

How to beat the bogus caller

If in doubt,
keep them out!

Home or away – keep all doors
LOCKED



STOP

Is anyone **EXPECTED**?
Back door **LOCKED**?



CHAIN

Put **CHAIN ON** before
opening the door.



CHECK

Ask for caller's **I.D.**
Check it by **PHONE**.

How to beat the bogus caller

Most people who call at your home will be genuine. But sometimes, people turn up unannounced, with the intention of tricking their way into your home. They are known as 'distraction burglars' or 'bogus callers', whose only aim is to get into homes to distract people and steal their money or valuables. You should always

be aware when someone you don't know calls at your door. By using the advice in this leaflet, you can protect yourself and vulnerable members of your family.



Bogus callers may be smartly dressed and claim to be from the council, the police, health organisations or gas, water or electricity companies. They can be convincing and persuasive. They may be men, women or even children.

They may ask for a drink of water or to wash their hands. Some may be looking for a lost pet.

In fact, people may use any story.

They often use 'props' like an identity card or wear overalls with a company logo. If you are expecting the caller, remember to check their identification very carefully against the letter you have been sent or the password you have agreed before you let them in.

And, if you are in any doubt, keep them out!

These official visitors should always arrange an appointment with you beforehand. If you are not expecting them and are alone, ask them to call back when you have someone with you.

Do not keep large amounts of money in your home.

Bogus callers can also turn up as builders or gardeners and try to trick you into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to having work done by someone who is just passing, or take their word that work needs to be done at all. Do not be pressured into paying them before they do any work. Do not accept any offer from them to drive you to the bank to withdraw the money. If you think work needs to be done, get quotes from trusted companies (two or three should be enough) and also ask a friend or relative for a recommendation. You can check whether the company is reputable by contacting your local council's trading standards office.



LOCK, STOP, CHAIN and CHECK

When someone calls at your door and offers to do repairs to your home or to ask for urgent help, or when someone official knocks on your door, follow these simple steps to help protect yourself and your home from bogus callers.

LOCK: Keep your front and back doors locked, even when at home.

STOP: Before you answer, stop and think if you are expecting anyone. Check that you have locked any back doors and taken the key out. Look through the spyhole or the window to see who it is.

CHAIN: If you decide to open the door, **put the door chain or bar on first.** Keep the bar or chain on while you are talking to the person on the doorstep. (Normally, when the door is shut and locked, leave the bar or chain off in case you need to get out in an emergency.)

Some bogus callers call on older and vulnerable people saying they need help urgently. They may ask you to help them outside the house or ask to come in to make a phone call or have a glass of water.

Only go to help them if you have someone else with you. Don't worry if you choose not to help – it is not rude or unfriendly.

CHECK: If someone who looks official calls at your door, always do the following. Ask for and carefully check their identity card, even if they have a prearranged appointment (all genuine callers will carry one). Do they look like the person on the card? Is the name the same one as that on your letter? Close the door while you do this. If you are not expecting them and they have not shown you an identity card, do not let them in until you have checked and double-checked that the caller is genuine.



You can do this in three ways.

- 1 Look up the phone number in the phone book and check it against the card the caller has given you. Do not be tempted to just ring the number on the card as it may be a fake.
- 2 Phone directory enquiries. It will help to check whether the company is genuine.
- 3 Look at a recent bill to check the phone number. You should also think about keeping a list of useful phone numbers, like gas, electricity and water services, in a handy place. Many now have free phone numbers to help you check the identity of their workers.



**If you have any doubts,
keep them out!**

If, after these checks, you have any doubts about the caller, especially if they came unannounced, tell them to call back later when someone can be with you. You can also tell them to contact you by letter to arrange a more convenient time.

Only let them in when you are absolutely sure that they are genuine.

Genuine callers will always be happy to make an appointment to call and will carry an identity card with a photograph. They won't mind waiting if you want to phone and confirm their identity or want to rearrange the appointment.

Whether you are at home or away – keep your front and back doors locked.

REPORT BOGUS CALLERS

Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs or even teams. They are often well organised. One will distract the person while the other searches the house for money or other valuables. They can be men, women or children (or often a combination). Watch out for anyone who says they are in a hurry. Don't let them pressure or confuse you.

If you think a bogus caller has called at your door, report it to the police immediately – dial 999 and tell them what has happened. Try to give the police a description of the person. While they are on their way, tell a neighbour, caretaker or Neighbourhood Watch representative just in case they try at other homes in the area. The earlier the police know that bogus callers are working in the area, the quicker they can investigate.

If you let someone into your home, even if you know them, and you become uncomfortable, make excuses and leave. Go to a neighbour's house or ask a friend to come back with you. If you have a community alarm use it.

DOOR BARS and CHAINS

If you haven't already got a door bar or chain fitted, you should think about getting one.

A door bar only costs a few pounds and is easier to use than a chain.



If you have a PVC door, bars can sometimes be difficult to fit. Check with the manufacturer before you buy a PVC door, and always ask for a bar to be fitted.

A door bar or chain acts as a useful barrier when talking to unexpected callers. It is a worthwhile investment.

Only put your door bar or chain on when you answer the door. Don't keep it on all the time in case you need to get out in an emergency.

PASSWORDS

The gas, water and electricity companies, and some councils, now have a password system for older and vulnerable customers. Customers give the company a word which is confidential to them and the company. When their representative calls, they will be expected to tell the customer the password to prove they are genuine. Many companies offer special services to help you even more. Please contact your gas, water and electricity suppliers, or other utilities, to find out more.

Working together to help you

The following people and organisations are working together to help you.

Local Crime Prevention Team

Your crime prevention team can give you more advice about home security. Contact them at your local police station.

Local Council

Community safety, housing or social services can give you advice or even provide home security.

Age Concern

A welfare organisation for older people. They even run projects in some areas to fit security devices in older people's homes. Look in your local phone book for your local centre or phone their national advice line free on **0800 00 99 66**. The line is open seven days a week from 7am to 7pm.



Help the Aged

Provide practical support to help older people live independent lives. They run a free national phone advice line called SeniorLine – call **0808 800 6565**. The line is open from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. In some areas, Help the Aged run schemes that supply and fit home-security equipment – call **01255 473 999** for more information.

Neighbourhood Watch

Try to join (or set up) a Neighbourhood Watch, Home Watch scheme or residents' group. It's a good way of working together to make your community safer. For more information visit www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com

