

The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate exists to improve policy making, decision taking and practice in support of the Home Office purpose and aims, to provide the public and Parliament with information necessary for informed debate and to publish information for future use.

Findings are produced by the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. For further copies contact:

Communication Development Unit  
Room 264,  
Home Office,  
50 Queen Anne's Gate,  
London SW1H 9AT.

Tel: 020 7273 2084  
Fax: 020 7222 0211  
publications.rds@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Editor: Carole Byron  
Printed by: TABS

© Crown copyright 2003  
ISSN 1473-8406

## Reducing Burglary Initiative: early findings on burglary reduction

Jenny Kodz and Ken Pease

The first round of the Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI), launched in 1999, funded 63 Strategic Development Projects (SDPs). One of the key aims of the RBI was to find out what burglary reduction strategies work best where. The SDPs were encouraged to develop innovative burglary reduction strategies. As a result, a wide range of interventions was implemented in a variety of contexts. Some early findings on burglary reduction in the SDP areas are discussed here. The decline in burglary in 55 of these areas has been compared with other 'reference'/comparison areas. Eight SDPs, where no feasible comparison areas could be identified, have been excluded from the analysis.

### Key points

- Burglary rates fell in 40 of the 55 SDP areas (relative to the comparison areas).
- In the 21 months after the launch of the Reducing Burglary Initiative, burglaries fell in the 55 SDPs by 20% compared with a pre-project period. The net reduction in burglaries was 7% in the SDP areas, when taking into account burglary reduction in comparison areas.
- This analysis suggests that 2,700 fewer burglaries took place in these SDP areas than would have been expected, between April 1999 and December 2000.
- Of the 55 SDPs analysed, 15 achieved a 20% or more reduction in burglary relative to the comparison area; a further 13 saw a relative reduction of between 10% and 20%. However, 15 of the projects saw a relative increase in burglary.

As part of Round 1 of the Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI), local crime and disorder reduction partnerships were invited to bid for funding for one or more of 60 initial Strategic Development Projects (SDPs). They were asked to identify areas comprising 3,000 to 5,000 households, which had experienced at least twice the national recorded domestic burglary rate for each of the previous three years.

In March 1999, 63 SDPs were selected. Most projects received around £60,000 from the Home Office and the bulk of activity was expected to take place within 12 months. Each project was evaluated by one of three regionally-based independent contractors. They were the Northern Consortium (led by the University of Liverpool Environmental Criminology Research

Unit), the Midlands Consortium (led by The University of Keele, Department of Criminology) and the Southern Consortium (led by South Bank University Criminal Policy Research Unit).

These findings report the results of some simple ways of combining data from the evaluations and identify some conclusions reached by one or more of the evaluation teams which give practical help to local crime and disorder reduction partnerships intent on reducing burglary. Four of the most successful projects are described in Table 2.

A full report detailing the findings of each of the three regional evaluation teams will follow, including what worked and the cost-effectiveness of the initiative. For details about the Reducing Burglary Initiative see Jacobson (2003).

**The views expressed in these findings are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect Government policy)**

## Was burglary reduced?

Each SDP area was examined to see whether there was a decline in burglary in these areas compared with a reference area. The reference areas used were the police force area, the basic command unit or the police division.

Table 1 shows 'before' and 'after' comparisons, giving the number of SDP areas where domestic burglary rose and the number where it fell compared with the reference areas. The 'before' period was September 1997 to March 1999 and the 'after' period was April 1999 to December 2000. The number of SDP areas where the domestic burglary rate fell relative to areas chosen as comparison areas far exceeded the number of areas where there was a relative increase in burglary. However, as the start and end date of each project varied, this analysis is an indication of the impact and the results should be treated with caution. Different results are shown when different time periods for the analysis are used (the Stirchley project provides an illustration of this, shown in Table 2)

**Table 1 Number of SDP areas where domestic burglary increased and decreased relative to reference area over the project period**

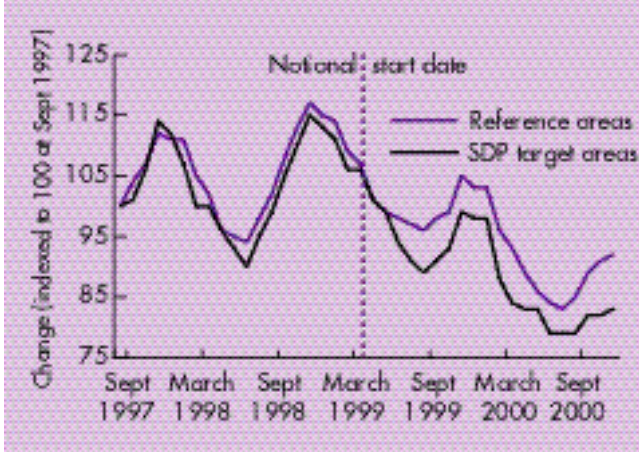
Domestic burglary rate	No. of SDPs
Relative decrease	40
Relative increase	15
All SDP areas analysed	55

Note: Target areas were excluded when no feasible comparison could be selected. The split between the SDP and comparison areas was statistically significant (at the 5% level), for each region taken separately and for all regions combined.

## The scale of the decrease in burglary

The number of burglaries in the 55 SDP areas per month has been aggregated and plotted relative to the total number of burglaries in the reference areas (Figure 1). For ease of comparison, the data has been indexed to 100 for September 1997, the first month for which data from all areas was available. A notional project start date (due to variations in date of implementation) of April 1999 is shown.

**Figure 1 Aggregate number of burglaries per month in SDP and reference areas, September 1997 to December 2000**



A percentage burglary reduction across the projects has been calculated using the notional project start date of April 1999, and making comparisons between the before and after periods shown in Figure 1. This shows that the number of burglaries per month fell by 20% in the SDP target areas and by 13% in the reference areas. Therefore, the net reduction in the number of burglaries in the project areas (or the net effect size) was 7%, between these periods. This suggests that there were 2,700 fewer burglaries in the SDP areas, during the 21 month after-project period, than would have been expected if the SDPs had followed the same rate of reduction in burglaries as the reference areas.

The extent to which burglary reduction in the SDP areas can be attributed to the SDP funded activity must be considered – changes in burglary may be due to other factors, such as other local projects funded by alternative sources. Nonetheless, Figure 1 gives an approximate indication of the impact of these SDPs.

The differences between the burglary trends in the SDP target areas and reference areas are fairly modest because this includes the 15 schemes which had increases relative to their reference areas as well as the more successful projects. Four of the more successful projects are described in Table 2.

Comparisons with national burglary trends (England and Wales) for the before and after periods gave a similar picture. The SDP target areas showed a reduction in burglaries per month of 20% and national data showed a 14% reduction over these two periods. In other words, in comparison with the change in burglaries nationally, there was a net reduction of 6% in the number of burglaries in the SDP areas. After 2000, there were fewer SDPs for which burglary data was available but where data was available, the aggregate number of burglaries continued to be lower in the target areas than the reference areas into 2001. The Home Office is continuing to monitor the longer term impact of the SDPs.

## The distribution of apparent effect sizes

Figure 2 shows the distribution of net effect sizes, using the before and after periods and a notional project start date of April 1999. The figure shows that the highest number of projects were within the 10% and 20% range for a net reduction of burglaries, relative to the reference area. Of the 55 projects, 13 had a reduction within this range and a further 15 had a net reduction of over 20%. The maximum net reduction was 53% and the project with the greatest increase in burglary saw a net rise of 40%. What can be said is that enough of the SDP areas out-performed expectation to an extent which makes closer study of what happened in these areas particularly worthwhile. Further analysis of these changes will be published in the full report.

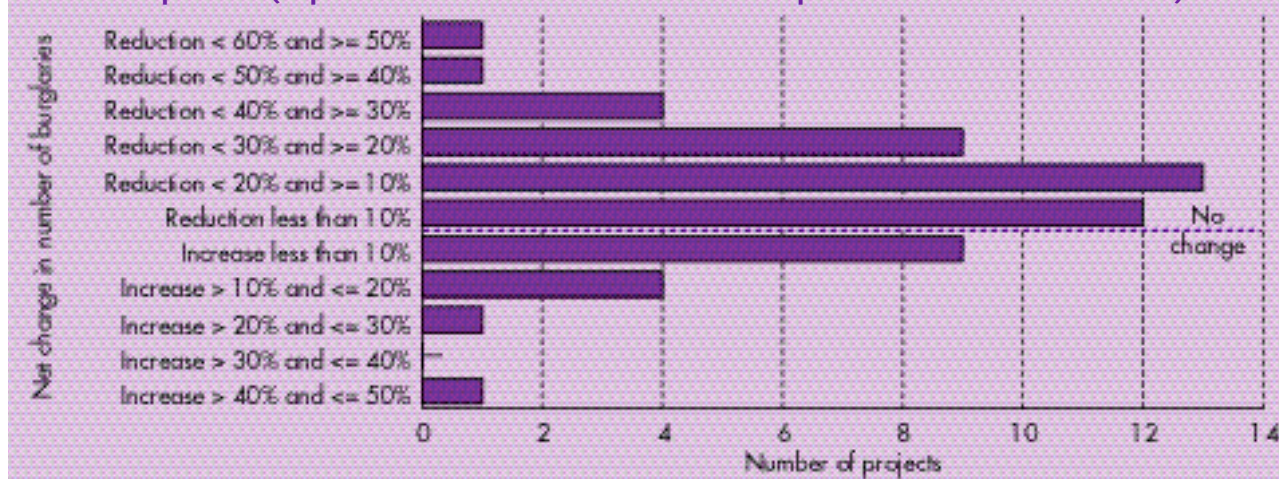
## Lessons to be learnt from the SDPs

Analysis undertaken by each evaluation team has produced some lessons of immediate practical value.

### Anticipatory benefits

The Southern and Northern evaluation teams noted anticipatory benefits, i.e. in a number of cases the burglary reduction anticipated the launch of the scheme. In a review of successful crime prevention initiatives (Smith et al., 2001),

**Figure 2 Net change in number of burglaries in SDP target areas between project before- and after-periods (September 1997 to March 1999 and April 1999 to December 2000)**



40% of such projects showed a decline in crime which predated project implementation. The Northern consortium suggests that publicity is responsible for some or all of this effect. Other possible explanations of these anticipatory benefits include:

- the process of selecting target areas may make police forces more sensitive to burglary problems which are then tackled
- SDP areas reaching an unusual peak in burglaries prior to the project start, and then falling to a more typical level during the implementation period (regression to the mean).

#### Amount spent per household and speed of implementation

Modelling undertaken by the Northern consortium demonstrated that both spend per household and speed of implementation had a significant impact on outcomes. The Southern Consortium also considered 'dosage' in terms of the intensity of the SDP activity to be important and the Midlands consortium concluded that it may be intensity of action itself, rather than the effect of any specific kind of crime prevention measure, which has the greatest impact on crime reduction outcomes.

#### Displacement of crime

All three evaluation teams considered that, on the basis of evidence collected, the total gains achieved across all projects were not at the expense of displacement of crime to other areas. Tools and techniques for measuring displacement of crime are discussed in Johnson et al., 2003. Further analysis of displacement of crime resulting from RBI projects is planned alongside the evaluation of the longer term impact of the RBI.

#### Identifying the nature of the burglary problem

Identifying the nature of the burglary problem and applying this information to the selection of the crime prevention action to be taken is critical. Repeat victimisation was a particular issue raised by the Midlands and Northern evaluation teams. Prevention strategies targeting repeat victims are not appropriate where there is not a significant problem of individual households being repeatedly burgled, or where there are difficulties identifying the targeted dwellings.

Deploying a repeat victimisation strategy inappropriately could actually have the effect of increasing the concentration of victimisation, since repeat victims may have the most intractable problems to deal with. Projects dispensing burglary reduction help to households should therefore ensure that the help afforded prior burglary victims is commensurate with the degree and nature of their particular problems.

#### Implementation problems

A significant proportion of projects experienced implementation problems. Factors contributing to successful implementation identified by the Southern evaluation team were:

- identifying the nature of the burglary problem
- development of skills and experience of project managers and personnel
- establishing commitment amongst partner agencies
- prior experience of partnership working
- ensuring community involvement and accountability
- monitoring progress.

Projects need to be realistically tailored to the resources available and planned carefully. Some of the projects underestimated the amount of planning and development time needed to get interventions up and running; others ran into trouble when uninformed assumptions about local demand for crime prevention services were proved wrong. Examples of the delivery mechanisms of four of the successful SDPs are summarised in Table 2.

#### Monitoring progress and taking remedial action

Monitoring and taking remedial action quickly when problems are encountered also contributes to success. The more successful projects took a more flexible approach, recognised mistakes and looked systematically for alternative solutions.

#### Effective burglary reduction measures

The evaluations show that it is how the burglary reduction measure is identified, planned and implemented and who is involved that are key success factors. Within the context of small short-term projects, the evaluation teams all identified area-wide situational crime prevention as an effective measure when planned and implemented successfully. This

includes 'alley-gating' and street lighting. The evaluators also indicated that although targeted situational prevention (e.g., security measures for vulnerable households) can be effective, it can pose problems in implementation. With this targeted approach, intensity or spend per household, appropriate targeting and the risk of increasing the concentration of victimisation need to be carefully considered. Two of the evaluation teams also noted police enforcement (e.g., high visibility policing and CCTV) as an effective strategy. Impact is enhanced when several interventions are implemented as a coherent and complementary package of measures. Short

and long-term approaches can work together particularly well, for example publicity campaigns and the installation of household security measures.

### Conclusions

These evaluations have provided a rich source of data on factors contributing to the success of projects and learning points identified by the initiative. A full report on the impact and cost effectiveness of the RBI will be published by the Home Office together with a series of thematic reports on various aspects of burglary reduction practice.

**Table 2 Examples of four successful Strategic Development Projects<sup>1</sup>**

SDP area	Intervention	Project management/ success factors
<b>Net burglary reduction<sup>2</sup></b>		
Rochdale -37%	Publicity campaign, target hardening households of victims of burglary, homewatch schemes to increase community involvement and drug arrest referral system to help tackle reoffending.	Jointly led by a full time police officer and a local authority community safety officer. SDP complemented and built on existing partnership activity. Publicity leaflets translated into three languages. Non-uniformed police more successful delivering crime prevention messages within the community.
Fordbridge, Solihull -12%	Target hardening vulnerable properties, installing alley-gates and street lighting. Implementing youth diversion schemes such as improving local leisure facilities.	Jointly led by police and local authority housing department. Local councillors, senior representatives of the police and council, and members of the community were also involved. Previous successful partnership activity between local authority and police. Complementary package of interventions.
Yew Tree, Sandwell -47%	Police crackdown: targeting known offenders, e.g., through anti-social behaviour orders and high visibility policing, followed by consolidation activity including property marking, environmental improvements and youth diversion initiatives.	Police led project. Experienced, enthusiastic project management. Police crackdown resulted in quick wins, consolidated by longer term community based interventions. Police interventions helped improve public confidence.
Stirchley, Birmingham 5% increase but -46% when burglary in 2000 compared with 1998	Alley-gating, fencing at rear of properties, property marking and newsletter distributed to residents.	Led by police, steering group included probation service, local authority and residents. The police officer who worked with the project manager provided consistency, continuity, dedication and a good relationship with local residents. Difficulties were overcome when installing alley-gates on private land.

Note:

1. Case studies of these RBI projects are available on the Home Office RDS website <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/> and the Crime Reduction Centre website: [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)
2. Net change in number of burglaries between notional project before- and after- periods (September 1997 to March 1999 and April 1999 to December 2000).

### References

- Jacobson, J. (2003). *Reducing Burglary Initiative: planning for partnership*. Home Office Development and Practice Report 4. London: Home Office.
- Johnson, S., Bowers, K. and Hirschfield, A. (2003). *Reducing Burglary Initiative, Pushing Back the Boundaries: new techniques for assessing the impact of burglary schemes*. Home Office RDS On-line Report 24/03.
- Smith M.J., Clarke, R.V. and Pease, K. (2001) 'Anticipatory Benefits in Crime Prevention.' In N.Tilley (ed) *Analysis for Crime Prevention*. Monsey NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Jenny Kodz is a member of the Crime and Policing Group in the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. Ken Pease was a consultant to the Crime and Policing Group and is Professor of Criminology at the University of Huddersfield. The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions from the Northern Consortium, led by Dr Alex Hirschfield of the Environmental Criminology Research Unit, University of Liverpool and the Southern Consortium led by Professor Mike Hough of the Criminal Policy Research Unit, South Bank University.