

Home security guide



Why home security is important

Although property crime is falling it [still accounted for 70%](#) of all police recorded crimes in England and Wales in 2013/14, so it's important to do all you can to keep your home secure.

The most commonly stolen items in 2013/14 included purses, wallets, cash and irreplaceable items. Valuable electronic gadgets like smartphones are becoming increasingly popular targets for thieves.

A break-in can also have a huge psychological and emotional impact on those involved.

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Burglar alarm systems

Burglar alarms offer one of the most reliable pieces of the home security jigsaw and there are lots of options to choose from.



A bells only security alarm

The most standard form of burglar alarm available. The alarm is activated when one of the sensors is tripped. Fitted by an alarm engineer, the visible alarm unit outside of your home can work as a deterrent alone.

You may also want to take out a maintenance contract so that a qualified engineer can ensure your alarm is fully functioning.

Monitored alarms

For an additional cost, you can have your security alarm monitored.

- **Monitored contracts** - either your alarm provider or a separate alarm monitoring company can offer this service. The alarm is connected to a receiving centre and if your alarm is activated they will call to let you know.

- **Police response** - you can sign up so that the police are notified when your alarm is activated. How quickly the police can respond will depend on if there are other 'higher priority' incidents for them to deal with. Please note that if you have three false alarms in a 12 month period, the police will stop responding to any alerts. In Scotland, it is four occasions during the same period.
- **Speech dialler** - this is a cheaper alternative to the above options. When the alarm is activated, it automatically calls the number(s) of your choosing to notify that the alarm is going off.

Once you have an alarm installed it's worthwhile remembering the following:

- Always activate it when you're leaving your property.
- Does it have anti-tamper protection (to block radio frequencies)?
- Service it at least once a year and test it every month.
- Keep your pin safe.
- Is your garage also protected by the alarm?
- Might your pets set it off?
- How sensitive is the alarm? Will it disturb the neighbours if it is continuously being activated?

Check out our useful [tools and guides on looking after your home](#) for more information.



Doors, windows and locks

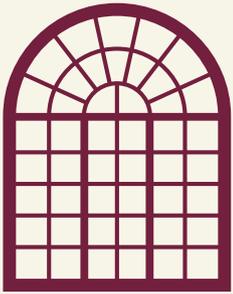
If you haven't already, it's worth considering investing in doors, windows and locks that will offer enhanced security.



Doors

In terms of security, it's recommended that any external doors to your property are certified to [British Standard PAS 24:2012 enhanced security for doorsets](#). Other considerations for safe and secure doors include:

- External doors should be robust and at least 4 cm thick.
- Fit a door bolt or chain for added security.
- Does the door have a peep hole? If not, consider getting one fitted.
- Always keep the chain secured if opening the door to a stranger.



Windows

Windows are often used as an entry or exit route for burglars, so it's a good idea to invest in ones that will offer you as much protection as possible. The most appropriate standard is the [PAS 24: 2012](#). Windows with the PAS 24 Kitemark have been fully tested and certified by the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Additional measures to make your windows more secure:

- Ensure that your windows are properly connected with your alarm system.
- Use key operated locks where possible (especially on ground floor windows) but be aware of the need for exit in the case of fire.
- For windows that open more than 60cm, such as Sash windows, it's a good idea to fit a secondary lock.
- Consider installing laminated glass, especially in easy to access windows. This material is much harder to break and will crack instead of smashing.



Lock options

As with doors and windows, purchasing locks that comply with the most recent British Standards will offer better protection. The three main basic types of locks are:

- Mortice lock - designed to be fitted to a door or window.
- Rim lock - a lock that is fitted to the internal surface of a door.
- Padlock - there are two types of padlocks: open and closed shackle.

British locks should meet the standards that UK insurers usually refer to: [BS 3621](#). The BSI Kitemark will be engraved in the lock. This standard test is only relevant to mortice and cylinder rim locks that require a key.



External

Exterior lighting is useful to illuminate areas outside of your property at night. Placing motion sensitive lighting strategically around your property can help alert you if anyone is approaching your home.

- Infrared lights are the most common form of motion sensitive lighting.
- Lights turn on when the Passive Infrared Sensor (PIR) is activated.
- Mount your detector at least two metres from the ground so that it is more difficult to tamper with.
- Be aware that animals can set off motion lights.
- Check that the sensor isn't too sensitive and that the lights aren't too bright.
- Intrusive lights could cause issues with your neighbours.

Gates, fences and hedges could be a good addition to your home security. You can prevent easier access to your property by adding security gates to the front, back and sides of your home.

- A minimum height of two metres is recommended for fences to the back of your property.*
- Fences with a trellis on top make it more difficult to climb over.
- Growing prickly bushes or plants next to the fences can act as a further deterrent.
- Hedges at the front of your property are ideally lower than 1.4 metres; so that the front of your home can be seen by passers-by and neighbours.
- Gravel around your home can act as an alarm as it's noisy when someone walks over it.

Sheds - if you have one, use it to lock away any [valuable garden equipment](#), toys and furniture. Garden furniture could also be secured with a bike chain.

CCTV - if you own the property you could install CCTV.* It's worthwhile chatting with any neighbours who may have objections first, to advise them of your plans.

**Please note that planning permission may be required for fences. For more information, have a look at the [Planning Portal website](#) (England and Wales) or visit www.doineedpermission.co.uk (Scotland). Planning permission is not usually required for CCTV installation on domestic properties but there may be exceptions to this rule in some circumstances, or other restrictions.*

Property marking

If your possessions are marked, it might make thieves less likely to take them in the event of a burglary, as they will be aware that they can be traced. It will also make it more difficult for them to sell anything on.

There are a few ways that you can mark your property:

- Electronic marking - you can register certain items, like electrical devices and bikes for example. That way, if they are stolen and then recovered, they are more likely to be identified as yours and returned to you.
- UV pen marking - the idea is that you mark your postcode and house number on valuable items with a UV pen. Stickers supplied with the pen can be displayed on your possessions, warning any potential thieves that your property is marked.
- SmartWater marking – similar to a UV marking, but SmartWater is almost impossible to remove. It can help deter burglars, assists the police in identifying stolen property, and can be traced back to a marked item's rightful owner.

Going digital

Many of today's modern security systems allow you to activate locks, alarms and CCTV remotely, from your smartphone.

There is a range of [Internet Protocol \(IP\) cameras](#) and [wireless smartphone alarm kits](#) that allow you to monitor your home remotely, record any activities and respond to alarm notifications when out and about or on holiday.

Another option is to consider turning the webcam in your computer into a home security system. You'll have to purchase and install software, so it's worth doing research into the best options available to you. Some webcams only allow you to monitor and don't offer you the ability to record images.



Additional measures

Neighbourhood watch schemes

Neighbourhood watch schemes work in a way where a local community comes together to offer their own crime prevention measures. An active partnership between local residents and the police force, a neighbourhood watch scheme can:

- Prevent and cut opportunities for crime.
- Monitor neighbours / local residents' properties when people aren't home.
- Offer help and reassurance to local residents.
- Bring a community together and make it safer for everyone.



Tackling bogus callers

Bogus callers often target the elderly and the vulnerable. If an unknown person does appear at your door, take the following steps:

- Lock - make sure that all your doors are locked. Some bogus callers might distract you at the front door whilst an accomplice is at the rear of your property.
- Stop - are you expecting someone? If not, look through the peephole or window to check who is at your door.
- Chain - before answering the door, put the door chain on (if you don't have one, it's a good idea to purchase one).
- Check - with the keychain on, ask for an identity card. Take the card and check that the number is correct by comparing it on the company's website or in the yellow pages for example. For extra security, give the number a call.

We've created a handy [visual guide on home security](#). It outlines some of the key points above in a practical and easy-to-digest infographic format.

The above information should be used as a guide and may not offer a complete home security solution. Make sure you do your own research and keep your eyes open to what's going on in your neighbourhood. Always contact the police if you notice something suspicious and, if you are a victim of crime, don't hesitate to contact [Victim Support](#) or another similar charity.

- 1) http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_309648.pdf
- 2) <http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/home-insurance/index.shtml#tab-home-zone>
- 3) <http://www.securedbydesign.com/aware/doors.aspx>
- 4) <http://www.bsigroup.co.uk/en-GB/our-services/product-certification/industry-sector-schemes/construction/windows-and-doors/>
- 5) <http://www.bsigroup.co.uk/en-GB/our-services/product-certification/industry-sector-schemes/construction/windows-and-doors/Standards-for-windows-and-doors/>
- 6) <http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/home-insurance/contents.shtml#tab-policy>
- 7) <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/>
- 8) <http://doineedpermission.co.uk/>
- 9) <http://www.which.co.uk/home-and-garden/home-improvements/guides/burglar-alarms-and-home-security/home-cctv/>
- 10) <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/spiderweb-online-marketing/pressreleases/yale-smartphone-alarm-kit-ef-kit3-spiderweb-online-reviews-1037200>
- 11) <http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/money-matters/home-security.shtml>
- 12) <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/>

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