

Initial response

How to manage the initial response to residential burglary, including actions for call takers and investigators.

First published 4 October 2023

Call takers

Call takers should take a victim-focused approach when responding to reports of burglary. This is often the victim's first contact with the police and this interaction will set the tone of the subsequent police response and investigation. It can have a direct impact on victim engagement and the confidence of wider communities.

When making a report, the victim will be an engaged and interested caller. Take advantage of this and gather as much information as possible. Provide reassurance and relevant information on what will happen next, who will attend, and what the victim should do or not do.

Effective reporting and recording practices will also enable a fast-time response to residential burglary when this is necessary, establishing solvability factors, identifying suspects and providing opportunities for an early arrest.

The quality and detail of the information gathered will inform the priority grading and the police response required.

Forces should consider appropriate training and prompts lists for call takers, to maximise the amount of material gathered when taking reports of residential burglary.

Suggested actions for call takers

The call taker should:

- pay attention to detail, obtaining and recording as much detailed information about the victim, location, time of offence, suspect and any items stolen. (In particular, whether any stolen devices include a tracking ability, such as 'Find my phone' or 'Find my device'.) For any stolen vehicles, include make, model, colour and vehicle registration mark
- identify and record whether the victim is a repeat or vulnerable victim

- undertake a THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigate, vulnerability and engagement) assessment and where necessary, instigate safeguarding activity
- provide basic scene preservation advice before referring the incident for triage by a forensic practitioner, who should be deployed when appropriate

Reports received through the web

When the report is received via online reporting facilities, a return call should be made as soon as possible so that further information can be obtained, and an appropriate police response instigated.

Return calls with additional information

Victims may later call again to provide additional, actionable information that may help policing to recover stolen property or arrest a suspect. It's important that this information is passed to the officer in the case or their supervisor as quickly as possible, so it can be actioned.

Deployment

All Home Office police forces have agreed that they will attend every residential burglary.

This may be one person or multiple people. For example, someone to undertake the investigation, a crime scene investigator (CSI), and someone to provide prevention advice.

The most significant contributing factor to a successful outcome following a residential burglary of a home is establishing solvability factors.

To maximise the material available to the investigation and help identify a suspect, it's essential to:

- attend the scene as early as possible
- conducting a thorough and effective investigation while at the scene

Initial investigation

Initial deployment is often, but not always, undertaken by uniformed officers engaged in response policing. It's important that those responsible for golden hour actions are given enough time to complete the following considerations.

- [See APP on Investigation process – Golden hour](#)

Golden hour enquiries undertaken during initial attendance are important. They may make the difference between early identification – and arresting a suspect and recovering stolen property – or not.

An effective and professionally curious initial attendance ensures that all available material has been gathered and reassurance is provided to the victim.

Identifying and arresting suspects should be the priority.

Suggested lines of enquiry

In addition to golden hour considerations, lines of enquiry should include the following.

- Being aware of and avoiding any contamination risks (including digital hygiene).
- Liaising with forensic departments to identify forensic opportunities at the scene (in accordance with local force standard operating procedures (SOPs)).
- Identifying scenes and conducting a peripheral search. Include entry and exit points to the home, as well as potential routes to and from the property. Also include areas outside the immediate scene for evidential and forensic opportunities, for example, discarded objects such as drinks containers or cigarette ends.
- Obtaining initial accounts and statements from victims and witnesses (consider [**APP on Working with victims and witnesses – Witness assessment**](#)). This should include the offence method or modus operandi (MO), time parameters for the offence, a detailed description of any stolen property, any property left at the scene, and [**ADVOKATE**](#)-compliant descriptions of any suspects sighted.
- Obtaining photographs or images of stolen property and serial or identifying numbers.
- Considering digital crime scene opportunities. For example, whether the suspect's mobile device connected to the victim's router or mobile device hot spots.
- Conducting house-to-house enquiries with neighbouring and overlooking properties. This is to identify potential witnesses (including domestic or commercial CCTV, doorbell or dashcam footage), alert neighbours to the crime, and provide advice regarding security of property.
- Reviewing additional CCTV opportunities, including private and commercial premises, doorbells and dashcam footage. Also include locations overlooking potential routes to and from the scene.
- Using body-worn video (BWV) or mobile phone photography to do a walkthrough of the scene.

- Photographing any non-intimate injuries to the victim (injuries may also need to be photographed by a CSI).
- Reviewing evidential opportunities for stolen property. For example, the time and date of stolen bank or credit card usage, and tracking devices in stolen property, such as 'Find my phone' or 'Find my device'.
- If a vehicle is stolen during a burglary, establishing if it is fitted with a tracking device or telematic equipment (this may require contacting the manufacturer). Where tracking data is available, pass to [Automatic Number Plate Recognition \(ANPR\)](#) and roads policing colleagues for fast time action to trace the vehicle and potential offenders.
- Using ANPR to track and trace stolen vehicles, including potential vehicles used by offenders or in convoy with the stolen vehicle.
- Ensuring completed actions are clearly documented on force recording systems. This should also include any actions that are not completed and the rationale for this, to ensure clarity for further investigating officers and to limit duplication.

Information or material received at a later date

Actionable information or material that is provided to the investigation later should be actioned using golden hour principles. This avoids lost opportunities to recover property or identify suspects.

Keeping force recording systems up to date

Force recording systems should be updated before the end of shift to facilitate handovers and further action.

To develop your understanding of digital opportunities for intelligence and investigation, our [Operation Modify interactive resources](#).

Tags

Neighbourhood policing Investigation