



From mountain to sea

# Trading Standards

## Doorstep Crime, Scams & Safety

### Bulletin 10

#### Doorstep Crime & Scams

- There have been reports of doorstep callers offering roofing and guttering work in the Laurencekirk area.
- A report has been received of a doorstep caller in the Fraserburgh area canvassing support for a well-known charity. Whilst many charities raise funds in this manner a reputable canvasser will not put pressure on you to donate or provide bank details for a direct debit. Residents should request the canvasser show their ID/ credentials before they engage with caller and follow these up with the charity if they are still concerned, alternatively consider donating via the charities' official website.

**Residents should be cautious if engaging with doorstep callers and report any concerns to Trading Standards or Police Scotland. When reporting doorstep crime or concerns about doorstep callers, try to remember key details about the trader such as business names, addresses, names, age, accents, descriptions, vehicle type, registrations and signage. Keep all original paperwork, leaflets and brochures.**

- A further resident has reported receiving an email purporting to be from HM Courts & Tribunals Service which requested payment for a misdemeanor.

Residents are reminded that it is the Scottish Courts that operate in Scotland and not HM Courts and Tribunals Service and if you have not visited England or Wales then the correspondence should be treated with suspicion. A genuine pursual of payment by the courts will not be done via email, regardless of country.

- A local business has reported being targeted by a publishing scam. An invoice was received requesting payment for the supply of books designed to prevent bullying. The invoice was paid but the business is now being targeted by other scammers.

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If a scammer is successful in obtaining personal/ bank details or monetary payment, this can signify to them that further attempts may succeed. This will often be followed up by further attempts by the scammer or the victim's details passed to other scammers.

- Consumers continue to report instances where they have purchased puppies that have not been supplied or have been supplied in poor health or with a life-threatening condition. Demand has increased during the pandemic, as has the price and this is unfortunately being met by puppies bred on puppy farms. Residents considering purchasing a puppy should –
  - only buy from a licensed breeder
  - ask lots of questions about the breeder, the puppy and its parents
  - view the puppy at its home, with its mother and check the condition of both and their accommodation
  - ensure you are provided with paperwork relating to breeding, vaccinations and microchipping and follow these up
  - treat the puppy's back story with caution, especially if the story is a sad one
  - avoid purchasing a puppy advertised on social media or small ad sites as these are often used by unlicensed breeders
  - do a Google reverse image/search on any photos and phone numbers displayed in adverts/ websites to see if they have been used before
  - don't pay with cash, but use a cheque, credit card or other traceable means

Most illegally bred puppies are sold online through social media or small ad sites, and 1 in 4 of those pups bought online die before their fifth birthday whilst 1 in 5 get sick or die in the first year - <https://www.buyapuppysafely.org/>

**If you have concerns that your puppy has originated from a puppy farm or are aware of someone who may be involved in an unlicensed puppy farm, contact Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000**

- This month marked the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative '**Friends Against Scams**'. The initiative aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering them to take a stand against scams. The initiative involves completing a 20 min online course that discusses scams, how to spot them and what to do etc. Once completed a certificate is awarded and you become a 'Friend Against Scams'. The course is open to everyone - <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

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### Safety

- Every year Trading Standards conduct checks on Aberdeenshire retailers that sell fireworks to consumers. Fireworks are classed as 'explosives' and there are strict legal requirements regarding their storage, manufacture and sale.

This year Trading Standards are taking part in a multi-agency approach to firework safety along with Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and our own Community Safety Department. Trading Standards will be undertaking safety inspections and test purchasing at licensed retail premises selling fireworks. There are, however, steps which members of the public can take to help stay safe. These are:

- only buy fireworks from a licensed seller
- don't buy fireworks over social media
- fireworks must bear the CE mark. Fireworks marked BS7114 are no longer legal and should not be sold.
- be prepared to remove face coverings in shops when buying fireworks, to verify your identity and age

The sale of fireworks to young people under 18 years of age is an offence, as is possession of fireworks by persons under 18 years of age in a public place.

### Contact

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 assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

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