



Home Office

# Keeping safe in your neighbourhood



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# Introduction

This publication has been jointly developed by the Community Sponsorship Team at the Home Office and Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI).

The UK is, in general, a safe place to live and this guide will give you some tips and advice about how to keep yourself, your home and your belongings safe.

It is not designed to be an exhaustive guide, but it does cover a broad range of subjects and contains up-to-date crime prevention advice.

The police are here to help you. Community police officers can give you more advice about how to keep safe in your home and in the community.

PCPI is owned by the UK Police Service and is the official police security initiative aimed at reducing crime and helping people live more safely. There is a wealth of information on their website:

[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)



# How do burglars choose a home to target?

**Recent interviews with prolific burglars conducted by researchers at the University of Huddersfield and West Yorkshire Police indicate that burglars target homes that they think will have valuables inside.**

Burglars are very observant and opportunistic, they often look for homes with windows or doors left open or with vulnerable features that they can exploit.

Burglars are aware of the times when someone could be away from their home – no matter how short a time – whether at day or night.

Many burglars typically do not want to be seen or heard and if they feel that they would be noticed by a neighbour or passer by, they are more likely to feel vulnerable and choose somewhere else.

Burglars often choose a home because they know there is a specific vehicle or motorcycle or bicycle they want to steal.

Sheds and garages are often vulnerable as they are not very secure and contain tools with which the burglar can use to assist them to gain entry into a home.

Overgrown bushes and trees make it easier for a burglar to get close to a home unnoticed.

**It is not uncommon for burglars to return to homes that they had burgled once before because the homeowner had not updated their security after the first burglary.**

# How do burglars get in?

## Common methods burglars use to break into homes:

Open windows and insecure doors

Fishing for keys through a letterbox, window or even a cat flap

Communal doors left insecure or wedged open

Using force on inadequate doors or windows

Slipping locks

## Valuables targeted by burglars include:

- Cash, credit cards, jewellery, family gold
- Portable electronic devices, phones, laptops and tablets
- The vehicle parked outside
- Pedal cycles, motorbikes and mopeds
- ID documents and Passports (for identity theft and fraud)
- Tools
- Antiques

**Reduce the hassle and stress of losing your personal property and having to call Police and your Insurance company by taking some simple measures to ensure it doesn't happen to you.**

**Remember if your valuables are out of sight and can't be seen they are less likely to be taken.**

## Cars and vans

### This is how you can help protect your car or van:

- **Leaving items on show is an invitation** – Power leads, SatNavs and mounts, stereo front panels, coins, sunglasses, tools, clothing and bags should be removed from the vehicle or placed out of sight.
- **Keys and ignition fobs should be kept safe and out of sight and reach** – The most common ways to steal a car or van is to take the keys or ignition fob, either when left in the vehicle or from your home through burglary.
- **Always lock and close the windows of your vehicle when unattended** – On the drive, the petrol station forecourt or when parking, an unlocked vehicle is the easiest to steal or steal from. A steering wheel lock is a good visual deterrent. When away from home, consider using a 'Park Mark' approved car park. A tracking device can help recover your vehicle if stolen.
- **Keep electronic keys safe** – Thieves are using scanners to read and copy electronic keys and steal vehicles without the actual key. When not in use keep your electronic key in a security pouch that blocks the signals from keyless entry fobs.
- **Fit theft resistant number plate fittings** – stolen number plates are commonly used to hide the identity of stolen vehicles. Use one-way clutch head screws.
- **Consider fitting a lock to your vehicle on board diagnostic port (OBD)** – this will prevent your vehicle from being reprogrammed by a potential thief. Speak to your vehicle dealer for more information.

## Catalytic converter

This is how you can help protect your catalytic converter from theft:

- **Contact your car repair garage or vehicle dealership** on fitting an aftermarket product approved by the vehicle manufacturer to prevent your converter being removed. The car repair garage or vehicle dealership can advise on the most suitable way to secure the converter, depending upon the make and model.
- **If you cannot park in a home garage or secure compound** – leave your vehicle in a place that is well lit and overlooked. Try to park so that the converter cannot be easily reached by potential thieves.
- **Consider using a marking or etching system to identify your converter** – if stolen this will make it harder for thieves to dispose of.

## Motorcycles

This is how you can help protect your motorcycle:

- **Keep your motorcycle in a garage, shed, designated bike store or use a motorcycle cover** – Storing it out of view is one of the best ways to prevent opportunist theft. Consider fitting a garage or shed alarm.
- **Fit an alarm and/or immobiliser, preferably with tracking capability and property mark panels** – Alarms act as a deterrent; trackers and property marking assists in recovery, should your motorcycle be stolen.
- **Lock the rear wheel to an immovable object or ground anchor and use a disc lock on the front wheel** – Making your motorcycle less of an easy option will reduce the chances of it being targeted. Combine the use of a disc lock and a chain lock to a ground anchor.
- **When possible, keep the lock off the ground** – Whenever you lock and chain the rear wheel, wrap any excess chain around the rear wheel and try to enclose the lock. Keeping the lock off the ground can prevent it being attacked and smashed.

## Mopeds

**This is how you can help protect your moped:**

- **Chain your moped rear wheel to an immovable object or ground anchor, don't rely on the steering lock** – Standard steering locks are easily defeated and your moped can always be lifted into a van, if not secured. Use a disc lock on the front wheel.
- **Fit theft resistant number plate fittings** – Stolen number plates are commonly used to hide the identity of stolen vehicles. Use one-way clutch head screws to secure plates.
- **Use a moped cover** – Covers are another hassle for an opportunist thief, if they cannot see what moped it is, they are less likely to target it.

- **When possible, keep the lock off the ground** – Whenever you lock and chain the rear wheel, wrap any excess chain around the rear wheel and try to enclose the lock. Keeping the lock off the ground can prevent it being attacked and smashed.



## Cycles

**This is how you can help protect your cycle:**

- **Use a good quality lock, proportionate to the value of your cycle** – Stolen cycles have a good resale value, so protect your cycle with a good quality lock. Quick release wheels and saddles are easily stolen.
- **Store in a garage or substantial locked shed, secured to a strong anchor** – Even when stored inside, chain cycles to a ground or wall anchor. Garden sheds can easily be broken into.
- **Record and register the details and frame number of your cycle and take out cycle insurance** – Each year police recover many cycles but are unable to restore them or prosecute offenders as the owner cannot be traced.

Registering your bike will help, should it be stolen.



## Personal safety

**This is how you can improve your personal safety:**

- **Tell someone where you are going** – Let a friend or family member know where you are going, who you are meeting and what time you will be home. If you haven't met someone before, meet them in a public location.
- **Plan** – Use common sense when planning your route, especially if you travel at night. If you are travelling somewhere new then research your journey. Use licensed taxis and mini-cabs.
- **Alcohol can affect your judgement** – Always know your limitations - never leave drinks unattended, don't take drinks from strangers and take care to stay with and look after your friends.

## Street robbery

**This is how you can help protect yourself from street robbery:**

- **Look confident** – Walk with a purpose and be aware of your surroundings. You are less likely to be targeted if you appear more assertive and less vulnerable. Avoid using distractions such as mobiles and headphones.
- **Plan your route** – If you are travelling somewhere new, research your journey. Keep to busy, well-lit areas which are more likely to be covered by CCTV. Only take licensed taxis and mini-cabs.
- **Keep your mobile phone and valuables out of sight** – If you have to use your mobile phone, be aware of your surroundings at all times. If you are distracted, a phone can easily be snatched away. Consider too what you need to take with you, expensive items may be targeted.

## Bag theft

**This is how you can help protect yourself from bag theft:**

- **Don't stereotype what a thief looks like**
  - The most accomplished bag thieves are those who are rarely seen and they dress to blend in. Be aware of your surroundings and people nearby.
- **Theft tactics** – There are many tactics thieves use for different locations: in particular avoid being distracted and having your attention diverted.
- **Look after your property** – Keep your personal possessions in front of you, in full view and where you have control of them. Never leave your property unattended or exposed, for example hanging on the back of a chair or a pushchair.

## Pickpocketing

**This is how you can help protect yourself from being a victim of pickpocketing:**

- **Don't stereotype what a thief looks like**
  - The most successful pick-pockets are those who are rarely seen and dress to blend in.
- **Be aware of your surroundings** – Be wary of crowded locations and when on public transport - thieves are afforded cover and proximity in which to strike.
- **Look after your property** – Keep purses and bags closed and secure at all times and place wallets in an inside pocket. Carry bags in front of you or diagonally across your chest especially in crowded locations.

## Mobile phones

**This is how you can help protect yourself from mobile theft:**

- **Protect your phone** – Don't leave your phone unattended or out of your sight or left on a table. When you have finished with it put it away. Ensure you obtain your phone's IMEI number – this can be obtained by pressing \*#06#. You need this information if the phone is lost or stolen. Use your phone's inbuilt security devices such as SIM locking and PIN locking mechanisms.
- **Record** – Register your phone's details on an accredited mobile phone database. This helps police to identify you as the rightful owner.
- **Tracking** – Consider installing a tracking application on your smartphone, this could help trace your phone if stolen.

## ATMs and card security

**This is how you can help protect yourself around ATMs:**

- **Be vigilant** – While at an ATM, cover your pin and keep an eye on your card at all times. Be aware of who is around you and be suspicious of anyone hanging around the ATM. Thieves employ a wide range of tactics to distract you. When you have left the ATM, put your card away.
- **Look out for devices attached to the ATM** – Some devices are more obvious than others. If you do see something suspicious, contact the bank or the premises responsible for the machine.
- **Trust your instincts** – If in doubt, do not use the machine.
- **Be careful with contactless cards** – You can obtain a sleeve or cover that will prevent the electronic card details from being inadvertently read.



## Stalking

### **This is how you can help protect yourself from stalking:**

Stalking is described as a pattern of unwanted and persistent behaviour that is motivated by a fixation or obsession that causes a victim to suffer alarm, distress or a fear of violence.\*

*\*Live Life Safe, Suzy Lamplugh Trust.*

Stalking is behaviour that is persistent and unwanted by the victim, it could initially appear normal. However, when that behaviour is repeated and causes fear, harassment or anxiety, it is stalking and you do not have to live with it.

There are many forms of stalking ranging from unwanted attention from somebody seeking a romantic relationship, to violent predatory behaviour. A stalker does not have to be a stranger, the majority of stalkers are known to their victims such as ex-partners, a friend, neighbour, colleague or an acquaintance.

- If you think you are being stalked, then it is important you seek help, contact the police or get in touch with a support group.
- Gather any evidence you can. Keep a log / diary of all the incidents that have occurred, and record any sightings of the individual.
- Review your personal safety; see the personal safety section for advice.

**National Stalking Helpline:**  
Call 0808 802 0300

**Paladin, the National Stalking  
Advocacy Service:**  
[www.paladinservice.co.uk](http://www.paladinservice.co.uk)

**Suzy Lamplugh Trust:**  
[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)

## Harassment

### **This is how you can help protect yourself from harassment:**

Harassment is when someone behaves in a way which makes you feel distressed, humiliated or threatened. It could be anyone, someone you know or a stranger.

Harassment can include unwanted phone calls, abuse online, stalking, verbal threats and damaging property.

- Don't engage with the harasser.
- Keep a log of incidents.
- Photograph any damage or graffiti.
- Contact your local police for assistance.

If this happens in the workplace, consider contacting your HR, line manager or union representative.

## Domestic abuse

### **This is how you can help protect yourself from domestic abuse:**

Domestic abuse is the repeated, random and habitual use of intimidation to control a partner within an intimate or family relationship. The abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual and can occur in any relationship.

Anyone forced to alter their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner's reaction is being abused.

- Recognise this is happening to you. Contact your local domestic abuse support group or the police for assistance.
- Plan in advance how you might respond to different scenarios.
- Consider having an escape route from your address.
- Develop a sign or a code word so that family or friends know when to call for help.
- Keep a charged mobile phone with you at all times.

## Hate crime

### This is how you can help protect yourself from hate crime:

A hate crime is any criminal offence when the victim or any other person believes it to be motivated by prejudice or hostility towards a person's disability, race, ethnicity, religion, faith or belief, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Hate crimes can include being physically attacked or threatened with violence, receiving offensive letters, emails or text messages, having property interfered with or damaged, or suffering from verbal abuse.

- Recognise it is happening and accept you are not to blame.
- Go somewhere you know is safe and get help.
- Hate crimes start as smaller incidents which may escalate into more serious and frequent attacks, therefore report any incidents to the police.

**Stop Hate UK – national organisation**  
0800 138 1625  
[www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)

## Nuisance phone calls

### This is how to protect yourself from nuisance phone calls:

If the calls are threatening, abusive or obscene, report them to the police and your service provider. Note down the date, time and number that called, along with any other useful information. Most providers offer products, services and advice to help you screen or block such calls.

Some silent calls are generated by automatic dialling equipment in call centres, where the number of calls made outnumber the operators. To prevent this, register your number free with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS).

- Screen calls using the caller ID function.
- Do not engage in conversation and hang up immediately.
- Never give personal information out over the phone.
- Use 1471 to retrieve the caller's number.
- Report threatening, abusive or obscene calls to the police and your service provider.
- Make sure your number is not visible online and opt for your landline number to be ex-directory.
- Use a number blocking service and register with the TPS.

## Fraud

### How to protect yourself from fraud:

- **Be suspicious of all ‘too good to be true’ offers and deals.** There are no guaranteed get-rich-quick schemes.
- **Do not hand over money or sign anything until you have obtained independent/legal advice and done some research.** Do not feel hurried into taking action or making a decision, and always take 5 minutes to think, however much pressure may be put on you.
- **Never give out your banking or personal details to anyone you do not know or trust.** Never give out **your bank PIN** code. Police, bank staff or other officials will never ask for your bank PIN code, or ask you to withdraw money or buy goods to give to them for safekeeping.
- **Do not be embarrassed to report a scam.** Fraudsters are cunning and clever, there is no shame in being deceived. By reporting you will make it more difficult for them to deceive others.

Read the Little Book of Big Scams at [www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)

#### Recommended links

[www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)  
[www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)  
[www.met.police.uk/fraud](http://www.met.police.uk/fraud)

## Distraction burglary

### How to protect yourself from distraction burglary:

- **Don't allow unexpected callers into your home unless they have a prior appointment.**  
Even if people visit unannounced with identification and appear trustworthy, do not let them in without checking who they claim to be.
- **Always ask for identification and check it before letting somebody into your home.**  
Use the phone number in the phone book or online, for the company that they claim to be from, not the one shown on their identity card.
- **If you do let someone in, make sure your front door is secure before you escort them through your home.** This ensures that no-one else can enter whilst you're occupied.
- **If you feel threatened or in danger by the presence of a caller ring the police on 999.**
- **For pre-planned appointments with utility companies, a password scheme can be set up.**

## Rogue traders and door to door sales

### How to protect yourself from bogus traders:

- **Don't be forced into making a quick decision on the doorstep.**
- **Do not allow uninvited callers into your home.**
- **Beware of a caller to your door claiming to be a builder highlighting an issue with your home – this is a common trick used by criminals.**
- **Refuse any offer of being taken to the bank to withdraw money to pay.**
- **If you ever feel intimidated by them, close the door and call the Police.**

## How to protect yourself from online crime:

- **Use hard to guess passwords.** Have different passwords for different accounts in case one is compromised. An ideal password is made up of three random words, with capitals, numbers and special characters. For a good example, watch the Little Guide to Passwords video at [www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)
- **Install antivirus software on your computer and mobile devices and always update it when prompted.** This can stop malicious software infecting your computer or device. Always update any software when prompted. This ensures that vulnerabilities are kept to a minimum.
- **Don't follow links or open attachments in emails unless they are from a trusted source, and you are expecting the link.** Opening links and attachments may allow malicious software to be downloaded on to your computer or device, and email addresses can be spoofed, so they might not be who they say they are!

- **Be wary of emails asking you to input private information such as login details or banking information.** The emails may not be from who they say they are and may be trying to trick you in to providing private information. No reputable company requests private information from you in an email. Do not click on links in emails. Log onto any existing accounts by using an internet browser and a known internet address.

Read the **Little Book of Cyber Scams** at [www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)

### Recommended links

<https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/central/advice/fraud/met/little-book-of-cyber-scams-2.0.pdf>

### GetSafeOnline

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)

## Online dating

Many relationships start online and there are millions of UK users registered with online dating sites.

Offenders exploit the anonymity and ease of use of dating websites to make themselves appear more credible to other users and to create a false persona.

### How to improve your security when online dating:

- **Stay on the dating site.** Don't be too quick to leave the dating site's messaging service. If they are a fraudster, they will often be keen to use alternative methods of communication quickly.
- **Never give money** to someone you met on a dating site, especially if you haven't met them in person. For more information watch "The Little Guide to Avoiding Romance Fraud" at [www.met.police.uk/littlemedia](http://www.met.police.uk/littlemedia)

- **Avoid feeling pressured** into meeting prematurely in person.
- **Create and adhere to a date plan** that is on your terms and considers the location, timing, duration of the date and method of transportation to ensure your safety.
- **Meet and stay in public;** treat the first date as a short screening process.
- **Report any offences to the police;** this can help to prevent similar offences in future.

## Child safety online

**People online might not be who they say they are and could be dangerous.**

### ■ To keep your child safe you should tell them not to:

- Give out personal information to people they only know online, such as name and address, contact numbers, personal photos, bank details, PIN codes and passwords.
- Supply details for any account registration without asking for permission and help from you.
- Visit chat websites that aren't fully supervised.
- Arrange to meet an online friend in person without your knowledge and permission (if you agree to let them, you should always go with them).
- Give any indication of their age or sex/gender in a personal email address or screen name.

- Respond to unwanted emails or other messages.
- Keep anything that worries or upsets them online secret from you.
- **Make use of parental controls on any internet-enabled device.** Information on how to do so should be available on the service provider's website.
- **Agree and enforce boundaries with your child about what they can and cannot do online.**
- **Activate safe search settings on search engines.**
- **Consider monitoring your child's internet use** by checking the history folder on your browser as it contains a list of previously visited sites.
- **Install and regularly update filtering software** to protect against inappropriate internet access.



## How at risk of fire is your home?

Fire and rescue services across the UK offer a free, home fire safety visit to assess your home and offer bespoke advice on how to make it safer. Where appropriate, smoke alarms will be fitted for free in all areas containing a fire risk other than kitchens.

The home fire safety visit is primarily aimed at people regarded as having a higher risk of fire in the home, such as:

- People more likely to have fires such as smokers, people with mental health conditions affecting memory, and people who've previously had fires or dropped cigarettes onto clothing/furniture.
- People with factors that could affect their ability to react, hearing impairment, learning difficulties or some mental health conditions, and those affected by alcohol or drugs (prescription or recreational).
- People with factors affecting their escape such as limited mobility, impaired vision or mental health conditions.

Visits are arranged at your convenience.

**Book your free home fire safety visit**  
**If you are concerned that your home may be at risk of fire, or you know someone who you think needs our help, you can find safety advice and arrange a free home fire safety visit via your local Fire and Rescue Service website.**

**Note: Home Fire Safety Visits are sometimes referred to as Home Safety Checks or Safe and Well Visits by other Brigades.**







