

Criminal Damage – Home Office Progress Update – December 2006

This letter is intended to let you know about the progress we have made on tackling criminal damage since a stakeholder consultation event in March this year and to thank you all for the work you have done so far. Although there is some way to go yet to tackling criminal damage effectively everywhere, the commitment we see from around the country is really encouraging and we, and our local communities, are enormously grateful for the efforts in this area.

We hope that you will also be interested to know which aspects of our Action Plan we will be tackling next.

The Action Plan

The action plan developed as a result of the stakeholder event, and on which we consulted shortly afterwards, contained actions under 4 headings:

- Reducing Incentives
- Reducing Opportunities
- Managing Offending
- Supporting Delivery

Through consideration of the speed, impact and cost of our actions we were able to assess their relative priority, and identify a 'top ten' to be taken forward quickly. Many of these quickest benefits featured under the Supporting Delivery heading, supporting you and your colleagues in your efforts to tackle criminal damage.

Progress of Actions

A few highlights from the past few months include:

- Provision of £500,000 to reduce criminal damage in 10 Areas, developing and showcasing problem-solving approaches;
- Appointment of ACPO lead on criminal damage;
- Tilley Award for Criminal Damage to Operation Mullion – other successful bids shortlisted;
- Establishment of website for Criminal Damage;
- Expert advice to practitioners via On-line 'action sessions';
- Criminal Damage 'Champions' at CDRP level;
- 79 ENCAMS action days now completed; and
- good practice guides on tackling repeat victimisation and criminal damage to vehicles are now available on the criminal damage website (www.crimereduction.gov.uk/criminaldamage)

What Have the Results Been?

I recognise that efforts to tackle criminal damage are not always reflected in a reduction in recorded crime figures, as these are affected by people being more likely to recognise and report incidents. This is an important point. We very much want the public to feel that local agencies respond to criminal damage and therefore it is important that we encourage people to report incidents of criminal damage. But whilst we expect to see an increase in reporting and recording in the short term, we do still expect to see decreases in criminal damage figures over the longer term. At the local level, CDRPs will be better placed to understand their performance if they

collect evidence of actions taken and estimate its impact on recorded crime figures.

Challenges Ahead

Criminal damage still remains a problem. But local partners now recognise this as a key indicator of public safety and are starting to grip the issue and are responding in an effective way. More than half CDRPs now rate criminal damage as a priority in their Local Area Agreements and it should no longer be regarded as a lower level offence which is unimportant – tackling it will have benefits in terms of volume crime, public satisfaction, fear of crime and beyond.

In order to continue to make progress, we are:

- developing communication with young offenders of the consequences of criminal damage – including perhaps a competition for schools to build engagement;
- consulting on next steps to promote best use of good practice guidance on tackling repeat victimisation;
- building links with Neighbourhood Policing; and
- further clarifying roles and responsibilities in local delivery.

Proposed Future Actions

We're looking at how we can most help you at the local level with your local campaigns and are considering:

- Launching a national 'clean-up' day – aimed at improving criminal damage trouble spots, removing graffiti and repairing other damage. This would promote sustainable benefits through increased use of public places; use materials and design that are more robust to damage; and promote partnership approaches;
- Working through the ACPO lead to investigate ways to improve detection rates for criminal damage, and so increasing the credibility of deterrence messages;
- Promoting the identification of full costs of criminal damage, and pursuing these through the criminal justice system.

What do you think?

These are our current initiatives and plans for the future. But we would really value your input to our programme of work. So please let us have your comments on these proposals. Specifically,

1. Are there any major gaps that would bring big benefits in reducing criminal damage?
2. Are there any major obstacles we have yet to tackle?
3. Can any of the suggested actions be improved and if so how?

We would be grateful for your views and suggestions, either through the mailbox criminal.damage@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or by phone (020 7035 1443)