

From mountain to sea

# Trading Standards Bulletin

## Bulletin No. 59

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department unless otherwise stated to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR.

### **Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling**

#### Door to Door Leafleting

Trading Standards have recently received reports about roofing and ground maintenance companies leafleting houses in the Turriff area of Aberdeenshire. Serious concerns have been expressed about some of these companies.

If anyone in the Turriff area has seen these companies delivering leaflets door to door, we would be grateful to receive copies of any leaflets delivered or to obtain descriptions of the workmen (including their accents), their work clothing, vehicle descriptions (including any company details on the vehicles) and registration numbers of the vehicles concerned. This information would allow us to build up a clearer intelligence picture of these companies and where and how they operate. Contact details for Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department are at the end of this bulletin.

### **Scams etc.**

#### Social Media scam

One resident of north Aberdeenshire was recently contacted by a friend of hers via a popular social medium, through its messaging system. The friend advised that the resident may be able to make compensation claims under a particular 'program' (note the American spelling, rather than the UK spelling 'programme'). The resident was then put in touch with an agent who could apparently help to progress the claim.

The agent later got in touch with the resident and began asking her for personal details such as name, address, date of birth, parental details, and much else besides. (This is about the point that alarm bells should start ringing in your head.) After obtaining the resident's details, the agent then asked for a clearance fee of £500 for a gift voucher to cover fees at which point the resident became suspicious and ended all contact. Thankfully, no money exchanged hands nor did any banking details.

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In truth, the whole thing was a scam and the ultimate aim appears to have been to cheat the resident out of the £500 payment for the gift voucher. Financial advisors don't normally work for gift vouchers either. In all likelihood, the friend's account has been hacked and the messages originally sent was actually sent by the scammer/hacker (the agent). If you think your social medium account has been hacked:

- Log into your account and change the password immediately to a new password, to lock the hacker out. The new password should be a secure password. Advice from Which? on secure passwords can be found [here](#)
- Contact the social medium immediately to report your concerns and ask them to investigate this and report their findings back to you
- Send out a message to your friends immediately advising them of this breach, to not accept any new friend requests and to disregard any messages from the hacked account (particularly about financial matters) until they have been given the all-clear by you
- Remember, social media are a favourite haunt of criminals, so be careful when dealing with strangers, especially about financial matters and never disclose sensitive personal information to people you don't know
- Remember too, scammers' ultimate aim usually involves appropriating their victims' money or money's worth such as vouchers, so if you are contacted by someone on social media who wants to discuss finance of any sort, the risks are high that they may be a scammer, so the safest option is simply to say "Thanks, but no thanks" and end all contact.

### Text scam

One resident in the Garioch area recently reported to Trading Standards that he'd been caught out with a scam. He had been ordering quite a number of parcels from online websites over the last few weeks and when he'd received a couple of e-mails claiming to be from a well-known delivery company which didn't look quite right, he dismissed them as spam. However, while busy at work, he later received a text on his mobile phone with a photo and his name on a parcel. The text advised that the company had tried unsuccessfully to deliver the parcel and that it would cost 2 Euros to re-deliver it. Thinking nothing of it, the resident paid the 2 Euros via a link in the text.

Once he got home, the resident had another look at the text and noted that the address on the parcel was blurred out and became concerned that it may be a scam. He then reported the matter to his bank. The bank was able to put a stop to the payment which was actually to someone in Cyprus. However, the scammer had also set up a subscription from the resident's bank account without his knowledge. Thankfully, the bank put paid to the subscription too.

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As we have discussed before, this is actually an all too common scam. We would like to ask you to be vigilant, especially at this time of year when you may be ordering numerous items online. Try to:

- keep track of the items you order, which companies they are from and who the delivery companies will be
- be wary of e-mails or scams which come from delivery companies which ask for payments. Delivery costs should normally have been dealt with at the point of sale
- forward any suspicious texts to the short code 7726, which allows telephone companies to collate all reports about that scam and the sender's phone so that they can take action to block the number. Further information about this service can be found on the Ofcom webpage [here](#)
- phone your bank on the short code 159 to report your concerns and ask the bank to keep an eye on your accounts. More information about the 159 service can be found [here](#) at Stop Scams

### **Misc.**

#### Self-Feeding Pillows

You may have seen articles on social media or on the internet from the Office for Product Safety and Standards recently, about an urgent safety alert regarding self-feeding pillows for babies, which have been found to present a risk of serious harm or death from choking or aspiration pneumonia.



In short, the advice is to stop using these items immediately. However, you can find more information about these items on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website [here](#).

### **Conclusion**

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Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with a scenario such as the ones discussed here where fear, panic and alarm are often tools used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time. Remember, after the initial panic is over, you may have rights which Trading Standards can help you with. We can also help you with advice about any article mentioned in these bulletins.

If you have been the victim of a Doorstep Crime or an attempted crime, whether Bogus Caller or Rogue Trader, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can build a detailed, ongoing picture of the activities of these scammers throughout the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

### **Contact Info**

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing [tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> or Take Five at <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Please direct any media queries to [news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found at:  
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>