



Crime awareness advice for the older community



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1 Doorstep Crime Distraction Burglary Rogue Traders

"I'd never heard of 'distraction burglary' before, until one day a chap called at my house saying he needed to turn my water off as there was a leak down the road. There was no leak of course; he was what they call a "distraction burglar" trying to lie his way in to my home to steal."

What is Distraction Burglary?

- Distraction burglary is where criminals call at your house posing as officials or asking for your help with something.
- They make up a story to get in to your home.
- Generally targeting older people, they have just one intention: **to steal!**

How do they operate?

- Some work alone, but often they work in groups of two or more, usually one person will knock at your door with a convincing excuse that seems genuine or urgent.
- The talker will persuade you to let them into your house and keep you occupied whilst others sneak in and search your house to steal cash and valuables.
- They can be men, women or children and sometimes a combination, smartly or casually dressed.

Remember

A genuine caller will happily wait outside while you check on them by calling their organisation and or calling a family member or neighbour.

- **Use a spyhole and speak to them through the door**, using an intercom, or through a window.
- **Do not accept packages for neighbours** unless they've asked you.
- **Do not let strangers in to write messages for neighbours.**
- **Don't be pressured into opening the door for anyone who doesn't have an appointment and will not let you check their ID. e.g. police, council officers. A closed door is a safe door.**
- **Report suspicious callers to police on 101.**

Rogue traders

Rogue traders are those who turn up at your home uninvited and offer to do work on your property or gardens for cash. They use phrases like "we were working down the road and noticed you have some tiles missing", "working next door and there is a problem with your house as well", "have some materials left over from another job". They will want payment in cash to buy materials and this may be the last you see of them. If they do any work, they will ask for more cash and say that other work needs doing. They will offer you a lift to the bank to get more money.

If any trader just turns up at your home:

- Do not agree to them doing any work and do not hand over any money.
- Always ask family or friends for recommendations and obtain 2 or 3 quotations for the work you want doing.
- Contact **Trustmark on 0333 555 1234** or visit **www.trustmark.org** for a list of reliable traders.

2 ATM, Cashpoint Crime

Older people can be concerned about security of on-street ATMs, their PIN being seen, being mugged, fearing that an ATM has been tampered with, not knowing what to do if they can't get their card out of the machine. Theft can occur when someone watches over your shoulder or watches to see who is using the cash machine and may take out large amounts of money or be vulnerable to pickpocketing or mugging.

ATM/Cashpoint Safety

- **NEVER share your PIN with anyone.**
- **If there is anything unusual about the cash machine or there are signs of tampering**, do not use it and report it to the bank concerned immediately.
- **Cover your PIN.** Stand close to the machine and always use your free hand and body to shield the keypad as you enter your PIN to prevent any prying eyes or hidden cameras seeing your PIN.
- **Do not get distracted.** Be particularly cautious if 'well-meaning' strangers try to distract you or offer to help you and most importantly, discreetly put your money and card away before leaving the cash machine.
- **Fraudsters sometimes fit devices to cash machines** that trap your card, which they then retrieve as soon as you have left the area. If your card is retained by the machine for any reason, report it to your card company immediately, ideally using your mobile phone while you are still in front of the machine. Make sure you have your card company's 24 hour contact number stored in your mobile phone.
- **Shred your cash machine receipts, mini-statements or balance enquiries** at home.

3 Bag Dipping and Bag Theft

Anyone can become a victim of bag theft, pickpocketing or 'dipping' but older people can more often become a target.

These tips can help you to stay safe.

- **Be aware of who's around you when you're shopping.**
Pickpockets often operate in pairs and use distraction techniques to avert your attention whilst they steal from your bag.
- **Wear your bag across your body**, so that it opens on the side facing you. In winter, wear your coat over your bag to hide it. You're an easy target if you leave your bag facing backwards over your shoulder or carry it over one shoulder.
- **Never leave your bag unattended** in a shopping trolley or basket or on the back of a pushchair, always keep it with you.
- **Avoid carrying valuables in the outside pockets of rucksacks.**
- If you use a wheelchair or motorised scooter, **keep your valuables in front of you**, rather than hanging them on the back of the chair where thieves can dip into them.
- **Keep your bag or briefcase where you can see it or feel it** - on your lap or touching your feet, not hung on the back of your chair when you're eating or having a drink.
- **Keep your keys in a different pocket from anything that has your address on it.**
- **Don't keep the PIN number for your cash card with you.** Keep the emergency number to cancel your credit cards with you so that you can phone immediately if you have to.
- Cafes, restaurants, pubs, clothes and shoe shops are places where people tend to be careless with their bags.

4 Scams

Direct mail scams

Receiving unsolicited offers of products and services through the post can be irritating and often puzzling. This 'junk mail' can also cause problems for vulnerable people who are unable to judge the products being offered.

If you receive something that looks like a scam and the mail is addressed to you, you can complain to **Action Fraud**, either online www.actionfraud.police.uk or by phone **0300 123 2040**.

Companies in the UK are required to follow certain rules when sending out direct marketing. By registering with the Mailing Preference Service you can have your name taken off most direct mailing lists, although the service does not cover mail that is unaddressed, addressed to 'The Occupier' or originates from overseas.

Once you are registered, companies should not contact you, and you can complain to the Mailing Preference Service if they do.

Unfortunately, many scammers and criminals also use letters to contact people. Many direct mail scammers are based overseas, so they're unregulated and largely beyond the reach of UK authorities. If you receive a direct mail invitation of this kind, ignore it and throw it away.

Never reply to these letters. If you do, your details could be circulated to others running similar schemes and you could end up being bombarded with scam mail.

There are two versions of the Electoral Register. The Electoral Register used for voting purposes and credit checks and the "Open" Register which can be sold to any person requesting a copy. Removing your name from the "Open" register may reduce the likelihood of receiving scam mailings. Contact your local **Council Electoral Services** to do this on **0208 871 6023** or email electoral@wandsworth.gov.uk

Email scams

Email offers a cheap way of reaching large numbers of people for very little cost, so it's popular for both honest and dishonest purposes.

- Scam emails are likely to contain spelling or grammatical errors in the subject box to get around the spam filters that email providers set up to block them. Don't open email attachments from people you don't know or click on links within the email, as these will often carry a virus and can infect your computer.
- Never reply to scam emails, even to say 'no', as it will let the sender know that your email address is active and this is likely to encourage them to send more emails.
- A common scam is for a fraudster to send an email claiming to be from your bank or another trusted organisation, which directs you to a fake website where it asks you to enter your account details. The website will often be cleverly designed to look like the organisation's real website. Ignore these types of emails.
- One well-known type of email scam is called 'advance fee' fraud. This takes different forms, but commonly the initial email explains that the sender has money or something valuable and needs help to move it – often from one country to another. In return, the donor is promised a reward. Once involved, victims are persuaded to make a payment to help the transaction along. The promised reward never appears.
- Alternatively, victims are asked to provide their bank details. These are then used to remove money from their account. As with other scams, once you have paid you will be encouraged to make further payments. If you have lost money through an email scam or you think someone has hacked into your computer, report it to ActionFraud. You can also get advice from the antiscam campaign group Think Jessica.

- Most email accounts can be set to block spam, so check your settings. You can visit the 'Help' pages of your email account provider for information about how to deal with scam emails. Get more advice on how to avoid being targeted by scammers from www.getsafeonline.org
- For more information on different types of scams and how to protect yourself see Age UK's information guide, Avoiding scams www.ageuk.org.uk



5 Tips to Stay Safe

- **If anyone comes to your door, make sure you ask for identification** even if it's a police officer or someone in authority. Genuine callers will be happy for you to check their ID. **You DO NOT** have to let anyone in and they must leave if you ask them to.
- **Don't keep large amounts of cash at home.** You are unlikely to need more than £50 emergency money.
- **Don't leave keys in easy reach of the front door** as they can be fished out through the letterbox.
- **Only carry the amount of cash that you need** and be aware of where you keep your purse or wallet all the time.
- **Don't carry your PIN with your bank card.**
- **Keep a watch on where you put your purse or wallet and phone** when out shopping. Don't leave valuables out on the trolley for opportunistic thieves to take.
- **Destroy personal information.** Shred or put into water all documents with your personal details on.
- **Only give out personal details when absolutely necessary** and when you trust the person you are talking to.
- **Never give out your personal, credit card or online account details** over the phone unless you made the call and the phone number came from a trusted source.
- **If you do not want to have an internet bank account** you can request that your bank record this wish so that no-one can try and set up a fraudulent internet account in your name.
- **If you are interested in what a door-to-door salesman is offering** do not agree to buy anything then and there. Take time to find out about their business. Get two or three quotes from different businesses.
- **Remember if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!**

6 Contact Details for support services

London Metropolitan Police

You have a local Safer Neighbourhood Team here to help you.

Always dial 999 to report an emergency

Call **101** for incidents not requiring an immediate police response.

Wandsworth Adult Social Care Access Team

To raise a safeguarding concern or alert or to request an assessment for support.

Telephone: **020 8871 7707**

Email: accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk

Wandsworth Community Safety

Wandsworth Community Safety Team is one of the main members of the Wandsworth Community Safety partnership, which delivers community safety and crime prevention services across Wandsworth.

Telephone: **020 8871 6567/8894/8895** (general enquiries)

Email: communitysafety@wandsworth.gov.uk

Age UK Wandsworth

Age UK Wandsworth, previously Age Concern Wandsworth, was set up in 1963 and is the principal voluntary sector organisation working with older people in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Address: **549 Old York Rd, London SW18 1TQ**

Telephone: **020 8877 8940**

Email: **info@ageukwandsworth.org.uk**

Web: **www.ageukwandsworth.org.uk**

Victim Support

Victim Support is an independent charity working towards a world where people affected by crime or traumatic events get the support they need and the respect they deserve. We help people feel safer and find the strength to move forward after crime.

Address: **17-19 Falcon Rd, Clapham junction
London SW11 2PH**

Telephone: **020 7801 1777**

Email: **vs.wandsworth@vslondon.org**

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline

For help and advice on how to resolve problems with goods and services that you have bought and to report problems with rogue traders and scams to Trading Standards.

Telephone: **03454 04 05 06**

Wandsworth Older People's Network

The Wandsworth Older People's Network/Forum was set up in 1991 to be a voice for older people in Wandsworth.

Monthly Open Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.

Address: **Anchor Centre, 273 Garratt Lane SW18 4DU.**

Web: **www.wandpensforum.org.uk**

Alzheimer's Society

The Alzheimer's Society provides information, advice and support to anyone in the borough with a diagnosis of dementia, and their families and carers.

Address: **Wandsworth Office – 241 Garratt Lane,
London SW18 4DU**

Telephone: **020 8877 0033**

Email: **wandsworth@alzheimers.org.uk**

Wandsworth Carers' Centre

Wandsworth Carers' Centre is a registered charity and limited company that has been providing support to unpaid Carers in Wandsworth since 1995.

Address: **181 Wandsworth High Street, London, SW18 4JE**

Telephone: **020 8877 1200**

Email: **info@wandsworthcarers.org.uk**

Text Relay: **020 8877 1200**

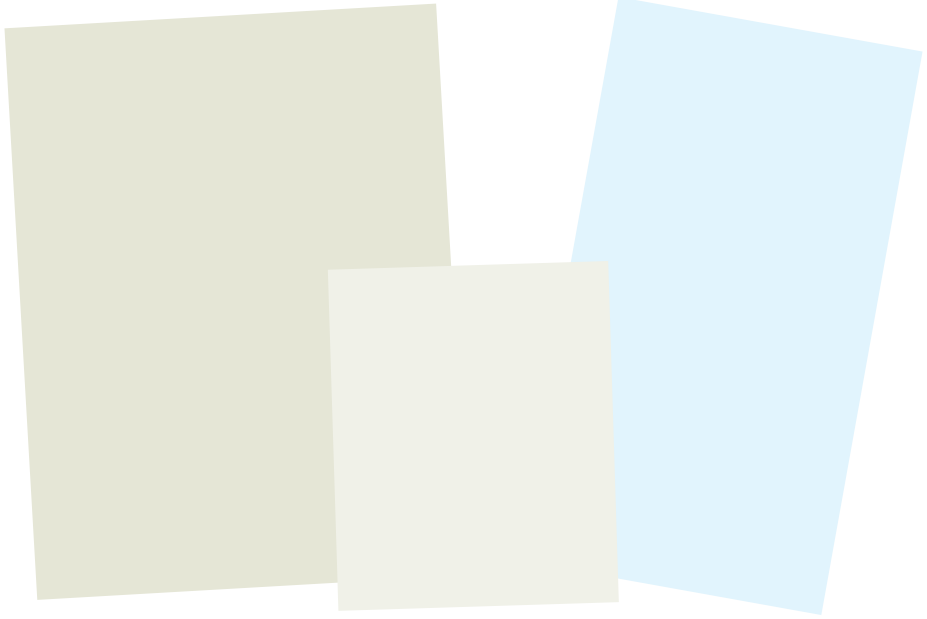
Web: **www.carerswandsworth.org.uk**

Add the contact number for your bank here in case you need to cancel your bank cards or check the identity of a caller:

Bank name

Bank telephone number

Notes



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