



REPEAT VICTIMISATION IN  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH  
NOVEMBER 2014

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This report focuses on repeat victimisation of adults aged 16 years and over in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Police recorded local data, of all victims, for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, for a period of calendar years 2011 to 2013, is used to examine the extent of repeat victimisation.

### Definition

Repeat victimisation can be defined as being a victim of crime on two or more separate occasions within a given time period. Within this definition a person can experience 'multiple' victimisation, experiencing being a victim of a number of different offences, perhaps committed by different offenders.

### Why some people are repeat victims

There are some mechanistic theories for repeat victimisation that begin to explain **why** someone might become a repeat victim of crime:

- *Rational Choice Theory*: Helpful when considering repeat victimisation for acquisitive crime such as burglary or theft. Over half to two-thirds of burglars report burgling a specific property twice or more (Ashton et al., 1998). Offences against the same target by the same offender will be based on previous experiences, perception of known risk and rewards. This 'rational' choice centres on the motivated offender's knowledge of the victim's suitability and the likelihood of the absence of capable guardians.
- *Routine Activity*: The probability of a crime occurring is influenced by the 'routines' of both victims and offenders including work patterns, family-life and leisure activities (Cohen and Felson, 2003). An individual working within the night-time economy or a nightclub goer is at more risk of being a repeat victim of assault compared to someone who goes out less; a property bordering a busy thorough-fare is more at risk of criminal damage than somewhere quieter.

The weakness of these two theories is that neither sufficiently explains the interaction between vulnerable victims and the offenders who target them. In many cases, it is either the on-going relationship between an offender and a victim (e.g. in the case of domestic violence) that explains repeat victimisation or the offenders' willingness to 'share' victims between themselves (e.g. in the case of older people vulnerable to fraud).

## National Trend

- Nationally, since 1995 the estimated number of incidents of crime decreased by 55%. However, the fall in repeat incidents has been much steeper (a drop of 65%). This suggests a fall in overall level of repeat victimisation over time.

## Local Findings

Local data for over **93,563** records of victimisation for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the period of the calendar years 2011 to 2013 were analysed.

- Data analysis identified **9,088 unique repeat victims, who were victimised 21,533 times (more than 1 in 5 of victim records were for a repeat victim).**
- For the study, repeat victims were split into two categories, one with repeat victimisation for **less than four times, 8,393 victims victimised 18,155 times;** and another victimised **four or more times, 695 unique victims, victimised 3,378 times.**
- The most commonly repeated offence was that of violence against the person. Approximately 20% of all violent crime victims were repeat victims with 13% being victims more than twice.
- There is a chance that 1 in 5 victims would be at risk of becoming repeat victims for violence or for criminal damage. Whereas 1 in 8 victims are at risk of becoming repeat victims for burglary and 1 in 10 are at risk for theft.
- Overall, females are more likely to be a repeat victim than males. However when broken down by crime type males are more likely to be repeat victims of property crime whilst females were more likely to be repeat victims of violence.
- **For the repeat victims who were victimised less than four times, 42% were repeated within three months** and over 60% were repeated within six month.
- **Among repeat victims who were victimised four or more times, 62% were repeated within three months** and over 80% were repeated within six months. This shows that the heavily victimised offences are repeated more rapidly.
- Approximately 79% of the victims who were victimised four or more times were residents of an urban area and 21% were from a rural area.
- The geographical pattern of repeat victimisation can be related to relative deprivation, with more deprived areas suffering from higher rates of repeat victimisation.

## Relating the findings to policy

Reducing repeat victimisation offers a good opportunity to reduce the volume of reported crime overall.

- One of the key aspects of the local data is how it highlights the existence **of a relatively small group of 695 repeat victims who have experienced victimisation at least four or more times** over the time of the study. Translating this number into the day-to-day work of victim services, they make up approximately **3.6% of the workload**.
- The database from which the victim data is drawn does include a 'repeat victim marker', but (as has already been noted in the methodology) this is by no means comprehensive. For the 3,388 times this group of 695 unique victims appears in the data a **repeat marker is only used 43% of the time (less than half of cases)**.
- Clearly this raises a concern to the extent to which repeat victims are identified; given the proviso that the data is sourced prior to the development of the victims hub.

Not all repeat victims are the same (or suffer from the same circumstances).

- The most significant group are those who are victims of domestic violence. This is evident through the data, with violent crimes being the most commonly repeated offence (see figure six), and **75% of victims of repeat acts of violence being against women** (see figure 15).
- There are other groups of repeat victims however, whom we have highlighted through a series of cases studies:
  - Repeat victims of property crime e.g. shed burglary;
  - Repeat victims of harassment (not related to domestic violence);
  - Repeat victims resident in 'chaotic' areas;
  - Young male victims of violence;
- In general terms the priority is identifying where there has been repeat victimisation, understanding what the specific needs are for that individual (A repeat victim of domestic violence will need very different help from a repeat victim of burglary, or hate crime etc.) and then meeting these needs with local support
- Whilst the services for victims of domestic violence are relatively well developed, there is a need to commission capacity to support victims in other categories.
- Straightforward access to specialist support services regardless of what happens as a criminal justice response is key. Non-statutory services can be particularly helpful where repeat victimisation is linked to a lack of engagement with the statutory sector.
- Drug and alcohol support services and mental health and welfare support can help address lifestyle risks when it comes to re-victimisation as is improving economic wellbeing.

## INTRODUCTION

The user guide for the Home Office crime statistics<sup>1</sup> (October 2011) draws a distinction between ‘repeat victimisation’ and ‘multiple victimisation’.

- Repeat victimisation is defined as being a victim of the same type of crime (e.g. vandalism) on separate occasions.
- Multiple victimisation is the experience of being a victim of a number of different offences on separate occasions (e.g. vandalism, burglary and robbery).

Within the data analysis for this report we largely focus on multiple victimisation given this reflects the whole experience of the victim.

Beyond this mechanistic definition of repeat victimisation, there is a diverse range of reasons as to why someone may be a repeat victim. They could be enduring domestic violence, experiencing a campaign of racial attacks or be the victim of on-going abuse. Alternatively something in the nature of the victim can make them vulnerable to repeat episodes of crime be it a personal vulnerability (e.g. an elderly victim of fraud), lifestyle (e.g. a regular club / pub goer becoming a victim of violence), or location (e.g. a resident within a household of multiple-occupancy being a victim of theft). Therefore, within the report and accompanying analysis we have sought to personify different groups of victims as an aid to developing suitable policy responses.

## OFFENDERS AND REPEAT VICTIMS

### RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

The rational choice theory for offender decision making can be helpful when considering repeat victimisation for acquisitive crime such as burglary or theft. Offences against the same target by the same offender, usually based on previous experiences, perception of known risk and rewards. This ‘rational’ choice centred on the motivated offender’s knowledge of the victim’s suitability and the likelihood of the absence of capable guardians.

Rational choice theory assumes that the frequency of crime will decrease if:

- The probability of success is decreased
- The perceived benefits are reduced
- The perceived costs are increased

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/116226/user-guide-crime-statistics.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116226/user-guide-crime-statistics.pdf)



These factors fit comfortably within the classic victim / offender / Location model of crime prevention.

For repeat crimes against the same target committed by different offenders, the 'rational' decision factors influencing target selection (perceived victim suitability, perceived likelihood of capable guardianship) will be similar to those which prompted previous offenders to target the same victim (Farrell, 1995).

Research work in Scotland on repeat victims by Shaw and Pease 2000 identified that offenders admit returning to the same targets. If an offender does decide to go back to the same target, it is likely to be relatively soon after the previous offence. Offenders will also return to similar targets to exploit any shared weaknesses in security e.g. to similar blocks of flats. It is noticeable that over half to two-thirds of burglars report burgling a specific property twice or more (Ashton et al, 1998)<sup>2</sup>.

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## ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY

The probability of becoming a victim of crime is influenced by "routine activities" which included work patterns, family, leisure and consumption activities (Cohen and Felson, 2003). A key variable in explaining crime and victimisation is therefore the scope to which the basic arrangements of social life do or do not facilitate crime events by regularly placing individuals in criminogenic<sup>3</sup> situations (Garland, 2005).

This approach places emphasis not just on the victim or the offender, but instead looks into the situations that contribute to victimisation. In circumstances where a suitable target is in contact with offenders, and where guardians are weak or absent, the target's likelihood of being repeatedly victimised is increased. For example, a club goer places themselves at more risk of being a repeat victim of assault compared to someone who goes out less often; a property bordering a busy thoroughfare is more at risk of criminal damage compared to one within a quieter residential area.

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<sup>2</sup> Ashton et al, 1998 featured interviews with 186 convicted burglars. Other smaller studies; Ericsson 1995 interviews with 21 convicted burglars and Shaw & Pease 2000 interviews with 32 offenders, also observe offenders returning to the same targets.

<sup>3</sup> Criminogenic: of a system, situation, or place, causing or likely to cause criminal behaviour.

The weakness of the two previous theories is that neither sufficiently explains the interaction between vulnerable victims and the offenders who target them; in many cases, it is either the ongoing relationship between an offender and a victim that explains repeat victimisation or the offenders' willingness to 'share' victims between themselves.

### **Domestic Violence (DV)**

- Approximately 42% of domestic violence victims have been victimised more than once. The British Crime Survey indicates that victims experience an average of 20 incidents of domestic violence in a year, which can often increase in severity each time. (Walby, S. and Allen, J, 2004).
- Despite chronic under-reporting, at least 16% of all reported violent incidents to the police are characterised as domestic violence (Povey, E; et al, 2008).
- Domestic violence has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime (Home Office, July 2002), 76 per cent of all DV incidents are repeat (Flatley, Kershaw et al., 2010).
- On average, a partner or ex-partner kills two women a week. This constitutes nearly 40% of all female homicide victims (Department of Health, 2005.) A Home Officer report<sup>4</sup> identifies that in many cases there is evidence, known to at least some local agencies, of previous incidents of domestic violence prior to the homicide.

### **Repeat Child Victims**

- At least 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence (Department of Health, 2002). Children who live with domestic violence are at increased risk of behavioural problems and emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life. In over 50% of known domestic violence cases, children were also directly abused (NSPCC).
- Unlike adults, the probability of children aged 10 to 15 years being the victim of violent crime varied by the type of household and area they lived in. Children in high-income households (4.9%) and those in rural households (6.7%) were less than half as likely to have been a victim of violence as low-income households (10.6%), social renters (12.7%) or those in flats and maisonettes (11.3%)<sup>5</sup> (Office of National Statistics).

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<sup>4</sup> Domestic Homicide Reviews: Common Themes Identified as Lessons to be Learned, Home Office 2013

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_298904.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_298904.pdf)

- Following high profile cases there is increased awareness of the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE). One of the three abuse models for CSE put forward by Barnardo's<sup>6</sup> features *"Young people (often connected) are passed through networks, possibly over geographical distances, between towns and cities where they may be forced / coerced into sexual activity with multiple men."*

### Repeat Older Victims

- Older people are particularly vulnerable to repeat victimisation for offences like distraction burglary, rogue trading and doorstep fraud. Recent evidence provided by Cambridgeshire County Council's Trading Standards team shows that lists of victims vulnerable to fraud are being shared between different offenders.
- The Crime Survey for England & Wales indicates that older people are generally less at risk of burglary than other age groups (Simmons, ed. 2002). However, the effects of victimisation on older people could be more serious for the individuals concerned<sup>7</sup>.

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### RELATING REPEAT VICTIMISATION TO WIDER CRIME PATTERNS

Repeat victimisation<sup>8</sup> appearing in different forms can have a significant impact on wider crime patterns.

- Repeat victims and near repeat victims (targets that are physically close to the original victim) can form the heart of a burglary (or other acquisitive crime) hotspot.
- The extent of repeat victimisation suffered over an extended length of time, for example by the victims of domestic violence, can explain the overall level of violence in any given area.
- Repeatedly stolen goods and their popularity (or value) may motivate repeat victimisation. A prime example would be the repeated theft of scrap metal, fuel, and machinery from farm properties.

The extent to which such patterns arise and policy makers understanding the mechanisms behind them will provide the key to putting effective crime reduction schemes into place.

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<sup>6</sup> CSE Joint Strategy 2014, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Safe Guarding Board

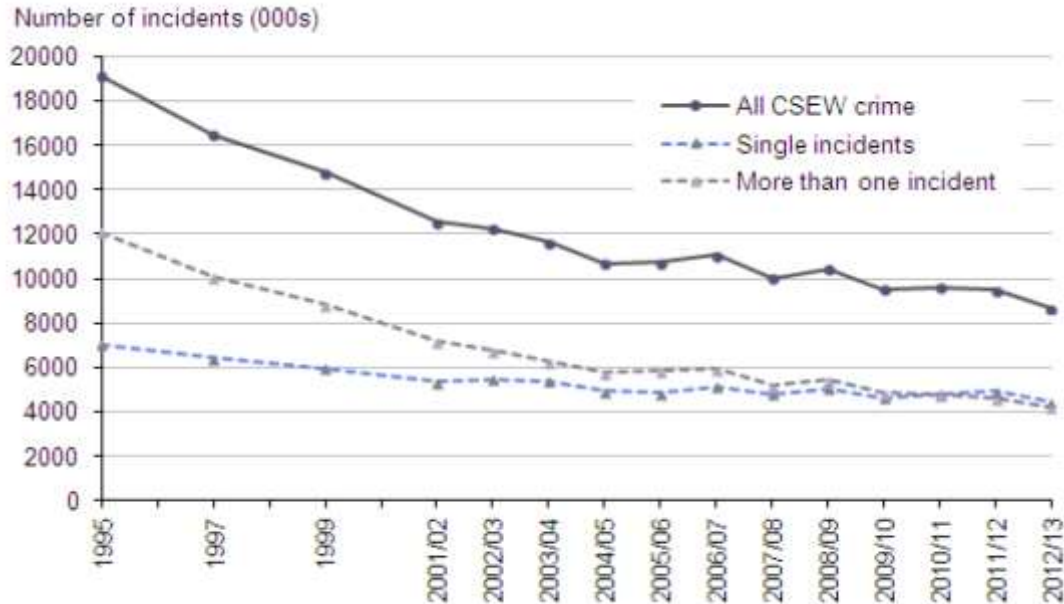
<sup>7</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r198.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Centre for problem oriented policing. University of Albany (state university of New York)

## NATIONAL DATA

Figure 1 (below) shows the trend for repeat victimisation between 1995 and 2012/13. Since 1995, the estimated number of incidents of crime decreased by 55%. However, the fall in repeat incidents has been much steeper (a drop of 65%).

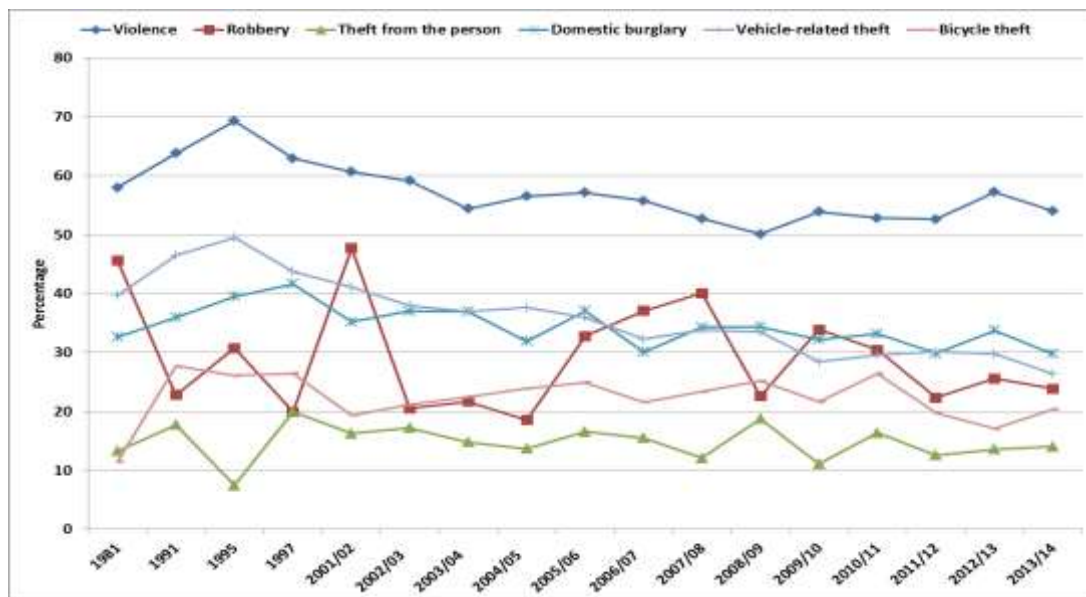
**Figure 1: Trends in the number of total incidents of crime experienced by single and repeat victimisation, 1995 to 2012/13 CSEW**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

The data on this chart refer to different time periods: a) 1995 to 1999 refers to the calendar year (January to December) b) 2001/02 to 2012/13 refers to the financial year (April to March)

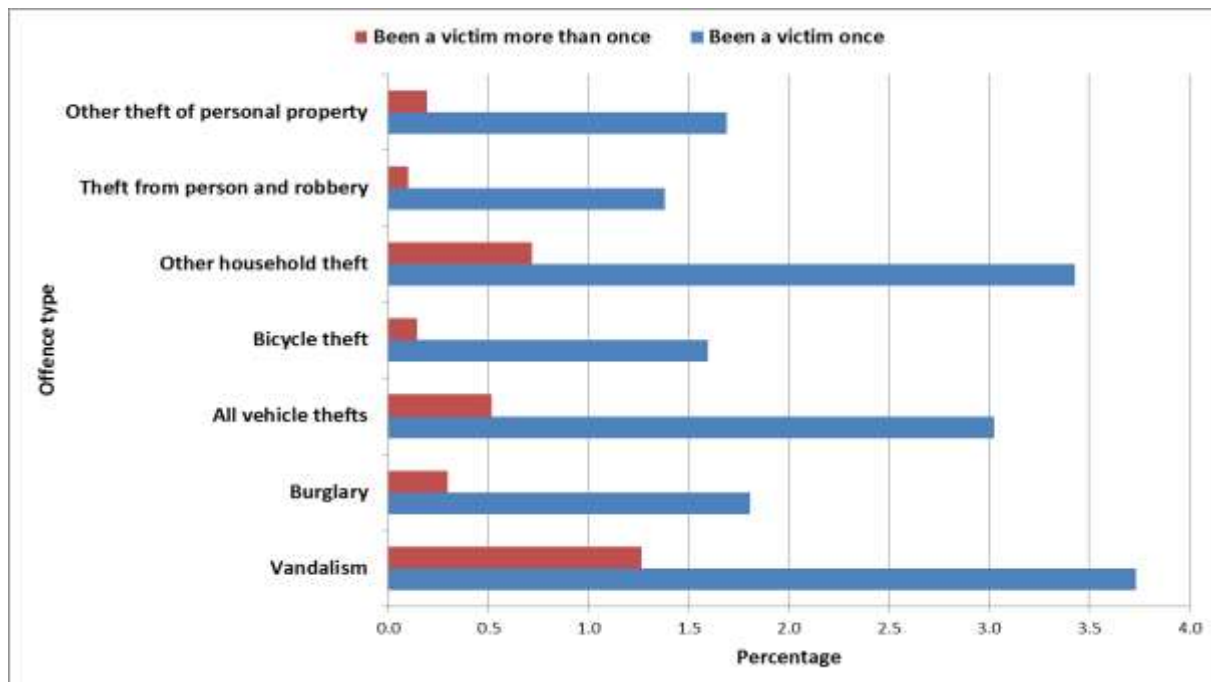
**Figure 2: Trends in the percentage of different crime incidents experienced by repeat victims CSEW**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

Figure 2 shows that there has been a decline in the percentage of incidents of repeat victimisation for most crime types except for bicycle theft and theft from the person. The greatest decline has been for repeat incidents of vehicle-related theft.

**Figure3: Single victims and repeat victims as a proportion of all those interviewed, 2012/13 CSEW**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

Figure 3 shows the percentage of people who have been a victim of crime once or more than once. It indicates that highest percentage of repeat victimisation for different types of property crime can be observed for the offence vandalism (1.3%) followed by other household theft (0.7%) however by far the most commonly repeated offences are those that fall into the violent crime category. ONS reports<sup>9</sup> that in 1995 when violent crime (as measured by the British Crime Survey) peaked, repeat victims experienced 68% of all violent incidents. This is compared with 55% in the 2012/13 Crime Survey for England & Wales (CSEW).

<sup>9</sup> Overview of Violent Crime & Sexual Offences 2012/13, ONS 2014

Local data for **93,563** records of victimisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the period of the calendar year 2011 to 2013 were analysed (For the purpose of this report all the data which is related to the victimisation of businesses was removed<sup>10</sup>).

- All the repeat victims between 2011 and 2013 were identified based on the recurring use of a unique person identifier, the 'Nominal URN'.
- This method identified **9,088 unique repeat victims, who were victimised 21,533 times (approximately 1 in 4 of all victim records were for repeat victims)**.
- This method of using the 'Nominal URN' to identify repeat victims is reasonably reliable but it should be noted that the checking for an existing 'Nominal URN' when a repeat victim reports an offence is a manual process. Therefore, it is possible that an operator will miss an existing number, allocating a new URN, meaning some incidents of repeat victimisation will be missed.
- The victim database provided by the police does include a 'repeat victim marker' and 'repeat victim count columns'. These are a very unreliable way of identifying repeat victims, for example, in the data we looked at one victim identified eleven times by the 'Nominal URN' method was only officially marked as a repeat victim twice.
- For the study, repeat victims were split into two categories, one for repeat victimisation of **less than four times (8,393 victims victimised 18,155 times)**; and another for victimisation of **four or more times (695 unique victims, victimised 3,378 times)**.
- The report authors decided on this split because the nature of the victimisation seemed particularly different between these two groups.
- The length of time for repeat victimisation was calculated by finding the difference between the date of initial victimisation and the next subsequent victimisation and then between the second victimisation and the third and so on.
- There were sufficient records to enable further analysis of repeat incidents of violence, burglary, criminal damage and theft and handling. However, the volume of repeat incidents for other crime types was too low to allow for any meaningful analysis.

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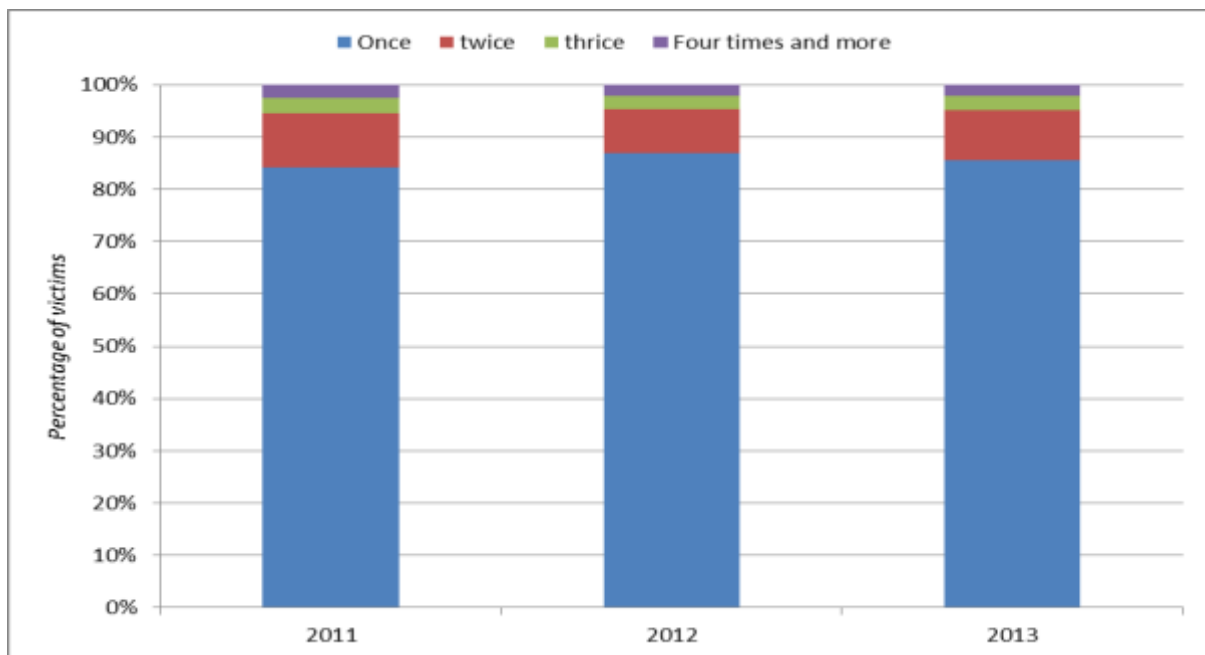
<sup>10</sup> Analysis of repeat victimisation of businesses needs to be completed as a separate exercise purely because the scale of repeat incidents of shoplifting and over forms of theft dwarfs the experiences of other victim groups.

Local data for repeat victims in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, for a period of the calendar years 2011 to 2013 was analysed.

## REPEAT VICTIMISATION

The pattern of repeat victimisation has changed little over the last three years. Figure 5 shows the percentage of repeat victims in each year.

**Figure 5: Percentage of victims of all crime in each calendar year 2011 to 2013**

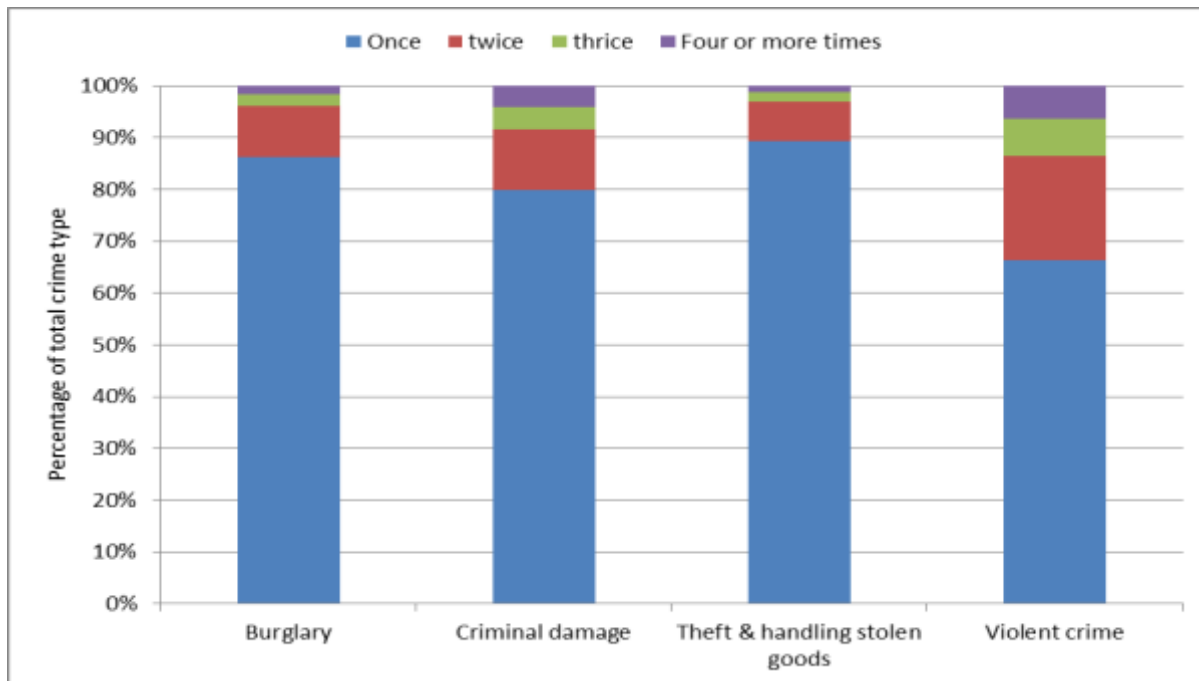


Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

On average, for a period between 2011 to 2013, 86% of reported victims were victimised once, 9% (approximately one in ten) were victimised twice and 5% of victims were victimised three or more times.

A further analysis of crime type was conducted. Figure 6 shows that the crimes with the most repeat victims were criminal damage and violent crime. Around 20% of violent crimes were committed against the same victim twice and a further 13% were repeated more than twice. For burglary 10% were committed against the same victim twice and a further 4% were repeated more than twice (see figure six below).

**Figure 6: Proportion of repeat victimisation by crime type (2011 to 2013)**

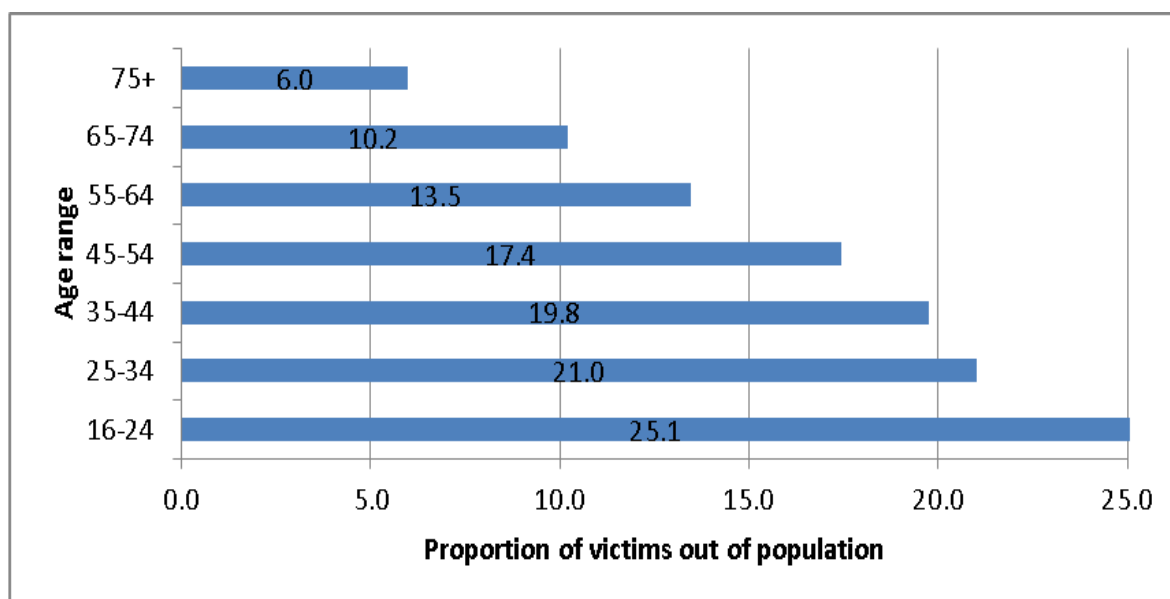


Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

#### AGE RANGE FOR ALL VICTIMS

At a national level the different age groups for adults who were victims of all crime in the year 2013/14, can be seen in figure 7.

**Figure 7: Proportion of the entire adult population who were victims of CSEW crime in 2013/14**

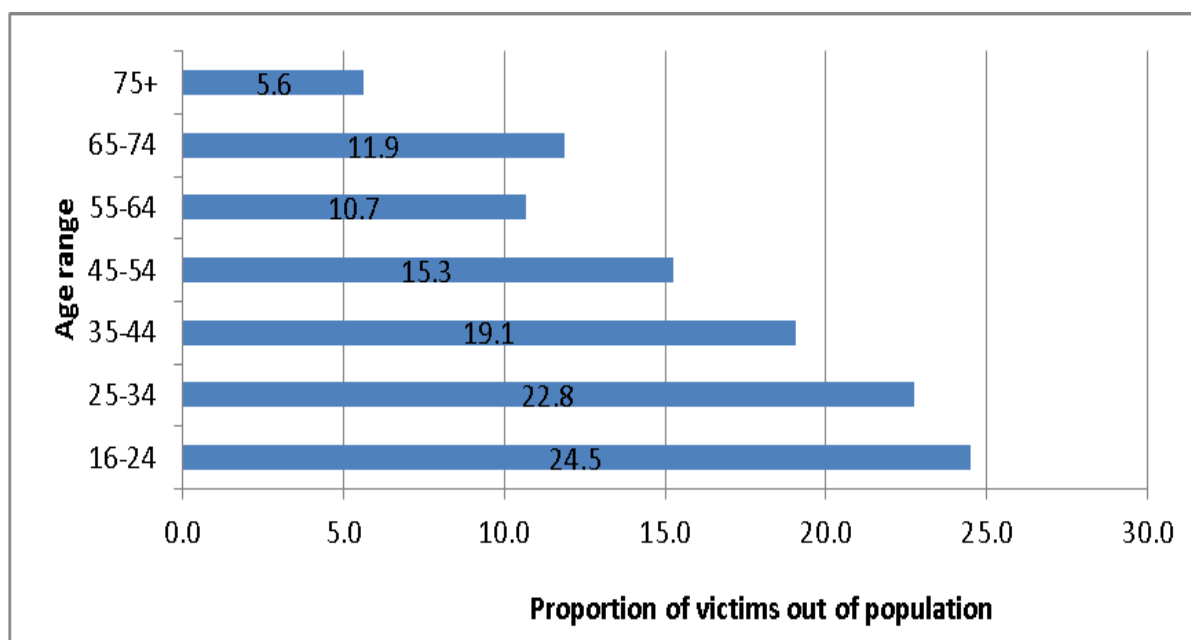


Source: CSEW end of March 2014



By comparison, for the police recorded data for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough victimisation by age group is slightly different compared to the national data (see figure 8). This is unsurprising given the local data will have a different rates of under-reporting compared to the national data and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough’s population structure will be somewhat different compared to the national age structure. This does however provide some context within which to view the information on repeat victimisation by age group.

**Figure 8: Proportion of the entire Cambridgeshire population who were victims crime, 2011-2013**

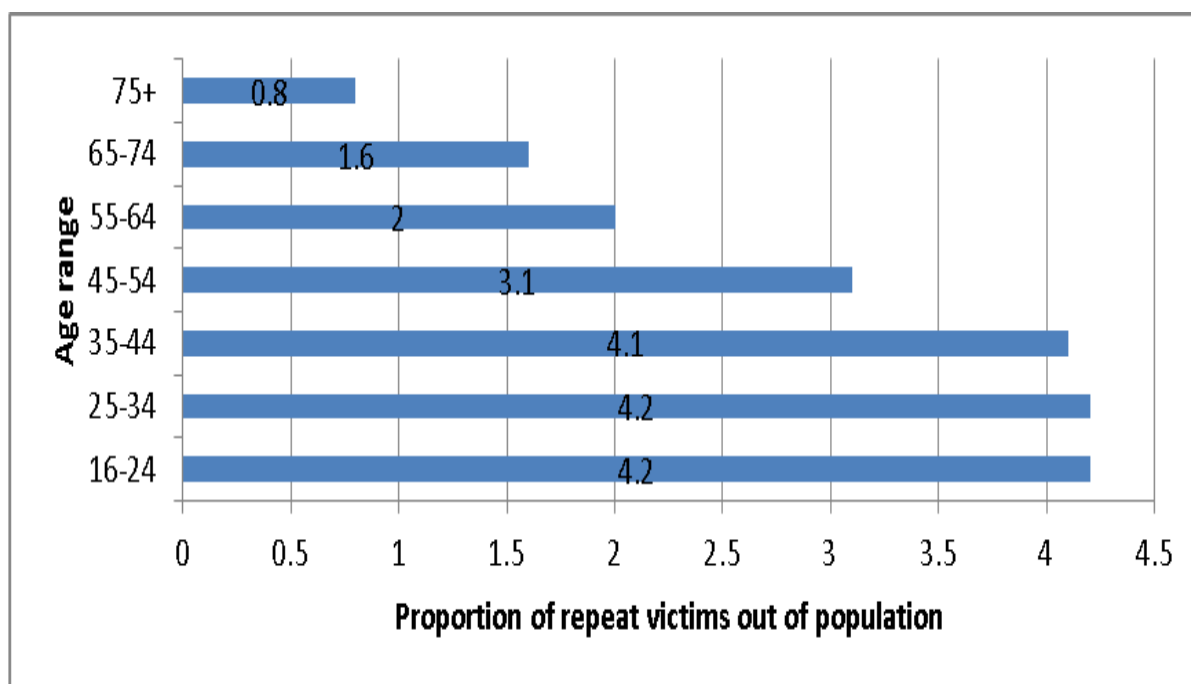


Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

#### AGE RANGE OF REPEAT VICTIMISATION

The proportion of adults who were repeat victims in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough according to their age range is shown in figure 9. This shows that the repeat victim rate for the age groups 16 – 44 were very similar, contrary to the pattern shown in figure 8. After the age of 45 the rate of repeat victimisation falls dramatically with very few people age over seventy-five becoming repeat victims.

**Figure 9: Proportion of the entire adult population who were repeat victims out 2011-2013**



Source: Police recorded data (2011-2013)

**Table 1 Ethnicity of Repeat victims (2011-2013)**

Ethnic Group	Proportion of repeat victims	Proportion within the population 2011 Census ONS
White	87.6	89.2
Asian/Asian background	5.4	7.9
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1.3	1.6
other	0.8	1.3
Unrecorded	5.0	-

Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013) and <http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/populationanddemographics/ethnicity>

\*White British, White Irish White: Gypsy and Traveller, White Other Mixed- White and Black Caribbean Mixed- White and Black Caribbean Mixed - White and Asian

\*\*Asian or Asian British – Indian, Asian or Asian British – Pakistani, Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi, Asian or Asian British – Chinese, Asian or Asian British - Other Asian

\*\*\*Black/African/Caribbean/Black, British - African Black/African/Caribbean/Black, British - Caribbean Black/African/Caribbean/Black, British - Other black

+Other ethnic group Mixed - Other mixed

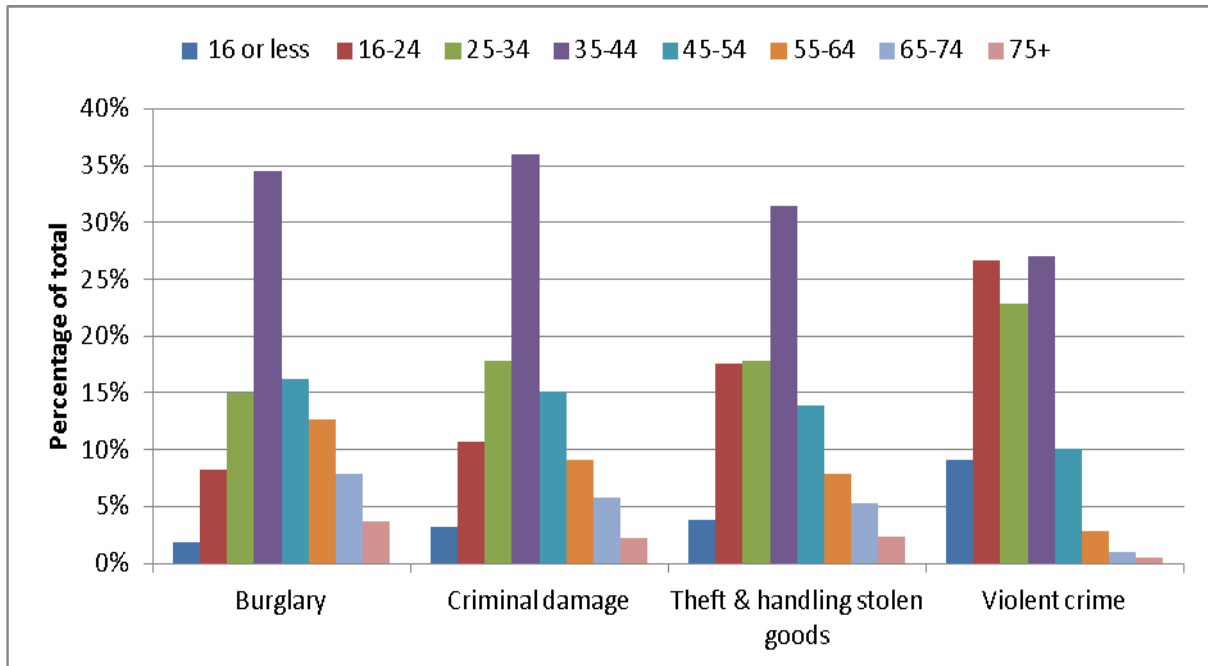
The ethnicity of repeat victims can be seen in table 1. The proportion of repeat victims for different ethnic groups broadly reflects the ethnic diversity for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough population as a whole<sup>11</sup>. The vast majority of repeat victims are from White ethnic group (87.6%) followed by Asian/Asian background (5.4%). Around 7.5% of the victims were Non-white.

<sup>11</sup> Although analysis is hampered by 5% of repeat victims having no recorded ethnicity.

## REPEAT VICTIMISATION BY CRIME TYPE

For most of the crime types, repeat victimisation which is repeated less than four times can be observed most frequently among the people in the age range of 35-44 years (see figure 11). In the case of violent crime however, the repeat victimisation profile is different with people in the 16-24 age range being repeat victims as often as those in older age ranges.

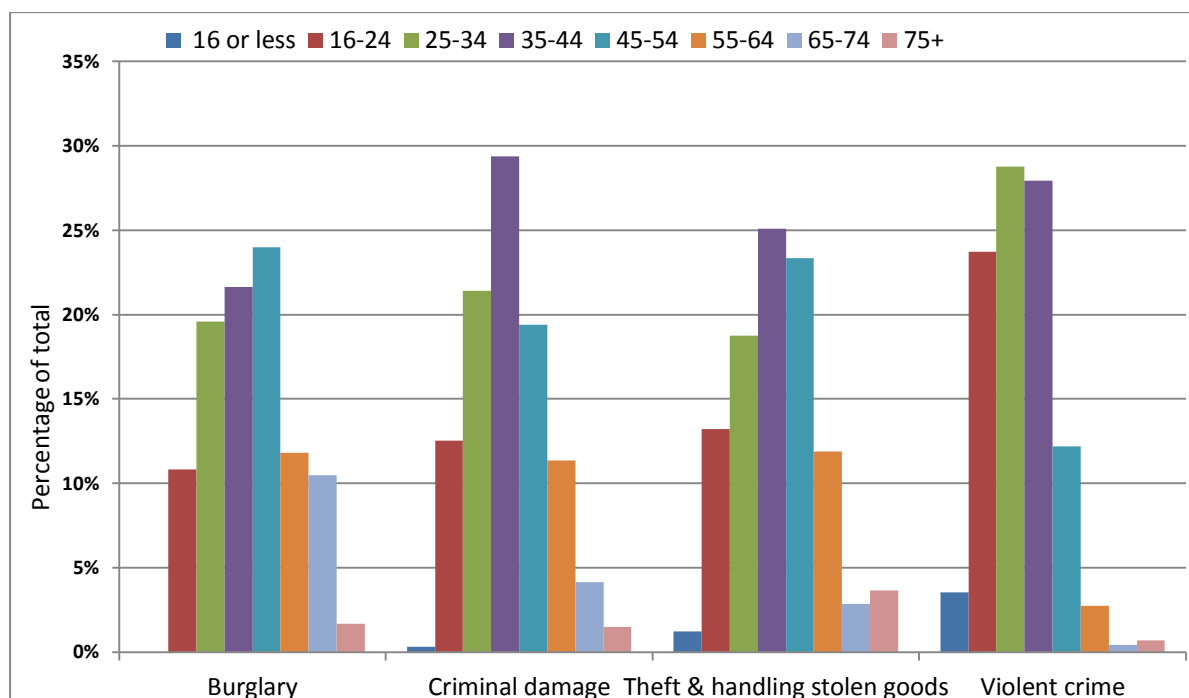
**Figure 11: Repeat victimisation (less than four times) by crime type and age group (2011-2013)**



Source: Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Looking in more detail at people who were victimised four or more times (see figure 12). The age profile of victims is older compared to those victimised less than four times. For example, the peak age for repeat victims of burglary (victimised four times or more) was 45-54.

**Figure 12: Repeat victimisation (Four or more times) by crime type and age group (2011-2013)**

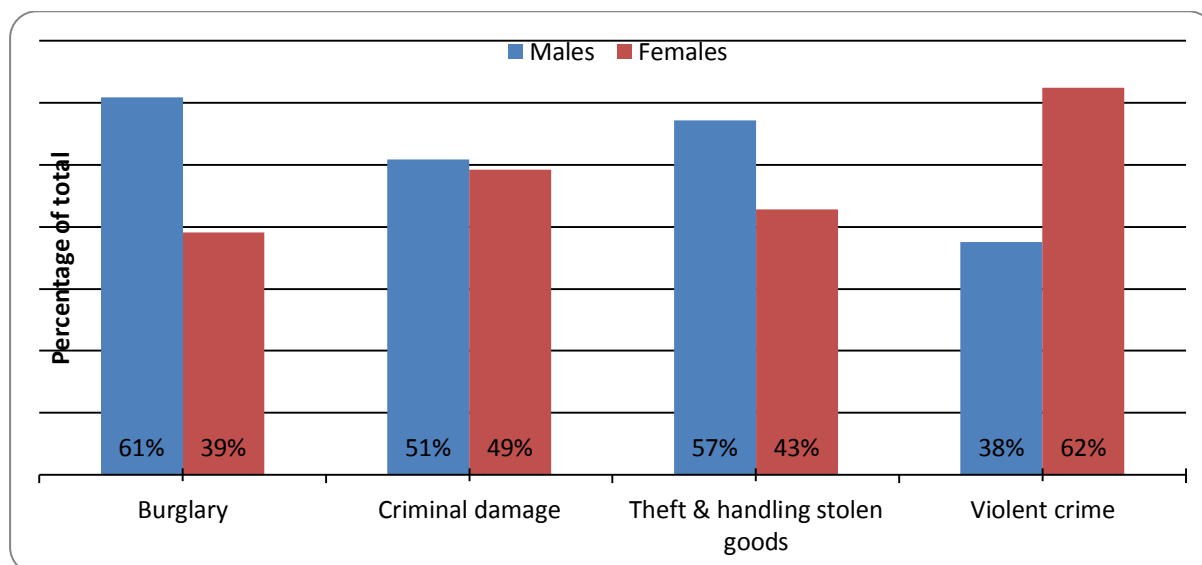


Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

#### REPEAT VICTIMISATION BY CRIME TYPE AND GENDER

For all property crime types, males were more likely to be repeat victims than females. However, violent crime did not follow this pattern, with females being much more likely to be repeat victims of violence (see figure 13).

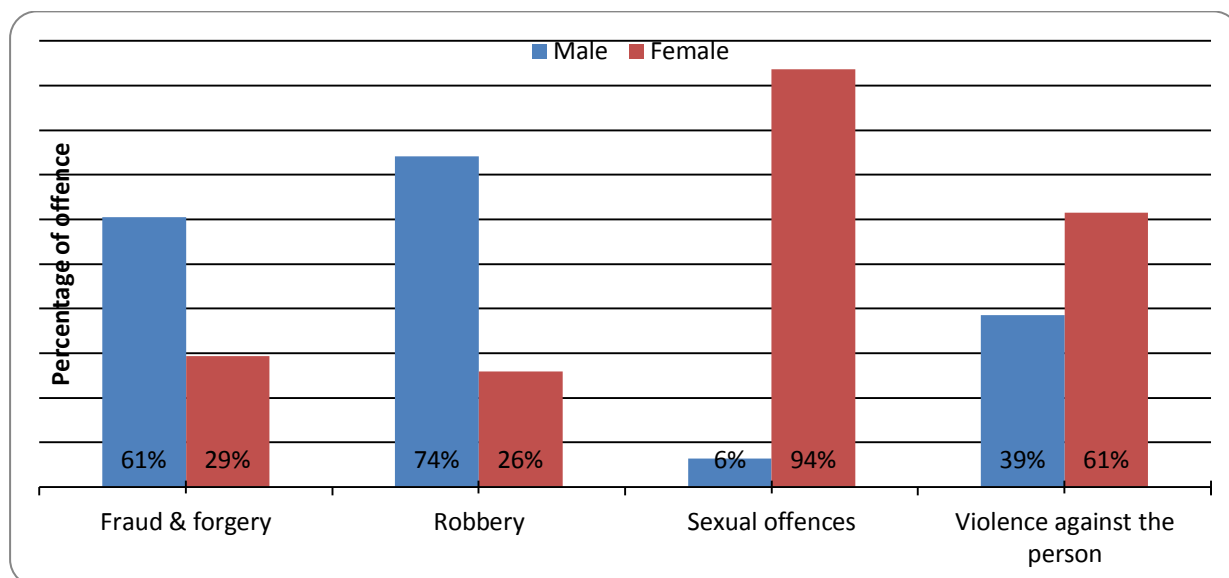
**Figure 13: Repeat victims (less than four times) by crime type and gender (2011-2013)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

A further analysis of violent crime is shown in figure 14 along with fraud and forgery offences.

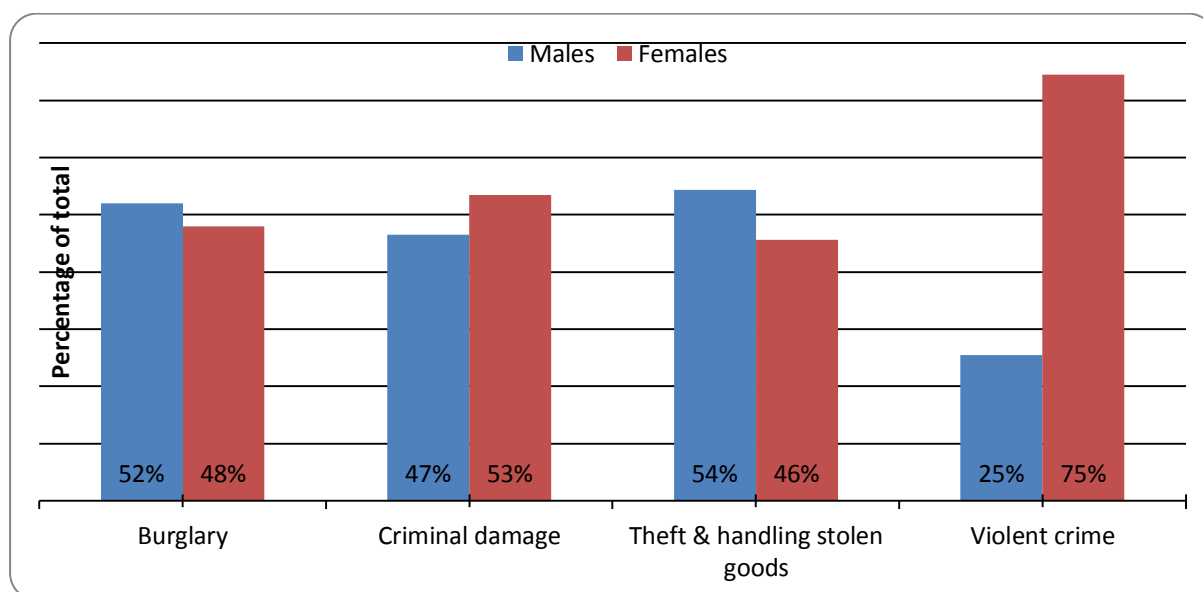
**Figure 14: Repeat victimisation for violent crime, fraud & forgery by gender (repeat victimisation less than four times)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Before April 2014/15 the definition of violent crime included robbery, sexual offences and violence against the person (VAP). Looking at these sub-categories, repeat victimisation (less than four times) was higher amongst females than males for sexual offences and violence against the person and higher amongst males for robbery and fraud(although the numbers of repeat offences of robbery were very low so the percentages may give a false impression).

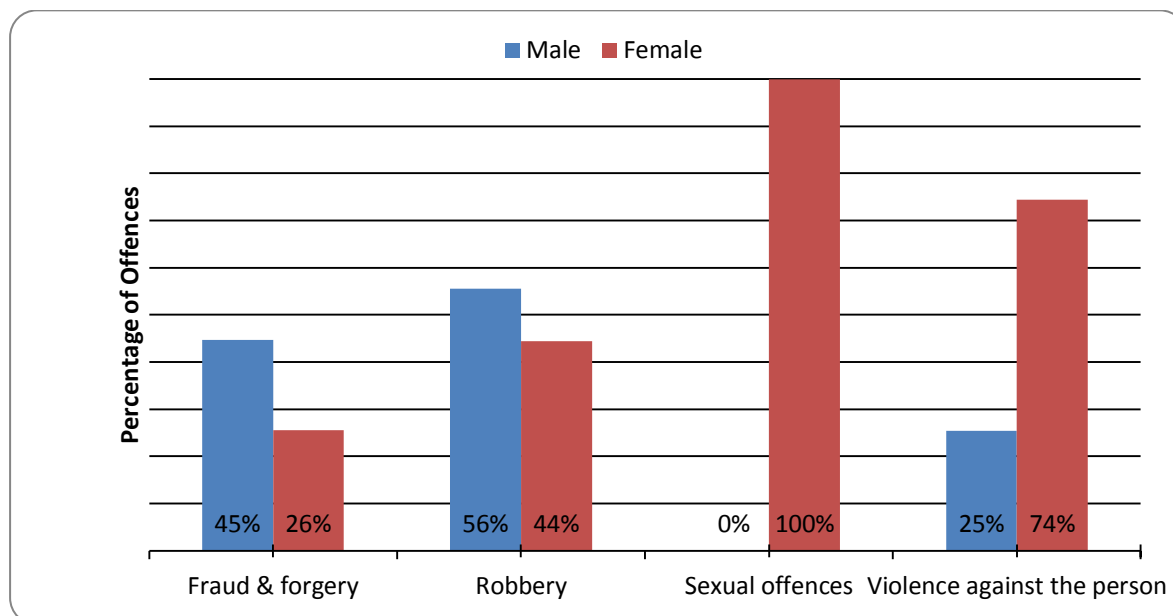
**Figure 15: Repeat victimisation (Four or more times) by crime type by gender (2011-2013)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Amongst repeat victims who were victimised four or more times females are much more likely to be a repeat victim of violent crime (see figure 15). This is almost certainly due to domestic violence.

**Figure 16: Repeat victimisation for violent crime, fraud & forgery by Gender (four or more times)**



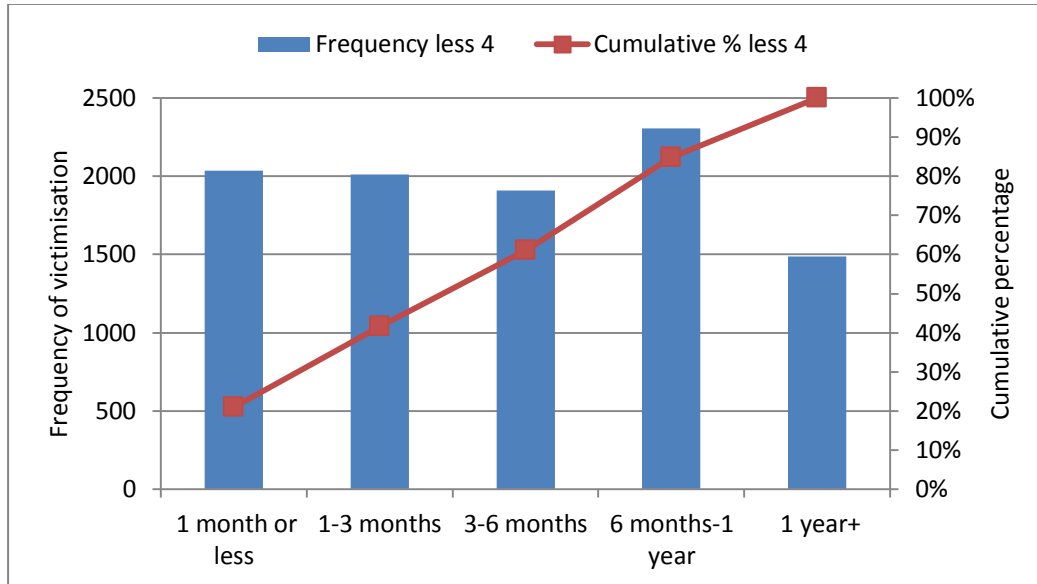
Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Again looking at the sub-categories, repeat victimisation (four or more times) was higher amongst females than males for sexual offences and violence against the person and higher amongst males for robbery and fraud (although the numbers of repeat offences of robbery were very low so the percentages may give a false impression). Males aged 16-24 featured most often as repeat victims of robbery.

## REPETITION PERIOD BETWEEN CRIMES

The repetition period is the time difference between a crime and the previous crime suffered by the same victim. The difference for each victim was calculated for each repeated crime.

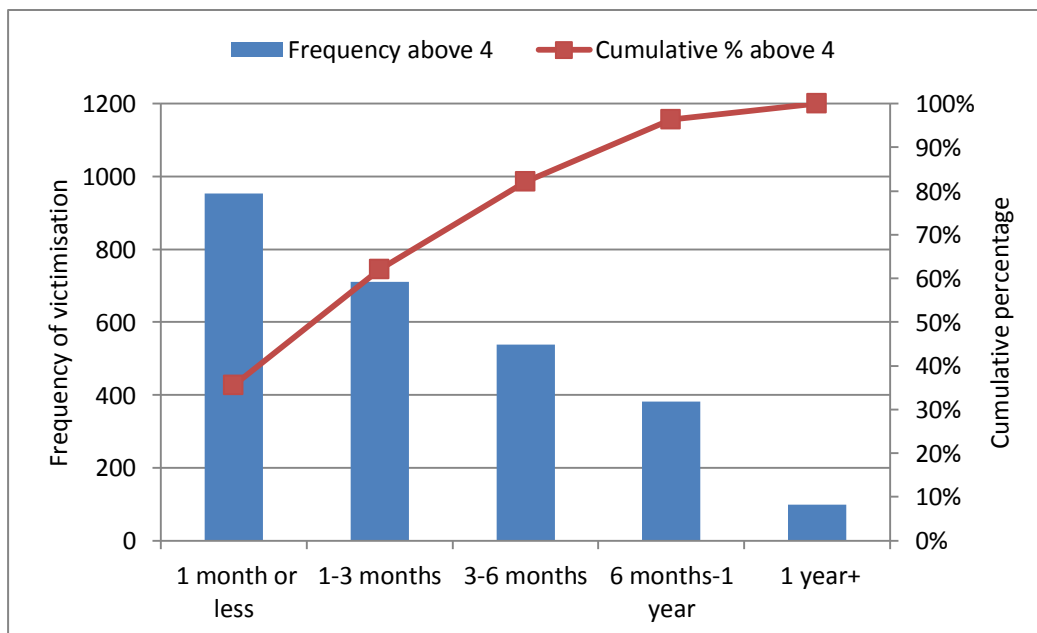
**Figure 19: Repetition period for repeat victims victimised less than four times (2011-2013)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

For the repeat victims who were victimised less than four times 42% of crimes were repeated within three months and over 60% were repeated within six months (see figure 19).

**Figure 20: Repetition period for repeat victims victimised four or more times (2011-2013)**



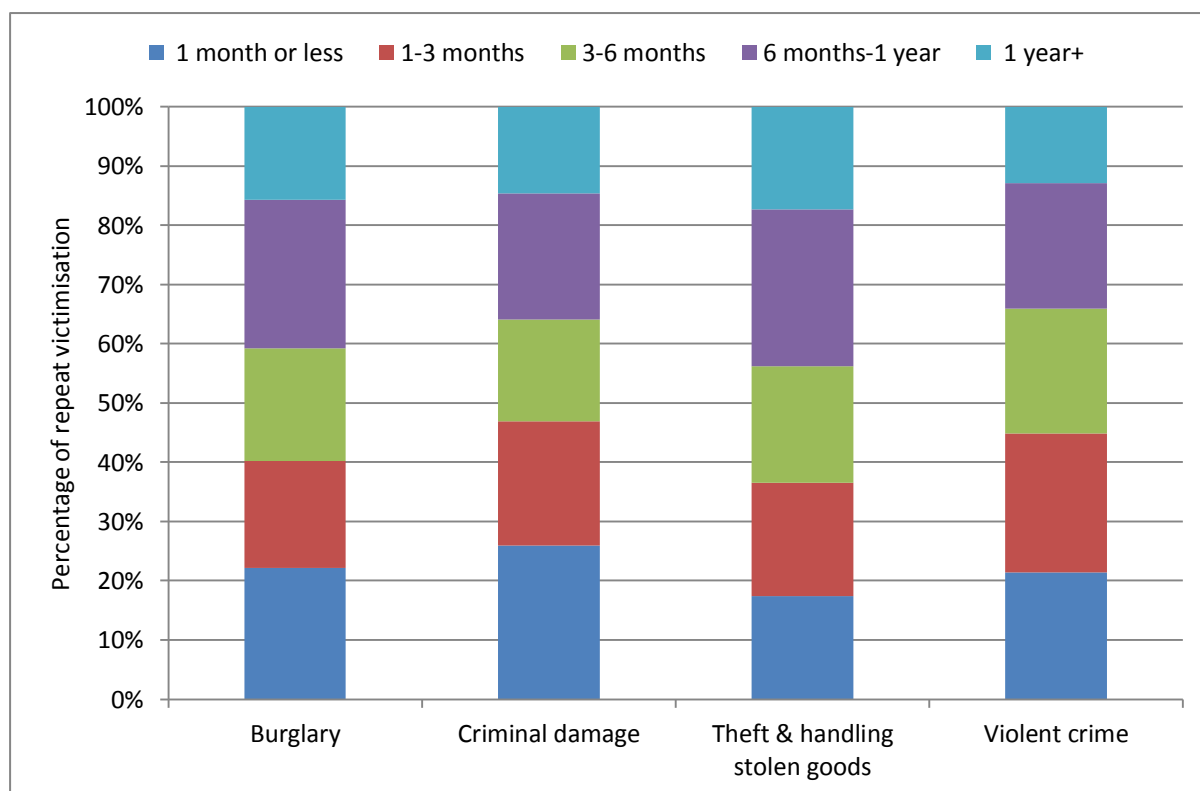
Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Among repeat victims who were victimised four or more times 62% were repeated within three months and over 80% were repeated within 6 months (see figure 20).

#### REPETITION PERIOD WITH CRIME TYPE

There are some slight variations in the repetition period by crime type. Figure 21 shows crimes repeated less than four times; the most-noticeable contrast was between criminal damage and theft. 47% of criminal damage offences were repeated within three months (of which 26% were within a month). Whilst 37% of theft and handling offences were repeated within three months, (of which 17% were repeated within one month).

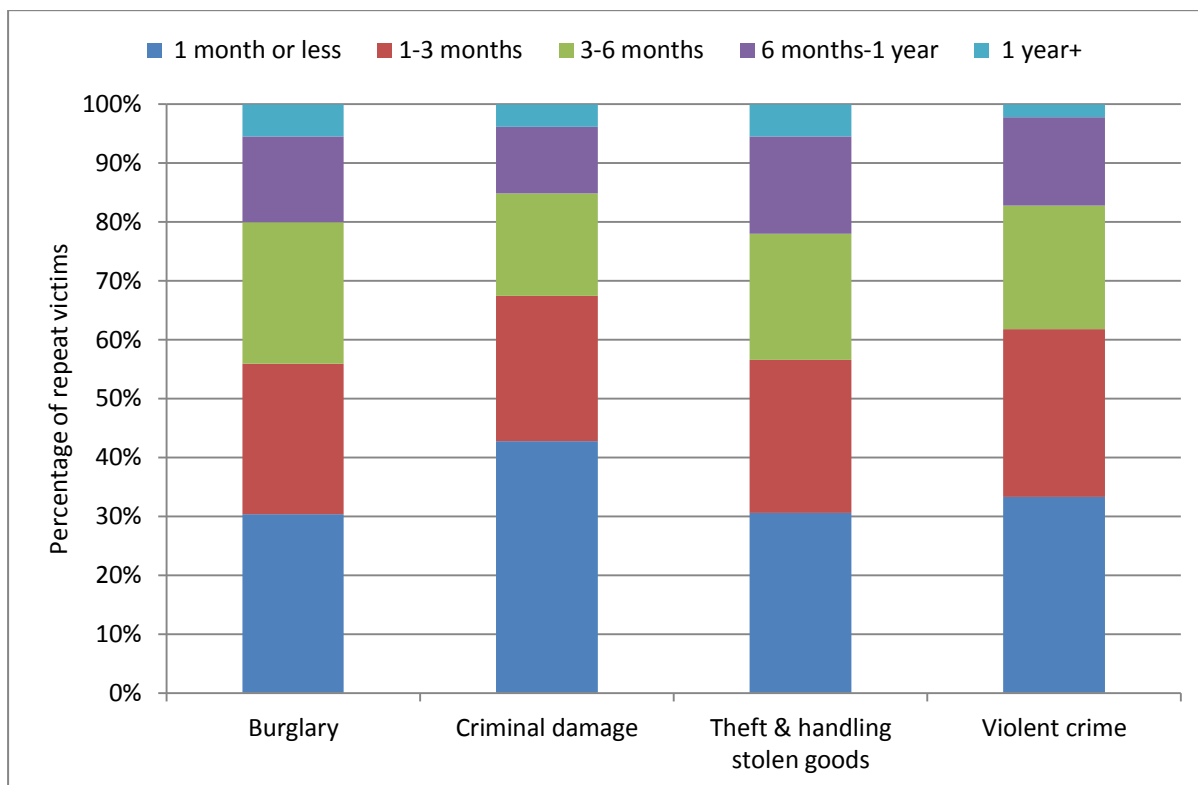
**Figure 21 Repetition periods with crime type for repeat victims victimised less than four times (2011-2013)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)



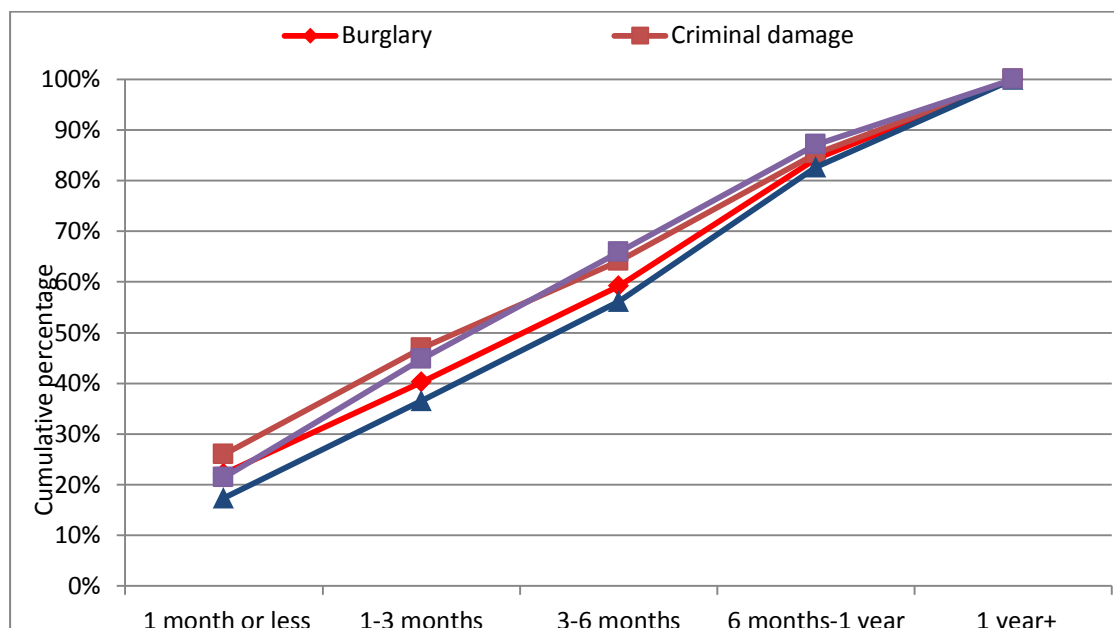
**Figure 22 Repetition period with crime type for repeat victims victimised four or more times**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Figure 22 shows that for the crimes repeated four or more times, a much larger percentage were repeated within three months of time. For instance, 67% of criminal damage and 62% of violent crimes were repeated within three months of time, out of which, 43% and 33% respectively were repeated within a month.

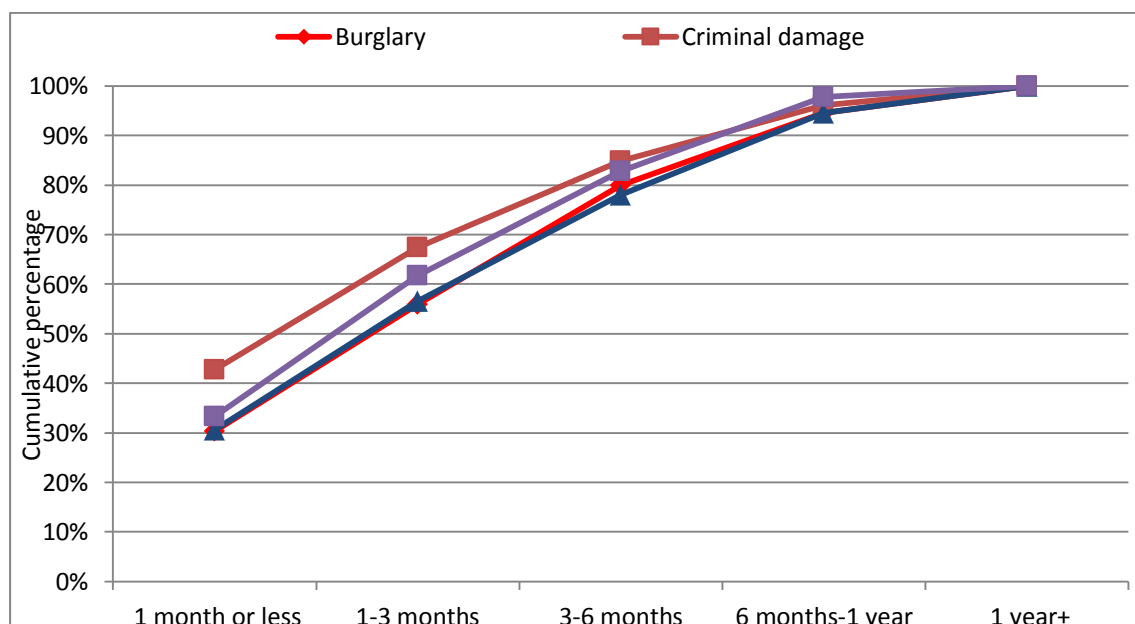
**Figure 23 Cumulative percentage of crime type with repetition period for victims (Less than four times)**



Source: Police recorded data (2011-2013)

Figure 23 and 24 again emphasise the relationship between volume of repeat victimisation and the speed at which someone becomes a repeat victim. Broadly the higher the volume of repeat offences the quicker they reoccur.

**Figure 24 Cumulative percentage of crime type with repetition period for victims (four or more times)**



Source : Police recorded data (2011-2013)

## GEOGRAPHICAL BREAKDOWN

Crime incidents do not occur evenly throughout the area, the following section reviews the geographical patterns of repeat victimisation.

**Table 2 Repeat victimisation by district / unitary authority**

	Unique victims			Total rate per 1000 population (2011 census)
	Victimisation: Less than four times	Victimisation: Four or more times	Total	
Cambridge	1482	124	1606	12.96
East Cambridgeshire	488	33	521	6.22
Fenland	997	103	1100	11.54
Huntingdonshire	1287	101	1388	8.19
Peterborough	2933	258	3191	17.38
South Cambridgeshire	817	55	872	5.86
Other place of residence / unknown residence	389	21	410	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8393</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>9088</b>	<b>11.29</b>

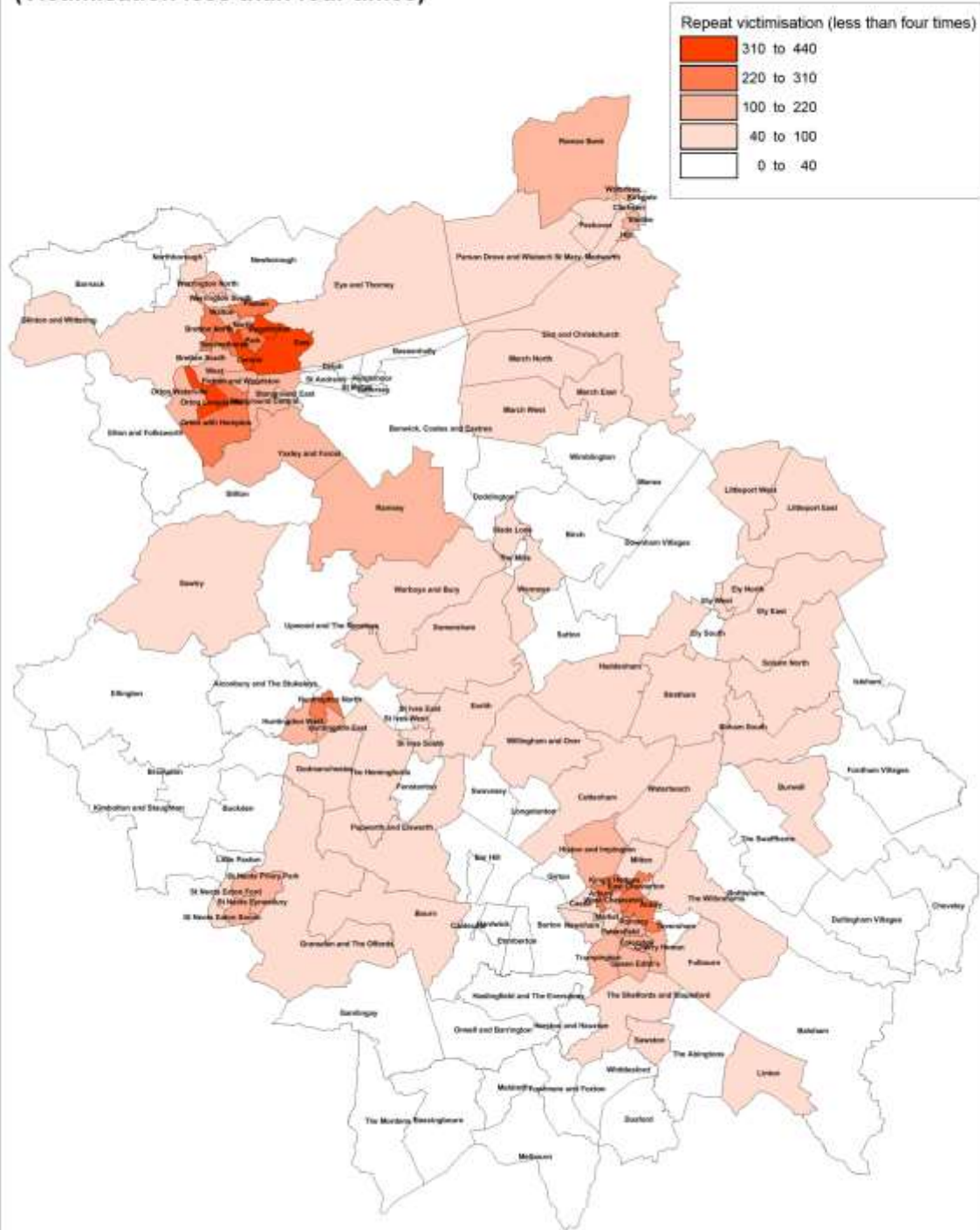
Table 2 shows the distribution of repeat victimisation between the Cambridgeshire districts. The highest rate of repeat victimisation was recorded in Peterborough, 17.38 per 1000 population, followed by Cambridge and Fenland with rates of around 11 to 13 per 1000 population.

## LOCATION OF REPEAT VICTIMISATION

Most of the repeat victims were resident of urban areas. Approximately 75% of the victims who were victimised less than four times were residents of an urban area and 25% were from a rural area. Similarly approximately 79% of the victims who were victimised four or more times were residents of an urban area and 21% were from a rural area.

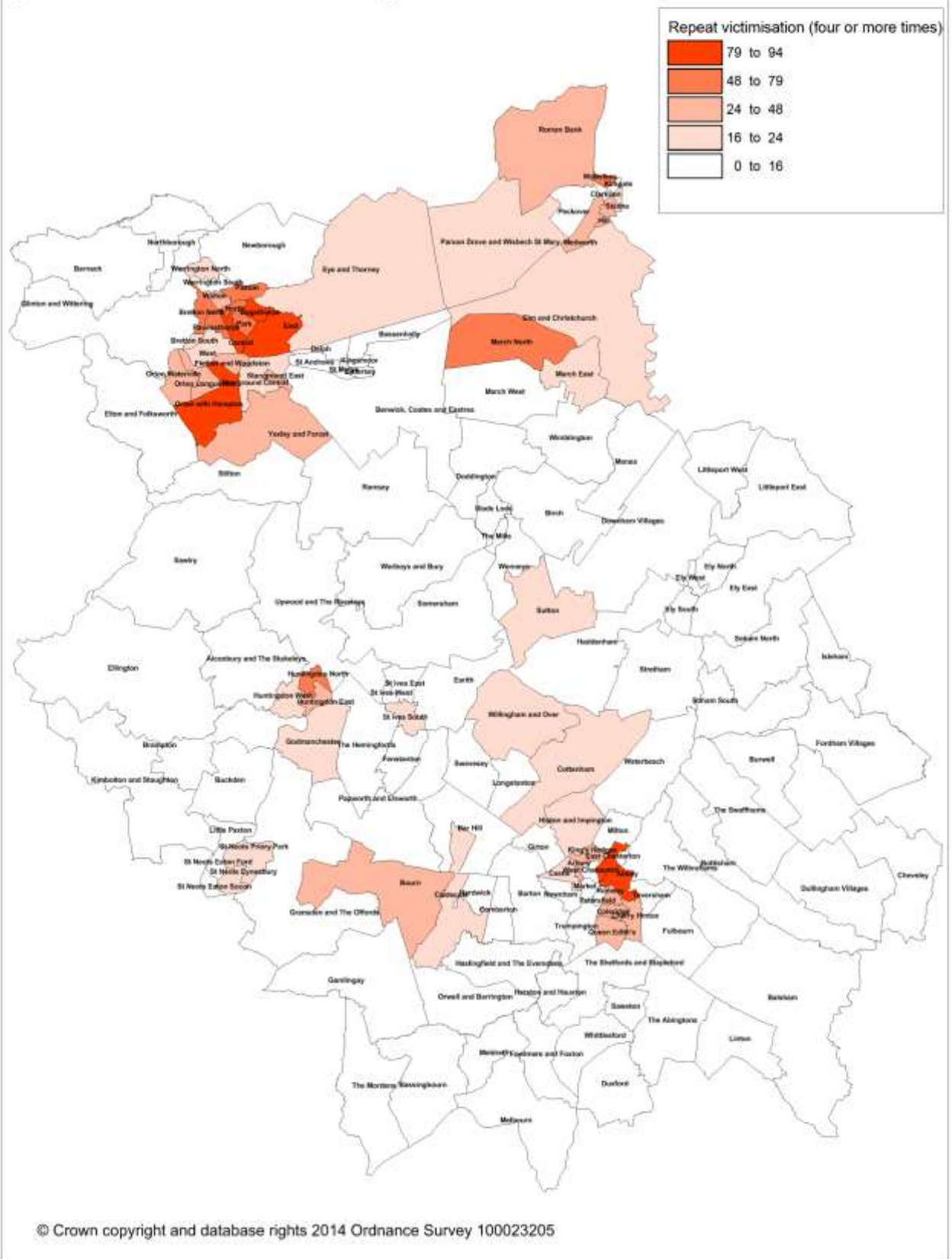
The following maps (page 30-34) show the geographical pattern of repeat victimisation in more detail. The patterns match very clearly the pattern of relative deprivation for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. For instance among all the areas in Cambridgeshire the highest rates of repeat victimisation were in the wards of Abbey (Cambridge), East Chesterton (Cambridge), Huntingdon North and King's Hedges (Cambridge). In addition, for Peterborough Central Ward, East Ward, and Dogsthorpe Ward, had the highest rate of repeat victimisation. All these wards are among the most deprived wards in the county.

## Repeat Victimization in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Victimization less than four times)



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## Repeat Victimization in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Victimisation four or more times)



#### IDENTIFYING REPEAT VICTIMS

One of the key aspects of the local data is how it highlights the existence of a relatively small group of 695 repeat victims who have experienced victimisation at least four or more times over the time of the study. Translating this number into the day-to-day work of victim services, they make up approximately 3.6% of the workload.

The database from which the victim data is drawn does include a 'repeat victim marker', but (as has already been noted in the methodology) this is by no means comprehensive. For the 3,388 times this group of 695 unique victims appears in the data a repeat marker is only used 43% of the time (less than half of cases). This is marginally better than for cases of people who have been repeat victims less than four times. For this group a repeat victim marker was used only 40% of the time. Clearly this raises a concern to the extent to which repeat victims are identified; given the proviso that the data is sourced prior to the development of the victims hub.

#### DIFFERENT GROUPS OF REPEAT VICTIMS

Not all repeat victims are the same (or suffer from the same circumstances). The most significant group are those who are victims of domestic violence. This is evident through the data, with violent crimes being the most commonly repeated offence (see figure six), and 75% of victims of repeat acts of violence being women, see figure 15. There are other groups of repeat victims however, whom we have highlighted on the following pages as a series of cases studies:

- A Repeat victim of shed burglary;
- A Victim of an on-going campaign of harassment (not related to domestic violence);
- A Victim resident in a 'chaotic' area;
- A Young male victims of violence;
- A Victim of on-going domestic violence

Each of the case studies adapted from crimes experienced by real victims, these are people identified through the data analysis. It should be noted that the detail in the case studies has been derived from crime reports, the victims have not been directly interviewed as part of this research. Where necessary the precise detail has been adapted to protect the identity of the victim.

## **Case Study One: A Repeat Victim of Shed Burglary**

### **The Crimes**

A series of four offences carried out within a relatively short period of six months, three shed burglaries and one offence of criminal damage.

### **The Victim**

A man in the 55 to 64 age group resident in an urban area

### **The Victimization**

The victim lives alone. There was a period of two months between the first shed burglary and the second offence. After a further three months, the victim reported a criminal damage offence against the same property and a month later became victim to another shed burglary.

### **Discussion**

In this case the repeated targeting by burglars of a particular property fits with the 'rational choice' theory of offending discussed on page ten. In all likelihood, the crimes were committed by the same offender/s returning to the same target due to their knowledge of the ease of the previous offence compared to the benefit gained. Further analysis may point to the area being a short-term hotspot for this type of offence.

The suggested policy response to this repeat victimisation would be:

- Immediate support for the victim who may feel personally targeted. This support could include advice to prevent further victimisation. A number of different individuals could deliver this a PCSO, a neighbourhood watch volunteer or perhaps the Bobby Scheme.
- Secondly the existence or probability of near repeat offences (those targeted at other sheds in the area) should be considered with warnings / support extended to neighbours.
- In the longer term, consideration should be given to situational crime prevention. Is the property being targeted because it backs on to an alleyway? Can anything be done to manage this and other similar risks in the area? The local community safety partnership could respond in this way.
- Finally, offender management may have a role. Repeat offenders of this sort may be eligible to being managed within the Integrated Offender Management team.

**A Victim of an on-going campaign of harassment (not related to domestic violence);**

**The Crimes**

A series of vehicle tampering and criminal damage offences aimed at property owned by the victim.

**The Victim**

A male in the age group of 45 to 54 years, he is a resident of a relatively crime free, rural area of the County.

**The Victimization**

The victim reported eleven different offences within four months. Most of the recorded offences were criminal damage offences targeting vehicles and other property. On six instances, the victim's car tyres were damaged or let down. On other occasions, property was scratched or damaged.

**Discussion**

The offences were such that it appears that the offender had a personal motivation to trouble the victim over an extended period.

Such cases need to be identified at an early stage and subject to investigation and possibly anti-social behaviour 'casework'. Any number of agencies (e.g. Local housing provider, District Council, Police) depending on the victim's circumstances could lead the casework element.

The harassment could have a serious impact on the victim and his family and this would need to be assessed with the relevant support services being in place for a referral if necessary. The assessment of risk to the victim would also need to be reassessed over the course of the victimisation, not just at first or second occurrence.



## **Resident in a chaotic Area**

### **The Crimes**

Multiple crimes of different nature; such as criminal damage, burglary, theft, and handling stolen goods. Different crimes were repeated seventeen times.

### **The Victim**

A male in the age group of 55-64 years resident in a relatively deprived part of a large urban area.

### **The Victimization**

The first fourteen offences repeated each after the intervals of one month or less, 12 out of fourteen offences were of criminal damage. Others offences occurred less often, repeated within a period of three months and six months including theft and one instance of burglary.

### **Discussion**

There is relevance to a previously commissioned report for the Police & Crime Commissioner about under reporting of crime. In this instance, the victim is reporting every crime they become a victim of but others living in the area may not come forward as often (the research showed that people living in chaotic / deprived areas were less likely to report minor offences).

Policy should focus on two areas, supporting the victim and also setting the offences in a wider community context.

In the case of the victim they should be assessed to see if the offences are having an impact on them and their families. It may also be helpful for the victim to be offered the option of restorative justice, if an offender or offenders are identified. This will provide satisfaction in term of justice and reassurance that they are not being singled out. Restorative justice has also been shown to prevent re-offending.

For the community as a whole it would be helpful to refer to 'routine activity theory (see pages 10 – 11) and identify ways in which property can be protected by reorganising public space or how it is used.

## **On-going Domestic violence**

### **The Crimes**

Multiple offences of violence against the person and criminal damage recorded against a female victim.

### **The Victim**

A young female in the age group of 25-34 years resident of a large urban area.

### **The Victimisation**

The first offence was of violence, where victim was assaulted by means of pulling her hair. There was then a gap of four months to the next reported offence of criminal damage. Then after a further two months, there were two violent offences within the space of a couple of days (at this point, the victim's record gained a repeat victim marker. Over the following four months, three other similar offences were recorded.

### **Discussion**

There are a range of domestic violence services available in the County and the first response to this case would be to ensure that the victim was properly assessed and received an appropriate referral.

What is of note is the steady escalation of the violent offences both in frequency and severity. This points to the assessment process for victims of domestic violence needing to be sufficiently robust to notice early warning signs with an accompanying robust response.

## **Young male victim of violence**

### **The Crime**

The victim reported multiple offences of violence with and without injury.

### **The Victim**

A young male victim in the age range of 16-24 years resident in a market town.

### **The Victimisation**

The first two offences were separated by an interval of a month and resulted in minor injury.; both offences were committed by the same group of offenders.

Six months and a further three months later two further violent crimes were reported.

The last recorded crime in the series was an arson-endangering life where offenders set fire to the door of the victim's property.

### **Discussion**

In this case, a group of offenders known to the victim were singling him out for bullying.

Beyond pursuit and prosecution of the offenders, the victim obviously requires significant support.

The victim could be supported by safety planning to reduce victimisation; certainly support with being able to remove himself from situations where offences could occur would be helpful.

As with the previous case of domestic violence it is easy to see how a series of victimisation offences can escalate in terms of frequency and seriousness.

## ADDITIONAL INPUT FROM EXPERTS

To further inform the policy discussion we talked to a small number of ‘experts’, professionals who have worked with repeat victims and can offer some insight into how they could be supported. We asked four short questions (shown below).

First, respondents were asked for their opinions on repeat victimisation:

### **Q1: What existing services do you think are particularly good at supporting repeat victims?**

*“Services that don’t just reduce risk, but seek to meet need and reduce vulnerability. Specialist services are particularly important to ensure that victims are offered the right service at the right time. Straight forward access to specialist support services regardless of what happens as a criminal justice response is key (the incident shouldn’t have to be a crime for a service to be offered). Non statutory services can be particularly helpful where repeat victimisation is linked to lack of engagement with the statutory sector. “*

*“Cambridgeshire’s Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences are designed to reduce repeat victimisation (and are performance monitored around this driver)”*

*“Any service capable of providing support to victims will be good at supporting repeat victims. I would therefore define ‘good’ in this context as a service that could help prevent further victimisation. This will obviously depend of the type of offence. Drug and alcohol support services and mental health and welfare support can help address lifestyle risks when it comes to re-victimisation. Improved target hardening can be effective in the case of property theft. Police Community Safety Officers and the Bobby Scheme are good examples of this support. The new Cambridgeshire Victim Hub offers emotional and practical support to victims who are persistently targeted, vulnerable, or intimidated. The need for support is identified by the police through the use of an initial victim needs assessment. The Hub will develop a recovery plan with the victim to coordinate the support they need. This includes reducing the risk of re-victimisation.”*

### **Q2: What extra support is required for repeat victims?**

*“An understanding of the prevalent offences involving repeat victims is needed to enable any additional support to be prioritised and resourced. In general terms the priority is identifying where there has been repeat victimisation, understanding what the specific needs are for that individual (A repeat victim of domestic violence will need very different help from a repeat victim of burglary, or hate crime etc.) and then meeting these needs with local support. Making best use of existing*

services, ensuring they are appropriately resourced to meet the needs of repeat victims, is a better approach than identifying any extra support.

*“The provision of high quality support services, understanding the need for on-going long term support to cope and recover from experiences of sexual abuse and violence in order to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation, supporting victims of sexual violence to recognise that they are victims of a crime. The normalisation and minimisation of the experience of sexual violence for many survivors leaves them at greater risk of repeat victimisation”*

*“More work could be done to reduce the number of repeat victims of male violence against women. A campaign to address and highlight abusive behaviours aimed at the public would be useful.*

*We need to recognise that repeat victims don't just need crisis support but support to recover. This support needs to help recovery in many areas by offering emotional and practical support. Economic recovery in particular should not be forgotten if we want them to become resilient to future victimisation. If the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme is stopped next year, this will particularly impact on the recovery of domestic abuse victims.”*

**Q3: In your opinion, what more could be done to reduce repeat victimisation?**

*“More academic research is required to identify the responses that are most likely to prevent re-victimisation in each of the prevalent crime categories. This research must then be used by organisations to inform their response to repeat victims and provide support tailored to their needs. The research a few years ago into repeat victims of burglary is a good example. It is now used in the response by community safety officers in Peterborough to repeat victims of Burglary.”*

*“Relevant agencies must take more robust action to address repeat offending (consider adding DV to IOM).”*

*“it would depend on the nature of the crime and the offender, there is a role for target hardening, or ensuring the offender is dealt with appropriately – to focus on the victim may give a message that the victim is responsible for what subsequently happens to them and depends on the outcome that is being sought. All victims need support to meet the needs they present with.”*

*“More work tackling the causes of domestic abuse is needed in the county. Access to well publicised, specialist support services early on before the victim becomes weakened by their abusive partner would also reduce repeat victimisation. We particularly need more support for children to recover from crime such as domestic abuse. “*

#### **Q4: Any other comments related to repeat victimisation.**

*“Agencies cannot appropriately address repeat victimisation without a) services that go beyond crisis intervention and b) where offending behaviour is not robustly managed.”*

*“Academic literature indicates that domestic abuse is rarely a one off incident and is a pattern of incidents, therefore there needs to be a comprehensive response to crime including focus on the offender as well as the victim.*

*Those victims who are persistently targeted may be more vulnerable and have more needs due to the impact of the offending against them.”*

*“The new Cambridgeshire Victims’ Hub provides an opportunity to improve the identification of repeat victims and the response to their needs through effective assessment by Victim Care Coordinators and their knowledge of local support services. The Hub is also well placed to help inform academic research and to incorporate any outcomes and learning from the research into the response to repeat victims.”*

## LINKING ACROSS POLICY AREAS

### SUBSTANCE MISUSE & REPEAT VICTIMISATION

Research has found that a very significant number of people using domestic violence survivor agencies, perpetrator programmes and substance use programmes face dual problems of domestic abuse and substance misuse.

For victims substance use may play a role in the repeated episodes of victimisation. A report published by the Mayor of London in 2005 on Domestic violence and substance use<sup>12</sup> found that almost two third of the women surveyed from domestic violence agencies with substance misuse problems reported that they started problematic substance use following their traumatic experiences of domestic violence.

More than half of respondents said that either they or their current/ex-partners had used alcohol, illegal drugs and /or prescribes medication in problematic way in the past five years. The research found that 93% of the domestic violence perpetrators were problematic substance users before they became domestically violent. Most of them believed that substance use was an excuse, not a cause of violence. The intersection between these issues and repeat victimisation needs to be dealt with in a more holistic way.

<sup>12</sup> [http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom\\_violence/docs/dom\\_vi\\_sub.pdf](http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/dom_violence/docs/dom_vi_sub.pdf)

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND REPEAT VICTIMISATION

The STELLA Project is an example where mental health support provides one of the keys to reducing repeat victimisation. The project started as a partnership between the Greater London Domestic Violence Project (GLDVP) and the Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance (GLADA) in 2003. In 2010, as the GLDVP made steps to, incorporate wider forms of violence against women and girls into its new remit of AVA (Against Violence and Abuse), the Stella Project incorporated sexual violence and mental health into the scope of its work. This was in recognition of the level of sexual violence experienced by women who access drug and alcohol treatment services in particular, and in recognition of the research highlighting drug and alcohol use as coping mechanisms for experiences of trauma.

The Stella Project<sup>13</sup> offers a range of services to organisations, local authorities, and individual practitioners. This includes a comprehensive training programme, covering basic and advanced training in domestic violence and substance misuse; sexual violence and substance use; and safeguarding children and working with domestic violence perpetrators who are in drug/alcohol treatment. They also provide consultancy support to agencies and local authorities wishing to develop a strategic response to domestic and sexual violence and substance misuse, and produce a toolkit for practitioners who work with clients experiencing repeated domestic violence and problematic substance use.

Safety planning is also key element in designing effective practice for domestic violence repeat victims. It can protect people affected by domestic violence from harm. Safety planning involves more than assessing future risk: it can create psychological security, the space necessary to recover, and liberty from fear<sup>14</sup>. It is also important that the survivor focuses on the more positive things going on in their life and identifies possible routes to activities that would improve confidence, self-esteem, and emotional wellbeing.

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## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND REPEAT VICTIMISATION

Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the real impact of the crime - it empowers victims by giving them a voice. It also holds offenders to

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.avaproject.org.uk/our-projects/stella-project.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> Making the connection: Developing integrated approaches to domestic violence and substance misuse

account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends<sup>15</sup>. Government research demonstrates that restorative justice provides an 85% victim satisfaction rate and a 14% reduction in the frequency of reoffending.

In Cambridgeshire the aims of restorative justice interventions are to:

- Improve victim satisfaction
- Promote desistance amongst a wide range of offenders
- Create safer and stronger communities
- Make the best use of reducing resources.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk>



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