

TAKING CARE OF OUR COMMUNITY

THE DANGERS OF BOGUS CALLERS AND ROGUE TRADERS

Your home should be a safe place. Most callers to your home will be people you know, but you need to be careful when people you don't know and haven't invited call at your door - they could be a Doorstep Criminal.

WHAT ARE DOORSTEP CRIMINALS?

Doorstep criminals target residents across Kent, particularly older or more vulnerable householders. These callers may tell you that repairs need to be done to your home, making you feel the jobs need doing immediately. The work they say needs to be done usually relates to property maintenance, gardening, driveways, roofing, general building work, guttering etc. They can be persistent and intimidating to get you to agree to have the work done. Sometimes they will increase the price as the job progresses, often not finishing the work, which is frequently of a very poor standard. In some cases the quote is low and then becomes much higher. The work is either of poor quality or is not carried out at all. The common issue is that the work is never worth the amount paid. These traders do not issue Cancellation Notices or comply with other Trading Standards Legislation. Some of the traders who work in this way are linked to distraction burglary.



WHAT IS DISTRACTION BURGLARY?

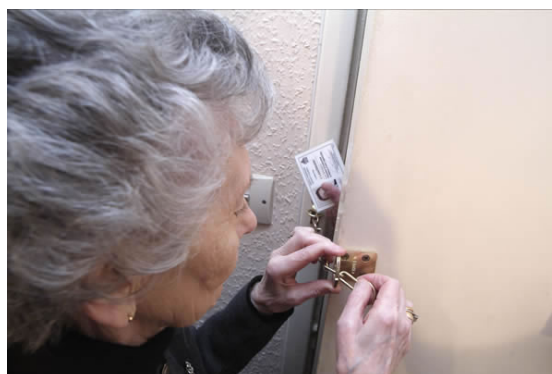


Doorstep callers are not always as genuine as they first appear. They often pretend to be some kind of official, perhaps from a water or gas company or the council, saying that urgent work needs to be done to the house, perhaps roofing, or offering to carry out resurfacing or garden work. They then charge an extortionate price for little or no work. Once inside, they seek to distract the occupant so they can steal cash or other valuables. Sometimes one person distracts the householder whilst the other sneaks in

to steal. The householder may only see one person.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW CALL AT YOUR DOOR?

- Keep your front and back doors locked
- Look to see who is at your front door, through the window or spy-hole.
- Put a door chain on before opening the front door. If you don't have one, ask the caller to pass their ID card through the letterbox.
- An ID or identity card is a card with the caller's picture, name and name of the company where the caller works.
- Keep the chain on the door. Check the caller's identity. Check that they are who they say they are.





- The callers might say they have come to check your electricity, water or gas meters. The callers might say they are from the council. Phone the company the caller say's they work for. Find the number of the company in the phone book. Do not use the number on the ID card.
- If you are not sure about the caller, ask them to make an appointment to come back when a friend or family member can be with you. If they are a genuine caller, they will understand and make an appointment with you.
- Do not sign any forms for services or give money to people you don't know when they turn up on your doorstep.
- Dial 999 and ask for the police if you feel afraid or threatened by people you don't know.
- If you are not sure, keep them out!
- Never let a stranger into your home, even if they do offer an identity card.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF OR OTHERS FROM THESE BOGUS CALLERS?

- Be very wary of anyone calling at your door offering to do work on your home or garden and do not let them into your home.
- If you are approached, always ask yourself if you would have had the work done if the trader had not called at your door. There are few jobs which need to be done immediately.
- Do not let a caller into your home if you are at all suspicious of them.
- Keep an eye on elderly or vulnerable neighbours. If you think someone you know is being targeted by such traders report it to Trading Standards via Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.
- If you feel threatened at any time or believe you are in immediate danger call the police on 999.

WHAT IF YOU WANT WORK DONE IN YOUR HOUSE OR GARDEN?

- If you do want the work done, get quotes from reliable tradesmen and take your time to choose. A reputable trader will be happy to let you do this.
- To find a reputable tradesman ask friends and neighbours for recommendations.
- Phone a local company, get a quote and fix a date and time. That way, you know the caller is genuine.
- Buy With Confidence is our good trader scheme that provides a list of traders who have been checked and approved by Trading Standards. Telephone Consumer Direct for details on 08454 04 05 06 or visit the website www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/Kent/bwc.htm
- Don't part with any money or a deposit unless you are sure you want to buy. Never pay the full amount or a large deposit up front.
- Ask for a detailed receipt with the trader's full address and telephone number on it.
- Beware of traders who will only accept cash or are prepared to 'do a deal' for payment in cash.
- NEVER accept any offers of a lift to the bank or building society to get money for the trader.



DO YOU KNOW YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS WHEN BUYING GOODS OR SERVICES ON THE DOORSTEP?

Try this quiz and find out

You bought from a seller who called on you at home and the goods or service you agreed to buy cost over £35. Can you change your mind and cancel the contract?

Yes, if a salesman calls on you with or without an appointment and the goods cost £35 or over. (The law has recently been changed to protect the consumer if they have invited a trader to their house, previously the law only protected the consumer if the trader called at their home uninvited).

How many days do you have to change your mind?

If a salesman calls with or without an appointment and the goods cost £35 or over, the law says you have 7 days to change your mind. (This is known as a 'cooling off' period).

What type of products does this apply to?

This includes contracts for goods and for the supply of services, including construction of driveways, patios, extensions and conservatories, as well as the repair, refurbishment or improvement of 'immovable' property.

Does the law require that the seller must give you written details of your right to cancel?

Yes. Failure to do so is a criminal offence and the contract cannot then be enforced.

If you decide to cancel the contract, are you entitled to get back any money you have paid?

Yes. However, if you have received certain goods - perishables for example, or if certain services have been carried out, you will have to pay for those despite cancelling the contract.

If you cancel the contract and the goods have been supplied, must you let the seller collect them?

Yes. You must keep them safe until they are collected.