

LIFE SKILLS

Doorstep crime

TEACHERS NOTES

DOORSTEP
CRIME

**Easy
read**



**TRADING
STANDARDS**

DOORSTEP CRIME

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 call at your door and try to sell you something, or offer to do some work on your house or garden, like a builder or gardener.

If somebody knocks on your door uninvited and tries to sell you something, it is called 'cold calling'.

WHAT IS DOORSTEP CRIME?

Doorstep callers are not always as genuine as they first appear. Some are criminals. These people knock on your door then lie, cheat and trick you into giving them money for work they say needs doing in your house or garden.

These callers may tell you that repairs need to be done to your home urgently. The work they say needs to be done usually relates to property maintenance, such as roofing, guttering, driveways, general building work and gardening.

Some doorstep callers pretend to be somebody 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.

Other people that call at your home may try to sell you things, like security systems or mobility aids.

Examples of bad practices associated with cold calling and doorstep selling include: pressure selling, unfair contracts, overpriced or substandard home maintenance or improvements, so-called consumer surveys and bogus charity collections.

These people are committing crime and we call them doorstep criminals, because they target you in your own home.

DOORSTEP CRIMINALS

Doorstep criminals often find out where older people live, or where there are people with special needs who might easily be tricked.

They are usually very friendly to start with and offer to do a small job at a very low cost to gain access to the home. They will often talk about their family and usually have a sad story of a family tragedy or accident, in order to get pity and further work.

They will often say they are working round the corner, at a neighbour's or are returning to check work previously carried out (particularly on the roof).

They can be extremely persuasive and use intimidation to make you agree to have the work done. In many cases the quote to do work is low and then becomes much higher. The work is either of poor quality or is not carried out at all.

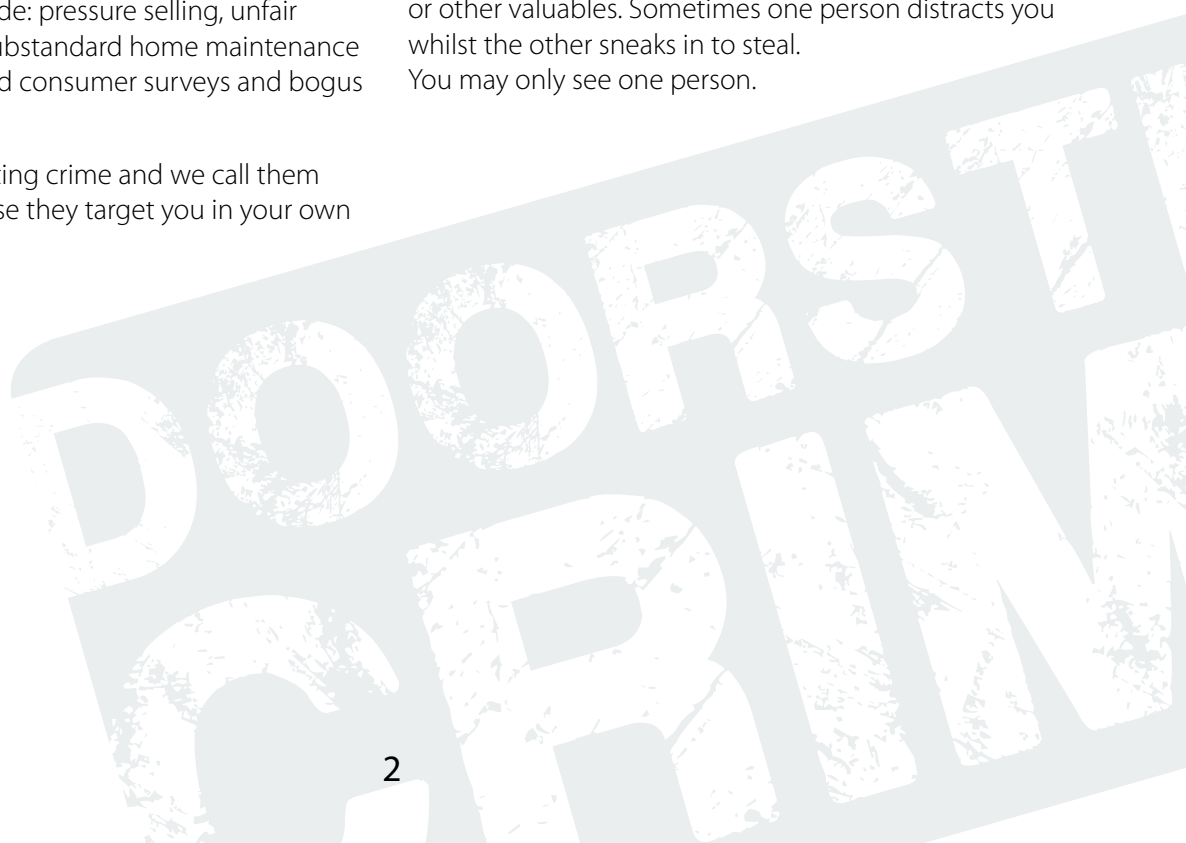
The common problem is that the work is never worth the amount paid. These traders do not issue Cancellation Notices or comply with other Trading Standards legislation. Some of the traders who work in this way are linked to distraction burglary.

WHAT IS DISTRACTION BURGLARY?

Some callers might lie and say they have come to check your electricity, water or gas meters or they are from the council and need to get into your house to carry out repairs.

Once inside, they will distract you so they can steal cash or other valuables. Sometimes one person distracts you whilst the other sneaks in to steal.

You may only see one person.



HOW CAN YOU KEEP SAFE AT HOME?

- When someone knocks at your front door, look to see who it is through the window or spy hole.
- Before you answer the door, check that your back door is locked and put the chain on your front door before you open it.
- If the caller says they are from somewhere like your electricity, gas or water company, ask to see their Identity Card and call the company to see if they are genuine. To be safe, look up the company number on a recent bill, rather than trust the number on their ID card.
- Look at the photograph – has anything been stuck over it and does it match the person at the door?
- Remember, it is very rare that they will visit without an appointment.
- Do not let strangers in your house. If you are not sure about them, do not let them in. Remember it is your home.
- Tell them you are not interested in what they are offering or that it's not convenient and ask them to come back at a different time when a friend or family member can be with you to help you decide what to do.
- Some doorstep sales people can be pushy and may not leave your home when you ask them to. If this happens call the Police.
- Do not sign any forms for services or give money to people you do not know when they turn up on your doorstep.
- Never give money to someone at the door.
- Never agree to go with a trader or a stranger to the bank to get money out.
- If you are not sure, KEEP THEM OUT!

- Dial 999 and ask for the police if you feel afraid or threatened by people you don't know.
- For non-urgent calls to the Police dial 101.
- For free consumer advice call Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 04 05 06.
- There are laws to help protect you. If you buy something on the doorstep costing over £42, you have 14 days to change your mind and ask for your money back. This is known as the 'cooling off period'.
- If you do need work doing on your house or garden ask a neighbour or friends if they can recommend a trader they have used before or look at the Kent County Council Trading Standards fair trader scheme: 'Checkatrade' www.checkatrade.com/kent or call 03330 146190.
- Get quotes from at least three traders to compare prices.
- Ask for the quote in writing, to ensure that the price doesn't go up afterwards.
- Don't pay until the job is finished.
- You can report a doorstep criminal to Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 04 05 06.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Doorstep Criminals
Kent Police
Citizens Advice

DOORSTEP
CRIMINALS

Questions



Question 1

Who are doorstep criminals?

- a) Strangers who knock on your door and offer to do good work on your house or garden for a fair price
- b) Strangers who knock on your door to sell you something and give you your money back if you change your mind
- c) Strangers who knock on your door then lie, cheat and trick you into giving them money for work they say needs doing in your house or garden.

Question 2

Who needs to be careful of doorstep criminals?

- a) Everyone
- b) Elderly
- c) Women

Question 3

If somebody knocks on your door, what should you do?

- a) Open the door straight away
- b) Lock your back door and put the chain on your front door before you answer it
- c) Tell them to go round the back

Question 4

If a caller says they have come to check the electricity, water or gas meters or say they are from the council, you should ask them to show you their ID card.



What is an ID or identity card?

- a) A passport
- b) A card with the caller's picture, their name, name of the company where the caller works and telephone number
- c) A piece of paper which the person has written his name on





Question 5

You have checked the caller's ID and you are still not sure about them.

What should you do?

- a) Let them in
- b) Give them your phone number to call you
- c) Ask them to come back when you have somebody else with you

Question 6

The caller says he has seen you need work doing on your house or garden and asks you to sign a form agreeing to have the work done and asks for cash.

What should you do?

- a) Sign the form and give him a cheque
- b) Sign the form and let him take you to the bank to get the money
- c) Do not sign any forms and never give them money



Question 7

A salesperson knocks at your door and you agree to buy some books from them for £45. Later you decide you do not want the books.

Can you change your mind and ask for your money back?

- a) No, you said you wanted them and have to keep them
- b) Yes, you can ask for your money back
- c) No, the salesperson said 'no refunds'

Question 8

You bought a Hoover from a doorstep seller. You have changed your mind and want to ask for your money back.

How many days do you have to change your mind and ask for your money back?

- a) 30 days
- b) 14 days
- c) 7 days

Question 9

When you employ a trader to do work for you, like a builder or gardener, what important details should you get?

- a) Their name, address and contact telephone number
- b) Their mobile number
- c) Their bank details

Question 10

If you have agreed to buy goods or services from a doorstep seller and are worried or not sure what to do and need help, who should you contact?

- a) Do not tell anyone
- b) Contact Citizens Advice consumer service for advice and to report it to Trading Standards
- c) Pay for the goods or services, even if you do not want them

**DOORSIDE
CRIMINAL**

Question 11

You want some work done in your house or garden.

What should you do?

- a) Give the work to somebody who knocks on your door looking for work
- b) Ask someone you have seen working on another house
- c) Look at the list of traders recommended by Trading Standards at www.checkatrade.com/kent or call 03330 146190



Answers

Doorstep Crime

Name: _____

Question	Answer
Question 1	
Question 2	
Question 3	
Question 4	
Question 5	
Question 6	
Question 7	
Question 8	
Question 9	
Question 10	
Question 11	