

From mountain to sea

Doorstep Callers and Scams

Bulletin No. 94

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

Correction

In Bulletin number 93, it was stated that Aberdeenshire Council do not conduct surveys of residents. Please accept my apologies, as this information was incorrect.

Aberdeenshire Council do in fact conduct surveys of residents via a small number of sub-contractors in certain circumstances, such as after work has been done on Council tenants' properties or random satisfaction surveys on services provided by Aberdeenshire Council to Shire residents.

These surveys may include general questions such as the gender and ethnicity of the resident, the age bracket which they fall into and which general area of Aberdeenshire which they live in. Some notable points:

- There should be no questions about what someone's date of birth is or what their exact address is,
- There should be NO questions relating to money, banking arrangements, finance of any sort, or payments of any kind being made by the resident,
- Genuine callers are unlikely to be calling from 03301 (non-geographic) numbers and are much more likely to be calling from the 01698 (Motherwell) area,
- No resident is obliged to take part in these surveys,
- No resident is obliged to answer any questions which they are not comfortable in answering,
- Should you feel sufficiently unhappy with any aspect of a survey conducted as a result of a cold call, please just hang up,

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- If you have any queries about surveys which claim to be conducted on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, please contact engage@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to have those concerns addressed,
- Trading Standards officers looking into the incident detailed in Bulletin no. 93 are satisfied that it was a scam call,
- There have been other similar, reports of callers claiming to represent Aberdeenshire Council, which closely mirror the actions of bona fide sub-contractors but also have the hallmarks of being scams. These are currently being investigated, so the advice provided in Bulletin no. 93 still holds true,
- Please continue to report all such suspicious matters to Trading Standards, so that we can investigate.

Please also accept my sincere apologies for any confusion caused by last month's article.

Bogus Callers in Peterhead

Trading standards have very recently received information that there has been a number of men going around the Peterhead area cold calling residents and claiming to work for the gas company SGN. When challenged to produce identification, these men have left in a white van.

Their behaviour, in trying to gain access to people's homes, has caused sufficient concerns with some householders that they have reported the matter to Trading Standards and to Police Scotland. It is suspected that in fact they are bogus callers.

Should you have males fitting this description attend at your home, please do not let them into your home until you are absolutely certain that they are genuine.

Some other points to consider should you have unexpected cold callers attend at your door:

- If you have a fish eye door viewer, door chain or door bar fitted to your door, please remember to use them. If you don't have them fitted, please consider doing so,
- Consider making an arrangement with a near neighbour that if either of you live alone and has a cold caller at the door, the other will nip over to offer support whilst dealing with the caller,
- Alternatively, if you live with others, ask for their assistance,
- Try to remain calm and polite when dealing with doorstep callers,
- If you don't feel happy answering the door to a cold caller you don't like the look of, then don't,

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- If you do answer the door, remember the cardinal rule; if in doubt, keep them out,
- If a caller claims to work for a company, ask to see their ID card . If they can't or won't let you see it to your satisfaction, close the door on them,
- If they do let you see it, advise them that you're going to borrow the ID card, go inside and verify their identity. Remember to lock the door when you do so,
- Don't take the information on the ID card at face value as it may be false, so Google the company concerned to get a contact number then call the company to inquire about the cold caller,
- If at any stage you're unhappy with this process, ask the caller to leave, perhaps to call back at a more convenient time,
- If you feel the need to go back inside, make your excuses (you have a visitor in the house, pot boiling on the stove etc.)
- If they don't leave, or become persistent or aggressive, tell them you'll call the Police (so have a mobile phone handy) and do so, if necessary,
- Try to note down details of the callers and their vehicles as soon as they leave and hold onto any paperwork they hand over,

Please report any sightings of males fitting this description and mode of behaviour to Trading Standards and/or Police Scotland as soon as possible.

Scams etc.

Delivery Scam

One resident in the Formartine area recently reported that he had received a text, apparently from the delivery company Evri, that they had tried to deliver a parcel at the resident's home but had been unable to. The text advised the resident that it would cost 75p to attempt a re-delivery and that by clicking on a link in the text, the resident could pay the 75p charge with his bank card.

Believing that the parcel might be for a family member, the resident did consider clicking on the link and paying the very small re-delivery fee. Fortunately, before he did so, he discussed the matter with his family. It was confirmed that there were no parcels expected and the resident's son suspected it was a scam (which indeed it is) so the matter was reported to Trading Standards and no fee was paid. The resident has had no further texts about the matter.

Some points to consider:

- Evri took no part in this matter. Their name was misused by the scammer to lend credibility to the deception,
- In truth, there was no parcel to deliver. It never existed,



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- Re-delivery of parcels is covered by the original delivery costs so there should be no surcharges. Often the delivery driver will leave a notice about the attempt in the customer's letterbox, advising of a re-delivery or advising how the parcel can be collected,
- Be wary of texts from unexpected sources, especially if they relate to additional charges for re-deliveries,
- Never click on links in unknown texts, simply close the text down,
- If you suspect the text to be from a scammer or a spammer, if you can, forward the text on to the 7726 Spam text line where they will be collated and if found to be suspicious, the sender's number will be shut down,
- The real aim of these scammers is to obtain the bank card details of customers, so that they can try to rack up unauthorised transactions against the resident's account. This is done when the 75p surcharge is paid,
- If you think you may have made such a payment to a scammer, report the matter immediately to your bank,

Remember too, if you think you've been the victim of such a scam or you'd like more advice, please contact your local Trading Standards office.

Misc.

Gift Card scams

In previous bulletins we have covered the subject of residents receiving phone calls, often pre-recorded calls, from people claiming to represent tax authorities, law enforcement and prosecutors. These calls deliberately scare residents and advise them that legal action is being taken against them but to avoid further action they should purchase a large amount of gift cards (usually from Apple iTunes, Google Play or Amazon) then send photos of the cards, with serial numbers, to a specific e-mail address or mobile number, to pay the 'fine', 'levy' or 'penalty'.

As previously mentioned, no tax, law enforcement or prosecuting agency would behave in this manner. These are scams but many people have been so frightened by these scams that they will go to shops which sell these gift vouchers and spend large sums of money on them, then send the details to the scammers.

The purpose of this article is to remind readers who work in shops which sell these vouchers that with 2 simple questions, tactfully asked to any customer spending over £100 on them (particularly if they are elderly), they may be able to foil such scams. These questions are:



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- Are the vouchers for someone's birthday? (or a similar icebreaker),
- You're not buying these after getting a phone call, are you?

If the answers to these questions suggest that the vouchers are being bought for such a purpose, Trading Standards would ask that the true nature of what's really going on be explained to the customer and that the customer should seek advice either from Trading Standards or Police Scotland before completing the purchase.



#NoBlameNoShame
#WeAreScamSurvivors



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.



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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](#).