

## DOORSTEP CRIME – DON'T BE A VICTIM!

### What is Doorstep Crime?

Doorstep crime is the name given to crimes carried out by bogus callers and rogue traders who call uninvited at people's homes under the guise of legitimate business or trade.

### Bogus Callers

Some criminals make their living by preying on older and vulnerable adults. They may say they are from the water or gas companies and there is an emergency or pretend to be from the council.

The main aim of these bogus callers is to distract the occupier, get into the home and steal from them. They may work alone, in pairs or teams and could be male, female or even children. This crime is called distraction burglary.

### Rogue Traders

Many doorstep crime incidents are committed under the guise of legitimate business, usually property maintenance and repair. These traders knock at the door uninvited and may tell the house holder that urgent work is required on the property.

Examples of this type of work are roofing repairs, soffits and fascias, drive re-surfacing and garden services. The work is often unnecessary and to a very poor standard. A low price is normally quoted and often escalates to an extortionate figure once the work has commenced.

These workmen target the most vulnerable, especially older adults who live alone. They then put a lot of pressure on the victim to pay up, usually in cash. They often drive people to the bank to withdraw hundreds and even thousands of pounds.

The workmen prove difficult to trace because they use false names, accommodation addresses and mobile phone numbers.

**Experience shows that victims of bogus callers and rogue property repairers are likely to be targeted again particularly if they are found to keep cash in the house.**

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STOP THIS HAPPENING?**

### **SAY NO TO DOORSTEP CALLERS**

- Don't let uninvited callers in and don't buy from anyone at the door.
- Don't be rushed or pressurised into having work done on your home. **Remember** that reputable builders and other workmen don't have to go knocking on doors looking for work.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash in the house.

### **ACTION YOU CAN TAKE**

- Have a door chain or door bar fitted and consider fitting an entry phone or a door viewer with a microphone
- Try to keep up with house and garden maintenance.
- Only deal with callers by appointment
- Report any suspicious callers to the police or Trading Standards
- Check the caller's identity. Genuine callers from the utilities / council etc will have identity cards and will happily wait on the doorstep while you telephone to confirm that they are who they say they are. Don't ring the number on the identity card – look in the phone book.
- Get contact details of a friend, neighbour or local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and ring them if you have a caller at the door you are uncertain about.
- Fit security lighting above the front and rear of the property.

### **WHAT CAN DERBYSHIRE TRADING STANDARDS DO TO HELP YOU?**

We treat doorstep crime incidents as a priority. When we receive a report of an incident we can:

#### **Intervene**

- Act on your behalf to prevent you handing over cash

## **Disrupt**

- Disrupt doorstep criminals by attending the incident wherever possible. If the trader is still on site, then we will attend with the support of the police.
- Leaflet the local area warning other residents that doorstep criminals are operating in the area.
- Gather information about such traders and share this with the Police, and neighbouring Trading Standards Services to prevent other residents from becoming victims.

## **Advise**

We can advise all parties involved. The trader about their legal obligations and you about your rights.

## **Support**

- We will act on your behalf if you no longer want to deal with the trader directly.
- We will call in other agencies as required (e.g. Victim Support and the Police) and direct you to home security improvement agencies where available.

## **Enforcement**

Relevant legislation includes:

- **The Cancellation of Contracts made in a Consumer's Home or Place of Work etc. Regulations 2008**

If you agree a contract in your own home or place of work and the goods or services cost more than £35 then usually a 7 day cooling off period must be given. During this time you can cancel the contract. If you are not given a written notice explaining the cancellation rights then the trader has broken the law and the contract is unenforceable. This means that the trader is not legally entitled to any payment for the goods or services. In this situation do not be pressurised into paying, contact Trading Standards for advice.

- **The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008**

False verbal or written statements about work required or claimed to have been carried out are the most obvious offences. We can also deal with false statements indicating approval by the local authority or membership of trade organisations (e.g. Guild of Master Craftsmen).

If the rogue trader quotes one price then attempts to charge a higher price once the work has been completed he could be breaking the law. The rogue trader would also commit a criminal offence if they harassed you to make you pay money that they claimed you owed them.

- **Fraud Act 2006**

Obtaining money by deception, for example saying your roof needs urgent repair when it doesn't is a criminal offence.

- **Companies Act 2006**

The ownership of the business must be disclosed on all business letters, orders, receipts, invoices and any documents about payment. If they are a sole proprietor they must state their name. If they are a partnership they must state the name of all the partners. If they are a limited company they must state the full company name. All businesses must also give on these documents an address at which legal documents can be served; this cannot be a Post Office Box.

## **REMEMBER - SAY NO TO DOORSTEP CALLERS**

**We want to hear about all doorstep crime incidents in Derbyshire.**

For advice or to report any suspicious callers contact Derbyshire Trading Standards at:  
Chatsworth Hall  
Chesterfield Road  
Matlock  
Derbyshire  
DE4 3FW

If you are a **consumer**:

Telephone                      Citizens Advice consumer helpline      08454 040506  
Website                         [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

- If you are threatened or intimidated ring the Police on **0345 123 33 33**
- Or in an emergency ring **999**

If you are a **business**:

Telephone: 08 456 058 058  
Fax: 01629 536197  
Website: [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards)

We want everyone to be able to understand us. On request, we will arrange:

- Language interpreters, including for sign language
- Translation of written materials into other languages
- Materials in large print, on tape or in Braille.

To ensure that you are looking at the most up-to-date version of this leaflet, please visit our website at

[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/sfy22\\_tcm9-71746.pdf](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/sfy22_tcm9-71746.pdf)

or telephone us on 01629 536166.

Reputable builders and other workmen **DO NOT** have to go knocking on doors looking for work.



We can help you to find honest and reliable traders who promise to do a good job for a fair price.

All the businesses on our Trusted Trader register have been checked by our trading standards team.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> plumbers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> glazers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> builders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> drain cleaners
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> roofers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> electricians
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> garages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> gardeners
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> decorators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> retailers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> joiners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ...and many more.

Call Derbyshire\* 08456 058 058

[www.derbyshire.gov.uk/trustedtrader](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/trustedtrader)

\* Call Derbyshire is open 8am to 8pm weekdays, 9.30am to 4pm Saturdays.

An average three-minute call costs 10p for BT customers. Charges from other suppliers may vary.

