

Investigating the practical support needs of burglary victims: executive summary

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Crime Concern would like to thank all the managers, workers and volunteers from Victim Support across England and Wales who took part in the research.

Primary audience:	Everyone in Victim Support
Action:	Summary of a report which addresses a gap in research about the kinds of practical support burglary victims need. It makes recommendations which will help Victim Support and other agencies support victims of burglary.
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Coverage:	All of Victim Support

Executive summary

Victim Support and Direct Line commissioned this report, *Investigating the practical support needs of burglary victims*, as a first step to address the identified gap in research about what kinds of practical support burglary victims need.

The research looks at how Victim Support, and the organisations it works alongside, could improve the scope, coverage, effectiveness and quality of practical support for burglary victims in the future.

Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were used to gather the views of Victim Support managers, volunteers and burglary victims. Case study research was also carried out. This will help local Victim Support branches to learn from the successes and challenges others have experienced when setting up projects to support the practical needs of victims.

The research generated a great deal of information about the impact of burglary, the practical support needs of victims and about current services available across England and Wales. The research not only adds to our knowledge, but makes a number of recommendations which will help Victim Support and other local agencies involved in supporting victims of crime.

The impact of burglary

Although burglary is always a serious crime, its impact, including its longer-term emotional and psychological effect, will vary enormously from victim to victim.

Consultation with victims through a postal survey revealed that:

- two thirds of victims were at home when the burglary actually took place and a quarter had been burgled before
- almost a quarter of victims surveyed had no insurance when they were burgled, the most common reason being that they 'could not afford it'
- a high proportion of victims experience a range of emotional responses to the incident including anger, shock, worry and fear
- burglary can have a high emotional and financial impact; 60% of victims said that they were emotionally affected and 40% financially affected 'very much' or 'quite a lot'
- a quarter of victims did not upgrade their security after they were burgled
- only a minority of victims had received practical and financial help to upgrade their security after the incident.

Practical support needs of burglary victims

The victims consulted in this research most commonly wanted a combination of both practical help and emotional support after the burglary. The project identified the key practical support needs of burglary victims as:

- timely help to secure the property immediately after the incident (eg door and window locks)
- help to repair any other damage caused by the burglary
- help to secure the property more extensively in the medium to long term
- financial assistance to replace stolen items
- practical help with filling in claim forms (eg to insurance companies).

Meeting the practical support needs of burglary victims

The primary focus of the services Victim Support provides to burglary victims is emotional support to help them deal with and recover from victimisation. However, for burglary victims, the research identified that one of the most effective ways of providing emotional reassurance is to provide practical help, in particular by securing the home to prevent re-victimisation.

The majority of local Victim Support charities consulted were unable to directly provide free or subsidised home security improvement services. But a high proportion were able to help older or disabled victims to get this kind of support by referring them on to services provided by other national charities such as Help the Aged, Age Concern and Care and Repair.

Overall the coverage of home security improvement services across England and Wales is patchy and access to practical help is very much dependant on where a victim lives. The research highlighted that provision of this kind of service was particularly limited for victims from low-income households, a group identified as particularly vulnerable to victimisation and re-victimisation.

Case studies of projects providing practical support to burglary victims

The research looked at a number of case studies which highlight the impact that Victim Support can make through offering practical support to a wide range of victims – either directly or by working in partnership with other agencies. The projects examined focus on a range of issues including: proactive and reactive ‘target hardening’¹; support for victims of distraction burglary; and multi-agency approaches to tackle burglary and support victims.

¹ Target hardening is a form of situational crime prevention where preventative measures are put in place to reduce the opportunity for crime. It is assumed that if for example a property is made more secure, the increased effort required from the offender to be able to gain entry is such that they will be deterred from doing so.

The projects also demonstrate that many local Victim Support charities extend their support to victims through innovative uses of funding. Lack of funding is one of the main threats to the sustainability of this kind of project. Partnership working is key to success. By working in partnership, not only are projects more sustainable, but victims of crime benefit from the range of support that the various agencies can provide.

Recommendations and key points

The results of this research can be used to influence Victim Support services both nationally and at a local level. In particular, it recommends that guidance is developed to help Victim Support staff and volunteers prioritise the provision of practical support to victims based on agreed criteria. In general, there is a need for greater coverage of practical support for victims across England and Wales. In the context of limited resources, Victim Support should increase its involvement with local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and community safety partnerships² to represent and raise the profile of the needs of burglary victims.

Other recommendations focus on how Victim Support can build on its current expertise in supporting burglary victims, specifically by:

- developing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- more effectively capitalising on current provision and increasing capacity
- developing mechanisms for knowledge sharing across England and Wales.

Future research into how to appropriately support children and young people who experience burglary, burglary victims from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, refugee communities and victims who do not report burglary to the police would be beneficial.

² These statutory partnerships are known as CDRPs in England and as community safety partnerships in Wales. For the purposes of this report, the term CDRP is used to refer to both.