



Protecting your home and belongings

Always **call 999** if you think a crime is in progress

Call 101 if it's not an emergency or visit:

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk



Introduction



People often ask us for advice on how to prevent crime from happening, particularly in relation to burglary, and we hope you find the information in this booklet useful. It offers a range of simple things that you can do to protect your home, garden, car and bike.

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Supporting victims of burglary



We understand that being burgled, robbed or having money taken by fraudsters can be deeply upsetting and more than just the hassle of an insurance claim.

We are committed to reducing burglaries and other crimes by identifying and relentlessly pursuing offenders and bringing them to justice. We'll keep you updated and provide you with the best possible service.

Now you've reported your crime, there are some things you should do:

Cancel your credit or debit cards, chequebooks and passbooks, if they've been stolen.

Ask your bank/credit card company if there's been any use of your cards or chequebooks. If so, note the dates, times, amounts, details and location and ensure we're aware of this information as soon as possible.

Activate any tracking software downloaded on to your stolen computer or phones.

Contact your mobile phone provider, whether you have a contract or pre-pay phone, and ask for the phone to be blocked. Also ask for the IMEI number and give this information to the officer dealing with your case.

Contact your household insurance company to find out if you're covered for repairs (if

needed) or for replacement locks if your keys have been stolen. They will also advise you of anything else you need to do.

Preserve the scene. If your home has been burgled, officers may advise you that a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) will contact you to arrange a visit. If so, please don't touch anything where possible, especially smooth/shiny surfaces and any point of entry used by the burglar, such as window ledges.

What happens next?

If your home has been burgled, you will receive an initial police visit and possible CSI visit (as above) and may also receive a visit from a neighbourhood police officer or PCSO a few days later. Meanwhile, an investigation will be started into the burglary. You may also receive a call from the investigation team if they need any additional information.

You can track updates in the investigation online via Track My Crime (www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/trackmycrime). You should also receive a 'You've reported a crime, what happens next' leaflet. Please ask the attending officer about details of Track My Crime or the leaflet if you don't receive this. You will be contacted to update you on the outcome of the case in due course.

Protecting your home



- Lock all windows and doors at all times – even those in unattended rooms when you're at home.
- Make sure your front and back doors are solid doors, in good condition, with a strong frame.
- All external wooden doors should be fitted with a five lever mortice dead lock. It's also advisable to have a security chain and a viewer fitted to your door.
- Letter box restrictors can prevent thieves from accessing the lock from outside.
- Sliding patio doors should have long throw bolts fitted to the opening door.
- Fit key-operated window locks to all downstairs windows and vulnerable ones like easily accessible upstairs windows.
- Remember to remove keys from locked windows and to keep them out of sight in a safe place.
- If you are replacing windows, consider laminated glass as it's difficult to break. Ensure they meet the relevant British and European security standards.
- Never leave valuables on display in your windows or near doors – especially those with cat flaps.
- Keys shouldn't be kept by the front door. Keep them hidden away in a drawer or somewhere else out of sight.
- Invest in plug timers for lights and radios to give the appearance of people being at home.
- If possible, have a security alarm fitted.
- Consider installing CCTV cameras.
- Download tracking software on to phones, laptops and any other gadgets you may have, such as **www.preyproject.com**.
- Record all your property on national property database **www.immobilise.com** to deter thieves and increase your chances of being reunited with stolen property.
- Report any suspicious behaviour. An offender may check out a number of properties for entry points before finding a vulnerable home.
- Consider joining a Neighbourhood Watch scheme (see page 8).

Securing your garden



- Check for weak spots where a thief could get in – a low or sagging fence or a back gate with a weak lock.
- Rear garden fences should generally be 1.8m high and kept in good condition. Fix trellis on top of fence panels to make them more difficult to climb over.
- Fences at the front of the property should be low to offer good visibility.
- Fit a strong, lockable high gate across any side passage to stop a thief getting to the back of the house where they can work undisturbed.
- Use thorny hedges and plants along boundaries, under ground-floor windows and up drainpipes to make it harder for thieves to gain access.
- Cut back any vegetation that might shield a thief from view and any trees that could give roof access.
- Consider fitting dusk 'til dawn security lights to the outside of your home at the front and back.
- Don't leave ladders or tools outside, or if necessary chain them up, as they could be used to break into your property.
- Photograph valuable tools and unusual garden ornaments.
- At detached or remote properties, consider fitting a gate at the entrance of your drive and keep it shut whenever possible. Lock the gate overnight.

Securing your outbuildings



Sheds

- It is advisable not to keep valuable items in your shed but if this can't be avoided, make sure you secure it. A tough pad bar (also called hasp & staple) fitted with a padlock and secured with coach bolts is the most effective way of securing the shed door.
- Padlocks should be of hardened steel and of Sold Secure standard (www.soldsecure.com). Buy the close-shackled variety to prevent hacksaws/bolt croppers being used.
- Replace standard door hinges with strap hinges secured by coach bolts or use security screws on existing hinges.
- Shed windows should be screwed shut or have window locks. Consider fitting a metal grille.
- Chain tools, cycles and other valuable equipment together using a high security chain or cable and a padlock. Anchor the chain into the wall or floor.

- Alarms can be extended to garages and sheds. Alternatively, buy a battery-operated audible alarm.
- Mark your tools with your postcode and house number, or the first two letters of your house name, then place the details on www.immobilise.com

Garages

- Most standard 'up and over' garage doors are easily overcome by a burglar. You can prevent this by drilling a hole through the channel above the wheels and fitting a padlock. Alternatively, fit a hasp and staple each side of the door with a padlock (preferably the close-shackled variety and of Sold Secure standard) or fit a specialist lock.
- If you have a door connecting your garage to your house, ensure the connecting door is secured with a mortice deadlock (BS 3621) and mortice bolts.

Preventing fuel thefts

If you have fuel storage tanks on your property, please consider the measures below.

- Avoid putting storage tanks in isolated areas. If this isn't possible, consider fencing or planting that will disguise the tank.
- Lock your fuel tank wherever possible and don't leave containers nearby that could be used to steal the fuel.

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Keeping jewellery and valuables safe



- Consider fitting a suitable safe to store jewellery and other valuables. Various grades of safe are available according to the value and number of items you want to store in it.
- Before purchasing a safe, it is advised that the owner consults with their insurer as they may require a certain grading to cover the contents in case of loss.
- Safes should be supplied and fitted by a company approved by the Master Locksmiths Association. The safe should be Sold Secure tested and approved - you can check the details on www.soldsecure.com
- The safe should be fixed to a solid wall or floor with the fixings inside the safe.
- Take photographs of your valuables and write a short description of each of them. Register your valuables on www.immobilise.com

Securing your home when you're away



- Make sure your house looks occupied. It's worth getting automatic time switches to switch lights and a radio on and off.
- Don't leave valuable items like TVs or DVD players visible through windows.
- Cut the lawns before you go.
- Cancel deliveries of milk, newspapers, etc discreetly – don't announce your departure to a shop full of people.
- Only tell people who need to know you're going away. Be careful about what information you give out on social media.
- Don't have your home address showing on your luggage for the outward journey. Put this only on the inside of your cases.
- Lock all outside doors and windows. If you have a burglar alarm, make sure it's set.

Beating bike crime



- Take a picture of your bike, especially if you have customised it in any way.
- Register your bike at www.immobilise.com and www.bikeregister.com.
- Insure your bike, either on your home contents insurance or separately. If you use your home contents insurance, don't forget to cover it for theft away from home.
- If you don't need them, replace quick-release levers with bolt-up security skewers which are more difficult to undo.
- Always lock your bike at home, even when it's in your flat or halls of residence, and secure it to a fixed immovable object.
- If storing your bike in the shed or garage, secure it with a high security chain or cable and a padlock. Anchor the chain into the wall or floor.
- Invest in a good lock which has achieved Sold Secure standard (www.soldsecure.com). Aim to spend around 20% of the value of the bike and always opt for D-locks. Avoid cable style or combination locks.
- If you're out and about, always try to lock your bike to a purpose-built stand that is firmly anchored in the ground.
- When locking your bike, where possible ensure it passes through at least one wheel and the frame, whether at home or out and about.
- If you leave your bike in public, try to take all removable parts with you.

Beating car crime



- Lock doors, windows, the boot and sunroof every time you leave your car, however briefly.
- Don't leave bags, coats or change on display. The cost of replacing a broken window is often far more than the value of goods stolen. If you can, take your things with you. If you can't, lock everything out of sight in the boot.
- Never leave driving documents or personal letters inside your car. They could help a thief to sell your car or provide a cover story if stopped by the police.
- Don't leave satnavs on display when you're not in your car.
- Never set your home address in your satnav for your start or return journeys, use an area near to your home you know - if your keys are stolen a criminal may use your satnav setting to direct them to your home.
- Keep valuables out of sight while you're driving and consider keeping the doors locked.
- Take the ignition key out even when the car is parked in your drive or garage and always set the immobiliser. If you don't have an immobiliser, consider having one fitted.
- Always keep your car keys in a safe place at home, away from windows and doors and preferably in a locked cupboard or cabinet.
- When parking your car away from home, look out for the Park Mark scheme (www.parkmark.co.uk) to denote a car park that has security measures in place.

Community schemes



Neighbourhood Watch



Neighbourhood Watch is a voluntary network of schemes where neighbours come together, along with the police and local partners, to build safe and friendly communities.

Neighbourhood Watch is not about being a nosy or an interfering neighbour, it is about communities working together to help reduce local crime, as well as looking out for each other and vulnerable members of the community.

It has proved to be a very effective example of communities working in partnership to prevent crime and vandalism, reduce the fear of crime and generally improve the quality of life of an area. Some household insurers will also offer discounts to customers who are members of a Neighbourhood Watch.

To find out about joining or setting up a scheme in your area, contact us online at www.avonandsomerset.police.uk or call 101 and ask for your local Neighbourhood Watch Administrator.

Other Watch schemes

There are a range of local Watch schemes running across the force area, such as Farm Watch, Horse Watch and Community Speed Watch. To find out more about these schemes or about joining/setting up a scheme in your area, visit www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/services/watch-community-schemes.

Property marking



There are a range of property marking options available that may be used to mark your valuables, such as permanent forensic marking solutions or marking your property by engraving or using a permanent marker/paint.

Expert advice should be sought if you intend to mark high-value items, such as art and antiques, to ensure that you are choosing a suitable product that will not damage or devalue your item.

Security advice



Look out for products which carry the Sold Secure or Secured by Design logos when choosing security products. For more information about security products or for additional crime prevention information visit their websites below.



www.soldsecure.com



Official Police Security Initiative

www.securedbydesign.com