

From mountain to sea

# Trading Standards Bulletin

## Bulletin No. 36

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

Nothing to report.

### **Scams**

As we go into the Christmas period, it is not usual to learn of the increase in the number of puppies sold for Christmas presents for children or families. Trading Standards continue to receive reports from all across the country of puppies which have been bought by people and later found to be extremely ill, some having to be euthanized by a vet. As well as being heartbroken at the loss of the puppy, buyers have been left out of pocket, sometimes by over two thousand pounds when the cost of the puppy and the cost of vet's bills are included.

Further to previous articles on this matter, some other tell-tale signs of scammers posing as genuine breeders may be:

- Puppies being offered for sale on-line, often on sites whose names closely resembles reputable pet chain stores.
- All arrangements with the seller are conducted via a seller's mobile phone number.
- Photos of the puppy (or of a puppy) are sent to the potential buyer via messaging apps. Sometimes the puppy in the photo is not the one the buyer receives.
- Transactions are conducted in cash only or by direct bank transfer.
- Vaccination cards may be from outwith the UK.
- Internet searches on the seller may shed some light on previous incidents.
- Irregularities on the paperwork such as the Vaccination Card such as signs of stickers having been removed or replaced, entries being overwritten, no vet details on the card or they are illegible.

The more of these signs a buyer sees, the louder the alarm bells should ring in their mind and the greater the reason they should turn and walk away. Reliable advice on how to buy a puppy more safely can be found at

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/getting-a-dog/>



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Aberdeenshire Trading Standards receive regular intelligence regarding the existence of puppy farms within Aberdeenshire and continue to try and tackle this criminality in co-operation with enforcement partners such as the Scottish SPCA. Puppy farms will commonly transport puppies from the farms, usually in rural locations, to domestic premises, which is often an AirB&B rental, to give the impression that the puppy is home reared. Commonly the mother is either not available or another dog is held to be the mother. Tackling puppy farms remains a local priority for Aberdeenshire Trading Standards and we would welcome any intelligence on this despicable trade. Contact details are below.

### **Misc.**

#### Section 75 protection

Trading Standards regularly receive reports of residents who order goods from 'traders' which never arrive or are faulty or substandard. These can be ordered a number of ways such as via sales catalogues, social media or direct from the trader's own website, amongst others.

Sometimes the trader stops responding to the resident's messages or declares insolvency, leaving the resident at an impasse. This can be further complicated if the trader is based abroad.

Where goods or services cost over £100 but less than £30,000 there can be advantages in paying for them using a credit card (though not a debit card or charge card). This is due to Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. The Section 75 advantages can apply even if you pay a deposit of less than £100 on goods or services totalling over £100 and may cover the total amount.

Section 75 provides that the credit card company can also be liable for the transaction, so that if the trader refuses to help, goes bust or is based abroad, the resident can make a claim against the credit and they can do so whilst still dealing with the trader. This done by getting in touch with the card provider to make the claim. Details of this would normally be on a paper statement or an e-mail from the card provider.

It is also immaterial how the goods or services were ordered, whether over the phone, by e-mail or the internet, for delivery from one place in the UK to another or from abroad to the UK.

There may be situations where the resident may make payment to an agency which does not supply the goods or services and Section 75 might not apply so try to pay the trader direct wherever possible. Also, cash withdrawals on a credit card are not covered.

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Trading Standards can offer guidance and advice to anyone who finds themselves in such a situation. Contact details are below.

### Disposable Vapes

Further to my previous article in Bulletin 34 about disposable vapes (e-cigarettes), Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department have since started a programme of contacting all registered sellers of e-cigarettes in Aberdeenshire with the aim of reviewing the types of disposable vapes being sold and offering retailers advice on what is and what is not legal. This programme is expected to continue well into 2022.

However, we are also aware that there have been reports of disposable vapes being sold by unregistered people, the vapes themselves being illegal or sales to under-age youngsters. We will be investigating these in due course.

If you have any information about the sales of disposable vapes which concerns you, please contact Trading Standards using the details below or if you are concerned about confidentiality, you can also contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 where you can make a report in complete anonymity.

### Conclusion

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.

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.

Also, if you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco, 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



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

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>