



“YOU’D HAVE TO BE A ‘NUMPTY’ TO ROB A BASEMENT FLAT”

Jane Taylor unearths a few home truths about basement flat burglary by speaking intimately to some of the ‘professionals’ as statistics seem to be thin on the ground.

In May last year, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea published a release stating that ‘there was a reduction of 5.2% in the number of burglaries reported to the police in 2011/12, down to a total of 980.’ I wondered what percentage of the 980 burglaries occurred in a basement flat. Why? To see if the claims published online about lower ground floor properties being more at risk of burglary were actually true.

Neither the London Metropolitan Police Service - it records burglaries by postcode only and not by floor - or the Office for National Statistics - fantastic for burglary ‘trends’, but not specifically what I was after

- could provide any factual evidence relating to basement flat burglary. Statistic sourcing was proving difficult. I decided it was time to hear what the ‘professionals’ had to say. Who better to approach first than someone with a burgling past?

Bill aged 42 works for Bounce Back - a Charity Foundation and Painting and Decorating Social Enterprise set-up two years ago. The charity offers training and employment for ex-offenders on their release from custody. It is an intelligent way of giving them a second chance. During the end of Bill’s prison sentence for burglary, he was interviewed by Fran Findlater, CEO of Bounce Back, and proving his enthusiasm and genuine desire to change was offered a job.

He kindly agreed to answer a few of my questions in my quest to disprove the theory that basement flats are more susceptible to burglary than any other property. I began by asking him if they were still seen as easy

prey: “No, they’re not. The level of security in a basement flat is very tight. 9 times out of 10 basement flats have more security locks. Burglary is more of a spur-of-the-moment thing so open windows present opportunities, and with basement flats it’s difficult to see if any of its windows are open as they are lower ground.”

But weren’t basement flats once notorious for being broken in to, I asked him? “It was different 20 to 30 years ago. Today basement flats are no longer an attractive prospect for your intelligent burglar as there are often no escape routes.” He goes on to say: “Gardens or terraces are overlooked, and as you’re downstairs on the lowest level, it doesn’t give you anywhere really to go. You’re trapped.”

Interesting, so it’s not just the level of security within a property that deters a burglar from

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