



From mountain to sea

# Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 122

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**

### **Rogue trading fly-tipper operating in the Crimond and Strichen area**

**Aberdeenshire Council is investigating reports of a rogue trader putting residents at risk of fines by illegally fly-tipping their waste in the Crimond and Strichen area.**

A male wearing a hi-visibility jacket has been reported going door-to-door in the Crimond area over the last few weeks offering gardening and other work, then illegally dumping the waste. It was said that they have been using a small white van featuring an orange logo of a house and the word "ultra" on the side. No reports were made about the person's actions until they were witnessed dumping waste. They appear to be targeting the older generation using a story—that varied slightly from home to home—about a family issue being the reason why they need the work.

The individual may have moved onto the Strichen area, with fly-tipped materials appearing there containing documents referencing Crimond.

Cllr Alan Turner, Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee Chair, said: "Most businesses and individuals who would dispose of your waste are fantastic, but there are always a few who spoil it for the rest. It's not fair to the businesses who operate legally, and it is certainly not fair to those trusting that their waste will be disposed of responsibly."



## From mountain to sea

“Our advice to residents is to only use companies or individuals that are properly registered with SEPA as waste carriers. Don’t be afraid to ask a company or individual where they normally dispose of waste before hiring them; they should be able to provide proof, with a waste transfer note, showing that they have done so responsibly and lawfully.”

Householders have a responsibility to ensure that their waste is disposed of correctly. As such, this rogue trader is putting individuals at risk of also receiving a £500 fixed penalty notice by illegally dumping or fly-tipping residents’ waste. To check if a business or individual is legally registered as a waste carrier via the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) head to <https://www2.sepa.org.uk/wastecarriers>

Aberdeenshire Council’s Trading Standards prevention and intervention team can also help to keep residents safe from rogue traders through its ‘Protecting our Community’ initiative.

Vanessa Wilson, Senior Trading Standards Officer at Aberdeenshire Council, said: “Doorstep callers tend to target elderly and vulnerable residents, but what we’re seeing increasingly is that everyone can be susceptible to these rogue traders.

“Through our ‘Protecting the Community’ initiative, consumers can request various prevention tools—such as doorbell cameras, call blockers, ‘no cold calling’ stickers, and information about the Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader scheme to help protect themselves at home.”

If you suspect someone of being a rogue trader - or find yourself confronted by uninvited doorstep sellers - contact the Trading Standards team by email at [trading.standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or call 01467 537222.

Residents can also enjoy peace of mind when it comes to seeking out reputable services by visiting the Aberdeenshire Trusted Trader scheme at <https://www.trustedtrader.scot/Aberdeenshire>

### **Scams etc.**

#### **Parking app scam**

One resident of the Garioch area recently reported to us that just a few days beforehand he had travelled into Aberdeen to do some shopping and had parked

## From mountain to sea

up in one of the many car parks there while he walked round the shops. When he approached one of the parking meter in the car park, he was unable to pay for parking using his bank card so downloaded a parking app on his mobile phone so that he could make payment. Initially, when using the app he was only charged 1p, it would appear, to set up the payment system. He then paid £7 for parking. However, a few days later the resident spotted that a charge of £40 had been deducted from his bank account and paid to the named company whose parking app he had downloaded onto his phone.

The resident immediately reported the matter to his bank. Enquiries with the bank revealed that the £40 charge was in fact a recurrent monthly charge – which he hadn't authorised. The bank stopped these recurring payments straight away. Efforts are ongoing to recoup the £7 initially paid.

The matter was also reported to Trading Standards when became apparent that the resident had downloaded the parking app directly from an internet website onto his phone, believing the app to be genuine. Trading Standards enquiries are also ongoing.

Some points to note:

- The resident downloaded a parking app directly onto his phone from the internet. Unfortunately, the app appears to have been set up by a scammer to which the resident paid the initial £7 believing he was paying for his parking. It would appear that this app also operates a subscription trap,
- Strictly speaking, it would appear that the resident hadn't paid for his parking so may still have been liable for it and might have incurred a parking penalty from the car park operator for non-payment. Fortunately, though, this didn't happen,
- Downloading any app from the internet directly onto your mobile phone can be a very risky matter as some scammers go to great lengths to clone legitimate websites to fool people. Other scammers don't clone websites but simply set up their own. The intention is the same though – to separate an unwary victim from their money and provide nothing of value in return,
- When looking to download apps onto your mobile phone, the first port of call should always be your phone manufacturer's own app store, i.e. the likes of the Apple store for iPhones or Google Play Store for phones running on the Android platform, as the apps featured there have been checked by Apple and Google as safe to use,
- The most widely recognised legitimate parking app for use with parking meters in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire are RingGo and PayByPhone. Further information can be found about these apps [here](#) and [here](#),



## From mountain to sea

- If you believe that you have fallen victim to a scam similar to this one, please report the matter to your bank as a priority, to get any non-authorized recurrent payments stopped and to reclaim any payments already made. Remember you can use the Stop Scams phone short code of 159 to do this,
- Remember also to report the matter to your local Trading Standards office for their awareness and possible investigation.

The Consumers Association ran an article on the Which? website a little while ago about this type of scam. This article can be found by clicking [here](#).

### **Misc.**

#### **Loft Lies: Don't Get Scammed**

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards have been receiving a high level of complaints about home insulation recently and so have become aware of a business that appears to be targeting elderly and vulnerable people and generating complaints across the UK. With complaints from every corner of the UK they felt a national campaign was more appropriate and would generate greater reach and coverage than something just locally focussed, so ask you to share this information far and wide:

Loft insulation scams often involve high-pressure sales tactics and misleading claims about the need for or benefits of insulation upgrades, sometimes targeting older homeowners. Scammers may cold call, claiming to represent legitimate organisations or using scare tactics about health risks related to existing insulation. They may also falsely claim to be working with government or official sounding schemes or endorse specific products and pressurise homeowners to waive their cooling off rights.

#### **Aims of the Campaign:**

- To educate consumers regarding scam phone calls / doorstep callers,
- To educate consumers regarding cooling off rights,
- To highlight insulation scam tactics e.g. work not needed, the company disappears, badly installed insulation, victims re-targeted for removal (esp. foam)
- And to encourage reporting of incidents by consumers.

#### **Aggressive and misleading practices**

In the UK, pressure selling is prohibited and considered an unfair commercial practice. Legislation aims to protect consumers from practices that use harassment, coercion, or undue influence to make them buy something they



## From mountain to sea

wouldn't otherwise purchase. This includes situations where a trader's behaviour significantly limits a consumer's ability to make an informed decision.

Key aspects of pressure selling and related consumer rights:

### **Aggressive Practices:**

These include tactics that intimidate, exploit, or place unreasonable burdens on consumers. Examples include:

- **Harassment:** Repeated and unwanted calls or visits, refusing to leave a consumer's home.
- **Coercion:** Using threats or physical force.
- **Undue Influence:** Exploiting a position of power over a consumer to pressure them.
- **Pressure Selling:** The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 prohibits aggressive commercial practices, which include undue pressure on consumers to make a transaction they wouldn't otherwise make. Creating false urgency, overwhelming consumers with information, refusing to leave when asked, or making them feel unable to leave without buying something are all examples of pressure selling tactics.

### **Misleading Practices:**

Traders cannot use false or deceptive information to induce a sale. This includes:

- **Misleading Claims:** Falsely claiming a product is free or that a special offer will soon end. Or falsely claiming work is needed when it is not e.g. you have a damp loft or it will improve the energy efficiency of your home.

### **Capacity:**

If a consumer is deemed to lack capacity, then any contract entered into under such pressure is likely to be deemed invalid. A person lacks capacity to make a decision if they cannot understand the information needed to make the decision, remember that information, or use it to make a decision. Rogue traders sometimes take advantage of someone in this situation.

### **Cooling off rights:**

You are entitled to 14 days for 'cooling off'. You should not be asked to sign anything to waive this. The only situation in which you might need to waive your cancellation rights is in the case of a genuine emergency, e.g. locked out and need a locksmith or have a leaking pipe and need an emergency plumber.



## From mountain to sea

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has produced a consumer guide for spray foam, and their website allows you to search for a qualified, professional surveyor in your area. To access this guide, please click [here](#).

Further information can be found about the campaign by clicking [here](#).

**#LoftLies**

### **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 Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via [tradingstandards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing [tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto: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.



## From mountain to sea

Please direct any media queries to [news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto: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](#).