



# CALLING ALL CARERS: KEEPING THOSE YOU CARE FOR SAFER AT HOME

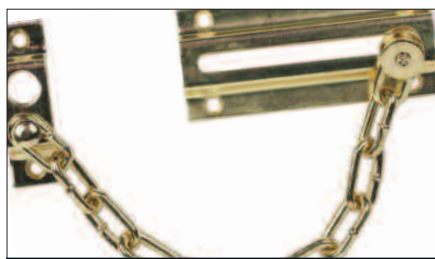
**KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT HIDDEN**

**LET'S KEEP  
CRIME  
DOWN**

Carers, whether professional or family members, can play vital roles in the drive to reduce distraction crime against vulnerable older people. As a carer, do you know what you should be looking for on your regular care visits, to help keep the person you care for from becoming a victim of unscrupulous bogus callers or rogue traders?



There are some basic guidelines of observation and reporting that will help to deter the visits of unwanted callers. There are also effective practices that people should always adopt when an unexpected caller visits:



**DOES THE FRONT  
DOOR HAVE A SECURE  
LOCK, SPY HOLE, BAR  
AND SAFETY CHAIN?**

Encourage the person you care for to think if anyone is expected. Tell them to look through the spy hole to identify the caller and keep the chain on when deciding whether to talk to any stranger. You may be able to help organise the fitting of these essential security items through a local Age UK Handyperson scheme.



**ARE CASH/VALUABLES  
LEFT LYING AROUND?**

Both bogus callers and rogue traders are always looking for ready cash – plus passports, bank statements and household bills which can be used for identity fraud. Remind that such items should never be left to be seen and not

to show anybody that significant amounts of cash may be kept in a wallet or purse. Advise that repair payments should always be made by cheque.



**ARE MEDICATIONS  
LEFT OUT FOR ALL  
TO SEE?**

Medications such as powerful pain killers can be a valuable attraction for bogus callers. Displayed medication seen from the outside can also be a clear indication of a possible infirmed vulnerable person on the inside.



**IS THE PROPERTY OF  
DILAPIDATED  
APPEARANCE?**

Unkempt gardens, missing roof tiles, blocked drains and broken guttering are just open invitations for rogue traders to

try their luck. They will make unexpected calls to offer repair services – often of unwarranted necessity and at extortionate prices. Tell those you care for never to consider any such approach and always to get quotes from reputable, recommended tradespeople.



## ARE ANIMALS SUSCEPTIBLE TO 'PETNAPPING'?

Petnapping of cherished animals can be a particularly distressing crime, which can be costly in every sense to the pet owner. If the person you care for owns a dog, encourage them to keep a close watch on it at all times – especially when left in a garden.



## IS THERE A 'NOMINATED NEIGHBOUR' TO INVOLVE?

Neighbours are only too pleased to be of assistance to older people living nearby. You can suggest to the person you care for to keep a neighbour's telephone number in a prominent place, to help with the checking of unexpected visitors' credentials – and in an emergency situation generally. Neighbours generally can be encouraged to 'read the signs' concerning the well being of older people – particularly those living alone. Are lights switched on at night? Do the curtains get drawn? Is milk taken in? Are newspapers accumulating on the doorstep?



## ARE DUMMY ALARM BOXES FITTED?

Obviously, a genuine alarm system is preferable, but older people may be deterred by cost and memory practicalities. Dummy alarm boxes can be an effective deterrent when a burglar is choosing which property to target. Again, you could suggest that the local Age UK Handyperson scheme is contacted.



## ARE PENDANTS AND ALARM PULL CORDS FITTED?

Many people given alarm pull systems and pendants by local authorities are amiss about using them – not wanting to 'bother' the call centre, or forgetting to wear the pendant. You should be encouraging the person you care for to treat such devices as an essential part of their continued well being. Make sure they fully understand the mechanisms and procedures involved.

## COULD A BOGUS CALLER ALARM BUTTON BE INSTALLED?

Simple Telecare (assistive living) technology can be installed which will include a 'Bogus Caller' alarm button at the front door with a mobile pendant access. You might mention the possibility to your social services' care manager.

## IS A PASSWORD SYSTEM SET UP WITH UTILITY COMPANIES?

It is extremely rare that any water, gas or electricity company will have the need to visit unannounced. When notified visits are necessary, a password system can be set up, where the representative will have to give a nominated password, as a verification of his/her credentials. You should encourage those you care for, or family carers, to make the password arrangement(s).

## LOCK > STOP > CHAIN > CHECK

Please take the trouble to match this list against the homes you visit – and be prepared to give advice where there is inadequate precaution. Simple application on your part can mean the difference between a callous bogus caller or rogue trader being foiled, or succeeding!



At the very least, let's get all older people practising the simple procedure of 'Lock, Stop, Chain, Check' at all times. This guidance is presented by Care Directions ([www.caredirections.co.uk](http://www.caredirections.co.uk)) as part of The Home Office's 'Action Against Burglary' campaign.

  
**Home Office**