

Elmsett and Aldham Neighbourhood Watch



This month's article has more scams to look out for, help choosing a locksmith and what to do if you are concerned about a neighbour.

Parking charges scams:

Recently, there have been reports around the country of scammers placing fake QR codes on parking meters, which lead unsuspecting drivers to unauthorised payment sites where they are prompted to input their personal and financial information. Follow these top tips to avoid falling victim to these scams.

1. Verify QR codes before scanning by looking for any signs of tampering or irregularities, such as scratches or tear marks on the QR code.
2. Use official payment methods only and avoid making payments through unfamiliar QR codes or websites.
3. Stay Vigilant and lookout for any suspicious behaviour around parking meters, such as individuals tampering with them or loitering nearby.
4. Report Suspicious Activity: You can call 101 or contact CrimeStoppers to report potential scams of this nature.

Protecting yourself from ticket fraud:

Only buy tickets from the venue's box office, official promoter or agent, or a well-known ticketing website.

Avoid paying for tickets by bank transfer, especially if buying from someone unknown. Credit card or payment services such as PayPal give you a better chance of recovering the money if you become a victim of fraud.

- The password you use for your email account as well as other accounts should be unique. Use three random words to create a strong and memorable password and enable 2-step verification (2SV).
- Be wary of unsolicited emails, texts or adverts offering unbelievably good deals on tickets.
- Is the vendor a member of STAR? If they are, the company has signed up to their strict governing standards. STAR also offers an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution service to help customers with outstanding complaints. For more information see www.star.org.uk/buy_safe.
- Think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040, or call the Police on 101.

Holiday Tickets scams:

Buy tickets and hotel stays from trusted retailers or even better direct from the airline or hotel.

- When booking stays, look for valid reviews and always use your debit or credit card which helps to protect your money should something go wrong.
- When using websites such as Airbnb and Booking.com, only pay through their systems. Do not transfer money directly to the host.
- If you're booking a hotel through a third party and receive what appears to be a message from the hotel asking for more money after the original booking has been confirmed, don't pay this without contacting the third party or the hotel directly.
- Pay attention to warnings. Your bank will likely provide a warning when you set up a new payee or make an unusual payment. Be sure to follow any advice provided.

Locksmiths:

Did you know that locksmiths aren't regulated? Among the risks are poor workmanship and high prices. Watch out for very low prices which becomes higher later, intimidating behaviour and a failure to answer calls personally. Should you need one, seek a recommendation from someone you trust, check reviews, check to see if the company is registered with the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) and also the website's average prices and above all carry out the usual scam checks.

Looking out for neighbours:

Have you ever been concerned about a neighbour and not sure what to do? Recently I was contacted by someone who was unable to get hold of the elderly person next door and was sure they were home. We discussed the situation and they subsequently called 999. The Police advised that the person check the house (there was a means of entry without breaking in) WITH another person. There was a delay before that could happen and in the meantime the Police had informed the Ambulance Service. They arrived and checked the house and fortunately found all was OK. If you find yourself in a similar situation, if you are able check the house WITH someone else. You do not know what you may find and another person is a witness should there be questions later. Obviously if someone is calling for help, your discretion is necessary for a solo entry but at least inform someone of what you are doing. If you have a genuine concern for a neighbour, do not delay calling 999. You will not be criticised if all turns out OK as long as your call was genuine.

Always look out for your neighbour.

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