

Police commit to eradicating scourge of bogus callers



Police Scotland today renewed its commitment to eradicating the scourge of doorstep crime and bogus callers.

Victims of bogus callers and doorstep crime are often unaware the crime has been committed, feel so embarrassed they are unable to go to the police, and fear a loss of independence, while facing financial uncertainty in the future.

Operation Monarda drives home the message – “If In Doubt, Keep Them Out”.

If someone arrives to your home unexpectedly:

- ensure your windows and doors are secure
- make use of door chains and bars
- don't allow anyone entry to your home unless you have verified their identity by telephone.

Operation Monarda brings together public, private and third sector organisations to help minimise risk and prevent harm to vulnerable and older people from criminals who commit doorstep crime. It operates as a preventative project, and encompasses engagement work with the general public, as well as enforcement work to target criminals.

Doorstep crime occurs across Scotland, in every policing division, with more than 1000 incidents recorded between 1 August 2014 and 13 February 2015. Approximately £400,000 was taken from victims in that time.

Speaking at the national launch in Edinburgh, Chief Superintendent Mark Williams (Local Police Commander for Edinburgh) said: “This campaign is about raising awareness

within communities of this despicable crime and offering simple but effective advice to the public on how to avoid falling victim to it.

“Doorstep crime can affect anyone but we know that the over 60’s are particularly vulnerable. Bogus callers and rogue traders can be extremely convincing in how they present themselves and win over the confidence of potential victims. Sadly, many people are convinced by their lies.

“We don’t recommend dealing with cold-callers for any form of property maintenance or repair to your home, so if you have any doubts, do not let them into your house.”

“If you are aware of any suspicious activity taking place at the home of a neighbour, friend or family member, then please contact us immediately.”

Councillor Stephen Hagan, Chair of Trading Standards Consumer Protection Task Group said: “Doorstep crime has been identified as a national priority for Scottish Trading Standards for the last couple of years and it has been again for 2015/16. Trading Standards and the Police have a long history of working together to combat this issue and I warmly welcome the strong partnership ethos driving Operation Monarda this year.

“In some instances, entire life savings are wiped out to pay for often unnecessary work, however, the long term impact of doorstep crime can be much more than the financial loss; often impacting on the health and wellbeing of the victim. We also can’t forget the knock on effect this crime can have on local business and the economy more widely.

“The message is simple, doorstep crime will not be tolerated in our communities and we all have a role to play in combating it and keeping those around us safe. If you have any suspicions that you, your neighbours, or family and friends have been targeted by these criminals, report these to Police

Scotland or your local trading standards service immediately.”

David Crawley from Crimestoppers said: “Crimestoppers is an independent charity which is committed to helping victims of crime, or those who live in fear of crime, to be able to report, or provide information about crime, anonymously.

As part of this commitment to helping all members of society, we are delighted to support this campaign which is focused on beating doorstep crime across Scotland. This type of crime often sees vulnerable and older people targeted, so if you have information regarding who is responsible, you can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on www.crimestoppers-uk.org.”