

August –September 2015

Consumer Alerts

Doorstep Incidents

Local police have warned of a lady visiting homes in the Fylde area saying she was carrying out a survey into obesity in children. It's reported that the lady has visited one house approximately 15 times to try and gain entry. At another address the lady asked questions about the parents work and how much they earned. She then weighed one child in the house but not the other. Residents wishing to report similar incidents should contact Lancashire Constabulary on 101 (non-emergency calls) or 999 (emergencies only).

There have been further reports of a man selling memory foam mattresses door to door. The man claims they are an unwanted order or stock from a shop which has closed down. The man asks for £150 in cash claiming this is a price reduction from £500. Trading Standards advice is not to buy goods of this kind from door to door sellers as they are likely to be of uncertain quality and may not comply with safety regulations.

Householders are warned about a man offering gardening services in the Chorley area. His sales pitch falsely claimed that Chorley Council had given him authorisation to call on local residents to provide free quotes for hedge cutting and tree work. When challenged, he claimed he had left his business card at the local depot in Chorley. The man is described as 5 ft 10 ins tall with red/ginger beard wearing blue and white check shirt, yellow high vis, orange hard hat, tan boots and jeans,

driving a white van with an orange band at the back.

There continues to be a large number of reports of incidents involving bogus roofers. One lady reported being charged £20,000 for roofing work which its thought was unnecessary and of very poor quality. Another vulnerable consumer reported being cold called three times since the beginning of this year by different traders. They paid sums of £2,200 and £2,000 for roofing work and £1,200 for drain clearing. It is unclear what work has been carried out and it seems unlikely it was ever necessary.

Another consumer agreed to roofing work but refused to pay when they saw that the tiles did not seem to have been laid properly. The trader then went to his van where he suffered a 'cardiac event'. He told the consumer he was due to go into hospital for a heart operation but had skipped it to do her roof. The lady was eventually persuaded to pay in cash.

There have also been reports of traders becoming aggressive when payment is refused. One local resident was cold called by a trader who said he was doing roofing work down the road. The consumer agreed for the trader to re-cement the ridge tiles and dry verge tiles, and apply protection against rain and bad weather for £625. He paid £250 deposit. The trader started work immediately but when the job was largely done he called the consumer out to have a look and pointed out issues with the fascia boards. He also showed the consumer

photos of the flat roof which he said was in need of urgent repair. The trader quoted £900 for the fascias and £4500 for the roof but said he would do the whole lot for £5000. The consumer agreed but later rang the trader to cancel the contract having got a second opinion. The trader then claimed the consumer owed him £1500 for the work he had already done and said he would be back the next day for payment and threatened his lads would rip the materials off the roof if he refused to pay.

Trading Standards advice is never do business with doorstep traders. If you need help finding a reputable trader for home improvements, property repairs or gardening services why not try our Safe Trader Scheme. For more information visit www.safetrader.org.uk or call 0303 333 1111.

Letter Scams

Unfortunately the People's Postcode Lottery scam is still in circulation. Consumers are sent a letter, allegedly from the People's Postcode Lottery saying they have won sums like £825,000 in prize money. Consumers are asked for a processing fee or admin fee to claim their prize. The letters appear genuine as they seem to come from the South of England, Hampshire area and use the name Barron Wheels whom is apparently the president of this Peoples Postcode Lottery.

There have also been reports of scam clairvoyant letters. This is a mail shot but personally edited and claims the sender is aware the consumer has recently lost loved one. They claim to have received a message from them. The bereaved person is asked to pay a fee to receive this message but then never hears anything again.

We are still getting calls about cold callers trying to sell a call blocking service. The caller usually suggests they are from the Telephone Preference Service or from BT. Consumers are reminded that the Telephone Preference Service provides a free opt out service enabling you to record your preference on the official register and not receive unsolicited sales or marketing calls. For further information visit their website <http://www.tpsonline.org.uk/tps/index.html> or call 0845 070 0707.

A potential telephone scam currently circulating concerns Payment Protection Insurance (PPI). The caller offers to reclaim mis-sold PPI for the householder on payment of a fee. If you believe you have been mis-sold PPI please contact the Financial Ombudsmen Service on 0800 023 4567 or visit <http://financial-ombudsman.org.uk/> They can advise on how to make a claim free of charge.

The bogus 'Microsoft' scam seems to be around again. The usual scenario is that the consumer gets a phone call from the trader saying they are calling from 'Windows' or 'Microsoft' and that their computer is infected. The trader then tricks the consumer into giving them remote access to their computer and then demands money to 'fix it' or tries to sell insurance.

To report or get advice on fraud or internet crime contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or visit www.actionfraud.police.uk.

For more information about protecting elderly & vulnerable people from scams which come through the postal system and criminals who contact them by telephone visit www.thinkjessica.com.

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 04 05 06