



COLIN'S BLOG

Friday 23rd March 2018

Spring has finally sprung, so, let's take this opportunity to look ahead, to new life, new beginnings, new challenges, new adventures, and new opportunities, whilst not forgetting old values and lessons learned.

Few of us know, what awaits us around the corner, and we need to make the most of every day of our lives.

Life is often a lottery, we can improve our chances of winning, by making friends and by our own unselfish behaviour, being there for others in times of need, showing compassion rather than greed.

We can help ourselves, and, set a good example to others, through responsible living, and by facing up to the challenges of life.

Easter is just around the corner, putting aside, but not ignoring, the obvious religious significance and meaning around Easter, I am always concerned about the amount commercial activity which surrounds all our significant events. It seems that as soon as the Christmas festive season passes, we find Easter Eggs in the shops, and much of the initial meaning of past and present events, is often lost or clouded through the resulting commercialisation.

Whilst thinking about Easter Eggs, there has been a great deal of comment in the news, about the reduction in the size of chocolate bars, which, unlike their cost, seems to have shrunk. This is particularly noticeable when buying a crème egg, which was one the size of a medium chicken's egg, now a bantam's egg, next year a quails egg? Do companies really think that we are that gullible?

Mind you, continuing my quest to continue my efforts to lose weight, I shouldn't be thinking about chocolate!

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, I am looking forward to the months ahead, working with and alongside, my many friends and colleagues in the voluntary sector, who do so much, often with few resources, in order to make a difference to the communities in which we live.



Cuckooing

Criminal gangs are inflicting pain and suffering on vulnerable people in Essex towns and rural communities by taking over their homes.



Criminal gangs are exploiting vulnerable people in your area.

Crimestoppers.
0800 555 111
100% anonymous. Always.

crimestoppers-uk.org
Crimestoppers Trust is a registered charity, number 1109687 and SC037960 in Scotland

Crimestoppers in Essex has launched a campaign to try to stop these gangs which use violence and abuse to target the homes of vulnerable people and use them as bases for drug dealing. This is known as 'cuckooing'.

Everyone has the right to feel safe from crime, wherever they live and work. Crimestoppers wants your help to make communities safer.

If you have any suspicions or information about 'cuckooing', please let us know. You can speak to our Contact Centre on 0800 555 111 or click here to use our non-traceable online form. You will remain 100% anonymous. Always.

We're an independent charity that gives people the power to speak up to stop crime. 100% anonymously. Always. You can contact us by

phone on 0800 555 111 and [online](#), 24/7, 365 days a year. We're not interested in your identity. We won't ask your name. Won't judge. Just listen to what you know and pass it on for you. When you hang up the phone or click send [online](#), you're done.

Victims of 'cuckooing' are often drug users but can include older people, those suffering from mental or physical health problems, female sex workers, single mums and those living in poverty. Victims may suffer from other forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.

Once they gain control, gangs move in with the risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence. Children as well as adults are used as drug runners.

It's common for gangs to have access to several addresses. They move quickly between vulnerable people's homes for just a few hours, a couple of days or sometimes longer. This helps gangs evade detection.

These gangs may use accommodation in rural areas, including serviced apartments, holiday lets, budget hotels and caravan parks.

Some vulnerable adults may be forced to leave their homes, making themselves homeless and leaving the gangs free to sell drugs in their absence.

Signs that 'cuckooing' may be going on at a property include:

- An increase in people entering and leaving
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increasing litter outside
- Signs of drugs use
- Lack of healthcare visitors

Speak up to stop crime - Let's make Essex safer together!



Speak up. Stay safe.

Criminal gangs do not care how much suffering or damage they inflict on people's lives.

By using threats of violence or abuse they take over the homes of vulnerable people to deal drugs and commit other serious crimes.

Those whose homes are most vulnerable include older people, those with mental health problems, drug users or those living in poverty.

But you have the power to speak up, stop the gangs and protect those who need help.

Speak up 100% anonymously if you suspect a property is being used by gangs. Signs to look out for are:

- Lots of different people visiting, often at odd times of the day or night
- Increase in cars or bikes pulling up to the property, often for short periods

- Increase in anti-social behaviour near the property
- Curtains or blinds closed all of the time
- Disengagement with support services

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We won't ask your name. Won't judge. We listen to what you know, and pass it on for you.

No police contact. No witness statements. No courts. Speak up. Stop crime. Stay safe.

Everyone has the right to feel safe. Wherever they live.

Find out more about us at crimestoppers-uk.org

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Latest from Action Fraud: -

The top 8 frauds to watch out for in 2018 20th March 2018

A new report from NatWest has identified the top ways they expect fraudsters will try and get their hands-on people's cash in 2018.

NatWest has worked with research agency The Future Laboratory to analyse data from the last 18 months to predict eight frauds expected to emerge in 2018.

Eight scams to watch out for in 2018

1. **Social media spying.** People might not realise how much information they are giving away, but to a fraudster the posts can be very helpful in setting up a scam.
2. **Malicious software on smartphones.** It is expected that malware or malicious software threats will grow among mobile devices.
3. **Bogus Brexit investments.** Consumers should be wary of fake investment opportunities. For example, fraudsters may email customers, warning Brexit will affect their savings, and that they urgently need to move them into a seemingly plausible, but fake, investment product.
4. **Fraudsters preying on World Cup excitement.** Some fraudsters will sell football tickets that are either fake or will never arrive. It is also expected that "package trips" will be offered by fake travel companies. Always buy tickets from a reputable source.
5. **Money mules.** Mule recruiters may trawl social media for potential targets, particularly cash-strapped students in university towns, and use them to inadvertently launder money. Money mules receive the stolen funds into their account, they are then asked to withdraw it and send the money to a different account, often one overseas, keeping some of the money for themselves.
6. **Wedding excitement.** Experts fear couples could be easy prey for fraudsters who tempt victims with extravagant offers at bargain prices. Fraudsters can set up fake websites for elements of the big day like venue hire, catering, or wedding dresses that appear very realistic. Fake wedding planners will take people's money and then disappear.
7. **Romance scams.** Criminals create fake profiles to form a relationship with their victims. They use messaging to mine victims' personal details to use for identity fraud. Or, just when the victim thinks they have met the perfect partner the fraudsters asks them for money.

8. **Scams aimed at first-time buyers.** Computer hackers monitor emails sent by a solicitor to a first-time buyer and then they pounce, pretending to be the solicitor and telling them the solicitors' bank account details have changed in order to steal cash.

Julie McArdle, NatWest security manager said: "Scammers are dogged in their attempts to get their hands-on people's money and are always looking for new ways to get ahead. This means banks and customers need to evolve alongside scammers too.

"By being aware and staying ahead of scammers, we can stop them winning and keep the country's money safe and secure."

If you think you have been a victim of fraud you should report it to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 20 40 or by using the online reporting tool: -

https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud



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DON'T FORGET TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR CLOCKS GO FORWARD AN HOUR THIS WEEKEND!



Next week, I will be, '**branching out**' and featuring an article concerning our native woodlands and trees, alongwith ways that we can protect and preserve our heritage broadleaf wonders!

Meanwhile, I hope that you Keep Alert, Keep Secure, Keep Safe and have a good weekend!

Don't forget that you can also read my blog at :-
<http://www.eppingforestnhw.org.uk/>



DATA PROTECTION

My blog is sent to members and supporters of Epping Forest, Brentwood and Harlow NhW groups. and partnership organisations. When you join neighbourhood Watch, you agree that your contact details are shared between Neighbourhood Watched and Essex Police under existing partnership agreements, and that they are not shared with other organisations or individuals.

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