Protecting your home



West Mercia POLICE

www.westmercia.police.uk

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> People never think they will be a victim of crime until it happens to them.

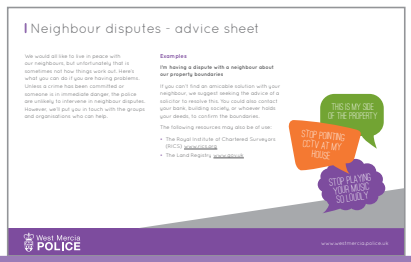
Being a victim of any crime can be extremely distressing and difficult to process.

This leaflet will give you a range of information designed to inform you of the process and crime prevention advice to protect your home in the future. It also offers useful help and support on what you can do if the worst should happen.

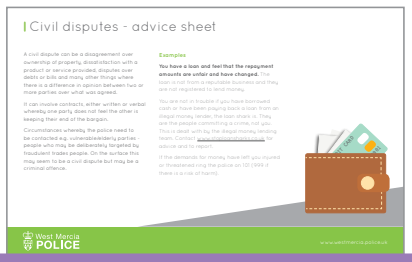
A person's home and possessions often carry an emotional attachment and when a criminal interferes with this, it can have a long-lasting impact on victims. West Mercia Police are committed to protecting people from these crimes.

Help and advice guides

The following help and advice sheets are available to download at www.westmercia.police.uk/maketherightcall



Neighbour disputes



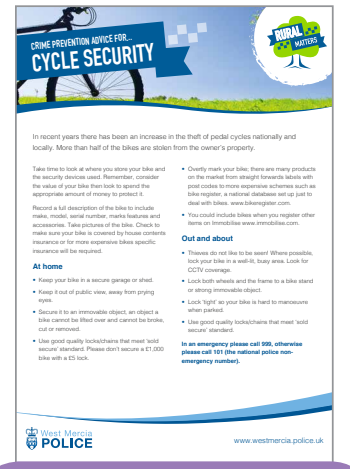
Civil disputes



Noise nuisance



Unauthorised encampments



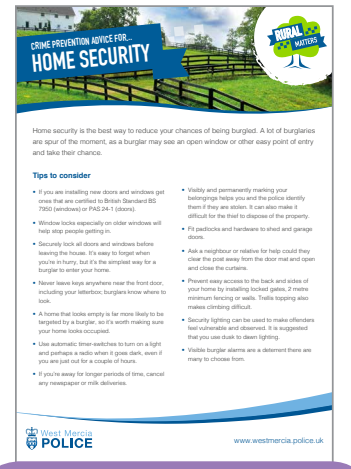
Cycle security



Immobilise property register



Property marking



Home security



Shed security



Fire Safety

Burglary

Burglary can be a very upsetting for the victims. We understand that burglary in your home can feel like a personal crime and an invasion of your personal space.

Crime prevention tips for the home



Lock your doors and windows every time you leave the house, even when you're just out in the garden.



Hide all keys, including car keys, out of sight and away from the letterbox (remember a device could be used to hook keys through the letterbox).



Consider installing effective outside lighting.



Get a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your property.



Make sure the fences around your garden are in good condition.



Leave radios or lights in your house on a timer to make the property appear occupied.



Secure bikes at home by locking them to an immoveable object inside a locked shed or garage.



Keep ladders and tools stored away. Don't leave them outside where they could be used to break into your home.



Ensure side gates are locked to prevent access to the rear of the property.



Consider joining or forming a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.



Remove valuables from view of ground floor windows.

If you become a victim of burglary, you can help us bring the offender to justice and potentially recover items stolen by following this forensic advice:

- **Limit what you touch around your home.** It is tempting to try and establish exactly what has been taken, but every surface you touch may be destroying potential fingerprint or DNA evidence.
- **Broken windows should be left alone.** Intruders have been known to leave DNA evidence on broken glass. If you clear the frame of broken glass prior to police arrival, you will also have cleared the potential for evidence to be obtained.
- **Limit walking about within your home.** Intruders can leave footwear marks which can be retrieved by our crime scene investigators.
- **Any items or tools discarded by the intruder should be left where they are.** If you see anything which does not belong in your home, leave it alone and let the officer know about it.

When reporting a burglary to the police you will be asked a number of questions relating to the incident. We will ask you to explain what has happened, when it happened, what was stolen and if there is any evidence that can help our investigation.

Following a report of a burglary, we will appoint an investigating officer who may take some or all of the following steps during the investigation:

- Obtain a statement from the victim and any other witnesses who may be identified.
- Conduct door to door enquiries in the area.
- Establish if there is CCTV footage in the area.
- Task a crime scene investigator to attend and search for fingerprint or other evidence.
- Make attempts to trace stolen property through appeals and other channels.

Where a burglary occurs in a shed or outbuilding at your home, after an assessment by control room staff, a telephone investigator will record your crime. You will be asked a number of questions relating to the incident.



What you can do?

- Identify any location of CCTV and you may be asked to assist in its retention.
- A crime scene investigator will be considered if any item has been left behind by the offender. In that case you will be asked to leave it insitu unless evidence maybe lost due to adverse weather. You would then be asked to recover it using a clean plastic bag to a sheltered dry location.
- Name any possible witnesses after speaking to your neighbours.

In an emergency please call 999. You can contact the police on 101 to report the crime, visit a police station. For advice and reassurance please follow the below link to identify your safer neighbourhood team where their contact details are available.
www.westmercia.police.uk/myarea

For further information visit
www.westmercia.police.uk/has/burglary



Distraction burglary

You don't have to open the door, most callers are genuine, but some aren't. Burglars won't go to the trouble of breaking in if they can just knock and be invited in. So always be on guard when unexpected visitors - men, women or even children turn up at the door.

Occasionally some callers will pretend to be on official business from utility companies (gas, electricity, water) or the council. They may pretend to be trades people who are calling to carry out urgent repairs or may claim that they have lost something in your back garden.

To protect yourself from distraction burglary

- Beware of anyone who says they are in a hurry - if in doubt, call a neighbour or friend.
- Check to see who is at the door by using your door viewer, or looking through a front window.
- Always put the chain on before you open the door as this is a barrier against unwanted callers.

When an unexpected caller claims they work for one of the utility companies, they must be able to quote your password and unique customer number and produce an identity card:

- All of the utility companies operate password schemes - contact the customer services department and set up a password with them.
- Make a note of your customer number, which can be found at the top of the utility bill and keep it handy - this number is unique to your household.
- As added proof of identity, genuine trades people should carry an identification card with their photograph on -check this carefully and keep the chain on.
- If you're unsure about the caller's identity telephone the company the caller claims to represent, but don't rely on them giving you the number as it may be false - genuine callers won't mind waiting.
- If you're still unsure, ask the caller to come back later so that you can arrange for a friend or relative to be present.

For further information visit www.westmercia.police.uk/burglary

Phone scams

The police take phone scams very seriously. Criminals will often use scam phone calls as a way of defrauding people out of their money. On most occasions, people realise that the call is a scam, but we are encouraging people to continue to be vigilant.

What to look out for

- Typically scammers will pretend to be from the police and tell callers that their bank cards have been used fraudulently. Often the callers have stated that they are from the Metropolitan Police, but they have been known to claim that they are from West Mercia Police, MI6 or the fraud squad. They will often say that they have the offenders in custody.
- Usually they will then ask the victim to contact their bank to cancel their cards. In doing so, they will 'hold the line', so the victim believes that they are calling their bank, when in fact they are still on the line to the offenders.
- They will then encourage the victims to hand over their bank details, including their PIN which they will often ask them to enter into the keypad of the phone.

- Following this they will say that the cards are needed and send a courier to collect them. Sometimes they will ask the victims to give a password which the courier will use to make it appear more genuine. Consequently the offenders have been able to withdraw money from victims' accounts.
- On other occasions, rather than sending a courier, they have asked the victims to transfer money to a secure police account, asking them to call back to verify that they are genuine, whilst holding the line.
- Sometimes the scammers have told the victims to attend the bank to transfer money but told them that bank employees are involved in the scam, so not to mention it to them.
- More recently callers have told victims that they are from Customs and Excise and that they have paid too much tax. In order to get this back they must pay an amount of money via a courier.



What to do

We offer the following advice to protect you from these scams:

- Remember police officers and banks will never ask for account details or PINs over the phone.
- Police officers and banks would never come to your house to collect your cards or property.
- They would also never ask you to transfer money to a secure account.
- If you receive a call like this, hang up immediately and call 101 using another phone. In an emergency or if a crime is in progress call 999.
- If you have elderly friends or relatives who may be vulnerable to this scam, please talk to them and make them aware.

www.westmercia.police.uk/media/7412/ItsAScam/pdf/Courier_Fraud.pdf

For further information visit www.westmercia.police.uk/article/16141/Phone-scams

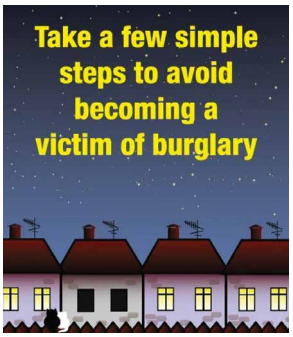
A genuine caller will never ask to:

- ✗ **send a courier to collect cash, bank cards, or valuables**
- ✗ **ask for your PIN**
- ✗ **ask you to withdraw or transfer money**

Advice for the winter months

With the dark evenings, the winter months offer opportunities for burglars. Make sure you take some simple precautions to protect your home and property.

- Set a timer switch to turn your lights on when it gets dark - unlit houses are a give away that no one is at home.
- Lock your doors, patios and downstairs windows - even when you are in. Double check them again before you go to bed.
- If you have a burglar alarm, make sure you set it when you go out and also when you go to bed.
- Don't leave car keys, ID cards or valuables near windows, doors or letterboxes, where burglars can reach through to steal them.
- Lock your garden gates and side entrances. Don't leave tools lying around in the garden which could be used to break into your home.
- Mark your property and valuables with a forensic security product such as SmartWater.



For further information visit www.westmercia.police.uk/winter-security-advice

No cold calling

There's nothing more frustrating than people knocking on your door when you don't want to be sold things. Remember, you don't have to let them in.

To help, we have produced a free-to-print 'no cold callers' sign. You can print this in colour but it has been designed to also work through black and white printing. Download your copy of the No Cold Callers sign www.westmercia.police.uk/media/13240/No-Cold-Callers-Sticker---MERCIA/pdf/No_Cold_Callers_Sticker_-_MERCIA.pdf

Where to place it?



The best place is on your front door, but as it's a print-out, the colour may run. Tape over the small one, or put it in a clear plastic folder and stick that up. Or if you've glass doors, stick it on the inside to protect from the elements.

Further support and prevention

Safe and Well Checks

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service want everyone across the West Mercia region to be safe from fire at home and know how to escape safely if a fire starts.

We have learnt that visiting people in their own homes to make sure they have working smoke alarms and a good level of fire safety awareness prevents fires and saves lives.

We provide advice to everyone and for the more vulnerable such as the elderly, people living alone and those with reduced mobility both Services offer a FREE of charge Safe and Well Check.

A Safe and Well Check is a Home Fire Safety visit that's tailored to an individual's needs. The visit will provide you with actions and advice to help make your home a safer place and protect you and your family from the risks of fire, it will also provide you with a fire escape plan to follow should the unthinkable happen. We may also fit smoke alarms and specialist equipment if required. A Safe and Well Visit will also identify any health and care needs that require signposting to local services to help ensure your safety and wellbeing. All of these services are provided free of charge.

If you require any further information regarding a Safe and Well Visit, of if you would like to see if you qualify for a visit, contact details below:

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Community Risk Department

Tel: 0800 032 1155

Email: hfsc@hwfire.org.uk

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Prevention Department

Tel: 0808 168 9010

Email Homevisit@shropshirefire.gov.uk

We Don't Buy Crime

'We Don't Buy Crime' takes an innovative approach to reducing and disrupting the market for stolen goods and protecting your home and possessions by making them less attractive to the would-be criminal. We want to prevent crime happening in the first place but if the worst should happen, we provide the victim with a tailored and quality service. This includes providing victims of burglary dwelling with a free SmartWater home marking pack, included in their 'We Don't Buy Crime' victim pack.

To find out more visit: https://www.westmercia.police.uk/we-dont-buy-crime

This campaign has had great success in 'We Don't Buy Crime' towns and villages, where every residential property has the opportunity to mark their possessions with SmartWater free of charge. This offer is extended until 31 December 2018.

Please vist https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/WDBC-application-briefing.pdf?x19529 to see how you can become part of this and the success achieved so far.

We don't buy crime sticker

http://www.westmercia.police.uk/media/4587/We-Dont-Buy-Crime-window-sticker/pdf/Circle_Sticker.pdf

SmartWater

How SmartWater works

- SmartWater has a unique forensic code that, once applied, makes equipment traceable back to their owner
- SmartWater is easy to apply and only visible under UV light
- Each application is guaranteed to last 5-years
- Recognised by criminals - SmartWater THIEVES BEWARE® deterrent signage sends out a powerful warning to thieves
- When deployed by police, SmartWater has helped reduce burglary by up to 85%.



When you purchase SmartWater, please ensure you register your forensic code as per the instructions to ensure your property can be traced back to you.

Thanks to West Mercia and Warwickshire Police's WE DON'T BUY CRIME project, you can purchase SmartWater for your home at a special promotional price of £19.95* with no annual fees.

Please visit: https://shop.smartwater.com/redeem/

Or call: 0333 320 7797

Use discount code: WDBCRIME25

Victim Support

Victim Support is an independent charity that help people affected by crime and traumatic events. They are not part of the police or any other criminal justice agency.

www.victimsupport.org.uk

T: 0808 168 9111

Neighbourhood Watch

Consider joining or forming a NeighbourHood Watch Scheme.

https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/

West Mercia Neighbourhood watch:

http://westmercianw.org.uk/

Their aim is to bring Neighbours together to create strong, friendly and active communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are less likely to happen.

Immobilise

Register your valuables to help reduce property crime and improve the chances of getting them back in the event of loss or theft.

https://www.immobilise.com/home#registration

Counter Terrorism Policing

Report suspicious behaviour here:
https://act.campaign.gov.uk/

You can also report suspicious activity by contacting the police in confidence on 0800 789 321.

Crimestoppers

An independent charity that gives you the power to speak up to stop crime, 100% anonymously.

Whoever you are, wherever you live, from communities to companies.

By phone and online, 24/7, 365 days a year.

https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/

Action Fraud

Report online at:
https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/

Action Fraud is the UK's national fraud and cyber crime reporting centre.

West Mercia
POLICE

www.westmercia.police.uk

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