



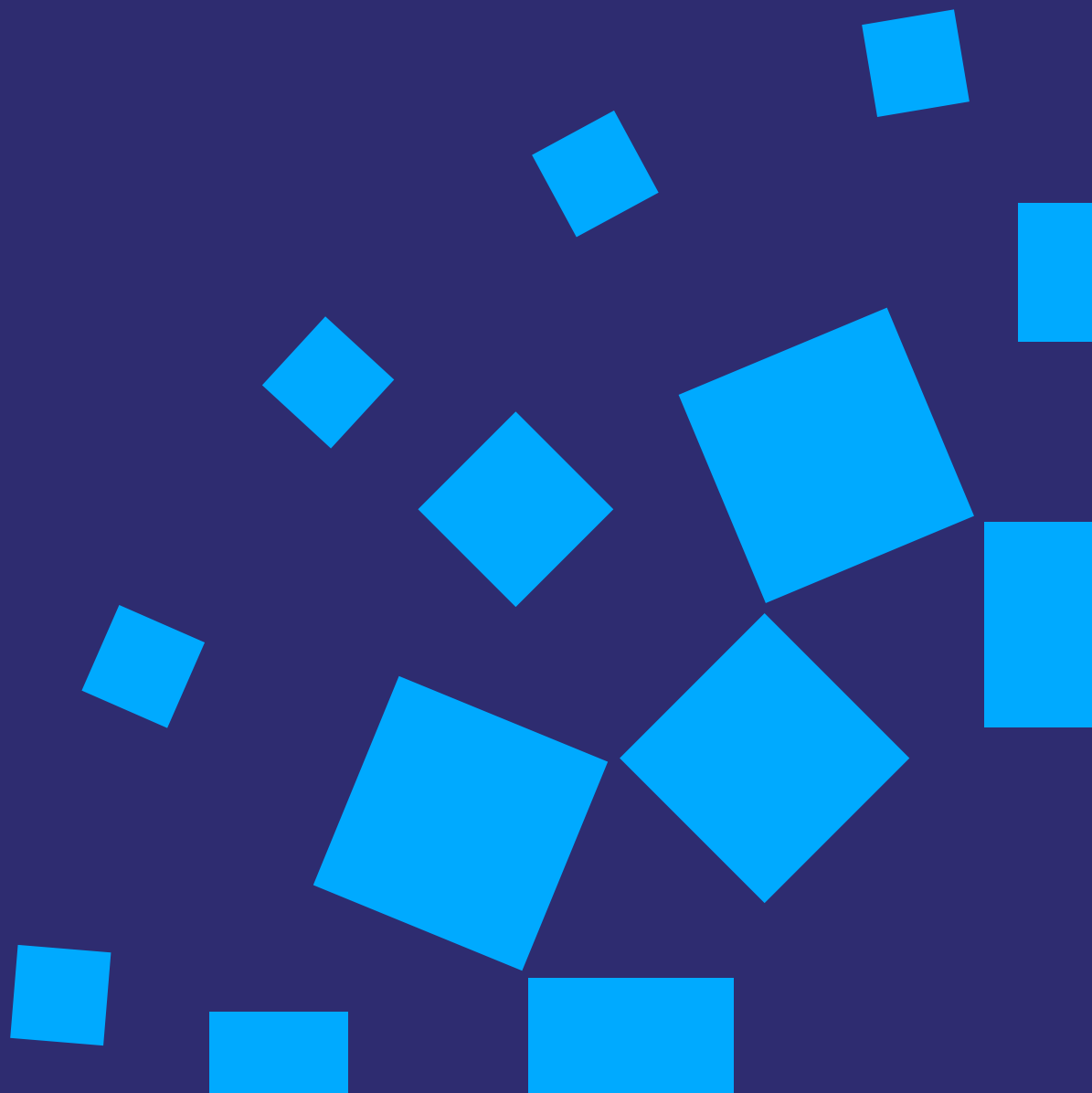
College of  
**Policing**

Working together  
to prevent crime

# Neighbourhood crime Situational crime prevention interventions

## Evidence briefing

### January 2022



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# What is the purpose of this briefing?

This briefing supports police and crime reduction partners to make evidence-based decisions about using situational crime prevention techniques to reduce neighbourhood crime (defined by the Home Office as domestic burglary, vehicle-related crime, theft from the person and robbery<sup>1</sup>). The paper provides a definition of situational crime prevention and the theories that underpin this approach, together with an overview of the factors that can influence neighbourhood crime and the interventions that can be used to address it.

This briefing summarises evidence presented in the [\*\*Safer Streets Fund Crime Prevention Toolkit\*\*](#). The Safer Streets Fund<sup>2</sup> provides funding to hotspot areas in England and Wales that are disproportionately affected by neighbourhood crime. The toolkit, commissioned by the Home Office and developed by the College of Policing, provides details of the various situational crime prevention interventions that can be applied to neighbourhood crime, together with practical details on costs, sustainability and implementation.

## Methodology

Evidence has been collated by searching for relevant literature, identifying key papers and reviewing the [\*\*Crime Reduction Toolkit\*\*](#). Feedback was also obtained from an academic reference group containing subject matter experts. While this briefing is not intended to be a review of all relevant literature, or to contain a formal appraisal of evidence quality, members of the academic reference group are satisfied with the breadth of literature included.

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1 Home Office (2020).

2 The Safer Streets Fund is a Home Office fund that provided funding to police and crime commissioners in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

## Key findings

- A number of interventions have been identified that can be used to tackle neighbourhood crime. The majority of these interventions are related to burglary, but some interventions can be applied to more than one crime type. Interventions with strong or moderately strong evidence of effectiveness are given below.
- For burglary, these include:
  - physical security
  - alley-gating
  - Neighbourhood Watch
  - interventions for repeat and near-repeat victims (cocooning)
- For robbery, these include:
  - street lighting
  - road and pathway design
- For vehicle crime, these include:
  - CCTV
  - secure car parking
  - vehicle security devices
- For all crime types, these include:
  - crime prevention advice
  - publicity
- It is unusual for interventions to be used in isolation. Many crime prevention programmes use a range of different interventions to address crime problems.
- Taking a problem-solving approach will enable the selection of appropriately targeted interventions and can promote sustained reductions in crime.
- Partner involvement is critical for situational crime prevention, as it often involves changes to the built environment.

## What is neighbourhood crime?

For the purposes of this briefing, we have used the definition of neighbourhood crime adopted by the Home Office for the Safer Streets Fund,<sup>3</sup> which includes the following offence types:

- domestic burglary
- robbery
- theft from the person
- vehicle and cycle crime

Despite long-term trends measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which show a fall in overall crime since its peak in the mid-1990s,<sup>4</sup> the downward trend in neighbourhood crime has started to change. A 4% increase in neighbourhood crime was reported between March 2017 and September 2019.<sup>5</sup> For the year ending March 2020, neighbourhood crimes made up 35% of total crime (excluding fraud and computer misuse). Of these, 45% were vehicle theft, 30% were dwelling burglaries, 19% were theft from the person and 6% were robbery.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Home Office analysis has shown that these crimes are not randomly distributed, with the top 5% of areas accounting for 24% of all neighbourhood crimes in 2018/19.<sup>7</sup>

While COVID-19 has led to a sharp reduction in levels of neighbourhood crime, it is unclear how long these reduced levels will be sustained.<sup>8</sup> Investing in evidence-based measures to prevent neighbourhood crime therefore remains a key priority for UK government.

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3 Home Office (2020).

4 Office for National Statistics (2020a).

5 Ibid.

6 Office for National Statistics (2020b).

7 Home Office (2021).

8 Langton, Dixon and Farrell (2021).

# What is situational crime prevention?

Situational crime prevention focuses on the settings where crime occurs, rather than on those committing specific criminal acts. The emphasis is on managerial and environmental change that reduces opportunities for crimes to occur.<sup>9</sup> Situational crime prevention is based on two related theories.

- **Rational choice theory**,<sup>10</sup> which states that potential offenders rationally choose to commit crime, and also the methods used in order to do so. This choice is influenced by the offender's need to maximise reward while minimising risk.
- **Routine activities theory**,<sup>11</sup> which states that, in order for a crime to occur, there must be the presence of three linked elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians. Capable guardians can include people such as security guards or the police, as well as environmental factors, such as locks or other security devices.

Situational crime prevention aims to increase risk and/or minimise reward, thus making either the commission of a criminal act too difficult, or the reward for committing the act too low to risk being caught. Increased risk can be achieved by minimising the number of suitable targets or adding 'capable guardians'.

In 2003, Cornish and Clarke produced 25 techniques of situational crime prevention,<sup>12</sup> which detailed various types of interventions to reduce crime. The 25 techniques were split into five specific groups:

- increasing the effort
- increasing the risk

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9 Clarke (1997).

10 Felson and Clarke (1998).

11 Cohen and Felson (1979).

12 Cornish and Clarke (2003).

- reducing the rewards
- reducing provocations
- removing excuses

Interventions relating to neighbourhood crime described in this report tend to fall into the ‘increasing the effort’ and ‘increasing the risk’ categories (for further information, see the [25 techniques of situational crime prevention](#)).

A similar concept to situational crime prevention is **crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)**. CPTED and situational crime prevention are both concerned with changing the environment to reduce opportunities for crime. CPTED is associated with design solutions that often focus on architecture and planning, and is also known as ‘designing out crime’.<sup>13</sup> Situational crime prevention tends to be broader in nature, referring to any opportunity-reducing measure that has the potential to increase the difficulties or risks of offending.<sup>14</sup>

## The nature of neighbourhood crime

The following sections set out the characteristics and risk factors associated with each type of neighbourhood crime, drawing on national data (further details on risk factors can be found in the [Safer Streets – Neighbourhood crime factors](#) document). Forces should analyse their local problem to inform the development and implementation of appropriate interventions in line with a problem-solving approach.

### Domestic burglary

- **Offender profile:** Based on CSEW data between April 2019 and March 2020, where the victim was able to say something about the offender, the vast majority of domestic burglars (90%) were male.

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<sup>13</sup> Cozens and Love (2015).

<sup>14</sup> Clarke (1989).



Overall, 75% of burglars were under the age of 40, with the majority (53%) between the ages of 25 and 39.<sup>15</sup>

- There is some evidence to suggest that the following factors may be associated with an increased risk of burglary.
  - **Victims:** Households with the highest levels of victimisation are premises with little or no security, rented properties and single-parent households.<sup>16</sup> In addition, homes are four times more likely to be burgled if they have been burgled before.<sup>17</sup>
  - **Times:** Domestic burglaries are spread evenly throughout the week, with around 70% occurring on weekdays and 30% at the weekend. Overall, 40% of burglaries take place during the morning or afternoon (6am–6pm) and 60% take place during the evening or night (6pm–6am)<sup>18</sup>
  - **Places:** Burglaries are more prevalent in neighbourhoods lacking social cohesion, where neighbours are less likely to notice the offence or intervene,<sup>19</sup> or where there are fewer opportunities for access or surveillance.<sup>20</sup>
  - Evidence suggests that the likelihood of burglars being observed while committing offences plays a major part in their decision-making. For example, the number of people present in an area,<sup>21</sup> or the degree of cover surrounding a property,<sup>22</sup> were key determinants in whether they saw a property as an attractive target.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, properties overlooked by between three and five other properties were found to experience 38% less crime than those not overlooked.<sup>24</sup>

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15 Office for National Statistics (2020c).

16 Tseloni, Thompson and Tilley (2018).

17 Forrester and others (1990).

18 Office for National Statistics (2017).

19 Bernasco and Nieuwbeerta (2005).

20 Armitage (2018).

21 Reppetto (1974), cited in Armitage and Tompson (in press).

22 Nee and Meenaghan (2006).

23 Armitage (2018).

24 Armitage, Monchuk and Rogerson (2011).

- 'Defensible space', which involves the use of real or symbolic barriers to differentiate between public and private areas,<sup>25</sup> is also influential in predicting burglaries. Burglars reported that areas with clearly defined defensible space would deter them from committing burglary.<sup>26</sup> Research involving a comparison between burgled and non-burgled properties found that burgled properties had fewer symbolic barriers.<sup>27, 28</sup>

## Robbery

- **Offender profile:** Based on CSEW data between April 2019 and March 2020, where the victim was able to say something about the offender, offenders are predominantly male and aged between 16 and 24 years, and most are unknown to the victim. Most offenders were not thought to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the offence.<sup>29</sup>
- Evidence suggests that the following factors may be associated with an increased risk of robbery.
  - **Victims:** More likely to be male. Younger adults (aged 16 to 34) are at greater risk.<sup>30</sup> Individuals who are distracted (by looking at their phone, for example) or vulnerable are also more likely to become victims.<sup>31</sup> School-aged or elderly people are more likely to become victims during the day.<sup>32</sup>
  - **Times:** Offences predominantly occur during daylight hours.<sup>33</sup>
  - **Places:** Personal and street robbery is concentrated in metropolitan areas,<sup>34</sup> and tends to be more spatially

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25 Newman (1976).

26 Armitage (2018).

27 Brown and Altman (1983)

28 Armitage (2006)

29 Office for National Statistics (2020d).

30 Ibid.

31 Tompson (n.d.).

32 Smith (2003).

33 Office for National Statistics (2020d).

34 Ibid.

concentrated than other crime types.<sup>35</sup> Robbery offences are typically concentrated around retail premises that largely accept cash transactions, areas that provide cover for offenders, or around drugs markets and areas frequented for the purposes of prostitution.<sup>36</sup>

## Theft from the person

- **Offender profile:** Based on CSEW data between April 2019 and March 2020, where the victim was able to say something about the offender, offenders tend to be male (75% of all recorded thefts), and older than those committing robbery, with 54% of recorded thefts committed by individuals over the age of 25.<sup>37</sup> In addition, offenders are prepared to travel relatively long distances (up to 17 miles) to commit offences.<sup>38</sup>
- Evidence suggests that the following factors may be associated with an increased risk of theft from the person.
  - **Victims:** Females are more likely to be victims of theft from the person, and younger adults (aged 16 to 34) are at greater risk.<sup>39</sup>
  - **Times:** Two-thirds of thefts from the person took place during the week and one-third during the weekend. Around half of thefts from the person took place during the afternoon (noon to 6pm) and around one-quarter during the evening (6pm to midnight).<sup>40</sup>
  - **Places:** Offences occur mainly in urban areas and on public transport. The most common location for thefts from the person is the street, although shops, supermarkets and entertainment venues are also targeted.<sup>41</sup>

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35 Tompson (n.d.).

36 Ibid.

37 Office for National Statistics (2020e).

38 Home Office (2013).

39 Flatley (2017a).

40 Office for National Statistics (2020e).

41 Ibid.

## Vehicle crime

- **Offender profile:** Data relating to offender characteristics is less readily available for vehicle crime compared with other offence types. However, research has identified two types of vehicle crime offenders: alert opportunists who will commit offences as and when they spot an opportunity, and active searchers, who will look for suitable targets.<sup>42</sup> Additional research suggests that offenders who commit vehicle crime to fund alcohol or drug habits tend to take more risks than other offenders.<sup>43</sup>
- Evidence suggests that the following factors may be associated with an increased risk of vehicle crime.
  - **Victims:** Households that include children are at greater risk from vehicle crime than those without. Households where the owner or renter is employed or unemployed are also at greater risk, compared to those who are economically inactive (such as students or retired individuals).<sup>44</sup>
  - **Times:** Almost three-quarters of vehicle crime occurs during the week, with a quarter occurring at weekends. The majority of vehicle crime (80%) happens between 6pm and 6am.<sup>45</sup>
  - **Places:** Over two-thirds of vehicle crime is recorded as occurring on cars parked in the street, or in semi-private areas (outside areas owned by a householder).<sup>46</sup> Residents of terraced or semi-detached dwellings are most at risk, compared with those living in detached properties.<sup>47</sup> Urban areas also have higher rates of vehicle crime.<sup>48</sup>

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42 Copes and Cherbonneau (2006).

43 Quinn (2019).

44 Flatley (2017b).

45 Office for National Statistics (2020f).

46 Ibid.

47 Flatley (2017b).

48 Quinn (2019).

# Interventions for situational crime prevention

This section outlines the various interventions that can be used to tackle neighbourhood crime. The majority of these relate to burglary offences, although some interventions are relevant to more than one crime type. No relevant interventions have been identified for theft from the person alone, although some exist for this crime type in addition to other neighbourhood crimes.

## Domestic burglary

For domestic burglary, initiatives that involve changes to the built environment have the greatest impact on crime, although schemes that raise awareness of risk have also shown positive crime reduction effects.

### Physical security

There is strong evidence to suggest that physical security measures reduce crime by making residential properties more difficult to break into, and some measures may act as a deterrent. Measures include a range of devices and options, used individually or in combination, such as:

- double door locks and deadbolts
- window locks
- security chains and limiters
- external lights on a timer or sensor
- internal lights on a timer
- window bars and grilles

Analysis of data from the CSEW on the effect of physical security measures on burglary<sup>49, 50</sup> found that:

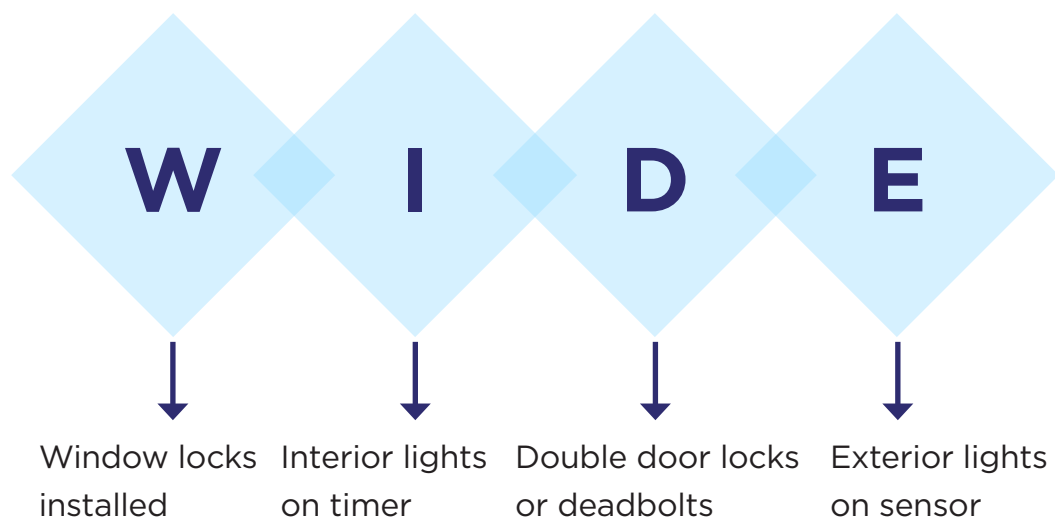
- window locks, external lights or door locks offer the greatest benefit as an individual, stand-alone security feature

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49 Tseloni and others (2017a).

50 Tseloni and others (2017b).

- a greater number of security devices generally gives more protection than fewer, although the benefit of adding devices reduces when there are more than four
- the most effective combination of two security devices are window locks with external lights or window locks with door locks
- the most effective combination of four security devices is 'WIDE':
  - **W** - window locks installed
  - **I** - interior lights on timer
  - **D** - double door locks or deadbolts
  - **E** - exterior lights on sensor



Counterintuitively, intruder alarms on their own were found to increase burglary risk. However, these analyses did not distinguish between factors such as alarm monitoring, installation quality and geographical factors, and did not establish whether the alarm was fitted post-burglary.

Within England and Wales, Secured By Design (SBD) provide details on security standards and design principles that underpin the CPTED principles. Evaluation of SBD developments have been conducted, for both refurbished and new-build developments. A recent meta-analysis, currently in press, found that building to SBD standards reduces the likelihood of burglary victimisation by 53%.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Armitage, Sidebottom and Tompson (in press), as cited in Armitage and Tompson (in press).

## Alley gates

There is strong evidence to suggest that installing **alley gates** can reduce crime in areas with a particular type of housing stock. Alley gates are lockable gates that prevent access by offenders to alleyways that are commonly found along the rear of older-style terraced housing in the UK. Residents are given keys to the gates to allow access but non-residents are unable to enter. A systematic review of the effectiveness of alley gates<sup>52</sup> found a mean reduction of 43% in burglary in areas that had them installed. Alley gates may be less suitable for communities with a high turnover of residents, as it may mean that many people have access to keys or key-codes without necessarily having any investment in the area.

## Neighbourhood Watch

There is strong evidence to suggest that **Neighbourhood Watch Schemes**<sup>53</sup> (NWS) reduce crime. The purpose of NWS is to encourage involvement of local citizens in activities that promote safety or assist with crime prevention. A systematic review that examined the effectiveness of NWS found that overall, for every 100 burglaries, an average of 26 crimes were prevented with NWS.<sup>54</sup> There is limited evidence on how Neighbourhood Watch schemes work, but research suggests that it could be a combination of:

- deterrence, as offenders may be concerned that residents will actively look for and report suspicious activity
- enhancing community cohesion and increasing the effectiveness of informal social control
- facilitating detection via an increased flow of intelligence between the public and police

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52 Sidebottom and others (2018).

53 Also known as home watch, block watch and community watch.

54 Bennett and others (2008).

## **Interventions for repeat and near-repeat victims (cocooning)**

There is strong evidence to suggest that use of interventions for repeat victims reduces acquisitive crime. Research suggests that, when a home is burgled, there is an increased risk of it being burgled again or properties within 400 metres of the burgled home being targeted within the following six weeks. Evidence also suggests that the risk of burglary is greater for immediate neighbours of the burgled property, with the risk reducing the further away properties are from the original burglary (known as 'near' or 'virtual' repeat victimisation). This pattern of risk is thought to be due to burglars being aware of the layout and security status of particular properties and the risks of being overseen.<sup>55</sup> This is known as 'optimal forager' theory.<sup>56</sup> Housing diversity has been shown to be the most effective predictor of near-repeat burglaries, with areas containing properties of similar characteristics (such as layout and/or security features) more susceptible to near repeats than areas containing properties with different characteristics.<sup>57</sup>

Cocooning (otherwise known as cocoon watch or super-cocooning) are activities designed to address repeat and near-repeat victimisation. These activities involve the provision of crime prevention advice and guidance to residents of burgled properties, as well as neighbours and inhabitants of surrounding addresses. The provision of crime prevention advice is often combined with other interventions, such as target hardening, property marking and security surveys.

A systematic review of 22 repeat domestic burglary prevention evaluations in Australia (six studies), the USA (three studies) and the UK (13 studies) showed a significant reduction in burglary repeat victimisation, with the UK programmes generally showing greater effects than the US and Australian studies.<sup>58</sup> Other UK studies that

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55 Fielding and Jones (2012).

56 Chainey (2012).

57 Townsley, Homel and Chaseling (2003).

58 Grove (2011).



used these techniques to address burglary also showed a reduction in subsequent offending.<sup>59, 60, 61</sup>

## Street lighting

There is strong evidence to suggest that the improvement of **street lighting** reduces crime. Improved street lighting is a form of situational crime prevention that involves increasing the levels of illumination on the street or in other public spaces. A systematic review of 13 studies (eight from the USA and five from the UK) showed an average 21% reduction in all crime types in areas with improved street lighting, compared to control areas.<sup>62</sup> The UK studies showed statistically significant reductions in total crime in four of the five studies, and the combined estimated average reduction across the five UK studies was 38%. The improvement of street lighting has also been shown to decrease crime during the day.

## Property marking

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that property marking reduces crime. Property marking involves adding a house number and postcode to items of property, therefore making it easier for these items to be returned to the relevant householder if stolen. Property marking can be carried out by the use of UV pens, security tags, radiofrequency identification (RFID) devices or microdot solutions (containing a uniquely coded digital signature).

Evidence for the effectiveness of property marking is not as rigorous as for the other interventions detailed above. Two studies that investigated the effect of property marking on burglary noted that this approach had a crime reduction effect.<sup>63, 64</sup> A further study tested different forms of property marking in 10 burglary hotspots and found that only one marking technique showed a statistically significant reduction

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59 Fielding and Jones (2012).

60 Weems (2014).

61 Johnson and others (2017).

62 Welsh and Farrington (2008).

63 Laycock (1985).

64 Raphael (2015).

in burglary, compared to the control group, although burglaries recorded were low before and after the intervention, which weakened this finding.<sup>65</sup> Studies used police employees to personally visit householders, carry out property marking and advertise that marking had taken place. It is possible that these other activities also had an impact on any subsequent drop in burglary rates.

## Road and pathway design

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that the design of roads and pathways can reduce crime. Evidence has shown a relationship between street access and crime rates, with streets that have greater ease of access experiencing more crime. Offenders are more likely to avoid cul-de-sacs, where the probability of being observed is higher, access to properties is restricted, and reduced entrance and exit routes can make it more difficult to escape without being seen.<sup>66</sup>

Available research that relates to specific types of crime varies, with the majority of studies focusing on burglary. Clarke (2005)<sup>67</sup> identified 11 studies investigating the effect of road closures on crime, either as a stand-alone intervention, or as part of a range of different crime reduction techniques. All studies showed a reduction in crime, with little or no displacement recorded. In addition, research conducted by Johnson and Bowers (2010) found that risk of burglary was associated with increased permeability – burglary risk was lower in cul-de-sacs and higher on major roads.<sup>68</sup> Armitage and others (2011) also found that, compared to a true cul-de-sac (without linked pathways), through roads experience 93% more crime, while leaky cul-de-sacs (with linked pathways) experience 110% more crime. Being located on a corner plot increases risk by 18%.<sup>69</sup>

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65 Agnew-Pauley, Lundrigan and Specht (2021).

66 Clarke (2005).

67 Ibid.

68 Johnson and Bowers (2010).

69 Armitage, Monchuk and Rogerson (2011).

## Robbery

While there are few identified interventions specifically addressing robbery, two interventions have been shown to be effective for both robbery and burglary: street lighting, and road and pathway design.

### Street lighting

As described in [Domestic burglary - Street lighting](#), there is strong evidence to suggest that [street lighting](#) reduces crime.<sup>70</sup> While a meta-analysis was conducted on total crime, regardless of crime type, there is evidence from individual studies included in the review that street lighting was effective in reducing robbery.

### Road and pathway design

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that the design of roads and pathways can reduce crime. While most of this research focuses on burglary (see [Domestic burglary - Road and pathway design](#)), two identified studies found that rates of robbery reduced after road closures when compared to control areas, although one study noted that the reduction was only temporary.<sup>71</sup>

## Vehicle crime

The following initiatives have been successful in reducing vehicle crime.

### CCTV

There is strong evidence to suggest that use of [CCTV](#) in certain settings can reduce crime. CCTV surveillance cameras are used as a situational crime prevention measure in public and private places. CCTV is a formal surveillance technique where cameras are set up and monitored to aid crime prevention, detect offenders and control

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<sup>70</sup> Welsh and Farrington (2008).

<sup>71</sup> Clarke (2005).

crowds.<sup>72, 73</sup> A meta-analysis<sup>74</sup> of 14 CCTV projects, published in 2007, reported that CCTV was:

- most effective in reducing vehicle crimes in locations such as train station parking facilities, especially with high coverage and with the involvement of other interventions, such as lighting
- not effective in city centres or residential areas

A further systematic review, conducted in 2009, based on 41 studies,<sup>75</sup> found that:

- CCTV was associated with a 16% decrease in crime in the areas studied, in comparison to control areas
- the most effective CCTV schemes were in parking facilities, which experienced a 51% decrease in crime
- schemes in other public places, such as city and town centres and around public housing, were small and non-significant, showing a 7% decrease

## Secure car parking

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that the development of secure car parking facilities can reduce vehicle crime. One study has been identified that examined the effectiveness of the Secured Car Park Award Scheme<sup>76</sup> (now called The Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme). The scheme involved awarding 'secured car park' status to parking facilities that met the required standards in terms of security. The study found that features such as levels of formal surveillance, lighting, access control and physical appearance were useful in reducing levels of vehicle crime within existing high-crime parking facilities. It was also found that applying these standards to the construction of new parking facilities led to lower crime levels.

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72 Farrington and others (2007).

73 Welsh and Farrington (2009).

74 Farrington and others (2007).

75 Welsh and Farrington (2009).

76 Smith, Gregson and Morgan (2003).

In addition to the reduction of vehicle crime within secured car parks, the study found that improving parking facilities to the Secured Car Park Award standard increased use of the parking facilities and also reduced fear of crime in these areas.

Similar interventions have been developed for reducing the theft of two wheeled-vehicles, including bicycles, mopeds, scooters and motorcycles.<sup>77</sup> These interventions aim to improve the security of cycle parking facilities or how cyclists lock their bikes. However, the evidence on their effectiveness has been described as ‘weak and anecdotal’,<sup>78</sup> and more systematic evaluations are required.

## Vehicle security devices

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that the use of vehicle security devices can reduce crime. The term ‘vehicle security devices’ covers a number of different methods for securing vehicles to prevent their theft, or theft of belongings inside the vehicle. These methods include locks, immobilisers (electronic and mechanical), alarms, window security etching and tracking devices. Vehicle security devices can be fitted to the vehicle during the manufacturing process or retrofitted later. The absence or presence of particular security devices and the quality of the device fitted determines its effectiveness in reducing vehicle crime.

Studies that examined vehicle theft before and after the implementation of security devices found sustained drops in crime rates after the introduction of electric immobilisers.<sup>79, 80</sup>

With regard to the effectiveness of different vehicle security devices:

- for theft of motor vehicles, a combination of an alarm, central locking, electronic immobiliser and tracker had the best protection against theft of the motor vehicle, followed by central locking, electronic and manual immobilisers
- for theft from motor vehicles, alarms and central locking featured in each of the top six security configurations – single security devices

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77 Sidebottom (2012).

78 Ibid.

79 Farrell and others (2011).

80 Morgan and others (2016).

offered some protection but were less effective than a combination of different devices<sup>81</sup>

There is limited research of the effectiveness of retrofitted vehicle security devices and so evidence of their effectiveness is sparse.

## All neighbourhood crime types

Two types of intervention, crime prevention advice and publicity, appear to have a positive effect on all neighbourhood crime types. These initiatives are typically used in combination with other interventions.

### Crime prevention advice

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that crime prevention advice can reduce crime. Crime prevention advice involves contact with individuals who have experienced crime, or are at risk of being victims. This contact is likely to involve a discussion with the victim or potential victim to highlight any vulnerabilities to crime, together with the provision of crime prevention literature. In some cases, this may also involve provision of physical materials (such as stickers or devices to turn lights on at a certain time), to help prevent the individual from becoming a victim of crime or of further victimisation. Crime prevention advice is frequently used in combination with other interventions, such as **property marking**, **Neighbourhood Watch** and **interventions for repeat victims**.

For cycle theft, two studies investigated the effectiveness of crime prevention advice in the form of stickers and leaflets promoting good locking practices. The intervention resulted in a reduction in cycle theft and an increase in good cycle locking practices.<sup>82, 83</sup>

For vehicle theft, crime reduction initiatives tend to involve a number of different interventions, with crime prevention forming one element. In Australia, in response to an increasing rate of vehicle theft, a community

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81 Farrell, Tseloni and Tilley (2011).

82 Van Limbergen, Walgrave and Dekegel (1996).

83 Sidebottom, Thorpe, and Johnson (2009).

awareness intervention was developed that aimed to encourage the use of vehicle security devices. This intervention involved a state-wide advertising campaign, as well as a letter sent from the Commissioner of Police to individuals renewing their car registration. The study found that there was an increased awareness of the scheme and a significant reduction in vehicle theft after the scheme was introduced.<sup>84</sup>

No specific evidence has been identified for theft from the person or robbery, although the Home Office have produced an information pack that details useful crime prevention advice aimed at reducing these crime types.<sup>85</sup>

## Publicity

There is moderately strong evidence to suggest that publicity can reduce crime. Situational crime prevention focuses on the removal of opportunities to commit crime, increasing the perceived risk of getting caught, or making it more difficult to commit offences. These can be achieved through changes to the physical environment, or by influencing offender perceptions of potential risks and opportunities.<sup>86</sup> Publicising crime prevention activities is potentially an effective method of reducing crime by influencing offender perceptions. As with crime prevention advice, publicity is frequently combined with other crime reduction activities. Whereas crime prevention advice is specifically targeted at victims or those at risk of victimisation, publicity tends to be more general in terms of targeting, and can include offenders.

A review of the Reducing Burglary Initiative in 2003<sup>87</sup> looked at the effectiveness of publicity and found the following.

- Schemes running publicity campaigns prior to the implementation of a burglary reduction initiative reported that rates of burglary started to fall before the initiative was rolled out, suggesting that publicity was at least partly responsible for the observed reduction in crime.

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84 Wortley, Kane and Grant (1998).

85 Home Office (2013).

86 Bowers and Johnson (2003).

87 Ibid.

- Schemes that spent more per household on advertising showed larger burglary savings than those who had spent less.
- Four of the five most cost-effective schemes implemented stand-alone publicity campaigns.

## Combining interventions

As shown in the material on publicity and crime prevention advice, a number of interventions are frequently used in combination, which can make it difficult to isolate the crime reduction effects of specific initiatives. In order to measure the effect of a particular tactic accurately, it must be implemented without being combined with other interventions, and any evaluation must be rigorous enough to discount other possible explanations for any effects found.

[The Policing Evaluation Toolkit](#) provides practical advice on how this can be achieved.

## Conclusion

There is evidence to suggest that some people are at greater risk of victimisation in relation to neighbourhood crimes. In addition to this, victims or properties subject to neighbourhood crime are also at increased risk of being victimised again, and neighbourhood crimes tend to be concentrated in terms of time and space.<sup>88</sup> It is also clear that, for neighbourhood crimes, a specific profile of offender can be identified from the available crime data, for example, risk factors for burglary show that males under the age of 40 predominantly commit offences. Problem-solving approaches, such as the [SARA model](#), have been shown to be effective in reducing crime, including neighbourhood crime, and should be used to ensure that any response is tailored to the identified problem.

Most of the research that supports the effectiveness of situational crime prevention initiatives to address neighbourhood crime focuses on burglary. This is likely to be because situational crime prevention

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88 College of Policing (n.d.).



addresses crime by altering the settings for crime, mainly through environmental changes, rather than the criminal acts themselves. However, there is evidence to suggest that some burglary-focused interventions can be moderately effective at addressing other crime types, for example, road closures for robbery, although caution must be exercised when doing so.

In the majority of interventions described in this briefing, researchers have evaluated a combination of different approaches to understand whether crime is affected. In order to implement a relevant response to a particular crime problem, it is important to fully understand the underlying factors of the criminal activity and to develop a tailored approach to address them.

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