

# **CROYDON TRADING STANDARDS**

## **COMMUNITY ALERT**

### **Emergency Locksmiths – key to making the right decision**

Most of us have experienced at some time that moment of horror when we shut the front door behind us and then realise we have left our keys inside. Alternatively, you may find an issue with a lock which has been damaged – perhaps by force – and you cannot open the door.

If we are fortunate enough to have families or trusted neighbours in the locality and have left spare keys with them, the problem may be soon rectified. If not, you should try not to panic – admittedly easier said than done if you perhaps have young children and the weather is bad – and first ask yourself if it is a real emergency: perhaps you have got someone you can stay with whilst you assess your options?

When locked out, often the first thing people do is to Google an emergency locksmith and contact the one at the top of the search list. Unfortunately there are criminals who are preying on people at their most vulnerable moment and they pay for their adverts to be seen first.

Unfortunately, Croydon is just one borough which has seen reports of emergency locksmiths charging excessive fees and which has been acknowledged as a national problem. These traders are often effectively criminals who having completed what is often a relatively quick job, charge the victim an excessive amount to that which was originally quoted.

Having changed the locks, by holding the keys to the new lock they effectively hold to ransom the householder until money is paid. We have had more than one report of young women who have been in this predicament, being locked in the house until the amount is paid usually by means of a mobile payment device.

If you have a smartphone or are able to call a friend and ask them to assist, first look instead for a business which is reasonably local but has its own website with contact details so that you know who you are dealing with and in the event of any problems can be contacted afterwards.

Also, ask yourself does this have to be done as an emergency call out? Obviously if perhaps it is late at night or a Sunday, you will have to pay the premium, but if not, you may get a locksmith out within a reasonable time but not at emergency rates.

Additionally, if not an emergency call out, you retain your rights to a 14 day cooling off period, so if you change your mind or have concerns about the person who attends, you can cancel the contract – although you would have to pay a reasonable price for the attendance and any work done.

To report a suspected crime, or if you feel you have fallen victim to fraud, contact [Action Fraud](#) via its website or by calling 0300 123 2040

Otherwise, for your initial civil advice contact CACS on 0808 223 1133

Further advice can be obtained by emailing [trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk)