

# Staying safe



Keeping yourself safe at home,  
out and about and online

# Information written with you in mind.

This information guide has been produced with the help of older people, carers and expert peer reviewers.

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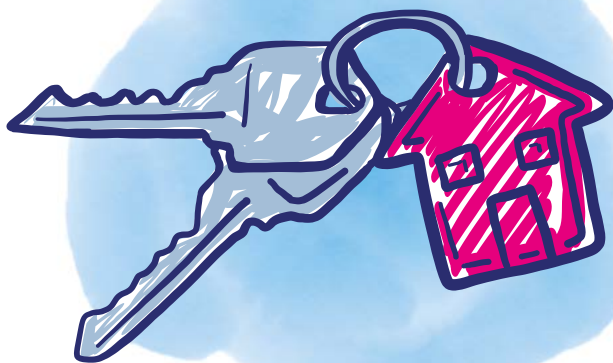
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## What this guide is about

**We all want stay as independent as possible and feel confident enough to keep doing the things we enjoy. However, as we get older, we might not feel as safe as we used to – whether that’s due to mobility issues, illness or feeling less able to protect ourselves from crime and scammers.**

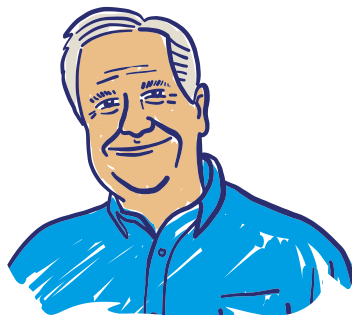
There are plenty of things you can do to protect yourself and feel safer day-to-day. This guide outlines ways you can feel safer at home, out and about and online.



This symbol indicates where information differs for Wales and Northern Ireland. As far as possible, the information in this guide is applicable across the UK.

**“My local Age UK helped me find a trusted person to secure my windows and doors.”**

Lee, 69



There's a lot of information in this guide, so don't feel you need to read it all at once. You might prefer to turn to the sections you'll find most helpful for now and refer back to other sections later on.

We've also included a handy list of top security tips on pages 54-55, which covers some of the most important things to consider when thinking about staying safe.

## Good to know



Some of the suggestions in this guide may involve hiring a tradesperson – and knowing where to turn and who to trust can sometimes be tricky.

To find a reliable tradesperson, you can use the Government-run TrustMark scheme (page 64) which lists local tradespeople who comply with Government-endorsed standards. You can also see if your local Age UK runs a 'Trusted Trader' or handyperson scheme. In Wales, contact Age Cymru or Care & Repair Cymru (page 59). It can also be worth checking if your local Home Improvement Agency (HIA) offers services for free, such as fitting locks.

# Staying safe at home

They say there's no place like home. It's where we should feel safest – but that's not always the case. There are many reasons why you might start to feel a bit unsettled at home, but there are things you can do to feel more confident.

## Avoiding falls

As we get older, we may start to feel a bit less steady on our feet and worry about falling. Maybe you've had a fall or two in the past and you're worried about having another. Fortunately, there are lots of simple things that can help you avoid a fall.

### Remove trip hazards

- Try to keep things tidied out of the way – items lying around the home or on the stairs can cause a trip.
- Coil up cords and wires or tape them close to the wall.
- Rearrange your furniture to make it easier to move around your home. If you need a hand with this, is there someone you could ask for help?
- Replace worn out or fraying carpets. Use double-sided carpet tape to help prevent loose rugs slipping – or you might prefer to remove these completely.

### Wear the right shoes

A good pair of shoes can make such a difference. Worn out or badly fitting shoes or slippers can increase the chance of a fall. It's important to look after your feet too, as problems like foot pain can affect your balance.

## Get help with small repairs

Some local Age UKs offer handyman schemes for older people who meet certain criteria. These schemes assist with small repairs and help you identify hazards at home. There might also be a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in your area offering similar help. You can contact Foundations (page 59), the national body for HIAs, or your local council.



In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there's a handyman scheme in your area, or contact Care & Repair Cymru (page 59). In Northern Ireland, check with Age NI (page 56).

If you're disabled, you might be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, which is provided by local councils to help fund changes to your home. Contact your local council for more information.

## Avoid slipping in the bathroom

You might want to think about getting a handrail, non-slip bathmat or a bath seat. These can help you feel more confident getting in and out of the bath. You can get non-slip rubber mats or use self-stick strips to make sure they don't slide about.

## Good to know



If you're finding it difficult to manage safely at home, contact your local council for a needs assessment. Depending on your needs, the assessor might suggest equipment or small adaptations, which are provided for free. They might recommend other services such as care visits – if they're charged for, the council must explain how much you'd need to pay.

For more information, see our guide **Getting help at home**.



## Thinking about lighting

Make sure any stairs are well lit. You can have two-way light switches fitted, so switches at the top and bottom of the stairs control the same light. It might be worth considering motion-sensor lights too.

You could also think about nightlights or having a lamp or torch by the bed in case you need to get up in the night.

And it might seem obvious, but are your bulbs as bright as they could be? Bulbs are now measured in lumens rather than watts (1,500 lumens is the same as about 100 watts).



To see if there's a Home Improvement Agency in the area that can improve your lighting, contact Foundations (page 59). In Wales, contact Care & Repair Cymru (page 59).

## Next steps



Contact the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) (page 63) for further advice on lighting in the home. You can also contact DLF (page 58) for information about equipment and adaptations that could help you.



## Check the stairs

The stairs can become harder to navigate as we get older. Make sure they're well lit and have suitable handrails and bannisters – it's best to avoid leaving things on the stairs too. You can get non-slip tape to mark the edges of any steps – inside or outside the home. But make sure it's stuck down properly so it doesn't become a hazard in itself.

## Keep an eye on pets

We all love our pets, but they can sometimes get underfoot. It's good to be aware of where they are – especially at feeding time when they tend to move that bit quicker!

## Consider using a personal alarm

If you don't feel entirely confident at home, a personal alarm could be reassuring. If you fall, a button lets you contact a 24-hour response centre – some include GPS tracking for extra peace of mind. Many councils run personal alarm schemes. Visit [www.gov.uk/apply-for-community-alarm](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-community-alarm) or contact your local council to find out what's available in your area.

## Next steps



For more information about preventing falls, see our guide **Staying steady**. Your GP may be able to refer you to an NHS falls prevention service if you've had a fall or you're feeling unsteady.

If you need help with small home adaptations, contact your local Age UK or Home Improvement Agency (page 59) to see if there's a handyman scheme in your area. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru or Care & Repair Cymru (page 59). Our guide **Adapting your home** and factsheet **Disability equipment and home adaptations** have more information. In Wales, see Age Cymru's version of this factsheet.



## Fire safety

Fires can start quickly and be devastating. But there are some simple things you can do in your home to prevent them and give yourself some peace of mind.

### Get a smoke alarm and check it works

It's vital to have at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home. Alarms should bear the British Standard number BS 5446 and the Kitemark. Test them monthly and keep them free from dust – you might find that a long-handled duster makes this easier. Use a step ladder or get someone to help you when fitting, testing or cleaning your alarms.

You should change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year. Alternatively, you can get long-life alarms that last between 7 and 10 years.

If you have hard-wired smoke alarms, you should still test them monthly. It's advisable to replace them every 10 years.

There are specialist smoke alarms if you have hearing or sight difficulties.

Private and social landlords in England must fit smoke alarms on every floor where there's proper living space. Check with your landlord to make sure this has been done.



In Wales, private landlords have to fit a smoke alarm on every floor of a property. They must ensure it's working, connected to the electricity supply, and linked to any other smoke alarms.

### **Plan a fire escape route**

Think about how you'd escape if there was a fire, especially if you live in a flat. You can ask the management company for a copy of your building's fire risk assessment to read.

### **Arrange a Home Fire Risk Check**

Some fire and rescue services offer a Home Fire Risk Check where they visit to help you install smoke alarms, plan escape routes and assess other hazards. Contact your local fire service to find out more.

### **Cigarettes and candles**

Make sure any cigarettes, candles, and incense or oil burners are completely out once you've finished with them.

## **Good to know**



RNID (page 63) has products for people who are deaf or have hearing loss, including smoke alarms.

## In the kitchen

When you're cooking, make sure pan handles don't stick out – it's easy to knock them, especially if you're not too steady on your feet. Use a timer to help remind you that there's something cooking.

If a pan catches fire, don't move it and never throw water on it. The best thing to do is turn the heat off if you can, shut the door, leave the property and call **999**.

## Use a fire guard and sweep the chimney

If you have an open fire, use a fire guard and make sure you have your chimney and flues swept to prevent fires and carbon monoxide build-up – ideally at least once a year. You can find an approved chimney sweep through the Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (page 60).

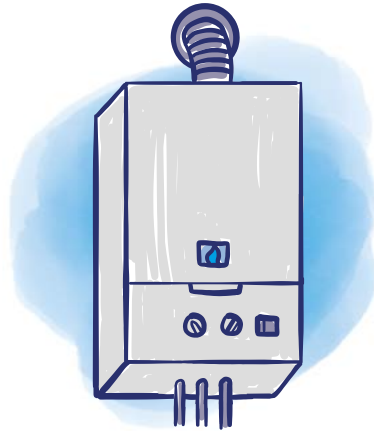
## If there's a fire

Don't panic and don't try and tackle a fire yourself. Remember the fire service advice: **Get out, stay out and call 999**.

## Next steps



Talk to your local fire and rescue service for more advice on fire safety or to see if they can give your home a Fire Risk Check. Visit the UK Fire Service website (page 64) to find your local service. In Northern Ireland, Age NI can make a referral for a free Home Fire Safety Check for you.



## Gas and solid fuel safety

Gas and solid fuel problems can go unnoticed, but some straightforward checks will keep your home safer and reduce the risk of an accident.

### Organise a yearly gas appliance check

It's recommended to have an annual check to make sure your appliances are working safely. Make sure the check and any repairs are done by a Gas Safe registered engineer (page 59). Never try to repair or service a gas appliance yourself, or let a friend or relative try – even if they say they know what they're doing!

If you own your home and receive a means-tested benefit such as Pension Credit, you may be entitled to a free annual gas safety check from your energy supplier. You should ask them about this and any other priority services you might be eligible for (see page 18). If you're not eligible for a free check then shop around, as costs can vary.

If you rent, your landlord is legally required to arrange a safety check with a registered Gas Safe engineer at least once a year for any gas appliances they've provided. The landlord must then give you a copy of the inspection record within 28 days of the check and fix any problems reported by the engineer.



### Service any solid fuel appliances

Solid fuel appliances – for example, heaters or cookers that burn wood or coal – also need a regular service. Contact HETAS (page 60) for a directory of registered installers and servicers that you can search online.

### Good to know



If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak, turn off the gas supply, open all doors and windows and call the 24-hour National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**. Never use a phone near the gas leak, as this could cause a spark that might ignite the gas. Use a mobile phone outside your property or a neighbour's phone. Don't turn any electrical switches or appliances on or off.

Contact the Gas Safe Register (page 59) for more information on gas safety or to find a registered engineer.

## Check the pilot light on your boiler

If you have a gas boiler with a pilot light, check regularly to make sure it's burning. If it's gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler on how to relight it. If you can't do it yourself, call out a Gas Safe registered heating engineer.

## Allow air flow and ventilation

Is there enough ventilation for gas or solid fuel appliances to burn? It's important to keep air vents and chimneys clear.

## Be aware of carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide is known as a 'silent killer' because you can't see, taste or smell it. Even low exposure to carbon monoxide can cause long-term health problems, while high exposure can cause poisoning.

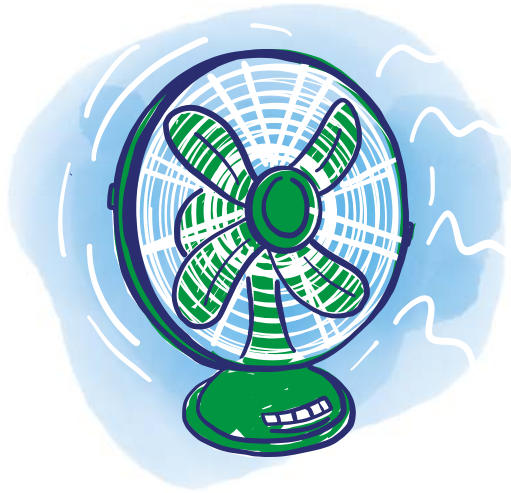
Heaters, boilers or other appliances that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off carbon monoxide if they aren't working properly. Look out for yellow or brown staining, a lazy yellow or orange-coloured gas flame rather than a sharp blue flame, or too much moisture in the room.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include having a headache, feeling sick, or having a sore throat and a dry cough – similar to a cold or flu. If you're worried that you might have carbon monoxide poisoning, call **999** immediately.

You can install a simple carbon monoxide detector to help prevent poisoning – make sure it bears the Kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 50291.



If you rent in England, your landlord must fit a carbon monoxide alarm in each room used as living accommodation containing a gas, oil or solid fuel appliance. In Wales, a landlord must ensure there's an alarm in any room which has a gas, oil or solid fuel appliance they've installed.



## Electrical safety

Most homes have lots of things plugged in. Making sure everything's being used safely can prevent a fire.

### **Check the condition of your electrics**

Keep an eye out for any fraying or exposed wires and any damaged appliances and sockets. Don't ignore burning smells, buzzing or crackling sounds, or fuses blowing, as these can be signs that something's wrong.

### **Don't overload sockets**

Be careful not to overload sockets. If you don't have enough sockets, use an extension lead rather than a block adapter – but don't plug appliances that use lots of power into these, such as fridges or washing machines.

### **Keep appliances out of the bathroom**

Appliances such as hairdryers, heaters (unless fitted with a cord pull) and mains-powered radios should never be used in the bathroom.



## Be careful using electric blankets

Check whether yours can definitely be left on overnight and look for any danger signs, such as fraying fabric or scorch marks. Never switch it on if it's wet or could get wet (if you've just had a bath or shower, for instance) and don't use it with a hot water bottle – however cold the weather is.

Get your electric blanket tested by an expert at least every 3 years and replace it every 10 years. The shop where you bought the blanket or your local Trading Standards Office may be able to test it. Find your local Trading Standards Office using the Chartered Trading Institute website (page 57). Your local Age UK or Home Improvement Agency (page 59) might also have a handy person scheme that can help. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru or Care & Repair Cymru (page 59).

## Be careful with portable heaters

Don't leave heaters unattended and don't use them while you're sleeping. Keep them away from paper, furniture, clothing and curtains.

## Electrical safety for tenants

Landlords must ensure that any electrical appliances they provide are safe. They should arrange for an electrical safety check before a tenancy or occupation contract begins, and then again at regular intervals – generally every 5 years.

## Next steps



Contact Electrical Safety First (page 58) for more information on electrical safety or to find a registered electrician. Visit their website to download **Electrical safety in the home: A guide for older people and their relatives**.

## If you have a power cut

Call **105** free of charge. You'll be put through to your local electricity network operator who can give you help and advice. In Northern Ireland, contact Northern Ireland Electricity Networks on **03457 643 643**.

## Sign up for priority services

Energy suppliers and network operators have Priority Services Registers for people over State Pension age and those who need some extra help – perhaps because they live with a long-term health condition or disability. Some people need support temporarily after an injury or illness too. If you sign up for priority services, you may get extra support if there's a power cut.

Network operators are the companies in charge of the electricity and gas supply to your area. You can contact the Energy Networks Association (page 58) to find out who your network operator is.

To make sure you get as many of these services as possible, join both your supplier's register and your distribution network operator's register, as they may offer different things.

**“I'm on the Priority Services Register. It's reassuring to know I'll get support if there's a power cut.”**

Tony, 77





## Securing your doors and windows

Some simple precautions can reduce the risk of your home being burgled and help you feel safer – and they’re often not that expensive.

Fitting your doors and windows with good locks can really deter burglars – and even if they did try to break in, they’d be much less likely to manage it. If you live in rented accommodation, you can ask your landlord if they can help make your doors and windows more secure.

## Doors

Here are some security precautions you could take:

- Make sure you have a lock that can only be unlocked with a key, even from the inside. Typically, this is a five-lever mortice deadlock with Kitemark BS 3621. You should get one of these on any back doors as well as your front door.
- Have an automatic rim latch lock (sometimes called a night latch) fitted to add an extra level of protection – these can be opened from the inside without a key.
- Add locks such as hinge bolts to make doors even more secure.
- Have a door chain fitted so you can see who's at the door without completely opening it. But it's a good idea not to leave the chain on all the time if there's a chance that carers, family members or emergency services will need to get in.
- Get advice from a locksmith about how best to secure patio doors and French doors – they can sometimes be less secure than front doors, depending on their age and what they're made from.
- Install a peephole if you'd like to see who's on the doorstep before you open up. If you're comfortable using the technology, you could consider a smart doorbell with a camera instead.
- Avoid leaving keys under doormats or in plant pots by the front door – burglars know where to look.
- If you have glass in your door, consider replacing it with laminated glass or fit a film on the inside of the glass.
- Are your door frames and hinges sturdy? This can really add to the overall strength of the door.

## Windows

Here are some security precautions you could take:

- Fit window locks with keys to all downstairs windows and any others that might be easier for burglars to reach – such as those above a flat roof or near a drainpipe.
- Keep window keys in a safe place, out of sight and reach – but make sure they're easy to get to in an emergency.
- If you have new windows fitted, make sure they come with good locks. It can be tricky to add better ones later.
- Lock up when you go out – many burglaries are carried out by opportunists who see an open or unsecured window or door.
- If you have a carer, ask them to make sure they lock any windows and doors they've unlocked as they leave.
- If you're out for the evening, leave a front or upstairs room light on so burglars think there's someone in – you can leave the radio on too.

## Next steps



If you need locks fitted or changed, use a qualified locksmith. You can check whether a locksmith is a member of the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) (page 61) by going on their website or calling them.

For more advice and tips on keeping your home secure, contact your local Safer Neighbourhood Team (page 63) or check to see whether your regional police force has security tips on its website. In Northern Ireland, contact the Police Service of Northern Ireland (page 62).

# Safety at the door

Unexpected knocks at the door can be unsettling, especially when it's someone you don't know. Adding a peephole, chain or smart doorbell to your door can help you stay in control. It's a good idea to make sure windows and back doors are locked when answering unexpected knocks at the door too.

## **Not sure? Don't open the door.**

And if you ever feel threatened, call the police on **999**.

## **Bogus callers**

Bogus callers try and trick their way into your home. They might pretend to be a meter reader, police officer, council or benefits official, or a person needing help. They might try to distract you or trick you into believing that they urgently need to come into your home. Any genuine person will have ID they won't mind showing you – and if you like, you can call the organisation they represent to check it's a legitimate visit.

## **Password schemes**

Gas, electricity and water companies are all required to keep registers of customers who need extra support, such as older and disabled people. These are known as Priority Services Registers. If you join one, you'll be offered special services such as a unique password you can use to verify the identity of a caller claiming to be from the company. A genuine caller should also show you an identification card.

## **Ask the caller to come back another time**

You can always ask someone to come back at a more convenient time if you're feeling uneasy. A genuine caller won't have a problem with you taking these precautions.

Be particularly careful if there's more than one person at the door. If you're worried about a doorstep caller, call the police, your housing officer, the manager of your sheltered housing scheme, or someone else you trust.

## Rogue traders

Doorstep traders aren't always genuine or honest salespeople. They can be quite pushy, and try to talk you into unnecessary home repairs or improvements, often at high prices.

Some doorstep traders pressure you and make you feel like they won't leave unless you agree to buy what they're selling – but it's your home and you're in control. Don't agree to anything, sign a contract or pay money until you've talked to someone you trust – and never let anyone persuade you to go to your bank and withdraw cash. Above all, don't be afraid to ask a salesperson to leave. If they refuse, call the police on **999**.

Some areas operate a 'no cold calling zone' where signs and stickers are put up around the area to show cold callers they aren't welcome. To find out about setting one up in your area, contact your local Trading Standards Service which you can find through the Chartered Trading Standards Institute website (page 57).



In Northern Ireland, the Police Service (page 62) has a Quick Check scheme with a freephone number to check whether a doorstep caller is authentic and to get support.

## Next steps



See our guide **Avoiding scams** for more information about common scams, including doorstep scams. If you think you've been scammed, contact Action Fraud (page 57) for information and advice.

## Contact numbers

Write down the phone numbers of your local services in the spaces below so that they're handy if you need to check the identity of a doorstep caller. Find their details on a utility bill or online.

Electricity: .....

Gas: .....

Water: .....

Local council: .....

Police: **101** (if it's not urgent) or **999** (if it's an emergency)

Contact your utility companies and ask to join their Priority Services Register. Tell them what support you need, including a doorstep password scheme if you think this would be helpful – they should provide services that suit you.

**“I’ve put a sticker in the porch window to stop people knocking at the door trying to sell me things.”**

Liza, 70





## Boosting home security

As well as securing doors and windows, there are other measures you can take around your property to feel safer.

### Burglar alarms

A burglar alarm can warn you and/or the police if someone breaks in. There are lots of types of alarms, and costs vary.

There are some things you should do if you're thinking about installing a burglar alarm:

- Ask the Safer Neighbourhood Team (page 63) or the Crime Prevention Officer at your nearest police station for advice before you buy an alarm. Safer Neighbourhood teams work with local people to make the area safer.
- Get at least three quotes and specialist advice from alarm companies before you have one installed.
- Ask your insurance company if it recommends any alarm companies and how an alarm needs to be maintained. Some companies offer a discount on your home contents insurance if you have an approved alarm installed.
- Get professional help to install the alarm and check they're approved by the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) (page 61) or the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB) (page 64).

### Next steps



Visit the Secured by Design website (page 63) for more information on home security and licensed security products.

## Lights

Outdoor lights make it easier for you to get to the front door and find your keys when it's dark. They can also deter would-be burglars. If you get a motion-activated light, it's worth considering your neighbours when you're positioning it.

## Garages, sheds and passageways

Make sure you also secure any garages, sheds and passageways outside your home:

- Garages and sheds can be full of expensive tools – some of which could help a burglar break into your home. Fit garage doors with good locks and replace any that aren't solidly built.
- Fit a strong, lockable gate to any passageways at the side and back of your home. If you share a passageway with a neighbour, discuss it with them first.
- Metal bar side and driveway gates are helpful as they allow intruders to be seen.
- Put up a strong fence or plant a prickly hedge to deter thieves from getting into your garden. Trellis or anti-climb tops to fences, gates or walls can help too.
- Consider having gravel driveways and paths, which can make it harder for burglars to approach quietly.

Contact Foundations (page 59) to find out if there's a Home Improvement Agency in your area that could help with costs or organising the work.



In Wales, contact Care & Repair Cymru (page 59).  
In Northern Ireland, you may be able to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant by contacting the Occupational Therapy Department at your local Health and Social Care Trust.

# Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are voluntary groups of local people who work in partnership with the police, local councils and other agencies that help keep the community safe.

Members of the Neighbourhood Watch can offer valuable help and advice and provide peace of mind. For example, they can:

- watch out for neighbours who are older or vulnerable
- keep an eye on neighbours' homes when they're away
- share local police updates and information
- share crime prevention advice in the community.

**“It’s nice knowing the community are looking out for each other.”**

Tina, 68



## Next steps



See the Neighbourhood Watch’s **Members’ Guide** for more tips and advice about preventing crime and keeping safe. Ask your local Safer Neighbourhood Team (page 63) or visit the Neighbourhood Watch website (page 62) to see if there’s a scheme in your area. If there isn’t, why not help to set one up? In Northern Ireland, contact your local neighbourhood police by calling **101**.



## Home insurance

Having good home insurance cover can put your mind at ease. If the worst happens and anything is stolen or damaged, you won't need to fork out to replace it.

If you already have home insurance, make sure it completely covers your needs. If you're looking for a new policy, compare quotes from different companies to make sure you're getting the best deal possible. You can compare quotes online. If you're not online, is there a friend or relative who could help you check? They may even find they could save money themselves.

Lots of insurance companies offer lower premiums to people with good home security – for example, if you have a burglar alarm or locks on your windows. You might also get a discount if you're in a Neighbourhood Watch scheme (page 62).

## Next steps

MoneyHelper (page 61) provides information and advice about getting the best home insurance deal for you. Some companies tailor their products for older people.

## Marking possessions

If your things are stolen, the police are more likely to find and return them if you've marked them with your postcode and the number of your house or flat, or the first two letters of its name.

There are different ways to mark possessions. You can use a permanent marker or a more subtle security pen that can only be read under ultraviolet (UV) light. This works well for things such as electronics – but speak to an expert before marking any items that are particularly valuable, such as antiques or specialist items.

Take pictures of valuable items and write down the serial numbers of any electrical equipment. If items are stolen, this information can help police return them to you.

You can also register valuable possessions online for free on the Immobilise Property Register (page 60). This website helps police identify owners of lost or stolen property.

### Next steps



Ask your local Neighbourhood Watch group (page 62) or Safer Neighbourhood Team (page 63) for more information on marking possessions.



## Staying safe when you're out and about

As we get older, we sometimes feel more vulnerable when we're out and about. This can affect our confidence and stop us doing the things we enjoy. But there are ways you can keep yourself safer and feeling more confident.

### When you go out

Going out can feel daunting. That might be because you worry about your valuables or about getting around – or because everything just feels a bit much sometimes.

The tips on the following pages should help you feel safer when you leave your home.

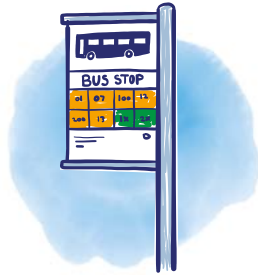
## In the street

- Keep valuables such as your mobile phone out of sight.
- Avoid carrying around large sums of money. If your pension is paid straight into your bank account, you don't have to withdraw it all in one go.
- Check no one's hovering behind you before you use a cash machine. You might feel more comfortable using a machine that's inside a bank rather than on the street. Always shield your Personal Identification Number (PIN) when you're putting it in.
- Keep your bag in sight at all times.
- If someone tries to snatch your bag, it can be safer to let them take it rather than trying to keep hold of it.
- If you use a wheelchair, keep your belongings beside you rather than hanging them on the back of the chair.
- Consider planning your route before you leave home and stick to busy, well-lit areas.
- If you think you're being followed, keep moving and head for a busy area or go into the nearest shop. Tell someone what's happening or call the police.
- If there's an emergency, shout loudly to get attention. You could also consider carrying a personal attack alarm.

**“I always go into the bank to get money out. I don't like doing it on the street.”**

Mick, 74





## On public transport

- Try to wait for public transport in busy, well-lit areas.
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, don't feel embarrassed to move away.
- You might feel safer if you sit near other people. If you're on the bus or train and there aren't many people about, sit near the driver. Try to be near the bell or emergency alarm.

## In taxis

- Keep the number of a reliable, licensed taxi company handy. Find a company you trust and feel comfortable with.
- Book a taxi before you go out. When it arrives, check it's the one you ordered before you get in. If you're in any doubt, ask the driver to tell you the name of the person who booked it to make sure.
- Sit behind the driver on the back seat. If you feel unsafe, ask to be dropped off somewhere you know that's busy and well-lit.

**“I always use the same taxi firm. They know me now and usually send the same driver to take me to the doctor.”**

Helen, 83





## When you're driving

- Before setting off, plan your route and make sure you have enough fuel. You might find it reassuring to tell someone where you're going and how long the journey should take.
- Think about what you'd do if you broke down – for example, do you carry a mobile phone you could use in an emergency? Keep any contact numbers you might need to hand – and it might be worth buying a charger you can use in the car too. It's a good idea to have a blanket and some warm clothes in case it's chilly while you wait for help to come.
- Consider joining a roadside assistance scheme for extra peace of mind should you break down. Prices vary, so shop around to find the best deal. Call different companies for quotes, check their prices online or look at price comparison websites.
- Try to park in busy, well-lit areas. If you'll be parked for some time, think about what the area will be like after dark.
- Keep valuables and personal possessions out of sight. When you leave the car, make sure you remove any valuables and lock the doors.



## Mobile phones

If you have a mobile phone, it's worth taking steps to prevent it from being stolen and to protect yourself if it is:

- Add a passcode or PIN. This can be done in your phone security settings and means it's more difficult for anyone else to get into. Some phones feature extra security features, such as fingerprint scanners or facial recognition.
- Register your phone for free on the Immobilise Property Register (page 60).
- Ask your mobile phone provider for your international mobile equipment (IMEI) number or find it by typing in **\*#06#** on your mobile phone keypad – your IMEI number will appear on your screen. It's worth taking a note of it, along with your mobile phone number, so if your phone is stolen you can pass these details on to your network and the police.
- Make sure your phone is fully charged when you go out or drive somewhere, in case there's a problem.
- Avoid using your phone in crowded places or when walking down the street. Try not to leave it in your back pocket or an unzipped section of your bag.
- If your phone is stolen, get in touch with your network as soon as possible so they can block it, then report it to the police too.

## Going on holiday

To a burglar, milk bottles on the doorstep or a newspaper sticking out of the letter box are invitations to break in. Here are some tips to help you enjoy your holiday without worrying:

- Pause milk, newspapers, and any other regular deliveries.
- If you have a garden and you're going to be gone for a while, it might be worth mowing the lawn before you leave.
- Check your building and home contents insurance is up to date and current while you're away.
- Is there someone you trust who could keep an eye on things? Perhaps they could also collect your post, draw your curtains, water any plants, and switch lights on and off.
- If you're going to be away for some time and there isn't someone who can pick up your post, consider registering with the Royal Mail Keepsafe service (page 63). Your letters and parcels are safely stored at your local delivery office for up to 2 months and delivered to you when you're back.
- Don't completely close curtains or blinds – they can be a giveaway during the day.
- Plug a lamp into a timed switch so it turns on in the evenings. Avoid leaving it in a room that passers-by can see into when the light is on.
- Don't display your home address on the outside of your luggage – and don't leave your luggage on view in the car or at home.
- Try not to mention the specifics of your holiday on social networking sites before you go. You don't want everyone knowing when your house will be empty.



## Staying safe online

The internet can make our lives much easier – these days, it seems you can do almost anything online. But it can be overwhelming at times, and you might be worried about keeping your details safe while you're browsing the web.

If you'd like to get online but don't know where to start, contact your local Age UK or Online Centres Network (page 62) to see what help is available locally. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru.

### Good to know



You might come across some new terms in this section. If you're not sure what they mean, see our glossary on pages 50-52.

# How to recognise suspicious emails

These tips will help you know what to look out for:

- Does the email have errors in its spelling or grammar, or is it written in an unusual style? Does the design feel 'off'?
- Check the email address, not just the sender. It may seem to come from your bank or phone operator but have a personal email address, rather than one with the bank's name.
- Even if an email address looks official – perhaps from the bank or HMRC – it still might not be genuine. If you have a funny feeling it's not, then contact the organisation and check. Don't use the contact details supplied in the email.
- Does the message use your proper name, or does it start with a general greeting like 'Dear customer'?
- Is there a sense of urgency, threatening that unless you act now a deal will expire or an account of yours will be closed?
- Be aware that you can be taken to a fake website even if a link appears to be correct. It's best to avoid links and search for the website yourself so you know it's OK.
- Is the sender requesting personal information, such as your username, password or bank details?
- Does the email ask for money for someone in need, or claim you've won a cash prize?
- Is there something to open with a message or text saying 'Check this out' or 'See what I found' without explanation?

To confuse things more, these emails can even come from an email address that you recognise, such as a friend or family member. This can happen when someone's account is hacked. If you receive an email that seems suspicious or out of character, give the person a ring to see if they sent it.

# If you receive a suspicious email

Follow these steps if you receive a suspicious email:

- It's always better to be safe than sorry, so if you're not sure where an email's from or it makes you feel uneasy, just delete it without opening it.
- If an email contains a link or attachment, don't click on it unless you're certain it's safe.
- Don't reply to spam or suspicious emails, even just to say 'no'. This shows the sender your email address is active, and they'll probably be in touch again.
- Your bank (or any other financial institution) will never ask for personal information or your PIN over email. If you receive an email claiming to be from your bank, contact them directly to check it's genuine. Use the phone number on the back of your bank card or type their web address into your browser – don't follow the link in the email. You can also call the centralised number **159** to verify your bank is trying to reach you.
- If an email asks about account information, phone the organisation directly to ask about the email using the phone number found on its official website.
- Don't panic if there's a sense of urgency in the email – this is exactly what the sender wants. Take time to properly check the email first.
- Forward the email to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service at **report@phishing.gov.uk**.

# Spam

Spam (also known as junk) mail is usually from a person or organisation trying to sell a product or service – often something you have no interest in and haven't signed up to receive information about.

These are some common types of spam:

- advertisements from a company
- emails telling you about a scheme to make you rich
- emails warning you of a computer virus
- emails encouraging you to send the email on to more people.

Most email providers have spam filters that block emails from untrustworthy sources automatically – but it's still good to know what to look out for.

**“Some of these dodgy emails seem so real. My friend lost a lot of money. It's better to be safe than sorry.”**

Therese, 86



## Next steps



Visit the 'Protecting Yourself' section on the Get Safe Online website (page 59) for more information on email scams.



## Online shopping and banking

Shopping and banking from the comfort of your home can be really handy. More and more of us are doing it – and it’s particularly helpful if you find it difficult to get out and about.

However, as with anything when you’re transferring money over the internet, it comes with certain risks. But using a secure website when entering card information ensures your information can’t be read by anyone else.

### What’s a secure website?

The website address should begin with **https://** – the ‘s’ stands for ‘secure’.

If the address bar – the bit containing the web address that runs across the top of your browser – is green, this is an extra sign that you’re using a safe website.

You should also look out for a padlock symbol in the address bar. Websites that offer secure payments and other financial transactions, such as banking, need a security certificate. To view it, you can click on the padlock symbol to check the organisation is what it says it is. The certificate should be up to date and registered to the right address.

The padlock isn’t an absolute guarantee of safety, so it’s good to be cautious if you still have any doubts. And be aware that scam websites might have a padlock on the actual webpage (rather than in the address bar) to try and fool you.



## Tips for shopping and banking online safely

- If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Be cautious of anything offered in an email you didn't ask for.
- Use strong passwords (see page 44 for more information).
- You'll never be asked for your card PIN but you'll probably be asked for the security number for your debit or credit card. This is the 'CVV' (card verification value), 'CVC' (card verification code) or 'CVV2' and is the 3 digits on the back of your card (if you have an American Express card, the CVV is the 4 digits on the front of your card).
- If you get a pop-up message warning you about a website's security certificate, it's probably a scam. If you click on it, you'll might be redirected to a fake website that lets somebody else read the information you're sending.
- Stick with online retailers that have a good reputation. Plenty of online stores have reviews from previous customers you can read before buying anything.
- If you're buying something made by a major brand, there's often a list of authorised sellers on their official website.
- Check where the seller is located. Just because the web address has 'uk' in it, it doesn't necessarily mean they're based in the UK. If you buy from a seller or company based outside the UK, it can be harder to sort out any problems. By law, the seller must provide their full contact details.
- Watch out for hidden costs, such as VAT or extra postage – especially for transactions outside the UK. For more information on buying from sellers based in other countries, visit the UK International Consumer Centre website (page 64).
- Always use the secure payment method recommended by reputable online retailers and auction websites. Be wary of any requests to pay by bank transfer instead.

- Use a credit card for internet transactions to add extra protection. You can also check to see if your debit card provider offers any protection. If your purchase costs more than £100 and you use a credit card, the seller and your card company are equally responsible if anything goes wrong. Be aware that there's sometimes a card handling fee when you pay with your credit card though, so check how much this is.
- Check if your bank offers free anti-virus software or browser security products.
- Always make sure you log out from any accounts so no one who uses the computer after you can access any of your information.



## Next steps



See our guide **Avoiding scams** for more information on how to protect yourself.

Your local Age UK might offer help with getting connected and staying safe online. Learn My Way (page 60) offers free online courses on digital skills, including getting started with online shopping, online payment methods and consumer rights.

# Social networking

Social networking websites are online communities where you can create a profile, exchange messages and join groups. You can keep in touch with family and friends, share photos, play games, explore online dating, find out about events, and more.

These guidelines can help you stay safe:

- Think about who you want to see your profile. Your profile is likely to be public by default, which means anyone can see it – but you can usually change your settings to make it private.
- It's best to avoid posting personal information such as phone numbers, your home address or date of birth as this is usually how scammers get in touch with you.
- If possible, pick a username that doesn't include any personal information – for example, don't use 'annajones1947'.
- Use a strong password that is different from the passwords you use for other accounts (see page 45).
- Be cautious if people you've just met online ask you to reveal personal information or want to meet you very quickly – and never send money to anyone you haven't met in person.
- Some scammers use dating websites to win people's trust, so it's important to be mindful of this risk if you're dating online.
- Be on your guard against phishing scams (see page 51).

## Next steps



Visit the Get Safe Online website (page 59) for more information about using social networking sites securely.

# Passwords

Setting up strong passwords is probably the simplest, most effective thing you can do to stay safer when you're using the internet.

## Avoid weak passwords

Weak passwords are made up of common words, numbers or keyboard patterns. These are some examples of commonly used weak passwords:

- password
- 123456
- qwerty
- password1

## Choose a strong password

A good way to come up with a strong password that's easy for you to remember is by putting together three random words, such as 'SkyChairYellow'. You can also include capital letters, numbers and symbols.

Make sure you don't include any personal information like your name or date of birth – or use our example for your own password.

You can save your passwords to your internet browser to make it easier to log in to and manage your accounts. There's more about this on the next page.

## Choose different passwords

Use different passwords for different websites or accounts. It can be tricky to remember lots of different ones, but having one password for all accounts isn't a great idea – because if someone hacks your account on one site, they'll be able to log in to all your accounts. Your email account is the gateway to all your other accounts, so always make sure that the password for it is different.

## Keep your passwords safe

Never write down your password. If you need a written reminder, try to write a hint that won't make sense to anyone else (rather than the password itself) and keep it safe away from your computer.

## Password managers

Some internet browsers have built-in password managers. These are tools that remember your passwords for different sites and fill them in automatically when you need them.

When you log in to a website for the first time, the password manager will ask if you want it to remember the password. You can choose whether you want it to or not. It can save time – but you should only use it on your own computer.

Your password manager log in details will be available to anyone you share the computer with, so make sure it's only shared with people you trust – and don't use the password manager anywhere in a public place, like a library.

## Next steps



The National Cyber Security Centre (page 61) website has more information about strong passwords and staying safe online.

# Protecting your computer

It can be worrying to think about getting a virus on your computer. But there are ways to protect your computer from harmful types of malware and viruses.

## Install anti-virus software

Viruses are malicious programs that can spread from one computer to another by email or through websites. They can display unwanted pop-up messages, slow your computer down, and even delete files.

Anti-virus software helps to find, stop and remove these malicious viruses. The type of software you'll need depends on whether you have a Windows or Apple computer.

## Install anti-spyware software

Spyware is an unwanted program that runs on your computer. It allows unwanted adverts to pop up, tracks your online activity, and can even scan your computer for private data such as credit card numbers. It can make your computer slow and unreliable and make you a target for online criminals. By installing anti-spyware software, you can reduce the chances of this happening.

**“I couldn't get my head round all of this. But I went on a local course and now I'm much more confident using my computer.”**

Dev, 74



## Keep your operating system updated

The operating system is the main software program on your computer. It manages all the other programs on it – the most common systems are Microsoft Windows and Apple’s Mac OS. Whichever operating system you have, keep it updated to give yourself the best protection. You should receive notifications when new updates are available – but you can also update your software manually.

## Protect your wireless network

If you use wireless internet at home, you’ll have a wireless router. You need to protect your wireless network (also known as Wi-Fi) so that people living nearby can’t access it. Read the instructions that come with your router to find out how to set up a ‘key’ – a type of password – so that no one else can access the internet through your router.

## Good to know



It might seem like you need a lot of software to protect yourself from online risks, but it’s actually very easy. You can buy a complete package that includes everything you need, or get effective free software such as AVG ([www.free.avg.com](http://www.free.avg.com)) or Avast ([www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)). These work on both Windows computers and Apple computers.

Online threats change constantly, so once your software is installed, keep it up to date to ensure you have the highest level of protection.

## Computer scams

Beware of a common scam that involves scammers calling you claiming to be from a well-known IT company. They might ask you to follow a few simple instructions to get rid of a virus, update your software, or fix another issue with your computer. This is to try and upload software called spyware onto your computer, which allows them to access any personal details you have stored there.

Legitimate IT companies never contact customers in this way, so never respond to a phone call from someone claiming that your computer has a virus. If you get a call like this, hang up straight away and report the scam to Action Fraud (page 57).

See our guide **Avoiding scams** for more information on different types of scams and how to avoid them.

**“I do worry about Dad getting scammed online – but he knows he can run anything he’s not sure about past me.”**

Bethan, 44



## Next steps



You can find step-by-step explanations and advice on protecting your computer on the Get Safe Online website (page 59).



# Protecting your tablet and mobile phone

You can check emails, shop and bank online, or explore the internet on tablets (such as iPads) and smartphones – so they need protecting too. Start by password-protecting any devices.

You can download anti-virus and anti-spyware protection for tablets and phones. These are often referred to as ‘apps’ (applications), which is just another term for software. The best protection for your device depends on the type of phone or tablet you have, but you could ask a member of staff in a phone or electronics shop or have a look online for more information. A lot of good anti-virus protection for phones and tablets is free.

Some free, highly rated anti-virus apps are:

- Avast mobile security ([www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com))
- Kaspersky internet security ([www.kaspersky.co.uk](http://www.kaspersky.co.uk))
- Norton mobile security ([uk.norton.com](http://uk.norton.com)).

These apps work on phones and tablets that use Windows, Android and Apple products and it’s a good idea to keep them updated.

## Next steps



Visit Get Safe Online (page 59) to find out more about protecting your smartphone or tablet. See our guide **Avoiding scams** for information on telephone scams, including text messages.

# Glossary

## Anti-spyware software

Software that protects your computer against pop-ups, slow performance, and security threats caused by spyware and other unwanted software.

## Anti-virus software

Software that detects and prevents known viruses from attacking your computer.

## App (application)

A type of program that you can download for your computer, tablet or mobile phone. There are hundreds of apps available, some for free. They do lots of different things, from letting you play games and do puzzles, to helping you remember to take your medication or giving you access to your bank account.

## Attachment

A file such as a photo, document or program, sent in an email.



## **Browser**

The computer software or app you use to access the internet, such as Google Chrome or Safari.

## **Hack**

An attempt to gain unauthorised access to a computer or account.

## **Malware**

Malware is short for 'malicious software' and is a general term to refer to hostile or intrusive software.

## **Operating system**

The software that manages different programs on a computer.

## **Phishing**

When criminals direct users to a counterfeit website to trick them into disclosing private information, such as usernames or passwords.

## **Pop-up**

A small window that suddenly appears (pops up) on a webpage, usually an advertisement or alert. Some are genuine, others aren't.

## **Profile**

A description of you on a social networking website that may contain personal details. They can be set as public (viewable by everyone) or private (only viewable by certain people).

## **Router**

A device that connects your computer to a broadband-enabled telephone line and provides your home internet signal.

## **Smartphone**

A mobile phone which can connect to the internet, send emails, and perform a number of other functions like a computer, as well as make calls and send texts.

## Social networking website

An online community where users connect with friends, family and other people who share their interests.

## Spam

A commercial email you didn't request, also known as junk mail.

## Spyware

An unwanted program that runs on your computer, which can make it slow and unreliable or even make you a target for online criminals.

## Tablet

A larger handheld device with a touchscreen which can connect to the internet and be used as a portable computer – for example, an iPad.

## Virus

A program that spreads from one computer to another by email or through malicious websites. Viruses can slow your computer down, display unwanted pop-up messages and even delete files.

## Wireless network

Also known as Wi-Fi, this is a way for your computer to connect to the internet without using wires or cables.



# What to do if you're a victim of crime

- Call the police (**999**) as soon as you can. You can call **101** to report a crime if you don't need an emergency response.
- If you think you've been a victim of a fraud or a scam, contact Action Fraud (page 57).
- If you think you've been burgled when you get home, don't go inside unless you're sure the intruder has gone. Call the police straight away.
- If you're burgled, make a list of missing items and contact your insurance company. They're likely to ask for the crime reference number, which you should get from the police.
- If you lose a set of keys, get your locks changed.
- Cancel any stolen bank cards as soon as possible – the phone number should be on your bank statement or on any cash machine belonging to your bank.

## Good to know



The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) (page 58) compensates victims of crime who have been injured or traumatised – it doesn't replace stolen items.

Victim Support (page 64) can provide information about compensation schemes and explain your options. It also gives free practical and emotional support to people who have experienced crime and runs a witness service to help people who are going to court.



## Top tips for staying safe

There's a lot of information in this guide, but you don't need to remember it all – you can refer back to it at any time. Here are some of the main tips that'll help you stay safer:

- Keep an eye out for trip hazards around the house to reduce the chance of having a fall.
- Get your smoke alarms and boiler or gas appliances checked to make sure they're all working safely.
- Keep windows and doors locked and bolted (where possible) while you're out or overnight.
- If you have one, set your burglar alarm every time you go out. If you don't have one, consider whether you should get one fitted.
- When you lock up at night, keep the keys to hand (but out of sight) so that you can get out easily if you need to.

- If someone rings or knocks at the door and you're not sure who's there, or you feel uneasy, don't feel pressured to open it. Never let a stranger into your home unless you're confident you know what they want and they're who they say they are.
- Cancel milk and other regular deliveries before going away.
- Leave some lights on when you go out at night – or set a timer switch, if you have one.
- Speak to your local Safer Neighbourhood team or Neighbourhood Watch group about any worries.
- Be careful of your valuables and your surroundings when you're out.
- Set strong passwords for any online accounts.
- Look out for the signs that an email might not be genuine and always be careful opening any links or attachments.
- Install anti-virus and anti-spyware software on your computer and electronic devices.
- Don't give out personal details when using the internet.

**“No one should feel unsafe in their own home.”**

Gillian, 84



# Useful organisations

## Age UK

We provide information and advice for people in later life through our Age UK Advice Line, publications and website.

**Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65**

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

**[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**

In Wales, contact Age Cymru Advice: **0300 303 44 98**

**[www.agecymru.org.uk](http://www.agecymru.org.uk)**

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI: **0808 808 7575**

**[www.agei.org](http://www.agei.org)**

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland: **0800 124 4222**

**[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**



## Action Fraud

National reporting centre for fraud and internet crime in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Call the helpline for advice on preventing fraud and what to do if you fall victim to it, or use the online fraud reporting service.

Tel: **0300 123 2040**

**[www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)**

## Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Use the Consumer Hub to get advice on problem purchases, find your local Trading Standards Office, and search for trustworthy businesses.

**[www.tradingstandards.uk/consumers](http://www.tradingstandards.uk/consumers)**

## Citizens Advice

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential and independent advice, face-to-face or by telephone.

In England, call Adviceline: **0800 144 8848**

In Wales, call Advicelink: **0800 702 2020**

For online information and to find details of your nearest Citizens Advice in:

England: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**

Wales: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales)**

## Citizens Advice Consumer Service

Provides information and advice on consumer issues and offers tips on recognising email scams.

Tel: **0808 223 1133**

**[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer)**

In Northern Ireland, visit **NI Direct**  
**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/consumerline](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/consumerline)**

## Compensation Services

Compensates victims of violent crime in Northern Ireland.

Tel: **0300 200 7887**

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/compensation-services](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/compensation-services)**

## Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)

Compensates people who have been physically or mentally injured by violent crime in England, Scotland or Wales.

Tel: **0300 003 3601**

**[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/criminal-injuries-compensation-authority](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/criminal-injuries-compensation-authority)**

## Digital Unite

Helps older people learn about computers and the internet. There are useful instructions for using technology on its website, and they have a network of tutors across the UK who offer tuition for a fee.

Tel: **0800 228 9272**

Email: **[du@digitalunite.com](mailto:du@digitalunite.com)**

**[www.digitalunite.com](http://www.digitalunite.com)**

## DLF (Formerly the Disabled Living Foundation)

Provides impartial advice on products and equipment that help with daily living.

Tel: **0300 123 3084**

Email: **[info@dlf.org.uk](mailto:info@dlf.org.uk)**

**[www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk](http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)**

## Electrical Safety First

Provides free advice on electrical safety in the home and garden.

**[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)**

## Energy Networks Association

Contact them to find out who your network operator is.

Tel: **020 4599 7700**

**[www.energynetworks.org](http://www.energynetworks.org)**

## Foundations

National body for Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) with a website you can search to find your nearest one in England. HIAs provide support for vulnerable homeowners and tenants to help them undertake adaptations and repairs.

Tel: **0300 124 0315**

**[www-foundations-uk-com](http://www-foundations-uk-com)**

In Wales, contact **Care & Repair Cymru**

Tel: **02920 107580**

**[www-careandrepair-org-uk](http://www-careandrepair-org-uk)**

## Gas Safe Register

Provides advice on gas safety and maintains the register of engineers who meet the health and safety standards required to install or repair gas appliances. You can check if an engineer is on the register by visiting the website or by calling the free consumer helpline. All registered engineers carry an official photo ID card which displays their engineer's licence number and qualifications.

Tel: **0800 408 5500**

**[www-gassaferegister-co-uk](http://www-gassaferegister-co-uk)**

## Get Safe Online

Free advice about using the internet safely.

**[www-getsafeonline-org](http://www-getsafeonline-org)**

## GOV.UK

Government website offering practical information and advice to the public.

**[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

In Wales, visit **GOV.WALES**: **[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)**

In Northern Ireland, visit **NI Direct**: **[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)**

## Handyperson scheme

More than 70 local Age UKs operate handyperson services across the country. These services offer older people extra help with small practical jobs – from installing energy efficient light bulbs to putting on a door chain. These are usually charged-for services, and the cost will depend on the nature of the work required.

For details of your local Age UK, call Age UK Advice on **0800 169 65 65**. In Wales, call Age Cymru Advice on **0300 303 44 98**.

## Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (HETAS)

Official body for approving solid fuel appliances, with a register of installers, chimney sweeps and servicers.

Tel: **01684 278 170**

**[www.hetas.co.uk](http://www.hetas.co.uk)**

## Immobilise

Online property register where you can log your possessions. The police use it to trace lost and stolen items.

**[www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)**

## Information Commissioner's Office

Provides information about data protection.

Tel: **0303 123 1113**

**[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)**

## Learn My Way

Free online courses for beginners on using a computer, browsing the internet, sending an email and finding work online.

**[www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com)**

### **Master Locksmiths Association (MLA)**

Professional body of locksmiths that produces a list of members, available free of charge.

Tel: **01327 262 255**

**[www.locksmiths.co.uk](http://www.locksmiths.co.uk)**

### **MoneyHelper**

Gives impartial information about financial products and services and offers tips on everyday money management.

Tel: **0800 138 7777**

**[www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)**

### **National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT)**

Provides details of qualified electricians and installers.

Tel: **0345 543 0330**

**[www.napit.org.uk](http://www.napit.org.uk)**

### **National Cyber Security Centre**

Information and advice from the Government about staying safe online.

**[www.ncsc.gov.uk](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk)**

### **National Grid Gas Emergency Number**

If you smell gas, call the 24-hour gas emergency number.

Tel: **0800 111 999**

### **National Security Inspectorate (NSI)**

Certification body for the security and fire protection sectors in the UK.

Tel: **01628 764888**

**[www.nsi.org.uk](http://www.nsi.org.uk)**

## Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are voluntary crime prevention groups that work in partnership with the police, local councils and other agencies involved in community safety to prevent crime. They can offer help and advice.

Tel: **0116 402 6111**

**[www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk)**

## Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Offers free home fire-safety checks in Northern Ireland.

Tel: **028 9266 4221**

**[www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org)**

## Online Centres Network

Provides access to computers and the internet, and helps people gain basic digital skills. Use the 'find a centre' facility to locate your nearest Online Centre.

Tel: **0114 349 1666**

**[www.onlinecentresnetwork.org](http://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org)**

## POLICE.UK

For non-emergency information and advice in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Tel: **101**

**[www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)**

## Police Service of Northern Ireland

Provides free online information about crime prevention. You can also ring up to check whether a doorstep caller is authentic and to get advice and support.

Tel: **101**

**[www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)**

### **RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)**

Offers help and support for people who are blind or partially sighted. Has information on lighting in the home and advice about sight loss.

Tel: **0303 123 9999**

**[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)**

### **RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People)**

Provides advice and support for people who are deaf, have hearing loss or have tinnitus.

Tel: **0808 808 0123**

Email: **[contact@rnid.org.uk](mailto:contact@rnid.org.uk)**

**[www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)**

### **RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)**

Provides detailed advice on specific safety problems.

Tel: **0121 248 2000**

**[www.rosipa.com](http://www.rosipa.com)**

### **Royal Mail Keepsafe**

Service to hold your mail while you're away and deliver it when you get home.

Tel: **03457 777 888**

**[www.royalmail.com/keepsafe](http://www.royalmail.com/keepsafe)**

### **Safer Neighbourhood Team**

Offers free crime prevention advice and home security assessments. Contact the Safer Neighbourhood team at your local police station for more information.

**[www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)**

### **Secured by Design**

Security products that are licensed by Secured by Design have passed police standards and tests.

**[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)**

## **Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB)**

Responsible for certifying organisations who provide security systems, fire alarms and telecare services. Search the website for a SSAIB-approved organisation in your local area.

**[www.ssaib.org](http://www.ssaib.org)**

## **TrustMark**

Government-backed scheme to help you find reliable tradespeople.

Tel: **0333 555 1234**

**[www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk)**

## **UK International Consumer Centre**

Provides advice on problems with traders based abroad.

**[www.ukecc.net](http://www.ukecc.net)**

## **UK Fire Service**

Provides information on fire safety and the UK Fire and Rescue Service. The website contains a directory of all the fire and rescue services in the UK.

**[www.fireservice.co.uk](http://www.fireservice.co.uk)**

## **Victim Support**

Charity that provides free and confidential help to victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales.

Tel: **08 08 16 89 111**

**[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)**

In Northern Ireland, contact **Victim Support NI**

Tel: **028 9024 3133**

**[www.victimsupportni.com](http://www.victimsupportni.com)**





† The Age UK network includes the charity, its trading companies and national partners (Cymru, Scotland and NI). We also work closely with local Age UKs. Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Age UK, 7th Floor, One America Square, 17 Crosswall, London EC3N 2LB.



# Help us be there for someone else

We hope you found this guide helpful. When times are tough, it's so important to get some support. Did you know you could help us reach someone else who needs a little help? Here's how:

1

## Give your views on guides like this

Our Readers' Panel helps make sure the information we produce is right for older people and their families. We'd love you to join. Go to [www.ageuk.org.uk/readers-panel](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/readers-panel).

2

## Donate to us

Every donation we receive helps us be there for someone when they need us. To make a donation, call us on **0800 169 8787** or go to [www.ageuk.org.uk/donate](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/donate).

3

## Volunteer with us

Our volunteers make an incredible difference to people's lives. Get involved by contacting your local Age UK or at [www.ageuk.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/volunteer).

4

## Campaign with us

We campaign to make life better for older people, and rely on the help of our strong network of campaigners. Add your voice to our latest campaigns at [www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns).

5

## Remember us in your will

A gift to Age UK in your will is a very special way of helping older people get expert support in the years to come. Find out more by calling **020 3033 1421** or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/legacy](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/legacy).

## What should I do now?

You may want to read some of our relevant information guides and factsheets, such as:

- **Avoiding scams**
- **Adapting your home**

You can order any of our guides or factsheets by giving our Advice Line a ring for free on **0800 169 65 65** (8am-7pm, 365 days a year).

Our friendly advisers are there to help answer any questions.

All of our publications are available in large print and audio formats.

There's plenty of really useful information on our website, too. Visit **[www.ageuk.org.uk/homesafety](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/homesafety)** to get started.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the below box, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.



**0800 169 65 65**  
**[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**



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