

# Crimes against students: emerging lessons for reducing student victimisation

Patterns of Crime

Crime Reduction

Policing and Organised Crime

Criminal Justice System

Drugs and Alcohol

Offenders

Corrections

Immigration and Asylum

Social Cohesion and Civil Renewal

Economic Analysis and Modelling

# Crimes against students: emerging lessons for reducing student victimisation

## Introduction

The following report provides some emerging guidance to practitioners working with students, including those working in universities (e.g. student welfare, student unions, security departments, and accommodation offices) as well as the police and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). This report considers the issues

associated with setting up and implementing initiatives to reduce victimisation against students. The suggestions and case studies presented are taken from various sources of information, including evaluation reports from the Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI) and information gathered from various universities.

## Background

In April 2003 the Home Office published research conducted in seven universities and higher education institutions in the East Midlands, which examined the incidence of student victimisation (Barberet *et al.*, 2003). The research asked students about their demographics, security issues, risk and fear of victimisation, lifestyle and crime prevention behaviours. More detailed questions were also asked about experiences of victimisation over the previous 12-month period. The results from this research showed that from a sample of 315 students, 31 per cent had been the victim of crime in the previous 12 months. Ten per cent had been the victim of burglary. Students living in privately-rented accommodation were over twice as likely to experience a burglary compared with those living in halls of residence; 12 per cent compared with five per cent.

This research can be compared with the British Crime Survey (BCS) which examines levels of victimisation amongst a random sample of households in England and Wales. The 2002/03 BCS (Simmons and Dodd, 2003), shows that 27 per cent of households were the victim of crime once or more during this year. The survey also highlights that three per cent of all households had experienced a burglary in 2002/03. The risk of being victimised appears to increase if the head of the household

is aged between 16 and 24. Eight per cent of this group of individuals experienced a burglary. Tackling crime against students can, therefore, be an effective way of reducing local crime levels. Tilley *et al.* (1999) provide a number of suggestions for why students may be particularly vulnerable to burglary. These include their age, income, tenure, employment status, occupancy of house and accommodation type.

A key number of universities already carry out significant crime prevention initiatives to reduce levels of crime affecting students both on and off campus. These are often built on strong partnerships with key players to tackle the problem of student victimisation and include:

- operating secure storage rooms for students to store their belongings during the university holidays;
- giving students crime prevention advice in the form of talks at the beginning of the term;
- giving students written crime prevention advice in the form of leaflets and also the distribution of crime prevention posters around campuses;
- using emails which are sent to students to inform them of certain crime-related issues, such as where to be careful on and around the university campus;

*Home Office Development and Practice Reports draw out from research the messages for practice development, implementation and operation. They are intended as guidance for practitioners in specific fields. The recommendations explain how and why changes could be made, based on the findings from research, which would lead to better practice.*

- the promotion of 'Campus Watch' schemes. These tend to be similar in set-up to Neighbourhood Watch schemes which rely on students and staff keeping an eye on what is happening on their campus and reporting anything to the security departments or police; and
- the introduction of landlord accreditation schemes.

Working with students to reduce crime can be challenging for practitioners. One of the key difficulties involves trying to identify students and student households amongst the general population. This should be an easy process for those directly working with students, such as the student union or university accommodation departments. However, other agencies may have difficulties in identifying student households due to data protection. Private accommodation rented to students in one year will often be rented to students in subsequent years. Therefore, once student households have been identified it is reasonable to assume they will remain student households for some time, which means the address information can be used for future intakes of students.

It is also important to remember that every year there is a fresh intake of first year students into universities. Any crime prevention work aimed at students will therefore require a committed and repeated approach every year. The start of a new academic year is also a good time to

ensure that any crime prevention literature produced is updated and developed. This will ensure that any new developments or initiatives to tackle student victimisation are highlighted amongst the student population. It also ensures that the literature is kept fresh so that the students will hopefully take notice of the messages being conveyed.

In addition, some universities are reluctant to commit resources to the issue of crime against students, or even engage at all for fear of putting off potential students. High level meetings between the local police, the University and the union (local police commander, vice-chancellor and student union president) can be an effective way of overcoming such issues.

This report examines some active schemes in further detail and provides suggestions for reducing incidences of student victimisation, particularly burglary. It also offers some practical tips for setting up and running such schemes. However, it is important to remember that student communities differ across the country, (i.e. university location and campus layout), and are constantly changing. Therefore, practices that work in one area may not automatically work in another and will need adapting to suit local circumstances. Similarly, local crime patterns must be continually monitored to ensure that interventions are effectively targeted.

## Secure storage

A high proportion of students will often leave their high value goods in their vacated accommodation during the holidays. The empty property is then vulnerable to burglary during the university holidays whilst there is little surveillance from the residents. Furthermore, student households will often not know their neighbours well enough to ask them to keep an eye on the property whilst they are away.

The Rusholme RBI project in Manchester ran from 1999 to 2000 and used RBI funding to set up a secure storage room as part of a package of interventions aimed at reducing burglary amongst students. The room was set up to enable students to leave their property in a safe and secure place whilst they were away from their university accommodation during the holidays. A number of the students in Manchester come from areas which are a considerable distance from their universities and they are often not able to take their belongings back home or to their parental address during the holidays.

The secure room is still currently in existence and allows students from three universities in Manchester to store their property free of charge. The university security department currently manages the room.

The room also has a number of security features. These include:

- strict access control. This means that the students have to book a time to both store and collect their property from the room;
- roller shutters on the door, for extra security;
- an alarm linked to the 24-hour university security monitoring station.

### Good Practice for implementing secure storage

- Ensuring the room is of a sufficient enough size to meet expected demand is important.
- Obviously it should also have adequate security, as publicising the room may also alert thieves to the opportunity it presents. Security should ideally include alarms, access controls and where possible the alarm should be linked to the university security department.
- In order for a secure storage room to be successful it needs to be well publicised amongst the student population. This could be done through posters with the local student union or via email distribution to all students. Alternatively, leaflet drops to student residences to alert them about the room or through induction packs which are often sent to the student's home address before they start university.
- Ideally, the room should be located in a campus building, which has an appropriate staff presence throughout the university vacation period. In the case of the Rusholme RBI project, the room was linked to the 24-hour CCTV security office, which ensures the room is kept under constant surveillance.

## Publicity campaigns – raising awareness

Publicity campaigns are used widely to provide students with crime prevention advice and to ensure students are aware of the crimes occurring where they live and work when they are at university. The information can be disseminated in a number of different ways. These can include:

- crime prevention videos
- emails distributed to all students about crimes occurring in their area
- advice packs
- crime prevention talks by university security officers or the local police
- newspaper articles and
- text messaging to students' mobile phones.

This section examines a few of these campaigns and gives some examples where publicity has been used to target students. It is often a good idea to consider combining different campaigns together rather than using only one strand.

### ● Videos

A number of universities have produced student safety videos; these are often tailored to the individual university and surrounding areas. In one city, film study students at the local art and design college produced a crime prevention video to distribute to students in the local area, as part of a package of interventions in a RBI project. The aim of the video was to increase students' awareness of crime prevention issues in the surrounding area. It included information for students on ways to protect their property and information on their personal safety in the local town. The video was developed in a humorous style and was only ten minutes long. It cost £1 to make each copy of the video, plus the RBI project also paid the college to use the video recording equipment. Four hundred copies were distributed to the students via student unions and college accommodation offices.

### Good practice for implementing videos

It is a good idea to ensure that the distribution of the video is monitored and the opinions of students are sought, either through the student union or the police both working in partnership together. This will ensure that the video can be appropriately developed. This could involve producing the video with a group of students to ensure that they think the messages will be taken on board and also to canvass their opinions on the content. This helps to make the video more entertaining and light-hearted, so that other students can relate to it. Locally-tailored publicity messages have the flexibility to closely address local needs and to present messages in a style that has more impact for that particular audience (see Bowers and Johnson, 2003). However, it is important that universities consider the cost implications of keeping any videos up-to-date. They should consider using generic information in videos, such as basic information on students protecting themselves and their property.

One factor to consider with the use of videos is when to show them to students. For example, the video could be shown during freshers' week, but this could have the disadvantage of providing too much information during students' first week at university. One project chose to show their video at times when they knew that there were likely to be increases in crime, based on analysis of local crime trends.

It is also worth considering showing the video to different groups of students. For example, most universities have different societies associated with international students. It is worth liaising with these societies and with student unions to arrange suitable times to show the video specifically to these groups. The timing of these will need to be well publicised around the societies so that the students will attend.

### ● Emails and student newspapers

Emails are a good way of getting vital security information across to large numbers of students cheaply and quickly. Whilst it is important that this tactic is not overused, as students may delete the emails without reading them, it is advised that such emails are distributed at least once or twice every semester in order to keep students up-to-date. One alternative to consider is the use of pop-up windows

that appear when students log into their university IT service. These are useful as they can be programmed so that students must read the message before accessing their account and can provide a good way of communicating urgent safety news and advice.

Another way to keep students informed is to use newspapers to publish articles about crime prevention advice or local incidents of crime that have been occurring both on and off

campuses. This should preferably be through the local student paper, which is distributed through the student union, as students are more likely to read this than a locally distributed one. It may also be useful to inform students when there is an increase in certain types of crime, such as an increase in burglaries, and to inform them where and when these are occurring.

#### ● Crime prevention talks by local police/security officers

At the beginning of the university term and normally within freshers' week, a number of universities will ensure that students attend crime prevention talks by the local police and/or university security officers. These raise awareness among students of the importance of crime prevention issues both on and off campus.

As with crime prevention videos, these talks should be repeated throughout the year and not only during freshers' week. During the first few weeks at university, students are often bombarded with a lot of information. The talks should also be well publicised to ensure that students attend. In some universities, attendance at these talks is mandatory for freshers as part of enrolment. It is vital that any such talks are well co-ordinated and use agreed material to ensure that all presenters deliver a consistent message.

#### ● Student safety websites

A lot of universities use websites to give crime prevention tips and advice and to raise awareness of crime-related issues amongst students. One example of such a website is called 'Safer students'. It provides useful, practical information and advice relating to personal safety, protecting your property and being careful when you are out drinking.

In early 2003 the Home Office launched the good2bsecure website. This is a student-based crime prevention site (<http://www.good2bsecure.gov.uk>). The website gives students advice on a number of issues and is broken down into various different sections. On the website there are also two viral games for students to play. These games are designed to highlight to students the importance of locking their houses and how easy it is to prevent a burglary if they take some basic precautions. Viral marketing is used to get information, such as these games, across to as many people as possible. The idea is that awareness of the game will grow as individuals forward the games on to fellow students.

#### Good practice for student safety websites

- Try to engage students in the development and maintenance of the website. They will have first-hand experience of student lifestyles and will be able to make suggestions about the suitability and usefulness of its content.
- Don't overload the site with too much information. It is a good idea to break the site into different sections so it is easy to navigate around.
- Ensure that as many students as possible are made aware of the site.
- It is a good idea to have links to other related websites so that the students can visit these to gain further information, e.g. victim support organisations.
- The website should have contact details for relevant university departments, such as student welfare, local police and emergency numbers for the university security department.
- A good development tool is to get feedback on the effectiveness of the site from groups of students.
- The site should be publicised every year for each new intake of students.
- Ideally the site should be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that it is covering relevant and topical issues.

## Landlord accreditation schemes

Landlord accreditation schemes are increasingly being introduced at universities. They are used to ensure that students have suitable accommodation to live in whilst they are studying. The landlords who are members of the accreditation schemes follow a number of minimum standards on renting their property. These guidelines often include standards for fire safety, contract standards and also minimum standards for security.

One such accreditation scheme is UNIPOL. This is a charity, which offers advice to students from nine universities and colleges wishing to rent in Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield to which landlords can subscribe. Students are encouraged to rent property from those landlords that have signed up to the code of standards. The UNIPOL scheme ensures that students have a number of benefits whilst renting their property, including:

- being given clear advice on contracts with landlords;
- ensuring that accommodation is of a reasonable and safe standard;
- that landlords agree to repair any damage to the property quickly;
- rewarding landlords by awarding between one and five stars, to reflect higher amenity and security levels within individual properties.

Another scheme is Manchester Student Homes. The landlords rather than the properties themselves are registered with the organisation. As an incentive for landlords to sign up to the scheme they are given preferential advertising for their properties and can also apply for an advanced security standard.

### Good Practice for implementing landlord accreditation schemes

The following gives some recommendations for setting up successful landlord accreditation schemes from the experience of the two schemes discussed:

- The local area and its diversity need to be considered before setting up the scheme.
- The scheme should ensure that it has good links with the student union and other student representatives. This will enable as many students as possible to be aware of the scheme and take advantage of it (see also section on publicity campaigns).
- The schemes can consist of a number of different representatives working in a consortium. This can include involvement from the local authority and other agencies.
- Schemes should have good databases that hold information on the different types of housing and landlords who own those properties.

## Target hardening

Large numbers of students live in Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and students are more likely to own high value, portable goods (such as laptops and mobile phones) than the general population, which makes them an attractive target for burglars.

Despite this level of victimisation, students appear to have a lower fear of crime than the general population. In the East Midlands study (2003), whilst most students were found to take basic precautions such as locking doors or windows, almost a third did not. Successful schemes have taken this into account and implemented 'student-proof' security devices, such as self-closing locks. Saying this, it is important to remember that you can never fully proof security equipment and most devices require a level of education if they are to be used effectively and become sustainable.

Several projects funded under the Reducing Burglary Initiative tackled burglary in student areas by installing target hardening measures to vulnerable properties. One such project was the Sheffield 'Studentland' project<sup>1</sup>. There are over 45,000 full-time students registered at the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam, about half of whom live within the 33,400 households targeted by the project. The project used a package of interventions targeted at both the student and resident population, combining target-hardening measures with proactive policing and awareness campaigns.

### ● Alleygates

Many properties within the Studentland project area consisted of terraced housing, which had alleyways running between the houses, each giving access to around four properties. Therefore, it was decided that alleygates would be used in areas of Studentland that had a particularly high rate of burglary. This was expected to

work through blocking off access to, and escape routes from, the rear of properties and also through increasing the perceived effort and risk involved in a burglary.

The project team visited the areas, although no consultation with residents took place before the decision was made to start the work. However, it may be necessary for the project team to liaise and consult closely with residents so that they are fully informed about what is occurring. Letters were distributed to households and landlords requesting formal consent. This was labour-intensive and difficult; for example, in one block of flats, which housed transient residents, the team could not gain consent from all residents, so the work did not go ahead. For further guidance on the various issues that need to be considered when installing alleygates, readers are referred to the Home Office publication by Johnson and Loxley, 2001 on 'Installing alleygates'.

The gates were installed from July 2001 and were six feet high with a self-closing mechanism. The average price of the gate was £260. Many of the gates had to be custom-made and, as many houses used the back door as the main entrance, residents were offered the opportunity to purchase letterboxes at a reduced cost, that could be fitted to the gate or front door.

### ● Locks

The Studentland project also installed target-hardening measures to individual premises, following a survey conducted by a Crime Reduction Officer to evaluate the security of properties that had been a target of a burglary in the year prior to the project. The installation work was carried out by young people on the Sheffield City Stewardship Programme. Around 700 homes received some form of target hardening, which generally involved fitting additional locks. The average spend per house was £80.

1. An evaluation of the Studentland RBI project is currently being produced and will be available in the near future.



### Good practice for implementing student target-hardening interventions

- It can be difficult to obtain an accurate list of landlords or student households. This is best done in conjunction with the university accommodation service or through the local authority who may hold details of registered landlords.
- It is not always easy to persuade landlords to upgrade security equipment, as very often the student housing market is so buoyant that landlords are almost guaranteed new tenants each year. One way around this may be to work with the university so that only 'secure' properties are displayed on the private landlord lists distributed by the university. Another is to persuade them that the costs of fixing damage etc. caused in a burglary are likely to be far more than those of fitting good security.
- It is advisable to bring in Crime Reduction Officers to survey the target area in order to identify the most vulnerable properties/repeat victims etc.
- Due to the problems with identifying student households, projects may want to consider targeting all residents within a known 'student area'.
- The design of the measures is crucial to the success of the project – for example, fitting a self-locking mechanism to alleygates should help to improve the numbers of gates kept locked.
- Typical equipment installed includes – five lever mortice locks, door chains, door viewers, security bolts, window locks, anti-climb paint etc.
- Sustainability of these schemes can be particularly problematic due to the constant new waves of students into the housing. For example, if a project installs alleygates will there be enough keys for new student tenants or if students lose the keys during the year? If a project aims to provide security advice, has the scheme the resources to re-educate the new intake of students? In addition, getting landlords to maintain security measures and to educate each new wave of student tenants would help to ensure that the interventions are sustainable.

## Campus Watch

Campus Watch schemes are similar to Neighbourhood Watch schemes and use a partnership approach *'to educate students and staff, initiate crime prevention activities, increase awareness of potential crime, enhance personal safety and create a safer university environment for everyone'* (Luton University website).

When successful, Campus Watch schemes encourage students to report incidents and aid communication between key crime reduction agencies, facilitating more effective targeting of resources.

All Campus Watch schemes are different, but there are a few common features. For example, most schemes have a well-publicised incident line or web page that students can use to report crimes or to gain security advice. One university updates its website monthly, giving information about the number, types and locations of incidents that have occurred on campus and advice on how to avoid becoming a victim of such crimes. They also encourage students to report suspicious incidents. Currently, there is no available information on evaluated Campus Watch schemes, as these have only recently been set up. However, it is important to consider some of the emerging good practice from those already existing schemes.

### Good practice when running a Campus Watch scheme

- Consider when is the best time to launch or publicise the scheme – freshers' week may be appropriate but be aware that there will be a lot going on and students may suffer from 'poster fatigue'.
- Consider innovative ways of marketing the Campus Watch telephone number, such as stress toys, mouse mats, mugs, key chains, and screensavers on university computers etc.
- Schemes must plan how the Campus Watch phone line will work alongside the 999 call – it should be clear which number to dial.
- Many existing schemes display lists of recent crimes on the university security service homepage. This may work well if the majority of students routinely visit the security service page but universities may want to consider communicating this information in other ways, for example, on university radio, in university papers, by text message, or on the main intranet pages.
- As with any publicity campaign, it would be useful to keep track of how many students read the Campus Watch material and report incidents. From this the material can be developed and changed if necessary. For example one CDRP assesses students' perceptions of crime and the effectiveness of their activities as part of their 'Statement of Aims'.
- A Campus Watch scheme can provide a vehicle to do more than raise awareness. For example, following a spate of cycle thefts, Hull University Students Against Crime (HUSAC) volunteers took a proactive approach by initiating a 'Bike Watch' scheme. Under this scheme, students can pay a minimum fee to rent high-quality D locks and also have the bike postcode stamped and registered for free. The rent charges are then ploughed back into HUSAC for future schemes.

## International students

In 2000-2001, students from countries other than the UK, who were studying in this country, numbered 230,870 and represented 12 per cent of the total student body (Higher Education Statistics Agency, press release PR 54 2002).

International students may need additional support when they join a new university, as for many it will be their first time living away in an unfamiliar country. Many will come from countries with lower rates of crime or where the types of crime problems are markedly different, leaving them potentially unaware of the new risks or the behaviours best adopted to avoid becoming a victim.

Most universities have recognised the importance of targeting security messages to overseas students, and the majority provide international student/society websites that outline basic security and crime prevention tips. However, it is important to ensure that *local* crime prevention messages get across to all international students *and* their families.

To date there has been little evaluative research into projects that have targeted international students. However, several areas currently run schemes that involve a package of measures targeted at international students, some of which you may wish to consider.

One project uses an approach initially developed by Sussex Police, to tackle the victimisation of foreign language school students. This project uses several measures that are directly transferable to university students:

- publicity of personal security tips and useful reporting contacts via posters and leaflets;
- visits – welcome visits from the Community Safety Officer overseeing the project, where a student safety video is shown to new students and numerous procedures for reporting incidents are highlighted.

The Community Safety Officer also regularly makes plain clothes visits to a site popular with the foreign language students to act as a familiar point of contact for students and encourage reporting;

- Safe Havens – in their information packs students receive the details of several town centre Safe Havens. These havens are usually shops or restaurants where the management has agreed to assist any foreign student experiencing distress or harassment. This particular project has designated several branches of a well known fast-food chain as Safe Havens as at each restaurant there is a trained first-aider and multi-lingual staff on duty to offer assistance;
- ‘Student Safe Southampton’ is a joint initiative between the police, University of Southampton, Southampton Institute of Higher Education, the local council together with local further education colleges and language schools. It has also adopted the Safe Havens idea alongside other student safety measures. The project has 12 Safe Havens in the town centre, including a high-street chemist, a book shop, fast-food restaurants, and fashion stores. In order to publicise the havens pocket-sized ‘Student Safety’ maps were distributed to international students through the university, local colleges and language schools. The maps clearly illustrate the location and fascias of the Safe Havens and also contain important personal security messages.

However, it should also be borne in mind that this initiative initially experienced an increase in the number of reported crimes experienced by international students. This could have occurred due to the students’ increased ability to report incidents to the police.

### Good practice for targeting international students

- It may be helpful for security staff to liaise closely with international clubs and societies when devising marketing strategies for crime prevention schemes.
- Very often crime prevention and safety messages are presented during freshers' week. However, as many freshers' week events revolve around alcohol, the messages may not be getting across to students who may not automatically fit into this culture. Consider holding international events such as a global food or music party, or other appropriate events, to integrate international students and stress key security messages.
- Universities need to ensure that international students can easily report incidents. Sunderland University is encouraging international students to report crimes by supplying anonymous reporting forms on its website. A drop-in reporting centre, perhaps attached to the student union or a health centre may also encourage reporting among those who may be reticent of talking to uniformed authorities.
- If implementing a 'Safe Haven' scheme think carefully about which premises will be suitable havens and ensure all staff are regularly trained to know what their involvement requires of them.
- It may also be useful to combine the Safe Haven scheme with a Safe Route initiative (discussed below) and produce materials that outline both the location of Safe Havens and suggested safe routes through town or campus.
- Any 'Safe Haven' scheme should ideally have the support of senior police personnel and projects should consider how their schemes could link productively with other police-led schemes, for example, initiatives on racial/hate crime.
- A promising approach, piloted by some forces (though with potential for development) is to carefully consider and address the cultural and behavioural characteristics of the different nationalities comprising the international student body. This can not only assist in tailoring crime prevention advice to meet the needs of different nationalities but can also help educate police officers to improve how they deal with victimised international students.
- Make sure students don't stand out and therefore attract the attention of offenders. Some universities have, for example, provided new students with distinctive bags.

## Police higher education liaison officers

There is a steady increase in the number of police officers who are specifically dedicated to university campuses. They are known as police higher education liaison officers and their primary role is to provide a contact point for both students and staff on police related issues. The Police Association of Higher Education Liaison Officers (PAHELO) was set up in 2001 to enable higher education

liaison officers to share good practice on tackling student crime. The association allows members to keep each other informed about any changes in legislation relating to higher education institutions. The association has grown steadily over the last two years and now has over 50 members from various universities in the UK.

## Preferred route schemes

Preferred route schemes are designed for students to ensure that they follow a set route around university campus buildings. A number of the preferred route campaigns were introduced as part of the Government's Street Crime Initiative. The Target Walksafe campaign in Leeds is designed to ensure that students do not become victims of crime whilst they are studying. It also raises awareness of personal safety amongst students who may be new to the university and who are unfamiliar with the layout of the local area and who do not know which areas are considered safer than others.

A similar scheme currently being piloted in Manchester was designed to ensure that students take a certain route between the university and the halls of residence. Part of

this scheme includes the introduction of road signs along the route and physical improvements to the surrounding area. The improvements include increasing street lighting and environmental improvements such as cutting back trees to enable increased surveillance.

A variation on this is the use of late night transport targeted towards students particularly over the weekend period – especially Friday and Saturday evenings. In one city, for example, an established bus service, which runs between the town centre and the university environs, has been extended to run between 11.30pm and 03.30am at weekends. This has been widely publicised with students and reduces the necessity for lone students to walk back to residences through what is a known robbery hotspot area.

### Good practice for implementing preferred route schemes

- Any preferred route scheme needs to be well publicised to make students aware of the specific routes the scheme is covering. A good example of raising awareness is from projects which implemented high visibility policing to ensure that students were made aware of the scheme. Officers were posted around the university area and gave out maps to students which included information and details about the safer route. They also used this as an opportunity to hand out other crime prevention advice.

## Property marking and registration

Crime prevention projects will often use property marking as a key intervention. There are various types of property marking available, varying from stickers with the resident's postcode, the use of Ultraviolet (UV) pens or other means of property marking.

As discussed earlier, the student population is highly transient and it is worth bearing this in mind when using property marking kits which show the student's postcode for their current accommodation. Students will often move into different housing during their time at university from

one academic year to the next. When using property marking labels or UV pens this point should be borne in mind. Students may be unwilling to have their student accommodation postcode permanently marked on their property, as they will only be staying at their university for a relatively short period of time. A number of universities suggest using the code or initials of the university plus the student's university registration number. It is also worth considering using the student's parental address as the marked postcode.

### Good practice for implementing property marking and registration

UV pens and property marking kits are often distributed to students in crime prevention packs during freshers' weeks at university. It is important to ensure that students do actually mark their property. In Manchester, police officers visit campus accommodation to mark freshers' property. This ensures that when students move into privately-rented accommodation in their second year their property is already marked. Where this isn't possible, police officers in the local areas should also be made aware of the use of this intervention so that any retrieved stolen property can be checked.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### Key developments and promising areas

There are a number of new key initiatives and interventions which are being used across a number of universities to tackle student victimisation. The issue of student victimisation is increasingly being discussed and dealt with at universities, as concern about the potential victimisation problem grows. Some universities have started to openly discuss the issue of student crime at dedicated one-day conferences and partnership meetings. These are ideal opportunities to discuss local university issues and set out clear action plans to address problems.

It is crucial that internal departments (such as accommodation offices, the student union, and university security), as well as external partners, such as the police, and the local authority are invited to the student crime meetings. These events enable a locally-based partnership to develop, which ensures that all relevant parties with a role in ensuring the safety of students are involved. However, there is also a need for high-level intervention at Vice-Chancellor and Police BCU Commander level to ensure that student safety is seen as a priority.

### Problems and challenges

One challenge facing practitioners is working out how best to target the crime prevention activity. In the early stages of any crime prevention project it is essential to collate information on the local student community in order to assess which specific areas and /or problems to tackle. Also, all interventions must be tailored to suit local circumstances – one size does not necessarily fit all.

Engaging with the student population can be another difficulty for practitioners involved with student safety. A local practitioner-based partnership approach will help to

overcome any barriers that may occur. For example, through ensuring that the student union is involved they can help to publicise any awareness raising initiatives and help to target other initiatives aimed at students. This could be through ensuring there is a crime prevention stall at the freshers' fayre or by publicising police crime prevention talks around the campuses. The involvement of the university student accommodation department can help to identify where the students are living off campus to enable appropriate targeting these households.

Any publicity aimed at students needs to be carefully thought through and targeted appropriately to ensure as wide a coverage as possible. Students need to be made aware of the potential risks of having their home burgled, for example, and some of the basic precautions they can take to ensure this doesn't happen. The use of private landlords also needs to be monitored to ensure that any problems with student accommodation, such as a lack of security, are dealt with promptly and efficiently. This can be explored through the accommodation department's use of landlord accreditation schemes.

The objective of this report was to provide an initial examination of the problem of student victimisation and the new ways in which it is being tackled across university campuses. Many of the case studies presented above highlight examples of projects that were implemented as part of the RBI. It is intended that practitioners, hoping to develop student based initiatives, use the report as an introductory guide to the various issues surrounding student victimisation. The hope is that it will encourage further partnership working among universities and relevant agencies in order to tackle student victimisation.



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### Background to the research

The report was prepared by Sarah McCreith and Sally Parkinson of the, What Works in Reducing Crime Programme section, Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate.

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The Home Office's Crime Reduction website provides practical guidance for practitioners on a mini site specifically related to student victimisation (<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/studentvictimisation.htm>).

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