

# AUGUST 2023 ECW

ESSEX COMMUNITY WATCH MAGAZINE



TAKING BACK CONTROL OF GRAYS TOWN CENTRE - P9

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### NHS lost £600,000

A HOSPITAL theatre manager has been jailed for 11 years for his part in a "sophisticated" fraud that cost the NHS £600,000.

Hasan Abusheikha, 47, took bribes and stole equipment that had been donated to the West Herts NHS Trust.

Prosecutors said his crime "involved a significant undermining of the proper function of a public service".

Co-defendant Elmo Emanuel, 74, of Station Road in Wingate, County Durham, ran medical equipment suppliers Implants International and Xtremity Solutions, and was also convicted of bribing Abusheikha and was jailed for 28 months.

Another trust supplier, Jawid Khan, 51, Windmill Road, Hemel Hempstead, admitted bribe charges and was handed an 18-month suspended sentence and do 200 hours of unpaid work.

#### Delivery fraud

PARCEL delivery fraud is "by far" the most common scam faced by the public so far this year, according to Citizens Advice figures.

Almost half of people targeted by scammers (49%) found themselves involved in a parcel delivery scam, with fraudsters attempting to get hold of personal information or bank details.

Citizens Advice said its research suggested that 40 million people had been targeted by scams already this year.

It warned that several of the most frequently encountered scams involved a "quite sophisticated" impersonation of official organisations

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## Police hit by telephone call...

# HOAXERS

THOUSANDS of hoax 999 calls were made to police right across the country over a two year period, new data has revealed.

Emergency operators across the UK are being kept unnecessarily busy by a shocking number of prank police emergency calls.

More than 10,000 prank calls were made to Lancashire police in 2021 with that figure rising in 2022 to 11,227.

This equated to more than 30 prank calls a day to the force; in England, police received an average of 266 prank calls per day. - with Essex emerging in the top half of police forces in the country.

Data from Essex Police showed there was 2,587 hoax calls made between 2020 and 2021, and 1,803 made from 2021 to 2022.

The county of Hertfordshire was discovered to have the highest number of prank emergency calls, with 49,740 made between September 2020 and September 2022.

This averages out to over 68 prank calls per day. If that picture wasn't bad enough, there was a sharp increase of hoax calls to Hert

Home security specialists SimpliSafe obtained data via Freedom of Information requests to determine which counties received the most hoax calls.

England as a whole received a high number of prank calls - with 91,290 between 2020 and 2021 and 102,930 between 2021 and 2022 - a 13 per cent increase.

The biggest percentage increase year-on-year was in London, where prank calls grew 200% in a consecutive year. However, there were some outliers, with North Yorkshire Police, in particular, experiencing a 52% reduction in prank calls year-on-year, with numbers dropping from 4,968 to 2,389.

fordshire police of 27% between 2021 and 2022 to 27,841.

UK General Manager at SimpliSafe, Jonathan Wall, said: "The amount of hoax calls the police received across the UK is very worrying, especially when the emergency services are stretched so thin. These calls are a waste of resources and misdirect help from the people who really need it.

"There are plenty of precautions and measures that the average person can take to help protect themselves while taking some pressure off the emergency services, such as cameras outside your home and a good alarm system.

"Of course, if there is a genuine situation that requires the help of the emergency services, the right course of action is to dial 999. Ensuring you're fully protected and aware of what constitutes an emergency will help you get the right help you most need.



If your car suffered damage from a pothole then make a...

# CLAIM



POTHLES nationwide have become the scourge of every motorist with tyres being ripped to shreds and cars being damaged.

But Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis believes you could be entitled to compensation for any damage.

Mr Lewis has issued an urgent warning for those whose motor has been "mangled" by road defects.

The consumer champion said in his latest weekly email that £22million was paid out to Brits for pothole damage last year but thousands more could be due cash.

The damage caused by potholes can affect tyres, wheels, suspension and steering, with repairs costing hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds.

In a handy guide, the MSE team said: "Whoever controls the road has a legal duty to maintain it to a fit standard, and if they don't, they should pay for repairs.

"Local authorities paid out more than £22.7million in compensation last year. Claiming for damage can be a slog, but don't be put off – we've seen many successes."



Potholes warning sign



To begin the process, it's always worth reporting the pothole to your local authority.

### What should I do if my car is damaged?

The first thing you should do is report the pothole to your local authority. You can do this by visiting [gov.uk/report-pothole](http://gov.uk/report-pothole).

It not only means they will be inspected but if any damage occurs there is more chance of redress.

If the hole might endanger a driver or cyclist's life, phone your council's emergency line rather than use its less-urgent online reporting system.

Also, check any unfamiliar routes you plan to drive or cycle. The FixMyStreet app and website let you search areas for reported potholes and other road obstacles.

### How do I claim compensation for damage?

If you've damaged your car and want compensation, work out which council is responsible for the road.

Write to the authority and, if they believe you have a valid claim, they will send you a damage report form.

You'll need to provide copies of estimates or invoices for repairs, a current MOT certificate and ideally photos of the damage.

MoneySavingExpert says it's vital to

collect as much evidence as possible to ensure that you can prove your local authority's negligence.

### At the minimum, you need to include:

- Copies of repair invoices and proof of payment.
- Copies of your mechanic's statement on cause of damage.
- A note (or map) of the pothole's location.
- Note of the date and time the damage occurred.
- Photos of the damage.
- Photos of the pothole if possible.
- Notes from anyone who saw the incident.

So make sure to go the extra mile and include notes on the size, shape and depth of the pothole with sketches of its position and photos — but don't trespass onto a motorway in a bid to get these.

Be aware authorities often defend the claims, especially if they can show they have a good road maintenance programme and were unaware of the hole.

If your first claim is rejected, don't give up straight away.

Ask for details of the road's repair programme as this will strengthen your case if it isn't being properly maintained and launch a full claim.

And if your local authority doesn't hold these - put in a Freedom of Information request, which the council has to answer.

Your request should ask for the age of the road surface, the number of reports about the specific location your car was damaged and repairs carried out.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Paying the penalty

DRIVERS are being handed almost 20,000 parking fines every day as councils race to replenish depleted coffers in the wake of the pandemic.

The average number of daily parking tickets issued by local authorities has risen by 12pc from 17,500 in 2021 to 19,631 in the first six months of last year, according to analysis by Churchill Motor Insurance.

Fines have surged by more than a third compared with the 14,426 issued each day in 2020, when successive lockdowns meant fewer cars on the road.

Islington topped the list by sending over a thousand penalty notices every day, which raised an average of £44,799. Lambeth issued slightly fewer fines but brought in higher daily revenues of £48,424. Waltham Forest sent out 874 fines that totalled £41,125.

### Alarm safety alert

TO anyone whose kids have mobile phones, here's a message that could save them from harm.

Download the Hollie Guard App and if they are walking home late or alone, they can switch it on and any parent can track them.

If someone approaches and they feel threatened or unsafe they can just shake the phone and it sets off a high-pitched alarm and also messages the parent to alert them.

This tip was sent by Jane Hamill, a PCSO based at Doncaster East police station.

### Scams warning

THE Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) has issued a warning about a significant rise in energy scams linked to the cost-of-living crisis and increased consumer vulnerability.

CTSI claim over 40 million people were targeted by scammers last year. Scam energy rebate text messages; energy tariff mis-selling by doorstep sellers; and loan sharks preying on the most vulnerable affected by the cost-of-living crisis were the most common scams.

## Amazon is keeping you...

# ALL SAFE



TECH giant Amazon continues to protect buyers from criminals operating worldwide and revealed this month that it had stopped over 800,000 bad actors' attempts to set up new selling accounts, with the overall number down from six million in 2020 or more than 50% year over year.

Last year, Amazon invested over \$1.2 billion in technology and experts, hiring more than 15,000 people – including machine learning scientists, software developers and expert investigators – to counter fraud.

Thanks to these efforts, Amazon sued or referred for investigation over 1,300 criminals in the US, UK, EU and China – up from 600 in 2021.

Amazon's seller verification process requires partners to provide a government-issued photo ID, taxpayer information and details about their identity, location, bank accounts, credit cards, and more.

The systems then analyse collected data to detect risk and establish relationships with previously identified bad actors.

Similarly, the firm's automated technology scans over eight billion listings daily and uses the data to improve its counterfeit prevention tech.

The system also relies on customer complaints to enhance the detection process.

"It's great to see Amazon respond to the threat of counterfeiting and take action against illegitimate sellers, including by supporting us to seize £170,000 worth of suspected counterfeit CDs during raids last year," Detective Sergeant Andrew Masterson, from the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) at City of London Police, said.

The firm also identified, seized and appropriately disposed of over six million counterfeit products in 2022 thanks to its ongoing cooperation with law enforcement.

In 2022, the number of valid notices of infringement plummeted 35% compared to last year. According to Dharmesh Mehta, Amazon's Vice President of Worldwide Selling Partner Services, the ultimate aim is to reduce counterfeits to zero.

Additionally, the firm's partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) allowed it to identify over 5,000 false brands and prevent them from joining Amazon Brand Registry.

Earlier in the year, Amazon announced it would start flagging frequently returned items in a bid to help shoppers make more conscious purchasing choices and reduce returns.

As Range Rover tops stolen car league again, Tracker advises, make sure your car is...

# SECURE



THE Range Rover Sport tops the most stolen cars list in 2022. Tracker says that this is the fourth consecutive year that it's hit the top spot.

According to Tracker, Land Rover and Range Rover account for 42% of all stolen cars recovered by the company in 2022.

The highest value car recovered was a Mercedes-Benz worth £182,000. The VW golf, worth £10,000 on average, also reappeared on the list.

The lowest value car was an Audi A4 worth £1,000 - so it's worth investing in extra security no matter what your car's value.

There's a new addition to the 10 most stolen cars, - the Lexus RX 450H. This is the first hybrid model to feature in the list, and could reflect a growing demand for low-emission vehicles.

Clive Wain, head of police liaison for Tracker, comments: "What's becoming evident through our data is that hybrid vehicles are now rich pickings for criminals."

"The Lexus RX 450h enters Tracker's top 10 most stolen and recovered league table. This is the first time a Lexus vehicle has ever appeared in its annual review of stolen and recovered vehicles.

"A sharp rise in thefts of the Lexus RX450h in the second half of the year indicates it's likely to remain a target for thieves."

Premium and nearly-new cars aren't the only targets. Thieves are taking advantage

of the global shortage of car parts and creating 'chop-shops'. These are buildings that hold stolen cars, which are stripped down for parts.

In 2022, police forces uncovered 32 chop shops - a 300% increase since 2021. These vehicles were located using tracker systems, but they found hundreds of vehicles that didn't have trackers fitted too. The police also seized valuable vehicle parts worth millions of pounds.

The lack of parts and materials globally has led to a waiting list for new cars. This has caused a surge in demand for second-hand cars, causing their value to increase.

All this means that criminals could stand to make money from a stolen second-hand vehicle.

**What is keyless entry theft?**  
Criminals commit keyless entry theft using a relay device. They hack the constant signal from the fob, open the car and drive away. They can sometimes do this even if the fob is inside the house.

Keyless entry theft continues to challenge car manufacturers. Some have fitted the fobs with a sleep or an off function.

But thieves are still finding a way around this. Tracker reports that 94% of vehicles were stolen without using the owner's keys in 2022. This is a 14% rise since 2017.

**How can I keep my car secure?**  
To keep your car secure and to protect against keyless car theft, you have several options including:

- Using a faraday pouch
- Buying a steering or wheel lock
- Investing in CCTV or smart doorbells
- Making your car easier to identify

The Metropolitan Police advises using an electronic car key security pouch – a faraday pouch. The pouch blocks the keyless signal when the fob is inside it.

When storing your keys, keep them out of sight. It's not unusual for thieves to use a tool and fish for them through a letterbox.

But a multi-layered approach to security is best, as Clive Wain says: "Criminals continue to find ways around new security technology, which is why we always encourage motorists to use traditional security deterrents such as crook locks and wheel clamps.

"An investment in smart doorbells or a CCTV system are also increasingly popular amongst those keen to guard against unwanted visitors."

Alarms and immobilisers are usually fitted as standard for new vehicles. You can also give your car a distinct mark that can be used to identify it.

Though they can't stop signals being intercepted, tracker systems can increase the chances of your car being recovered.

Wain says: "In the event of a theft, stolen vehicle tracking technology will significantly help police quickly locate the vehicle and return it to its rightful owner before it's sold on, broken down for parts or shipped abroad."



## UK'S MOST STOLEN CARS:

1. Range Rover Sport
2. Range Rover Autobiography
3. Range Rover Vogue
4. Land Rover discovery
5. Mercedes-Benz C-Class
6. Lexus RX450H
7. Mercedes-Benz GL-Class

8. BMW 3 Series, Mercedes-Benz S-Class, BMW X 5, Mercedes-Benz E-Class
9. Range Rover Evoque
10. Land Rover Defender, VW Golf, Mercedes-Benz CL-Class

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Firefighters award

FIREFIGHTERS have thanked their local community after scooping a national charity recycling award.

The crew from Chatteris Fire Station won The Fire Fighters Charity Bag It and Bank It competition, which sees stations around the country compete to see who can donate the most textiles through their yellow clothing banks.

The competition ran for a month with more than 900 stations

Locals donated more than four tonnes of clothing, generating an impressive £1,040 for the charity.

Across the UK, more than 400 tonnes of clothing was donated, raising £89,000 for the charity, which is currently celebrating 80 years of providing support and rehabilitation to serving and retired members of fire and rescue staff and their families.

### Under attack

NEARLY a third of businesses and a quarter of charities have said they were the subject of cyber attacks or breaches last year, new data has shown.

Figures collected for the Government by polling company Ipsos show a similar proportion of larger and medium-sized companies and high-income charities faced attacks or breaches last year as in 2021.

There has been a fall in the proportion of smaller businesses who have identified cyber breaches or attacks, but this may be due to smaller businesses being occupied on the economic climate and less focussed on cyber security

### Rogue traders

TWO rogue traders who conned an elderly man out of almost £30,000 for poor roof work that was not needed have been sentenced.

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council said Nathan Lee, 35, and Tarn Price, 34, appeared before Wolverhampton Magistrates Court following an investigation by trading standards.

Lee was sentenced to 32 months imprisonment. Price was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment, suspended for 18 months,



Travellers have seen car hire prices soar

## Holiday car hire prices will make you...

# SEE RED

AS travellers face paying more than double pre-pandemic prices for car hire in some destinations this summer, Which? reveals the companies to use and which to avoid.

Which? analysed data from Which? Recommended Provider Zest Car Rental, a leading broker, and found that a week's car hire in August will cost 77 per cent more on average this year compared with 2019.

While prices are marginally lower than last year, continuing high demand and depleted stocks mean prices have settled at levels above those seen before Covid.

The consumer champion looked at figures for over 8,000 rentals in nine popular holiday destinations including Italy, Greece and Spain.

Three of the nine destinations have seen prices double, or more than double, with prices up 100 per cent in Cyprus, 106 percent in the UK, and increases of a massive 126 per cent in Italy, where a week's rental in August has increased from an average of £209 to £473.

The most expensive country for car hire is the USA, where a week's rental is likely to set sightseers back by a staggering £546 on average, up 92 per cent since 2019.

Separately, the consumer champion carried out a survey of almost 2,700 Which? members, asking them to assess car hire firms and brokers based on a range of criteria, including clarity of extra charges, age, mileage and condition of the car, customer service and value for money.

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## From page 6

With almost half of respondents (47%) reporting that they worry about being exploited by their rental company, it's essential that consumers are able to book with confidence this summer.

Travellers to the Canary Islands are particularly well served, with the islands home to the only two car hire firms to be awarded Which? Recommended Provider status this year; Auto Reisen and Cicar.

Both achieved exceptional customer scores of 91 per cent and were awarded five stars in categories including the clarity of extra charges, how easy it is to opt out of those extra charges, the clarity of the final hire cost, customer service, and how well description matched reality.

Household names **Alamo** (72%), **Enterprise** (72%) and **Hertz** (71%) came in joint third and fifth places respectively.

Sister companies Alamo and Enterprise both received largely favourable reviews from respondents.

Enterprise was awarded five stars by travellers for both the record customers received of existing damage to their cars, and for age, condition and mileage of their vehicles, and achieved no fewer than three stars in any of the remaining categories.

Similarly, Alamo also received a clutch of three and four star scores, but beat its sister firm on price, with customers paying almost £100 less a week on average.

**Goldcar** has been one of the survey's worst performers for years, and again found itself at the bottom of the table this year with a dismal customer score of 54 per cent.

Despite having some of the lowest prices of any of the companies in the survey, with an average price per week of £245, the company scored just two stars for value for money.

It also received two stars for the ease of opting out of optional extras, and for customer service, with multiple respondents commenting on pressure selling techniques used to encourage customers to purchase extra insurance at the rental desk, an issue Which? has previously investigated.

This issue cropped up repeatedly in responses from Goldcar customers, with one saying there was a "hard sell on the insurance", which was "excruciating".

Another said they felt the firm was "obsessed with selling extra cover", while a fellow respondent complained of having to "suffer the hard sell, which sometimes became close to threatening".

They even remarked that they saw fellow customers "in tears at the desk when asked to pay hundreds of Euros for insurance".

Goldcar were not alone in this, however. Overall, one in seven people who took out an extra insurance policy at a car hire desk told Which? they felt under a lot of pressure to do so.

For those that prefer to use a third party to find the best possible deals, Which? also surveyed travellers' experiences of using brokers.

Unlike comparison sites, which simply scrape prices to find the cheapest options, good brokers negotiate their own deals, and often use smaller or local suppliers that travellers might not find elsewhere.

They also offer tourists an added layer of protection, as they're able to assist in the event of any issues with the supplier.

**Zest Car Rental** was the only broker to receive the coveted Which? Recommended Provider badge. It achieved an impressive score of 87 per cent, and received full marks in four out of seven categories, including the clarity of extra charges, and customer service.

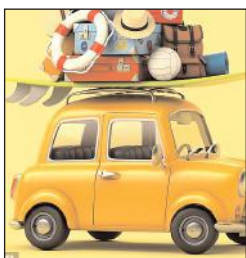


One customer remarked it was a "very easy process" with "accurate information", while another happy traveller recommended their customer service representatives as "very helpful".

While missing out on Which? Recommended Provider status, **Auto Europe** was also rated highly, with a customer score of 82 per cent. At the bottom of the survey was DoYouSpain.com, with a score of just 55 per cent.

Rory Boland, Editor of Which? Travel, said: "Travellers this summer can expect to pay much higher prices for car hire than before the pandemic, with strong demand and a continuing shortage of vehicles pushing up costs.

"While there are deals out there, people should avoid the firms with the cheapest headline prices, because too often they will later be stung by hidden charges. Only use a reputable broker or hire firm, so you can ensure you're getting the best possible service for your money."



“ While there are deals out there, people should avoid the firms with the cheapest headline prices, because too often they will later be stung by hidden charges. Only use a reputable broker or hire firm, so you can ensure you’re getting the best possible service for your money. ”

**RORY BOLAND - WHICH?**

## CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS

### E-scooter accidents

ALMOST 60 people were injured in e-scooter collisions in Essex last year, new figures show.

Department for Transport figures show 57 casualties were recorded by Essex Police in 2022 - a rise from 44 in 2021 and a significant increase from ten casualties two years prior.

Private e-scooters cannot be legally ridden on roads or pavements in the UK but have become a common sight, particularly in urban areas.

E-scooter rental trials in Colchester have been operated by TIER Mobility since it replaced SPIN last summer.

### Stopping drug gangs

TARGETED work on drug dealers in Chelmsford has seen 10 County Lines networks shut down..

As part of a week of intensification earlier this year, 23 people were charged relating to ten County Lines operating in the city.

The operation was led by our Op Raptor North and Op Orochi teams, both of which are part of our serious violence unit, and the Chelmsford community policing team.

Overall, crime in Chelmsford is falling. Up to April this year, there were 267 fewer offences compare to 2022.

Within that, incidents of violence are also falling, with 424 fewer violent incidents in the 12 months to April compared to the previous 12 months.

### Assaulted a child

A MAN who seriously assaulted a child in a restaurant's customer toilets in an unprovoked attack in Southend has been jailed for six years.

Liam Taylor 31, from London, was sentenced at Basildon Crown Court for causing grievous bodily harm.

At an earlier hearing, Liam Taylor pleaded guilty to the assault that took place in KFC in the High Street on Thursday 20 October last year and he was further ordered to pay the victim £500 for the resulting facial injuries.

### Crime boss back behind bars

ORGANISED crime boss Richard Wakeling, who had been on the run since 2018, is back behind bars starting an 11 year prison sentence after being extradited to the UK from Thailand.

Wakeling, 55, from Brentwood, Essex (pictured right) arrived back in the country on 1 June and appeared at Chelmsford Crown Court.

He was immediately jailed after being convicted in his absence.

Wakeling was found guilty of trying to import £8m worth of amphetamine suspended in liquid in 2016, but fled the UK on the eve of his trial in 2018.



## Fraudster preyed on Canvey's elderly

A FRAUDSTER who posed as a police officer to con elderly people out of thousands of pounds on Canvey has been convicted.

Abul Anam Sadruddin, 28 of Dod Street, LImenhouse, was found guilty at Basildon Crown Court of two counts of fraud by false representation.

In the first incident, the elderly victim was called at their home by a man pretending to be a police officer.

He told the 82-year-old victim that she had been a victim of fraud whereby counterfeit money had been placed in her account and manipulated her into thinking she was assisting with an ongoing investigation.

She was then ordered to the nearest bank where she withdrew £2500. When she returned home, she was greeted by Sadruddin who collected the money.

The following day, in December 2019, a 91-year-old was told a similar story and made to believe that he was assisting police with an ongoing fraud investigation if he withdrew £5000.

The female victim described how since the crime, she has found it difficult to leave her own home and is constantly looking over her shoulder.

Sadruddin was due to be sentenced as we went to press.

Detective Constable Lee Pudney said "Sadruddin's despicable crimes had a detrimental impact on the victims who were led to believe that they were assisting the police.

"I'd like to commend the victims in this case who have bravely supported the investigation.

"The sad truth is that economic crimes such as these, leave victims feeling foolish but that should not be the case. Fraudsters such as Sadruddin will often go to great lengths to make their scam look believable."



## CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS



Members of the public engage with the Grays Town Centre team

## Taking back control of Grays

OFFICERS from the Grays Town Centre Team have been praised for their superb work in combatting anti-social behaviour.

Groups of youths began to use Burger King on the High Street as a hang out, rarely buying any food and behaving anti-socially, and sometimes violently, both inside and outside the restaurant.

Their behaviour created an intimidating environment for shoppers and made Burger King a no-go area once schools and colleges had finished for the day.

Burger King shift manager Ewelina said: "They were treating it like their living room. They were making a mess and it was distressing for us and our customers.

"Our sales were down because people were afraid to come in here. Now,

when the police have been around, it's much better, and quieter, than before.

"We are seeing more patrols on the High Street, they are checking people and if they see that something is wrong, they come in."

Acting Sergeant Tom Butler said: "The behaviour in and around Burger King was having a detrimental effect on the business itself and on the people who were using the High Street.

"We set up an operation to prevent and deter the anti-social and violent behaviour and in the last two months we've seen a dramatic fall in the number of reported incidents.

"We've been going in there regularly, talking to people and utilising our stop and search powers."

Alongside the tackling the issues on the High Street, the Town Centre Team

have been working alongside enforcement officers from Thurrock Council to make sure the terms of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that covers the town centre and local park are being respected.

Anyone breaching the order by drinking alcohol, taking other intoxicating substances or being verbally abusive can be issued a fixed penalty notice (FPN).

Tom Butler added that the response to the team's work had been very positive: "The high visibility patrols have been well received by the public and we will continue to work with our partners at the council and local businesses to address any issues they may have.

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## CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS

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“We want Grays to be a safe and welcoming place for all members of the community to enjoy. I want to encourage anyone who sees any anti-social or criminal behaviour to report it to us so we can deal with it.”

The team’s latest day of intensification saw 35 hours of foot patrols through the town, four stop searches, three PSPO enforcements and 21 engagements with local businesses. A knife was also recovered from the park.

This work formed part of Op Community, a new initiative that will see significant numbers of officers from all areas of the force combatting issues raised by local people in every district across the county.

This enhanced engagement and crime prevention operation takes a proactive approach that emphasises listening to the local community, problem-solving, and investigating all concerns to achieve positive outcomes.

Did you know we have a few different ways you can contact us? If you would like to report a non-emergency crime, antisocial behaviour, or give us information, you can report online or by use our Live Chat service.



Engaging with staff at Burger King

 Essex County Council  
Trading Standards

**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](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk) to find Trading Standards Approved businesses you can trust.

Visit [BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk) or call 0808 223 1133



## Young people claim they all fear knife...

# CRIME



FROM December 2022 to March 2023 more than 1,560 young people took part in the fourth Essex Violence and Vulnerability Youth Voices Listening Project.

Seventy-three youth groups across Southend, Essex and Thurrock asked their young people how safe they feel in their communities with the results giving a picture of the fears and concerns of children across the county.

Knife crime and getting stabbed was the top concern for the third year in a row at 16%, followed closely by youth violence and fights on the street at second place with 14% and drug dealers and user at third place with 12%.

The concerns of the young people vary according to the district and borough they live in, but all had concerns about violence which takes place for

filmed and shared on social media.

There was a general feeling that violence was becoming normalised and there were no repercussions from it.

When asked what makes them feel unsafe, the main answers were dark and poorly lit areas, large groups of people and being out alone. They feel safe with their friends, with people they trust and in well-lit areas.

All young people would like to see more sports activities and youth clubs available that are affordable and local, safe spaces that are run by trusted adults.

Roger Hirst, Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex and Chair of the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership said: "Young people right across our county have been open, and honest about the things that make them feel unsafe and now it is our responsibility to act on these findings.

"I will be sharing the report with colleagues across Essex to see what we have the power, capability, and resources to change.

"Essex is a safe county, and it is rare to be a victim of crime but if people don't feel safe then it restricts their ability to live happy, healthy, positive lives. I am confident that by working in partnership we can help our young people feel safer and happier as they live, study, work and play in Essex."

The Listening Project was managed by Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services and results have been collated by geographical area so that the young people's fears, concerns and solutions can be acted upon and implemented on a local level.

Following publication of the report The Essex Violence and Vulnerability

### WHAT THEY SAID

*"Being with friends makes me feel protected, and being with a boy group of friends makes me feel even safer"*

*"Fighting at school is a worry as people do it just to put on Tik Tok."*

*"Education around gang violence and repercussions needs to be taught more. School assemblies don't really work as we just switch off."*

*"Education around gang violence and repercussions needs to be taught more, and at an earlier age. School assemblies don't really work as we just switch off."*

*"Knowing how to protect ourselves is important."*



Roger Hirst, will share findings

Unit will look to work with local youth organisations, Community Safety Partnerships, local authorities and other community stakeholders to see how to young people's fears can be addressed and positive changes made.

To view the full report and view in more detail the comments made and groups that took part visit [www.ecvcs.org.uk/ecvcs-youth-voices](http://www.ecvcs.org.uk/ecvcs-youth-voices)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Rise in ticket fraud

ACTION Fraud is warning people to be aware of a rise in ticket fraud over the last 12 months hitting those buying tickets for live sport and music.

has seen a rise in ticket fraud over the past twelve months, as criminals take advantage of people wanting to enjoy more live sport and music.

They have launched a national aware-Action Fraud receiving 7,088 reports of ticket fraud in 2022, as the UK enjoyed the first full summer free of Covid-19 restrictions.

A spokesman said: "Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

### Password safety

NEARLY 15,000 people had their email or social media accounts hacked in financial year 2021/22. Enabling 2-step verification (2SV) can keep hackers out of your account.

Your email password should be strong and different from all your other passwords.

Combining three random words that each mean something to you is a great way to create a password.

Do not use words that can be guessed (like your pet's name). You can include numbers and symbols if needed. For example, "Hippo!PizzaRocket!"

### Rotten food inquiry

THE Food Standards Agency (FSA) has launched a fraud inquiry following allegations that a food processing company sold tens of thousands of tonnes of foreign pork to UK supermarkets which was labelled as being British.

An investigation by Farmers Weekly found that mislabelled, and possibly even rotten, meat may have been sold by the supplier to supermarkets, hospitals and schools, over a period of at least 20 years.

It is alleged that company employees duped food auditors by moving 'washed rotten' meat around a processing plant during inspections.



Viva, a company you really can...

# TRUST

THERE are two very important questions you must ask yourself before even considering making an application for Equity Release.

1. Is my company a tried and tested equity release provider?

2. Is my provider a member of the Equity Release Council?

If you can say yes to both of them then the chance are you will not fall into the hands of unscrupulous companies and your money is safe.

**Viva Retirement Solutions** has just celebrated its 10 year anniversary, so it has the pedigree you are looking for and not only are they active members of the Equity Release Council, but owner Paul Saroya has also become a Council member.

That should give you all the reassur-

ance you require that you are in the right hands.

Having started with just two advisers and are now currently at 17, Viva recently celebrated with an event at The Sunborn Yacht Hotel where they were able to bring together team members from across the UK as well as many of the major players in the equity release industry.

During this 10 year period, Viva have arranged 1,669 plans, released over £200m of initial funds and have put in place over £52m of drawdown facilities.

As well as being members of The Equity Release Council they are also heavily involved in the Competency Framework and the new 5th standard.

continued on page 13



**Paul Saroya, far left with his wife Sarah and fellow director Mark Lambert and his wife Emma at Viva's 10th anniversary celebrations on board at the Sunborn Yacht hotel in London**

**from page 12**

Their commitment to driving the equity release market forward is one of the driving forces behind the business.

**Here are some of the highlights from the past 10 years:**

- 2013** – Incorporated and first business written and issued
- 2014** – Finalists at the Equity Release Awards
- 2015** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards
- 2016** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, Stonebridge Top Business Partner for Growth
- 2017** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, Money Facts Highly Commended - Dave Hulin & Gerard Hucker joined
- 2018** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, Money Facts Highly Commended - Russell Coneron joined
- 2019** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards - Nick Craddock, Liz Murley & Shaun Tillyer joined
- 2020** - Liz Murley appointed to the Equity Release Council

- 2020** - Join VouchedFor and work with them to create a new category for equity release to recognise its growing importance in the mortgage marketplace
  - 2020** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, Money Facts Highly Commended, Mortgage 1st Winner Best Broker - Rob Polworth, Dawn Evans, David Grasham, Robert Walsh & Susan Williams joined
  - 2021** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards - Steff Miles & Kerry Quirke joined
  - 2022** - VouchedFor Top Rated Firm
  - 2022** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, Air Best Large Advisory Firm, Stonebridge Best Business Quality - David Cole joined
  - 2023** – Winner at The Equity Release Awards, 10th Anniversary Celebration - Katie Wilkinson joined
  - 2023** - Paul Saroya appointed to new Equity Release Council Standard Committee
  - 2023** - VouchedFor Top Rated Firm for Three consecutive years
- Viva are very proud of all that we have achieved in this 10 year period and

look forward to the next 10 years too. During this time, they could only have done this with the fantastic support from all of our customers.

If you would like to find out more about what makes us different and would like to explore your options with us, please contact them today.

Viva Retirement Solutions can talk you through both options and help you make the right decision for you and explain the basic differences and similarities between various schemes:

As with a lifetime mortgage, your home will eventually be sold to repay the lender, impacting the amount of inheritance you leave behind.

All quotes can be tailored to your own circumstances and you are under no obligation to proceed.

Equity release is not right for everyone and may reduce the value of your estate. Viva charge an Advice Fee after any completion of £750, typically in the market most companies will charge you £1,695 for this.

**Call free on 0808 109 8751**



The explosion after an e-scooter went up in flames while being charged

## How e-scooters nationwide are going up in...

# FLAMES

THE consequences of charging an e-scooter indoors or in a confined space can have catastrophic consequences – even life threatening.

To illustrate the point click on this link - <https://bit.ly/3qhL5a6> – and this will take you to a video of an exploding scooter showing just what might have happened had anyone been nearby.

This particular incident happened in London, but e-scooters exploding while they are being charged is happening all across the country so adults and children should be aware of the dangers.

London Fire Brigade crews were

called to the incident at in Cecil Road, Harlesden, Brent, where Dell Williams, 37, is one of the tenants in the two-storey terraced house, was charging his e-scooter in the kitchen when the fire occurred. Luckily for him, and the other residents, they were not nearby when the incident occurred.

The CCTV footage, captured on two cameras in the hallway and in the kitchen of the property shared by the letting agent, shows how quickly the e-scooter caught alight. Dell attempts to tackle the fire with a fire blanket but was overcome by fumes and exits the property.

Security guard Dell bought the e-scooter a fortnight ago from the online marketplace Gumtree, to help him travel around London. He says he was charging the e-scooter in the communal kitchen instead of his room to avoid his dog touching it while it charged.

Dell said: "I just want to thank the Lord that we managed to get out of there in one piece! I am so grateful to be alive.

"I spent eight hours in hospital due to inhaling smoke from the fire and when I went back to the house it was such an eye opener. I was shocked, continued on page 17

**From page 16**

I am shocked now. I am so grateful that no one else was hurt. I am very, very lucky. I cheated death.”

London Fire Brigade’s deputy Commissioner, Dom Ellis, explains while this type of incident is frightening, sadly it is getting more common.

“As the video shows, once a battery starts to go into thermal runaway a fire develops very quickly and can block escape routes,” said Dom. “Thermal runaway can lead to the destruction of the battery and a ferocious fire.

“We know prior to ignition thermal runaway can lead to the ejection of a range of gases. The white and grey coloured smoke is not harmless, and the speed at which these incidents develop shouldn’t be ignored. Follow the brigade’s #ChargeSafe advice and never tackle a fire: get out, stay out and dial 999.”

Dell wants to advise others who are thinking about purchasing an e-scooter about how to keep safe, he said: “Don’t have e-scooters in the house, charge outside, don’t keep it in the house.

“Buy e-scooters from a reputable shop where you have a warranty and insurance. These things happen, I wouldn’t say don’t buy one, but if you buy one store them outside so they don’t catch fire. Don’t leave them on charge unattended. Keep people and property safe!”

Fires sparked by faulty e-bikes and e-scooters have injured at least 190 people in the UK and killed eight, as a surge in public enthusiasm for battery-assisted travel is matched by a more than quadrupling in blazes since 2020.

Latest London Fire Brigade data shows that there have been 48 e-bike fires and 12 e-scooter fires in the capital in 2023.

Overheating lithium-ion batteries create fierce fires, releasing toxic smoke, and are now occurring at the rate of at least six a week in the UK, according to latest figures.

Fire and electrical experts are warning riders against buying batteries in less regulated online marketplaces, particularly from China.

The number of injuries in London, the worst affected area, is on course to be more than four times higher this year than in 2020. Fires more than quadrupled in Greater Manchester from 2020 to 2022, injuring six people, figures show.

In Merseyside in January, Rab Shearer and his son Gary were killed when an e-bike battery set to charge overnight caused a house fire.

In South Yorkshire, a dozen fires since the start of 2020 have claimed two lives. Last September, Abdul Jabar Oryakhel, from Afghanistan, died falling from the top floor of a Bristol tower block after an e-bike started a blaze.

Insurers have been dealing with substantial claims from e-bike fires. In January, Zurich Insurance said it had recently received a £225,000 property claim, while last year Axa paid out more than £500,000 in just two months on lithium-ion battery fire claims.

**TIPS TO KEEP SAFE**

- Never block your escape route with anything, including e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Store them somewhere away from a main through route and in a safe location such as a garage or a shed.
- Do not attempt to modify or tamper with your battery. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Converting pedal bikes into e-bikes using DIY kits bought online can be very dangerous. They pose a higher risk of fire.
- Check your battery and charger meets UK safety standards.
- Watch out for signs that the battery or charger aren’t working as they should – if it’s hot to the touch or has changed shape.
- Always use the correct charger and buy an official one from a reputable seller.

The Brigade has particular concern where batteries have been purchased from online marketplaces and when they’ve been sourced on the internet, which may not meet the correct safety standards.

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.

If you are charging batteries indoors, please follow our advice on safe charging.

- 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.
- Fit alarms where you charge. Ensure you have smoke alarms fitted in areas where e-bikes or e-scooters are being charged and make sure they are tested regularly.

You can quickly and easily check your home by visiting our free online home fire safety checker tool at [bit.ly/43vFjjO](https://bit.ly/43vFjjO)



Essex County Council  
Trading Standards



**Buy With  
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**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](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk) to find businesses that have been fully checked, vetted and continue to be monitored by Trading Standards.

[BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk)



## ESSEX TRADING STANDARDS CAN HELP YOU AVOID SCAMMERS

ESSEX Trading Standards can help you avoid scammers and rogue traders. Don't be a victim, follow our advice and stay safe at home.

- 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're offering to do on the spot
  - Ask what your cancellation rights are?
  - Bully or scare you into doing work
- Never be pressurised into buying anything or having any work carried out. Rogue traders and doorstep callers may do unnecessary work, or to a poor standard, and the price may rapidly increase.

To find a reputable trader approved and vetted by Trading Standards visit [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)

For general help and advice or to report a problem with a trader telephone the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 11



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.





## FORMER BOSS OF FINANCE COMPANY JAILED FOR 10 MONTHS

THE former CEO of London Capital & Finance, Michael Thomson, has been jailed for 10 months for contempt of court after he spent thousands of pounds in frozen assets on luxuries.

This included a £5,000 holiday in Italy, a £3,900 luxury horse saddle, £1,170 on a hotel and spa stay in Torquay, and a £5,495 hot tub.

The Serious Fraud Office froze Mr Thomson's assets in 2019 as

part of its investigation into suspected fraud and money laundering at LC&F, where 11,000 investors lost in excess of £237 million between 2014 and 2019 in a mini-bond scheme.

The SFO's Proceeds of Crime team uncovered Thomson had breached the order by diverting £95,000 into his wife's bank account, which he proceeded to spend on extravagant purchases

and holidays in an attempt to hide the money from the SFO.

Lisa Osofsky, Director of the Serious Fraud Office, said: "This result makes clear: company executives are not above the law. When they break it, we have the means and the resolve to go after their money.

"Over the past two years we have traced and seized over £140m for taxpayers."

# Investment firm was a fake

THREE people have been convicted for investment fraud and sentenced to a total of 24 and a half years for their roles, in a prosecution brought by the FCA. A fourth defendant was convicted for trading without FCA authorisation.

Following an 8-week trial at Southwark Crown Court, Cameron Vickers, 27, from Essex, Raheel Mirza, 38, from East London and Opeyemi Solaja, 33, from Northampton, were convicted of conspiracy to defraud through a fake, London-based company called Bespoke Markets Group (BMG).

Their scam fleeced roughly £1.2 million from around 120 UK investors. Mirza was further convicted of perverting the course of justice and Reuben Akpojaro, 40, was convicted for trading investments without FCA authorisation. Akpojaro was acquitted of conspiracy to defraud and money laundering.

Between June 2016 and January 2020 the four men made cold calls to members of the public, using pseudonyms, to convince them to invest with BMG, registered at Old Brompton Road.

Various UK and offshore companies and bank accounts were set up to try to distance the defendants from the fraud (including Upscale Limited, registered in the Marshall Islands) and to launder money.

They claimed to trade their clients' monies in 'Binary Options' (a type of fixed odds financial betting), when in reality the money was shared among the fraudsters to fund their lifestyles. To encourage people to invest or invest more, BMG offered to match investments with their own funds and refund losses in the

first 3-6 months.

The investors had access to a sophisticated online platform that appeared to show their funds being traded, however, this was manipulated to show trading activity when there was none.

In sentencing, the trial Judge, His Honour Judge Hehir, remarked that BMG was no more than a

money-making machine, which operated to transfer as much of its unfortunate customers' money into the defendants' pockets as possible'.

"All three defendants were a loose confederation of criminally minded associates' and 'equally responsible,'" said the Judge.

He stated that they lived a lavish lifestyle from the money and often misery of the victims, including large cash withdrawals, expensive foreign travel,

cosmetic dentistry, online gambling, property purchases, a wedding reception and partying in nightclubs.

Vickers was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment. He claimed to be the 'trading floor manager' and would meet investors in person to convince them to invest.

Mirza (pictured left) was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for the conspiracy to defraud offence and a consecutive 18 months for perverting the course of justice (a total of nine and a half years). He was responsible for setting up and running the BMG offices to legitimise the operation.

Solaja was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment and directly received the most money from investors.





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**Go online today at [BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk)  
or call 0808 223 1133**



# Neighbourhood Watch asks residents: are you worried about...

# CRIME



ARE you concerned about crime? Do you want to make your area a better place to live? Do you want to make a positive difference in your community? If so, joining Neighbourhood Watch could be just what you are looking for!

Neighbourhood Watch is a community-based crime prevention charity in England and Wales that started over 40 years ago and is still creating safer, more connected neighbourhoods. It promotes neighbourliness, vigilance, and partnership between residents and local agencies.

Members can help reduce crime, increase feelings of safety, and build stronger community ties.

A survey\* of 25,000 people in 2022 revealed that 77% of members think that people living in their area trust each other; 67% hardly ever or never feel isolated or lonely, and 54% think that local people will challenge others' behaviour.

Being part of Neighbourhood Watch can increase your knowledge and awareness of simple, easy-to-follow crime prevention measures. You can learn about home and car security, personal safety, how to address antisocial behaviour or harassment, and what to do if you experience or witness a crime.

Whether you are a homeowner; a renter; or a business owner, registered members are invited to attend webinars and workshops to learn about simple crime prevention measures.

Neighbourhood Watch members help raise awareness of unusual activity locally, and criminals are less likely to target areas where active Neighbourhood Watch groups are visible.

Being part of a local group can help you build stronger relationships with your neighbours and create a stronger sense of belonging to your community.

To join, all you need to do is sign up to the national charity at [ourwatch.org.uk/join](http://ourwatch.org.uk/join) and

then join a local scheme. If you are already part of a local Neighbourhood Watch scheme, register with the national charity to receive the full membership benefits.

Your national membership will move with you when you move area, and remember, membership is always free!

By working together, we can create a safer and more vibrant community. Join the movement today, and let's make this a better place to live. Together.

If you are a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator and wish to grow your group, visit [ourwatch.org.uk/betterplacetolive](http://ourwatch.org.uk/betterplacetolive) for a wide range of resources to support you.

\*Neighbourhood Watch Crime and Community Survey 2022

## JOIN YOUR LOCAL WATCH

Have you considered joining Neighbourhood Watch? Joining Neighbourhood Watch group can be a great way to build stronger relationships with your community while reducing the opportunity for crime to occur in your area.

Neighbourhood Watch is a community-led charity that enables residents to work together to help to deter local crime.

Criminals are less likely to target a community where there is a strong Neighbourhood Watch presence, as they know that residents are keeping a close eye on their surroundings and more likely to report suspicious activity. This can help to prevent crime before it happens.

One of the key benefits of having a group is the sense of community it fosters. By working together with your neighbours, you can build a more connected and resilient community.

This can help to reduce social isolation and improve the mental health of residents.

By working closely with local police, Neighbourhood Watch can help to identify and address issues in the community. This partnership can lead to more effective policing, improved safety for residents, and increased trust between residents and the police.

Joining a local group can bring a range of benefits to your community. A survey\* of 25,000 people in 2022 revealed that 77% of members think that people living in their area trust each other, 67% hardly ever or never feel isolated or lonely, and 54% think that local people will challenge others' behaviour.

If you're interested in joining, all you need to do is sign up to the national charity at [ourwatch.org.uk/join](http://ourwatch.org.uk/join) and then request to join a local scheme.

By working together, we can create a safer and more vibrant community.

If you are a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator and wish to grow your group, visit [ourwatch.org.uk/betterplacetolive](http://ourwatch.org.uk/betterplacetolive) for a wide range of resources to support you in doing this.



As seen on TV



## Introducing the no-fuss, lower cost\* alternative to a funeral

Direct cremation allows you to say goodbye your way and protect your loved ones from the stress and expense.

Click to download your free guide or call 0808 141 0810

### Why families choose Pure Cremation

-  A fuss-free, dignified farewell
-  Your family free to celebrate as you wish
-  No money spent on funeral frills
-  A choice of simple ways to pay

#### Trust-based Plan

- For anyone aged 18 or over.
- Single up-front payment: you are covered immediately.
- Monthly payments: you are fully covered after 24 months.

#### Over 50s Insurance-backed Plan

- For anyone aged 50-74.
- Low monthly payments that won't change.
- Fully covered after 24 months.
- Price based on age at the time of purchase.



\*Based on the Sunlife Cost of Dying Report 2022 (page 10), direct cremations are, on average, the least expensive option when compared with traditional cremation and burial alternatives.

Pure Cremation Funeral Planning Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (reg no FRN 965260).

Pure Cremation Funeral Planning Limited is the funeral plan provider.

Pure Cremation Limited provides the Pure Cremation.

0808 141 0810

[purecremation.co.uk](http://purecremation.co.uk)

## Funeral costs are high, but it's unfair for your children to suffer the financial...

# WORRY



PAYING for a funeral, especially that of a parent, should not fall on the shoulders of their children.

According to the latest Sun Life report the cost of dying has soared to over £9000 while a basic funeral has gone down to £3,953. This is still too high a burden to place on your children.

Leaving them a legacy like that could impact them financially for the rest of their lives.

Fortunately, there are a variety of options available when deciding how you will pay for a funeral, from pre-paid funeral plans, to life insurance, savings and investment.

Bear in mind that many funeral directors require third party costs upfront, so relatives may have to pay for the funeral before they receive any money from the estate.

So DON'T close the deceased's bank account before the funeral has been paid for as banks will often release funds to pay for a funeral.

### A Sun Life report said people found the following:

- 38% took money from savings or investments
- 22% used a credit card
- 27% borrowed money from a friend/relative
- 17% paid for the funeral in instalments
- 16% sold belongings
- 10% applied for a government subsidy or to a local charity
- 3% - Other
- 2% can't remember

### Pre-Paid Funeral Plans:



A funeral plan allows you to pay upfront for your funeral costs so family do not have to cover the cost themselves. You can usually pay in one go or spread the cost over a number of years.

### Family (Cash, Loan, Credit Card):

Some people often take out a cash loan with family to cover the cost of a funeral until the deceased's estate is available to them. Or alternatively a family member would put the cost onto a credit card.

### The State (DWP, Social Services, NHS):

People claiming certain benefits may be entitled to help from the DWP – these include income support, income based jobseekers allowance, pension credit and income related employment and support allowances. Even if you are receiving Universal Credit, you can get help towards funeral costs.

### The Estate:

Funeral costs are often paid for from the deceased's estate, but a number of factors can effect how soon any money would become available.

**Burial costs have risen to over £9000\* (Sun Life)**

**17% of people paid for a funeral in instalments**



**Some people get a loan until the estate is sorted out**



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or call 0808 223 1133**



[buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://buywithconfidence.gov.uk)  
ESSEX TRADING STANDARDS

## Trading Standards warns residents to be alert to the cowboy...

# TRADERS



ROGUE traders will offer a million different reasons why your roof needs retiling or your gutters need cleaning or your windows qualify for a Government grant.

Most of the time they are conned out to make a fast buck. So now is the time to be aware of their cunning tricks.

Often they say that they just happen to be in the area and can offer you a 'special deal' and quote a very low price.

If you agree for the work to be carried out, they are legally required to give you a written notice explaining you have the right to a 14 day cooling off period.

They often target the elderly or vulnerable members of society, pressuring them to allow the work to go ahead immediately.

The price will then dramatically increase, usually to several thousand pounds once the work is underway. Many leave once they have been paid, leaving unfinished work and broken promises.

On the occasions that they complete any work, this is normally of a very poor standard and often is found to have been totally unnecessary.

Even if the work has been completed and you have paid and it was a few months ago, we can assist you with information and by reporting them to us we can protect others from being conned.

### Who to contact

If you receive a cold call from a rogue trader contact our team via Citizens Advice consumer service on: 0808 223 1133. Their officers are available weekdays between 9am and 5pm. If you feel under threat or in danger; you should contact the Police on 101 or if it is an emergency dial 999.

They can offer assistance and take action against the cold caller. Even if the cold caller has gone away, get in touch, we are always keen to have information about what hap-

pened, as this can provide us with intelligence.

In the case of an emergency, particularly where a trader is on the scene or a suspected rogue trader is expected to return at a particular time, trading standards will make an attempt to get officers out to you

### What to do if you are cold called at your home

If you receive a cold call from a rogue trader contact our team via Citizens Advice consumer service on: 0808 223 1133. Our officers are available weekdays between 9am and 5pm.

### Have you had any of these approaches?

"You've got a loose tile on your roof"

"I can give you a good price to repair your driveway"

"I'm doing a survey"

"I advise on security/home safety"

"We were working next door when we noticed..."

"You have definitely won a prize"

"We are only in your area this week"

"Can you help with market research?"

"I'm selling on behalf of..."

"We're looking for show homes..."

All of the above claims are used by uninvited doorstep callers/sales people as an introduction to try and get you to pay for services



or goods you don't want or need.

### Always ask yourself

■ Do I really want the work done, or the goods?

■ Would I normally have agreed to this?

■ Have I compared prices?

■ What if it goes wrong?

■ Do I know the seller?

■ Can I really afford it?

■ Can I contact the seller again?

■ Do I have any cancellation rights?

■ Don't hurry to part with your money, a good deal will always wait.

Cold calling is the act of making uninvited visits to your home with the intention of selling goods or services. It is not illegal and does not require a licence.

However, the law states that a trader who ignores a resident's request to leave and not return commits a criminal offence under the provisions of The Consumer Protection From Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

You can express your request not to receive visits from cold calling doorstep traders by taking part in our no cold calling sticker scheme.

Any trader that puts you under pressure by falsely implying that you have to make a decision there and then, or that the "special price" is only available for a limited period in order to make you sign up, is committing a criminal offence.

In addition, if you pay or agree to pay over £42 for any services or goods that are sold to you in your home, then:

You have fourteen days to cancel the agreement. If you cancel, any monies that you have paid should then be returned to you.

The trader must give you a written notice of your cancellation rights when you agree the contract. If the trader doesn't provide you with this information, they commit a criminal offence and you are not bound by any agreement you enter into.

# CrimeStoppers. How you remain anonymous.

**We're an independent charity giving people the power to speak up about crime, 100% anonymously.**

When you make a report via our anonymous online form at **crimestoppers-uk.org**:

- We'll never ask for your personal details
- Your IP address is scrambled – it is impossible to retrace information back to your device
- You can tell us what you know in whatever language you feel most comfortable with, using your smartphone, tablet or computer

When you call our anonymous reporting line on **0800 555 111**:

- Your number can't be seen
- The call is not recorded
- The telephone line is scrambled – it is impossible to redial or track the source of your call
- The call won't show up on your phone bill

Our specially trained call agents will make sure your report contains no information that could identify you, and securely forward it to the most appropriate police or law enforcement agency.

## **Suspect something criminal?**

If you have crime information but don't want to reveal your identity, you can tell us what you know by phone and online, 24/7, 365 days a year.

In an emergency always call 999.



**CrimeStoppers.**

**0800 555 111**

100% anonymous. Always.



Protect yourself from suspicious ...

# EMAILS



ALMOST 21 million reports have been made to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS), resulting in the removal of over 235,000 malicious websites.

SERS was launched by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the City of London Police in April 2020 to enable the public to forward suspicious emails to an automated system that scans them for malicious links.

Mobile phone providers also offer a service that allows customers to report suspicious text messages, by forwarding them to the number 7726.

The service is free of charge and enables providers to takedown malicious websites and block malicious texts from being sent across their network.

As of 31st May this year, 54,000 text message scams have been removed as a result of suspicious texts forwarded to the 7726 service.

Commander Nik Adams, from City of London Police, said: "Every year, thousands of people in the UK are scammed by a fraudulent email or text message.

"Phishing scams, whether it's a text message claiming you have missed a delivery and are required to pay a redelivery fee, or an email claiming to be from your bank are a common security challenges that both individuals and businesses across the UK face on a daily basis.

"If you receive an email or text message that you think might be a scam, don't respond to it or click any links in the message or email. Instead, contact the organisation di-

rectly using contact information from the company's official website, and not the links or numbers provided in the message itself.

"If you think you have been a victim of fraud, report it to Action Fraud at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

"By reporting phishing scams or suspected fraud, you are directly helping us in our work to identify and stop these criminals and helping us protect others from these scams."

#### How to protect yourself from scam emails and texts

1: Forward suspicious emails to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk). Send emails to this address that feel suspicious, even if you're not certain they're a scam - we can check.

2: Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 (it's free of charge). Your provider can find out where the text came from and block or ban the sender.

3: 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 at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Please note: Sometimes a forwarded email may not reach us because it is already recognised by spam detection services. You can also take a screenshot of the email and send it to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk) (If you found this information useful, please forward it to your friends and family)

“ Phishing scams, whether it's a text message claiming you have missed a delivery and are required to pay a redelivery fee, or an email claiming to be from your bank are a common security challenges that both individuals and businesses across the UK face on a daily basis. ”  
 NIK ADAMS (below)



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“ Kiistone really helped with a unconventional transaction, it was a credit to work with Tim and the team who where there to help on both sides immediatly. We will definitely be using Kiistone again and would highly recommend to others. ”

TRUST PILOT REVIEW



## Cowboy builders left cancer victim feeling...

# ASHAMED



EVERY week we see heart-breaking stories about how rogue traders rip off elderly and vulnerable customers by lying about work that needs to be done on their homes.

We are never surprised, often shocked, by how easy vulnerable residents fall for the simplest of scams – but the perpetrators don't get the justice they deserve.

Rogue traders Matty Rossiter, 18, James Rossiter, 25, and Dean Smith, 21, are three such scum who had made at least £45,000 ripping off customers and have been jailed for a combined total of eight years.

Here at Kiistone and Community Watch magazine we feel appalled that the sentence does not properly reflect the crime because the person they scammed was 82 year old grandmother Ellen Bray who not only spent months feeling ashamed and humiliated that she had become a victim, but she was also dying of cancer.

Matty and James Rossiter, and Smith will have time to think about that while they sit in a prison cell, but it is unlikely to change the way they go about their business, lying and cheating the most vulnerable people.

The wicked trio even filmed themselves bragging about fleecing poor Ellen and her husband John and she spent her final days feeling guilty not that she had parted with thousands of pounds for 'a hole in the roof' but that she had

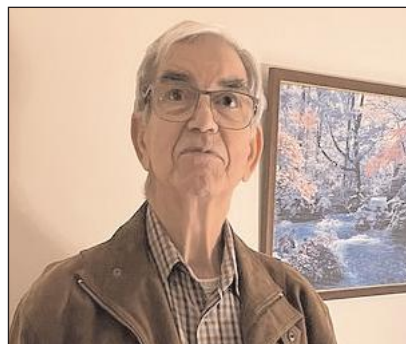
been duped by cowboy builders.

The youngest member of the team, 18 year old Matty, was jailed for two years and three months, James Rossiter got three years and four months and Smith was sentenced to three years after pleading guilty to participating in a fraudulent business.

The three of them made £45,000 from crimes committed in at least 18 properties using multiple business names.

Ellen's heartache might have been avoided had she known about the Kiistone App because she would have had the service of a professional builder not a cowboy and that no money would have exchanged hands until Ellen and her husband were satisfied.

The Kiistone App has been designed by Tim Mullock and it has been specifically designed to ensure that builders cannot rip you off in the way



John Bray

Kiistone, which aims to protect consumers from rogue traders, provides peace of mind to honest tradespeople and restore faith and improve the image of the building industry.

Built to reflect Tim's 23 years experience as a tradesperson, Kiistone safeguards all parties interests in a project by holding monies safely in escrow (a neutral bank account).

It offsets project stages (that include tasks mutually agreed by the customer and tradesperson) against money milestones - where funds can only be drawn down after a stage has been completed to the customers satisfaction.

The tradesperson also benefits because they know the money is 'ringfenced' allowing them to purchase materials and invest time in a job - leading to immediate payment on completion.

All messages, extras and job changes are recorded on the spot to avoid misunderstandings and reflect both parties' conduct should a dispute arise.

Kiistone is the key to peace of mind and is a small price to pay when you calculate the thousands of pounds you could lose or the condition your home could be left in.

The message is: Stay alert and do your homework before you employ anyone - better still use the Kiistone app to ensure peace of mind.

helpdesk@kiistone.co.uk

## To keep you safe this summer Essex Police is making...

# WAVES



ESSEX has the second-longest coastline in England which, coupled with bright summer sunshine, makes it extremely attractive to visitors.

Many will want to take a dip in the sea, go kayaking or paddle-boarding or even hire a boat or a personal watercraft.

And the Essex Police Marine Unit will be helping to keep you safe when you do.

Officers have launched their annual Wave-Breaker operation to tackle anti-social behaviour and promote water safety along the Essex coast.

Each weekend until the beginning of September, they will mount high-visibility patrols on the water and along the shoreline.

You'll also see them at marine community events – where you can get advice about staying safe on the water, discuss issues which matter to you or obtain crime prevention information – and at Street Meets with colleagues

from our community policing teams.

Last year, incidents of anti-social behaviour relating to PWCs dropped by a quarter from those reported in 2020 – from 99 to 74.

And this year, we hope incidents will drop still further as more people realise council byelaws are in place to keep them, other water-users and a multitude of wildlife safe from harm.

Many of the rivers, creeks and estuaries are used by swimmers, paddle-boarders and sailors as well as local businesses and other agencies.

They are also home to many endangered and protected species of birds and wildlife.

For these reasons, areas close to the shore are subject to speed limits which help to make sure the Essex coastline is a safe place for everyone.

During Operation Wave-Breaker, Essex Police will focus their patrols along the coast in areas known for suffering repeat water-based anti-social

behaviour, such as speeding on personal watercraft.

During the 2022 season, which ran from April until the start of September, the unit's six officers stopped and spoke to 179 personal watercraft riders and 49 people in power boats about their behaviour on the water.

And, as a result, 164 verbal warnings were given and 12 personal watercraft riders reported for court action after speeding over the eight nautical miles per hour limit in the areas of either Lawling Creek or Mayland Creek on the River Blackwater, contravening council byelaws.

Among them were: a 34-year-old Maldon man was fined £220 and ordered to pay £150 costs and a victim surcharge of £58 – total £438; a 25-year-old Rochford man was fined £153 and ordered to pay £150 costs and a victim surcharge of £61 – total £364; a 34-year-old South Ockendon man received two fines, £40 and £80, and was ordered to pay £270 costs – total £390; and a 35-year-old Rainham man was fined £153 and ordered to pay £180 costs – total £333.

The two Maldon District Council-funded PWCs used by our Marine Unit officers are a valuable asset for policing our shallow coastal areas and rivers as they enable our officers to reach isolated areas, inaccessible from the unit's rigid-hulled inflatable boat, or rhib, Sentinel.

Their versatility means officers use them for all types of marine policing activity. As well as tackling water-based anti-social behaviour, they use them to search for missing people along the shoreline, for general patrolling and for engaging with marine communities.

One major benefit of the PWCs is their ability to break down barriers between the police and the public, particularly other PWC riders.

And, with their distinctive Essex Police livery, they are proving to be a significant attraction at community engagement events.

