

## News

### Crime reduction pilot uses asset marking

10 August 2007

#### Police in Watford are to conduct the first UK trial of a new asset marking system

The scheme, which uses a solution based on encrypted microparticles to 'mark' home owners' assets, will be piloted by Hertfordshire Police in 1,000 homes in North Watford. Home owners taking part in the trial will also use a free asset management website to register details of their marked belongings.

The scheme will make use of [enigmaTag](#), an asset marking fluid developed by RedWeb Security. Participating householders will receive a small bottle of the solution, which has its own unique code. They will then be asked to paint a tiny amount of the fluid, which cannot be seen by the naked eye, onto valuable belongings such as computers, digital cameras and antiques.

Triallists will also be encouraged to register all their belongings, including those marked with the fluid, on the free asset management website [www.mythings.com](http://www.mythings.com).

The site allows individuals to set up a secure and anonymous 'portfolio' of their belongings, including descriptions, serial numbers and images of items. The [enigmaTag](#) code will be held on a central owners' database for police access.

Police do not have access to an individual's MyThings portfolio but, in the case of theft, account holders may wish to share details of their items with the police.

Alexandra Smith, sales director at [mythings.com](http://mythings.com), told *GC News* on 9 August 2007 that people who report a burglary to the police can go to their portfolio, add in details such as their crime reference number, and click on a 'reported stolen items' button.

"This takes you through to [www.trace.com](http://www.trace.com), mythings's sister site, which the police have access to," explained Smith.

Police will be able to use handheld scanners to identify stolen items. These will identify the code hidden in the fluid and compare it with the details in individuals' MyThings portfolio.

A spokesperson for the Hertfordshire Constabulary told *GC News*: "The scanners are important in terms of on the spot identification. So, rather than sending off items to a laboratory, officers can know right away if they're with the rightful owner."

The scanners will also help police when items with different codes are found in a property being searched.

Doug Bain, the principal scenes of crime officer responsible for managing the scheme, said: "It's a really simple scheme for householders to participate in and has the potential to offer major benefits in terms of burglary prevention.

"Our pilot is the first implementation of its kind in the UK and we've worked with the product owners to evolve an evidential system which will assist us in realising what we hope will be a significant reduction in burglaries in the trial area."

North Watford neighbourhood sergeant Julie Storey added: "We hope we will be able to reunite people with their stolen property but, more importantly, we hope the scheme will act as a deterrent to opportunist thieves."

Hertfordshire Constabulary is still enlisting volunteers for the scheme. The force spokesperson said that it currently has less than 500 and wants to start the pilot once it has 1,000 people signed up. She added that, if successful, the pilot could be rolled out to the west of the borough and could go county wide.

**Source:** *Kable's Government Computing*

**Publication date:** 10/08/2007