

Consumer Alerts – June 2020

Beware Doorstep Callers

Trading Standards have received a spate of reports about cold callers throughout Lancashire. In Leyland a vulnerable resident was cold called by traders implying urgent work was needed to his house and wanting a payment of £1000. Luckily the Police intervened.

In a case in Chorley, an elderly lady was cold called and advised her ridge tiles needed repointing and gutters cleaning, despite this work having been carried out recently. The traders were pushy and came into her home uninvited. The lady, who did not agree to any work, managed to get them to leave but they returned later that day pressing her for a decision.

A report was received from a concerned resident in the Lostock Hall area. Traders were door knocking in the evening, offering driveway work. They were pushy and seemed to be targeting vulnerable households.

A Rossendale resident was cold called, the trader claimed her chimney was dangerous and was causing damp and needed replacing at a charge of £1800. The trader went on to state he could repair her whole roof for nearly £4000. The elderly resident contacted a local roofer who said only minor repairs were needed and would cost no more than £500.

In the Morecambe area a pensioner agreed to some repointing and painting work for £280 after being cold called by a trader offering property repairs. A small amount of work was carried out, further discussion was had about repairs to the driveway and further monies were given. The trader has since not returned.

Use local known reputable trades people. Never feel pressurised into agreeing to work.

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers. The Safetrader scheme can help you find a trader in your area, contact 0303 333 1111 or go to www.safetrader.org.uk

Scam HMRC Phone Call

A Preston resident has reported receiving a call on their mobile from an automated call centre claiming to be the HMRC and that they were being investigated for Fraud. The automated voice instructed the listener to press 1 or they would be arrested.

Similarly, a Chorley resident received a call alleging they owed money in relation to a loan and if they didn't obey the instructions they would send someone to her house.

These calls are from scammers, they can be very frightening, their aim is to make you panic into giving your personal and banking details and will sometimes try get payments from you.

Scam Citizens Advice Phone Call.

Residents in the South of England have reported receiving telephone calls alleging to be from Citizens Advice. The caller states they can help people claim a grant provided by the government to assist people struggling financially during the Covid-19 crisis. Personal details are required including bank details.

Citizens Advice would never contact people without their permission and would definitely not request their bank details.

To reduce telesales calls join the Telephone Preference Service on 03450 700707. Many telephone service providers can also offer help to reduce the number of scam calls you receive.

"Brushing Scam"

A householder in the Preston area recently received an unsolicited package in the post which contained 2 small packs of seeds. The package was addressed to the householder and had come from Malaysia.

Trading Standards has not come across this possible scam before but one explanation is that it is a 'brushing scam'. This scam is where online businesses create a paper trail and then post fake online reviews. The products are sent to real addresses, then the seller writes a positive online review of the items from a bogus buyer account to boost the firm's online profile.

Concerns are that the recipients' details may have in some way been compromised. Anyone receiving unusual unordered low value goods in the post may want to check any online trading accounts they have are secure.

Scam 'friends' Email

A Poulton le Fylde email user received an email headed 'change of address for Paul and Carol'. The email held no message but asked you to click on a link. The recipient of the email coincidentally does have friends of this name but luckily did not click on the link. This is a phishing scam, again attempting to 'fish' for personal data.

Other current phishing attacks to be aware of are a text alleging to be from Pay Pal and an email alleging to be from EE.

If anyone receives texts or other kinds of messages like this, they should not click on any accompanying links, and report them to Action Fraud, contact 0300 123 2014 or go to www.actionfraud.police.uk .

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133