

Burglary prevention in newbuild development sites

A victim focused approach to reducing the number of burglaries on new build development sites by identifying knowledge gaps and intelligence opportunities.

First published

19 November 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Theft and burglary Neighbourhood crime Intelligence
Organisation	Warwickshire Police
Email address	Analysis@Warwickshire.police.uk
Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police Private sector
Stage of implementation	The practice is no longer being implemented.
Start date	March 2024
Completion date	July 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Victims

Aim

The initiative aimed to:

- identify environmental factors for situational crime prevention measures
- raise awareness about the information required for initial response with victims to maximise opportunities for detection
- identify locations at risk
- identify a background into offences, profile offences, and opportunities to link offences

It also aimed to identify factors of offending that go beyond the Kipling factors:

- what has happened?
- where is the event occurring?
- how is this event occurring?
- who is involved?
- why is this event occurring?

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes were to:

- increase burglary detection rates
- reduce the volume and frequency of offences on new build housing estates
- improve relations between police and housing developers
- improve intelligence gathering of burglary incidents
- raising organisational knowledge and awareness within force on burglaries

Description

Weekly scanning was conducted, including geospatial analysis, to identify hotspots and themes in burglary offences. A pattern emerged of newbuild development sites being targeted for boilers and other appliances.

Warwickshire Police conducted a comparative case analysis (CCA) on new build burglary crime data to identify any similarities or themes to understand if these offences were isolated, part of a series, or an emerging trend. The CCA revealed a lack of detail captured within investigation records.

To negate the lack of detail, a focus group with the tactical analysis team was held to identify the intelligence gaps and how these could be resolved within force. A list of intelligence gaps and hypotheses were produced that formed the basis of a new questionnaire.

The questionnaire was created on Microsoft Forms and made accessible via a QR code. The following questions were categorised by the boiler, the development site/properties targeted, and site security:

- what make/model of boilers were stolen?
- do you have the serial numbers for the stolen boilers?
- are there any other unique identifiers for the boilers?
- where do you get your boilers from? Who is the provider for the site?
- where in the properties were the boilers located? Were they hidden from an outside view?
- are the boilers ever turned on or left on whilst the properties are being built/are empty?
- is the heating ever left on once the boilers are fitted? If so, why? (for example, to dry plaster)
- how were the boilers removed from the properties? (for example, forcefully or professionally)
- who fits the boilers on this site? In house employees or external contractors?
- at what stage of build is the boiler fitted?
- how long after being fitted were these boilers stolen?
- what are your site working/open hours?
- are these hours the same for the show home office? If not what hours are they open?
- how available is your site plan?
- which style of properties are available to view as show homes?
- what were the style of properties targeted?
- were the targeted properties close together?
- were the targeted properties sold? Was this advertised on the front?

- were any other properties targeted that didn't have boilers fitted?
- how were the targeted properties entered?
- what stage of build were the properties that were targeted?
- was anything else taken from the site or properties?
- do you have on-site CCTV?
- do you have on-site security? Is this 24 hours? Which company provides your security?
- how many access points are there to the site?
- how is the site secured once all builders have left? Is this the case for each access point?
- how are the houses secured? Where are the keys kept?
- do you use any anti-theft devices? (for example, smart water)
- is there a log kept of visitors to site? (for example, prospective buyers or ANPR of vehicles)
- did you or anyone on site notice/report any suspicious activity in the days/week leading up to the incident?

The questionnaire was shared organisationally on the home page of the force's intranet. This remained as a carousel post that included information of the intelligence gaps, a link to the questionnaire, and detail of the process as part of initial attendance. In addition, this initiative was included as regular agenda item at a daily tactical working group meeting where compliance was monitored, and uncertainty of tasking was clarified.

There was no cost to planning and delivering the initiative.

Roll out across Warwickshire

Following authorisation for a full roll out from the burglary tactical lead, attending officers were directed to distribute the questionnaire to new victims of burglary on development sites. During the visits, they encouraged victims to complete the questionnaire. Attending officers were also directed to record if a questionnaire had been distributed to a victim on the crime action log, enabling compliance to be tracked. As these questionnaires were provided by a QR code linked to a Microsoft form, responses could be collated and analysed.

For retrospective offences, officer capacity inhibited the questionnaire being distributed and completed for previous offences. To mitigate this, intelligence analysts attended sites and conducted questionnaire interviews. They visited fifteen sites over five days between May and July 2024. The interviews were not pre-arranged with the developers, rather conducted spontaneously if

a site/project manager was available or had a knowledge of the reported crime. When there was unavailability, the site was visited on separate occasion.

The responses populated a comparative case analysis enabling offence types to be identified. Themes amongst victim location and environmental factors were identified, providing the analyst with the opportunity to evidence specific site security measures/needs. The force identified a need for minimum site security to be embedded within planning applications that ensured adequate security standards, from groundwork to the completion phases.

The force recognised that the scale of Warwickshire's housing development was anticipated to increase exponentially. As such, there was a necessity to identify future housing development sites which may be at risk.

Overall impact

- positive feedback was received from housing developers and residents who reported feeling more confident at reporting crimes
- Warwickshire Police had enriched the intelligence around burglary offences, this has raised organisational knowledge and awareness
- compliance was monitored by the tactical lead, and subsequent analysis provided information on the extent of the issue and future operating environments
- sites identified as at future risk informed further planning and risk assessment analysis, such as strategic assessment

Learning

- it is essential to conduct site visits to improve public confidence and to inform a richer intelligence picture
- involving a range of internal and external stakeholder was key to reaching strategic forums. The initiative was also presented at the Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime Conference 2025
- Warwickshire Police faced challenges around the compliance and engagement of attending officers when distributing the questionnaires
- the initiative is no longer implemented due to fewer crimes being reported and the occurrence of higher priority offences

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