

Strategic management

How to manage residential burglary investigations.

First published 4 October 2023

Leadership

Senior officers, together with police and crime commissioners, should take the lead in ensuring forces are responding to offences of residential burglary in accordance with this practice guide. They should:

- promote the importance of giving victims a consistent, professional and thorough response
- ensure force control strategies are effectively prioritising resources to support their commitment to prevent and detect such offences

This is not just a force issue. Appropriate tasking of specialist capabilities and resource should be considered for cross-border offending. Regional organised crime units should also consider this criminality as part of their threat assessment.

Public trust and confidence

Residential burglary is a crime that resonates with communities. It has a significant impact on victims and the police response directly influences victim and community confidence in the ability of the police to keep them safe in their homes.

The police have a responsibility to work with partners and homeowners to:

- bring offenders to justice
- reduce the fear of burglary
- ensure that victims receive a professional and thorough response from initial call to final outcome
- prevent such offences taking place

Even where it is not possible to identify a suspect, victims will want to know that the crime has been taken seriously and police have taken all reasonable steps to identify the perpetrator and recover

any stolen property.

See [research on the effect of being a victim of burglary by Portsmouth University \(2016\)](#).

Arrest and advantages of an early arrest

When suspects are identified, consideration should be given to early arrest. The advantages of an early arrest include:

- the opportunity to search and seize material under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act \(PACE\) 1984](#) and other powers
- the opportunity to recover stolen property before disposal
- facilitating immediate investigation and when the evidence supports it, an early charging decision
- the opportunity to use of pre- and post-charge bail conditions
- preventing further offending because the suspect is in custody
- supporting the use of bail and remands – if an arrest is not made at the first opportunity, it may be difficult to justify subsequent arrest or imposition of bail conditions

Prevention and detection of residential burglaries

Police forces should implement prevention strategies to reduce offences of residential burglary. There has been some success in doing this, with a 51% reduction in offences recorded over the past decade. See [Crime in England and Wales: year ending December 2022](#) (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

Partnership working

Policing must work with partners and homeowners to target harden residential properties and make it as difficult as possible for offenders to commit such crimes.

Designing out crime officers (DOCOs) play a fundamental role. So do local neighbourhood teams, who work closely with local communities and partners to implement situational crime prevention activity.

See also:

- our [Neighbourhood crime evidence briefing – Situational crime prevention interventions](#)

- Armitage R. (2013). [Crime Prevention through Housing Design: Policy and Practice](#). Palgrave Macmillan: Crime Prevention and Security Management Book Series

Force processes

Police forces should have the correct processes in place, with appropriately trained officers and staff, for when burglary offences do take place. This ensures that victims receive an effective, professional and thorough response.

Call handlers need to ask the right questions to gather the necessary information, understand immediate risks and assess opportunities to arrest suspects.

Police must attend residential burglary crime scenes as soon as possible to identify and capture crucial material that may lead to the successful prosecution of suspects. Investigators, crime scene investigators, and intelligence teams must work together to build a picture of offence patterns. This enables situational crime prevention and provides the best chance of bringing prolific offenders to justice.

Building the evidence base

Forces should continue to participate in innovation and actively test novel approaches to improve burglary prevention and detection.

Examples of innovative practice can be submitted to the College of Policing for inclusion in [our practice bank](#). This approach will help to further develop the evidence base and share good practice.

- [About our work to produce and share the latest research and the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction](#)

Tags

Neighbourhood policing Investigation