

SECURING YOUR HOME



Advice from Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit



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Your home

Contrary to popular belief, most domestic burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves looking for the easiest way of getting into your home without being seen or disturbed. Sometimes they don't even have to use force - they get through an open window or door.

Look at your home through the eyes of a burglar. Are there places where a burglar could break into your home without being seen? How would you get in if you had forgotten your keys? If you could get inside, so could a burglar.

Securing your home is the best way to reduce the chances of you becoming a victim of burglary. Follow this advice to ensure your home is as secure as possible.

Home security checklist

Windows and doors

- When you go out, always close and lock external doors and windows, even if you are just going out for a short time.
- Fit a five lever mortice lock (British Standard 3621) to all exterior wooden doors. The lock is only as effective as the frame it is fitted to so make sure this is in good condition. Patio and French doors should have top and bottom bolts fitted. If you are having new windows and doors installed, ensure they are certified to British Standard 7950 (windows) or PAS 24 (doors).
- UPVC or composite doors have multi-locking systems, but it is strongly recommended they are fitted with an anti-snap lock cylinder (TS007).
- Window locks, especially on older windows, will help stop people getting into your house. Remember, a burglar is less likely to break in if it would mean they had to smash a window, as the sound of breaking glass could attract attention. One in three burglars get inside homes through a rear window. Window locks can be seen from the outside and could deter a burglar from forcing the window.
- Before fitting extra locks to UPVC windows, talk to the fitter to make sure it won't affect the warranty.
- If you have deadlocks, use them. They make it more difficult for a thief to get out again. But don't leave the key near the door or in an obvious place nearby.

- If you have a flat roof extension the windows above it should always be locked.
- A spyhole in your front door allows you to see who is there. A door chain allows you to open the door a little way to talk to the caller without opening it fully.

Keys

- Ensure your keys are kept in a safe place out of sight and well away from your letterbox.
- Don't tag keys so they can be easily identified.
- Keep all spare keys in a safe place.
- Don't leave spare keys outside or in a garage or shed.

Outside your home

- Never leave garages or shed unlocked, especially if they connect to your property.
- Visible burglar alarms and carefully directed security lighting can deter burglars. Make sure alarms stop sounding after 20 minutes and lights don't disturb your neighbours.

Protecting the perimeter of your property

- Planning regulations govern many changes you can make to the outside of your home, including erecting walls and fences. However, you don't need to apply for planning permission to make every change you might want to. Check with your local planning authority.
- Unless you live in a Listed Building, or your local council has removed your 'permitted development rights' (your right to carry out limited development without applying for planning permission), you can build a fence or boundary wall up to 1 metre high where it will be next to a road or footpath, or up to 2 metres high elsewhere.
- Your front garden should not provide cover for a burglar. Hedges or fences at the front of your home should be limited to 1 metre high.
- At the rear of your property, hedges, fences or walls can be up to 1.8 metres high. Gates leading to the rear of your property should be the same height and padlocked.
- For added security, place a trellis along the top of your fence and plant prickly or thorny bushes alongside it.
- Fit lighting in your garden. Consider security lights that are controlled by a passive infrared sensor that detects movement, or low wattage lights controlled by dusk to dawn sensors that stay on all night and are relatively cheap to run.

Intruder alarms

If you are considering buying a new intruder alarm, it's a good idea to obtain at least three quotes from industry approved installers (NACOSS or SSAIB) or talk to your insurer who may have some recommendations.

You could also use the Trading Standards website www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk to check for vetted suppliers in your area.

Three types of intruder alarms are available:

Monitored alarm

If the system is breached, a monitoring station informs the key holders and police within minutes.

Audible only alarms

If activated, an alarm sound will alert your neighbours. These alarms are less expensive than monitored systems and are a good deterrent. However, you cannot guarantee anyone in the area will react to it and alert you or the police.

Auto-dialling alarm

If the alarm is activated, the sound will alert your neighbours and the system will dial a series of telephone numbers. This allows the receiver to respond to the alarm.



Securing your home

Garages and sheds

Garages and sheds are often used to store expensive tools and equipment. A burglar could use these to break into your home.

To reduce the chance of this happening, fit a strong hasp and padlock to your shed and garage doors. Make sure the doors are strong enough to resist being kicked or pushed in.

Consider fitting an intruder alarm, either linked to the house alarm or a separate stand alone system.

Move ladders, tables, chairs and wheelie bins so that they cannot be used to climb on. If possible, chain and padlock them to a strong anchor point.

Visibly mark the property you keep in your shed and garage and use anchor points to secure larger tools and equipment.

Register your valuables at the national online property database Immobilise so that police can reunite you with them if they are ever stolen and later recovered.

Visit www.immobilise.com



Be a good neighbour

If you see anyone acting suspiciously in your neighbourhood, call the police on **101** or, in an emergency, **999**.

Living in a flat or shared housing

- Consider having a phone entry system fitted to the main door of your building, if there isn't one already. Never buzz open the door for strangers or hold open the door for someone you don't know.
- Get home contents insurance.
- If you are a student, take all of your high value belongings with you when you go home for the holidays, or use secure storage schemes run by your college or university if available.
- If you live in halls of residence, always lock your room even if you are just going down the corridor.

Going on holiday

- Suspend any deliveries, such as milk or newspapers.
- Ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your property.
- Try to make your home look occupied while you are not there. Use timer switches on lamps or your radio.

Fire safety

- When fitting security devices, consider how you would escape if there was a fire.
- Fit at least one smoke detector on every floor of your home. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and check they are working at least once a month.
- Agree a plan with your family for getting out of your home in an emergency.
- Know where your keys are at all times.

Join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme

There are more than 15,000 schemes in the UK. Anyone can start a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Ask for details at your local police station or visit www.ourwatch.org.uk

Securing your home

Marking your property

There are many ways of marking your valuables. Some would be easy to replace if they were stolen, but others hold immense sentimental value and would be impossible to replace.

Consider buying a safe for personal papers, passports and small items of jewellery. This must be secured to the floor or a wall.

Many stolen items are recovered by the police every year but cannot be returned to their rightful owner because they cannot be identified. Below are some examples of how you can mark or register your property to ensure it is returned to you if it is ever stolen.

Ultraviolet or invisible marking

It can only be seen by an ultraviolet lamp, although it does fade over time and can be washed off eventually.

Permanent marking

Suitable for hard surfaces by engraving or etching.

Tracking for laptops and smartphones

These can now be traced if stolen by using online tracking software, which is usually free. Search online and register your laptop or phone.

Know your IMEI number

If your mobile phone is lost or stolen, your network provider will want to know your IMEI number. This can be found by typing ***#06#** into your phone. Make a note of the number that appears and keep it safe.

If you have antiques, artwork or other items that require specialist security marking, download our 'Protecting your art and antiques' guide.

Personal safety at home

While securing your property can keep you and your belongings safe, there are steps you can take to ensure you are safe in different situations you may find yourself in.

If you think an intruder is in your home, only you can decide how to deal with the situation. Think now about what you might do - you might not be thinking clearly if it ever happens to you.

If you arrive home and you think an intruder could be inside, don't go inside alone. Go to a neighbour or friend's house and raise the alarm. Call the police immediately on **999**.

In the unlikely event that you are at home and an intruder enters your home, call the police immediately. Make sure you have a phone within reaching distance at all times so you can easily raise the alarm.

It is best not to challenge an intruder but to alert the police straight away.



Securing your home

Older people

At times, you may feel more vulnerable at home, but a few simple steps can help reduce the risk of you becoming a victim of crime.

- Don't keep large sums of cash at home - use a bank account instead.
- Many areas run schemes specifically aimed at assisting older people with home security and general maintenance. You should ask advice from your local police officers, local authority or community groups.
- If your area has a community alarm system, consider joining the scheme so you can alert someone if you trip or fall or are feeling unsafe at home.
- Keep a list of useful telephone numbers by your phone. This could include members of your family, **101** for your local police and your local council.



Bogus callers

Most people who call at your home will be genuine, but sometimes criminals do try to trick their way into people's homes.

This advice will help to keep you safe at home.

LOCK - keep your front and back doors locked even when you are at home.

STOP - Before you answer, stop and think whether you are expecting anyone. Check you have locked the back door and taken the key out. Look through a spyhole or window to see who the caller is.

CHAIN - If you decide to open the door, put the chain or door bar on first, if you have one. Keep the chain or bar on while you are talking to the caller.

CHECK - Even if the caller has a pre-arranged appointment with you, check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, call the company concerned to verify their representative's identity. Don't use a phone number on the card, as it could be fake. Look up the company in the phone book if you can.

Most utility companies operate a password scheme for older or vulnerable customers. You can register with the scheme and their representative will have to confirm your password when they visit to prove they are a genuine employee of the company.

Bogus callers may be smartly dressed and often claim to be from the police, the council or the 'water board'. They sometimes claim to be builders or gardeners and try to trick people into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to having work done by someone who is just passing by. If you need work doing, get at least two quotes from reputable companies.

If you think a bogus caller has been to your home, call the police immediately on 999.

If you have any doubts KEEP THEM OUT!

Nottinghamshire Alert

Nottinghamshire Alert is a system which allows Nottinghamshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch in Nottinghamshire and other organisations that work for the public to send community safety messages to you quickly and efficiently.

If you are interested in getting updates on major incidents, advice on crime prevention and community safety and alerts about criminals operating in your area, make sure you are registered with the system.

You can report antisocial behaviour in your area and receive responses from police about the incident you have reported and find out how to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or set up your own in your street by registering.

What do I get?

- A totally free service — you can control your message settings and choose to receive alerts via email, text message to your mobile phone or recorded voicemail. You can unsubscribe at any time.
- Information about crime trends, incidents and appeals from authorised police officers and police staff.
- Report suspicious and antisocial behaviour (not crime), receive updates and responses about them.
- Start, manage or request to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in your area.
- Configure how, when and which messages you'd like to receive.

If you want to know more about Nottinghamshire Alert, contact Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit.

Tel: 101, extension 800 3011

Email: nottinghamshirealert@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk

To register for Nottinghamshire Alert, visit www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk

If you would like a paper copy of the registration form, call **101** or visit your local police station to request one.

For more advice on crime prevention contact

Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit
Arrow Centre
Hucknall
Nottinghamshire
NG15 8AY

Tel: **101**

Tell us what priorities you want your local police to focus on with our online survey

www.neighbourhoodprioritysurvey.co.uk

If you have information about criminals operating in your area, call Crimestoppers anonymously on

0800 555 111