

Distraction/Bogus Official Burglary

DEFINITION: DISTRACTION BURGLARY

Any crime where a falsehood, trick or distraction is used on an occupant of a dwelling to gain, or try to gain, access to the premises to commit burglary.

It includes cases where the offender first enters premises and subsequently uses distraction burglary methods in order to remain on the premises and/or gain access to other parts of the premises in order to commit burglary.

Offenders will pretend to be on official business from respectable concerns such as utility companies - gas, electricity and water - or the council. They may claim to be tradesmen or workmen calling to carry out urgent repairs.

Distraction burglars usually work in teams and move from area to area. One team member will distract the resident's attention while another will gain entry to the property and steal any cash or valuables they find.

Distraction burglary is a rare but very distressing crime that mainly affects the most vulnerable members of our society, especially the elderly and infirm.

It is now well established that distraction burglaries and rogue doorstep trading are interlinked - all too often, the seemingly innocent doorstep seller is actually checking things out for a re-visit to carry out a burglary or distraction burglary.

Whilst this type of criminal behaviour can impact on anybody in any place, research shows that older people and those living alone are particularly at risk. Incidents involving older people losing thousands of pounds are now not unusual to hear or read about and what has become clear is that the response and support of enforcement agencies has not kept pace with the skills and organisation of the criminals.

Victim Visits

Following an offence of Bogus Official Burglary an officer from the Local Police team will visit the victim. As part of this visit the officer will look to make referrals to other agencies re basic prevention requirements (eg no door chain - refer to a Handyman scheme).

Crime Prevention will also look for what other devices can be used to prevent / detect this type of offence. Currently we fit Memo Cam to appropriate houses however we will look to use other devices such as doorbell cameras, passive lights and links to care call alarm centres

Potential Victims by area

A multi agency team should target a specific area (chosen by analysis). This team could consist of Health/Fire/Police/Trading Standards/Housing/Council. The team will from information sharing identify those who are potentially vulnerable and visit them. These visits will then be an opportunity to address security needs and

establish good practice such as Nominate a Neighbour. The visits will also potentially identify those who are at risk from other dangers such as fire/falls or health matters. The staff visiting will be able to give information and leave items such as memoinders at the property.



NOMINATE A NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

**Help a
friend or
neighbour**



**STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE**
**HELPING OUR COMMUNITY
STAY SAFE AT HOME**

About the scheme

Thank you for agreeing to be a nominated neighbour and being prepared to check the identity of anyone who calls on your neighbour.

The initiative has been launched to reduce distraction burglary. We hope that it will assist elderly and vulnerable members of our community to feel safe in their homes.



NOMINATE A NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

What is your role?

- 1 Your friend or neighbour will write your address on to their 'Nominated Neighbour card'.
- 2 When your neighbour has a caller at their home whom they do not recognise, they will show the card to direct the caller to your home.
- 3 Check their identity.
DO NOT LET THEM IN YOUR HOME!
- 4 When you are happy that they are genuine, return with them to your neighbour's home.
LOCK ALL DOORS BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
- 5 When you arrive at your neighbour's home, stay with the caller while they conduct their business (unless the neighbour specifically asks for privacy).
- 6 Secure both front and back doors and ensure no one else can enter your neighbour's property undetected.
- 7 Never allow the caller to move from one room to another.
- 8 Never leave the caller alone.
- 9 When they have completed their business, escort the caller off the premises.

Genuine callers will not mind waiting while you check their identity. Utility companies can arrange passwords, to ensure that only genuine officials gain access to their customers' homes

If you are uncertain, or have any doubts about the identity of callers, contact the police immediately.

Tel: **0300 123 4455** or if you require assistance urgently dial **999**



NOMINATE A NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

I DO NOT RECOGNISE YOU!

**Please go to my nominated
neighbour at number:**

**They will check your identity
and return with you.**



STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE
HELPING OUR COMMUNITY STAY SAFE AT HOME

No Cold Calling Zones



Quite simply, this is about local residents or communities having the confidence to say “NO” to uninvited salespeople or to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are being watched.

Hundreds of zones are now operating successfully across the UK with reports of significant crime reduction and a greater feeling of security amongst residents.

Types of Cold Calling Control Zones

There are two main types of zones:

No Cold Calling

These should generally only be considered when supported by a real local need to stop all sellers/callers.

When designing a scheme it is important to give thought to the wording and to what is trying to be achieved. "No Cold Calling", for example could reasonably imply a wish to stop calls by charities, religious and political canvassers whereas "No Doorstep Selling" may be interpreted as not applying to roof repairers, gardeners and other services.

Examples currently used are:

- No Cold Callers
- No Cold Calling Zone or No Cold Calling Area
- No Cold Calling - No uninvited salespeople
- No Doorstep Selling
- No Uninvited Salespeople
- No Cold Calling - all uninvited callers will be reported
- This Community Says No Doorstep Callers Here
- No Uninvited Doorstep Callers
- Uninvited traders are not welcome here



It is important to be clear about what is intended and issues such as

exemptions need to be considered, consulted upon and decided before the zone is launched. For example do the restrictions apply to none commercial callers such as:

- Charities (local/national/collecting money/collecting clothes/signing bank direct debits, etc)? - See Doorstoppers 'Charities' web page for information on laws applicable to charities calling door to door.
- Cosmetics or housewares / cleaning products sellers?
- Religious canvassers?
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There is a balance between keeping the message clear and simple but at the same time reflecting the views and intentions of the residents/partners. The majority of local schemes do not state that any exemptions apply. Exemptions could be identified on signs/posters or in leaflets.

Watch / Protection Zones

An alternative to a No Cold Calling Zone is a Zone in which residents' awareness of the problems with doorstep callers is heightened but cold calling is allowed to continue.

These might be more suitable for areas where residents are requesting a No Cold Call Zone but where the evidence from Police/Trading Standards doesn't support such a robust approach. They may also be more suitable for larger areas where it would be impractical to canvass the views of every resident or get total agreement for a No Cold Calling Zone. No Cold Calling Zones can also be resource-intensive for Trading Standards and other agencies if they are committed to responding to reports of callers in the zone area. This is especially the case with larger/multiple zones. In such cases a control zone that allows cold callers to continue, but with close monitoring by residents, may be more appropriate.

Within such zones the Local Authority and partner services could for example focus educational/awareness-raising campaigns or carry out home security improvements such as fitting door chains, spy holes, door mirrors, etc. Each home within the zone would ideally be issued with door stickers so that residents can individually say "No cold calling" if they wish to.

Names for such control zones could be:

- No Doorstep Crime Zone
- Doorstep Crime Watch Zone
- Doorstep Protection Zone
- Doorstep Alert Zone
- Home Security Zone
- Trader Watch Zone

The most usual reasons / justifications for setting up and locating a zone are:

- Police data / reports
- Trading Standards reports
- Concentration of 'at risk' residents
- Community / Neighbourhood Watch request

Lets Work Together

Let's Work Together is a multi agency initiative to ensure that people receive the support they need to live healthy, safe and independent lives.

The initiative gives home visitors the tools, trainings and skills to be the 'eyes and ears' for partner organisations, identifying risks and signposting or referring to services.

Home visitor is a generic term for the significant number and wide range of people who visit individuals and families in their homes. They may be employees of statutory organisations or volunteers.

General Advice

- If you're not sure who is at your door, don't open it. Check the identity of the caller by calling the company they claim to be from eg. police, council or gas, electricity, water companies. Use the telephone numbers listed in your local directory or sent to you by your service provider.
- Do not use any telephone numbers provided by the caller, as they may be bogus.
- Many utility service providers like gas, electricity and water, offer password schemes for customers, sign up to these. When unannounced callers claiming to be from these utility providers call at your door they should know the password if they are genuine.
- 'Water Boards' no longer exist, it is an obsolete phrase used only by bogus callers.
- If a builder or tradesman offers to accompany you to the bank so you can withdraw cash to pay them don't accept.
- Arrange for someone you know well to take you and pay the tradesman later.
- Don't keep large quantities of cash at home; put it in the bank where it is safe
- Keep doors locked and windows secure at all times.
- Ensure that if you do let somebody in to your home, you close the door behind them – distraction burglars often work in teams, where one will distract you whilst others sneak in through the insecure door.
- If somebody asks for your help (needs to make a telephone call, lost a ball in your garden, needs a drink or pen and paper) refer them to a younger neighbour or assist them through a closed door or call a friend or neighbour to come and help.
- If you suspect a bogus caller is at your door call 999 immediately.