



Coventry City Council introduced SmartWater as an asset marking system in all their schools in November 2004. This followed a 24% increase in the number of losses of data projectors used in conjunction with interactive whiteboards funded by the Government as part of a national initiative. These thefts undermined teacher and pupil morale, damaged educational provision, and occurred despite considerable expenditure on security measures such as perimeter security, security lighting, alarm equipment and secure cages for data projectors. Following communication with other local authorities it emerged that escalating thefts from schools were a national problem.

The initiative was introduced in all 117 schools as a twelve month pilot that cost £25,070. This cost was met from the risk management fund as it was felt it was in the corporate interest to staunch the flow of losses but the initiative could have caused budgetary difficulty and resultant negativity if schools had had to fund the cost. At the end of 2005 it was proven that the benefit of reducing the value of claims by 85% (£117,550.40) outweighed the expenditure. This does not take into consideration the additional benefits of saved staff time, saved teaching time and improved staff and pupil morale.

Following the success and positive feedback of the pilot SmartWater was adopted as the corporate asset marking system for Coventry City Council at the beginning of 2006. Since then we have been able to sustain the number and value of claims from schools. Although there have been peaks and troughs we have not faced the continued increase in losses experienced by neighbouring local authorities and have not returned to the position we were in at the end of 2004. The initiative has now been rolled out to other areas of the Council and has become embedded into the procedures for purchasing new equipment.

Our partnership work with West Midlands Police, the Youth Offending Service and Audit has continued. SmartWater is going to be included as best practice in the new corporate Premises Security policy produced by City Development Directorate in partnership with our Corporate Security Adviser and its usage being included as part of internal audits. As well as the benefits to Coventry City Council our partners in the project are also benefiting from our work. West Midlands Police Service have seen a decrease in the number of break-ins they are required to attend.

Coventry City Council has been innovative in tackling a national problem and is the first local authority to take the lead on such a large scale SmartWater project. A recent report by the Cullen Centre for Risk and Governance commissioned by ALARM states that "Coventry's SmartWater project illustrates well how activities funded and pursued by risk management departments can add value for multiple stakeholders and establish secure foundations for future partnership working. As first movers who have set a good example to all organisations concerned with the problem of escalating theft

Risk Management and Insurance Services (RMIS) is responsible for corporate insurance arrangements and for the implementation of proactive risk management processes to protect employees, city residents and Council owned property and assets.

In 2004 we experienced a 106% increase in the value of theft claims in schools, especially of interactive whiteboard projectors. In addition to the financial costs the impact on teacher and pupil morale and the provision of education was significant. There was also an impact on the resources of RMIS in time spent dealing with insurance claims and providing security advice. We knew we could not sustain such an increase in costs and resources and needed to take some action and following advice “to consider security marking. ...using an indelible method” from Zurich Municipal we selected SmartWater¹ for a twelve month pilot in schools. SmartWater was chosen because of its:

- use by Warwickshire Police (to avoid displacement of crime as Warwickshire surrounds Coventry)
- ease of application
- use by our insurers on their assets
- affiliation with ACPO² and a proven scientific track record with central government and public sector

SmartWater is a forensic coding system. It uses a colourless, odourless liquid which is virtually impossible to remove and shows up under ultraviolet light. As with DNA, each sample is chemically different. We hand-delivered SmartWater kits to 117 schools and officially launched the project on 1st November 2004.

We monitored progress quarterly with visits to each school and ensured that their feedback was considered and acted on.

Our Community Safety Team Communications Officer led a strong media campaign throughout the pilot. This included articles in three local newspapers about the launch of the project, Police comment on the effect of crime in our schools on the provision of education for our young people, and the purchase of SmartWater logo UV key fobs by RMIS for Police Officers.

Since inception our strategy surrounding the SmartWater Project has been underpinned by research³ showing the most powerful deterrent for criminals is the thought of being caught. The aim is for criminals and potential offenders to be educated about SmartWater and recognise the logo through:

¹ SmartWater Technology Limited

² Association of Chief Police Officers

³ University of Leicester Perpetuity Research 2004

- labels on windows and doors at all schools
- an aluminium sign outside each school
- a strong media campaign in newspapers and on radio locally
- issuing information leaflets to all pupils
- partnership work with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) who have undertaken a proactive campaign with young people involved with or on the edge of criminal behaviour
- the purchase of uv key fobs for Police Officers to wear on their utility belts
- purchase of uv detectors for local second hand shops

The cost of the initiative was met from the risk management fund with the view that investing modestly to minimise the continuing losses of school assets would be good value for money. The cost of the pilot was £25,070 spent as follows:

£9,595 for the kits - these were for all schools, Whitley Depot, Finance & ICT Directorate (RMIS & Internal Audit teams), Youth Offending Service (several locations), Coventry Transport Museum and The Grange (childrens home). The kits included a bottle of solution, UV lamp, small paintbrush, computer labels and window labels. Whitley Depot and some of the schools also used vehicular kits on minibuses etc.

£10,332 for the marketing of the initiative - this included a metal logo sign outside each of the premises using SmartWater, UV lamps for all of the second hand shops in the city, additional equipment and window labels for the schools, photographer for the launch of the schools initiative, leaflets for every school pupil in the city and large posters for Police custody suites and Council offices.

£2,494 towards the cost of purchasing SmartWater logo UV key fobs for Police 'on the beat'.

£2,649 for covert kits in various schools during December 2004 to March 2005.- this took the form of a sprinkler system that sprays intruders with the solution. We used these kits in partnership with West Midlands Police at five of the schools most 'targeted' by criminals.

This expenditure resulted in an 85% reduction on the value of insurance claims between 2004 and 2005.

At the end of the twelve month pilot we arranged for PRCI Ltd to complete independent research which concluded that SmartWater "complemented the raft of existing security measures to help reduce the number of losses from our schools". During the period of the pilot we continued to part fund security initiatives such as perimeter fencing, lighting, access controls, alarm upgrades, and data projector cages. We also made data projector cages compulsory for all new data projectors installed during 2004.

Following a Cabinet report in February 2006 SmartWater was adopted as the corporate asset marking system with individual areas purchasing the kits from their own budget but via RMIS. The areas that have started to use SmartWater since the end of the pilot include Partnership Centres and Neighbourhood Renewal schemes.

In November 2005 the renewal cost was £8989 and in November 2006 the renewal cost was £9750. The renewal costs include a new bottle of solution and additional labels. We are adding the renewal cost for these areas to their insurance recharges to enable us to monitor who is using SmartWater and its effectiveness. This also means the charge is seen clearly and awareness is maintained. The schools have use of SmartWater as part of their Service Level Agreement and again renewal is charged with their insurance charges.

Despite natural peaks and troughs, in the main, we have been able to sustain the reduction in the number of losses of data projectors and computer equipment from schools and we have not returned to the position we were in at the end of 2004. Figure 1 shows the number and value of school theft claims from 2003 to 2007.

Figure 1⁴

Period	Number of claims	Paid to date total £
2003/2004	54	66,918.88
2004/2005	67	137,740.63
% increase between 03/04 & 04/05	24	106
2005/2006	31	20,190.23
% decrease between 04/05 and 05/06	54	85
2006/2007	41	28,659.82*
% increase between 05/06 and 06/07	32	42

* This figure includes three large claims in September 2006 - £9,782.35, £2,707.94 and £2,155.31. Two of these claims were from schools in the process of moving to new buildings.

The project has been developed and embedded by:

- being included as best practice in the management of our premises and property
- being included as part of security reviews completed by our Corporate Security Adviser
- being communicated in the Security of Premises training session as part of Risk Awareness Weeks
- usage being included as part of internal audits
- regular reminders in our Risk Awareness newsletter

Between December 2006 and April 2007 our Corporate Security Adviser has hand delivered renewal kits to all 117 schools, Whitley Depot and Youth Offending Services. The kits have been delivered during fire and security reviews being carried out in partnership with Zurich Municipal. This has helped to keep awareness of the initiative alive particularly where there has been a change of staff.

Our Corporate Security Adviser strongly believes that the SmartWater Project has helped schools to adopt a consistent and rigorous approach to asset marking. He says "As I walk into any school in the city I can see the SmartWater logo displayed and staff are eager to tell me about the process they follow for accepting, marking and locating new equipment. With schools already having that process embedded into their culture it makes my job of giving proactive security advice easier."

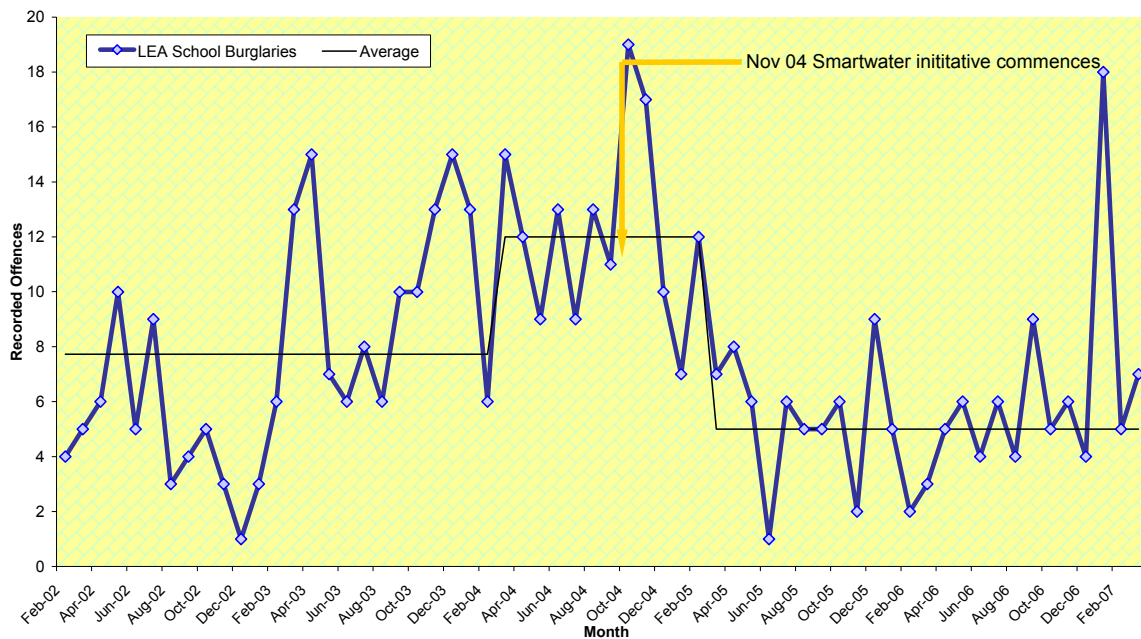
Throughout the project we have worked in partnership with West Midlands Police, Youth Offending Service, internal colleagues from schools, Community Safety team, Audit and Corporate Communications. Regular meetings of a working group with representatives from all interested parties have been held where the initiative and crime data has been shared.

⁴ Data as at 26/04/2007

Figure 2

Coventry LEA School Breaks, February 2002 - March 2007

Data source: Police Crime System.



Although some local authorities have adopted SmartWater as an asset marking system it has been on a much smaller and less co-ordinated scale and the lead has been taken by the local police force rather than the local authority. Coventry is the first local authority to take the lead on such a large scale SmartWater project. The loss of data projectors and IT equipment from schools was a national problem and Coventry City Council was able to effectively stop this trend within Coventry boundaries quicker than neighbouring authorities. The initiative has and will continue to help us:

- meet our obligations under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act, with 54% of schools saying that SmartWater has deterred crime, and that staff feel safer as a consequence
- complement the raft of existing security measures invested in to help reduce thefts
- enable partnership working with West Midlands Police, Youth Offending Service and schools
- give schools a standard asset marking system that satisfies audit
- reduce the time and cost of claims handling
- reduce disruption of pupil education
- promote use of SmartWater amongst our partners
- reduce demands on Police time

These benefits are ongoing. We are being cited as good practice on the Audit Commission website and a recent report by the Cullen Centre for Risk and Governance commissioned by ALARM states that "Coventry's SmartWater project illustrates well how activities funded and pursued by risk management departments can add value for multiple stakeholders and establish secure foundations for future partnership working. As first movers who have set a good example to all organisations concerned with the problem of escalating theft, In addition, despite intense competition from private sector organisations they went on to win in the Best Loss Prevention category at the Strategic Risk European Risk Management Awards."

List of Supporting Documents

1. Letter from Insurance & Risk Manager to all headteachers introducing SmartWater – October 2004
2. Press release for Coventry Evening Telegraph Article – 29 October 2004
3. Press release for Coventry Evening Telegraph Article – 3 November, 2004
4. Leaflet issued to all pupils/YOS customers
5. Risk Awareness Newsletter – November 2004
6. SmartWater 3 Month Review Questionnaire
7. Risk Awareness Newsletter – February 2005
8. Press release for Coventry Citizen (free paper to all Coventry homes) Article – 21 February, 2005
9. Risk Awareness Newsletter – April 2005
10. SmartWater 2nd Quarter Review Questionnaire
11. SmartWater final Quarter Review Questionnaire
12. End of pilot letter to all Headteachers – January 2006
13. Coventry Observer (free paper to all Coventry homes) Article – July 2006
14. Audit Commission 'Capturing Improvement' (notable practice) document
15. Advertising / Promotional material