



# Security of buildings and property:

## Introduction

This module has been prepared to assist you and your group in understanding and applying improvements to security in the home.

The principles can apply to where you work and your home. The aim of this module is to guide you by applying common sense and some basic knowledge to have an impact on crime and fear of crime.

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- understand the need for a basic property security survey;
- anticipate potential risks;
- discover strengths and weaknesses in the security of your buildings;
- identify priorities for action;
- have confidence that you and your Neighbourhood Watch group can help your community.

This module is in two parts:

- Part one contains the Development Notes which include separate fact sheets on different aspects of building security.
- Part two contains the Session Notes with suggested activities and their answers.



## Notes



## Security of buildings and property: Development Notes

For most people the risk of being a victim of crime is low. In some areas and places, there is a higher risk. Knowledge of your neighbourhood and the crimes committed in the area can help (information will be available from your local police). These notes are to help you reduce the risks.

### **Remember**

**Break-ins are often the work of opportunists.**

**Reducing the opportunities can make a real difference.**

People need to feel secure in their homes. Burglaries can have devastating effects on people because they no longer feel secure. Recent research shows that once you have been a victim of crime there is a greater chance that you could again. This is known as repeat victimisation.

## **Action**

It is important that steps are taken as soon as possible to prevent further crime.

This is where you and your scheme come in. It is important not to underestimate the influence you can have in advising about the sort of preventive measures which can be taken in your neighbourhood.



## Security surveys

The starting point for making your home more secure is a survey of its security.

Conducting domestic security surveys has for many years been seen as an important job for the Crime Prevention Officer (CPO). Due to pressures on police resources, and because of the officers' specialist training, such expertise is needed for other projects. The practice of routine domestic surveys by CPOs is no longer applied in most police forces.

There are two fact sheets in these Development Notes:

- Looking after your own and your neighbours' homes.
- Gardeners' security.

These fact sheets, the Session Notes and activities will give you enough information to carry out your own basic security surveys.



## Looking after your own and your neighbours' homes

### Conducting a security survey

Burglars like easy opportunities and most burglaries happen during the day. There are some basic points to remember before any survey or risk assessment of a home.

- Burglars don't like locked windows, because breaking glass attracts attention.
- They don't like security deadlocks on doors because they cannot open them even from the inside and have to get out through a window.
- Most burglaries are via the rear of premises.



## Looking after your home – general security

**Gates and fences:** A high wall or fence at the back of a house can put off a burglar. Check for weak spots where a thief could get in. A thorny hedge along a boundary can also be a useful deterrent. Make sure the front of the house is still visible to passers-by so that a burglar can't work unseen.

**Burglar alarms:** Visible alarms make burglars think twice.

**Garages and sheds:** Never leave a garage or garden shed unlocked, especially if it has a connecting door to the house. Lock tools and ladders away so that a thief cannot use them to break in.



**Strangers:** Be alert to people loitering in residential streets. If it is no one you recognise, call the police.

**Spare keys:** Never leave a spare key in a hiding place such as under a doormat, in a flower pot or inside the letterbox – a thief will look there first.

**Front door roof:** A thief could reach first-floor windows from this roof – so fit window locks.

**Small windows:** Even small windows like casement windows, skylights or bathroom fanlights need locks. A thief can get in through any gap larger than a human head.



## Doors

**Mortice deadlock:** Fit a five-lever mortice deadlock about a third of the way up the door. Look for one kitemarked to at least BS3621.

A deadlock can only be opened with a key, so a thief can't smash a nearby panel to open the door from the inside. If the thief gets into the house through a window, they can't carry your property out through the door.

**Hinges:** Check that the door hinges are sturdy and secure with strong, long screws. For added security fit hinge bolts. These are inexpensive and help to reinforce the hinge side of the door against the use of force.

**Letterboxes:** Never hang a spare key inside the letterbox. Consider fitting a letterbox cage which stops thieves from putting their hands through the letterbox and trying the locks from the inside.

**Rim latch:** Most front doors are fitted with a rim latch which locks automatically when the door is closed but can be opened from the inside without a key.

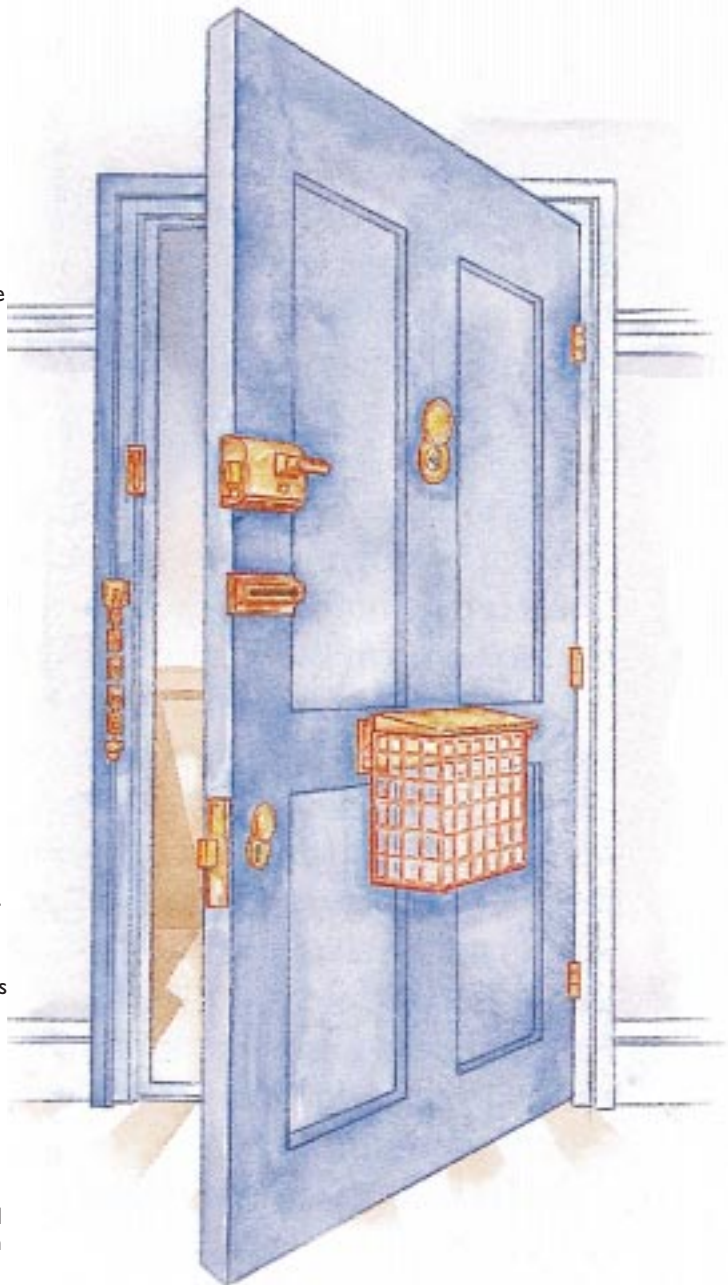
**Automatic deadlock:** This locks automatically when the door is closed, but when locked externally with a key, CANNOT be opened from the inside.

**Chains:** These help you to speak to strangers at the door without letting them in. Buy a chain and use it EVERY time you open the door.

**Door viewers:** Let you identify the caller before opening the door.

**Patio doors:** Get specialist advice on fitting locks to patio doors. They should have special locks fitted top and bottom unless fitted with system. Also install an anti-lift device.

**New doors:** Can be purchased to a security standard. Consider asking the installer for them.



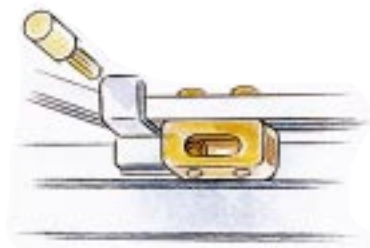
## Windows

DIY shops stock inexpensive key-operated locks to fit all kinds of window. If you are a tenant you may be able to get the landlord or council to pay to have them fitted.

A lock forces the burglar to break the glass and risks attracting attention.

Consider using laminated glass: a thief will find it more difficult to break.

Fanlight locks have a metal bolt to secure the metal arm used to open and close the window.



Casement locks make it impossible to open windows without the correct key.

The lock shown here locks the two windows together. A more discreet version is embedded into the wooden frame. Or there are devices to stop the window opening beyond a certain limit.



**New windows:** Can be supplied to British Standard BS 7950. Consider asking for them.



## Lighting

Good lighting can deter a thief. Some exterior lights have an infra-red sensor that switches the light on for a few moments when it detects something in its range. Lights can also be fitted with a light sensor to come on automatically as darkness falls.

Time switches can be used to operate lights and other appliances internally. It might be a good idea if your scheme buys some timers to lend to people when they go away.

## Burglar alarms and safes

If your possessions are worth a lot of money or you live in an area with a lot of burglaries, you should consider a burglar alarm or a safe. Ranging from inexpensive DIY kits to sophisticated systems costing hundreds of pounds, there are scores of burglar alarms on the market. Quality fitted alarms will certainly be a deterrent to burglars. Easy to install 'wire free' alarms are now available whereby sensors fitted around the house transmit radio detection signals to a control system. These systems usually take three to four hours to fit. Wired alarms are cheaper but take longer - around a day - to install.

If you have an alarm installed you should make sure that you designate someone as a key holder for when you are away. In that way if your alarm does go off, there is someone nearby who can be on hand if the alarm goes off and the police attend the incident.

Get specialist advice and a number of quotes. Consult your insurance company for the companies they recommend. The system installed should meet BS4737 (professionally installed) or BS6707 (DIY).

***WITH ALL SECURITY, CONSIDERATION MUST BE GIVEN TO THE RISK OF FIRE AND MEANS OF ESCAPE. ALWAYS FIT A SMOKE DETECTOR CONFORMING TO BRITISH STANDARD 5446.***



## Strangers at the door

Not all burglars use force to enter premises, and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to the bogus official or random caller.

Most callers are probably genuine but some are not.

They could be confidence tricksters or thieves. It is important to take precautions when people call at your home. Bogus callers often pretend they:

- are antique dealers;
- are roof repairers;
- are tarmac drive layers;
- need to use the telephone urgently;
- have kicked a ball in your garden and need to retrieve it;
- feel unwell;
- are from the gas, water or electricity board;
- are from the local council;
- are looking for someone by name, but aren't sure where they live.

## Doorstep code

### *Beware of callers!*

When someone comes to your door, follow these simple steps – this advice could stop you from letting a bogus caller into your home.

- Keep the door locked.
- Look out of the window or use the spy hole if you have one, to see if you can identify who the caller is. If there is more than one person **be suspicious** – it is unusual for a company to send more than one person. Is the caller wearing a uniform or is there a company car parked outside?



- Go to the door; make sure the safety chain is on before you open it.
- Does the caller know your name?
- Ask for an identity card – all reputable companies insist their representatives carry one. Look at the card and check:
  - does the card look like an official company card?
  - is there a photograph – does it match with the caller at your front door?
  - does the card carry the company name?
- If you are unsure, close the door and go and look up the telephone number for the company in the telephone directory. Don't rely on a telephone number the caller may give you – it could be a bogus number. Call the company and ask for verification, ask them to tell you your account number. Then, open the door, keeping the safety chain on and ask the caller to tell you your account number. If the caller is unable to tell you **do not let them in**.
- If you have any doubts at all, don't open the door. Keep the caller out and telephone the **police** on 999.
- If you live in a controlled entry block of flats or sheltered accommodation, do not let anyone in who presses the buzzer and says they are looking for someone else.
- Children or young people at home on their own or babysitting should never open the door to strangers, no matter who they say they are.

### **Remember**

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



## Gardeners' security

We have looked at security for **homes**, but what about the security of your **garden, garage** or **shed**?

### Facts

- The majority of thefts are committed by **OPPORTUNISTS**.
- Burglars often **USE** garden tools taken from outbuildings to break into houses.
- The value of property stored in gardens, sheds and garages is much more than you think.
- Your property is at risk.
- If you become a victim of crime your chances of further victimisation are increased.

### What can you do?

This fact sheet looks at the security of:

- sheds and buildings;
- individual items of property;
- security outdoors;
- security on allotments.

### Sheds and buildings

- Put tools and equipment away. Lock them to the fabric of the building if you can.
- Make sure sheds/outbuildings are locked when not in use.
- Use good quality locks to secure doors.
- Most door hinges on outbuildings are exposed and easily removed by taking out the screws. Use strap hinges secured by coach bolts. Coach bolts are very long with smooth heads that cannot be undone with a screwdriver or spanner.
- A strong pad bar (also called a hasp and staple) fitted with a close-shackled padlock and secured with coach bolts is the most effective way to secure doors.



## Property

- Mark gardening and DIY equipment, garden furniture and ornaments with your postcode, by engraving or printing.
- Photograph valuable plants or ornaments to help police trace them.

## Outdoors

- Install security lights to illuminate your garden. Don't underestimate the effect of good lighting as a crime prevention measure.
- Don't forget garden furniture or ornaments. They are expensive and increasingly stolen by criminals.
- Cut back shrubs, hedges and large plants to allow surveillance.
- Prickly planting is a visual deterrent and a physical barrier. Use it to complement and not replace other crime prevention measures. Get advice from your local garden centre.

## Allotments

These are harder to protect but much of the advice above can be applied.

- Get to know your neighbours on the allotment and look out for each other.
- Don't leave expensive equipment on site.



## Conclusion

You have now completed these fact sheets and you will be able to:

- understand the need for a basic property security survey;
- anticipate potential risks;
- discover strengths and weaknesses in the security of the building;
- identify priorities for action;
- have confidence that you and your Neighbourhood Watch group members can act to assist each other and the wider community.

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**The next part of this module contains Session Notes and activities to help you put some of the ideas in these fact sheets into practice.**

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# Security of buildings and property: Session Notes

## About these notes

These Session Notes contain an outline for how you can use the Development Notes on security of buildings and property to run short training sessions with the members of your scheme.

Because the needs of your Neighbourhood Watch are unique, this session has been left as flexible as possible. The sessions are based round three activities.

## Activities

There are three separate activities in these Session Notes:

- **Activity one:** Security in your home
- **Activity two:** Security in your garden
- **Activity three:** Security in your neighbourhood

Activities one and two involve some work in individual homes. Activity three is a group discussion activity.

Each activity has notes with points for discussion and answers to some of the questions.

## The resources you will need

A copy of the relevant fact sheet for each member of the group and the activities from these notes.



**Notes**



## Session preparation

Before you run any sessions on building security you should find out exactly what your scheme members need to know. You could include buildings and property security as a discussion item at one of your meetings. This would help you find out:

- whether people want information on buildings security;
- what aspects they are most interested in.

With this information you will be able to plan ahead and include building security on the agenda for one or more of your meetings.

### **Remember**

**These activities are designed to get individual scheme members to look at their own houses and identify areas where the security needs improving. Some members of your scheme will be wary of giving too much detail about the security in their homes. You should not encourage people to describe the vulnerable points in their homes in too much detail.**



## Activity one: Security in your home

### Aims of this activity

The aim of this activity is to get individual scheme members to look critically at the security in their own homes. By the end of this activity individuals will be able to identify:

- weak spots in the security of their houses;
- steps they can take to improve their security.

### How to use this activity

There are three stages to this activity:

#### Stage one

At your Neighbourhood Watch meeting give out a copy of the fact sheet 'Looking after your own and your neighbours' homes' and the questions that go with the activity. Allow 10-15 minutes for the group to read through the fact sheet and discuss any points they wish to make.

#### Stage two

Individual group members carry out a survey of their own homes and note down the answers to the questions.

#### Stage three

At your next Neighbourhood Watch meeting use the answer sheets with this activity and discuss the results of individual surveys. You can ask each individual to make a short presentation to the rest of the group if you wish. You should make your discussion last no longer than 30-45 minutes.



## Activity one: Security in your home – questions

### I. Think like a burglar

Walk around the property inside and out to identify weak spots. Look particularly at doors and windows, especially at the back of the house.

List the areas of weakness you have discovered on your walk-about. In particular, complete the security checklist for doors and windows on your property:

#### Doors

- Do doors have a solid wood core? Yes/No
- Do all external doors have two good locks? Yes/No
- Are there three strong hinges fitted to all external doors? Yes/No
- Is a security chain fitted? Yes/No
- Is it always used? Yes/No
- Do doors have glass panels, especially in the lower half? Yes/No

#### Windows

- Are window locks fitted? Yes/No
- Are the locks easy to use? Yes/No
- Do you always use them? Yes/No
- Are you sure sliding patio doors can't be lifted off their rails? Yes/No
- Can doors and windows be seen by neighbours? Yes/No
- Are window frames rotten, or is the putty dried out? Yes/No
- Are garage and shed doors securely locked? Yes/No



## 2. While you're out

Make a list of actions you could take to protect your property in your absence.

### Notes

Use this space to make any notes about the security of your home.



## Activity one: Security in your home – answers

### I. Think like a burglar

In your discussion of this question use the following points as a checklist:

- Where would an intruder get into the premises?
- Where would an intruder operate unseen?
- Where are the points of weakness - door, window, internal garage etc?
- Could property be removed easily from the home?
- Could property be identified?

Sixty-two per cent of all burglaries are at the rear of premises, so doors and windows at the side and rear **MUST** be well secured.

Doors and windows are one of the first lines of defence.

High fences and overgrown hedges provide privacy for a burglar. Foliage should be kept low to provide good surveillance. Prickly shrubs, especially at the boundaries of properties, form a good barrier.



## 2. While you're out

- Use time switches.
- Don't let your TV or video show through a window.
- Draw the curtains if you are going out for an evening.
- Cancel milk/newspapers if going away. Don't leave notes on the doorstep.
- Get a friend or neighbour to look after your home.
- Collect mail.
- Adjust curtains.
- Park car on drive.
- Never keep money in the house that you are not going to spend soon.

Protect your valuables by property marking. Your postcode is simple and effective and you can use marker pens, special etching or engraving tools. Keep a list of serial numbers and makes. Items like jewellery/silver can be photographed or videoed. After doing this, obtain a sticker for your window saying your possessions are marked.



## Activity two: Security in your garden

### Aims of this activity

The aim of this activity is to get individual scheme members to look critically at the security in their own gardens. By the end of this activity individuals will be able to identify:

- weak spots in the security of their gardens;
- steps they can take to improve their security.

### How to use this activity

There are three stages to this activity:

#### Stage one

At your Neighbourhood Watch meeting give out a copy of the fact sheet 'Security of gardens' and the questions that go with the activity. Allow 10-15 minutes for the group to read through the fact sheet and discuss any points they wish to make.

#### Stage two

Individual group members carry out a survey of their own garden or allotment and note down the answers to the questions.

#### Stage three

At your next Neighbourhood Watch meeting use the answer sheets with this activity and discuss the results of individual surveys. You can ask each individual to make a short presentation to the rest of the group if you wish. You should make your discussion last no longer than 30-45 minutes.



## Activity two: Security in your garden – questions

### I. Think like a burglar

Walk around your garden or allotment and identify weak spots. Don't forget to look at sheds and outbuildings.

List the areas of weakness you have discovered on your walk-about.

#### **Notes**

**Use this space to write down any notes.**



## Activity two: Security in your garden – answers

### I. Think like a burglar

Discuss the group's answers using the fact sheet as a checklist. Look at:

- sheds and buildings;
- property;
- outdoors security;
- allotments.



## Activity three: Security in your neighbourhood

### Aims of this activity

The aim of this activity is to get the group to look critically at the security of their neighbourhood and what you could do collectively as a scheme. By the end of this activity the group will be able to identify:

- areas where the scheme can work as a whole to improve neighbourhood security;
- steps they can take to improve security.

### How to use this activity

There are three stages to this activity:

#### Stage one

Introduce the topic and split the group into three or four smaller groups. Give each group a copy of the activity questions.

#### Stage two

Each group should discuss the questions and write down their answers. Allow 20 minutes for this activity.

#### Stage three

Bring the meeting together and discuss each group's findings.



## Activity three: Security in your neighbourhood – questions

### Advantages of the scheme becoming involved

The involvement of your scheme in promoting security in your neighbourhood could have many benefits. List down what you think the benefits are.

### What steps could your Neighbourhood Watch group take?

Make a list of the steps that your scheme could take to improve security in your area.

### Notes

Use this space to write down any notes.



## Activity three: Security in your neighbourhood – answers

### Advantages of the scheme becoming involved

The scheme's involvement could:

- reduce individual's feelings of vulnerability;
- influence neighbours and friends;
- reduce the fear of crime;
- help to foster good relationships within your community.

### What steps could your Neighbourhood Watch group take?

- You may consider holding meetings to discuss security and the implications of proposals in your community. Invite your local police Crime Prevention Officer.
- Do many people need new doors, windows, locks or other hardware? You may be able to negotiate group discounts with a local supplier/fitter.
- Are overgrown hedges a potential security problem for your scheme? Arranging for someone to trim all the hedges may prove cost-effective. Consider prickly shrubs under windows or as a barrier.
- Is the street/car parking area in your neighbourhood adequately lit? Joint action, such as letters and petitions to your local council, is often most effective.