

Consumer Alerts – November 2020

Beware Doorstep Callers

A householder in the Preston area was cold called by roofers who advised there was a loose tile on the roof. The job then escalated to include further minor roof repairs. The traders were on the roof no more than an hour and charged £600 in cash leaving the householder concerned that very little, unnecessary work was carried out.

In Rosendale an elderly gentleman was cold called and paid £120 for some guttering repair work. The trader has not returned to carry out the work.

A resident in the Fylde area was cold called by traders offering tree services. The traders did very little work, cut down a couple of trees but asked for £5000. Luckily, on this occasion, the Police intervened, when challenged the traders stated they were only charging £500.

Residents in the Thornton Cleveleys area have reported a van driver cold calling offering mattresses for sale. Be wary, often these mattresses can be second hand goods, packaged to look new.

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

Online Quote Providing sites

Please be careful when using online sites that offer to provide trader quotes, in particular the sites where a householder states what work they want doing, and traders are then invited to contact them. One complaint relates to an elderly

man in the Hyndburn area who lost over £5000 to a scam building contractor. These sites are commercial entities, they may charge traders for leads, and they often may not make as many checks on the traders as you might assume. It can be difficult to obtain trader details from them when things go wrong, or to get your money back when work is not done.

Always use local known traders. Get recommendations from friends and family. Obtain 3 quotes and make sure to get a written contract and full contact details including an address.

Green Homes Grant

Following the launch of the Government backed Green Homes Grant, residents are urged to be on their guard for possible scams. Details of the new scheme indicates only approved and checked traders can carry out the work requested to meet the criteria. Types of improvement that qualify for the grant are also split into primary and secondary measures – the voucher must be used to install at least one primary measure which can be insulation and/or low carbon heating. After at least one primary measure has been installed, the voucher can be used to help cover the cost of a list of secondary measures which contains things like double or triple glazing, draught-proofing and energy efficient doors.

Trading Standards concerns are the door may be left open for illegitimate traders to exploit the trust of consumers who just want to access a voucher to get home improvements made cost-effectively

Householders can check to see if they are eligible for the Green Homes Grant voucher

scheme, and can find a trader registered to carry out the work, via the government website, GOV.UK.

Scam Email – using a vehicle on a road where a charging scheme applies

Scam emails have been received from residents in the Lancaster and Ribble Valley areas. The email, in distinctive green and white, looks very official and purports to be from the Home Office or from HM Courts and Tribunals Service, stating the recipient has been issued with a Penalty Charge Notice for 'the use of a vehicle on a road in the charging area which a charging scheme applies without payment of the appropriate charge at the date and time stated below'.

Whilst a date and time is given, no mention is made of a town or street. Payment is to be made within 28 days and there is a click to pay option. This is a scam – do not respond.

Scam Covid Relief Fund email

Please do not respond if you receive an email from a Kiev email address stating 'Google Artificial Intelligence has selected your email as one of our lucky recipients to receive the Google.org COVID-19 Relief Fund'. You are then asked to download a pdf file. Again this is a scam.

Scam alleging fraudulent activity on your credit card.

A resident in the Lancaster area received a very convincing automated message saying they had been a victim of a false credit card payment the day before and to 'Press 1'. On pressing 1 they were put through to someone pretending to be from the Barclaycard Fraud Team which again sounded professional and plausible. Unfortunately money was taken but the fraudulent transaction was later identified by the victim's own bank.

Please be on your guard if you receive such a phone call. Be aware sometimes the scammers may prompt you to make independent checks, but they continue to stay on the line.

Sky Broadband telephone scam

Beware of receiving a telephone call from Sky claiming that you are due compensation due to their internet speeds being too slow. The scammers then requests bank card details.

Scams can be reported to Action Fraud, contact 0300 123 2040 or go to www.actionfraud.police.uk.

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