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Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 43

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

One resident of the Mearns recently reported that their parents had a knock at the door from a roofer despite have a 'No Cold Caller' sticker on their front door. The roofer pointed out a number of 'issues' to the resident and claimed that it would cost £20 to repair. The elderly resident asked for time to think about these issues but the roofer ascended their ladder and started work; when he came down from his ladder he then claimed that the issues would cost a 5-figure sum to remedy. Despite this, the roofer gave no breakdown for the work he claimed needed done.

Thankfully, the elderly resident's bank became concerned about the size of payment and did not authorise it, so no money changed hands.

Some points to remember:

- Trading Standards recommends that you shouldn't accept offers for work from tradesmen who turn up unannounced at your door. The risk is too high that problems will arise. Find your own trader through trade bodies, personal recommendation and trusted trader internet searches
- If you have a 'No Cold Callers' sticker or notice at your gate, front door etc., try to stick to that, even under pressure or persuasion by the cold caller. Remain polite, thank them for their concern and tell them that you will get someone to look at it. If necessary, tell them that you have a relative in the trade and you would prefer them to do the work or tell them that you have something on the stove/a visitor in the house and that you must attend to that urgently.
- If you decide to accept the trader's offer, remember, you have a 14 day cancellation (cooling off) period in which you can change your mind without penalty. The exception to this is if the consumer (the resident) waives this right and allows the trader to start work beforehand. This sometimes happens when the trader pressurises or persuades the resident to do so. Please use this cooling off period, or even some of it, to think carefully about what and who you might be committing to.
- The trader is obliged by law to provide certain information about themselves to a consumer before both parties finalise their agreement (which is a contract). This information includes the trader's name; business address and phone number; a total price of the goods and

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services being provided (including tax) or how that price will be calculated (a breakdown of costs); any additional delivery charges; an estimate of how long the work will take or that the duration of the work can be extended by agreement of both parties.

- Remember, these conditions apply to other types of tradesmen calling at your door, not just roofers.

Further information about cold calling tradesmen can be obtained from previous bulletins, in particular numbers 25, 28, 30, 33, 35, and 37. Also, in an effort to tackle this sort of problem, Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards are looking at the feasibility of setting up or joining a Trusted Trader scheme which will cover Aberdeenshire.

Scams

Telecare Scam

A message from our Housing and Building Standards Service:

We are aware of a scam being circulated in some areas which may be targeting telecare service users transitioning to digital telecare.

This scam is false phone calls to telecare services users asking them to pay for a new alarm as their current system is obsolete. Given the vulnerability of telecare service users, there is a high risk that they may provide bank details to the scammer. We suggest that you liaise with telecare service users and make them aware of this current scam.

Local Prevention Teams can provide a good source of support to your telecare service users, but if your staff are making calls to service users you may wish to consider including a conversation about nuisance calls. The following information may be helpful:

- People can sign up to the [Telephone Preference Service](#) for FREE either online or by calling 0345 070 0707
- Many home phone providers offer services (some of which are free) to block unwanted calls e.g. [BT Call Protect](#) , [Talk Talk's Call Safe](#)
- Unwanted calls can be blocked using built-in call blocking features on home or mobile phones
- There is a range of standalone devices that can be used to block/ monitor calls
- For more information on potential solutions check out Which's article on [How to block nuisance calls](#)



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When advising telecare service users about any call blocking options, it is important to ensure that they know to include their telecare service numbers in their “trusted”/ “safe” numbers. (To follow the links above, please press the Ctrl button on your keyboard then click on the links with your cursor)

Misc.

Trading Standards recently received a complaint from an elderly man in south Aberdeenshire who felt that he had been overcharged for heating oil, in some instances 80p per litre when the average price elsewhere was around 50p at that time. This is not a situation which has developed since the start of the recent troubles in Ukraine but has been in existence for much longer but only came to light more recently when the resident was discussing oil prices with a relative. Trading Standards is currently looking into this matter.

If your heating system runs on oil, this complaint highlights the worth, particularly now, of trying to get a quote for heating oil prices before buying. One good place to start looking is the heating oil price comparison website Boilerjuice (<https://www.boilerjuice.com/heating-oil-quote/>) which provides quotes nationally. Once you have your quote from this site, simply do an internet search for other, possibly more local, companies to see how their quotes match up to Boilerjuice. Most heating oil companies will offer a quote service on their Home page or will clearly direct potential customers to the quote page.

As with any other trader, we would recommend that you seek at least 3 quotes before deciding on which company to buy from, bearing in mind factors such as price, delivery timetables and payment methods.

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. 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



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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 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 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>