

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Bulletin

Bulletin No. 33

Doorstep Crime/ Cold Calling

Trading Standards recently received a report from a vulnerable resident in south Aberdeenshire who was cold called by a roofer asking if they needed any work done. The resident engaged the roofer to make a small repair to tiles. Whilst up on the roof the roofer claimed to have discovered a serious problem with another part of the roof which needed urgent attention. The resident, having agreed to the verbal quote of £7000, was then asked for a 50% deposit 'for materials' in a forceful manner.

The roofer went back up onto the roof and removed the 'faulty' tiles and other roofing materials, leaving them dumped on the ground. After the roofer had left for the day, on examination the resident could see no sign of the claimed damage or decay, surmising the tiles had been damaged deliberately. More seriously, daylight could now be seen through the area where the roofer had been working.

This was a classic case of the way that these rogue tradesmen operate. The vulnerable resident has now been left with a major headache which will cost thousands of pounds to rectify; all from a few tiles which should certainly have cost less than a hundred pounds to repair.

Advice from Trading Standards remains the same; the risk of engaging cold calling tradesmen and ending up with this sort of result is just too great. Please be wary of offers of work from cold calling traders. Instead, do your own due diligence and hire a tradesman with a proven track record, supported by reports from family, friends or neighbours. Consider placing 'no cold calling' stickers at your front door, these can be provided on request by emailing Trading Standards at trading.standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Scams

Further to a previous entry in Bulletin 31 regarding a Kennel Club investigation into lockdown puppy buying, Trading Standards have received a report of a puppy purchased recently via a sales website for almost a thousand pounds and delivered to them. He had been assured the dog was being rehomed due to a family member being admitted to hospital but subsequently learned that the

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seller was a 'breeder', the dog was very ill, the implanted chip had not been registered and the vaccination card had been fabricated. Also, the vet bills incurred by the buyer have reached several hundred pounds... so far.

If you are considering buying a puppy, please do not buy from sales websites or social media, do not have them delivered to your home and do not meet the seller in an agreed neutral location for a handover. These are very common tactics used by illicit breeders and avoided by reputable breeders. Instead:

- ask to see the puppy in its home environment, and with the mum to satisfy yourself that it is being cared for properly (some breeders will be wary about this due to Covid, so try to work out an agreeable solution where you can see the home environment or delay the transaction).
- ask to see what kind of food the puppy is being fed as you may have to feed it the same if you buy.
- ask questions about the puppy's health; its temperament, any inherited conditions from the parents etc. and gauge the clarity and credibility of the answers and how forthright the seller appears in answering.
- ask to see the paperwork for the puppy's vaccinations, microchip, any medication and details of any check-ups. You may also wish to contact the vet practice detailed on the paperwork to verify the details provided.

From a purely Trading Standards perspective, if you do buy a puppy it should be in good health and free from illness, had all relevant vaccinations and proof of this provided with genuine paperwork. As a puppy qualifies as 'goods' and if it turns out to be different from agreed (not fit for purpose), you have 30 days from date of purchase to reject and seek a refund from the seller, although the buyer may have to demonstrate the lack of fitness of purpose. Trading Standards can provide guidance on all of the above.

Misc.

Nothing to report.

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.



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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, 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>