



Merton Neighbourhood Watch

Winter 2020

Season's Greetings from Merton Neighbourhood Watch

Dear Coordinators and Members,

You may remember each autumn Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association hold our AGM in the Council Chamber at Merton Civic Centre. In addition to the work of the Neighbourhood Watch Committee and hearing from the Police, we also enjoy the opportunity to catch up with other coordinators and members over a sandwich and a glass of wine.

Sadly whilst we are unable to do this in person this year, we are delighted to announce we will be holding our AGM online **via zoom on Thursday 4th February 2021, 6pm-7pm**. Details on how to join the event will be circulated in due course. We hope to be able to follow this up with a social event once restrictions allow.

I would also like to thank Merton's Police Cadets, who despite the difficulties of lockdowns have been busy working on a MOPAC (Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime) funded door knocking project to recruit members to Neighbourhood Watch. So far they have knocked on over 900 doors and helped to set up or refresh 15 watches. We hope to continue working with the Cadets in 2021.

Lastly, in what has been a difficult year I would like to thank you for your continued support for Merton Neighbourhood Watch. I know that many of you

have been sharing information and looking out for your neighbours via Neighbourhood Watch more than ever, and will continue to do so. Your hard work is helping to keep Merton one of the safest boroughs in London and we are proud that Neighbourhood Watch can contribute to this.

Roger Steele

Chairman, Merton Neighbourhood Watch Association



The Police Cadets door knocking in Merton

Don't be a Christmas burglary statistic!

Advice from West Midlands Police:

- Don't leave presents - whether bought to give to loved ones or received - on show for burglars to see. This is the case for items at home and also in your car.
- Keep all doors and windows secure and always lock your door - and if you go out then it should be lights on and lock up.
- As refuse collections might not be so frequent over that period, if you are throwing empty gift boxes away make sure you rip it up and don't just leave it out next to your bin.
- Keep notes of serial numbers from electrical items and register them at [immobolise.com](https://www.immobolise.com)
- If you are lucky enough to receive jewellery, then take a photo of it and keep it separately.
- Be careful what you reveal on social media about received gifts and being away from your home so as not to advertise your property and goods to criminals.
- If having parcels delivered then make sure arrangements are in place if you will not be in to receive them, such as leaving with a neighbour, so that they are not just left on show.



Have you seen the new COVID-19 Secure Marshals?

A team of new COVID-19 Secure Marshals started work last week in an effort to help keep Merton safe. The team are funded by money given to local authorities by central Government earlier this year to promote compliance around COVID-19. The four Marshals have been recruited and trained especially to help the local community stay COVID safe and compliant.

They will be out and about across the borough to encourage social distancing in high footfall areas such as outside transport hubs or shopping areas.

They will also help to provide:

- A visible presence to provide reassurance for people returning to the High Street
- A friendly encouragement to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing
- A source of advice and information on the COVID-19 Secure guidance and legal requirement
- Information gathering for the police and regulatory services officers on general compliance with social distancing and any other requirements by the public and businesses.



Merton's COVID-19 Secure Marshals

Christmas Time - Swindle and Crime

By Hannah Lumley, Trading Standards Officer, Regulatory Services Partnership

Unfortunately scams are on the increase, it is estimated that from the small percent that are reported to authorities, the cost to the UK economy is already several billion pounds.

It is a misconception to think that it is only the elderly or 'silly' people that are victims. These scammers are professional and are very good at what they do. We talk to people from all different backgrounds that have unfortunately become victims.

Whilst it's true people are more likely to be a victim when they are vulnerable, what many people don't realise is that vulnerability isn't just when you are sad/ stressed, it can be when you are happy and jolly...in the festive spirit!

The festive season is fast approaching, and each year many people's Christmases don't go to plan as that 'bargain', didn't quite work out. Whilst it is an old one it is sadly accurate - if something sounds too good to be true, it is!

1: Online Purchases

With the current pandemic, I suspect more than ever we will be making purchases online. Before you do, do some research. Do you know who you are buying from? Just because the website address says .co.uk the company can be based anywhere. Always look for a geographical address, and type the company and address into google or a similar search engine. If there are problems with the company people are likely to have written about it!

- Always use a protected method of payment such as PayPal or a credit card
- Make sure there is a padlock in the address bar
- Don't use public wi-fi to make purchases
- Watch out for free trials offering to kick start your New Year resolution. Many of these ask for your bank details to cover the cost of delivery, though hidden in the small print is a contract. Make sure you read all the small print and take note of the company's contact details

2: One Day Sales/ Pop up Shops

Watch out for street traders and people knocking on doors offering to sell cheap electrical goods or cheap alcohol. These type of scams have been on the increase, using the excuse of surplus stock.

The alcohol is likely to be counterfeit, which is very dangerous. Properly produced and certified alcoholic drinks are made using ethanol, which is a type of alcohol that is safe to drink, however fake alcoholic drinks are likely to contain cheaper forms of alcohol – found in products like anti-freeze and industrial solvents – it can cause serious illness. People have lost their sight from drinking these illicit items or sadly died.

The cheap electrical goods, if they are even in the box are likely to be cheap imports which do not comply with safety requirements and pose a serious safety risk of electric shock and/ or fire.

3: Charities

Christmas may be the time for giving, but always double-check who exactly you are giving money to – and what you're signing, if asked to make donations by direct debit. You should be wary of vague statements on collection tins or boxes such as 'donations for work creation' or 'donations to poor children.'

- Clarify your values. Do this before you open your cheque book, volunteer your time, or look at that letter from a charity
- Identify your own preferences and which types of charities are close to your heart
- A charity must be registered if its annual income is over £5000 or if it is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

4: Telephone Calls/ Emails

Christmas is an expensive time of year, we all spend more than we usually do on presents and social events.

Watch out for calls from the bank or police asking if you have transferred an unusual amount of money or bought something from a company you don't recognise. Again these are on the increase, as they know we are more likely to be at home.

These scams work in the first few seconds, because as soon as you say no, the scammers know you believe they are the bank!

If you get a call like this, do not panic. Do not hand over any information to the person on the phone. Our advice is to take five. Sit down have a cup of tea and ring a friend or family member to talk about what has happened. This makes sure the line is clear. The decisions we make after taking a few moments are always very different to those made in panic.

If you are still unsure then ring the bank by using the number on the back of your card.

Your bank or the police will never:

- Ask you to transfer money to a new account for fraud reasons, even if they say it is in your name
- Phone you to ask for your 4-digit card PIN or your online banking password, even by tapping them into the telephone keypad
- Ask you to withdraw money to hand over to them for safe-keeping
- Send someone to your home to collect your cash, PIN, payment card or cheque book if you are a victim of fraud
- Ask you to purchase goods using your card and then hand them over for safe-keeping



Likewise be wary of people saying they are from the HMRC or your energy provider etc. saying you are owed a refund and asking for your bank details. Christmas is an expensive time of year, and the scammers know this! They know that an extra few pounds goes along way. Though remember companies you have a contract with have your details. Do not give anything out over the phone. If in doubt ring the company back using the number on your bill and ask them directly. If you don't know who is on the phone, just hang up!

5: Delivery Companies

More and more shopping is carried out online, therefore it's easy to get confused about what parcel is due. Have you missed a parcel?

Look out for unusual delivery slips being put through the door, asking you to ring a premium rate number (09) for you to reschedule the delivery. Look through your emails or ring the company you are waiting for a delivery from to check that it is genuine.

Also be aware of people delivering presents/ hampers and asking for a very small delivery charge. They would have been an error with the person ordering it, the fee will be a small amount around a £1. Though they don't accept cash, for safety reasons. They want you to use your card so they can skim it and take the details to do their own Christmas shopping!

We don't want to be party poopers but we want you to be safe and have a merry time. So remember if it sounds too good to be true, it is!

Remember:

Before you make any decisions take five, have a sit down and a think, talk it through with someone you trust and do some research.

If you do have concerns, further advice can be found via the **Consumer Advice Line, run by Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133.**

Officers also regularly carry out talks in the borough about scams and how to stay safe, so look out for one of these. If you are member of a group and would like us to carry out a talk for you please let us know via the number above.

All you need to know about illegally parked vehicles

Merton Council has a dedicated phone line for reporting illegally parked vehicles, which is available Monday to Saturday from 7am to 10pm, and Sundays 11.45am to 4pm.

Call **020 8545 4661 (option 3)** as soon as you notice an illegally parked vehicle, such as a vehicle parked:

- on the pavement or grass verge
- on yellow lines during restricted hours
- in a disabled bay without a Blue Badge
- obstructing the flat section of a driveway or dropped kerb

Only use this line to report illegal parking. The officers who operate this line will not be able to discuss other parking-related issues with you.

Information you will need to give

You will need to provide details of the illegally parked vehicle you are reporting, including its location and a description of the vehicle. If it is blocking your driveway, you will also need to include your name and contact number.

What happens next

A Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) will visit the location and issue a penalty charge notice (PCN) if the vehicle contravenes parking restrictions. We do not have the facility to remove vehicles.

Report a vehicle blocking your dropped kerb

To report a vehicle blocking your dropped kerb, call **020 8545 4661 (option 3)**. The line is open from Monday to Saturday 7am to 10pm and on Sundays from 11.45am to 4pm.

Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) can then visit the location and issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) to any vehicle that blocks any part of the flat section indicated by the red lines (opposite photo).



Reporting abandoned vehicles

The abandoned vehicle service will:

- inspect all reported abandoned vehicles prior to removal and disposal
- report all suspected stolen vehicles to the police
- report all claimed vehicles that are untaxed to the DVLA
- remove all abandoned vehicles from the public highway and from other open land, where the permission of the property owner has been given at cost to the Property Owner
- ensure contractors work safely and efficiently and dispose of all removed vehicles in an authorised manner.

You can help by:

- providing the registration number, colour, make and model and exact location of any suspected abandoned vehicle
- Report any changes in the condition or location of a suspected abandoned vehicle after you have initially reported it.

Use this link to report an abandoned vehicle:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/abandoned-vehicles>

CrimeStoppers.

Speak up. Stay safe.

Introducing Crimestoppers

In London last year members of the general public who contacted Crimestoppers helped to solve or prevent over 1,176 crimes in their communities.

Crimestoppers have been working in partnership with the London Borough of Merton, Neighbourhood Watch and residents to raise awareness of our anonymous reporting service and help prevent and reduce crime in the borough.

But we can do so much more in Merton and we're asking for your help to spread the word about the service we provide. Why not tell 2 or 3 of your friends and family about Crimestoppers or our youth service Fearless? Or visit our websites to find out more about how you can report crime, we also offer advice and information on keeping safe, spotting the signs of different crimes types and the type of information that is useful when reporting crime.

You'll be playing a part in helping to keep Merton safe and protecting the people, places and communities that matter to you.

Who we are

Crimestoppers is an independent charity helping communities to Speak Up and Stay Safe. We believe everyone has the right to feel safe from crime, wherever they live and have kept our vital guarantee of anonymity since we were formed in the 1980s.

Every day over a thousand people trust us to pass on their information about crime via our 24-hour UK Contact Centre on freephone **0800 555 1111** or by filling in our simple and secure non-traceable online form at [Crimestoppers-uk.org](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

How we guarantee you will remain anonymous

Anyone can contact Crimestoppers anonymously with information they may have about crime or criminal activity. For online, computer IP addresses are never traced so no-one will ever know you contacted us. We are not able to identify telephone numbers, calls are never recorded, we are not able to trace telephone calls and our telephone number will never show up on an itemised telephone bill.

After receiving a call or a completed anonymous online form, we create a report that brings together all the information, making sure it doesn't contain any information that could even remotely identify who has contacted us. This report is then sent to the relevant law enforcement body, which could be your local police force or an agency such as the UK Border Agency, or HM Revenue & Customs.

The difference we make

We exist because a significant proportion of the population are unable, or simply refuse, to talk to the authorities. However, with Crimestoppers, we offer hope. Our charitable status remains an essential ingredient as it gives people much needed confidence in their hour of need to trust our unique service.

Information we receive anonymously and pass on helps families of murder victims see justice, ensures domestic abuse and modern slavery victims are safeguarded and protected, and has stopped terrorism and acid attacks.

We know our service really does make a difference. Since Crimestoppers began, it has received over 2.2 million actionable calls, resulting in more than 151,000 arrests and charges, over £139 million worth of stolen goods have been recovered and over £367 million worth of illegal drugs have been seized.

We are supported by hundreds of fantastic volunteers across the UK who make a huge difference by spreading the word about Crimestoppers at a local level.

We have supported millions of people to speak up about crime, passing on vital crime information that may never have been heard without our charity's unique anonymous service. Please remember, you always have options when it comes to reporting crime and if you feel unable to speak to police, then Crimestoppers is here to help.



Attending an event in Merton in 2019 for Hate Crime Awareness Week