



Home Office

NEWS RELEASE

50 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 9AT
Telephone 01-213 3030/4050/5050
(Night line 01-213 3000)

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THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH CRIME IS TO PREVENT IT

Speaking today to the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP, stressed that everyone has a role to play in preventing crime. He said:

"The Government's strategy against crime has to cover the waterfront. It begins with crime prevention, which brings us here today. It covers the strength of the police and police powers. It covers the powers of sentencing available to the courts. It covers the prison system and the prison building programme.

"All these are necessary elements. The most neglected is the first, crime prevention. Yet the best way of dealing with crime is to prevent it. 95% of crimes in England and Wales are concerned with property; about 80% of these involve losses of under £50. A high proportion of these could be prevented.

"Crime prevention involves the citizen. The citizen need not just sit behind his or her newspaper despairing over the crime figures. They can do something about it. They can join the police in making the neighbourhood a safer place. They can help bring reassurance to people living alone.

cc Henry Boat

You should see the -
if you're not already
done so. I still await
the HO letter & am
chasing. MGA 21/11

"Crime prevention involves businessmen, architects, designers, local authorities and the media. In the jargon, it is multi-agency.

"Last month I announced a major initiative which concentrates upon 5 local areas. In each area a locally led steering group will develop a crime profile of the particular local problems and needs. On the basis of that profile they will develop a range of special crime prevention measures. The projects have been set up in Bolton, Longbenton in Tyneside, East Swansea, Wellingborough in Northamptonshire and Croydon. In 3 of the 5 areas the Chief Executive chairs the group whilst the Chief Probation Officers and a Senior Police Officer take the lead in the other 2. The Home Office is meeting the salaries of full time local co-ordinators and will be providing a small team of staff at Headquarters to co-ordinate and monitor the experiment. If successful the 5 projects will show that local action against crime is worthwhile; that it can help restore public confidence. By example, they will encourage and guide others in different parts of the country to undertake similar projects.

"Let me give you some more examples:

Robbery

Banks and post offices, by adopting crime prevention measures, have significantly reduced the number of over-the-counter robberies.

Property marking

This has been shown to have a dramatic effect on household burglaries. In South Wales, where an experimental project was set up, efforts by the police produced a remarkably high take-up rate, which in turn led to a 40% reduction in burglaries.

Neighbourhood Watch

Avon and Somerset show an overall reduction in crime of 22%; an increase in detection and a reduction in fear of crime. Mollington in Cheshire reports no burglaries in the 18 months after the introduction of Neighbourhood Watch. Boscombe in Dorset claims a 50% reduction in burglary.

Autocrime

The installation of a 24 hour taxi firm in a multi-storey car park to provide supervision round the clock, coupled with some increased physical security, has meant no thefts at all since they moved-in. £5,000 a year has been saved in repair bills due to vandalism.

Vandalism and Burglary of Council Houses

Local authorities are beginning to incorporate a concern for security in their housing programmes. In London, for example, Hammersmith and Fulham have produced a useful handbook giving sound practical advice on crime prevention, which they have distributed free to some 64,000 residents in the Borough. They are also helping tenants with grants for security purposes.

Crewe and Nantwich report that the fitting of alarms to vacant council houses to cut down on vandalism and theft, which had been causing rental losses of some £4,000 a year, is paying for itself.

"These are some of the first success stories. But we have a long way to go. Too many people still think that stopping crime is just a matter for the police. Crime prevention is not a sideshow, it should be central. That is why I am glad to announce today that the Prime Minister has decided to chair a seminar on crime prevention at 10 Downing Street early in the New Year. She will invite representatives of key organisations - insurance, building, car manufacturing industries, retailers, employers and trade unionists. The Prime Minister wants to stimulate ideas and put some sharp and urgent questions.

"How can we make our motor cars less vulnerable to the thief? How can we best protect from attack those who work in shops and in our public transport services? How can we combat crime in our schools? How can we alter the design of flats and houses to deter the criminal? The community is not helpless. Crime is not something over which we have no control. By our efforts and our determination we can take effective action and significantly reduce the opportunities for the criminal. Few people

nowadays fail to take elementary health precautions, for example inoculation of children against serious diseases which are now under control. We need to protect ourselves against crime with the same care."

Notes for Editors

1. The original Standing Committee was set up in 1967 to look at how local and central government, the police, the business community and industry could assist with crime prevention initiatives at a national level.
2. Earlier this year the Committee became the Standing Conference and its structure was changed to broaden its scope and allow it to draw on a wider range of expertise.
3. Three working groups were then established and the chairman of each group presents its report at the Standing Conference today.
 - i Residential burglary - Chairman Mr R C W Bardell OBE
Association of British Insurers
 - ii Car Security - Chairman Mr J D S Curtis of the British
National Insurance Company
 - iii Revised Guidelines for crime prevention panels
- Chairman Mr S E Bailey, CBE, QPM
Chief Constable Northumbria Police