

Bogus Callers FACTSHEET



The knock on the door

There have been many scare stories in the media about householders being burgled or ripped off by bogus callers (also often called distraction burglary). Some people are now afraid to even open their door to anyone. The good news is that the vast majority of callers to your door will be genuine people from reputable companies. The bad news is that each victim of a bogus caller is one too many and that the most likely victims are those who are most vulnerable.

This factsheet, which has been produced by the UK Neighbourhood Watch Trust, provides some very simple but effective measures that everyone can take to deter and thwart non-genuine callers.

What is a bogus caller?

Many burglars will not go to the trouble of breaking in if they do not have to.

Bogus callers at your door will pretend to be any one of a number of authentic callers. They may claim to be officials from the council, service companies, health authority or other organisations. They may also pretend to be genuine dealers or salespeople. They may impersonate workmen and say that they need to come in and check something or make urgent repairs. Even young children and women may be used to gain your trust and entry to your home.

These types of bogus caller all want to steal from you, trick you, or overcharge you for work that they do. Therefore it is very important to make sure any callers to your home are genuine.

How to check that callers are genuine - STOP - CHAIN - CHECK!!

Here is some simple advice to follow to help you make sure that your caller is not a bogus caller.

STOP - think before you open your door. Are you expecting anyone? Do they have an appointment? If you can, look/talk to them through your door or window.

CHAIN - secure the door bar or chain before opening the door.

CHECK - use door viewer if you have one to see the caller - ask the caller for proof of identity or identity card. Check it carefully, but keep the chain on.

If the caller doesn't have an appointment, tell them to wait outside while you ring their office to confirm their identity. Use the number from the phone book and not a number on any ID card provided by the caller. If the caller is legitimate then you can ask them to call back when you can have a friend or family member with you. **Remember - genuine callers will not mind if you check.** If you have any suspicions at all - do not let the caller into your home. If you think you may be at risk then call the Police - dial 999

Some service companies operate a password system to verify the caller's status. Contact your local Water/Gas/Electricity company to find out more.

If you don't have a chain or viewer then you should try and have them fitted - contact the crime prevention or community safety officer at your local Police station for advice.

**THIS FACTSHEET,
INCLUDES
INFORMATION ON:**

- How to stop bogus callers
- How to protect those at risk
- How to set up a NW scheme



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Protect those most at risk

Unfortunately those at greatest risk from a bogus caller are the most vulnerable in our communities, such as the very elderly, women and those who live on their own. That is what makes bogus caller crime such a despicable offence.

You can help prevent bogus callers from operating in your area by looking out for potential victims and protecting them. If you have vulnerable elderly neighbours, particularly those who live on their own, go round and talk to them. Make sure that they have a door chain fitted and that they check on the identity of any callers they do not know. Also let them know that they can ask you for help if they are in any doubt and keep an eye out yourself for strangers knocking at their door.

If we looked out for our neighbours in this way, we could greatly reduce the number of vulnerable people who become victims of this very distressing offence.

If you suspect bogus callers are operating in your area then contact your local police or contact Crimestoppers to report information on criminal activities **0800 555 111**.

Neighbourhood Watch

One of the ways to make your community safer is to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Neighbourhood Watch is the largest voluntary movement within the UK, with an estimated 10 million people involved.

Neighbourhood Watch is about people working together to make their communities safer and friendlier places to live and work. The aim of Neighbourhood Watch is to help people protect themselves and their properties, reduce the fear of crime and improve their local environment. Contact your local police station to find out if your area has a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

How to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme

If you do not have a scheme in your area you can consider starting one. National Neighbourhood Watch Association (NNWA) is the national charity that represents and promotes Neighbourhood Watch. If you do not have a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in your area, then there is a brief checklist to help you set one up.

- *Contact your local police station* - If your area does not have a scheme and you and your neighbours are interested in starting one then the police will be able to assist you. Also, contact NNWA for an information pack. Tel 020 7963 0160 or email info@neighbourhoodwatch.net
- *Set your aims and objectives* - Decide what issues you want your Neighbourhood Watch to tackle. Each area has different issues to address. It might be bogus callers or car crime for example.
- *Appoint the co-ordinator* - The co-ordinator of your Neighbourhood Watch is a key part of an effective scheme. Their role would include maintaining the Neighbourhood Watch in a specific area and acting as the link between the scheme, other co-ordinators, the local police and the local authority.
- *Neighbourhood Watch activities* - Once you have a co-ordinator in place and have set up the Neighbourhood Watch scheme in conjunction with the police, you can then undertake some of the activities to ensure the scheme runs smoothly and efficiently. These would include supplying stickers to scheme members, circulating newsletters and crime prevention advice, encouraging members to report suspicious activity and holding regular meetings.

Information for professionals

The Home Office has produced a Distraction Burglary Toolkit in association with a variety of partners to crack the problem of bogus callers.

The "Toolkit" is designed particularly for professionals who work regularly with older people. It contains a Good Practice Guide, video for practitioners (police, health visitors, utilities employees etc) a video for older people, and leaflets.

By simply remembering the 'Stop, Chain, Check' message - bogus callers can be kept out. All professionals visiting the housebound play a vital role in reinforcing this message, and the toolkit is particularly designed to help them achieve that.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes across the UK are already using the toolkits to help tackle this callous crime. If you want to find out more about the toolkit contact your local Neighbourhood Watch Association, the crime prevention officer at your local Police station, or the Home Office on 0870 000 1585.