



TACKLING DOORSTEP CRIME



In 2009 **Cambridgeshire County Council** was awarded Beacon status in the category of Cutting Red Tape. This award recognised that the council had *demonstrated clear evidence of having reduced burden on businesses by substantially reducing the number of inspections, whilst ensuring that the business community receives the advice and guidance needed to comply with their legislative requirements.* This initiative was developed in response to community concern about rogue traders. The assessors also noted that the council has developed *a strong focus on community partnerships in dealing with issues such as alcohol, anti-social behaviour and targeting regulatory service activity to gain maximum benefit.*

Achievement

- Cutting red tape and improved outcomes for local communities and businesses through concerted action to improve public protection, reduce unnecessary regulation and minimise enforcement action.
- The successful introduction of **No Cold-Calling Zones (NCCZ)** that have attracted a 90% satisfaction rating from residents.
- The NCCZ have gained national recognition, through the Trading Standards Institute, and have been adopted by over 50% of local authorities.
- Highly-effective partnership-working, characterised by: sharing of intelligence, pooling of resources, joint planning for concerted action, well-managed two-tier and inter-authority working arrangements, and effective public-private-third sector interaction.

Lessons Learnt

Involving the community in the development of local solutions to local issues is central to securing real enhancement to their quality of life.

A targeted approach to regulation is effective ensuring the efficient use of resources.

Effectively mobilising intelligence gathered through multi-agency-working is a powerful resource for developing a co-ordinated and tailored response to the threat posed by rogue traders and property crime.

Working with legitimate businesses to establish a **Registered Traders' Scheme** helps to reduce the burden of regulation, minimises enforcement action and improves consumer protection.

Using the **better regulation principles** contributes to an outcome-focused approach to service improvement.

Focus For Action

Clear evidence of community concern over doorstep crime, using intelligence from Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Age Concern, the families of older and vulnerable people and from Trading Standards officers.

The intelligence highlighted an increase in distraction burglaries and rogue traders charging unfairly high prices for services.

Using trend data gained through the Geographical Information System (GIS) the police were able to map the locations being targeted and analyse the extent of the damage that was being done to those communities.

In developing appropriate responses to this situation a number of contextual issues were identified.

- The need to change perceptions amongst older and vulnerable people – because they had no knowledge or experience of the types of crimes involved, and because many of them grew up with social values that are less likely to be respected nowadays. A solution had to be designed that took account of those values and to make people aware of the problem without over-dramatising the situation.
- An under-reporting of crimes, by people who were afraid of being stigmatised as being 'victims'. Measures would need to be developed that took away that stigma and that encouraged people to be more self-confident.
- The recognition that there would be a perceived increase in crime as more incidents were reported – but that there would subsequently be a downward trend as the impact of concerted action began to take effect. Robust management of that perception would be essential in maintaining confidence in the effectiveness of schemes.

Effective Solutions

From the outset it was recognised that a **multi-agency approach** would be needed to deliver an effective response to the situation. An initial partnership was formed between Trading Standards, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Police. As different elements of the response were developed other partners were recruited.

- All the local authorities
- Adult Social Services
- The PCTs
- Victim Support

- The Women's Institutes
- Barclays Bank
- Royal British Legion
- The Pensions Service
- Registered Social Landlords
- The water and power utilities

A **No Cold-calling Zones** scheme was established in the areas with the highest rates of rogue trading and distraction burglaries. A key element of the scheme was a programme of face-to-face Safety Awareness talks aimed at raising the confidence of older and vulnerable people, providing the resilience to resist the advances of uninvited callers to their homes. The national campaign **Lock, Stop, Chain, Check ID** provided the impetus for promoting the message 'don't buy it on the doorstep'. This was supported by a local campaign – 'We're not buying it' – using leaflets and stickers for front doors.

A **Registered Traders' Scheme**, where local traders have been 'kite-marked' by Trading Standards, allows older and vulnerable people – through Age Concern – to have access to safe business transactions.

The respected **Neighbourhood Watch** initiative is used to disseminate information to the community and to provide feedback on local issues.

Through the multi-agency **Home Shield** scheme staff are trained to assess possible areas of need when visiting older or vulnerable people's homes. With that person's consent, a completed referral form is sent to a central unit which is responsible for alerting the relevant agencies so that the support issues are appropriately addressed.

A strong emphasis on **forward planning** helps to identify potential developments that may lead to rogue traders targeting vulnerable people. For example, the 'switchover' from analogue to digital television transmission has been identified as a possible source for increased cold-calling and the sale of goods at inflated prices. The partnership has drawn-up an action plan to tackle this issue.

Contacts and Links

Main contact

Catherine Casbon
01354 750035
catherine.casbon@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Vulnerable and Older People

Cathy Inman
01954 284646
cathy.inman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Stop, Chain, Check ID

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/boguscaller17.htm

Digital Switchover

www.digitaluk.co.uk

IDEA - Cutting Red Tape Community of Practice

www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.doc