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## Mail delivery

21.17 There are three distinct crime risks associated with letter plates, the first two of which are very common problems:

- i. 'Fishing', whereby arm/hand and tool are pushed through the letter plate aperture to steal items such as house and vehicle keys from a hall table with the intention of either entering the house or stealing the vehicle or both
- ii. Lock manipulation, whereby arm/hand and or tool are used through the letter plate aperture to turn the thumb turn on the back of the lock (if one is fitted) to open the door (*Note 21.17*).
- iii Arson, whereby the arsonist pours accelerant or pushes a firework through the letter plate aperture. The large majority of domestic arson involves the use of the letter plate aperture.

*Note 21.17 SBD recognises that some multipoint locks are operated through the lifting of an internal, split spindle, door handle and are often left insecure by the occupiers, which means that the handle can be easily manipulated through the letter plate aperture to open the door. Likewise, SBD recognises the fact that occupiers also leave keys in the lock.*

*As the security of the building must ultimately rest with the occupier, SBD's requirements for letter plate deflectors as required in paragraph 21.18.1 assumes that keys have not been left in door locks and that multipoint locks have been engaged and locked into position. Applicants should also note that 'fishing' and lock manipulation are often carried out by young children who have been brought to the scene of the crime by an adult for this specific purpose.*

## Letter plate apertures

21.18 The Secured by Design requirements for letterplate apertures, dependent upon the above risks, are as follows:

21.18.1 If crime risk (i) above is present, which could be indicated by there being sufficient space behind the entrance door to accommodate a hall table on which house and car keys can be left, an internal letter plate deflector must be fixed onto the back of the door. The deflector must cover the entire letter plate and must prevent access for fishing via the letter plate aperture. The letter plate aperture must be no larger than 260mm x 40mm (*Note 21.18.1*).

21.18.2 If crime risk (ii) above is present, which will be indicated by the presence of a thumb turn operated lock, an internal letter plate deflector must be fixed onto the back of the door. The deflector must cover the entire letter plate and must prevent access to the thumb turn via the letter plate aperture. The letter plate aperture must be no larger than 260mm x 40mm.

21.18.3 If crime risk (iii) above is present, which would normally be indicated by recent arson attacks on the building or nearby building and would therefore not normally apply to new build developments, SBD recommends the installation of an 'anti-arson' container to be fitted onto the back of the door. The container, which may be constructed from steel or other combustion retardant material, must be sealed around the letter plate and prevent accelerant fuel or firework from passing through the letter plate aperture onto the floor.

Any fire that is set through the letter plate aperture must be controlled within the container; some anti arson containers contain fire extinguishers. It is likely that an anti-arson container may also reduce the chances of 'fishing' and lock manipulation. The letter plate aperture must be no larger than 260mm x 40mm (Note 21.18.2).

*Note 21.18.1 The police service is currently exploring the creation of a new attack test standard/guide for letter plates and letter boxes with partner organisations with similar interests. The SBD requirement will be updated upon completion of a standard/guide. Internal deflectors may be problematic if the doorset is being installed within a property with a narrow entrance or hallway, as the deflector may reduce the opening width of the door if it is opening onto a wall.*

*Note 21.18.2 Please note that the installation of an 'anti-arson' container to the back of the door, especially those of metal box construction, may reduce the opening width of the door where the door opens into a narrow hallway. Containers manufactured from a flexible combustion resistant material (cloth) may be more suitable in such situations.*

## Letter Boxes

- 21.19 As an alternative to the requirements and recommendations in 21.18.1 to 21.18.3, a surface mounted or 'through-the-wall' letter box may be used (Note 21.18.1). The use of such a product greatly reduces the crime risk problems associated with letter plates and also reduces heat loss through the door.

### Surface Mounted

- 21.19.1 Where a single surface mounted letter box is to be used for each dwelling they must be robust in construction and securely fixed to the external face of the building in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. They must be located in a position that benefits from natural surveillance. The letter box must incorporate a design feature that prevents the removal of mail through the delivery slot and the access door for mail collection must be lockable.
- 21.19.2 Where multiple boxes are to be used within the entrance hall of a block of flats, the boxes must incorporate the same design features as single boxes and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. Depending on crime risk it may be necessary for such letter boxes to be located within an 'airlock' access controlled entrance hall, whereby access can be gained by the postal worker through the outer door only. If this additional requirement is necessary the CPDA will advise the applicant in writing at the time of application.

### Through –the-Wall

- 21.19.3 Where the design dimensions of an entry hall in a block of flats are sufficient it may be preferable to provide 'through-the-wall' mail delivery into a secure internal letter box, thereby negating the need for the postal worker to enter the building. Such a box must incorporate the same design features as described above for a surface mounted box. Anti-arson design features may also be advised if such crime risks are present.