

John

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MP for Edinburgh West

Safer Community Pack

SAFETY IN THE HOME

Good home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being burgled. Many burglaries are spur of the moment crimes, as a burglar may see an open door or window and take their chance.

Basic Tips:

1. When you go out, **ALWAYS** lock the door and close the windows, even if you are out for only a short while.
2. Window locks, particularly on old windows will make a big difference to stop people getting in. Remember, a burglar is much less likely to break in if they have to smash a window.
3. Use timers for lights and radios if you will be away from your home overnight. They will create the impression that someone is home.
4. **VISIBLE** burglar alarms and security **LIGHTING** can help put off would-be burglars.
5. Fitting a **SPY HOLE** allows you to see who is at the door while a **DOOR CHAIN** means you can open the door a little to talk to them without allowing access to your house.

If you are renting your property, ask your landlord if they will make the improvements.



HOW TO AVOID BOGUS CALLERS

The vast majority of callers to your door will be genuine. But sometimes, people turn up unannounced with the intention of tricking their way into people's homes. These bogus callers pretend to be from the council, engineers from gas, electricity or water companies, or sales people to try to gain access to your home to steal money or property. However, by taking a few simple precautions you can help keep yourself safe and secure.

Your Checklist:

1. **CHAIN** your door – keep your doors locked when you are at home, before you answer stop and think if you are expecting anybody. If you decide to open the door put the door chain on first.
2. **VIEW** the caller – Keep the chain on while you are talking to the person on the doorstep to establish their identity.
3. Ask for **IDENTIFICATION** – Always check their details before you let them into your house. If in doubt, phone the company named on the callers' identity card.

If you are still unsure, phone your local police station (the numbers for all local stations are on the back of this report.) Remember – if in doubt, keep them out!

Enclosed with this pack is a laminated card you can display on front doors and windows. The card warns doorstep callers that the residents will not buy or sell at the door and will expect identification that can be verified.

Energywatch Password Protection Scheme

The energy watchdog Energywatch has recently set up a password protection scheme for elderly and vulnerable customers. In order to make sure a caller is genuine, you can agree a unique password with your gas and electricity supplier that will be used whenever their staff visit your home. This is a great way to protect yourself against bogus callers pretending to be from your gas and electricity supplier. If you are; of pensionable age; have a disability; have long term ill health, or are blind or visually impaired, you will be eligible. You can set up the scheme by calling Energywatch on 0845 906 0708.

Officials should always arrange an appointment with you beforehand. Genuine callers won't mind waiting if you want to phone and confirm their identity.

The Home Office Booklet 'How to beat the bogus caller' is available from my constituency office on 0131 339 0339.



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can be a good way to help people feel more secure in their own neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Watch works by all the houses in a certain area agreeing to look out for one another, keeping a look out for anything suspicious, and telling one another or the police.

If you are interested in setting up a scheme in your area please contact your local police station and ask to speak to the community beat officer. A starter pack with information on the next step to setting up a scheme will be sent to you. Alternatively, you can visit the neighbourhood watch website on www.neighbourhoodwatch.net

INFORMATION FOR THE ELDERLY

Older people may feel more vulnerable to some crimes, however they are actually less likely to become victims. A few simple steps can help further reduce both the fear and the risk of crime:

1. Think about getting a personal alarm to use in case you trip or fall at home
2. Try not to keep large amounts of cash at home – use a bank account
3. It can be reassuring to ask a neighbour to keep a friendly eye out for you.
4. Edinburgh City Council provide the following services :

Community Care Housing can provide a range of equipment to make everyday life easier. People can request these without charge and without having to be assessed by a health or social work professional – tel 313 2435

Emergency Alarm Service – An alarm can be provided that links to a 24 hour emergency support service – Tel 529 7676 for more details.

Community Safety will provide information and guidance on a whole range of issues – Tel 469 3871.



JUNK MAIL AND NUISANCE CALLS

A number of constituents have complained to me about the rise in abusive and silent calls, and excessive junk mail. While it is difficult to avoid all mail and telephone calls you might not want, there are things we can all do to cut down on unwanted mail and time-wasting calls.

Silent Calls

These calls are from automatic dialling machines and can be frightening and disconcerting for everyone, particularly elderly residents who live alone. While silent calls are difficult to avoid completely, signing up to the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) will help.

To sign up for the telephone preference service you can call the registration line on 0845 070 0707 (local call rate). Alternatively you can sign up online at www.tpsonline.org.uk and by clicking on the link to register. I have also enclosed a TPS form with this pack.

Junk Mail

Many local people have complained to me about the amount of junk mail they now receive through their letter boxes every day. I for one have noticed a steady increase in the amount of unwanted mail in recent years. Unwanted, unread direct mail wastes everyone's time and money and is bad for the environment and has no place in anyone's home.

The Mail Preference Service (MPS) can remove your name from up to 95% of Direct Mail lists. It may take a few months, but you will notice a marked difference in the amount of mail you receive. Signing up to the MPS is free and an application form is included in this pack.



BEWARE OF GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEMES

Recent years have seen the rise of ever more sophisticated scams, fuelled by the rise of email and the internet. Since I was elected I have had numerous complaints from people who have been the victims of telephone, email, and postal scams.

While the form of these are changing all the time, there are a few general tips that we can all take to stay one step ahead.

Bogus Sweepstakes and lotteries, get-rich quick schemes and fake health cures are just some of the tricks unscrupulous people will use to get their hands on your money. These scams will generally OFFER YOU SOMETHING FOR NOTHING such as a prize in a lottery you didn't enter, or the chance to join an investment scheme that promises huge unrealistic profits. Beware of sending of even relatively small amounts of money as a fee or postage to cover your prize.

How to recognise a scam...

Most have some things in common – check out this list and help yourself be on guard.

They will ask you to...

1. Send money up front for admin costs, tax or other reasons. **DON'T DO IT**, it will likely be a ruse to get you to give them money.
2. Give them your bank details and other personal information. If you are in any doubt **NEVER** give over these details over the telephone.
3. Ring a premium rate number (all UK Premium rate numbers start with 090)
4. Buy something to get your prize. Never do this as the chances are you will never receive any prize.
5. Never give your bank or bank account details to anyone over the phone or over the internet.

These are some of the tell-tale signs that can help you spot a scam. While some of their requests may sound reasonable we can **ALL PROTECT OURSELVES BY BEING SCEPTICAL**. If you think you have discovered a bogus scheme tell your friends and family. If you have been a victim of any of the above please report it to consumer direct on 08454 04 05 06 or on www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!



USEFUL NUMBERS

City of Edinburgh Council

Main Switchboard 200 2000
Road and Lighting Faults 0800 23 23 23
Anti Social Behaviour 529 7050
Litter and Dumping Problems 0808 100 3306
Community Councils 469 3838

Travel Information

Lothian Buses 555 6363
First Buses 08708 727271

Police Stations

Headquarters (Fettes) 311 3131
Crimestoppers 0800 555 111
West End 229 2323
Corstorphine 334 4900
South Queensferry 331 1798
Drylaw 343 3171

In the event of an emergency always call 999

Crime Prevention

Victim Support 668 4486
Neighbourhood Watch 01389 822010
Consumer Direct 08454 04 05 06

Telephone Preference Service

0845 070 0707

Services for the Elderly

Age Concern 0845 833 0200

Utility Companies

Scottish Power 0845 270 0700
Scottish Gas 0845 609 1122
BT 0800 443 311
Telewest 0845 142 0000
Scottish Water 0845 601 8855

Other Useful Numbers

NHS 24 - 08454 24 24 24
Aircraft Noise 0800 731 3397
Racial Harassment 469 3871
Zero Tolerance 221 9505

John Barrett MP 339 0339
Margaret Smith MSP 348 5786

Local councillor:
Tel council switchboard on 200 2000