

Advice on foiling burglars

We have noted that the borough has suffered a spate of burglaries over the recent hot spell.

Most of the thefts have occurred as a result of windows being left open on hot summer days, but others are being blamed on inadequate locks.

In order to reduce the chances of falling victim to burglars the police are advising residents to keep all windows closed when you are out, check your locks are sturdy and robust and keep car keys and handbags out of view and away from windows and doors.

A building that presents itself as unoccupied and insecure is far more likely to be targeted than one which is properly secured. Any of the following factors can increase the risk of a break-in:

- side gates open
- accessible windows open
- ladders left out, allowing access to otherwise inaccessible windows
- garden tools available to force entry
- untrimmed hedges or high fences preventing natural surveillance

Other factors which may increase the likelihood of a break-in include:

- milk bottles or parcels on the doorstep
- newspapers and mail in the letter box
- unlit houses after dark
- all windows shut in very hot weather

Simple steps which can reduce the chances of being burgled are:

- Prevent letterbox burglaries by storing keys away from the front door
- Do not label your house keys in case you lose them and they fall into the wrong hands.
- Where possible, try to keep valuables out of sight from windows.
- Install timers which switch lights or radios on and off automatically.
- If you're away have a neighbour or friend pop round to clear your letterbox or doorstep.
- Encourage a neighbour to park on your drive.
- If going out after dark, draw the curtains, leave some lights on and a radio playing.
- Install window locks, especially on older windows.

If you are away for extended periods:

- Cancel the delivery of milk and newspapers
- Disconnect the telephone answering machine, or re-word your greeting message to give the impression that you are only temporarily unable to answer.
- Enlist the help of a neighbour, friend or relative to keep a regular eye on your property and keep the front door clear of deliveries.
- If you are prepared to leave a key with a willing neighbour/relative, ask for curtains to be drawn and lights to be put on at night. If snow is on the ground a few footprints will make the house appear inhabited.
- Check your insurance policy. Some insurance policies for contents don't cover you if you are away for more than 30 days.
- Set your burglar alarm.
- If you do not have an alarm, consider investing a few pounds in a dummy alarm box. It may well deter the opportunist thief.

If you would like advice on crime prevention call (020) 8871 6567 or email

communitysafety@wandsworth.gov.uk To contact your local police safer neighbourhoods team and report issues of concern, or provide information about problems in your area, visit www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods