

Appeal in Connection with Burglaries in South East of England

Detectives investigating a series of 35 burglaries where older people have been targeted are asking for the public's help in identifying people they would like to speak to in connection with the incidents.

Detectives from Hertfordshire Constabulary's specialist unit, Operation Manhunt, which investigates distraction burglary crimes and burglary where the victim is aged 70 or over, have been working with police forces in the south east of the country to link the crimes which have occurred since mid-August.

The 35 offences, which are predominantly distraction burglaries, have occurred in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey and London. The victims have been mainly aged in their 80s and 90s, with one victim aged 94.

In the vast majority of cases, the offenders have created a false reason to gain entry to the property to steal, such as investigating a burst pipe, or repairing a water leak.

It is believed the people responsible for the crimes are operating in a team of three or four and have access to a small or medium sized silver hatchback vehicle.

Police would like to speak with the man pictured in connection with the crime as he may have information which could assist the investigation.

Detectives are also releasing a facial reconstruction of a second man they would like to identify in connection with the burglaries.

Detective Inspector Ben Wright, from Operation Manhunt is leading the investigation. He said: "This has been a long running and detailed investigation and we are now in a position to release these images. I would urge people to look carefully at them and contact Hertfordshire Constabulary if they recognise these men. We believe they may be from the Islington area.

"I would urge anyone who believes they may have seen these men or have been approached by them to make contact.

"I would also take this opportunity to ask people to remain vigilant and challenge unannounced visitors. If you are unsure who is at your door and you are not expecting anyone, don't open the door."

Anyone with information is asked to contact Hertfordshire Constabulary via the non-emergency number, 101 quoting Operation Parka. You can also leave information anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.



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People are urged to take note of the following advice to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of distraction burglary and doorstep crime:

Not sure? Don't open the door! - If you are not expecting anyone and you don't recognise them, don't let them into your home. Try to communicate with the caller without opening the door and ask them to return at a time when you have someone you trust with you.

If you *are* expecting a caller - If a person you are expecting comes at the time you have arranged, ask to see their identification before you let them in.

Never keep large amounts of cash at home. Put your money in an account where it is safe.

Never consider having work done on your house or garden by anyone who knocks on your door. You can find a reputable trader through Trustmark 01344 630 804 or visit www.trustmark.org.uk

Call 999 if you suspect a crime is in progress or you believe someone is acting suspiciously around your neighbour's property.