

# How to choose a burglar alarm contract

## Burglar alarm systems

You can have a bell-only alarm installed, or pay extra to have it maintained or monitored

When it comes to home security, there are a number of things you can do to keep your home secure, and choosing a burglar alarm is just one of them.

Many Which? members have a burglar system in their home, many paying for it to be professionally maintained and even monitored. So what choices are there for home security systems and how much should you pay?



## Types of burglar alarm systems

There are several different types of alarm system available, each offering different levels of security.

### Bells-only alarm

You can just pay a one-off fee to have an alarm installed and rely on someone phoning you or the police if the alarm goes off.

**Cost:** one-off fee of £300-£1400 depending of amount of zones and if its wired or wireless.

### Maintenance contracts

Half of Which? members with a burglar alarm system pay to have it inspected at least once a year.

Having your alarm system professionally maintained can help tackle the biggest problem Which? members have – false alarms.

Regular maintenance should highlight and cut down on defects, give you peace of mind and give you more redress if something goes wrong. Some contracts include extras.

**Cost:** Between £50-£150 a year depending on the system.

## Monitoring contracts

You can pay extra to have your alarm system monitored, so you or a key holder is called when it goes off. You also pay for maintenance if you want this.

The idea is that the alarm system connects to a receiving centre contracted by your installer or via a monitoring company. They call key holders if there are two indications a burglary is taking place, such as a sensor going off or the sound of a door being kicked in.

Because it is more expensive, many people may decide they don't need this extra level of cover. You may want this reassurance if you have particularly high-value items in your home or live in a remote area where a burglary may not be seen.

**Cost:** Prices Vary

## Police response

For a higher fee, you can have your alarm system linked to the police. Paying more won't guarantee they come out. DCI Taylor said that whether police go to your home and how quickly depends on what other incidents are happening and what other resources are available. He said that the call is graded by a call handler at the alarm receiving centre and added: 'If we're fairly certain there's someone in the premises, it's a higher priority.'

However, if you have three false alarms (four in Scotland) in 12 months, you're struck off the police register, and they won't respond if the alarm goes off.

**Cost:** ADT, the largest alarm-fitting chain, charges from £263.40 a year, We Charge £190 + Your local police also charge a one-off fee of up to £45 to register alarms with a unique reference number.

## Speech dialler

If you don't want the expense of monitoring, this device is a cheaper alternative. When the alarm goes off, it calls a set of numbers of your choice (for example family members or your mobile) until it gets an answer, then leaves a recorded alert that the alarm has gone off. Only one movement sensor needs to be activated for this to happen.

**Cost:** A one-off fee of £99-£150 to fit and call costs to your nominated numbers, when that is necessary.