

metroSTOR Webinar Summary and Transcript

10 Principles of Crime Prevention

07.03.25

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metroSTOR Webinar **Summary**

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The 10 Principles of Crime Prevention Webinar was led by Mark O'Callaghan from the Police Crime Prevention Academy, an Ofqual-approved training centre specialising in crime prevention and designing out crime. It provided a comprehensive overview of key strategies used to reduce crime through effective environmental design, security measures and community engagement.

Mark, a former Designing Out Crime Officer with the Metropolitan Police, shared real-world insights from his experience working with police, local authorities and organisations such as Network Rail and the BBC.

The webinar explored the 10 fundamental principles of crime prevention, illustrating each with practical examples of both effective and ineffective implementations. The session concluded with a Q&A discussion where participants could engage with Mark and with other professionals.

The 10 Principles of Crime Prevention:

1. Target Hardening

Key Findings:

- Strengthening security measures prevents crime.
- Poorly implemented security can lead to fire hazards and increased risk.
- Modern security should integrate seamlessly without making a property look fortified.

Good Examples:

- Certified security products, such as Sold Secure padlocks.
- Well-designed door and window systems that provide security without appearing intimidating.
- Effective communal door locks that prevent unauthorised access.

Bad Examples:

- Weak bin store doors that fail, leading to fly-tipping and fire risks.
- Improvised security fixes (e.g. taping over broken locks) that leave buildings vulnerable.
- Poorly maintained access control systems that allow easy unauthorised entry.

2. Target Removal

Key Findings:

- Removing visibility of valuable items reduces theft risk.
- Criminals often target parts of an item, not just the whole item.

Good Examples:

- Secure cycle storage units that keep bikes out of sight.
- Locking up or removing items that attract opportunistic theft.

Bad Examples:

- Leaving valuable possessions, such as bicycles, in open or poorly secured areas.
- Clearly marking locations of valuable items, like “Bike Store” signs, which attract thieves.

3. Removing the Means to Commit Crime

Key Findings:

- Crime is often facilitated by objects left in the environment.
- Poor security creates opportunities for unauthorised access.

Good Examples:

- Secure bin storage that prevents climbing, fire-setting and fly-tipping.
- Regular estate checks to remove objects that can be used for crime.

Bad Examples:

- Bins left against fences, enabling intruders to climb over.
- Tools and ladders left unattended in gardens or communal areas.

4. Reducing the Pay-off

Key Findings:

- Making stolen goods harder to sell reduces crime motivation.
- Preventing crime hotspots from forming reduces further criminal activity.

Good Examples:

- Forensic property marking to track and recover stolen items.
- Careful management of public shrines related to crime, avoiding escalation.

Bad Examples:

- Ignoring gang-related shrines, which can increase tensions and violence.
- Failing to mark valuable goods, making them easy to resell.

5. Access Control

Key Findings:

- Controlling access prevents unauthorised entry and crime.
- Poorly maintained systems can be bypassed and exploited.

Good Examples:

- Encrypted FOB entry systems with logging capabilities.
- Secure covers on fire brigade drop key switches to prevent misuse.

Bad Examples:

- Non-encrypted FOB systems that allow unauthorised copying.
- Misused emergency exit buttons that disable security doors.

6. Surveillance

Key Findings:

- Increasing visibility reduces crime by making offenders feel watched.
- Poorly designed spaces allow crime to go unnoticed.

Good Examples:

- Large windows, good lighting and low landscaping to promote natural surveillance.
- Video doorbells and well-placed CCTV for security monitoring.

Bad Examples:

- Hidden corners and overgrown vegetation providing cover for criminals.
- CCTV positioned incorrectly, capturing irrelevant areas.

7. Environmental Design

Key Findings:

- Well-planned spaces reduce crime risks.
- Poorly considered designs lead to security vulnerabilities.

Good Examples:

- Avoiding dense shrubbery that encourages weapon and drug concealment.
- Thoughtful design discourages makeshift security measures that obstruct fire exits.

Bad Examples:

- Unsecured cabinets near walls that enable climbing access.
- Overgrown or neglected areas that attract antisocial behaviour.

8. Rule Setting

Key Findings:

- Rules must be enforceable to be effective.
- Simple design changes can be more effective than restrictive signage.

Good Examples:

- Encouraging compliance through environmental design (e.g. growing grass longer in areas unsuitable for ball games).
- Clear, practical rules with defined consequences.

Bad Examples:

- “No Ball Games” signs ignored due to lack of enforcement.
- Unclear or contradictory regulations that create confusion.

9. Increasing the Chances of Being Caught

Key Findings:

- The risk of detection deters criminals.
- Community engagement and surveillance increase perceived risk.

Good Examples:

- Regular estate patrols and interaction with residents.
- Visible CCTV, security lighting and well-maintained public spaces.

Bad Examples:

- Poorly monitored estates where offenders feel unobserved.
- Lack of collaboration between estate teams and police, reducing intelligence sharing.

10. Deflecting Offenders

Key Findings:

- Providing alternatives can reduce criminal behaviour.
- Community and youth engagement play a crucial role.

Good Examples:

- Youth programmes like the Prince’s Trust and Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.
- Structured activities that offer alternatives to crime.

Bad Examples:

- Neglecting community initiatives, leaving vulnerable individuals without positive influences.
- Failing to engage with local organisations that offer diversionary activities.

Q&A Session Highlights

- Security in existing buildings: Many crime prevention measures apply to refurbishment as well as new builds. Simple actions like quick repairs and thoughtful management significantly improve security.
- Bike storage security: Removing signage that indicates storage locations can prevent targeted theft.
- Fire safety considerations: Poorly placed objects, such as bins and storage units, can facilitate break-ins or create fire risks.
- Estate patrols and maintenance: Regular checks on emergency door releases, bin stores and communal spaces can help prevent crime.

Key questions included:

Q: I'm looking to improve security in high-risk areas like bin stores and carports. I want to install garage doors on carports to reduce security risks. Would you—or any of your colleagues—be able to provide supporting evidence to help advocate for this?

A: Your first point of contact should be the Designing Out Crime Officer at Devon & Cornwall Police. They have excellent specialists who can provide detailed, locally relevant advice. You can find their contact details on the Secured by Design website under the "Find a Designing Out Crime Officer" section. They'll be able to support your project and help frame your proposal with the right crime prevention arguments.

Q: How can we improve security without a big budget?

A: Not every solution requires major spending. Using existing estate patrols effectively, ensuring quick repairs to security features and educating staff and residents on crime prevention can make a huge difference. For example, in Tower Hamlets Homes, estate teams regularly checked and reset emergency door releases in communal areas, reducing security failures without additional costs. Small, proactive actions can prevent bigger security risks.

metroSTOR Webinar **Transcript**

10 Principles of Crime Prevention

07.03.25

Nigel Deacon

Welcome to our webinar on the 10 Principles of Crime Prevention. I'm very grateful to Mark O'Callaghan for putting this presentation together and for sharing his many decades of experience.

Mark is from the Police Crime Prevention Academy and spends a lot of time training officers and others in crime prevention. I'll now hand over to him for his presentation. We'll have a Q&A session at the end. The recording and slides will be circulated. Please share comments and questions in the chat. We look forward to an active discussion on tackling crime.

Mark, over to you.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Good morning, everyone. As Nigel said, I'm from the Police Crime Prevention Academy. That sounds very highfalutin! Despite the name, we are a college, an Ofqual-approved centre running accredited qualifications in crime prevention and designing out crime. We train both police and non-police professionals, including local authorities and organisations like Network Rail and the BBC.

Our academy is part of a wider initiative called Police Crime Prevention Initiatives, which operates as the crime prevention wing of the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Today, we'll cover the 10 Principles of Crime Prevention, looking at each one in turn with practical examples. My aim is to make this relevant to you based on real-world experiences. Before joining the Academy, I was a Designing Out Crime Officer and Crime Prevention Officer in the Met Police, dealing with various crime prevention challenges. Many of the photos in this presentation come from estates and locations I've worked with.

These principles are fundamental, every prevention strategy will be based on one or more of them. The more principles you can incorporate into a response, the greater the impact.

Let's go through them one by one.

1. Target Hardening

Target hardening involves strengthening security measures to prevent crime. There are good examples of target hardening, but also many poor ones.

For example, the image at the top demonstrates a padlock that has been tested and certified by an organisation called Soul Secure. This certification ensures the product has undergone rigorous testing and will perform as expected.

However, when target hardening is not considered during the initial building phase, we often see poor examples, leading to the need for retrofit measures. One example I encountered was in a tower block, where

an ineffective security measure had been implemented. Modern systems, including advanced door security, eliminate the need for such poor solutions. Security should not only protect against crime but also work in conjunction with fire safety. In cases where poor target hardening is in place, it can present fire hazards, obstructing emergency exits and potentially putting lives at risk.

Another poor example is inadequate bin storage security. In one case, a bin store had doors mounted on weak hinges that had not been tested or certified. Large bins repeatedly slamming against the doors led to their failure. Once the doors broke off, the area became a hotspot for fly-tipping. In this instance, the bins contained recyclable materials, including large amounts of cardboard, which increased the risk of fire. If a fire were deliberately started in this location, it could pose a serious danger, particularly if it was situated beneath a residential balcony.

There are also cases where locks on communal doors become damaged and are simply taped over rather than properly repaired. This leaves the entire block vulnerable, providing easy access to unauthorised individuals. In many estates, poorly secured communal areas, particularly stairwells, are known to attract drug-related activity and antisocial behaviour. Ensuring that target hardening measures are properly implemented and maintained can help mitigate these risks.

Effective target hardening should integrate seamlessly with the environment. Modern security solutions mean that bars on windows and doors are no longer necessary. The correct materials and systems provide security without making a property look overly fortified. I always use my own home as an example—I live in a three-bedroom semi-detached house and from the outside, it looks perfectly ordinary. However, my doors and windows are designed to make forced entry extremely difficult. A good security system does not need to be visually intimidating; it should provide robust protection while maintaining a welcoming appearance.

A final poor example of target hardening is when an access control system fails and instead of being repaired, the issue is ignored or temporarily patched up. If a security measure is compromised and left unaddressed, it no longer serves its purpose, making the area vulnerable to crime.

2. Target Removal

Bicycle theft is increasing dramatically across the country. This is partly because, due to cycle-to-work schemes and other factors, bicycles are now more valuable than they used to be.

Where valuable items exist, they become potential targets. However, it's not just the whole bike that thieves are after. Even if the frame is locked, they may steal parts, such as wheels or other components, because they can easily be sold on.

A good example of target removal is the use of secure cycle storage units. Many workplaces and residential areas now have these, ensuring that bicycles are not visible to opportunistic thieves. By removing the target from sight, the risk of theft is significantly reduced.

The principle of "out of sight, out of mind" is crucial here. If a thief can't see the target, they are less likely to attempt theft. Instead, they will look for an easier or more accessible opportunity elsewhere.

It's also important to note that security measures should focus on the areas you are responsible for. You cannot control every location, but by ensuring proper target removal in your space, you can significantly reduce crime risks.

3. Removing the Means to Commit Crime

A key method of crime prevention is ensuring that people do not have the means to commit crimes in the first place.

A good example of this is secure bin storage. In many areas, poorly secured bin stores provide an opportunity for crime. If bins are easily accessible, they can be used as climbing aids, allowing intruders to gain entry to properties. They can also be set on fire, posing a serious risk—especially when stored near buildings, under balconies, or close to residential areas.

In contrast, secure bin storage areas—where bins are locked away—help prevent these risks. They ensure bins cannot be used for illegal access, arson, or fly-tipping.

However, security measures only work if they are properly used. In some cases, bin stores are designed to be locked, but if the doors are left open, they become a security risk rather than a preventative measure. A locked bin store removes the means to commit crime, while an open one invites problems.

Another key example of removing the means to commit crime is controlling the placement of objects that could be used for access. One common issue is people leaving their bins outside their fences. This makes it easy for someone to climb onto the bin, over the wall and into a back garden.

Similarly, tools left unattended in gardens, driveways, or sheds can be used to commit crime. A burglar doesn't necessarily need to bring their own tools if they can find something nearby to help them gain access.

Another consideration is public seating areas. When tackling anti-social behaviour, a common reaction is to remove benches completely. However, benches serve a purpose and their removal may not be the best solution. Instead, careful positioning of benches—ensuring they are in visible, well-lit areas—can help reduce opportunities for crime while still maintaining their intended function.

It's about balancing accessibility with security and ensuring that we are not unintentionally providing criminals with the means to commit offences.

4. Reducing the Pay-off

Traditionally, reducing the pay-off in crime prevention has focused on property marking. There are now a range of forensic marking solutions available that make stolen goods harder to sell and easier to trace.

However, I want to flip this on its head slightly and talk about something else—what we call shrines.

Unfortunately, towards the end of my career in London, there was a noticeable increase in serious youth violence, particularly gang-related stabbings and murders. When these tragic incidents occur, informal shrines often appear in public spaces. These can be highly sensitive issues, but they can also unintentionally lead to further crime or disorder.

If a shrine is gang-related, it has the potential to attract further tensions. Rival groups may seek to desecrate it, leading to retaliation and further violence. This is why it's crucial that estate teams, anti-social behaviour teams, or anyone managing public spaces are aware of this issue.

The key message here is: do not remove these shrines yourself. Instead, report them to your local neighbourhood policing unit. Every serious crime of this nature will have a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) and a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) assigned to the case. These officers can liaise with the victim's family to arrange for the shrine to be moved respectfully—perhaps to the family's home, a cemetery, or another suitable location.

By working with the police and the community, rather than taking matters into your own hands, you can help to reduce the emotional and territorial tensions that sometimes lead to further crime.

This approach aligns with the principle of reducing the pay-off—in this case, removing the potential for a location to become a focal point for further criminal activity.

5. Access Control

Access control is a critical element of crime prevention. It applies across a range of areas—bin storage units, bicycle storage units, communal doors and shared spaces.

A common method of access control in modern housing estates is FOB entry systems. However, for these systems to be effective, they must be encrypted. If they are not, anyone can take a FOB to a key-cutting shop and get multiple copies made.

Additionally, a good access control system should have data logging capabilities. This means that every time someone enters a building, the system records who used the FOB and when. If someone buzzes in a visitor, that entry is also logged.

From a policing perspective, this is incredibly useful. If there are reports of drug dealing in a particular block of flats, gathering formal witness statements can be difficult due to fear of reprisals. However, an access control log can provide clear evidence—if a single flat has had 20 visitors in an hour, that raises suspicions and allows for targeted action.

Another commonly misused access control feature is fire brigade drop key switches. These switches allow emergency services to gain entry to buildings by cutting the power to communal doors. However, standard drop keys are widely available and as a result, unauthorised individuals often misuse them to bypass security.

In London, housing associations worked closely with the London Fire Brigade and Gerda Security to develop secure covers for these switches. These covers can only be accessed using a patented key that the fire brigade holds. This is a great example of improving access control while still allowing emergency access.

Similarly, green emergency break-glass buttons are frequently misused. These buttons, designed for fire emergencies, cut the power to communal doors. However, they are often pressed deliberately to keep doors open, leaving buildings vulnerable to unauthorised access.

Often, when people report a broken door, the issue isn't actually mechanical—it's that someone has pressed the emergency button. When this happens, two yellow lines appear on the button, indicating it has been triggered. The door remains insecure until it is manually reset using a plastic key.

A simple but effective solution is ensuring that estate teams carry these reset keys. In a previous project with Tower Hamlets Homes, their estate teams patrolled daily. By checking the break-glass buttons in every block and resetting them when necessary, they significantly improved access control without additional costs.

For areas with persistent misuse, plastic covers with rip seals can be installed over emergency buttons to prevent unauthorised use.

When access control fails, the consequences can be severe. In one case, a failed access system in an underground car park turned the area into a dumping ground, creating not only a security risk but also a serious fire hazard.

Poor access control also affects stairwells and open spaces within estates. Stairwells in particular often become hotspots for drug use and anti-social behaviour. Unrestricted access to these areas allows issues to escalate, making them dangerous and unpleasant for residents.

Effective access control isn't just about installing security measures—it's about maintaining them, monitoring their use and ensuring they are not being bypassed.

6. Surveillance

Surveillance is a crucial element of crime prevention. Areas that are subject to crime and antisocial behaviour often have poor natural surveillance. If an area is hidden from view, offenders feel more confident committing crimes because there is less chance of being seen or reported.

Good environmental design promotes casual supervision. Large windows, good lighting and low landscaping all help increase visibility and encourage interaction between neighbours. Research with convicted burglars found that properties they targeted almost always had poor natural surveillance.

Informal surveillance plays a key role. The more people walking through an area and engaging with each other, the safer it tends to be. A strong community presence, such as neighbours watching out for each other, makes an area feel more monitored and less appealing to criminals. Neighbourhood watch schemes are not just about people reporting crime but also about fostering connections. When people know each other, they are more likely to notice unusual activity. Instead of thinking, "Who is that outside someone's house?" they think, "What is that person doing outside Tony's house?" This personal connection increases vigilance.

Formal surveillance includes CCTV, which has become more accessible due to advances in technology. Video doorbells are now widely used, providing both a recording device and a real-time monitoring system. However, CCTV use must comply with data protection laws.

Under General Data Protection Regulations, domestic CCTV is exempt if it only covers a homeowner's property. However, if cameras capture public spaces or neighbouring properties, different legal requirements apply. The Information Commissioner's Office is unlikely to be concerned if footage includes a small section of a road where a car is parked. However, if a camera is recording entire streets or overlooking neighbours' windows, permission is required.

Many modern video doorbells allow users to block out certain areas from recording. This is a simple way to ensure compliance with privacy regulations while still benefiting from surveillance.

A lack of surveillance often leads to problem areas. Large blank walls, hidden corners and overgrown hedges create ideal spots for loitering, antisocial behaviour and fly-tipping. One example is a gable-end wall with no windows and a tall hedge, providing complete cover. In such spaces, people can gather undisturbed or dump waste without fear of being seen.

Effective surveillance—whether natural, informal or formal—helps to reduce crime by increasing the chances of offenders being seen and identified.

7. Environmental Design

Environmental design plays a major role in crime prevention. If crime prevention measures are considered at the design stage, many security issues can be avoided entirely. Designing Out Crime Officers work closely with housing providers, local authorities and developers to ensure crime prevention is built into new developments.

When environmental design is not considered, people often take matters into their own hands. This can lead to poorly implemented security measures that may create additional risks. A common example is in older housing stock with external walkways leading to multiple flats. In these cases, residents often place plant pots and other objects outside their doors to create a personal space. While this makes them feel safer, it can obstruct fire escape routes and create hazards.

Careful planning during the design stage can help avoid these problems. If residents feel secure in their environment, they are less likely to introduce makeshift security measures that may cause unintended consequences.

Another aspect of environmental change is landscaping. Planters, for example, can enhance an area and create a more pleasant space. However, they need to be carefully considered. From a policing perspective, it is important to ensure planters do not provide places for weapons or drugs to be concealed. Planters also require ongoing maintenance. If neglected, they can become overgrown or filled with rubbish, making an area look run-down and unkempt.

Good environmental design can influence behaviour. A well-maintained and thoughtfully designed space encourages people to respect it, whereas neglected areas attract crime and antisocial behaviour.

8. Rule Setting

Rules play an important role in shaping behaviour and preventing crime. However, for rules to be effective, they need to be enforceable and meaningful.

A common example is no ball games signs, which can be seen in many housing estates. While these signs set a rule, they are often ignored. The question then becomes: what happens when people break the rule? If there is no enforcement or consequence, the sign loses its effectiveness.

Instead of relying solely on signs, other approaches can be more effective. For example, if an area is not suitable for ball games, a subtle design change—such as letting grass grow longer in the middle while trimming around the edges—can discourage play without needing a prohibitive sign.

Similarly, rules about cycling, littering or noise should be clear and practical. If a rule is in place, there needs to be an agreed response if it is broken. Otherwise, it becomes meaningless and does not contribute to crime prevention.

Effective rule setting is about influencing behaviour in a way that encourages compliance rather than simply restricting activity without a clear plan for enforcement.

9. Increasing the Chances of Being Caught

One of the most effective ways to prevent crime is to increase the likelihood that offenders will be caught. The greater the risk of detection, the less attractive the crime becomes.

There are many ways to achieve this. Forensic marking is a well-known method, making stolen goods easier to trace and more difficult to sell. However, increasing the chances of being caught is not just about physical security measures—it also relies on people.

Estate teams, wardens and neighbourhood policing teams play a key role. Their presence alone can deter criminal behaviour. When staff regularly patrol estates, speak to residents and engage with the community, they build trust. This encourages people to report issues and makes it harder for offenders to operate unnoticed.

Engagement with local police community support officers (PCSOs) is also important. The more interaction between estate teams and the police, the greater the intelligence gathered about what is happening in an area. When criminals feel they are being watched and reported on, they are less likely to continue offending in that location.

Visible surveillance also plays a part. CCTV, security lighting and well-maintained communal spaces all contribute to a sense of oversight. If offenders believe they will be identified, challenged or reported, they are more likely to move elsewhere or reconsider their actions entirely.

By creating an environment where people feel observed—whether through physical surveillance, community engagement or regular patrols—the risk of being caught increases, making crime less appealing.

10. Deflecting Offenders

Deflecting offenders is about providing alternative paths for those at risk of engaging in crime or antisocial behaviour. By offering positive opportunities, individuals—particularly young people—can be steered away from criminal activity.

There are many initiatives that focus on this approach. Programmes such as the Prince's Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award help young people develop skills, gain confidence and build a sense of purpose. Adult education programmes, job training schemes and community engagement projects also play a role in deflecting potential offenders from crime.

Local initiatives such as youth clubs and community centres offer structured activities and mentorship. By engaging young people in positive social environments, these programmes reduce the likelihood of them becoming involved in crime or antisocial behaviour.

The work done by those running these initiatives is often challenging but incredibly valuable. By giving individuals an alternative to crime and a sense of belonging, these programmes help reduce offending and contribute to safer communities.

Q&A Session

Nigel Deacon:

Before we wrap up, I just want to underline what you said, Mark. It's been a really interesting presentation. Many of us work in environments where we don't have the privilege of rebuilding our buildings, even if we'd like to. In many cases, buildings are being retained for sustainability reasons rather than being redeveloped.

That said, the principles you've covered today still apply. They may not always be easy to implement, but they remain relevant.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Absolutely. It's not just about new builds—refurbishment is just as important. A lot of what we've discussed today can be applied to existing housing stock.

Let me give a simple example. I've always found it interesting when bike stores are built inside blocks of flats and then a sign is put up saying "Bike Store." Everyone who lives in the building already knows where it is, so that sign is effectively an advertisement for potential thieves. That's a basic example of removing the means to commit crime—why make it easier by drawing attention to the target?

Beyond design, management and maintenance play a massive role. Without proper management, everything we've talked about can fall apart. Take something as simple as a broken communal door. If it isn't repaired quickly, it becomes an ongoing security risk. And that leads to further problems—unauthorized access, vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

The Broken Windows Theory—although a bit clunky—explains this well. If small signs of neglect aren't addressed, the situation deteriorates and crime escalates. Good management and ongoing maintenance are just as crucial as the physical design itself.

This is particularly true for bin stores and other communal areas. If they're not controlled properly, they become hotspots for fly-tipping, arson and other antisocial behaviour. These may seem like minor issues, but if left unchecked, they create significant long-term problems.

Tracy, I see you have your hand up.

Tracy Leese:

Yes, I wanted to go back to the high-risk areas I mentioned earlier—specifically bin stores and carports. As I'm relatively new to this role, I have a lot of work ahead in improving security in my area.

One project I want to pursue is installing garage doors on carports to reduce the security risks we've discussed. Would you—or any of your colleagues—be able to provide supporting evidence to help advocate for this?

Mark O'Callaghan:

That's a great initiative, Tracy. Your first point of contact should be the Designing Out Crime Officer at Devon & Cornwall Police. They have excellent specialists who will be able to provide detailed, locally relevant advice.

You can find their contact details on the Secured by Design website. Just go to the "Find a Designing Out Crime Officer" section, select Devon & Cornwall Police and you'll get their names, email addresses and phone numbers.

I'm confident they'll be very interested in supporting your project. They'll also be able to help you frame your proposal with the right crime prevention arguments to strengthen your case.

Tracy Leese:

That's brilliant! I've already taken some screenshots. Thank you—it's been incredibly helpful.

Nigel Deacon:

Thanks, Tracy and thanks for sharing. Mark, thank you so much. That was fantastic.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Has that all been useful for everyone?

Nigel Deacon:

Absolutely. Even in areas where buildings aren't being rebuilt or regenerated, we can still make a difference. Some interventions will be small, others will be more significant—

Edward Jelliffe:

Yes, it's given me a lot to think about—especially around how storage areas near buildings can unintentionally create security risks. We focus a lot on fire safety, but I hadn't fully considered how features like bins or cabinets near walls can act as ladders for break-ins.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Yes, that's a common oversight.

I had an example—unfortunately, I can't find the picture now—but there was an office block with a BT Openreach cabinet right next to its perimeter wall. The result? People were climbing onto the cabinet, then over the wall. In response, the building had to install roller spikes on top of the wall to deter intruders.

It's these small design choices that can make a huge difference in security.

Nigel Deacon:

That reminds me of the BT cabinet story you told the other day—the one where you found a weapon inside.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Oh, yes! That was in Tower Hamlets, during an estate walkabout. I was training housing officers on spotting potential crime risks.

I pointed to an open BT cabinet and said, "Be careful—these unsecured boxes can be used to hide weapons." One of the officers opened it and sure enough—inside was a chair leg with nails hammered through it.

They thought I'd planted it there as a training exercise! I had to swear on my children's lives that it wasn't me. It was just a perfect example of how criminals exploit unsecured spaces.

It's why estate patrols need to actively check for these things. Just as I mentioned earlier about checking break glass emergency door releases—officers should also be checking cabinets, bin stores and stairwells. These aren't expensive interventions—it's just about maximizing awareness and good estate management.

Nigel Deacon:

Exactly—making the most of what's already in place.

Mark O'Callaghan:

Yes. Not every solution requires a huge budget. Using existing estate patrols effectively, ensuring quick repairs to security features and educating staff and residents on crime prevention can make a huge difference.

Nigel Deacon:

Brilliant. Thank you, Mark—this has been incredibly valuable. Thanks, everyone, for your contributions—it's been a great discussion.