



Setting up

**NO**

Cold Calling  
Zones



# Cold Calling Control Zones

Quite simply, this is about local residents or communities having the confidence to say "NO" to uninvited salespeople or to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are being watched.

Hundreds of zones are now operating successfully across the UK with reports of significant crime reduction and a greater feeling of security amongst residents. This information pack has been put together to help local communities and local authorities set up their own cold-calling control zones. The pack is divided into three sections and includes information on:

## **Section 1 – WHAT & WHY**

- Doorstep crime
- Types of Cold Calling Control Zones

## **Section 2 – GETTING STARTED**

- Key partners
- Funding
- Selecting an area
- Signs & Door stickers
- Residents packs and information
- Launching a scheme

## **Section 3 – RUNNING THE SCHEME**

- Basic crime prevention & awareness/education messages
- What to do if somebody cold calls
- Measuring success

# 1 WHAT AND WHY?

## What is Doorstep Crime?

This is crime arising from doorstep callers, bogus workmen, high pressure salespeople, bogus officials and distraction burglary. Distraction burglary is where the householder is distracted by a caller whilst another robs them. It is now well established that distraction burglaries and rogue doorstep trading are interlinked - all too often, the seemingly innocent doorstep seller is actually checking things out for a re-visit to carry out a burglary or distraction burglary.

Whilst this type of criminal behaviour can impact on anybody in any place, research shows that older people and those living alone are particularly at risk.

A national Trading Standards Institute survey (2002) (TSI website via <http://tinyurl.com/y3syjs>) involved feedback from 9,000 randomly selected households. The results showed that nationally, 96% of people simply did not want doorstep cold-callers and virtually nobody actually welcomed them.

The number of serious doorstep crime incidents reported to both the police and trading standards services has grown significantly over the past few years. Incidents involving older people losing thousands of pounds are now not unusual to hear or read about and what has become clear is that the response and support of enforcement agencies has not kept pace with the skills and organisation of the criminals.

## Types of Cold Calling Control Zones

There are two main types of zones:

- No Cold Calling / No Uninvited Sellers Zones
- A zone where cold calling is permitted but is monitored by the residents (in a similar way to a neighbourhood watch area) with:  
Individual residents being given door stickers so that they can say "no callers" if they wish.  
Focused and enhanced crime prevention messages, awareness campaigns, etc in the area.

In both cases the zone area is clearly defined by notices on lamp posts, walls, etc.

'Control Zones' are similar in concept to a Neighbourhood Watch area and indeed, the two could work alongside each other with co-terminus boundaries and perhaps with a shared co-ordinator role.

## **No Cold Calling / No Uninvited Sellers Zones**

No Cold Calling Zones should generally only be considered when supported by a real local need to stop all sellers/callers.

When designing a scheme it is important to give thought to the wording and to what is trying to be achieved. "No Cold Calling", for example could reasonably imply a wish to stop calls by charities, religious and political canvassers whereas "No Doorstep Selling" may be interpreted as not applying to roof repairers, gardeners and other services. Examples currently used are:

- No Cold Callers
- No Cold Calling Zone or No Cold Calling Area
- No Cold Calling - No uninvited salespeople
- No Doorstep Selling
- No Uninvited Salespeople
- No Cold Calling - all uninvited callers will be reported
- This Community Says No Doorstep Callers Here
- No Uninvited Doorstep Callers
- Uninvited traders are not welcome here

It is important to be clear about what is intended and issues such as exemptions need to be considered, consulted upon and decided before the zone is launched. For example do the restrictions apply to none commercial callers such as:

- Charities (local/national/collecting money/collecting clothes/signing bank direct debits, etc)? - See Doorstoppers 'Charities' web page for information on laws applicable to charities calling door to door.
- Cosmetics or housewares / cleaning products sellers?
- Religious canvassers?

There is a balance between keeping the message clear and simple but at the same time reflecting the views and intentions of the residents/partners. The majority of local schemes do not state that any exemptions apply. Exemptions could be identified on signs/posters or in leaflets.

## **Watch / Protection Zones**

An alternative to a No Cold Calling Zone is a Zone in which residents' awareness of the problems with doorstep callers is heightened but cold calling is allowed to continue.

These might be more suitable for areas where residents are requesting a No Cold Call Zone but where the evidence from Police/Trading Standards doesn't support such a robust approach. They may also be more suitable for larger areas where it would be impractical to canvass the views of every resident or get total agreement for a No Cold Calling Zone. No Cold Calling Zones can also be resource-intensive for Trading Standards and other agencies if they are committed to responding to reports of callers in the zone area. This is especially the case with larger/multiple zones. In such cases a control zone that allows cold callers to continue, but with close monitoring by residents, may be more appropriate.

Within such zones the Local Authority and partner services could for example focus educational/awareness-raising campaigns or carry out home security improvements such as fitting door chains, spy holes, door mirrors, etc.

Each home within the zone would ideally be issued with door stickers so that residents can individually say "No cold calling" if they wish to.

Names for such control zones could be:

- No Doorstep Crime Zone
- Doorstep Crime Watch Zone
- Doorstep Protection Zone
- Doorstep Alert Zone
- Home Security Zone
- Trader Watch Zone

## 2 GETTING STARTED

### Key partners

The support of partner organisations is essential to the success of this initiative. However, the partners involved and their level of commitment will vary from area to area.

For local schemes to succeed, there will need to be a local champion (manager). This could be, for example, an enthusiastic Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, a Community Support Officer, a Community Warden, or indeed anybody willing to give a little of their time to help their local community. With the co-operation of local residents a scheme could be established without the support of official agencies such as the Trading Standards Service or Police but this would be very unusual and it would be far better for them to be involved.

Community safety issues are high on the agenda for local councils and in every area of the UK, councils will have policies and groups specifically dealing with local issues such as this. In many cases funds are available to support local initiatives and staff may be on hand to give advice and support. However, support will be more likely for areas which have a real problem with doorstep crime / distraction burglary. Listed below are some of the key potential partners to contact when thinking about setting up a scheme.

### Trading Standards

The Trading Standards Service is part of your local Council. It is a criminal enforcement agency, but at the same time, works closely with communities and businesses to protect them from rogue traders. Trading Standards is likely to be a key partner. You can find your local Trading Standards Service (by reference to your postcode) at [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk). For general consumer advice contact Consumer Direct 08454 44 55 66.

### Police

All police forces are committed to crime prevention through community policing. How they do this varies from one force to another. In addition, the police generally take a lead role in organising Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

### Local Councils

Local councils are required by law to consider community safety issues in relation to everything that they do and as such, it will be very high on their priority list. A local council will be a key partner if only through its network of contacts and ability to influence others.

All areas will have a local councillor, maybe two or even three. Local councillors are elected by local residents. In some areas there could be a parish

/ town councillor, a district councillor and a county councillor - three different people. In others, particularly unitary, metropolitan and London Boroughs, there may only be one councillor representing an area. Whichever is the case, councillors can be very influential people and their support is important.

### **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)**

These are partnerships between councils, police and other agencies (usually based on Council areas). They help establish and deliver community safety policy and initiatives, bringing together many agencies with community safety roles (contact through your local council). They have budgets to support local initiatives and are an important route to possible funding.

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

Neighbourhood Watch is a well-established national scheme usually operated and managed through the local police, but delivered by local residents and volunteer Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. The organisation and local focus of Neighbourhood Watch has made them one of the most common local partners.

Other local partners which may be keen to assist include:

- Community wardens / Community beat managers
- Parish Councils
- Housing agencies
- Tenants' associations
- Age Concern / Help the Aged
- Social Services
- Home Improvement Agencies (accessed through local councils)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Faith organisations

For details of other partners and useful contacts see the 'Partners' page of Doorstoppers.

## Funding

It doesn't cost much to set up a Control Zone, but it does cost something. In most cases there will be funds available from or through one or more of the partners listed in the section 'Key Partners' above.

Obviously costs will vary depending on the size and organisation of the scheme, but at its most basic and depending on the quantities ordered, the following provides a rough outline.

Street signs *	Approximately £15 each
Door stickers *	Approximately £50 for 200
Information packs for residents *	Dependent upon content, but likely to use existing leaflets and the information material - possibly cost of envelope and covering letter.
Initial letters to residents	Copying and printing costs
Ongoing information to residents	Depending on what information and frequency

\* For further details see following sections.

## Selecting an area

The size of zones varies greatly across the UK from just 20/30 homes to hundreds and even thousands. Ideally, the area for a No Cold Calling Zone should be relatively small and easily defined by its boundary, eg, a street, cul de sac, small estate or a Neighbourhood Watch area. The most important thing is that the initiative has the wholesale support of local residents. How this is achieved will depend on the local situation, but consultation with residents is a vital first step, not only to get consent, but also to raise awareness of the issues and encourage community involvement.

It is known that doorstep criminals will target particular properties, areas or residents. Older people and others living alone, are especially at risk. Agencies, such as the Police and Trading Standards, will have reports, statistics and experience to help identify areas at risk and as such, make them priority for establishing Zones. This will be particularly important in deciding what type of control zone is appropriate and to gain support (and possible funding) from Crime and Disorder Partnerships or local councils.

The most usual reasons / justifications for setting up and locating a zone are:

- Police data / reports
- Trading Standards reports
- Concentration of 'at risk' residents
- Community / Neighbourhood Watch request

## Street signs

Fundamental to the success of the scheme will be to mark the area's boundaries with signs which clearly say that it is a No Cold Calling Zone or a Cold Calling Control Area (or whatever).

These signs may be fixed to a lamp-post, wall, etc, but not without the permission of the land owner or local council.

The local council highway department will be able to supply details of their street sign supplier, specifications, approvals required, likely cost, etc, **and they must be consulted/involved.**

Where a zone is co-terminus with a Neighbourhood Watch area, consideration should be given to placing the message on or with the Neighbourhood Watch plate/signs.

## Door stickers

These have proved to be a useful way of deterring callers. On the outward facing side is a clear message such as **"Doorstep sellers - you are not welcome"**. On the other side (inward facing) is a simple crime prevention message and a contact number to call for help or report an incident.

## Residents' packs and information

It is important that residents are engaged in the initiative and that they understand their role and how to deal with uninvited callers. There are a number of ways in which this can be done, including one to one personal visits, group meetings or leaflets (or preferably a combination of these, eg, a personal visit to go through the information material). Personal visits are very time-consuming, but can be effective, especially when dealing with residents who are unlikely to attend a meeting or read through an information pack. Personal visits, by prior appointment if possible, should be made by somebody who knows the resident. Great care must be taken to

follow good doorstep calling procedures (See national cold calling protocol guidelines via the 'Leaflets and Other Information' page of Doorstoppers).

Group meetings are an ideal way of getting the message across, but difficult to organise and persuade residents to attend. If, however, there is an existing group (residents' association or similar), then this is worth considering, especially if a representative from the police or trading standards will attend. It is for each area / organiser to decide what material to include in a Residents' Pack, but the advice is "less is more" - keep the message simple and short. The following is a suggestion:

- Covering
- Door sticker (see previous section on Door stickers)
- Trading Standards / DTI leaflet
- Police / Home Office leaflet
- Contact details of organiser and how to report an incident
- 'No cold calling' card to hand to any callers (see later section 'Running the Scheme').
- Information about how to find an honest local trader

## **Launching the scheme**

A high profile public launch will help raise awareness and encourage support from both the public and partner organisations. If possible, a formal launch should be arranged with invited guests including key partners, local councillors and of course the local newspaper and radio. The launch should be located within the area (or nearby) and local residents invited. Perhaps it could be run alongside a coffee morning or luncheon club or arranged at a community hall or similar venue. Attendees should be given Residents Information Packs and doorstep crime prevention materials and somebody should be persuaded to make a short speech to formally launch the scheme.

It is important that the local press is involved and you should think about providing a staged photo-opportunity and tell the press when and where you are doing this. The press like a photograph of 'real people', so if you have a willing, older resident then that would be better than a line of dark suited local officials. If your local council / police are involved, then they will have professional press officers and it is important that they are kept informed as they will probably issue a press release and deal with the local media.

# **RUNNING THE SCHEME**

## **Basic crime prevention and awareness/education measures**

An essential part of the scheme is to educate local residents about their rights, how to find an honest trader and how to deal with cold callers and to give them the confidence to say "NO". Basic crime prevention and security issues such as the use of door chains / bars and checking IDs is vital. In the national Trading Standards Institute survey (9,000 householders) only 13.4% of people reported asking for IDs, and only 1.3% ever checked them out. Even basic measures such as the use of door chains was disappointingly low with only 39.4% of households having one fitted and only 6.4% ever using them.

Basic advice can be found in leaflets produced by the Home Office, DTI, Police and Trading Standards. These can be found via the 'Leaflets and Other Information' page of Doorstoppers. Better still, ask a local trading standards or police officer to help produce a basic advice package for residents.

An important element of the scheme will be to persuade residents to fit (or have fitted) a door chain / bar and if necessary a door mirror. These things cost very little, but can be extremely effective if residents can be persuaded to use them. It may be that one of the partners will be able to help with the supply, or even the fitting of such equipment to older people's homes. There are free installation schemes for older people available through some local Age Concern organisations.

To help residents find a local honest trader many local authorities operate approved trader schemes, a number of which are accredited under a Local Authority Approved Trader Scheme Network (LAATSN) and nationally, there is the Government sponsored Trustmark scheme ([www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk))

Depending on the type of scheme/zone being set up, residents may also benefit from being aware of the Direct Selling Association's approved code (see [www.dsa.org.uk/code\\_consumer.htm](http://www.dsa.org.uk/code_consumer.htm)).

## **What to do if somebody cold calls**

The system for dealing with incidents where sales people cold call within a No Cold Calling Zone will vary, dependent upon the scheme, partners and resources available.

Whilst No Cold Calling Zones have no force in law, the scheme should give householders the confidence to say "NO" and direct the cold caller out of the area. One way of doing this is to give residents small cards to hand to any caller explaining that they are in a No Cold Calling Zone and that they do not buy from doorstep sellers. The advantage of this is that it is less confrontational and doesn't need anything to be said.

Ideally, cold callers should be reported either to the local lead person or directly to the trading standards service / police depending upon pre-arranged local agreements. In some areas, systems have been arranged for somebody to attend to speak to the caller and support the householder. In some cases, this may be impractical, but if, for example, there is a locally sited community warden or a sheltered housing supervisor then this could be an option. However the local scheme is operated, a 'trigger plan' should be produced to advise householders about what to do, giving the necessary information and telephone contact numbers.

Irrespective of whether trading standards officers or police can make an immediate response, it is essential that where cold callers have been identified in a No Cold Calling Zone there is some follow-up action. One option is for somebody (preferably an official agency such as trading standards) to contact the person / business pointing out that they made a call in a 'No Cold Calling Zone', and advising accordingly. Whilst letters can be sent from the local scheme champion, it will carry much more weight if it has the support of partners such as the police or trading standards, or at least, includes their logo or reference to them.

## **Measuring success**

If the scheme has the support (and, in particular, funding) of official partners such as the police, trading standards or the Crime and Disorder Partnership, then almost certainly, they will wish to measure its success, not only to make sure that it's working, but also to encourage on-going commitment to and support for the concept and making improvements. One of the things which they might want to measure is whether, whilst successful for that particular area, it has merely moved the problem elsewhere.

Whatever the case, it is worth talking to the main partners before the launch to ensure that systems are in place to measure the success of the scheme in a way which they want.

For examples of a resident evaluation form go to the 'Leaflets and Other Information' page of Doorstoppers.