*Councils should continue supporting local schools and communities in developing school-based initiatives, and providing education to school pupils about vandalism and fire, building on existing partnerships with the local fire and police services.*

### Design crime out of new schools

Good building design can make a significant contribution to reducing crime-related risks to school property. In 'A safer place' we encouraged councils to use the opportunity of any new build or major refurbishment to design out crime. Mistakes of the past - expansive areas of glass, flat roofs, alcoves and recesses - need to be avoided in the future. In particular 'A safer place' recommended the good practice standards featured in the publication 'Secured by design'<sup>2</sup>, and the early and active involvement of the police and fire services in the planning process.

All councils have access to a police architectural liaison officer based in their local police force. Architectural liaison officers are specialist crime prevention officers who provide free advice on design features for buildings and the surrounding environment, in order to reduce opportunities for crime. Architectural liaison officers often work alongside specialist fire officers, to ensure fire safety features are also incorporated into new school buildings. Schools can apply through the police architectural liaison officer to be accredited as a 'Secured by design' building.

Examples of advice given include:

- identifying appropriate sites for CCTV cameras and security lighting
- using planting to prevent access while not impeding the opportunity for natural surveillance
- internal separation of areas for school and public usage
- roof and window design
- access controls and perimeter security measures.

Where new building has taken place, most councils have taken the chance to design out the opportunity for crime. However, in some cases, this relies on informal consultation. Only half of all councils had formal arrangements to ensure the police and fire services were involved at an early stage in the planning process.

### Recommendation

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*Councils should involve the police and fire services at an early stage in planning and designing new school buildings or major refurbishments of school property. Developing formal procedures will help to make sure this happens.*

### Monitor effectiveness of actions

'A safer place' recommended that councils should monitor the effectiveness of their activities. Regular monitoring is important to enable councils to:

- develop a clear understanding of how problems are affected by actions taken
- make changes to ineffective actions
- track trends in losses and identify emerging problems at an early stage.

<sup>2</sup> Copies of 'Secured by design' are available from all local police architectural liaison officers, and from the website, [www.securebydesign.com](http://www.securebydesign.com)

There has been significant investment in improving security measures, but monitoring the impact of this investment is not always systematic. The ability to monitor the impact of investment will relate to the quality of the councils' information system. Among councils where losses from vandalism, fire and theft are high (i.e., greater than £3,000 per school per year), Fife and West Dunbartonshire councils did not have procedures in place to monitor the effectiveness of measures taken in specific schools.

Councils tend to concentrate on measuring changes in the direct costs of vandalism only, although some councils (for example Glasgow) have taken into account issues such as reductions in disruption to teaching in their evaluation.

Not all councils have adopted a systematic approach to monitoring the implementation of agreed actions, relying instead on ad hoc feedback, for example, on the implementation of school access controls.

Monitoring the effectiveness of equipment is also important. In our survey, some head teachers expressed concern about poor maintenance of CCTV equipment or door access points. Effectiveness can also be reduced by inappropriate siting (CCTV in an unlit area, secure access points on rotting doors, or fire alarms frequently set off by the movement of ill-fitting windows etc).

### Recommendation

*Councils should ensure that they have mechanisms in place to enable them to monitor the implementation and impact of measures introduced to schools to reduce property crime.*

### Opportunities for the future

The increasing use of public private partnerships (PPP) for new and refurbished schools, provides an opportunity for councils to review their approach to property risk management. Exhibit 14 illustrates how Glasgow City Council have used the development of PPP to transfer the risks for school property, outside school hours, to their private sector partner.

#### Exhibit 14: Managing property risks in public private partnerships

Glasgow City Council has reviewed its management of school property risks, within the new private public partnership agreed for all secondary schools in August 2000.

Glasgow City Council contracted the property management of all their secondary schools to a private consortium, 3ED in August 2000. The council has transferred responsibility for all property risks for times when the school is not in use to 3ED. This approach has resulted in:

- clear division of responsibilities for risk management between the council and 3ED
- councillors receiving regular progress reports on risk management
- financial penalties for poor risk management, based on a daily rate per pupil place if classrooms are not available for use
- improved building design as new schools have been built - involving close liaison between the police architectural liaison officer, the councils and the consortium.

Whilst it is too early to assess the overall impact on property risk management and levels of losses suffered in Glasgow, the council reports:

- improved management information on levels and costs of vandalism
- quicker responses to problems
- increased levels of janitorial cover
- increased levels of investment in CCTV and the use of telephones and IT for security purposes
- better access controls
- a significant reduction from the anticipated number of vandalism incidents over the first main holiday period following hand over.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Vandalism and property crime are significant problems for some councils, and tackling them requires investment in time and money from a range of agencies, as well as involvement by the local community. This review has highlighted the activities and investment made by councils over the last few years, to reduce property-related risks in their considerable portfolio of school property.

There are no overall trends in vandalism costs over the last three years. Some councils have seen their costs increase, whilst others have experienced reductions, or costs have fluctuated. There is no evidence of any direct relationship between physical or managerial investment and costs. While the benefits of investment within individual schools can be clearly demonstrated, the relationship between investment and total costs to councils is more complex. Vandalism levels are affected by many factors, some of which are outwith the direct control of the council; for example, displacement of vandalism activity from other areas onto school buildings, and local social and cultural factors.

Councils need to determine their own priorities; however, councils with higher losses should be taking action to reduce these.

With the specific grant for school security now incorporated into GAE, and new opportunities arising through initiatives such as PPP, councils need to review their priorities for investment in improving school security and anti-vandalism measures.

Where crime-related risks to school property remain a significant problem, the approaches and actions recommended in '*A safer place*' remain valid. In particular, councils should:

- review their corporate approach to risk management to ensure they have mechanisms in place to monitor changes in the level of school property crime, and to develop and implement appropriate policies for reducing avoidable losses
- ensure that levels of property crime in schools and the action that has been taken to minimise the costs are reported to the relevant council committee, at least on an annual basis
- ensure they have effective, centralised information systems and a systematic approach to conducting risk assessments to enable resources to be prioritised and targeted at those schools most at risk
- examine the costs and potential benefits and savings from different options available to them in deciding appropriate measures to tackle vandalism
- review the risk management training needs of key staff regularly, and implement additional training as required



- ensure that head teachers, and other school-based staff, are involved in decisions to improve security in their schools, and kept informed of progress
- continue supporting local schools and communities in developing school-based initiatives, and providing education to school pupils about vandalism and fire, building on existing partnerships with local fire and police services
- involve the police and fire services at an early stage in the planning process in providing advice on designing crime out of new school buildings or major refurbishments. Developing formal arrangements will help to make sure this happens
- ensure that they have mechanisms in place to enable them to monitor the implementation and impact of measures introduced to schools to reduce property crime.

# Appendix 1

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