

From mountain to sea

Doorstep Callers and Scams

Bulletin No. 105

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

Trading Standards have recently been made aware of a number of reports from the Fraserburgh and Peterhead areas of a group of roofers going door to door there and the surrounding villages in unmarked vans, knocking at resident's doors and asking them if they would like any roofing work done.

Often, it would appear, the residents have been elderly and lived alone. The men have then been providing highly priced quotes, insisting that the work is done in the days immediately after their call and insisting on payment in either cash, cheque or a combination of the two. No form of paperwork has been provided to anyone by these men.

Unfortunately, some residents have accepted the offers made by these men and have had work done. Thankfully when these residents have gone to the bank to withdraw cash to pay the workmen, bank staff have implemented the Banking Protocol and declined to complete the cash withdrawal (as they should), but have instead contacted Police Scotland, thereby saving these residents thousands of pounds from their savings in the process.

To anyone who has read these bulletins for any length of time the sound of alarms bells should be deafening. For example:

- Rogue traders frequently target elderly or vulnerable people as they are less likely to complain if they're unhappy with the work done and are more easily intimidated,

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- Using unmarked vehicles makes it more difficult to know who you're dealing with and should problems arise in the future with the work, who to contact to get the matter remedied, as laid down in law,
- Payments in cash, unless witnessed, leave no paper trail afterwards to show who paid whom, when and by how much, and may indicate that the workmen are also trying to avoid paying taxes on these payments,
- Payments by cheque do leave a paper trail and permit the payer to cancel the cheque, if they do so soon after handing the cheque over. This method though was the less preferred method of payment by the men,
- Insisting that work is done soon after the initial knock at the door violates the resident's legal right to a 14 day cooling off period. This period is a valuable time for reflection, during which a customer can (in these circumstances) cancel any work arranged, at no cost to themselves and any ensure that deposit is refunded. It is not something which should be set aside carelessly,
- Once the nature of the work has been agreed by the resident and the trader, the trader is legally obliged to provide the resident with a written quotation "in durable form" which is clear and legible and contains the trader's business details in case a problem arises in future. Failing to do so is a clear offence and possibly further proof that the men didn't want the residents calling them back in future (see Bulletin 43 for further information on this matter),
- Failing to provide a resident with their cancellation rights in a clear and comprehensible manner, in a durable medium (e.g. paper or e-mail) is also an offence, which, in these circumstances, these men did not provide,
- Failure to provide an invoice to residents makes it almost impossible to establish to a third party what work was actually done, what that work cost and, most importantly, who did the work, all of which greatly hampers the resident's consumer rights when work has been sub-standard or problems arise regarding their legal right to a "repeat performance", i.e. to have the issue remedied at no further cost to the resident.

All-in-all, it can be seen that dealing with 'workmen' like this is extremely risky and very costly so we would advise our residents in the strongest terms not to accept offers from door to door traders as you simply don't know who you're dealing with and after the work is paid for, these men can effectively become 'ghosts'.

Trading Standards would also urge our residents to continue to report these sorts of incident to us and to contact us if they think that they may have been a victim of this sort of rogue trader.



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(N.B. – latest information suggests that these men are now operating in the Bridge of Don area of Aberdeen)

Scams etc.

Phone Scam

Trading Standards have recently become aware of a different type of scam, via our colleagues in the Community Pharmacy Grampian, which is generating quite a bit of concern. The scam involves residents receiving a phone call which appears to be from their GP's Practice asking the resident to press a button on their phone's keypad and then to update their personal details.

It has been noted that some of the recipients of these calls have also received messages suggesting that if they don't update their personal details, that they will be removed from their GP's practice list.

Community Pharmacy Grampian would like to emphasise that this is a scam and asks people to share awareness of it far and wide.

Our information on the scam is limited but from a Trading Standards perspective and from what we do know, this scam has some notable points/red flags. For instance:

- We currently have no information on which areas are affected,
- This scam bears a strong resemblance to the Press 1 scams which we've covered in the past where recipients receive an ominous call and are instructed to press a number of their phone's keypad. Also, this is not normally how GP's practices operate,
- The 'update' of details seems suspiciously like a phishing scam, where scammers target lots of people with an impersonal message then clandestinely obtain their details to either target them in the future via other scams or sell lists of those people's details to other scammers who will then target them,
- The threat of having someone's name removed from their GP's practice list is intended solely to scare people into complying with the instruction to update details,
- At the moment, we do not know if the call consists of a recorded message or live caller; if the number on the Caller ID on the resident's phone was their GP's number (having been spoofed) or another number; if anyone has gone on to try to update their details and whether they spoke to a live person or did so by other means and whether they were left waiting on hold for a protracted period of time or not,



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- The bottom line is that this is a scam, so we would ask everyone to be wary when answering their phone, especially if the call appears to come from the GP's genuine number. Satisfy yourself that you are speaking to a genuine member of staff from your GP's practice before you divulge anything of a personal nature,
- If you suspect that the call is this sort of scam, please try to note the caller's number, then hang up. Please then report the matter to Trading Standards using the contact information at the bottom of this bulletin.

Misc.

As we move into the new year of 2025, it might be worth looking back for a moment into 2024 to see which were the most prevalent types of scams covered by the Consumers Association through their publication, the Which? magazine.

From AI deep fake videos to WhatsApp scams, to ticket scams and more; they can all be found on the Which? website by clicking on the link [here](#).

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.



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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](#).