

# DEALING WITH UNEXPECTED CALLERS



## Advice from Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit



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**A distraction burglary is one where a criminal calls at your house posing as an official or asks for your help with something. They can make up a story to get in to your home.**

**Burglars need not go to the trouble of breaking in if they can just knock on your door and be invited in. Always be on your guard when anyone you're not expecting - a man, woman or even a child - turns up at your door.**

## **Bogus callers**

They may be smartly dressed and often claim to be from the police, the council or the 'water board'. They sometimes claim to be builders or gardeners and try to trick you into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to have any work done by someone who is just passing by. If you need work doing, get at least three quotes from reputable companies.

Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs. Beware of one distracting you at your door while the other enters your home via another door and steals your property. The best advice is to keep them out.

Ensure your back door is locked if you are answering the front door to someone you don't know.

Watch out for anyone who says they're in a hurry or it's an emergency. Don't let them pressure you. If in doubt, call a neighbour or friend or the police.

If you have any suspicions at all, don't let them in.



## **Rogue traders**

'Workmen' may say they need to come in to check something or make urgent repairs. Be cautious of callers who offer to make building repairs or Tarmac your drive. Often they'll ask for money in advance. They may even offer to drive you to the bank to withdraw money to pay them.

If you need any building work done, get several written quotes from reputable firms, then decide which one is best. If in doubt, talk it through with a neighbour or someone in your family.

**Genuine callers will normally make an appointment first and carry identification from their company with their photograph on.**

## How do you find a trader that measures up? Buy With Confidence helps you find a trader you can trust.

Buy With Confidence is run by Trading Standards - Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council - with support from Age Concern and Consumer Direct.

You can see an up-to-date list of builders, plumbers, gardeners, painters, electricians and many other types of business at [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)

If you don't have internet access, you can call Consumer Direct on **08454 04 05 06** and they will help you find the traders you need.

All the businesses on Buy With Confidence have been visited and checked by Trading Standards. To be members, traders must understand consumer protection laws, provide a quality service and give good customer care.

The scheme cannot guarantee that nothing will ever go wrong, but members of the scheme must deal with complaints fairly, and Trading Standards will help both sides to reach a fair solution.

If you decide to employ someone who is not on this scheme, always choose a reputable firm. Ask family and friends for their recommendations. Don't be afraid to ask the trader questions, such as:

- Where have they worked before?
- Can you look at their last job?
- Have they any previous experience in similar jobs?
- Can they provide references from satisfied customers?

Don't have work done by someone who contacts you unexpectedly or puts a leaflet through your door. It's often difficult to trace them if there are problems with the work.

Never buy at the door or from a business you don't know.

### Planning

**Make a plan of what you want done. Don't be pressured into unnecessary work or work you can't afford. Get a second opinion if you're unsure of what needs doing.**

**For some jobs you may need to get consent or agreements from your local authority and insurance company. Ask your trader for advice.**

**For large jobs consider choosing a contractor that offers an insurance backed guarantee. This will give you protection if the contractor goes out of business. Make sure you read the terms of the guarantee to ensure you know what is being offered.**

## Getting quotations

- An estimate is only a rough price and is not binding. Insist on getting a quotation, which is a clear written price. Quotations should include a breakdown of costs including any extras and VAT where it is payable.
- Try to get at least three written quotations from different businesses and ask how long they are valid for.
- Don't automatically choose the lower quote. Check what is included first.

## Contracts

- Once you agree to something you are in a binding contract whether or not it is in writing. Therefore get a written contract, particularly for large jobs. This is your protection in case of a dispute.
- Check payment timing and agree any deposits and retention details. Avoid making payments 'up front' unless it's for materials which are on site and you have a receipt for. Staged payments are a good way of making sure the work progresses steadily. Agree start and finish deadlines.
- For contracts agreed at home you have cancellation right. The business should give you a written cancellation notice giving you a seven-day cooling off period. You also have cancellation rights for credit agreements.

## If things go wrong

**You have rights under the Supply of Goods and Service Act 1982.**  
**For initial advice and information on all the aspects of buying goods and services contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or visit [www.consumerdirect.gov.uk](http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk)**

## Answering your door

**LOCK** - Keep your front and back doors locked even when you are at home.

**STOP** - Before you answer, stop and think whether you are expecting anyone. Check you have locked the back door and taken the key out. Look through a spy hole or window to see who the caller is.

**CHAIN** - If you decide to open the door, put the chain or door bar on first, if you have one. Keep the chain or bar on while you are talking to the caller. With PVC doors, it can be difficult and costly to fit a door chain. Check with the manufacturer before you buy a PVC door, that a chain will be fitted.

**FIRE SAFETY** - Only put on your door chain as you answer the door - don't keep it on all the time as this could delay your exit in case of fire.

**CHECK** - Look at their clothing. Some official callers will have a uniform bearing their organisation's name or symbol. Even if the caller has a pre-arranged appointment with you, check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, call the company concerned to verify their representative's identity. Don't use a phone number on the card, as it could be fake, so look up the company in the phone book if you can. If you're still not sure, ask the caller to come back later when someone is with you.

Most utility companies operate a password scheme for older or vulnerable customers. You can register with the scheme and their representative will have to confirm your password when they visit to prove they are a genuine employee of the company.

If you're still not happy, phone the police on **999** and tell us what's happened. Warn your neighbours and friends.

**If you think a bogus caller has been to your home, call the police immediately on 999. If you have any doubts KEEP THEM OUT!**

## **Useful contacts and advice**

### **Victim Support**

If you have been a victim of distraction burglary, we will give your details to the charity Victim Support (unless you ask us not to). They will call you to find out if you need any support and explain how they can help. This can include sending a specially trained volunteer to help you come to terms with the crime as well as practical support (e.g. improving home security).

If you want to contact them immediately - ring their national support line on **0845 30 30 900**. Find out more at [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### **Age UK**

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. Their mission is to promote the well-being of all older people and to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

For more information and advice, call **0800 169 65 65** or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

### **Consumer Direct**

If you need help or advice regarding a trader contact Consumer Direct on **08454 04 05 06**, they can also offer advice on selecting a reputable trader in your area.

### **Priority Service Register**

Energy companies offer the Priority Service Register (except Northern Ireland). It allows you to set up a personal password for gas and electricity staff to use every time they call at your home. This will confirm they are genuine.

To join the scheme, call the (freephone) Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99**, or contact your energy supplier directly. Joining the Priority Service Register also entitles you to other free services.

### **Water companies**

Water company employees expect to wait outside while you check their identity. Use the number on your water bill or telephone directory to call your water supplier every time. For extra protection you can also call the same number to register a password.

### **Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (NHWN)**

Neighbourhood Watch & Home Watch represents all members of Neighbourhood Watch across England & Wales.

To contact NHWN call **0116 2293 118** or email [enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk)

More information can also be found at [www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk)

## Nottinghamshire Alert

Nottinghamshire Alert is a system which allows Nottinghamshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch in Nottinghamshire and other organisations that work for the public to send community safety messages to you quickly and efficiently.

If you are interested in getting updates on major incidents, advice on crime prevention and community safety and alerts about criminals operating in your area, make sure you are registered with the system.

You can report antisocial behaviour in your area and receive responses from police about the incident you have reported and find out how to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or set up your own in your street by registering.

### What do I get?

- A totally free service — you can control your message settings and choose to receive alerts via email, text message to your mobile phone or recorded voicemail. You can unsubscribe at any time.
- Information about crime trends, incidents and appeals from authorised police officers and police staff.
- Report suspicious and antisocial behaviour (not crime), receive updates and responses about them.
- Start, manage or request to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in your area.
- Configure how, when and which messages you'd like to receive.

If you want to know more about Nottinghamshire Alert, contact Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit.

**Tel:** 101, extension 800 3011

**Email:** [nottinghamshirealert@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:nottinghamshirealert@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk)

To register for Nottinghamshire Alert, visit [www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk](http://www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk)

If you would like a paper copy of the registration form, call **101** or visit your local police station to request one.

For more advice on crime prevention contact

Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit  
Arrow Centre  
Hucknall  
Nottinghamshire  
NG15 8AY

Tel: **101**

Tell us what priorities you want your local police to focus on with our online survey

[www.neighbourhoodprioritysurvey.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodprioritysurvey.co.uk)

If you have information about criminals operating in your area, call Crimestoppers anonymously on

**0800 555 111**