

It's Time To Give Your Home A SECURITY HEALTH CHECK

Bedfordshire Police ask that you take a few minutes to review the security in your home. Many security measures can be made quickly and cheaply, and can put your mind at rest.

YOUR BOUNDARIES

- Fences, walls and hedges: check for damage and gaps and repair as soon as possible. Prickly plants are a good deterrent and can also be used under vulnerable ground floor windows.
- A low boundary at the front of your property ensures good visibility from passers-by and your neighbours – the Home Office recommend shrubs are cut to a maximum height of 1 metre.
- Your boundary at the back of your property should be approximately 2 metres high. You can increase security by using anti-climb paint or “prickler” strip along the top (with appropriate warning signage). Adding a trellis panel not only increases height but is too fragile to bear body weight, therefore increasing the risk to a burglar.
- Are side entrances secure? Replace any damaged or rusty hinges, hasps and padlocks.
- Good lighting is essential to deter a burglar – the police recommend the use of low level dusk-till-dawn lighting that is cheap to buy and uses less electricity than halogen lamps.
- Consider other warning devices to let you know someone has come onto your property, such as a gravel drive or a driveway alarm.

DOORS

- Check the framework around your external doors (including patio doors). Frames should be securely fixed and in good condition.
- Check the thickness of doors: an external door should be a minimum of 44mm if you want to fit a mortise lock – if the door is too thin, then a rim deadlock should be fitted.
- Do you have any wooden panelled doors? Are they strong enough? Often panels are made of a thinner material but these can be easily replaced with something more sturdy.
- Ideally front doors should be secured in two places – usually a mortise lock at a mid-point in the door with a Yale-type latch lock approximately 60-80cm above it. The more places a door is secured to the frame, the stronger it will be.
- Consider fitting a door viewer, a door chain or bar and even a letterbox cage.
- Does your patio door have suitable frame locks or an anti-lift device? If not, most double-glazing companies can fit these for you.

WINDOWS

- Check the frames of your windows and repair any damage. Pay special attention to those that are vulnerable (ground floor, at the rear of the building, accessible by a flat roof).
- Modern UPVC windows now have locks fitted as standard – British Standard BS7950 – and can be fitted with additional window restrictors and sash jammers.
- Are the windowpanes made from laminated glass – this is glass that is extremely difficult to break. Don't confuse laminated glass with toughened glass, which is designed for safety.
- Don't forget to check garage windows, especially if the garage is attached to the home with an internal access door.
- Garage and shed windows can be obscured with frosted adhesive vinyl – if a burglar can't see in, it reduces the temptation to break in.
- Leaded windows: these are not secure unless you fit secondary laminated glazing, polycarbonate sheeting, or internal grilles.

LOCKS

- Locks are only as good as the screws and framework they are attached to – replace any damaged parts.
- The recommended type of mortise lock is a five-lever lock to British Standard BS3621 / EN12209 (most house insurance policies insist on this specification for the front door).
- If you've got a Yale-style latch lock, is it double locking (ie, if you turn the key, does the block stay in place)? These are more secure, especially if the lock is near a glass panel in the door.
- Mortise bolts operate only from the inside and are suitable for French windows and sliding doors, and are best placed at the top and bottom of the door.

OUTBUILDINGS

- Give your locks and bolts a “health check” – replace any rusty items, ensure all padlocks and hasps bear the British Standard kite mark and are made of hardened steel.
- Don't forget the hinges on your doors – if a burglar can't breach the lock, they may attempt to unscrew the hinges. Use coach bolts, non-return screws or simply damage the screw head; you don't need to do every screw, just a couple on the hanging plate and a couple on the door plate.
- Remember to secure outbuilding windows – even the ones that don't open can be vulnerable. Consider obscuring the window with an opaque window film (the type used to obscure bathroom windows) as this will reduce the temptation. Alternatively, fit a grille or a couple of bars across the inside of the window to reduce the window aperture.
- Consider using a battery-operated siren alarm in your garage or shed - they often cost less than £20 and are simple to install and use.
- Get into the good habit of putting everything away when you have finished with it.

PROPERTY MARKING

Property marking cannot prevent your goods from being stolen but it is a very good deterrent as it is difficult to sell on stolen property that has been marked. It also allows the police to return recovered stolen goods to their rightful owner.

Mark your property with your house/flat number and postcode.

- Use a UV pen or a chemical DNA marking solution to invisibly mark items such as mobile phones, audio-visual equipment, cameras, etc.
- Items you don't mind spoiling the look of any garden equipment and power tools, security mark them by etching or scratching your postcode on to them.
- Don't forget to open an account with www.immobilise.com – this is a national online asset register where you can record details of your property. If your property is lost or stolen, Immobilise aids the police with their investigations and helps to disrupt the second-hand market.

BURGLAR ALARMS & DOMESTIC CCTV

- There are many types of alarm and CCTV systems, from wired and monitored systems at the top of the range down to battery-operated wire-free systems. Consider which is the most appropriate for your needs and how much you want to spend.
- Please bear in mind that, although wire-free systems are an effective deterrent, most insurance companies do not recognise these systems so will not acknowledge them on your policy specification.
- To find a reputable alarm and CCTV fitter, contact your local Trading Standards and ask about their “Approved Traders Scheme”.
- Alternatively, you can search for a fitter on the National Security Inspectorate website: www.nsi.org.uk
- Always get at least three quotes and check the system being supplied has UKAS accreditation with British Standard BS4737 / EN50131.

**These are, of course, only a few ideas to help improve the security of your home.
If you have any questions, please contact the Bedfordshire Crime Reduction Team on:
crimereduction@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk**