

Consumer Alerts – September 2020

Beware Doorstep Callers

Park home residents are advised to be on their guard to cold callers offering to carry out property repairs on their homes. An elderly park home owner in the Fylde area was targeted by traders who knocked on his door offering to replace the skirting. The work was unnecessary and overpriced and was luckily stopped before any money changed hands.

In **Lancaster** a householder was cold called and agreed to the roof and gutters being cleaned. The trader then tried to escalate the job by claiming there was a problem with the pointing which was not true.

A resident in **Nelson** contacted a trader after receiving a flyer through their door. They wanted some minor roofing repairs carried out and gave the trader money up front for materials. The trader has not returned and cannot be contacted.

Cold callers offering to clean your drive have been reported operating in the **Preston** area. If agreed, the price may escalate, traders can create confusion over which area of drive was included in the original price.

Always use local known traders. Make sure to get paperwork including full contact details, if you agree to the contract in your own home you will, in most cases, have 14 days to cancel.

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

TV Streaming Scam

Nationally a large number of reports have been received regarding scams where householders receive a telephone call about their TV subscription coming to an end and that they will have to pay in order to keep the service. Initially, an automated phone call states your subscription is about to expire and that you need to make a payment of £39.99. You are then asked to press a number on your telephone keypad in order to be put through to an operator to make payment. The operators can be very convincing. If you have a TV subscription, please check the company's website for advice on how to deal with any suspicious contact that you receive.

HMRC Scam Text to Self Employed

Be aware of a scam aimed at self-employed individuals and freelancers. Whilst genuine government financial help may be available, scammers are taking advantage of people's current vulnerabilities, sending text messages suggesting eligibility for a tax refund. A link in the text takes you to a very realistic web page. Initial information is asked for, the site calculates a fake refund amount, then asks for bank details and passport details for verification purposes. HMRC will never send a text that requires highly confidential information.

Scams can be reported to Action Fraud, contact 0300 123 2014 or go to www.actionfraud.police.uk.

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0800 222 1133