

From mountain to sea

Doorstep Callers and Scams

Bulletin No. 90

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

One resident in the Garioch area recently realised that his garage roof was leaking so began searching for a reputable roofer who could mend the problem. As the garage roof was made from asbestos, not all roofers who were contacted were equipped to deal with the matter.

The resident went onto an online trader website and posted a message looking for a suitable trader and very quickly he received a reply. Arrangements were then made for the trader to view the job, which he did. The trader then gave an estimate of £600 to repair the roof and he guaranteed the work.

Relieved to find a trader willing to undertake the work, the resident accepted the estimate and paid part of the sum in cash and part by credit card. At no time did the trader provide a written quote, details of the guarantee to the resident or an invoice.

Within a couple of days, the trader then 'completed' the job but overnight it rained and the resident found in the morning that the roof had leaked in the places which were supposed to have been repaired. The resident tried a number of times to contact the trader, to have the work rectified but the trader failed to respond at every turn. The matter was subsequently reported to Trading Standards who are investigating.

Some points to consider:

- Please be very careful when using online trader sites for sourcing tradesmen to do work for you. Many rogue traders search these same sites for victims to scam, as in this case,

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- We recommend sourcing a trader from [Aberdeen Care and Repair](#) if you live close to Aberdeen or the [Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader scheme](#) or through another reputable trader scheme to reduce the chance of falling victim to a scam. At the Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader scheme applicants are vetted by Trading Standards and although it's in its early stages, membership is growing,
- Contracts like this one, which was agreed at the resident's home, provide the resident with a 14 day cooling off period in which the resident can change their mind and cancel the work being done, at no cost to themselves,
- Likewise, this type of contract which is called 'off premises' requires the trader to provide the resident/consumer with certain types of information by law before the resident can be bound by it. This information includes details of the right to cancel, the trader's name, address and phone number or e-mail address and the total price of the goods and/or services, including taxes,
- This information should be on paper or other durable form. If it is not provided, this should be a red flag to the resident,
- Traders are required to use reasonable skill and care when carrying out work for a customer. If this doesn't happen and problems arise, the customer is entitled to a 'free repeat performance' or price reduction to fix any problems. Clearly in this case this didn't happen and the trader's guarantee was worthless,
- If a trader does provide a customer with a quote, invoice etc. these should be done on headed paper and should all be kept safe as it could be evidence that this trader did the work, what was done and how much it cost, in the event of that dispute arises,
- In this instance, the trader's preferred method of payment was cash. This could be for a number of reasons; to avoid paying tax and to avoid leaving a paper trail linking the trader to the customer. This may also be a red flag to a customer that they are dealing with a rogue trader,
- When cash must be paid, try to get the transaction witnessed and try to obtain a receipt written (legibly) by the trader. Don't be fooled into accepting a scrawled note or even writing the receipt yourself,
- If you do make payment to a trader by debit card or credit card and a dispute arises, remember to make a complaint to the card provider as this may help the provider recover cash from the trader or provide you with a refund under [Chargeback](#) or [Section 75 protection](#),
- Each case will rest on its own particular circumstances so if you find yourself in a similar situation, please call your local Trading Standards office for advice.

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Scams etc.

Text Scam

One resident in the K&M area recently received a text on her mobile phone, apparently from the delivery company Evri. The text explained that a parcel which had been due for delivery to her address could not now be delivered due to it sustaining damage to the packaging the address information had been lost.

The text went on to provide a hyperlink and advice to exit the text and enter the link onto the phone's browser to proceed and re-establish a delivery plan. Initially, the resident thought that it might be a phone charger her son had ordered but on reflection she noticed the spelling of some of the words in the text, which made her suspicious. Having previously attended a scams talk by Trading Standards; she then did the right thing by reporting the text to the National Cyber Security Centre as a scam and blocking the sender. She then reported the matter to Trading Standards.

In truth this text was a scam, in particular a phishing scam where a scammer sends a message apparently from a reputable company in an effort to induce a victim into a course of action which then leads to a loss of one kind or another for them.

Some points to consider:

- Evri took no part in this scam whatsoever. Their name was simply used by the scammer to give the scam some credibility,
- In the internal logic of this situation, if the outer packaging of the delivery had been lost, how could the link be made between the parcel and its destination and why then couldn't 'Evri' deliver it if they knew the recipient and their text number?
- Please never click on links in texts or e-mails which you're not sure of,
- In this case the link led to a very suspicious website which was suspected of trying to obtain people's personal details, either to try to cheat them out of money or to sell those details onto other scammers who would then target the resident,
- If in doubt, do as this resident did. Forward the text to the 7726 scam/spam text line for telephony companies to examine and, hopefully, block,
- Then, block the sender,
- And finally, please report the matter to your local Trading Standards office for them to investigate.

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Misc.

Dangerous Vapes

Although the primary purpose of these bulletins is the raising of awareness regarding scams which are reported to Trading Standards from around Aberdeenshire, on occasion there are other matters which we believe are worth highlighting to our residents and readers. One such matter involves the extreme danger posed by illicit vapes which are bought online.

Although many of the long-term effects of legal vapes are not known on people's health, especially our youngsters, one effect which is known is the potential for an addiction to the nicotine contained in these vapes.

Illicit vapes are even more dangerous than the legal ones as, being illicit, they may not have been manufactured to any laws in the country where they were made or to the laws in which it's intended that they're sold in and we have no idea of the hygiene conditions they were made in.

Please find by clicking this link [a recent article on the BBC website](#) relating to some very dangerous illicit vapes which have been found in the north of England, which contain some very dangerous substances. Although the article relates to that area, as the vapes concerned were bought online, it is a situation which could arise anywhere in the UK. One also has to wonder at the mentality of the people who would put these substances in vapes which they know will be consumed by unsuspecting customers.

Trading Standards would ask two things of our readers:

- If you know a young person who buys their vapes online, particularly via social media (usually due to the lower prices), please bring the contents of this article to their attention so that if they choose to continue to vape, that they source their vapes from more trustworthy sellers (such as high street supermarkets) rather than online sellers,
- If you know of any shops who sell vapes to youngsters under 18 or who you suspect of selling illegal vapes OR if you know of anyone who is selling vapes from their home to callers at their door, please report what you know to Trading Standards in complete confidence by calling us on 01467 537222, e-mailing me on robert.mckinney@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or calling Consumer Advice Scotland on 0808 164 6000 so that we can do something about it. It is of secondary importance to us who you are but of primary importance to us that we learn what you already know. Trading Standards will not divulge your identity to anyone outside our office.

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Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in 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 non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact the [Consumer Advice Scotland](#) website or call them on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).