



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Cambridgeshire Distraction Burglary and Rogue Trader Taskforce: an evaluation

Home Office Research, Development and Statistics
Crime Reduction Team

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Executive summary

The Cambridgeshire Distraction Burglary and Rogue Trader Taskforce¹ was established in August 2001 to facilitate a multi-agency cross-county approach to these issues.

The Taskforce aimed to reduce the problem of bogus callers and rogue traders by working towards a number of objectives:

- to reduce the opportunities for crime by raising awareness of bogus callers and rogue traders in the community;
- to reduce crime by educating older and more vulnerable members of the community to adopt security measures;
- to reduce fear of crime by identifying, targeting and improving home security of vulnerable members of the community.

The Taskforce developed a wide range of initiatives. The evaluation took place between January and May 2003. It concentrated on key initiatives and the Taskforce's most innovative aspects which were: the multi-agency setting; the publicity campaign; the Net-Detectives activity; and the Awareness Days - an initiative concentrating on older people.

Analysis of statistical data

- Although the volume of distraction burglary is low compared to some other crimes, the high impact of the crime means it can be viewed as a priority.
- Victim profiling illustrates the need to target initiatives to 'at risk' individuals.
- Victims do not lack security measures but may fail to use them.
- Those living alone, and particularly those living in accommodation usually associated with the elderly population such as bungalows, are at risk and should be targeted for initiatives.
- Repeat victimisation also seems to be an issue so victims must receive ongoing attention and support.
- Offender profiling shows that a wide range of methods are used to commit distraction burglary, and education campaigns should reflect that.

Multi-agency working

- The Taskforce was set up at a time when distraction burglary and doorstep selling had been nationally identified as an important issue.
- The harmful nature of the crime along with personal commitment to preventing it played a significant role in convincing agencies to join the Taskforce.
- The first step towards establishing a group involved the police inviting a wide range of agencies to a seminar to discuss the possibility of forming a multi-agency Taskforce. Once agreed, subgroups were set up with a thematic lead.
- Quarterly Taskforce meetings were held to discuss and agree the way forward for each initiative, while each subgroup met on an ongoing basis to implement their initiatives.
- It was a police-led Taskforce, which was accepted by members as a natural consequence of the nature of the project.
- Factors explaining why this multi-agency group was viewed as a success included:
 - its organisation (subgroups, project manager, chair);
 - its shared responsibility by putting the onus on the subgroups;
 - the people involved (their motivation, expertise);

¹ Referred to from this point as the Taskforce.

- its size (stronger impact, inclusiveness, improved communication, expertise and consistency, better funding).
- There were still areas for development.
 - Some agencies lacked commitment by their absence from the Taskforce (some commercial organisations).
 - The limited amount of time some members were able to dedicate to the Taskforce's work.

Publicity campaign

- A 'multi-product' publicity campaign was launched by the Cambridgeshire Taskforce to raise awareness of distraction burglary.
- The campaign was focused on the 'second generation – anyone knowing, related to, living near, working with older people – as a mechanism for effective communication with older people.
- The employment of marketing professionals was felt to ease the pressures associated with delivering a publicity campaign.
- Areas for development included:
 - focusing on a wider audience within the second generation to improve awareness;
 - developing more evidence-led approaches;
 - convincing the media that crime prevention messages are beneficial and carry more weight than sensational stories about victims to influence behaviour change.

Net-Detectives

- An ex-Cambridgeshire policeman had previously developed and run web-based activities designed to deliver lessons on crime prevention to children.
- Net-Detectives was developed by Childnet International to increase awareness of distraction burglary among grandchildren.
- As well as enhancing awareness of crime prevention and the police, web-based activities reached a large audience, and assisted schools in meeting their curriculum requirements.
- Net-Detectives could successfully raise awareness of distraction burglary and rogue traders among 11-year-old school pupils. The likelihood of success is increased by one-to-one contact with criminal justice professionals.
- All aspects of an intervention – technology, format of supplementary materials, task length – need to be tested by schools in advance to ensure that the activity runs smoothly.
- Young people are more likely to convey information on crime prevention to their parents than to their grandparents.

Awareness Days

- The aims of the Awareness Days were to:
 - raise awareness of distraction burglary and bogus callers among older people;
 - provide older people with simple steps to deal with callers at the door;
 - promote the use of security measures to prevent distraction burglary.
- The main components of Awareness Days were:
 - communication of the distraction burglary message;
 - entertainment;
 - hot lunch.

- The Awareness Days were generally seen as the most successful initiative by the Taskforce members.
- The events were highly appreciated and enjoyed by the participants.
- Forty per cent of the respondents indicated they would take at least one extra security measure as a result of their attendance at an Awareness Day.
- Nearly three-quarters of the attendees who filled in the evaluation form indicated that their confidence had increased after the Awareness Day.
- Awareness Days presented other benefits.
 - Addressing the issue of under-reporting.
 - Communicating other safety messages.
 - Media coverage.

1. Introduction

Overview of the Cambridgeshire Distraction Burglary and Rogue Trader Taskforce

The Cambridgeshire Distraction Burglary and Rogue Trader Taskforce was established in August 2001 to facilitate a multi-agency cross-county approach to these issues.

The Taskforce aimed to reduce the problem of bogus callers and rogue traders by working towards a number of objectives.

- To reduce the opportunities for crime by raising awareness of bogus callers and rogue traders in the community.
- To reduce crime by educating older and more vulnerable members of the community to adopt security measures.
- To reduce fear of crime by identifying, targeting and improving home security of vulnerable members of the community.

They seek to achieve these objectives by raising awareness and promoting crime prevention tools with older people, and those who regularly come into contact with them, including friends, family and professionals.

To assist with their work to tackle distraction burglary and rogue traders, the Taskforce applied to the Police Standards Unit (PSU) Innovation Fund in August 2002, and was awarded £77,580 to fund the project until March 2003.

The Taskforce undertook a wide range of initiatives. They included the following.

- Awareness Days aimed to raise awareness of distraction burglary and bogus callers among older people, provide older people with simple steps to deal with callers at the door and promote the use of security measures to prevent distraction burglary. The main components of Awareness Days were communication of the distraction burglary message, entertainment and a hot lunch.
- A multi-product publicity campaign to raise awareness of distraction burglary and focused on the second generation – anyone knowing, related to, living near, working with older people – as a mechanism for effective communication with older people
- Net-Detectives, a web-based activity designed to deliver lessons on crime prevention to children. In this case, the scenario was aimed at increasing awareness of distraction burglary amongst the grandchildren generation in an attempt to encourage them to deliver the message to their grandparents.
- The 'No Cold Call Areas' initiative identified self-contained areas where older people were given face-to-face advice on distraction burglary and rogue traders. Signs were also posted in the area with messages such as: 'You are now entering a No Cold Call Area' in an attempt to deter potential offenders.
- 'Training the Trainers' initiative focused on how to deliver distraction burglary messages to older people.
- A professional pack was circulated to carers of older people.
- A website.
- A free 'One Number for All' initiative enabling the public to report distraction burglars and rogue traders.

Defining distraction burglary and rogue trader offences

Distraction burglary is defined as: 'Any crime where a falsehood, trick or distraction is used on an occupant of a dwelling to gain, or try to gain, access to the premises to commit burglary' (Home Office, *Counting Rules for Recorded Crime*, April 2003). Nationally, there have

previously been difficulties in extracting the number of distraction burglaries from police systems, however the new offence code introduced in April 2003 will address this issue. Rogue traders are also referred to as bogus traders. The definition given by the Home Office Distraction Burglary Taskforce is: "Another method of 'tricking' older and vulnerable people is criminal deception. The offenders are often the same, but they purport to be tradespeople, offering repairs, services and maintenance to homes and gardens. They will often carry out inferior work (sometimes no work at all) and charge exorbitant fees. [...] These offences are notoriously difficult to prove as the offender hides behind the defence of providing a service, which they consider to be at a justifiable price." (National Distraction Burglary Taskforce (2001), *Tacking Distraction Burglary*)

Cambridgeshire Constabulary had already established a separate offence code for distraction burglaries and bogus callers on its crime recording system to allow the identification of the number of reported offences.

Aims and audience of the report

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to provide a process evaluation of the scheme;
- to evaluate the success in communicating messages to the second and third generations;
- to evaluate the success of Awareness Days at raising awareness among older people.

The report has been written:

- to allow the Taskforce to measure their success and reflect on the way forward;
- to draw out lessons for other practitioners;
- to assist PSU with the evaluation of their Innovation Fund;
- to add to wider knowledge of distraction burglary.

Methodology

PSU approached the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics (RDS) directorate to produce an evaluation of the Taskforce's project. The evaluation took place between January and May 2003, and was therefore not conducted from the beginning of the project. It concentrated on key initiatives and the Taskforce's most innovative aspects which were: the multi-agency setting; the publicity campaign; the Net-Detectives activity and an initiative concentrating on older people - the Awareness Days.

A range of methods were used.

- Questionnaires were used to partly evaluate the Net-Detectives activity (33 responses), the Awareness Days (455 responses) and the publicity campaign (116 responses).
- Five in-depth interviews were conducted with key individuals, including at least one from each part of the initiative.
- Ten telephone interviews took place with other members of the Taskforce.
- Observation was used for both the Net-Detectives activity and the Awareness Days.

The following table summarises the methodology used for each initiative.

Table 1.1: Methodology used to evaluate each initiative

Initiatives	Observation	Interviews	Survey
Multi-agency setting	√	√	X
Awareness Days	√	√	√
Net-Detectives	√	√	√
Publicity campaign	X	√	√
No Cold Call Areas	X	X	X
Training the Trainers	X	X	X
Professional pack	X	X	X
Website	X	X	X
One Number for All	X	X	X

Report outline

Chapter 2 offers a brief analysis of a range of statistical data. The evaluation concentrates on a number of key elements of the project rather than evaluating it all. These include:

- multi-agency working (Chapter 3) – as the Taskforce is a large multi-agency group;
- publicity campaign (Chapter 4) – as it was an innovative campaign aimed at the families of older people;
- Net-Detectives (Chapter 5) – as it was an innovative event aimed at primary school children;
- Awareness Days (Chapter 6) – because of the direct focus on older people.

Chapter 7 summarises the recommendations from the evaluation.

2. Distraction burglary in Cambridgeshire

The extent of distraction burglary in Cambridgeshire

Distraction burglary recorded by the police in Cambridgeshire increased from 191 offences in 2000 to 310 in 2001. In 2002, the number of offences decreased to 257. In 2003, 210 distraction burglaries were committed in Cambridgeshire.

Although the level of offences is relatively low when compared with crime overall in the county, it has particularly high social and economic costs, and is targeted at vulnerable community members, especially the older residents. Distraction burglary demands closer attention because of three major consequences of this crime type. Firstly, like conventional burglaries, distraction burglaries are violations and invasions of people's safe homes (see Donaldson, 2003). But the real damage to victims of distraction burglary lies in the erosion of trust of others and in reducing victims' self-confidence in judging the intentions of others. Secondly, distraction burglary has a large impact on fear of crime particularly when such crimes are reported in the media. Finally, it should be mentioned that there is some evidence that a number of victims of distraction burglary died shortly after the crime was committed.²

During the financial year 2001/02 Cambridgeshire Trading Standards received 590 enquiries relating to unsolicited calls from traders. They judge that the majority concerned goods and services offered to older people or vulnerable people through high pressure doorstep selling.

Profile of victims in Cambridgeshire

This section provides the initial findings of analysis of records of distraction burglary victims in Cambridgeshire central division between September 2001 and April 2002.³ Given the relatively small numbers (45 victims), caution should be taken in interpreting these findings.

The main findings were that:

- nearly half (21) of victims live in bungalows.
- 33 live on their own;
- 41 have family friends nearby;
- three-quarters (29) of victims who responded to this question said they kept money in the house;
- of those responding to the question about security, 39 stated they had some form of security;
- 33 victims had a chain on their door;
- 18 of the 44 responding stated that they do not ask for ID from callers, although 25 did;
- nearly a third (13) had been the victims of a different crime in the last two years and nine stated that they had reported it;
- nearly a quarter (10) had previously been a victim of distraction burglary and of the six responding about whether they had reported previous victimisation, four said they did and two did not.

This analysis suggests that:

- victims do not lack security measures but may fail to use them;
- repeat victimisation also seems to be an issue, so victims must receive ongoing attention and support.

² Although the direct link between the offence being committed and the death of the victim is difficult to formally establish, it is usually accepted that the vulnerability of victims, who are generally already frail, is significantly increased.

³ The age of the victims was not recorded.

Modus operandi used by offenders in Cambridgeshire

This profile is based on a report undertaken by police analysts at Cambridgeshire Constabulary headquarters on the first three months of 2003. Offences were grouped together by modus operandi (MO = method of committing crime).

- Bogus water company personnel (28 offences).
- Looking for someone (16 offences).
- Request for water (12 offences).
- Officials such as council, police, and nurses (12 offences).
- Window repairers (8 offences).
- Builders and gardeners (7 offences).
- Walk in offences (6 offences).
- Others (6 offences).

Offender descriptions and offence locations indicate that many of the offences are being committed by the same group of individuals using a wide range of MO types.

3. Multi-agency working

Origin of the Taskforce

The project emerged from a police initiative. The Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire police became aware that distraction burglary was an issue in the county and wanted to set up a group to tackle this kind of crime.

A seminar was organised to allow discussion between various agencies that had a connection with distraction burglary, or experience to address it. There was a general consensus at this meeting that a multi-agency group would be an effective way to tackle distraction burglary in the county by, as one interviewee put it,

[...] sharing expertise, and working together to develop more efficient working practices.

The expected outcome from the seminar met wide approval among the people who were invited, as a member of the Taskforce illustrated:

There was an inaugural meeting, that was to ask “Do we want to set up a multi-agency group”, and the resounding answer from the very senior people who were there from all the agencies was “Yes, we need to”.

Table 3.1 shows the range of organisations involved in alphabetical order.

Table 3.1: Composition of the Taskforce

Age Concern, Cambridgeshire	Huntingdon Housing Partnership
Age Concern, Peterborough	Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau
Alzheimer's Society	Learning Disability Partnership
Anglian Water	Lifespan Healthcare
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	Neighbourhood Watch
Cambridgeshire County Council	Peterborough City Council
Cambridgeshire Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships	Peterborough Trading Standards
Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service	Peterfield Live at Home Scheme
Cambridgeshire Libraries	Powergen
Cambridgeshire Social Services	Royal Bank of Scotland
Cambridgeshire Trading Standards	Shrievally Trust Bobby Scheme
Cambridgeshire Victim Support	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Care Network	The Pension Service
Crime Prevention Panels	Victim Support
Fenland District Council	Women's Institute
Help the Aged	

At the time of the seminar, tackling distraction burglary had already emerged as a priority issue.

- The Home Office national campaign had started.
- A number of the agencies invited to the seminar were already involved in initiatives concerned with raising awareness or otherwise tackling distraction burglaries.
- In particular, some of the utility companies that were active on this issue accepted that they had moral obligations to raise awareness of distraction burglary, since it was common knowledge that offenders use them widely as part of their modus operandi. Their involvement was also considered as positive for their public image as looking after their most vulnerable customers.
- Several of the agencies' representatives were also former police officers who were already committed to tackling distraction burglary.

These factors meant that not only could most agencies provide a valuable input even in the early stages of the project but also that the level of commitment and motivation from the members of the Taskforce was likely to be high. The following three quotes, from respondents belonging to different agencies confirmed this:

[...] Help the Aged has been part of the national distraction burglary work, [...], and it's part of our role to get involved as appropriate in the region.

[When I worked with the police], we were also providing a lot of support in the community for [victims], making sure that they didn't become repeat victims. [...] But I was getting towards the end of my service in the police and wanted to do something else, and by coincidence I joined a utility company as the Security Operations Manager. I believe that utility companies have a moral responsibility to help with this particular type of crime, because people use utility companies as an excuse to get into the victims' homes. [...] When I joined the company I brought this interest with me, and although [...] it was not part of my original remit, people within my organisation [...] began to see the benefits of this. Partly from the fact that we were helping in the community, but secondly because it was good for us, it was good from a brand point of view because we were coming across as a caring organisation, which is what we were trying to be.

We were one of the [...] groups in the county, that were working to reduce crime in the older age group, because [our company] only works with people who are aged 60 plus, and who are either victims of burglary or who are at a high risk of burglary. So we were already doing something in the county.

After the original seminar in August 2001, the first meeting of the Taskforce was held. Those attending discussed what the agencies had already been doing in relation to distraction burglary, what projects could be realistically developed, and missing organisations. Subgroups were subsequently formed to carry forward the projects that had been identified.

The subgroups were:

- Awareness Days;
- education/children;
- leaflets;
- No Cold Call areas;
- Training the Trainers/Professional Pack;
- website.

The subgroups met and worked together on an ongoing basis and fed into quarterly meetings where all the Taskforce members were present. A member of a subgroup explained why having the Taskforce split into different subgroups was an effective way of running a multi-agency group dealing with a multi-initiative project:

[...] We have meetings with the whole group about every three months. But the group itself is broken down into various teams within the group. For example, there'll be three members of the group that are involved in setting up tomorrow's Awareness Day. [...] So there are teams within the large group that get on and do this work in their own time as and when they can, and then we just have a meeting every three months where we all get together, we all report how we're doing on our various projects. Then we have a brainstorming, we talk about where we are, where we're going, what things we should change.

Although subgroups had the responsibility to develop a strategy for their initiative, they did not make significant decisions among themselves, but consulted the Taskforce.

[...] I've always been very conscious of not making decisions here totally, everything goes out to them for feedback. [...] A lot don't feedback, and we'll say if you don't feedback then that's your agreement of it. So we never do anything without the agreement of the whole committee.

There was an agreement among Taskforce members that the police had the lead on the project. Both the project manager and the chair worked for Cambridgeshire Constabulary. It was something that appeared natural to all the Taskforce members interviewed. Clearly one of the reasons why none of the interviewees resented this situation was that the police did not impose their point of view when decisions were taken.

This was how a Community Safety Officer presented the distribution of workload and responsibilities among the agencies:

[...] There are obviously some agencies that are more involved than others, like the police or the council, possibly because we've got invested more time than some of the other voluntary agencies. And for the other agencies, it's not their number one priority... [...] crime isn't on top of their list, whereas for us it's sort of our bread and butter really.

Two police representatives who had active roles in the project confirmed the view that the Constabulary had the lead on the project as a natural consequence of their crime prevention remit. They accepted the situation and were aware that the members were keen to fully engage in projects, but also would not oppose sharing their leadership:

[...] I suppose we did take the lead initially. [...] Until we had the last meeting, meetings were always held [at police HQ], but because we couldn't have a meeting room we went to the Fire HQ which was good as it took the lead away from the police and them spearheading it. The next meeting is at the Shrievally Trust. Although the chair is from the police it doesn't have to be – anyone from the group can do this and no one I believe would object. The beauty of the Taskforce is that everyone has equal status and an equal say in all decisions. The police administer the meetings – all the minutes and agenda go from police HQ – someone has to take responsibility for that and we do have the resources. In that respect the meetings are police led – it is our core job.

The three following quotes come from representatives of agencies which were not directly linked to the police. They illustrate the consensus existing among Taskforce members that it was a naturally police-led project.

It is obviously police-led because you would expect it to be. Because although it's a problem for us all it's the police who are always left to pick up the pieces when things go wrong. So it's quite right that the police should dominate the working group. Although I don't think that they've done that unnecessarily.

I know it's being led by the police, but I know obviously Trading Standards play an important part, and at the last meeting there were probably about 20 people represented, including the independent sector as well as all the statutory sector people. I think it's the only way we can work. Because of the way it's chaired and put together we do actually get through quite a lot of work each time. And obviously they've managed to find the Innovation Fund to actually put a lot of this project together [...].

Because obviously it's a very strong police push, but I think others are equally able to have their say in the discussion.

Assessment of the Taskforce

Strengths

Some of the strengths identified by the interviewees were discussed in the previous section. They included:

- the way the Taskforce was organised including the:
 - lead by the police;
 - consensual way decisions were taken by the whole group;
 - existence of subgroups which concentrated efforts on specific initiatives and split responsibility between each subgroup as opposed to putting the onus on specific people;
 - meetings that included monitoring of progress and forward thinking.
- the motivation of the members - most interviewees agreed that this may have been due to the organisations that the members represented but mainly stressed personalities as crucial assets to the Taskforce:

I think the best indicator [is] if you look at the minutes and see how many people turn up meeting after meeting after meeting, and that's the level of their commitment. I think that it's very unusual to find that level of commitment in multi-agency groups in this area.

This group is very enthusiastic [...] everyone's coming out with ideas. We have to say 'calm down, it's not your turn to speak', everyone is very keen.

I think [the best thing about the project is] the people on it, I have to say. I think it's something that we all feel is very important, and we all make a maximum effort to actually make it work. And it's well chaired, the people who attend want to make it happen. So I think that's why it works so well.

Other strengths identified by the respondents are listed below:

Nature of the crime

The power of the harmful nature of distraction burglary (compared to conventional burglary) played a major role in order to convince agencies to become involved:

There's the human side of things as well. The impact that it has on people is tremendous when it happens, it can absolutely devastate and my folks are now in their seventies, my father's a bit frail, he's had a hard life, and I just tend to personalise it. When you hear about tragedies, you always tend to relate them and interpret them in relation to your own family and the people you know [...]

Joint action

The interviewees indicated that the wide range of agencies represented among the Taskforce were central to its success. Interviewees also suggested that their impact was stronger because legitimacy and a holistic approach increased with the size of the multi-agency Taskforce:

The multi-agency setting is a real success of [this project]. It allows us to produce so much more. Not any of the agencies on its own could do what we've done, it just wouldn't be feasible, they wouldn't have the manpower, they wouldn't be able to get the resources, they wouldn't be able to get the money to finance it.

And if you get a group large enough together within a county like this you'll get press involvement too, who'll take a bigger interest.

Communication

A number of interviewees stressed how much the Taskforce facilitated communication and knowledge sharing between agencies.

Overall the most successful thing about this is all the agencies involved are now aware of every other agency.

I think most people will say that there's much more information sharing, there's a lot more networking and we're all being made aware of what our partners do, there was a lot of ignorance about what other people did.

Funding

Another strength of the Taskforce was its ability to secure funding. It was indicated by many members of the Taskforce, and in particular by its most proactive members, that without funding, the Taskforce would not have been able to promote awareness of distraction burglary in so many ways.

[...] We have been given funding, and that makes a heck of a difference, I can't tell you. It is just marvellous this time to have the money to do it.

Areas for development

Interviewees indicated that the distribution of actions was not naturally evenly spread among the various agencies: the police and the local authority played a central part while smaller organisations had a more limited role to play, because of whose 'bread and butter' crime prevention was. The majority of the respondents, however, expressed some disappointment with the lack of commitment from commercial organisations other than Powergen and Anglian Water, who had been committed to the Taskforce since its creation. The Taskforce had failed to convince some of the banks and other utility and communication companies to join their ranks, although there was some indication that it was an area that the Taskforce was hoping to pursue in the future.

It is very difficult with regards to those [commercial companies such as telecommunication companies] because they're commercial companies, and it's sometimes difficult to engage them when they have very much their own agenda.

It was also suggested that senior police and community safety figures also needed to be regularly convinced in order to continue giving their active support to the Taskforce. This is likely to be due to the relatively small level of offences committed.

[...] We actually talked about reinforcing the message to the senior managers of the various agencies [...then I went to a strategic meeting] and I did a presentation, [...] told them, 'I will be here sticking pins in you every now and again to remind you and to make sure that you maintain a commitment to it'.

A major issue, which was of concern in particular to the most proactive members on the Taskforce, was the lack of capacity. Even police or Community Safety Officers could not work full time on it. Several interviewees suggested that it would be extremely beneficial to the Taskforce to have a full-time person working on the project.

It is only part of my responsibilities. I've got a daytime job as well which I've got to do. [...] I don't spend as much time as I would like on this and there are weeks when I do nothing on it, purely and simply because I have everything else to do.

I'm actually wondering whether we're getting to the stage where we might have to have a paid person who is perhaps co-ordinating and doing the work for that group.

4. Publicity campaign

The aims of the Cambridgeshire campaign were:

- to encourage the second generation to take responsibility for the safety of older people;
- to increase awareness of distraction burglary among the second generation and indirectly among older people.

Campaign focus

The intention was to produce as many different types of publicity material aimed at the second generation as possible to provide a wide variety of mechanisms for transmitting the message. The manager of the marketing company involved in the campaign explained:

We identified the audience as the second generation and tried to find as many opportunities as possible that would fit in with their lifestyle [...]

The Taskforce made the decision to produce a standard leaflet for all agencies with the Home Office's 'Stop, Chain, Check' slogan. As Home Office materials already existed it meant that they would be able to produce effective materials for a minimum cost. Finally, adopting the Home Office logo would bring consistency to messages.

[...] We were finding that every single agency had its own leaflet, said the same thing but just in a slightly different way. [...] There was no point of duplicating and paying all this money [on] leaflets when we can produce just one that would suit everyone. We'd liked the Home Office 'Stop, Chain, Check' one, and we thought let's use that one... because there was no point producing another logo, that one was perfect [...]

So I don't believe in reinventing the wheel. Why should we come up with something that means the same but slightly different when the Home Office have obviously done their homework, they've come up with this pack, this pack is available, they're happy for us to use the logos, let's use it.

Due to lack of in-house inexperience and capacity, a local marketing company was employed to produce and advise on the campaign materials. It was clear from the interviews that many Taskforce members felt that this had eased the implementation of the various publicity campaign initiatives.

[...] We would never have really done it as well, because it's not a full time job for anyone.

It was the marketing company that also advised the focus on the second generation based upon evidence that older people did not respond to messages/experiences of crime in a preventive manner, in particular because some of them might have difficulties remembering them. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that older people are more compliant and more trusting of doorstep callers than other individuals⁴ and do not use their chains effectively when opening the door.⁵ The combination of poor receptivity of publicity messages, combined with lifelong door opening habits meant that media campaigns aimed directly at this group were unlikely to be effective. Targeting the publicity material at the second generation was therefore felt to be more likely to produce the desired impact.

⁴ See The Salford Research Team's *Distraction Burglary: Vulnerability factors and crime impact among older adult victims*, cited in Home Office (2001) *Tackling Distraction Burglary Good Practice Guide*, Section 4.

⁵ See Erol, R., *Gadget grants: Empowering older people to receive doorstep callers*, Home Office (2001).

This approach was supported by the Taskforce on the grounds that the regular contact older people had with neighbours, relations and carers – those referred to by the Taskforce as the second generation – gave these individuals more credibility, provided ongoing reinforcement of crime prevention messages, and also saved on the time and resources of other professionals.

I think that there was a number of reasons why we felt that the next generation was a better way of tackling it, because [...] you do go and visit an older person after a particular crime, next time you go and visit with them they still don't ask for ID or put the door-chain on. [...] We felt that it needed to be an ongoing message, and we as professionals haven't got the time to keep going back and forth to them. Whereas their carer, their relations hopefully, their neighbours, see them on a regular basis.

These were the only people that the victims would listen to. They would not listen to police officers, as they did not know them. They just weren't listening. It is more personal to target their children – people that often had a key part in their safety anyway. It seemed necessary to make someone else responsible.

The aim was to give the second generation responsibility for the safety of older people by passing on important crime prevention advice. This had two functions: to educate them about the risks of distraction burglary; and to inform them about security measures and behaviours they could adopt to help prevent them from becoming a victim.

Publicity materials

With the guidance of a local marketing company, the Taskforce decided upon a wide range of publicity materials intended to raise awareness of distraction burglary – see Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Publicity materials – illustration and range of formats



Impact

This section mainly examines specific elements of the campaign: posters at railway stations and the leaflet. In addition, a general question about the publicity campaign was also asked.

Railway station campaign

Posters aimed at communicating the distraction burglary message to the second generation were displayed at three railway stations for 12 weeks in Cambridgeshire as follows:

- Huntingdon from 13 March 2003;
- Cambridge from 13 March 2003;
- Peterborough from 9 April 2003.

The posters featured the 'Stop, Chain, Check' message and the slogan 'Who's at your Dad's door?'

The impact of the campaign was measured through a face-to-face survey with the target population and was based on the following indicators.

- Knowledge of the wider publicity campaign.
- Whether the respondent had seen the railway station poster.
- Implementation of preventive measures as a result of the campaign.
- Effects on feelings of confidence.

The survey was completed by 116 respondents (half male half female) who were drawn from across all age groups.

A number of methodological limitations have been identified, which limit reliability and should therefore be taken into account when interpreting the results of this evaluation. The Taskforce had little influence over where the posters were going to be positioned, because most sites were taken by publicity campaigns planned long in advance by commercial companies. The survey revealed that there were differences between stations in the number of individuals who had seen the railway poster. More individuals had, for instance, seen the poster at Peterborough, where it was situated in a prominent position on a bridge to a platform, than at either of the other stations where posters had been located less visibly. This is likely to have influenced the efficiency of the publicity campaign with impact being reduced at those stations where posters were less visible. The Taskforce had themselves recognised that variations in the location of posters may have resulted in differences in effectiveness between stations. A member responsible for the publicity campaign noted:

We were limited with space, because a lot of the boardings at all the railway stations are taken up by major companies, organisations that advertise for years on end. Those spaces are held for them. There was very few spaces left for some small little bits like an ad campaign that can't afford a lot, but we wanted to just put it up.

The evaluation of the railway campaign was also complicated by delays in the display of posters at all train stations. As a result, the posters had only been in place for seven days at Huntingdon, eight days at Cambridge and two days at Peterborough station when the questionnaire was conducted. This meant that only a small proportion of the projected audience would have had the chance to see the posters when they completed the questionnaire and thus to relay the message to the first generation. Therefore, everyone was shown, and had the opportunity to comment on, a copy of the Taskforce's leaflet when completing the questionnaire. Care was also taken to measure potential transmission of the crime prevention messages to the elderly.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses showed that less than one in ten respondents (11 out of the total 116 respondents) were aware of any element of the publicity campaign, and that a quarter had seen the railway poster (27 out of 116 participants). The impact on those

individuals who were previously aware of any element of the campaign was also limited. Just one respondent had fitted a chain to an older individual's door and just one to their own door. Only one of the 27 respondents who saw the poster had discussed the issue with older individuals, although on most occasions this was because the respondent had only seen the poster that day and therefore did not have the opportunity to do so.

Respondents were shown a copy of the Taskforce's leaflet to assess the likelihood of the crime prevention message being communicated to the first generation. Of the 111 participants who were asked how existing or new knowledge of the campaign might affect their behaviour, nearly half (51 people/46%) said that they would consider raising the issue with older people, 27 (24%) said that they would consider fixing a chain to an older person's door, 27 (24%) said that they would consider fixing a chain to their own door, and nine (8%) respondents considered other actions, such as warning others about distraction burglary. While taken at face value the responses were encouraging and suggested that almost half of the sample would take positive action as a result of the campaign, it is likely that the estimates were inflated by social desirability interviewer effects.⁶

A key concern with crime-related initiatives is that they can raise fear of crime. Once the respondents had seen the leaflets, they were asked if they felt more, less, or equally confident about their own safety and, as the intention of the campaign was to indirectly target the older people, about their parents' safety.

Table 4.1: The effect of the Cambridgeshire distraction burglary campaign on perceptions of safety

Perception of safety	Safety of older people		Personal safety	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
More confident	39	34	16	14
Equally confident	38	33	85	73
Less confident	24	21	8	7
Unsure	15	13	7	6
Total	116		116	

The results showed that perceptions of safety increased or remained stable among the majority of respondents. Many commented that having the advice allowed them to deal with the problem. In addition, one-fifth of participants were more concerned about the safety of older individuals, although this may have worked to the campaign's advantage by encouraging them to transmit the message. Less than one in ten individuals were less confident about their own safety.

Other publicity materials

The launch of the awareness campaign was on 7 November 2002. It involved three publicity sessions at three different locations, where leaflets, mugs and bookmarks were distributed to residents. The media attended each of them, presumably at least partly because of the presence of the actor Andrew Paul (PC Dave Quinnan from *The Bill*). The Taskforce thought that the launch of the campaign was one of the most positive aspects of the publicity campaign due to the increased profile produced by the media attention.

A senior policeman noted:

[...] Our prime period was around about the time [of the launch] [...] We couldn't be in the news all the time, so we have to pick the most advantageous time to actually go to them.

⁶ Participants are, for example, unlikely to admit that knowledge of the campaign will have no effect on their behaviour.

However, it was clear from talking to some of the members of the Taskforce that they were sometimes sceptical about the impact of the publicity campaign.. These reservations fell into three categories.

- Reservations about the content of publicity materials.
- Limitations about where the publicity campaign material was used.
- Feelings that few individuals take notice of publicity materials.

There were some doubts about the success of publicity materials, in particular the bus campaign. This was the first part of the publicity campaign which ran in November 2002 for one month. On 52 Stagecoach buses, all over Cambridgeshire, interior and exterior posters were placed showing the message 'Who's Mum letting in?'

Some members of the Taskforce doubted the potential influence of the campaign whereas some others noted that in their own experience, they did not come across any of the publicity campaign material produced by the group.

I think they were on the buses for a month, inside and on the back of the buses, but I never saw any up in Fenland.

We tried advertising on buses, it didn't go particularly well [...] because nobody saw any of the adverts. [...] I didn't see any, and not many of the Taskforce people reported seeing any.

It was suggested that materials were only effective if they were backed up with one-to-one contact and most members agreed with this at a Taskforce wide meeting:

[...] If you put a leaflet through the door, that says, 'Stop, Chain, Check' on it, you're not really going to get the message across. [...] So it is really important to spend as much time with them as you can to get the message across.

The Taskforce made many suggestions for improvement. They referred to the benefits of evaluation, and difficulties they had encountered:

[...] You do have to do research to find out whether it was cost-effective. The difficulty is actually trying to find that out, and I think the only way to find that out is when you actually talk, try and get some feedback from the people you're trying to get, the vulnerable people.

I was disappointed really that the Distraction Burglary Taskforce at the Home Office just seemed to end, and there were various regional launches. "And here's your pack, off you go and do it." I think there would have been a lot of benefits from just having another six to nine months at the end [...] so that they could actually come and visit home forces [...]

There was also some disappointment regarding the nature of the media coverage and the involvement of the local media company. Some members highlighted the difficulty engaging media in a crime prevention message, because they were generally more interested in reporting on sensational stories about victims. There were also some criticisms raised about the campaign being less effective at getting an appropriate level of TV coverage. As a consequence, members of the Taskforce had to try to obtain it themselves.

I think we had good coverage, Look East and Anglia TV came, although [...] they liked the victim profiles more than the prevention side. [...] I think we were slightly disappointed with [name of media company], the way they did it, because we were ringing around ourselves to get the TV coverage, they didn't seem to be able to get it [...].

5. Net-Detectives

Intervention description

The Net-Detectives activity is a web based role-play task for children. Developed by a number of agencies in Cambridgeshire, it allows pupils (under their teacher's supervision) to become classroom detectives, linking with professionals to solve real life scenarios.⁷ The distraction burglary activity was designed to increase awareness of the police, Trading Standards, distraction burglary and bogus traders amongst the third generation – the grandchildren, with the hope that these children would communicate the messages to others in their family more at risk from distraction burglary. Net-Detectives has existed for six to seven years, although the technology has improved greatly in the last year.

On average Net-Detectives activities last between two to three hours. The distraction burglary scenario was written by a serving police officer, a Trading Standards Officer and a Community Safety Officer. The ex-policeman who runs the Net-Detectives initiative had previously run Internet-based activities on the premise that they delivered crime lessons to a wider audience than individual lessons and that they allowed children to develop their use of the Internet, which was now a curriculum requirement. A positive element of approaching young children was its inclusiveness, bringing all the generations together to focus on distraction burglary.

[A colleague had suggested] that distraction burglary would be a really key topic to actually do with Net-Detectives because it would firstly raise children's awareness of the issue, secondly get children to think about how the issue could be addressed, and thirdly for them to actually pass the messages on within their own families...

We're doing it as a sort of feel good factor [...] in that we're getting community safety messages across through school, and hoping that the kids will take that information home to parents and educate grandparents [...].

The Net-Detectives' activity was aimed at primary school children aged about 11 years old as:

- it assisted schools in meeting a variety of curriculum requirements;
- children of this age were not expected to have preconceived ideas about the issues that were addressed;
- It was easier to co-ordinate such an activity in the timetables of children of this age than secondary school children.

Any school that registered was allowed to take part in the activity. One Taskforce representative referred to a previous Net-Detectives initiative:

[...] Last time we had 35 schools, and we had about ten groups of four or five children per school. We have schools from all over the world as well, [including] Australia. But mainly we have schools from Europe.

Overall, 36 schools participated in the Net-Detectives' distraction burglary initiative, which took place on 29 January 2003. Seventeen of these schools were based in Cambridgeshire.

On the day:

- 1,690 messages were sent by children;
- 1,219 replies were sent back by professionals;
- 229 teams of children took part.

⁷ For further information, see www.net-detectives.org.uk

The Taskforce agreed that, because the initiative was already developed and well-established, it had been quite easy to implement.

It was an already established thing [...] so it was easy to fit it in, rather than developing a different approach to getting into schools, let's use something that's already in existence really, so it was very easy.

The scenario

Pupils had to imagine that they were Community Beat sergeants who had been on holiday for two weeks. The available information (sent via e-mail), which detailed the crimes reported in the previous two weeks, showed that there had been a problem with distraction burglaries (involving older people in particular) in an imaginary town known as Huntingbridge.

Pupils had a range of information including reported crimes, information on the local area, local criminals, a database containing vehicle information, and online contact with a hypothetical police control room. The challenge was:

- to identify links between crimes;
- to identify the criminals;
- to think of the advice they could give to members of their family to protect them from becoming victims of this crime.

The control room

There were 22 individuals at the control room, including two district Community Safety Officers, IT consultants, and a mix of Trading Standards representatives and police officers. There were also two Italian researchers looking into the use of technology in citizenship education (the project has won an award in relation to this). There was also a representative from the sponsor – the East of England Broadband Consortium. In addition, four people from Childnet sited in London were watching and joining in the activity remotely on their computers.

Prior to the start of the event, the Net-Detectives co-ordinator explained the screen set-up, and what to do with inappropriate messages. He allocated two people to each of nine PCs. Two experienced staff were also 'floating' between computers to assist with difficulties.

The computer screens used to reply to pupils consisted of three sections.

- Inbox where the staff received messages. These could be replied to, discarded, or referred on to the co-ordinator for being inappropriate.
- Global messages which allowed staff to see all messages and replies sent from the terminals in the control room.
- Automated messages where the clues appeared as they were sent to schools.

For the first hour and a half the staff in the control room kept on top of the messages they received. A lot of the responses referred people back to the information that they had been given, e.g. the vehicle database. Similar messages came through from a lot of groups e.g. to send a police officer to the hospital where there was a lost child. These usually got an "OK" reply from staff in the control room.

For the last hour it was harder to keep on top of messages. Reply times gradually increased to about 20 minutes at the end, even with an extra terminal being used in the control room, and the support of people in London. This meant that when the answer was published at 11.45am, some participants were still awaiting replies to questions they had asked at 11.25am. This meant they were given the answer before they had time to work it out for themselves. The staff in the control room then referred pupils to message 13 that contained the answer.

The professionals involved gathered at the end to share their comments on the activity. These professionals identified a number of positive elements related to the activity and several areas for development.

Positive comments included the following.

- A high volume of messages had been received (1,690) and the majority had been answered
- There were reports of children staying in through their playtime to continue the activity.
- “It worked brilliantly” – generally the new technology had been seen to improve things dramatically.
- One member of staff in the control room commented they “were really impressed by some of the questions” from pupils, and there was general agreement.

Areas identified for development,

- Technical difficulties in some schools.
- Problems identifying streets on the map printouts. Suggestions included recommending to teachers that they printed them in advance to ensure the print quality was good enough,
- Keeping more closely to the original timetable,
- It was felt there was a high volume of inappropriate messages from pupils. It was suggested most of these happened towards the end when attention was slipping, and perhaps two hours was too long for the role-play,
- Staff in the control room were dealing with a large number of groups and found it difficult to understand some messages, or reply with any continuity. It would be useful if they could see all (or recent) dialogue along with the new message,
- The scenario contained reference to two white vans. It was often difficult to tell from pupils’ e-mails to which one they were referring.

Impact

The table below outlines the dynamics of the activity at the two schools where the evaluation of the Net-Detectives activity was based. It was immediately apparent that the task was approached differently by the two groups and that there were variations in the availability of IT equipment, which may have affected its impact on the pupils involved.

Table 5.1: Details about the two schools

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Pupils	10 (4 boys and 6 girls)	31 (18 girls and 13 boys)
Group set-up	1 group	1 group in library, 1 group in computer room
Adult presence	Police officer, Teaching Assistant, IT consultant	2 IT consultants, 1 Trading Standards officer, 1 deputy head, 1 police officer, 1 in-service trainer.
IT equipment	1 computer, network server	14 computers, network server, 3 printers.
Other equipment	Handouts, board.	Map of Huntingbridge on white board, handouts
Setting	Children around a table. Usually working in pairs (except for the boys working together and three girls in the same group). All assuming the role of police sergeants.	Children seated in pairs. All assuming the role of police sergeants.

The success of the activity was measured using observations of the following indicators.

- Levels of engagement.
- Interaction with adults.
- Success at the tasks.
- Awareness of distraction burglary.

A follow-up questionnaire two weeks later also evaluated:

- perceptions of task difficulty;
- the most and least enjoyable elements;

- previous knowledge of distraction burglary;
- the outcome of the activity.

All of the pupils involved in the activity at School A completed the questionnaire and 23 of the 31 pupils from School B (9 boys and 14 girls).

Levels of engagement

Children appeared keen to take part, displaying visible and verbal (sighing and tutting) impatience at the delays and technical problems encountered. Their enthusiasm was further demonstrated by their refusal of playtime (by all students in School A and by seven students – four boys and three girls – in School B), and engagement in additional tasks. The boys were most active and interested and appeared to find the initiative easier than the girls, working more quickly. The girls began to interact and enjoy the activity more as it progressed.

At School A, children's interest in completing the task was disrupted by a delayed computer connection. Unlike School B, this school had to undertake part of the activity using printed information. Having only one computer for the ten pupils also meant that, once the connection was established, the most interesting task for most of the pupils was not to discover who the burglars were but who would take control of the computer. The late connection meant that School A worked more quickly than those completing the Internet version of the activity and, as a result, they had to wait for messages.

A small proportion of students at School B became despondent as the task progressed, stating that they “were not getting anywhere.” Others showed visible signs of boredom – slower responses, lack of participation in additional tasks and general unsettlement (fighting, joking, noise, and so on).

The presence of less familiar adults (the researcher and Trading Standards representative at School B) and the presence of two journalists at School A also visibly distracted the children.

The questionnaire revealed, as suspected, that there were some differences between the schools. While all of the children at School A had found the activity interesting, more than half of those at School B perceived it to be boring. This may reflect differences in the way that the task was undertaken and delays receiving messages. A pupil at School A commented in the school newsletter, for instance, that:

It was quite good that we couldn't enter the Internet because it made it more interesting.

When asked what they liked least about the activity, 18 of the 23 pupils from School B referred to the slowness or inefficiency of computers, confirming the suspicions of the observers.

Interaction with adults

Four adults were present during the activity at School A. Two of them hardly intervened: the Home Office researcher and the IT assistant. The Teaching Assistant tried at first to have an active role but quickly became more preoccupied with encouraging children to concentrate on the task and helping the quieter girls with the activity. The police officer held the most active role at School A. He read the messages to the children when the internet connection failed. He also prompted the pupils, and guided them in the right direction.

Most of the interactions at School B occurred between the pupils and the Detective Chief Inspector (DCI), in-service trainer and the head teacher. This communication was generally interactive. Adults rarely provided answers, although they did offer clues to assist the children. The policeman – who was highlighted as the “crime professional” by the teacher – filled the main consultative role and students (and the boys in particular) were keen to seek his advice.

The teacher also took the lead on several occasions, inserting breaks into the programme where children were introduced to the adults in the room and given the chance to discuss the initiative. It was clear by the end of the task that the teacher was leading pupils to the correct answer. The control room observations suggested that this was also the case at other schools. It was clear that a few groups already knew the answer, or had information in advance of when they should have.

Success at tasks

The success of the activity was disturbed in many ways at School A.

- The internet connection failed, although the disruption was minimised by the input of the police officer.
- The maps produced for the activity were blurry and difficult to read. This meant that pupils could not identify the two areas where most crimes were committed.
- The pupils were successful at all tasks, although they often relied upon the help of the police officer.

The majority of students at School B arrived at the correct solution, although some were clearly reliant on their peers for answers. One pupil admitted that they only knew the solution because they heard someone else say what it was. As previously noted, the children were also led to the answer by their teacher and the other adults in the room.

Aspects of task design impeded the success of children at both schools. IT problems interfered with students' ability to complete the task, resulting in small delays. There were also some problems with terminology. The term 'deployment' appeared to pose particular difficulties for the children who had to seek help. Both the teacher and the DCI had to elaborate on the meaning of this term: 'think where you are going to put the policeman'. However, part of the aim of the initiative is to introduce pupils to technical language.

Awareness of distraction burglary

The questionnaire revealed that most pupils were not aware of distraction burglary before taking part in the activity (20 of the 33 pupils). Nevertheless, with the assistance of the police officers, they comprehended the meaning of the term and the need to be cautious when opening the door. At both schools, the real-life examples given by police officers had some impact on the pupils, helping them to complete the task. Pupils explained, for example,

That's why you need two: one person keeps the old person chatting, while the other steals; two people go to a house and pretend to be something they are not. Someone distracts the person while the other steals.

They were also keen to find solutions and quickly identified (with the help of the police officer at School A and the in-service trainer at School B) the need to check and verify callers' identity cards. Pupils at both schools showed that they knew what they should tell their grandparents and appeared keen to assist. One boy produced a poster of a small boy surrounded by speech bubbles to express the message. He explained that the boy represented himself and the speech boxes things that he would tell the older people about answering the door to keep them safe.

The follow-up questionnaire showed that, after the activity, given the choice of three definitions, all 33 pupils were able to correctly define distraction burglary. This suggests that the intervention succeeded in its aim to raise awareness of distraction burglary among the third generation.

Activity outcome

The results of the questionnaire showed that children were more likely to discuss the activity, and therefore distraction burglary, with their parents than their grandparents. Twelve of the 23 pupils at School B mentioned it to their parents, and the nine pupils at School A. Overall, just seven pupils discussed the issue with their grandparents. This suggests that Net-Detectives did not succeed in its aim to transmit crime prevention messages to the third generation. As the average age of victims is 81 years⁸, there is also some question as to whether the focus on 11-year-olds is appropriate for targeting the most vulnerable victims. The grandparents of the children involved in this intervention might, for instance, have been only 60 or 65 years old.

The questionnaire responses again suggested that the differences between the way the activity was undertaken at the two schools resulted in variations in the transmission of messages. As suggested in relation to the publicity campaign, it may have been that the one-to-one interaction produced by the internet failure resulted in messages being transmitted more effectively, although this hypothesis needs to be tested empirically.

A key concern with interventions intended to raise awareness of crime-related issues is that there will be a parallel rise in fear of crime. A member of the Taskforce acknowledged:

So there is a risk of raising fear of, [...] crime, but [...] hopefully [...] children are removed one step from it and secondly we have to recognise it's there, but make sure that there is a balance.

The questionnaire suggested that taking part in the activity had raised the majority of pupils' concerns about their grandparents' safety (25 out of 33 children said that the activity had made them worry about their grandparents). This might have been the case because children became aware of a crime that they did not know existed before taking part in the activity. The activity raised their awareness of distraction burglary but may not have emphasised enough that they had the power – though limited – to do something about it by talking to their parents and grandparents in order to attempt to change their grandparents' behaviour when answering the door. It is also possible that the scenario should have incorporated a message that distraction burglary is not a widespread offence.

⁸ See Thornton (2003, p.2).

6. Awareness Days

Initiative outline

The Taskforce established a subgroup to directly target victims and potential victims. Drawing on experiences from Derbyshire, they decided to organise days that would:

- raise awareness of distraction burglary and bogus callers amongst older people likely to be at risk;
- provide older people with simple steps to deal with callers at the door;
- promote the use of security measures to prevent distraction burglary.

One of the Taskforce members involved in developing the Awareness Days explained:

I think what we really wanted to do was make it a fun day for older people, a really fun day, a day that they would enjoy, but also the underlying message of the 'Stop, Chain, Check' being threaded throughout the day...

Figure 6.1: Awareness Day in March



The first Awareness Day was held in St Ives in May 2002, and subsequently another five days have been held across the county. Each day welcomed a large number of older people – between 200 and 400. The exact format of the day varied depending on location, but included similar components – namely the communication of the distraction burglary message, entertainment and a hot lunch.

Members of a variety of clubs and organisations were invited to attend the days. On the day of the event, there was wide local media coverage.

Distraction burglary messages were communicated in a number of ways:

- an opening speech by a local VIP welcoming participants and introducing them to the 'Stop, Chain, Check' message;
- the Master of Ceremonies reinforcing the message in-between the different activities;
- showing a Home Office distraction burglary prevention video;
- prizes for bingo winners, the participants shouting "Stop, Chain, Check", and those who correctly answered distraction burglary quiz questions;
- displays on the main stage and around the room about distraction burglary by some of the agencies involved;
- distraction burglary plays and presentations;
- a 'goody bag' at the end of the day containing a mug, a pen and various relevant leaflets and stickers;
- a range of entertainment included bingo, musicians, singalongs, raffles, magicians, keep fit and Tai Chi.

Impact

It was clear from talking to Taskforce members that the Awareness Days were generally seen as the most successful initiative that they had undertaken, though this may have partly reflected the fact it was the initiative with the widest multi-agency involvement.

[...] The 200 people in a room having a whale of a time, but being there for maybe four or five hours and every now and again getting this drip feed during the day of positive, reassuring crime reduction messages, that's what we think is working.

The impact of the days was measured by a number of indicators relating to participants:

- enjoyment of the day;
- feedback on feelings of confidence;
- reports of whether participants would alter their behaviour;
- increased installation of distraction burglary prevention measures.

In addition, Taskforce members identified some additional benefits to holding the days.

The evaluation did not have the scope to measure final outcomes, namely if participants did alter their behaviour, and if those that attended had been victims of distraction burglary since their attendance. As one Taskforce member mentioned:

I think we've been very successful, they're very hard to evaluate in that have they stopped further distractions happening?

Enjoyment of the day

It was clear from the atmosphere on the two days attended, and from feedback by participants, that the days were enjoyable. There were many positive comments,

A key player in one Awareness Day said:

[...] After it we must have had ten, twenty letters from people who've actually taken the trouble to sit down and write to us and thank us for it... I don't know the exact percentage, but I would certainly say a very, very high percentage of people thought it was a tremendous day out. I don't know whether it's because of the food, the bingo, or because of the message, perhaps it's a combination of all, which is what we wanted to do. We wanted to attract people, we wanted to make them aware, but we want to give them a pleasant day out. We've got a waiting list for the next one.

Participants also commented on the enjoyment they had during the Awareness Days. One lady was reported as saying "this was the best day of my life".

Some participants also wrote comments on the evaluation forms such as:

It has been a super day. And although in a wheelchair, I would come again! Thanks!

Everything has been super and very well organised. Have enjoyed it all and the music.

A brilliant day and many thanks for the delicious dinner, I didn't have to cook.

Feedback on feelings of confidence

One of the concerns in relation to raising awareness of certain crimes, is that you may inadvertently make participants more afraid. The Awareness Days sought to reassure people that they could deal with potential distraction burglars and rogue traders.

As one Taskforce member commented in relation to raising awareness of distraction burglary:

We are all aware that we don't want to terrify people or make them more frightened, we want to make them happier in their home and more reassured.

Table 6.1 shows that of those who responded to the question on how they felt after attending the Awareness Day, nearly three-quarters (72%) replied that their confidence had increased, and the majority felt 'a lot more confident'. Of the remaining respondents, only one per cent felt less confident, with the other 26 per cent feeling just as confident as before. This showed that both of the days communicated their preventive messages without worrying participants. In fact, they made them feel much safer.

Table 6.1: Fear of crime and Awareness Days

Confidence level	Total	
	Number	Percent
A lot more confident	187	57
A little more confident	50	15
Just as confident	85	26
A little less confident	3	1
A lot less confident	1	0
Not sure	5	1
Total	331	100

Reports of preventive behaviour

In total, 455 participants responded to the questionnaire, that is 71 per cent of the older people who attended one of the Awareness Days.

Analysis indicates that Awareness Days changed the older people's behaviour. Based on the evaluation forms, 44 per cent indicated they were going to take at least one extra preventive measure. The people who were the least likely to change behaviour after such an event were the people taking no measure at all (60% of them stated they would still not use any preventive measure) and obviously those using many security measures already (77% of the people already using five measures indicated they would not adopt another one after the Awareness Days). These results suggested influencing crime prevention behaviour change by events such as an Awareness Day was likely to be mostly effective on people who use a moderate level of security measures before attending them.

Increased installation of distraction burglary prevention measures

There was no follow-up with attendees on whether they improved their distraction burglary prevention measures. However, one measure that suggested this might have been the case was the increase in referrals to the Shrievally Trust Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme, which installed free security measures for vulnerable people. On the day, the Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme

and its procedure for self-referral was presented to the participants. Self-referral was also offered at the Awareness Days where the Shrievalty Trust was one of the many agencies to have a stand. A representative from the scheme commented:

[...] If you do an away-day for 200 older people and then within two or three days we get something like 80 self-referrals, which is what we had for the Peterborough one, you know that 40 per cent of people are actually doing something about it, and that is a hell of a return.

In the two months February-March 2003, the Bobby Scheme received 688 referrals, an increase of 49 per cent on the same period last year. A third of these came directly from older people or their carers/neighbours/friends rather than through agencies. As the scheme had done little of its own publicity, there was a strong feeling that the Awareness Days, and the publicity campaign, had increased the number of people taking action.

As the figures above suggest, practical measures such as the Bobby Scheme were an essential element of the days' success in increasing older people's self-confidence. The Awareness days gave the Shrievalty Trust the opportunity to publicise their existence and role and take self-referrals. This minimises the effort required by participants to install crime prevention measures.

Additional benefits

Addressing the issue of underreporting

Rogue trader or distraction burglary crimes are notorious for being underreported. This might be for a number of reasons, but a key one mentioned was potential embarrassment that they felt stupid in allowing themselves to be deceived. The Awareness Days were therefore viewed by one Taskforce member as an opportunity to encourage people to report their victimisation.

I think getting across that they shouldn't be embarrassed about being conned by somebody at their door. That's really important to say to them, "you must report it, don't be embarrassed about it, it happens to us all".

This is an additional benefit which could not be evaluated due to the difficulty of obtaining data on the issue.

Communicating other messages

A Taskforce member who volunteered to help at the Awareness Days said:

I think the Awareness Days are very good...and it's not just the Awareness Day, it's the spin-offs from the Awareness Day, like the people who could actually come along and talk about what they can do. Yesterday, there was somebody from the local council who was talking about saving electricity and gas and what they could do to support them with grants and things of that nature.

Other additional messages were around datalink⁹, pensions, fire safety, the Bobby Scheme, rogue traders or a more economical and 'warmer home'.

Some participants commented on their evaluation forms:

It was a very informative day.

⁹ Datalink is a scheme which encourages people to store relevant information for emergency services in a small container in the fridge.

I have enjoyed all of today, learnt a lot, just by listening, ordered a chain to be fitted, bought a kettle, so yes, very interesting, thanks.

All the information under one roof in an enjoyable atmosphere.

It has been totally enjoyable and I have learned a lot more about safety.

Good to know police and others are trying to help.

It has been a very helpful day and made me realise how to take more care.

Surprised how much help is available, especially for those living on their own.

There was disagreement over whether it was better to focus exclusively on 'Stop, Chain, Check' or whether it was better to use the opportunity to spread other messages. Another Taskforce member involved in a different Awareness Day commented:

We didn't want loads of information bombarded to them, and we really just concentrated on the three words. And I think I'd do that again, keep it very simple and just keep reiterating the importance of 'Stop, Chain, Check'.

Media coverage

The large-scale involvement of VIPs also generated wider publicity. As one Taskforce member noticed:

[...] And of course you also get good press coverage from them, and so that tends to also bring in good publicity.

This meant that people living in secluded and/or in rural areas became aware of the Taskforce's message other than by the mainstream publicity campaign which was mainly directed towards bigger towns.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The Taskforce

Many factors explain why this multi-agency group was viewed by its members as a success including its organisation (subgroups, project manager, chair), its shared responsibility by putting the onus on the subgroups, and the people involved (their motivation, expertise). Areas for further development were also identified that are likely to be a consequence of the low volume of offences. These include capacity issues arising from the absence of full-time staff, and difficulties getting commercial organisations and key professionals on board.

The Taskforce implemented a wide range of initiatives such as:

- a multi-product publicity campaign with a second generation focus;
- a web-based activity, Net-Detectives, designed to deliver lessons on crime prevention to the third generation;
- Awareness Days to provide older people with simple steps to deal with callers at the door and to promote the use of security measures to prevent distraction burglary;
- a number of other projects such as 'No Cold Call Areas', engaging with stores, professional packs, 'Training the Trainers', a website/database and 'One Number for All'.

Some initiatives were more successful than others in terms of raising awareness about distraction burglary and rogue traders.

Raising awareness of the second and third generation

It is difficult to evaluate the success of the publicity campaign aiming to target the second and third generations. Analysis of a small sample of respondents to a questionnaire at train stations suggested that:

- few were aware of the wider publicity campaign (launch, buses, railway station posters);
- the leaflet (and presumably therefore the poster if it was read) would inspire nearly half of people to consider raising the issue with older people.

Thus, while the publicity materials go some way in communicating the message on distraction burglary, further efforts are needed.

The messages in the publicity campaign will be reinforced by the professional pack and Training the Trainers, allowing the 'non-related' second generation to pass on messages. Most importantly this will be on an ongoing basis, as research evidence and the Taskforce's experience show that messages need to be regularly reinforced.

The Net-Detectives initiative aimed to encourage children to communicate messages to grandparents. Although the children had clearly learnt and remembered the distraction burglary messages, there was little evidence that they had translated them into action by passing messages on to grandparents. Thus, whilst web-based initiatives would clearly be successful in conveying crime prevention messages that related directly to the children, e.g. their personal safety and engaging youths with the police, other methods might be more successful in targeting the third generation.

Raising awareness among older and vulnerable people

The Taskforce saw the Awareness Days as a success. The days were enjoyable, and a large number of participants referred themselves to the Shrievally Trust Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme and/or said they would take new precautions as a result of the days.

Discussion on tackling distraction burglary

If anything, what this evaluation has proved is that tackling distraction burglary is a major task for several reasons. Firstly, any Taskforce or organisation wishing to tackle distraction burglary has to develop a robust business case. Because of the nature of the crime, tackling distraction burglary is a rather expensive area of crime reduction, in particular due to the low level of offences being recorded by the police. There is always likely to be some suspicion as to whether money spent on addressing distraction burglary could be more effectively used in tackling other, more frequently occurring forms of burglary.

Secondly, distraction burglary is one of those crimes that are widely known as being under-reported. Obviously, this has some impact on the point made above and goes some way in supporting the need for interventions. It also creates problems for those evaluating the impact of projects attempting to tackle such offences. A reliable baseline cannot be confidently identified. Trends in distraction burglary may also be influenced in different ways, which makes it difficult to set clear aims. For example, the project: can lead to a reduction in distraction burglary; can have no impact on the level of offences being committed; or may lead to an increase in offences as victims become more willing to report. The first and the last options may be viewed as positive. However, properly evaluating them remains a significant task.

Thirdly, because of the under-reported nature of distraction burglary, it is difficult to identify the characteristics of victims and/or offenders. This point leads, finally, to a difficulty in accurately targeting interventions. Although there is substantial evidence that distraction burglary victims are typically older people, it is important for any project to recognise that it does not mean that any old person is a potential victim of a distraction burglary. Equally, an 85-year-old woman (the most common victim of this crime), if bright and still very much alert, may be less at risk of being a distraction burglary victim than a forgetful 60-year-old male. Old age may be a common denominator for most victims of distraction burglary but local knowledge has to be used in order to identify those who are likely to be the most vulnerable when opening the door. This is one of the reasons why it is essential to gain a good understanding and knowledge of the local population and why it is also essential to draw agencies into the Taskforce that will have some understanding and knowledge of the relevant issues.

The following section draws together all the recommendations for practitioners from throughout the report. It is important to recall the objectives of the Taskforce in relation to its aim of reducing the problem of bogus callers and rogue traders:

- to reduce the opportunities for crime by raising awareness of bogus callers and rogue traders in the community;
- to reduce crime by educating older and more vulnerable members of the community to adopt security measures;
- to reduce fear of crime by identifying, targeting and improving home security of vulnerable members of the community.

Recommendations for practitioners

Analysis of statistical data

Victim and offending profiling

- Target initiatives specifically at 'at risk' individuals, identified from analysis of victim data.
- Raise awareness of the wide range of methods of committing distraction burglary.

Multi-agency working

There would appear to be a number of transferable lessons from the work in Cambridgeshire that could be adopted by other areas.

- Use a multi-agency setting. It offers various benefits such as avoiding duplication and providing consistency.
- Holding regular meetings throughout provides a forum to communicate objectives, progress and to establish consensus among members.
- Use subgroups looking at specific issues or interests to reduce the dependence upon individuals.

Publicity campaign

Promotion

Use a media company to take some of the pressure off Taskforce members.

Fear of crime

Use a second generation focus to transmit a crime prevention message and raise awareness without significantly increasing individuals' fear of crime.

Targeted publicity

Use carers as well as relatives to pass crime prevention messages to the older people.

Location of posters

Plan posters in advance to ensure a good location. Beware that some commercial companies book locations for their posters for a long period of time.

Media involvement

Plan well in advance any involvement with the media since they also have a role in awareness of initiatives. Ensure that the right messages are communicated.

Net-Detectives

Be clear about your target audience

Net-Detectives is a successful initiative if the target audience is young children. Use alternative initiatives to convey messages to their parents or grandparents.

Scope

Use a net-based activity (or perhaps even a planned paper-based activity) to reach a larger audience than lessons at individual schools.

Recycling

Redesigning an existing project to meet the requirements of another intervention can save effort and money.

Presence of professionals

Make sure key adults attend the participating schools. They made a significant contribution to the success of the initiative, as children were able to learn about crime reduction by asking questions.

Information technology

Those responsible for designing scenarios must ensure that technical connections are established well in advance of activities.

Further development in information technology could assist. Displaying previous messages from that team with the incoming message would allow continuity of messages and improve response times.

Quality of products

Ensure that the readability of resources such as maps is clear.

Attention

The activity should incorporate an informal break to assist pupils' concentration.

Fear of crime

Beware of the impact such an initiative can have on fear of crime.

Awareness Days

Planning

Two or three people local to the venue should organise the day. These people need to be dedicated full time in the run up to the event.

Recruitment – volunteers

Although it is most efficient to have a core group organising the day, it is vital that there are enough volunteers to sit at tables to answer individual queries and assist with practicalities such as passing out food.

Venue

- As far as possible select venues where the layout of tables allow participants to be fully engaged.
- Ensure the technological capabilities of the venue allow activities on the stage and videos to be clearly seen and heard.

Transport

The careful planning of transport was mentioned by everyone closely involved in the organisation of the days.

Programme

- Active participation e.g. playing bingo, is key to engagement. Too many presentations cause interest to lapse
- Do not let the day drag on – finish early whilst there is still plenty of energy and enthusiasm.
- Ensure that 'goody bags' contain appropriate items that reinforce the messages from the day.

Fear of crime

Be aware of the possibility of raising fear of crime.

- Offer of practical measures at the event.
- If possible, offer the opportunity to the participants to be self-referred to organisations such as the Bobby Scheme.

Other benefits

Use the large scale of the event to generate wider publicity.

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