

Student residential burglary reduction programme

Using targeted partnership activities to deliver tailored crime prevention messages, hot spot patrols and student engagement initiatives to reduce burglary offences within the student community.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Theft and burglary Community engagement Neighbourhood crime
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Education Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	September 2025
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Communities General public Victims Workforce

Aim

The aims of the student residential burglary reduction programme are to:

- prevent residential burglary within student communities
- deter repeat victimisation in burglary hotspot areas
- raise students' awareness of burglary risks and crime prevention measures
- encourage engagement between the police, students and universities

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the student residential burglary reduction programme are to:

- reduce the number of burglaries in multi-occupancy student accommodation
- improve student engagement with crime prevention messaging
- increase partnership working between the police, students and universities
- improve community confidence and reassurance
- reduce repeat victimisation through cocooning and targeted crime prevention activity

Description

Manchester South recorded 1,125 residential burglary offences from 2024 to 2025, the highest number within the force area. A review conducted by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) identified

that 474 offences (43%) occurred within a single local policing area (LPA). A significant proportion of victims were university students living in shared accommodation, with offenders targeting these properties because of the presence of multiple high-value items at a single address.

In response, GMP neighbourhood policing team (NPT) undertook a crime analysis and hot spot mapping exercise to better understand offending patterns. The analysis identified ten streets experiencing a disproportionately high number of burglaries. Further analysis of victims highlighted that students, many of whom were living independently for the first time, were particularly vulnerable to burglary and theft. Offender analysis also indicated that criminals were deliberately targeting student properties because of the increased opportunities for financial gain.

The student residential burglary reduction programme has been developed by the NPT in partnership with:

- Manchester Student Housing
- student ambassadors
- university partners
- local communities

Instead of relying on generic crime prevention campaigns, the NPT used behavioural science principles and nudge theory to design targeted intervention activities. These were aimed at raising students' awareness of burglary risks and influencing their decision-making to reduce opportunities for offenders. Nudge theory is a concept that subtly alters the environment or context in which people make decisions, with the aim of influencing their behaviour.

GMP's NPT produced crime prevention leaflets tailored to each hot spot street. The leaflets included information on local landmarks and street-specific details to make the messages more relevant to residents and encourage greater engagement. This tailored approach was intended to increase the likelihood that students would read, remember and act on the advice.

GMP's NPT also worked with Manchester Student Homes and student ambassadors to deliver face-to-face engagement at student properties. These sessions focused on personalised crime prevention conversations to raise awareness of burglary risks and share safety messages through trusted peer networks. The regular and informal sessions ensured that crime prevention advice was delivered in a way that was accessible and relevant to the target audience.

Where burglaries did occur, officers implemented cocooning activities around affected addresses. Cocooning is designed to address repeat and near-repeat victimisation. These activities involved providing crime prevention advice and guidance to residents of burgled properties, as well as to neighbours living at surrounding addresses. Neighbouring residents were informed of recent incidents and provided with immediate crime prevention advice to reduce opportunities for further offending. In addition, targeted patrols have been deployed at locations and times identified through crime analysis. These patrols disrupt offending, contributed to arrests and supported the prosecution of priority offenders.

The student residential burglary reduction programme was delivered through existing neighbourhood policing resources and strengthened partnership arrangements.

The initiative has established a sustainable framework for future student crime prevention. It can be replicated in other locations experiencing similar burglary issues.

Overall impact

The programme has seen reductions in burglary across Manchester South, from 1,125 offences to 714 offences. The LPA contributed to more than 50% of the district-wide reduction.

Through targeted patrols, cocooning activities and tailored crime prevention messaging, opportunities for offenders were reduced and repeat victimisation was disrupted.

The continued partnership with Manchester Student Homes and student ambassadors provides a strong foundation for ongoing delivery and further development of the programme.

Learning

- The programme has demonstrated that understanding the specific characteristics of a victim group is essential when designing crime prevention activities. Generic crime prevention messages were found to be less effective than highly tailored communications that reflected local circumstances and were relevant to the target audience. The application of nudge theory encouraged stronger engagement and increased the likelihood that students would act on the advice provided.
- Partnership working has been vital to the success of the programme. Collaborating with Manchester Student Homes, university partners and student ambassadors provided access to

student communities that would have been difficult to reach through policing activity alone. Peer-to-peer engagement proved particularly effective, as students were more receptive to messages delivered through trusted networks.

- The project has also highlighted the value of data-led problem solving. Hot spot mapping and crime analysis enabled resources to be focused on the ten streets experiencing the highest levels of burglary. This targeted approach ensured that both prevention and enforcement activities were directed where they could have the greatest impact.
- Implementing cocooning activities following offences has proved effective in preventing repeat victimisation. It increased awareness among neighbouring residents and encouraged immediate security improvements. Combined with targeted patrol activity, this helped reduce opportunities for offenders and increase community reassurance.

Best available evidence

For the best available evidence on [measures to reduce repeat victimisation of burglary](#), including crime prevention advice and cocooning, go to the [crime reduction toolkit](#).

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