

## Consumer Alerts – May 2020

### Beware Doorstep Callers

Trading Standards has received reports of bogus callers offering property repair services, sometimes charging inflated prices. In the Chorley area an elderly householder agreed to having their gutters cleaned and a couple of ridge tiles re pointed for nearly £400. A few weeks later the same traders returned, offering to pressure wash their drive, charging a similar amount of money for a job that did not take very long.

In another case in Thornton Cleveleys a resident agreed to have some minor roofing repairs carried out by cold callers, once the work had started the traders began to find further faults, escalating the job and the price.

In the Preston area a resident agreed to have paving work done, a deposit was paid, the work began, then further monies were demanded. The trader, who did not provide any paperwork or any name or address details has since not returned.

Trading Standards would advise you to always make sure you have a valid address of any trader before agreeing to a contract. Remember, for most contracts agreed at your home you will have 14 days cancellation rights. Best advice is to use local known trades people, shop around and obtain 3 quotes, especially for larger jobs.

**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](http://www.safetrader.org.uk)**

### Covid App Scam Texts

The UK Government is currently trialling a new COVID-19 coronavirus contact tracing app on the Isle of Wight. Many expect that the app will roll out to the rest of the country later this year.

Evidence has been received of a phishing scam themed around the app, even before the real app has released nationally.

Members of the public received texts informing them that they have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. The message contains a link to a bogus website which asks for the personal details of the user. Scammers may use the information to gain access to bank accounts and commit other forms of identity fraud.

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](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) .

### Wine Investment Scam

Beware telesales calls offering investments in wine. The caller can be very persuasive and convincing, making repeated phone calls, and victims have paid thousands of pounds for alleged investments which never materialise.

Never feel pushed into making any sort of investment decision. Always do your own research. Check to make sure the company is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority.

### Scam phone call offering face masks

A report has been received of a scam phone call allegedly giving advice about the Covid 19 outbreak. The caller advised that the householder, an elderly lady, must stay in and told her she would be sent 2 masks, 2 hand gels and gloves. The caller asked for her address, then stated the cost would be £29 and asked for her bank details.

Please be suspicious of phone calls asking for bank details, scammers will always be on the lookout for ways to take advantage.

### Scam Call Regarding Upcoming Burial

The next of kin for the deceased of an upcoming burial received a phone call from someone alleging to be from the local council bereavement services. They stated their payment had been declined by the Funeral Director and that they needed to make a payment over the phone and would need to give their card details. The scammer claimed if payment was not made they would cancel the funeral.

This is a scam, luckily the Greater Manchester resident refused to give details, rang the funeral director and reported the matter to the Police.

**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.**

### Bogus Internet and Facebook sellers

Beware of bogus internet selling sites. A report has been received of a scam Facebook seller offering mobile phones for sale for bargain prices. Once money is paid you hear nothing more and the seller cannot be contacted. In another case, a consumer paid for car parts via a website that looked to be legitimate and in the UK but was in fact based in China and again the goods were never received.

Always buy goods online through known reputable suppliers, look for spelling mistakes on the site that may alert you to a non UK seller and check there is a padlock in the top address bar, before giving any financial details.

### Email Charity Scam Warning

Nationally reports have been received by Action Fraud and Trading Standards of fraudsters seeking to exploit the pandemic by claiming to be raising funds for charity. Make sure the charity is genuine before giving any financial information – it's ok to decide not to give on the spot. Be wary of unsolicited emails from charities you have never heard of and be careful when responding to emails or clicking on links within them.

Check the charity's name and registration number at [www.gov.uk/charity](http://www.gov.uk/charity). Most charities with an annual income of £5,000 or more must be registered.

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