**ROGUE TRADERS TARGET MAIDSTONE RESIDENTS**

Residents are reminded to be vigilant against doorstep fraudsters following a spate of recent incidents in Maidstone.

On Monday 16 March 2020, two men are reported to have visited a pensioner's house in Tovil where they offered to do some gardening. The victim gave them a quantity of cash and they then left without completing any work.

Two days later, three men are alleged to have called at a house in Coxheath where they accepted payment from a woman in her 70s for gardening work that was never started.

A further report was received that on Monday 23 March, a man who took payment for roof repairs from a pensioner living in Penenden Heath, left without completing any work.

Inspector Mark Hedges of Maidstone's Community Safety Unit, said: ‘Officers are investigating these incidents but I strongly urge residents to be careful about who they allow to complete work at their homes.

‘Don’t be afraid to ask them for identification and if you have any doubts about a caller at your door, ask them to leave and come back at a time when you can have a friend or relative with you.

‘Whilst we work with partner agencies to protect the most vulnerable in our community, I would encourage people to look out for one another and report anything suspicious straight away by calling 101 or dialling 999 if a crime is taking place.’

Anyone with information that may help the investigations is asked to contact Kent Police on 01622 604 100, quoting reference 16-0471.

You can also contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously by calling 0800 555 111 or using the anonymous online form at Crimestoppers-uk.org.

**Further advice**

* Doorstep fraudsters generally seek to carry out services that are either completely unnecessary or substandard. If cash is paid in advance they will often leave without starting any work.
* Services offered will include cleaning driveways, gardening or roof and guttering repairs.
* If someone knocks at your door, always refuse on the spot repairs or maintenance.
* Don't allow anyone to pressure you into agreeing to have work carried out. If you ask them to leave and they don't, contact the police on 999.
* Don't ever go to a bank or cash point with a trader; legitimate traders would never do this.
* Use reputable traders who are members of the KCC Trading Standards approved trader scheme, run in partnership with Checkatrade.
* Ask for quotes in writing and check that the tradesperson is from the company they say they are from.