

Winter & Christmas Household Security Advice.

Aughton is already probably one of the safest Parishes in which to live, with low crime rates and equally low levels of anti-social behaviour. However, the onset of the dark nights and the focus on the forthcoming festive season has traditionally also brought a slight increase in the number of crimes committed in our area. Aughton Parish Council thought it would be timely to remind residents of the need to check that they are as well prepared as possible to prevent them becoming victims of crime.

Now before anyone starts asking "why worry if it is only a small increase in crime?", we think just one house or car getting broken into is one too many. Imagine how it would feel to come home and find your house has been broken into, the presents you have bought or received have been stolen and your home left in a mess. If you can put yourself in that position then we are sure you would agree it is worth spending a bit of time and possibly money to reduce the chance of it happening to you.

The majority of thieves are opportunists who travel around looking for soft targets. Thankfully they don't tend to be the most energetic or determined individuals, so if they come across a few decent obstacles they will generally move on. This means that a few simple precautions can really work to deter them from making you a victim. So what can you do, well here are some top tips suggested by various Police sources.

- 1 Don't leave your house or car keys, valuables or Christmas presents, where they can be seen from outside, or within easy reach of doors, letterboxes or windows.
- 2 Close and lock all doors and windows. If you have multi-locking door handles, lift the handle, lock it with the key and remove it - LIFT - LOCK - REMOVE. Put the key in a safe place out of sight in case of fire.
- 3 Lock garages and sheds so garden tools and ladders can't be used to break into your home.
- 4 Keep side gates locked and wheelie bins stored behind them.
- 5 Use timer switches linked to lights and a radio so it appears that someone is at home.
- 6 Invest in a safe for valuables and sentimental items and securely fix it to a solid surface.
- 7 Install a visible intruder alarm system - burglars don't want to be seen or heard.
- 8 Install low level 'dusk till dawn' lighting to increase visibility and deter burglars.
- 9 Keep side and rear boundaries high to restrict access and front boundaries low to remove hiding places.
- 10 Photograph and mark valuables and sentimental items with your postcode and house number/name
- 11 Don't leave any money, valuables or presents on display in your car. Remember that thieves are n't worried about causing hundreds of pounds worth of damage just to steal a few pounds.
- 12 When you are out think about your own security. Keep your wallet/purse/phone secure at all times. Never forget that thieves are looking for easy targets. The harder you make it for them the more likely they will be to pass you by.

And finally some good advice for all of us that like a drink at this time year.

- Be careful not to let alcohol affect your ability to take care of yourself and always look after your friends.
- Never Drink and Drive, think about the consequences - its not worth it.
- Remember after a night out you still may be "over the limit" and unfit to drive the next morning.

There is further advice available online which we recommend using especially if you are considering investing in additional security measures:

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org>

<https://www.police.uk/crime-prevention-advice/>

<http://www.lancashire.police.uk/about-us/our-commitment/our-approach-to-crime-prevention.aspx>