

Newsletter

The Rural Beat

South Worcestershire Police

Rural and Business Crime Team



John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

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The Rural Beat is a new publication from the Police in South Worcestershire for the benefit of the people who live, work and visit South Worcestershire. The aim is to provide information, advice and contact details to assist the community. **We will welcome your feedback.**





Preventing car and vehicle theft

Don't let thieves get an easy ride. Follow these simple rules to protect your vehicle from thieves.

1. Lock your vehicle

Locking your vehicle, even when filling up or parked on your drive, greatly reduces the possibility of it being targeted by an opportunist thief. Even if you have locked your vehicle, check you haven't left any windows or the sunroof open.

It is illegal to leave your vehicle running unattended while you de-ice it or warm it up in cold weather. If someone takes it while it's left like this, your insurer won't pay out because you won't be covered.

If your vehicle has wing mirrors that fold in automatically when locked, make sure you lock it properly. Criminal gangs are looking for vehicles like these where the wing mirrors are still out because it is clear to them that the vehicle has been left unlocked.

2. Keep the keys safe

Vehicles today are by and large more difficult to steal than ever, unless the thief can access your key or fob to clone them. Keep your keys safe, out of view when at home, and away from your front door. It's not uncommon for car keys to be stolen from inside your home by thieves fishing for them with a stick and hook through the letterbox.

If you're selling your car and you meet up with a potential buyer, do not allow the keys out of your sight. Your keys may be cloned by thieves and used later to steal your vehicle.

Keyless entry

Cars with keyless entry unlock automatically when the key comes within a short distance of the car. This can be from inside a pocket or bag. If you have to push a button on your car key to open your car, you don't have keyless entry.

Keyless car theft or 'relay theft' is when a device is used to fool the car into thinking the key is close by. This unlocks the car and starts the ignition.

Thieves only need to be within a few metres of your car key to capture the signal, even if it's inside your home. This means that even if your car and home are secure, thieves can still unlock, start and steal your car.

How to protect your keyless entry car

- When at home keep your car key (and the spare) well away from the car.
- Put the keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag and check if the bag or pouch is still working every few months.
- Reprogramme your keys if you buy a second-hand car.
- Turn off wireless signals on your fob when it's not being used.

Additional physical security such as locks and immobilisers are still highly recommended. [Section six](#) on this page has more information about this.

3. Be aware of carjackers

The fact that you're in the car isn't always a deterrent to someone trying to steal it.

In traffic, drive with the doors locked and when queuing leave enough space in front of your vehicle to enable you to get out of a tight spot. If your vehicle is bumped from behind, wait to pull over – somewhere safe and preferably where there are people. After all, you don't know the person who has collided with you; they could well be hijackers. If you're at all suspicious, consider calling the police.

If someone threatens you, it's better to hand over the keys to the vehicle than become a victim of assault. Then call [999](#) as soon as possible, and ask for the police.

If your car is stolen, some modern vehicle alarm and tracker systems have the facility to isolate or shut down fuel systems, bringing the vehicle to a halt and leaving the thief high and dry.

4. Park responsibly

It's always advisable to avoid parking in dark and secluded areas. It's worth an extra five or ten-minute walk if it means your vehicle is left in a well-lit and busier street.

And if possible, always try to park in illuminated and staffed car parks or those with a Park Mark safer parking award. To find one, simply check out [Park Mark](#).

5. Watch for illegal tow trucks

Thieves often attempt to lift vehicles from the street, literally. So, if you see a towaway crew acting suspiciously – especially if their vehicle isn't branded or if they're not in uniform – then please report it immediately.

As with every report of suspicious behaviour made in good faith, we'll never blame anyone for calling us if it proves unfounded.

Car parks with height-restricted entrances help prevent illegal tow trucks and removal vehicles. And fitting a [Thatcham rated](#) category 1 or 2 alarm system with tracking, immobilisation, anti-grab and movement sensors can help protect and trace your vehicle.

6. Fit good in-car security locks

Additional physical security can help to prevent your vehicle being driven away even if a thief gains entry. There are a range of security rated products tested by [Sold Secure](#) that can help, such as steering wheel locks, pedal boxes and gear stick locks.

Some of these products, tested to Sold Secure Diamond, can even resist a small hand-held angle grinder.

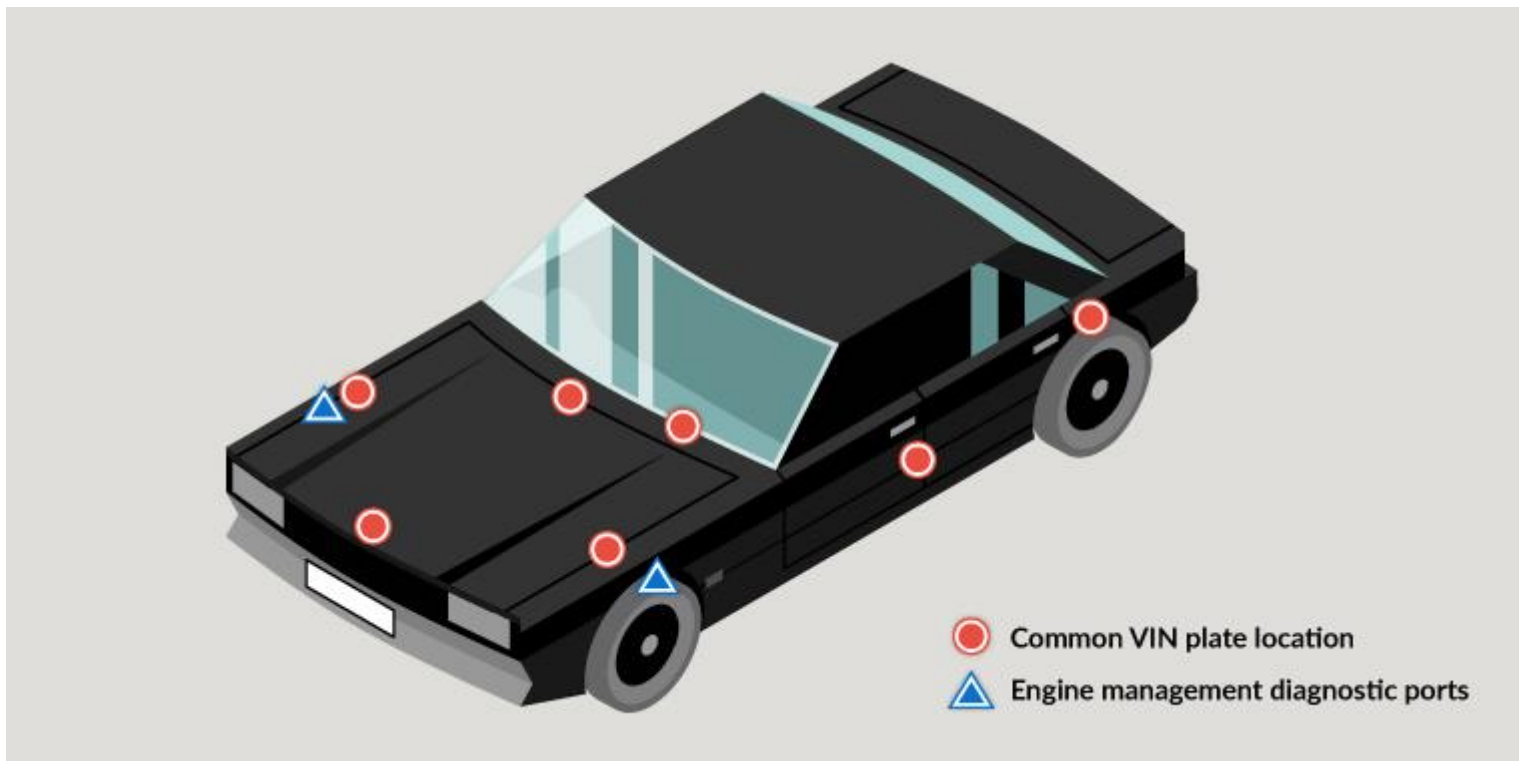
It's also worth speaking to your vehicle dealership about installing an aftermarket immobiliser approved by the manufacturer.

Immobilisers prevent a vehicle from starting unless the correct fob, key or activation process is used. They can be personalised so that you're the only one who knows how to unset it via a number of dashboard controls.

7. Double-check electronic locking

Electronic devices can be used to jam the electronic signal from your key fob to lock your vehicle. Always manually check your vehicle has locked before walking away.

If unsure, lock it manually, then scan the immediate area for anyone hanging around. If a potential thief who's watching feels they've been spotted, they'll probably move off.



8. Before owning, check for cloning

Changing the identity of a vehicle, known as vehicle cloning, can be as simple as adding stolen number plates. When buying a vehicle, always check the DVLA V5 document and make sure the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the vehicle is the same as on the document.

Make sure you check more than one of the VINs as well as the engine numbers on the vehicle (see diagram).

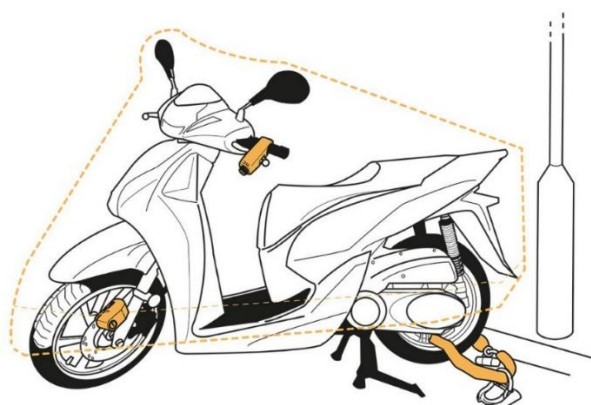
[Check a used vehicle you're buying.](#)

9. Secure your port

Many modern vehicles are fitted with engine management diagnostic ports, which can unlock and start your vehicle.

If your vehicle has this type of port, consider fitting a lockable cover.

Motorcycle Security



Thieves often steal a bike by breaking the steering lock and wheeling it away. Use a chain lock through the **back** wheel (the front wheel can be removed). Secure your bike, with the lock taut to an immovable object such as a ground anchor or street furniture. This will stop thieves from cutting a lock trailing on the ground using an angle grinder. If this isn't possible, thread the chain through your bike frame and **back** wheel.

Always use the steering lock and remove the ignition keys, even if you are close by or away for a few minutes. It only takes a few seconds for a thief so don't make it easy for them.

Never rely on just using your steering lock to secure your bike as thieves can break the steering lock and simply wheel the bike away.

For advice on which security device to use, how to **fit chains, anchors and disc locks** or how to find **accredited chains and locks**, please see

[Motorcycle Security Guide - Best Ways to Prevent Motorbike Theft \(2023\) \(locksmiths.co.uk\)](https://locksmiths.co.uk)

Also consider marking your motorcycle using a **forensic marking solution** such as Datatag [Motorcycle System \(datatag.co.uk\)](https://datatag.co.uk) or Smartwater detertech.com which will uniquely identify your property.

Installing a tracking device will help recovery of your motorcycle if it is stolen.

Dogs and children: living safely together



Dogs Trust, the UK's leading dog welfare charity, is pleased to offer a range of advice, resources, and services for parents and caregivers to ensure dogs and children live safely together.



Children and dogs must always be supervised. Use our 3 S's to help you!

Stay close – *watch, listen and stay close at all times*

Step in – *calmly intervene if anyone is uncomfortable or acts un-safely*

Separate – *keep dogs and children separate when you know you will be busy.*

Prevention is key

Children and dogs can have lots of fun together, but any situation can quickly change and become unsafe.

Sometimes dogs and children can accidentally hurt each other. And any dog can bite if they are worried or scared and feel they have no other choice.

You can prevent unsafe situations using our resources and services listed below:

Visit our dedicated **webpage** to access key advice, resources, and services.



Download our free **manual** to ensure dogs and children live safely together.

Sign up for our free parent/caregiver **webinar** to learn more about close supervision.



Find your nearest **Dog School** classes to access expert advice and practical training support.

Call our free **Behaviour Support Line** for help with your dog's training and behaviour.



For more information or any enquiries about dogs and children living safely together, please contact us at dogsandchildren@dogstrust.org.uk



South Worcestershire Rural & Business Crime officers have been working in partnership with the **Dog's Trust** who have produced the following guidelines primarily around keeping children safe.

A little bit of information goes a long way

Report suspicious activity, people or vehicles. No matter how insignificant you might think it is, if it is suspicious to you, it probably is.

Also, REPORT CRIME! We know not all crime is reported to us, and we know the many reasons for that including frustration.

You can help West Mercia Police by providing us with any information or intelligence about crime or anti-social behaviour

If you have any information regarding any crime you can contact police on 101, or <https://www.westmercia.police.uk/>.

You can also contact Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** to report any crime or criminal activity anonymously.

In the event of **Immediate threat of harm to life or property please dial**

999



We Don't Buy Crime is West Mercia Police's response to acquisitive crime – crimes such as burglary and theft – and the associated harm it causes. These crimes can have a long lasting impact on victims, it can often leave someone feeling unsafe in their own home, and where possessions that have emotional attachment are stolen it can be heart-breaking.

We Don't Buy Crime has five key strands along with our **towns and villages**, we work with **second hand stores** and **fuel stations**, **deploy covert tactics**, and more recently look at ways our local communities can help tackle associated harm including **criminal exploitation and vulnerability**.

We currently have over 20 Towns & Villages signed up to the We Don't Buy crime Smart Water scheme in South Worcestershire and we are currently looking to sign up more!

Please encourage your local Town or Parish Council to contact us to arrange a meeting so we can explain how the process could work

Calling All Farmers



Please contact us if you want to receive a FREE Farm security survey together with Smartwater marking solution and signage

Meet the Rural & Business Crime Team

Pc Nigel Bolton, and Rural & Business Crime Officer's (RABO) Mick Simpson and Pete Meredith work across South Worcestershire, as part of a larger dedicated problem solving team and are supported by Special Constables, police volunteers and members of the public.

If you would like to help with reducing crime in your area, contact a member of the team on

southworcestershireruralcrime@westmercia.police.uk or call 07773050803

So, what are we up to?

Some of the team's other recent activities

6 farms across South Worcestershire having been subject to crime were visited and crime prevention advice given.

46 rural businesses across South Worcestershire subject to crime were visited and provide with crime prevention advice.

1 Joint operation with local officers to patrol rural areas for wildlife crime and metal theft.

26 Catalytic Converter marking kits provided to victims of those types of theft.

14 sets of tamper proof number plate screws provide for victims of theft,

5 Crime Prevention Awareness Talks/Events to Parish/Village groups

Working with Local Policing Teams to Smartwater tools in trade vans

2 visits to Worcestershire Wholesale Market



Nige Bolton and Steve Chance at one of our regular visits to Worcester Livestock Market



Nige Bolton at the recent National Sheep association meeting at the Three Counties showground offering advice to Farmers and vehicle and product Manufacturers.

STOP PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS



Sign up for our brand new
community messaging service.

www.
neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk



Neighbourhood Matters is the new West Mercia Police
community messaging service.

Sign-up NOW

[Home Page - Neighbourhood Matters](#)

Contact the Rural & Business Team for more
information

southworcestershireruralcrime@westmercia.police.uk

Online Criminality

At last! There is now one email address you can report suspicious emails to.

If you receive an email which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious

Email: report@phishing.gov.uk

Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) report@phishing.gov.uk

Please be aware and remain vigilant of phishing emails. One of the many scam emails currently in circulation purports to be from the TV Licensing advising to cancel direct debits. These messages may look like the real thing but are malicious. Once clicked, you are sent to a website which could download viruses onto your computer, or steal your passwords. The criminal's goal is to convince you to click on the links within their scam email or text message, or to give away sensitive information (such as bank details).

For further information and advice please go to:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/suspicious-email-actions>

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/about-ncsc/what-is-cyber-security>

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

<https://staysafeonline.org/stay-safe-online/>

Stay Safe. Stay Connected. Stay Cyber Aware

If you have any information regarding any crime you can contact police on 101,
or <https://www.westmercia.police.uk/>

in an emergency please dial 999.

You can also contact Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** to report any crime or criminal activity
anonymously.