



Undertakers are underhand - P2



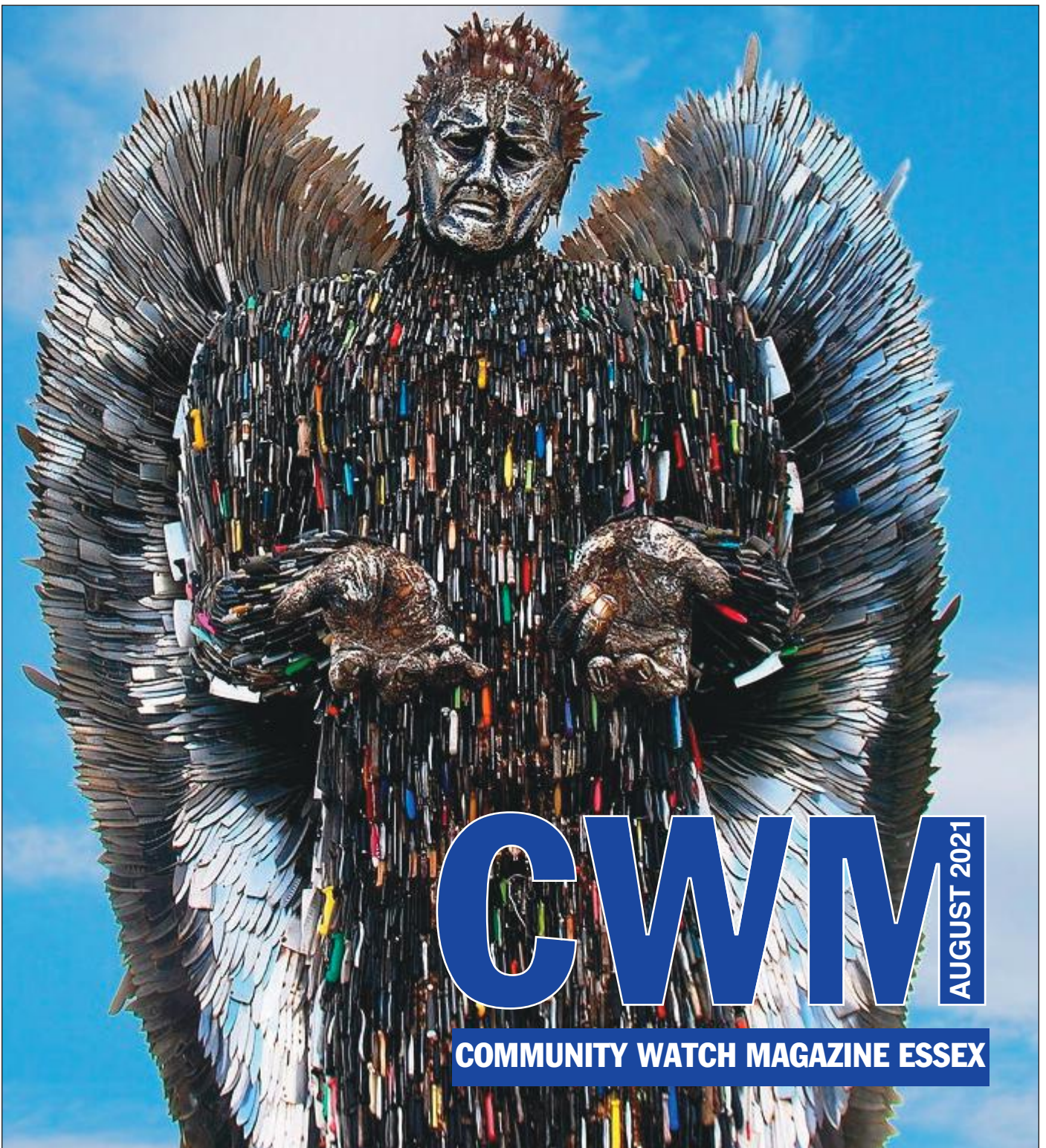
Beware of rogue locksmiths - P4-5



Alert over dodgy roofers - P6-7



Danger discs can cause injury - P11



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COMMUNITY WATCH MAGAZINE ESSEX

KNIFE ANGEL STATUE IS ARRIVING IN CHELMSFORD - SEE PAGE 12

Hiding the true cost of dying



Undertakers being investigated over the lack of transparency over the cost of funerals

FUNERAL directors have reluctantly become wealthier due to the high number of deaths caused by the pandemic.

But many of us could be getting ripped off as many funeral businesses are not being transparent with the prices of their services. And this is despite being put on notice by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) that changes were needed, Which? research has found.

A lack of transparency about the cost of their services puts vulnerable customers at risk of paying inflated prices and could lead to many more people spending over the odds.

The CMA is currently consulting on the details of new requirements, which it is proposing will come into effect in September 2021.

Fears over vulnerable customers paying inflated prices led the CMA to investigate funeral directors' costs in 2018.

Its final report stated that "ongoing uncertainty as to the future path of the pandemic" meant that it has "not been feasible to design and calibrate the price controls" it had been considering.

However its proposed remedies did include a requirement for funeral directors and crematorium operators to disclose prices that will help customers make more informed decisions.

But the consumer champion's research from February into 112 funeral directors found that a quarter (29) of them didn't include pricing on their websites.

Of those that did show their prices, information was often not presented in a consistent way, making it difficult for consumers to understand how their money was being spent.

Around 40 funeral directors showed package costs with a description of what's included but provided no cost break down. Only 18 showed itemised price lists.

Concerningly, even those signed up to the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD), members of which sign up to a code of practice, weren't always transparent with their costs. Of the NAFD members Which? analysed, a third (11) didn't disclose pricing online.

A spokesperson for the NAFD said they were reviewing the CMA's draft

Order to make sure they align our on-line member directory capabilities to the Order. They are likely to introduce enforcement on those provisions of our new Code in September, at the same time as the CMA's requirements become law."

Measures include letting those arranging a funeral know in advance the price they will pay and the terms of their business, and what services they will be getting for that price.

Which? believes that a lack of price transparency from funeral directors so far suggests this monitoring will be essential to ensure better outcomes for consumers.

Jenny Ross, Editor of Which? Money, said: "Organising a funeral is already a stressful time for families – that stress shouldn't be compounded by the fear of paying inflated prices. Our research shows many funeral directors are not showing their costs transparently.

"To avoid more vulnerable people paying more than they should, funeral directors must do the right thing and be up front about the cost of their services."



This scam doesn't ring true

MOST people, young or old, have a mobile phone contract today because it is a vital means of keeping in touch with loved ones, family or even friends.

Usually when your phone contract is coming to an end your supplier - Virgin, Vodafone, EE, or O2 - will send you a reminder asking if you wish to renew for a further period.

Criminals are aware of the procedure for renewing contracts and now they are trying to cash in with many people being hit in the pocket.

The National Fraud Investigation Bureau (NFIB) are aware of an ongoing scam where consumers are being cold called by individuals impersonating employees of legitimate mobile network operators and suppliers.

So far they have received over 300 reports since January 2020 with reported losses in excess of £86,000.

This week they asked mobile owners to stay alert in case they are one of the potential victims.

Victims are offered early handset upgrades, or new contracts, at significant discounts.

Once customers have been convinced that the deals are genuine and agree to proceed, suspects then ask for their online mobile account credentials,

including log-ins, address and bank account details.

Suspects then place orders with genuine companies on behalf of victims, however select a different handset to that requested and have it shipped to the customer's address.

Upon receipt, suspects assure victims that this has been an error and instruct them to 'return' the handset to a different address not affiliated to the mobile company. These addresses are usually residential.

Upon intercepting the 'returned' handsets, the suspects cease contact and victims find themselves stuck with

no phone and liable for the entirety of a new contract taken out in their name.

What you need to do:

- Cold calls about mobile upgrades and contracts - If you're unsure that the person calling you is an official representative of the company they claim to be from, hang up and do not reveal any personal information.
- Only contact your mobile network provider on a number you know to be correct. For example, 191 for Vodafone customers, 150 for EE customers, 333 for Three customers, 202 for O2 customers, 4455 for Tesco Mobile, 789 for Virgin Mobile and 150 for Sky Mobile.
- If you receive a device that you did not order or expect, contact the genuine sender immediately. The details for this will be within the parcel.
- NEVER post a device directly to a given address. All genuine Mobile Network Operators would send out a jiffy bag for you to return without you incurring additional cost.

For more information about how to protect yourself online visit www.cyberaware.gov.uk and takefive-stopfraud.org.uk



Don't hire a cowboy

1. Cheap Advertised Price

Be wary of from £39 / £49 or £59 prices – this is the price rogue locksmiths are using

2. Top of Google

1st position in the Google Adverts with cheap advertised price (£39/£49/£59)– they have PAID to be here, for a reason!

3. Nationwide Problem

Rogue locksmiths also turn on and off their adverts to appear in ALL areas of the UK and at certain times of the day. If a low price looks too good to be true then more often than not it will be!

4. False claims

Claims of 3rd Party Approval / Certification / Accreditation

One of the other most popular red flags to look out for when hiring a locksmith are false claims of being certified, accredited or DBS checked. After clicking the Cheap £39 / £49 / £59 Google advert the website usually makes false claims. Also false claims of being Vetted by a 3rd party and false claims of being DBS checked

5. Check for yourself

A legitimate locksmith company with genuine 3rd party approval will gladly provide you with the details of their accreditation, most will link through to their 3rd party accreditation profile as proof.

6. Police recommendation

This should alert you because the police do not recommend any locksmith companies but may suggest using one that is MLA approved

7. Price quotes

Be wary if they are very vague about price details on the phone; keeps mentioning a low price on the phone, unable to give accurate price quote for the job

Locksmiths Association sends a...



HOMEOWNERS are being scammed out of tens of thousands of pounds by a wave of rogue locksmiths who 'bully' their victims into submission.

Families are being warned against a new crop of cowboy tradesmen who promise quick-fix jobs before threatening to lock people out of their homes if they don't pay extortionate bills.

Online giant Google is profiting from the scams by promoting the conmen through paid-for advertising, it is understood.

One rogue company is believed to be paying to be promoted on the tech firm's search results.

The Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) has received more than 800 complaints about rogue or fake locksmiths over the past year — and in two-thirds of cases, customers are being overcharged by £200 or more.

Experts say the racket has reached an 'industrial scale' due to the pandemic.

The trade is unregulated and professionals are now demanding protection for cheated homeowners.

Fraudsters typically use a tactic known as 'bait-and-switch', in which they quote a cheap call-out price before ultimately charging ten times that of a regular locksmith.

In one example, a locksmith quoted an initial price of £49, but the final bill came to £1,604.

Conmen often intimidate homeowners into paying up or withhold keys to locks they've already fitted. Jane Mason, 45, was scammed out of £1,000 for a botched new lock, which she now has to replace to maintain her home insurance.

Standard prices for changing or replacing a lock are around £100.

Jane, who owns a fashion recruitment business, had wanted a new lock before she moved into her new home in Surrey.

After an online search, she contacted what appeared to be a local, family-run firm and booked two days in advance.

She gave her mother-in-law, Irene, £200 to pay for the job while she was helping her move home.



...warning about rogue operators fleecing residents



Lock out these rogue operators

From page 4

But the locksmith gave Irene an invoice for £1,000, which didn't include a breakdown of costs.

The locksmith demanded instant payment and - intimidated by their behaviour - Irene, 69, paid by credit card.

When Jane contacted the company to ask for her money back, she was told 'all the prices are told by our locksmiths in advance', which was not the case.

Jane said: "My mother-in-law is no shrinking violet, but even she was scared and felt like she had no choice other than to pay.

"This company shouldn't be allowed to get away with charging such extortionate amounts for a simple lock change.'

Irene's credit card company has returned her money.

David Vine, a locksmith from the Home Counties, says there has been 'a surge in scam stories from people who have been well and truly ripped off by drill-happy pseudo-locksmiths'.

He said: "They strike quick, lie, and bully their victims into paying extortionate amounts for poor service."

Vine says he came across one job in

which a female victim had been locked out of her home with her baby still inside.

The mother called a 'locksmith', who promised an immediate response, but after more than an hour realised she had been lied to and called Vine.

He said: "I arrived five minutes later, opened the door and was tidying up when the "locksmith" turned up.

"He was a large and very intimidating man and - following a heated argument - it was only after my threat of calling the police that he left the property.

"I can imagine how a lone victim is bullied into paying up.

"It's about time the UK locksmith industry got some strict regulations in force. There's always been a rogue element, but it's on an industrial scale now.

"The best way to get a decent locksmith is to use the Master Locksmiths Association website, but most people don't have time to do that, especially if they're locked out - and that's when they're vulnerable."

Steffan George, managing director of the MLA, says the lack of regulation means it's easy to set up as a locksmith with no training, experience or insurance.

"There are already hundreds of uncertified people working in the industry," he said.

The MLA believes the pandemic may have caused a spike in activity as cash-strapped homeowners are tempted by bargain prices and unemployment pushes people towards unscrupulous activities.

It says homeowners should be wary of locksmiths quoting unusually low prices, being vague about experience and how they'd carry out the work.

Inquiries that are diverted to a call centre and not answered by a locksmith are also red flags because details about who will be doing the job are harder to obtain.

Dodgy locksmiths should be reported to Action Fraud.

A Google spokesman said: "We take dishonest business practices and misleading ads very seriously and consider them to be an egregious violation of our policies. When ads do not comply with our policies; we take immediate action to remove them."

Dodgy dealers...

INCREASING storms, torrential rain and high winds can be harsh and looking after our properties can be a challenge, especially the parts we can't easily see.

A solid, leak free roof with good gutters is your home's best defence against the elements, but if you notice water stains, holes or loose/leaking gutters then it can be a daunting task to get it fixed.

Whether you need a small repair or complete roof replacement, always do your research when it comes to hiring a contractor as the consequences of bad roofing work can be disastrous.

Moisture, water damage, inadequate insulation or movement could cause cracks to occur in the walls of your property and, possibly, lead to the eventual collapse of the roof. Leaks in your loft can result in multiple dangers, including electrical, water, and physical hazards.

Not only will all of these affect your home's aesthetics, but they will be costly to repair and – more importantly - compromise the safety of you and your family.

Continued page 7



Kate, Aircrew Electricians
Buy With Confidence Member

Buy With Confidence

The only nationally available business approval scheme that's owned, controlled and operated by Trading Standards services.

Whether you need a plumber, electrician or anything else, visit BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk to find businesses that have been fully checked, vetted and continue to be monitored by Trading Standards.

BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk



buywithconfidence.gov.uk
ESSEX TRADING STANDARDS

Need work doing - be sure at the door

Follow our advice - don't fall victim to a rogue trader

- Choose a 'Buy With Confidence' accredited trader
- Obtain several quotes
- Get a written quote detailing exactly what work will be carried out, how much it will cost and what the terms of payment are.
- Take your time to make sure you're happy with what you're undertaking
- Ask a trusted friend/relative for advice
- Ask to see identity.

A genuine trader will not:

- Call without an appointment
 - Ask you or offer to take you to the bank to withdraw cash or make a money transfer
 - Ask you to pay in full before the work is complete
 - Insist that you decide about the work they are offering to do on the spot
 - Bully or scare you into doing work
- www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk



Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for useful leaflets to share with your friends and family. Don't take chances, follow our advice and stay safe.



...they just make you hit the roof



From page 6

If you need work doing to your roof, fascia/soffits or gutters then there are a few simple steps you can take to ensure you engage a reputable tradesperson to do the work.

- Do not do business with a trader that cold calls and puts you under pressure to have work done - this is a popular tactic of rogue traders who are likely to undertake unnecessary work to a poor standard at inflated prices.
- Instead, when choosing a roofing contractor, we recommend that you follow our advice and whilst it is tempting to go with the cheapest, try to base your choice on the quality of the advice given and your confidence in the trader.
- Check they specialise in the type of roof covering you require as slating/tiling, single ply, liquid-applied roofing, high-performance felt and lead all require different skills to apply – and ensure you understand what the work will involve.
- Also check to see if they are a member of a reputable trade association such as The National Federation of Roofing Contractors Limited (NFRCL).
- Never respond to leaflets for services such as gutter cleaning and repairs if the business doesn't provide adequate contact details. Trading Standards has seen an upsurge in traders using leaflets with fake or incomplete addresses, legitimate traders would not advertise their services in this way.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has seen an increase in scammers operating often preying on the vulnerable with roofing and paving jobs seen as easy targets.

Criminals will often target older people on their doorstep and offer to check the roofing and gutters or offer a cleansing service to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus – or worse still offer to fit a new driveway when

it may only need cleaning.

Would-be workmen knocking on doors will politely offer to do roofing or paving work. It's often a case of 'we have been doing work in the area. Do you want us to do your driveway or check your roof while we are here?'

These criminals will initially offer you a cheap price, but once you agree to have the work done, the price escalates.

In some cases, you will be asked for money up front, and will even offer to take you to the bank there and then.

Trading Standards advise that you do not enter into any agreement with anyone knocking on your door in these types of circumstances.

If work needs doing, always do your research first and use a reputable trader.

Also remember that property owners are responsible for any planning permission or building control approval that may be required on that property – you will need to discuss with your local Borough, City or District Council if the proposed work involves structural alterations, the performance of the new covering is significantly different to that of the existing covering, or you are replacing/repairing more than 25 per cent of the roof area. Do not assume that the trader will do this on your behalf.

To find a reputable trader who has been vetted by Trading Standards visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk or, if possible, obtain recommendations from family, friends or neighbours. If you have any concerns regarding the quality of work undertaken on your home or are being put under pressure to have more work done or pay more than has been previously agreed, contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133.



Check that any roofer is a member of a trade body

Don't use the services of a trader who cold calls on you

To find a reputable trader approved and vetted by Trading Standards visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk

For general help and advice or to report a problem with a trader you can telephone the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**





**Do you
know which
businesses
you can
trust?**

Buy With Confidence

The only nationally available business approval scheme that's owned, controlled and operated by Trading Standards services

It can be difficult to know who to trust. That's why Trading Standards created Buy With Confidence. Fully trained Trading Standards professionals independently check, vet and monitor businesses, who will treat you fairly.

So, whether you need a plumber, electrician, roofer or anything else, visit **BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk** to find Trading Standards Approved businesses you can trust.





CTSI warning over fake Post Office websites

THE Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) has uncovered evidence of a new Post Office scam that claims that the recipient's parcel delivery failed and returned to a Post Office depot.

The text contains a link to a fake website created to look exactly like an official Post Office platform.

The website asks the target to enter their postcode and personal details supposedly to identify their closest depot and reorganise the delivery.

The information requested includes the full name, address, date of birth and phone number. The information provided is sent directly to scammers who might use the information to commit many different kinds of identity fraud.

CTSI understands that someone who put their details into the bogus Post Office website lost £80,000 after fraudsters were able to pass their bank's security checks by using the personal information the victim provided on the phoney Post Office website form.

These Post Office scam messages come after a series of related delivery scams which use Royal Mail, DPD, Hermes and other delivery company branding. CTSI raised awareness of this scam during Scams Awareness

Fortnight, an annual public information campaign led by Citizens Advice.

CTSI Lead Officer, Katherine Hart, said: "This Post Office scam is far more insidious than a similar scam which involved Royal Mail.

"While the Royal Mail scam explicitly asks for a payment to reorganise a delivery, at no point does this happen in this Post Office version making the communication less suspect and potentially more likely to be successful.



"Scammers could use the information to gain access to bank accounts and other important personal accounts.

"With the pandemic leading to a significant rise in online shopping and deliveries, it is vital that the message about

the potential dangers of these scams are shared as far and as wide as possible."

To report scams, contact Action Fraud, or if in Scotland, contact Police Scotland.

For consumer advice, please call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133

The public is encouraged to join Friends Against Scams. This initiative aims to protect and prevent people from becoming scam victims by empowering them to stand against scams.

Warning over E-scooters

E-SCOOTER riders are being warned by police to know the law in a bid to reduce the number being illegally used.

Riding privately-owned e-scooters, outside of government-approved trials, is an offence on public land.

Essex Police said it wants to educate owners about current legislation but stressed the force will take enforcement action where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour or wider criminality.

The force has written to schools to raise awareness and said it must ensure that private e-scooter owners "do not pose a risk to the public or themselves due to their presence on public highways

Superintendent Sam Smith, who is leading the initiative, said the force wants to get the message to parents who are thinking of buying their child an e-scooter.

"We have written to schools recently and asked them to raise awareness with parents about the laws surrounding private e-scooters.

"Where there is persistent use of privately-owned e-scooters, or evidence of other offences, we will take appropriate enforcement action. This includes e-scooter seizure and riders being reported for driving offences."



Safety tips

- The Brigade's advice is to always use the correct charger for the product and buy an official one from a reputable seller.
- Batteries can get warm during their use and it is advisable to allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge as they could be more susceptible to failure.
- Batteries should always be charged on hard flat surfaces.
- Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around while in use or while being carried as spares as this can increase the chance of damage to cells.
- Always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging. Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging and we would advise not to leave it unattended or while people are asleep.
- Ensure you have smoke alarms fitted where e-bikes or e-scooters are being charged.
- Lastly, never block your escape route with anything, including bikes and scooters. Store them somewhere away from a main through route.



The damage caused to one flat after a scooter caught fire while being charged in a bedroom

E-scooter battery shock sparks brigade warning

OWNERS of electric bikes and scooters are being warned to take care where they charge new batteries.

The warning comes after 21 year old Nihad Chemban was lucky to escape with his life after an electric bike battery caught fire while on charge in his bedroom.

Investigation teams have seen a rise in such incidents and want to encourage people who use these products to be aware of the risks and highlight the danger of storing them in escape routes in the home or in communal areas such as hallways in blocks of flats.

Mr Chemban and his flatmate were both at home when the fire broke out and his flatmate had to jump from a first-floor window as the bike was blocking his route to the front door.

Already this year, fire-fighters in London have attended more than 25 fires involving electric bikes or scooters and some of them

have been significant incidents resulting in serious injuries.

In many cases, they are stored in escape routes or communal areas which can stop people being able to escape if they become involved in a fire. This year, there have been more than 120 fires in London which involved items stored in communal areas like halls and corridors.

Fire investigation officer Matt Cullen explained that a lot of the fires involve e-bike conversion kits (to convert a standard push bike into an electric bike rather than a purpose built one) which provide only the motors and control gear but batteries must be sourced separately.

The lithium-ion batteries have caused house fires in America and Australia; a woman died after a battery exploded in North Wales, and batteries have exploded in Ireland



One burnt out scooter



Graham Russell, chief executive of the Office for Product Safety

Safety fears over grinder disc

IF you have bought a chainsaw disc like the one illustrated above you are being warned to stop using it and demand a refund from the retailer.

Because your health - even your life - could be at risk.

That's the message this month from the Office for Product Safety and Standards who claim the discs are being sold illegally and put you at risk of a serious injury.

The chainsaw discs are being openly sold as being suitable attachments for angle grinders.

The OPSS say they are illegal and have already seriously injured people across the UK. If the disc grips the cutting surface the grinder can jump or turn sharply, and be torn from your hands.

If you have a chainsaw disc like those shown in the photographs you are being advised NOT to use it and return it to where you bought it for a refund.

Any business selling these products must remove them from sale immediately, as they do not comply with the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008.

For full details of the alert, please click here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-safety-alert-issued-for-angle-grinder-chainsaw-disc-attachment>

The OPSS, the UK's national product safety regulator, has issued a nationwide safety alert for the disc attach-

ment that has been incorrectly sold for use with angle grinders.

These attachments are not designed to be used together and are likely to cause loss of control which could result in serious injury or even a fatality.

Reports have been received of injuries arising from kickback caused by the chainsaw gripping the cutting surface and forcing the angle grinder to sharply turn or jump out of the hand of the operator.

Any consumers who have these angle grinder attachments in their possession are urged to stop using them immediately. They should contact the seller for redress if they believe the product was incorrectly marketed as compatible for use with an angle grinder.

OPSS is also telling any business that sells these chainsaw discs as attachments for angle grinders to remove them from the market immediately as they do not comply with the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008.



This safety alert is the result of a risk assessment carried out by OPSS following two previous risk alerts published by the Office in February, based on information from local regulators.

OPSS is working with all local authority Trading Standards nationwide to identify and take appropriate action against these chainsaw attachments.

OPSS Chief Executive Graham Russell said: "We have taken this important step because the chainsaw attachments are not designed to be used with angle grinders and could cause serious injury or even fatality."

This safety alert is the latest step taken by OPSS to help protect the UK public from unsafe products.

● *The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' Accident Surveillance Systems data ranked angle grinders as the third most dangerous tools, with 5400 injuries recorded annually.*

● *In August last year, a worker suffered a chest laceration when the angle grinder he was using 'kicked back'. At the time, he was apparently cutting timber and fibre glass with a 125mm angle grinder fitted with a multi-cutter blade.*

● *In a separate incident two months later, a young apprentice suffered serious injuries to his groin, right leg and stomach when a 9-inch angle grinder he was using kicked back and struck him. It appears he was cleaning a steel beam.*

CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS FROM ESSEX POLICE

Man set on fire

TWO men have each been jailed for 21 years for their role in an incident where a man was set on fire in Southend. The victim, a man in his 40s, had been attacked outside of his home in Southchurch Road, Southend. He had gone outside after taking a phone call from someone he knew. **READ THE FULL STORY**

Officers commended

THE bravery of five police officers who detained a man armed with an axe has been recognised with commendations from Chief Constable Ben-Julian Harrington. PC Lisa Vaughan-Jones, PC Emma McIntyre-Major, PC John Parkin, Sergeant Paul Brady and Sergeant Paul Downes attended a house in Braintree where a man was making threats against his own family. **READ MORE**

Jail for abuser

DETECTIVES have secured justice for two children after the man who abused them has been jailed. Phillip Thorpe was arrested after it had been reported that he had sexually abused two children. He was convicted at Chelmsford Crown Court. **FULL STORY**

Raped a child

ESSEX Police have ensured a man who left another man needing 185 stitches to his face and a metal plate inserted after stabbing him after an argument over drugs has been taken off our streets. Dylan Awulonu of Avon Way, Colchester, was jailed for 12 years at Ipswich Crown Court. **READ MORE**

Man videoed abuse

SPECIALIST detectives who put paedophiles behind bars have secured justice for a victim of a man who videoed himself abusing them. Vernon Pickett abused the child at an address in Basilston in July and August last year. **FULL STORY**

Statue to highlight knife crime misery

KNIFE crime has had a devastating effect on many families in Essex and a 27-foot anti-violence sculpture will arrive in Chelmsford next month to highlight the scale of the problem nationwide.

The National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, known as the Knife Angel, is made from 100,000 blunted blades and it travels around the country warning communities of the terrible consequences of knife crime.

It arrives in Central Park on September 6 and education, outreach and workshops to spread its anti-violence message are already underway.

The visit to the city has been organised by youth organisation Keep It 100 Essex with the support of a wide range of partners, including Chelmsford City Council and the Violence and Vulnerability Unit, a national team of community safety experts.

The impressive giant sculpture represents intolerance to all forms of violent behaviour and is the only monument to travel the whole of the UK with a commitment to bring about social change.

Key focus of its stay in Chelmsford is a celebration of positive youth culture, empowering young people to reject violence long before they might consider picking up a knife. School pupils and young people across Essex will be encouraged to become anti-violence ambassadors, with a pledge not to use aggression to solve disputes.

The sculpture, created by the British Ironwork Centre and artist Alfie Bradley, will be the focus of activity for a month-long series of events throughout September, including workshops for schools and youth groups, and a vigil for the victims of knife crime.

A special youth awards has also been made possible by the angel's visit. The first K1100 Awards this September will recognise young creative talent across the county, with a range of categories from best entrepreneur and tech skills, to awards for artists and lyricists. The event will be held in the Civic Theatre just before the Knife Angel leaves the city.

A key part of the Knife Angel's national campaign is the message 'Save a Life, Surrender Your Knife' and throughout September there'll be a knife amnesty in the city. New, discreet knife bins will be placed around Chelmsford so that anyone with a weapon may dispose of them safely and without fear of prosecution.

Details of where to find these permanent knife banks will be available on the Keep it 100 website in the lead-up to the Knife Angel's arrival in Central Park next month.



Knife Angel statue



How to avoid going on a phishing trip

CYBER criminals love phishing. Unfortunately, this is not a harmless riverbank pursuit. When criminals go phishing, you are the fish and the bait is usually contained in a scam email or text message.

The criminal's goal is to convince you to click on the links within their scam email or text message, or to give away sensitive information (such as bank details). These messages may look like the real thing but are malicious.

Once clicked, you may be sent to a dodgy website which could download viruses onto your computer, or steal your passwords.

As of 30th April 2021, over 5.8 million emails were reported to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS).

The tool, which was launched by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the City of London Police last April, allows the public to forward suspicious emails to an automated system that scans it for malicious links. Since its launch, over 43,000 scams and 84,000 malicious websites have been removed.

Most common phishing scams?

The most commonly spoofed organisation reported in phishing emails was TV Licensing,

with losses totalling £5.3m.

The majority of losses occurred as a result of victims following malicious links in the emails and inputting their personal information into what they thought was the legitimate TV Licensing website.

Shortly after, they would receive a call from criminals impersonating bank staff who was able to convince them that their bank accounts were compromised and persuaded them to transfer all of their money to a new 'safe' account.

Some of the other most commonly impersonated organisations in-

cluded HMRC and DVLA. We also received more than 40,000 suspicious email reports relating to COVID-19.

How to protect yourself.

Fake emails and text messages can sometimes be difficult to spot and criminals are constantly getting better at finding ways to make them seem more authentic.

Email address spoofing, for example, is just one of the tactics criminals will use to try and make their fake emails look real.

To protect yourself from fraud and cyber crime, visit: [actionfraud.police.uk /cyber-crime](https://actionfraud.police.uk/cyber-crime) for more information.



Tips for better safeguards

1: Be cautious of messages asking for your personal information. Official organisations, such as your bank, should never ask you for personal or financial information via email or text message. If you receive a message and you want to check that it's legitimate, you can call the organisation directly using a known number, such as the one on a bank statement or utility bill.

2: Report suspicious emails. If you receive an email you're not quite sure about, you should report it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) by forwarding the email to: report@phishing.gov.uk. Your reports will help government and law enforcement agencies to remove malicious emails and websites.

3: Report suspicious text messages. If you receive a suspicious text message, you can report it by forwarding the message to 7726. It's free of charge and enables your mobile network provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

4: Report fraud. If you've lost money or provided personal information as a result of a phishing scam, notify your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud.

Shock survey finds that...

Doorstep tips

Lock your doors

Before going to the front door, check that your back door is locked. Some scams may involve someone gaining access through the back while you're distracted at your doorstep. Put the door on a chain as extra security.

Think

Are you expecting anyone? If not, be extra cautious when answering the door. First, you can check through the window or spyhole, if you have one.

Examine ID

If they do provide identification, examine it thoroughly. If it's just a card with a mobile phone number on it, it's best to throw it in the bin right away and ask the caller to leave.

'No cold callers' sign

Place a 'no callers' notice on your door, informing people that you won't respond to or accept unsolicited callers. This will stop most callers knocking

Tell family, friends and neighbours

If you come into contact with a cold caller or a suspicious tradesperson, make sure to notify your neighbours as well as any friends or family, this will help make you feel more secure.

Don't buy at the door

No matter who is calling or what they seem to be offering, never buy from cold callers. This is because they will often rely on high pressure sales techniques and may try to get you to sign something, but this is a technique only used by scammers.

Don't be afraid to say 'no'

A simple no should be enough and you can do further research on the tradesmen and their company once they've left.

Be especially wary of people:

- claiming to conduct a survey
 - asking to use your phone for an 'emergency'
 - asking to borrow some money
- These are common scam techniques which target the elderly, especially those who live on their own.



A **Which?** investigation has found that doorstep scammers are back in business after lockdown restrictions - and these ruthless fraudsters are using new coronavirus scams to target the most vulnerable.

According to Action Fraud data, £18.7 million was lost to doorstep crime in 2020 alone. With many in-person scams believed to go unreported, the true figures could be even higher.

Doorstep scams can come in many forms. For example, fraudsters might offer building, gardening or home improvement services then overcharge for or never complete the work.

Fraudsters also often pose as salespeople or charity workers as a means of parting people from their hard-earned cash.

The number of reports to police for this type of fraud in April 2020 was 46 per cent lower than April 2019 as doorstep sellers were banned during the lockdown.

However, by summer 2020, reports of doorstep scams had returned to pre-pandemic levels, with fewer restrictions to stop fraudsters going out.

Which? research has found that scammers have exploited vulnerable people's uncertainty and isolation during the lockdowns and used the pandemic as an opportunity to create new coronavirus frauds and recycle old scams.

A survey of 1,186 **Which?** members found that 16 per cent have received unsolicited visits from someone claiming to be a salesperson or charity worker since the start of the first lockdown.

Also 9 per cent said that they felt the visitor was pressuring them into

making a purchase or performing a certain action, such as donating.

Although **Which?** doesn't know how many of these visits were scams, even genuine doorstep selling can leave consumers at a disadvantage.

These unexpected visits can also be unnerving - especially for elderly or vulnerable people or if the salesperson is particularly pushy.

Which? member William Grayson, 81, lives alone, a 40 minute drive from his closest relatives.

William was visited at his home by two volunteers from a 'Covid support group' who offered to do shopping and errands for him while he was shielding. He gave the young couple £200 cash over two visits for food and home essentials but never got his shopping.

He said: "Realising these people were out to get me made a dark time even darker for me to be honest."

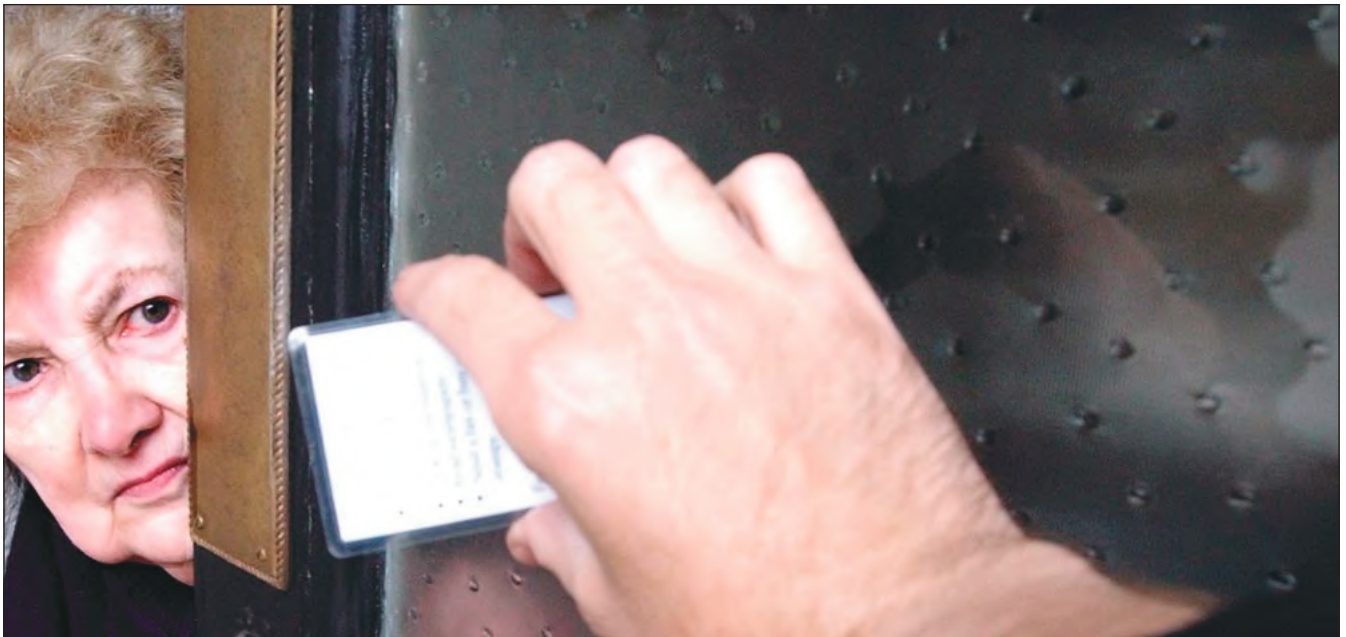
Which? has heard from other victims across the UK who have been targeted by fraudsters claiming to be from local NHS services offering fast-track testing and vaccines, collecting donations for fake charities and selling vitamin pills that 'protect against' Covid-19.

NHS services across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland continue to stress that all testing and vaccine services are free of charge, and nobody will ever turn up at someone's home without warning.

Those being vaccinated at home will likely be contacted in advance by their local NHS service, or regular district nurse, to arrange an appointment.

An increase in home improvement projects during lockdown provided scammers with new opportunities to rehash old scams. **Turn to Page 11**

...doorstep crooks are cashing in again



Doorstep crooks can trick you into parting with thousands of pounds so stay alert

Stay alert to doorstep scams

From page 10

Over a third (37%) of Which? members surveyed who had an unsolicited door knock said it was someone offering home improvement services.

When two landscapers turned up at Lucy's, whose name has been changed, front door in Maidenhead last July, offering to tidy up her front garden, she didn't think it was unusual that they'd asked for the money up front.

She explained: "They said they'd been working on my neighbour's garden and thought mine looked like it could do with a bit of TLC. It was funny because I'd recently been admiring my neighbour's new front garden."

Lucy later found out they weren't the same traders that had worked on her neighbour's garden. She has since given up hope of getting any money back.

Unfortunately for Lucy, victims are unlikely to get their money back if they've handed over cash. Cash transactions are also untraceable which makes the perpetrators harder to track down and bring to justice.

Which? advises consumers against buying from unsolicited doorstep sell-

ers. This applies to anyone that calls by who isn't expected, or who consumers haven't made an appointment for, such as water or electric meter readings or gas engineers.

If there are any safety fears, police and Trading Standards advise calling 999. This also goes for particularly aggressive traders. It is banned practice for a trader to refuse to leave your property if you've asked, although this may be justified under some circumstances, such as to enforce a contractual obligation.

Consumers should also sign up to Which?'s scam alert service in order to familiarise themselves with some of the latest tactics used by fraudsters, particularly given the explosion of scams since the coronavirus crisis.

Adam French, Which? Consumer Rights Expert, said:

"It's highly concerning that doorstep scammers are back in business and looking to exploit the pandemic in every way they can. We all need to be wary of anyone who knocks on our door unexpectedly.

"Adopting a blanket policy not to buy



goods or services offered at the door is a sure-fire way to stop any would-be fraudsters in their tracks. However, if you do decide to purchase something at your door, you should ask the seller for their ID or call the company to verify their identity before making any payments."





SAFETY FIRST BEFORE YOU GO ON HOLIDAY

ARE you planning a holiday at home or abroad? If you are, then stop thinking about sandy beaches and sunshine for a moment and concentrate on something far more important - how to keep your home protected while you are away.

It's easy for a thief to tell who's in and who isn't. The house may be in darkness, post may be left in the letterbox or milk bottles left on the doorstep.

Over 80% of burglaries occur when a house is empty, so try to make your house look occupied when you're out and when you're away on holiday.

It's quick and easy to take a few simple precautions that will make breaking into your home more difficult.

The more barriers you have in place, such as fences and locked doors and

windows, the less attractive your home will be. The chances are the burglar will give up and go on to the next house.

Just in case, check your contents and buildings insurance policies are up to date and you have sufficient cover.

Ten top tips for a safe home while you're away:

- Don't leave your car full of luggage overnight, or clearly visible from the outside. Keep it the hall ready for easy access just before you leave.
- Don't leave your lights on for the whole time you are away. It's worth investing in some automatic timer switches for turning on a few well-appointed lights and a radio or TV. Most can be programmed to come on at pre-set or random times.
- Ask a friend or trusty neighbour to keep an eye on your property, collect post and pick up the free newspapers and junk mail left in the letterbox. If you're really lucky, they may mow the lawn and sweep up leaves – often a clear giveaway that you're not at home. If they have two cars, encourage them to park in your drive.
- Use Royal Mail's Keepsafe scheme when you go away on holiday. It will keep letters and parcels for you and deliver on your return.
- Most people leave a hall light on if they go out for the evening – don't! Instead choose to leave a light on in a room at the front of the house – one that's visible from the road.
- Whether to keep curtains open or closed is always a tricky decision. Leaving them closed during the day makes it look like there's no one at home so best to leave them open and get security lighting.
- Try not to leave valuable items, such as your TV, stereo or computer, where thieves can see them.
- Unplug all appliances to protect them from power surges and save energy from standby functions, as well.
- Keep tools under lock and key so they can't be used to break into your house, and lock your garage and shed with proper security locks.
- Just before you leave, spare a few minutes to walk around your home to double check everything is safe and secure just for peace of mind!

