



**CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER**

**Category:** Public Sector Campaign

**Company:** West Midlands Police

**Entry title:** 27 Station Road

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**Brief and objectives:**

West Midlands Police (WMP) owned a house in Brownhills fitted out with crime prevention devices used to teach the public about burglary prevention. To reduce running costs, the force planned to sell the house and challenged its Corporate Communications team to find a way to replace it digitally.

Objectives:

- To find a way to replace the house and its learning environment digitally
- To increase engagement with burglary prevention advice
- To attract a wider audience than the physical house, which had hosted an average of 2,000 people a year over the last ten years.

**The idea, research and planning:**

On average, a burglary happens every 16 minutes in the West Midlands. A recent independent survey highlighted that three quarters of UK homes don't have a burglar alarm fitted and many aren't fitted until after a burglary has occurred.

Experience among police officers proves that many people only turn to the police for crime prevention advice after a burglary has happened.

The idea was to capitalise on the public's love of gamification and create a virtual representation of a burgled home, using 360-degree cameras - the first of its kind in the UK.

Viewers would be invited to take on the role of an investigating officer and tour the property at their own pace. Key items and areas were 'tagged' with the thoughts of the first officer on the scene – exploring how the thieves got in and what could've been done to prevent the crime.

### **Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:**

The strategy was to create such an interesting and intriguing product the viewer would feel compelled to explore it with the same level of interest and excitement as playing a game. The viewer would then actively teach themselves crime prevention advice by touring the house.

By recreating the visceral experience of the violation caused by burglars and providing an insight into the aftermath that many people won't see unless they've been a victim, it was hoped viewers would be prompted to increase their own home security before a burglary. Given that most first time burglary victims are burgled again within a year, this would provide better opportunities to cut burglary rates.

The skills needed to film in 360 degrees were beyond in house capabilities, so the force chose to work with a creative agency on delivery – only the second time ever it's done this.

The virtual house, dubbed 27 Station Road, would be hosted on the campaign microsite and be compatible with mobile and VR headsets. The plan was to launch the house shortly before the clocks went back in the autumn and shortly after the region's university students returned – a time when burglary spikes by 34 per cent.

The project is unique in the UK and possibly further afield. No other police force has currently applied a virtual reality approach to crime prevention.

The project team worked together creatively to maximise everyone's talents. The Design Out Crime Team Manager provided accurate crime prevention advice, the agency brought their expertise in 360 filming and the Corporate Communications team helped bring the whole project to life by setting the scenario, finding a police officer to take part in filming and creating an overall marketing strategy for the product.

For the first time in the force's history the Corporate Communications team used celebrity endorsement to help market the product.

### **Delivery:**

A typical West Midlands three bedroom home was sourced and the team created a storyboard around it. The storyboard included realistic details of how the burglars entered the house, their untidy search and what they stole.

The house was turned into a burglary scene, with electrical items 'stolen' and a realistic mess created, drawers emptied, plates smashed and belongings strewn around.

The house, drive and gardens were filmed using 360 degree cameras. A police officer was filmed arriving at the house in a police car, ready to investigate the crime scene.

In post-production digital 'tags' were added to various parts of the property bearing crime prevention advice.

Reformed burglar and BBC Beat the Burglar personality Michael Fraser was recruited to film an opening introduction to the product and a further series of nine videos.

These videos covered a range of burglary issues throughout the year, highlighting the security weaknesses that many people are guilty of, from leaving windows open in summer to leaving presents under the tree at Christmas. These videos would be used to continually market and promote 27 Station Road post launch.

The house was hosted as a microsite on the force's main website and launched on 23 September using a press release and social media posts, capitalising on the Michael Fraser endorsement.

Two paid for Facebook adverts were used to boost visitors on launch and in January 2019.

### **Measurement and evaluation:**

27 Station Road was an instant hit with the public, who had never seen crime prevention advice delivered in such an interactive way.

In just under ten months, (24 September 2018 – 3 May 2019) 62,423 people visited 27 Station Road – over triple the number of visitors to the physical house over its entire 10 year lifespan.

Over the same time period the previous year, exactly the same crime prevention advice delivered in a flat text format on the website had 12,271 page views. Meaning that creative use of digital media has increased engagement five-fold.

Users spend an average of 2 minutes 32 seconds exploring the house and taking on board crime prevention advice.

One visitor emailed the force saying:

“Thank you so much for the making and producing this video. It gave me a real sense of how what and why certain things are taken, how we can prevent them from being targeted and what simple things to do to discourage thieves in the first place.

“I am so pleased with how this was put together and that I didn't have to read through a page by page account.”

Another recently commented

“Checked out 27 Station Road it is really good gave me tips on what to do.”

Media coverage included articles in Express and Star, Birmingham Updates, Professional Security Online Magazine, Secured by Design and Belfast Telegraph.

### **Budget and campaign impact:**

WAA Chosen agency fee: £24,385

Michael Fraser performance fee: £4,000

Facebook canvas promotion £1000

Total £29,385

Two other UK forces, Greater Manchester Police and the Metropolitan Police, have contacted WMP about replicating 27 Station Road for themselves.

The Crime Reduction team have seen a change in people asking for help and advice before they are burgled, rather than after a burglary.

27 Station Road has won silver in The Drum's Creative Roses Awards.

The cost of the project per site visitor is only 42p