

## Crime Prevention

During the winter months, as the nights draw in and people change their behaviour due to the weather and the festive season, we often see criminals try and take advantage.

So, here's our guide of helpful advice and tips to try and prevent you from becoming a victim of crime.

This information – and more – can be found on our website: [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk) and for latest alerts follow us on Facebook or X (formerly known as Twitter). You'll find accounts for West Midlands Police as well as your local teams, here at Birmingham Police.

### **Facebook links:**

- [West Midlands Police](#)
- [Birmingham Police](#)

### **X links:**

- [West Midlands Police](#)
- [Birmingham Police](#)

## Vehicle Crime

Thieves are opportunists, looking for an easy way to steal items of value from an unlocked or unattended vehicle. This could be cash left on display, a sat nav from the glovebox, a mobile phone from the dashboard or perhaps tools kept overnight in a work van.



Every year, vehicles are stolen from driveways and outside homes when owners leave them to warm up with the key in the ignition. Do not do this.

Car thieves watch the weather forecast too and will be out early in the morning on the lookout for vehicles left unattended.

High value vehicles are often targeted in this way as their advanced security technology makes them difficult to steal unless they already have the engine

running and the key in the ignition.

- Stay with your vehicle and if you're in a rush, use de-icing spray and a scraper to speed up the process.
- Sit inside your vehicle while the heater de-mists the windscreen.
- Your insurance may not pay out if you are in any way deemed responsible for the theft.

If you would like to read more advice, or if you need to report something being stolen from a vehicle, visit our dedicated vehicle crime website: <https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/stealer-street/>

## Travelling or parking your vehicle in an unfamiliar place?

Here are a few additional tips to help keep you and your vehicle safe:

- Check your fob has done its job - do not assume your vehicle is secure, always check doors are locked before you walk away
- Take your dash cam or sat nav with you when leaving your vehicle, remove the cradle and wipe away tell-tale suction pad marks
- Never leave valuables on display or in the glovebox
- Don't leave shopping on view in your vehicle - lock everything in the boot, out of sight
- Fit an alarm or immobiliser
- If you have access to a garage, use it for your vehicle
- Use an anchor and chain for your motorbike
- Park your van in a well-lit area with CCTV or against a wall so the sliding or back door is blocked
- If using public parking, try and use one that displays a Park Mark or has visible security and good lighting

One of the most effective ways to stop someone stealing your vehicle (keyless or not) is to use a steering wheel lock. That way even if thieves manage to open your car door they won't be able to drive your vehicle away. We've partnered with Disklok, who are offering a 15% on their products exclusively to drivers in the West Midlands Police area. To get the discount sign up to our [FREE WMNow alert service](#) - the discount code can be found in your welcome email.

Selecta DNA offer a property marking kit for many different types of vehicle:

- SelectaDNA Vehicle Kit
- SelectaDNA Van & Commercial Vehicle Kit
- SelectaDNA Off Road and 4x4 Kit
- SelectaDNA Classic Car Kit
- SelectaDNA Motorbike, Scooter & Moped Kit
- SelectaDNA Off Road & Quad Bike Kit
- SelectaDNA Motorhome & Caravan Kit
- SelectaDNA Trailer Kit

You can get 50% off these kits by signing up to WMNow alert service - the discount code can be found in your welcome email.

## Burglary

Protect your home against opportunist burglars by remembering to 'lock up' and check on your neighbours. Dark evenings can provide perfect cover for burglars who can easily spot an open window in an unoccupied room, see your valuables through open curtains or blinds, or try their luck with an unlocked door while you are distracted.

Lock up - Protect your home

Here's some tips to try and make you and your home less vulnerable to thieves. More information and advice can be found on our dedicated burglary prevention website: <https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/27stationroad>



- Try to make your house look as occupied as possible when you are not there
- Do not leave your house and vehicle keys in the lock or on a side table in view of a window
- Do not leave items in open porches that could be used to enter your home, for example, curved-handled umbrellas to open doors or keys through letterboxes
- Always lock your windows and doors when you are in. If you have UPVC front doors take extra care to lock these as soon as you get into your property
- Check your UPVC or Euro cylinder door lock to see if it is snap resistant. It should be stamped with a three star Kite Mark. If it is not, we advise you get the lock changed to either a SS312 Diamond Approved Cylinder, TS007 3 Star Kitemarked Cylinder, or a 1 Star Cylinder with 2 Star handle for maximum protection. For more information contact the [Master Locksmiths Association](#), or [read this guide](#).

- Cancel newspapers and milk if you're going away for a few days and ask a trusted friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your property. They can help by pushing post sticking out of the letterbox inside fully, or checking garden gates are shut.

Play our interactive game [27 Station Road](#) where you are the detective at the scene of a house burglary. Explore the property and uncover clues about how the burglar broke in – and what the householder could have done to keep them out. Exploring the game will help users review their own security and put measures in place to prevent a burglary happening in their own home.

West Midlands Police is working in partnership with Selecta DNA to offer local residents a discount on their property marking kits. To get 50% off a DNA property marking kit (plus free postage and packaging) all you need to do is sign up to our FREE WMNow alert service here: <https://www.wmnow.co.uk/> - the discount code can be found in your welcome email.

If you would like to read further advice, or if you need to report a burglary to us, [visit this page](#).

## Distraction burglars and bogus callers

Bogus workmen will claim they need to enter your home to make urgent repairs or check something. They may also offer to carry out property maintenance, often asking for cash in advance without ever undertaking any work.

If you need work done at your home, get several written quotes from reputable firms before making a decision.

Never feel pressured to allow an unexpected caller access to your home. Call their company from the number in your telephone directory or from an independent online search, not the one on their business card. And remember, there is no such organisation as the 'Water Board' – a phrase often used by bogus callers.

Share details of doorstep password schemes with elderly or vulnerable relatives and help them sign up.

No matter what – if you are in doubt, do not open the door.

Always ask for ID when someone claiming to be a tradesperson wants to enter your property. A number of utility companies, including Severn Trent, also offer a 'doorstep password' scheme. You pick a password that you can ask for from anyone who says they work for the company. When a caller arrives, they'll need to phone their head offices to get your password and verify they are legitimate. [Sign up for the Severn Trent doorstep password scheme](#) – contact your other utility providers by phone to find out what schemes they have.

If see further advice on bogus callers, [visit this page](#).

## Your Garden

We're aiming to shed some light on home security...keep your garden tools out of sight.



Your garden and shed are easy targets during the darker nights. The colder weather means many people will be packing up all their valuable tools and equipment.

Garden tools and DIY equipment can be used by burglars to get into your house. Don't lend burglars a hand - put tools away and ensure outside sheds and store cupboards are securely locked when not in use.

We recommend you:

- Securely lock any chain tools, cycles, mowers, ladders and other valuables inside a shed or garage
- Bring tools inside if you do not have a shed or garage
- Mark your property with your postcode and house number - this makes stolen property easier to trace and it can be positively identified as yours
- Regularly check fences and gates are in good repair and check for any overgrown areas where someone could hide
- Selecta DNA offer a property marking kit for tools and equipment. You can get 50% off this forensic marking kit by signing up to our FREE WMNow alert service here <https://www.wmnow.co.uk/> - the discount code can be found in your welcome email.

## Robbery and theft

We always see a spike in robbery and theft during the darker nights. It's easier for criminals to go undetected by digital doorbells, CCTV, and by dog walkers.

Thieves are targeting mobile phones, bags, and car keys. Stay alert this winter and keep your belongings out of sight.



Here are a few tips to help keep you and your belongings safe this winter:

- Be aware of who is around you at the cash point.
- Use the machine inside a bank or building society if possible and alert bank staff to any suspicious activity
- Don't let headphones restrict your ability to hear traffic, strangers or potential trouble
- Never leave your mobile phone in plain sight on a bar or restaurant table. It may be within your reach but it will also be within reach of a thief

- Don't hang your handbag on the back of a chair, out of your sight under a table or leave it unattended. It takes a matter of seconds for valuable contents, such as your mobile phone or purse, to be gone
- Working on your laptop in a coffee shop? Keep all of your electronic devices together in one place and put them away safely when not in use
- Keep possessions like wallets or phones in a secure pocket or bag. We often see people have items stolen from a rear pocket of their jeans
- Register and record your phone IMEI number as it makes it easier to track or trace your phone if it is ever stolen

Selecta DNA offer a property marking kit for Fine Art & Jewellery so if you wear valuable jewellery we advise that you mark this. You can get 50% off this kit by signing up to our FREE WMNow alert service - the discount code can be found in your welcome email.

## Track your smart phone or tablet computer

- Turn on your location or share your location with someone you trust so you can track this
- Tracker applications use your device's internet connection and in-built global positioning system to plot the location of your phone or tablet
- In many instances, the tracker application is free and already pre-loaded to your smartphone or tablet, it just needs to be activated. Find out how to do this by visiting [Techadvisor](#).
- The application can assist the user and the police in tracking a stolen device and sometimes even allows remote activation of the device's camera to capture the face and surroundings of a thief.
- Always let the officer dealing with your theft know that you have traced your device
- If your smart device pings in an unknown location do not visit the location or confront the individual without talking to the police.

If you would like to read more advice, or if you need to report something being stolen to us, [visit our dedicated page](#) or call 101.

## How you can help us tackle anti-social behaviour

Information we receive from the community helps us identify common issues, hotspot locations, repeat offenders, and patterns of behaviour.

You can report anti-social behaviour on our website live chat between 8am-midnight.

You can speak directly to officers at community meetings or at your local police station.

[You can email your local police team directly here](#)

Keep a diary of incidents of anti-social behaviour. This gives us a history of events and can be used as part of the evidence gathering process. Try and note the time, day, and what type of clothing they are wearing.

Sign up to WM Now to receive the latest crime prevention advice and report crime, [click here to learn more about WM Now](#).

It often takes a great deal of courage to call for help and we will ensure that we identify every opportunity to protect victims. To report 100% anonymously call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Talk to your child about staying safe and responsible during the darker nights. While Halloween and Bonfire Night may now have passed, our guide contains advice that may be useful all year round: [Download our free Parents Guide to Halloween and firework safety here](#).

If you want to find out more about how to report rowdy behaviour, please [visit our dedicated advice page](#). If there is a threat to life or an emergency, please call 999.

## Knife crime

#LifeorKnife- the choice is yours.

[The Life Or Knife website](#) is aimed at all young people, parents and teachers.

It provides information on where to report or talk to someone about knives and where you can anonymously dispose of them.

It also includes lots of information on the devastating impact knives can have on you and others, guidance on how to talk to your child about knives, and resources that can be used in schools. Your child may recently have been given an input by officers or staff about knife crime, sharing Ronan's Story.



**“If somebody had reported my brother’s killers for carrying a knife, he could’ve still been here today”**

Got concerns about someone carrying a knife? Call us on 101 or report anonymously to Fearless on 0800 555 111

#lifeorknife  
Search Life or Knife or visit:



Ronan was just 16 when he was fatally stabbed in a case of mistaken identity just a short distance from his home in Wolverhampton. His sister, Nikita, has bravely shared their devastating story in the hope that young people can be convinced not to carry a knife, or to report those they know who do.

[View the film on YouTube, here.](#)

Signs you might want to talk to your child about knife crime:

- If they have become withdrawn from the family and school, changed their behaviour, achievement or school attendance
- If they might have lost interest in hobbies and old friends and now hang around with a new group, staying out late and being vague about where they go.
- If they have become secretive and defensive, particularly about what's in their bag and might even told you that they need to carry a knife.
- If you've noticed knives are missing from the house or may even have found one in your child's bag or coat.
- These things seem easily explained as part of the difficult teenage years, but it's still important to talk to them about knife crime.

### How to have the chat

- Pick a place and a time where you can comfortably chat together. Your child might be reluctant to talk to you, so it might help to start by watching a relevant video or news article.
- Ask them if they understand what knife crime is about. Be patient, get them talking, reassure them that they can be honest with you about their fears and worries. You are there to listen and support them.
- You might want to share your own fears about their safety and their future. Tell them that even when they feel they don't have choices, they do.
- You might have a story from your own childhood you can share about a time you felt pressured into acting a certain way or a recent news story you could reference.
- Explain that the bravest thing to do is walk away from a fight, particularly one where someone has a knife. That while walking away is never easy, it's easier than getting seriously hurt or being responsible for killing or injuring someone else.
- You might want to discuss excuses your child could use to help them walk away, such as 'I have to go and pick my little brother up,' - or decide on a 'code' where the child can message you asking you to call them so that they can use your call as an excuse to walk away.
- Reassure them by saying many young people don't carry knives.

### The James Brindley Foundation

The James Brindley Foundation exists to bring an end to youth violence, and to engage and empower young people to make positive changes for a better life.

Find out more about the work they do and how they're supporting our campaign by [visiting their website](#).

You can find out more by [visiting the knife crime page on our website](#) and join in the conversation on social media using #lifeorknife.

You can also find out more independent advice and anonymously report knife crime online [by visiting Fearless](#).