



Burglary

Students have long been the victims of burglary often due to the lifestyle of student living and the fact that student homes are not properly secured. This briefing will set a number of ways students' unions can help their students secure their homes and alleviate the risk of burglary.

Introduction

Keeping a student home and property secure can seem isn't just an issue for students' unions and rather just for individual students and the police. However if there are high incidences of burglary within an area that students live in this is an issue for other local residents, as well as an issue of community safety and issue for effective crime prevention. Students are twice as likely to be victims of theft and burglary as any other group and this is exacerbated during the winter months especially as most students will vacate their properties for the holidays.

Since the majority of people don't believe they will be burgled they don't often take the precautions to secure their home and most students are no different. While some burglary cannot be avoided the majority is opportunistic and without forced entry, so there are a lot of simple changes students can make to their properties are secure.

Why students are targets for burglars

Student homes are often susceptible to burglars simply because generally students live in multi-occupancy homes with a high number of valuables. In particular student homes often have a high number of expensive consumer and electrical goods.

The majority of students live in densely populated urban areas and are part of a fluctuating population. Furthermore student lifestyles often include an active social and late nights way from the home, meaning nobody is in the property. In addition social activities involving alcohol can mean that students are lax securing the home when they do return.

Finally usually a small number of landlords and lettings agencies cater specifically for the student market so properties can be easily identifiable because they have long been rented to students.

Finally there are significant and long periods throughout the year in which nobody will be living in a student home especially during the Christmas holidays. Burglary and other types of property theft occur disproportionately in the winter months of the year notably because there are less daylight hours making it more obvious when homes are empty and giving perpetrators the cover of darkness.

This a prescient issue particularly if students do not live with their landlord or deal with their landlord only through lettings agents. The consequences is that during the holidays the house is left without anyone to ensure it's security.

Security and burglary: the basics

There are few basic ways to ensure a student home and the property within it is more secure. Firstly students can assess the safety and security of their homes themselves by taking this [survey](#) on the Crime Prevention website. The survey assesses how likely your home is to be burgled and sends you a tailored rundown of how to secure your home.

In terms of the actual property the first things students can do is make sure that doors and windows are secure. As around 15% of burglaries don't use any forced entry simply ensuring that all doors and windows as well as locks are not in disrepair and that windows and doors and windows are locked when nobody is in the house can be a big precautionary measure.

Depending on the type of housing there will be different issues, for instance if the house students are living in is semi-detached there may be an alley way by which easier entry to the house is possible or alternatively if the student is living in a block of flats a communal door without a lock could be a route of easy access Students can check what precautions to take on the [burglary section](#) of the Metropolitan Police's website.

Other precautionary measures included adding extra locks or latches both on external doors and for doors and windows within the home, more advice is available [here](#). Alternatively students can use smaller tactics such keeping lights on in their homes when nobody is home or investing in exterior lighting. However students need to remember that landlords will have the final say on any additions they propose to make on a rented property.

The role of landlords

While the overall upkeep of a property is up to the landlord current landlords have no legal obligation to improve the security of the property or have any minimum security requirement. However landlords are legally required to make sure the property is in good repair including making any repairs to the structure of the property if it has been damaged by burglary. Things belonging to tenants must be insured by tenants and not the landlord. Landlords are also not responsible for the overall security of a building and can be requested to make improvement to the security of a property but they are under no legal obligation.

Even if a landlord refuses to make improvements the tenant can go ahead with replacing things like locks but tenants need to be aware that no damage can be done to that which is deemed the property of the landlord, this would include locks and security devices.

Working with your local authority and police

Your local authority and the police along with your local police and crime commissioner will have joint control over the community safety. The role of statutory bodies regarding burglary comes within community safety initiatives. Thus a local authority will not have responsibility for private property whether it's yours or that of a landlord but will have responsibility for the public spaces surrounding property.



Local authorities therefore are responsible for improving things such as street lighting and CCTV while the police will be responsible for advice regarding burglary prevention as well as crime prevention strategy overall. The other agencies that students' unions should be aware of are local Neighbourhood Watch and community safety schemes.

Students' unions should be encouraging their students to feed their issues of burglary into both these local community safety schemes and engaging their Police and Crime Commissioner through community safety partnerships to highlight local student burglary issues. More information about this is available [here](#).

Security devices and insurance

Security devices can be the most effective way of reducing burglary. However students have to be careful that they don't end up with a security system that is overpriced or faulty. The Association of Chief Police Officers website Secured by Design has [useful advice](#) on which types of security device to choose. The most common of which is a security alarm. A simple way to choose is for students to look through the [Police Preferred Specification](#), a list of police recommended suppliers of security devices.

Finally if a burglary has occurred the best way students can manage the loss of their property is to have their valuables insured. Information about Endsleigh, the NUS approved insurance company is available [here](#).

What students' unions can do

- Run a safety campaign at your university or college can help to increase awareness of crime and the importance of security precautions. There are a number of resources on [The Lock](#) part of the NUS website.
- Encourage students to become involved in their local neighbourhood and community and make sure your students' union is engaged with your local police and crime commissioner
- Have a meeting with your local uni/college liaison officer at the Police and/or meet the Safer neighbourhood Policing team and find out about risks during the winter evenings and what the union can do.
- Make sure dangerous areas are reported on within your student populus (eg. If there are dark alleyways leading from campus that are quicker, send recommendations that students go a slower but safer route from campus).
- Make sure your students' union provides your students with information about insurance and security devices

This briefing forms part of a series, which will be released by NUS throughout the year to help students' unions develop their work on key housing issues and campaigns.