

Bike intelligence tool for serious acquisitive crime offences

Using an intelligence tool and bike security marking to maximise crime prevention opportunities.

First published

17 December 2024

Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Acquisitive crime Intelligence Roads policing
Organisation	Merseyside Police
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Business and commerce Education Local authority Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Offenders Victims

Aim

- Introduce routine bike checks to identify stolen bikes.
- Gather intelligence around serious acquisitive crime and county lines offences linked to specific bikes.
- Prevent and reduce crime by reducing the desirability of bikes.
- Improve public confidence by returning stolen bikes to their rightful owners.

Intended outcome

- An increase in bikes registered on the National Cycle Database.
- An increase in bikes protected with security marking.
- A reduction in bike thefts.
- Increased intelligence around offenders and offences linked to specific bikes.
- Improved officer knowledge and education around bike related offences.

Description

Merseyside Police sought a way to combat an increase in bikes stolen through serious acquisitive crime offences such as thefts and burglary.

Bike register

The force Prevention Hub was tasked with improving the recording of bikes in force. After receiving superintendent sign off, the Prevention Hub piloted working in partnership with a company called Bike Register. The Bike Register offers bike security marking and operates a National Cycle Database which bike owners can join and register their bike on for free. The bike owner's details are kept on a secure online database which is accessible to police forces.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) in Merseyside Police already offered bike marking through Bike Register, but the new partnership enabled bike owners in Merseyside to have their bikes security marked for free. The partnership also enabled the force to conduct routine bike checks (similar to other police checks conducted on the Police National Computer) and maximise prevention opportunities.

Pilot

The initiative was piloted in the Wirral area of Merseyside before being rolled out force wide, and included promoting the Bike Register database to operational officers and enablers across the force

- Educating and training all front-line officers about Bike Register and when an E-Bike is considered to be a motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act (RTA). This training is run by the Prevention Hub.
- Introducing routine Bike Register checks during stop checks, warrants and when booking a bike into police property.
- Ensuring all pedal bikes booked into police property are checked by the force Evidence Management Unit prior to disposal.
- Ensuring the force Crime Demand Unit checks Bike Register for all crimes involving a bike.
- Advising victims of bike theft to register their bikes on Bike Register and change the bike's status to stolen on Bike Register's database.
- Asking police call takers to signpost all victims of bike crime to Bike Register, to improve the chances of bike recovery and improve the information obtained for recording a crime.

- Ensuring all staff and supervisors complete a Microsoft Forms link when a bike has been security marked. This process allows the force to map bike marking against crime trends.
- Creating an online training package for new recruits and operational officers.

It involved promoting the Bike Register database to the public.

- Regular Bike Register events across the Merseyside area at key times of the year (for example at Christmas, during the warmer months and at 'Bikeathons'). These events are advertised on social media and on the force website.
- Ensuring Bike Register events form part of the force Local Policing Calendar.
- Officers promoting and offering free bike marking to pupils at both primary and secondary schools. This offer now routinely forms part of transition period for new students into secondary school.
- Targeted marking and check-ins for high crime areas.
- Providing bike marking as part of aftercare during reassurance visits.
- Using signs to promote Bike Register and deter thefts.

It also included promoting the Bike Register database to bike retailers.

- Visiting and training bike retailers so they can register and mark bikes at point of sale.
- Providing bike retailers with a Bike Retailer Kit. This kit includes an Introduction Letter, Guide, Agreement, initial 50 Bike Marking Kits, Posters and Window clings to promote their partnership with Merseyside Police.

Partnership working

In terms of working in partnership with Bike Register, the force has several contacts for different requirements. This includes having a contact for delivering free training to staff within force and for providing regular data updates for Merseyside governance processes. Bike Register send the data on a monthly basis. The data is uploaded to force systems by an information and communication technology analyst.

The partnership with Bike Register is supported by governance structures within Merseyside Police. The force monitors the performance of individual officers and teams around their use of Bike Register as a disruption tool through dashboards. The force overlays crime data with bike marking event data to identify impact. Impact is then discussed in local monthly performance meetings.

The force's purchase of bike marking kits and equipment was funded by Serious Violence funding. This funding was agreed as offences associated with bikes were identified as linking back to recognised serious violence hotspots. The force ensures that activity linked to Bike Register takes place in these hotspot locations. The initial pilot cost the force £17,449 for the purchase of marking kits, gazebos, street stencils, foamex signs and a mat.

Overall impact

Bike Register is now routinely used as a search tool by operational officers, Investigations, Force Intelligence Bureau and the Evidence Management Unit to develop intelligence as well as identify stolen bikes, offenders and victims linked to serious acquisitive crime. The stop search of a cyclist has been added to the force Stop Search form, allowing officers to record details of the bike stopped and obtain a photograph of the bike to be stored on the force crime recording system, Niche.

Comparing data twelve months prior to implementation with the twelve months after implementation, the Wirral area of Merseyside has seen a sustained drop in the theft of bikes - reducing by 45.6%. There has also been a sustained drop in robbery offences involving a bike. Due to the success of the initiative, it has now been rolled out force wide.

The number of residents in Merseyside signed up to Bike Register has substantially increased with:

- regular bike marking events taking place in every area of Merseyside
- bike retailers registering and marking at point of sale
- safer schools officers registering and marking bikes as part of transition into secondary school
- victims being signposted at the point of reporting a crime

Learning

Merseyside Police has successfully overcome a few challenges with implementing Bike Register.

- Introducing routine Bike Register checks into the Evidence Management Unit. Staff initially felt that it was the responsibility of the officer booking property in to carry out the checks. However, it was explained that a search may provide a different result when carried out at point of booking in compared to at the point of disposal. A trial period highlighted the positive success of carrying out Bike Register checks, and the process was successfully implemented.

- Ensuring Bike Register searches form part of daily business. This has been achieved by force Prevention Hub staff going out and working alongside operational officers. The Prevention staff have been able to demonstrate the simplicity and positive results of Bike Register checks. The force has also found Command Team support and governance to be essential in ensuring the initiative is successfully embedded.
- Securing the funding to purchase bike marking kits. However, this can be achieved through support from local authorities, serious violence funding, or through operations linked to serious acquisitive crime.
- The training created for current officers and the online training for new recruits was created by Merseyside Police. The force are happy to share the package.

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