

Consumer Alerts – April 2021

Beware Doorstep Callers Offering Property Repairs and Maintenance

A vulnerable resident in the Pendle area reported cold callers offering to repoint ridge tiles and replace broken tiles. The job and price soon escalated to include further repair works, payment was asked for in cash, luckily the bank intervened and the Police were contacted.

The South Ribble area has also reported cold callers offering roofing repairs and driveway work .

If you need work doing to your property Trading Standards would advise to always use local known trades people, ask family and friends for recommendations and get 3 quotes. Always make sure you have a full valid address and contact details prior to agreeing to any work with a trader.

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

Gardening Work Scams

Householders are reminded to use caution when they obtain traders they have not used before from the many sites where consumers and traders can post jobs. A Leyland resident posted a gardening job on one of these sites and lost a deposit of over £1000 to a trader, who took the money but did not return and is not answering the householder's calls.

A resident in West Lancashire paid a cold caller a £100 to carry out gardening work, again, the trader took the money but did not return to carry out the work.

Do not pay money up front apart from small costed amounts for materials where necessary, make sure you have full costed contract details bearing the trader's name and address and any agreed work in writing before the job starts.

Cold Caller Offering Boiler Servicing

Residents in rural areas north of Lancaster should be on the alert after a report was received where a vulnerable resident was cold called by a man offering to service their boiler. It is suspected that the same cold caller had been knocking on doors in the same area the previous week offering to clean gutters.

HMCTS Spoofing Phone Call

Beware receiving a call alleging to be from the HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). Scammers mimic legitimate phone numbers, known as spoofing, and may allege that you owe HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) money and that a warrant for your arrest has been issued. Scammers may also tell you to look up contact details for HMCTS to verify the number they are using to call.

HMCTS is separate from HMRC and is not involved with tax payments and will not call or email you about tax matters. HMRC does not use any HMCTS phone numbers. If you receive a call or email, or any type of contact, do not provide any personal details or make a payment.

Scam Warranty Telesales

Please use caution if you are contacted by a telesales call offering to sell you a warranty or home appliance insurance. While many cold calls are trying to sell a new policy, many claim your existing cover

is expiring and you need to renew, regardless of whether you had cover in the first place.

Reports have been received where householders suffering from dementia have been targeted, being contacted by multiple companies all selling similar insurances for items that the householder does not own or are worth considerably less than the cost of the insurance.

Businesses offering insurance policies should be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority who also offer an ombudsman scheme, check the register at www.fca.org.uk.

Phishing Alerts

Be on the alert for a phishing email from **TV licencing** that states due to outdated TV account details your account will be suspended unless you provide your date of birth, current address, telephone number and payment method. The email provides a link to 'Visit TV licencing now' and advises you to keep your details up to date to prevent cybercriminals accessing your data.

Beware of a **fake Sainsbury's** email stating you have been selected to participate in a gift card giveaway, the recipient is invited to enter personal information on a linked website. This is a scam.

Similarly be on the alert for a phishing email alleging to be from **Just Eat** offering a £50 gift card, again taking you to a link requesting personal details.

Also doing the rounds is a phishing email alleging to be from **Yahoo** asking you to upgrade 'here'.

A **DVLA** phishing email from an email address G.O.V.U.K states that the payment for your latest vehicle tax invoice failed. It continues to say that some of the billing details associated with your account

might have expired or were otherwise changed. You are invited to click on a link to a secure page to enter your details.

Phishing emails can look as if they have come from a trustworthy entity and can make you panic into divulging personal information, often implying a service will be withdrawn or you will not be 'legal', or tempt you by the lure of a refund or a voucher.

If you have received an email which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) at report@phishing.gov.uk.

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