

Scams are crimes – help stop them!

We have joined forces with the National Scams Team and Age UK to identify and support the silent victims of mass marketing fraud, more commonly known as scams. Scammers will use every trick in the book to get you to part with your cash including:

- You have won a lottery, sweepstake or competition... **BUT YOU HAVE TO SEND MONEY**
- Money you have won is being held in a holding company... **BUT YOU HAVE TO SEND MONEY**
- Somebody has left you an inheritance... **BUT YOU HAVE TO SEND MONEY**
- A clairvoyant can stop bad luck/direct good luck towards you... **BUT YOU HAVE TO SEND MONEY**
- There is a "secret" deal which will make you rich... **BUT YOU HAVE TO SEND MONEY**

Scammers send out catalogues selling food, pills, jewellery, clothes and items for your home. They guarantee a prize to those who order and make it appear like 'you' are the only one to be getting this amazing offer. They never send the promised prize (though some do send "cheap" goods to keep the victim on the "hook"). Instead they send out more promises to get more orders!

Criminals claim to be **Debt Recovery Agencies**: threatening court action if a BOGUS overdue utility bill isn't paid within 7 days. A great many trusting older people fall for this scam.

Religious Scam: Criminals use religion as a way of deceiving victims, often claiming they are going to pray at Lourdes.

Charity Scam: Criminals send out "begging" letters from fictitious charities, they often use distressing photos, in an attempt to pull at the heart strings of caring people.

Courier Scam – Criminals telephone you pretending to be from your bank/building society and the Police to trick you into revealing your PIN and handing your card to a courier on your doorstep. Money is then withdrawn from your account or the card used to buy goods by these criminals.

They are forever coming up with new and more convincing scams so it's important to be vigilant both for you and loved ones. The Police or your bank/building society will never contact you to ask for your PIN or bank card. Scammers send authentic looking scam mail from banks/building Societies asking for personal information and/or cash. It's more prolific via email, called phishing, but it's still being sent out via the post.

Source: Think Jessica

As part of our ongoing work in this area, we have carried out joint visits with Age UK to victims of mail and telephone scams. The picture shows the scam mail received by a gentleman in Kettering over a two week period. He had been sending money for 'foreign lotteries' and also to a catalogue business based abroad offering prizes if orders were placed with them. He had spent over £3000 and received no prizes. He has now stopped responding to any scam mail.



Information continued on next page....

Remember, if it seems too good to be true it probably is! You can better protect yourself by taking the following steps:

- Never respond to scam mail – even those that appear to have official stamps stating “Guaranteed Winner” e-mails, texts or telephone calls.
- Never send money in advance to claim a prize.
- Never give out your personal or financial details to strangers or to people who should have this information already.
- Always shred anything with your personal or bank details on.

For further information and advice on how to protect yourself from scams visit www.thinkjessica.com or www.actionfraud.police.uk.

Safety Concerns

Lithium battery risk to the young



Trading Standards colleagues from Newcastle and Manchester have warned Parents about the risks to babies and young children of button or cell batteries which contain lithium following the deaths of two children who had swallowed them. The lithium contained within the battery causes a chemical reaction when it comes into contact with saliva. This would leak acid and cause severe trauma such as burning a hole in the stomach or throat and cause damage to internal organs.

Although there is a legal requirement for toy manufacturers to make sure they are locked away, the batteries are used in many other everyday objects such as keyrings, remote controls and greetings cards and can, therefore, be quite easily accessed by children. Therefore it is important to ensure the batteries are kept out of the reach of young children and to seek medical advice immediately if you suspect a child may have swallowed one.

Toys withdrawn from sale due to excess phthalates

Imitation cigarette practical joke toys have been found to contain excessive amounts of potentially cancer-causing chemicals. A survey of the toys carried out by us found that over 10% of the items sampled contained excessive amounts of restricted chemicals called phthalates.

What are phthalates?

Phthalates are toxic substances that may be associated with causing cancer, deformities in unborn babies and infertility in men and can be found in soft PVC which is commonly used in the manufacturing of toys. Regulations restrict the presence of six different types phthalates in relation to parts of the toys that children could possibly put in their mouths.

Following our survey, the suppliers of the affected toys have withdrawn them from sale pending further investigation.



Out of date food costs local shopkeeper £6,000

A shopkeeper who denied attempting to sell more than 100 items of out of date food, including a mouldy sausage roll (pictured right), has been ordered to pay over £6,000 following a trial at Northampton Magistrates' Court. Our officers visited the Nisa Local shop in Birchfield Road East, Abington in October 2013 following customer complaints.



Kulasingatharmarasa Nimalathan had previously pleaded not guilty to displaying items of food for sale that were past their use by date. He was given a £2,000 fine for the offence relating to the mouldy sausage roll and fined a further £2,500 for offences relating to 105 out-of-date items. He was also ordered to pay £1,655.90 in court costs.

Councillor André González de Savage, county council cabinet member for public protection, said consumers had a right to expect that any food items they buy are fit for consumption and in this case "basic standards were not being met." He said: "Public health is paramount, so we will take action against any business owner not abiding by the law in respect of food standards and will not hesitate to prosecute when appropriate. I would urge shopkeepers and staff to be vigilant about the condition of food and products that they sell and ask anyone who has information about poor practice to inform Trading Standards by calling the Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 040506."

Shop owner sold cigarettes to a 16 year old



Bharatkumar Patel who trades as Harrington Road Mini Market in Rothwell pleaded guilty to selling cigarettes to a 16 year old test purchase volunteer. He was fined £500.00 by Magistrates for the offence, contrary to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (as amended). Mr Patel had previously received several warnings from us regarding this issue.

£13,000 Confiscation Order for counterfeit goods

Jinbao Zhang, a counterfeit jewellery importer and distributor, has been ordered to pay a £13,370.54 Confiscation Order made under proceeds of crime legislation. Zhang was prosecuted by us after his vehicle was stopped by Northamptonshire Police while travelling north on the M1 where over 2000 counterfeit items were found and seized including jewellery, purses and bags with various fashion logos such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton. Zhang had previously pleaded guilty to offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994, for which he received a 30 month jail sentence.



Fine for failing to give Cancellation Notice



Thomas McCarthy from Leighton Buzzard has pleaded guilty to failing to provide a written cancellation notice of the right to cancel a contract he had entered into with a local consumer. He cold called a South Northamptonshire resident and agreed to carry out roofing work on the property. He received a £1,750.00 fine from Magistrates for this offence.

Illicit tobacco continues to cause issues

Since April 2014 our officers have seized over £130,000 worth of illegal tobacco. In one case over £26,000 cash was also seized.

Arasi Ahmadi, Euro Foods, Kettering

Pleaded guilty to six offences in relation to foreign labelled and counterfeit tobacco. He also admitted selling tobacco to an underage person who was only 16. Ahmadi was sentenced to 240 hours community service and ordered to pay £3,596.59 costs.

Hawar Ramo, Baltika Supermarket, Kettering Road, Northampton

Pleaded guilty to selling foreign labelled cigarettes and tobacco. Ramo was fined £2,000 and ordered to pay £1,525.90.

He had previously signed an undertaking not to supply or possess for supply such tobacco.



The tobacco had been hidden in a staircase

Shamal Hamadamin, Little Europe, Wellingborough

Pleaded guilty to labelling and trade mark offences in relation to supply and possession for supply of foreign labelled and counterfeit cigarettes and HRT.

The bench made a 12 month Community Order with a requirement of 100 hours community service. They also ordered him to pay £1,794.48 costs and a £60 Victim Surcharge.

Consumer cancellation rights extended

**DO YOU
KNOW YOUR
CONSUMER
RIGHTS?**



On the 13th June 2014 the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations came into force, replacing the Distance Selling Regulations 2000 and the Off Premises (Doorstep) Regulations 2008.

In summary, the change in legislation means that for consumers:

- Your right to cancel a service starts the moment you enter into the contract and lasts 14 days.
- Your right to cancel an order starts the moment you place your order and ends 14 days (previously seven days) from the day you receive it.
- If you want to download digital content within the 14 day cancellation period you must agree to waive your cancellation rights.
- Companies are not allowed to charge you for items they put in your online shopping basket or that you have bought as a result of a pre-ticked box.
- You should receive a refund within 14 days of returning goods to the retailer or cancelling online.
- You may in some cases be given longer than 14 days to cancel so always check the terms and conditions.

Further information on the Regulations can be found by visiting www.adviceguide.org.uk and searching for 'distance selling'.

Do you know someone who runs a local business?

We enforce many consumer laws to encourage fair, safe and honest trading. If you run, or know someone who runs, a business in Northamptonshire we can provide advice and guidance on how to comply within Trading Standards legislation. There are various levels of support we can offer depending on the nature of the business. We can tailor advice to the needs of the business across the spectrum of Trading Standards legislation. Fees are charged on a cost recovery basis and the maximum hourly rate payable for VAT registered businesses in 2014/15 is £59.83 (plus VAT). A lower subsidised hourly rate of £49.86 (plus VAT) is charged for non-VAT registered businesses.



However, start up businesses and some small businesses may be eligible for free advice to support them in their early stages. Please visit the business pages on our website to find out more – www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/TSBusiness-support.

Looking for a reliable trader? We can help!

Our Buy with Confidence scheme brings together gardeners, plumbers, builders, electricians and many other types of businesses from across the county who have been individually checked by us for trustworthiness and compliance with consumer protection laws.



Traders are only accepted onto our Buy with Confidence scheme if they pass stringent checks carried out, such as a full audit of the business and CRB checks for all employees. Some of the businesses who have joined us recently are shown below. For more information on these businesses, or to search for a business approved by us, please visit the Buy with Confidence website www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk.

- **County Home Renovations** (building work, kitchens & bathrooms), Northampton www.countyhomerenovations.co.uk
- **First Choice Heating** (heating engineer – domestic work only), Earls Barton www.firstchoiceheatingnorthampton.co.uk
- **D&L Windows** (double glazing), Northampton email george3057@sky.com, tel 01604 753643
- **Andy O'Dell Window Cleaning Services**, Finedon www.windowcleaning.co.uk
- **Abbey Builders** (general builders), Kettering www.abbeybuildersuk.co.uk

Would you like to join our scheme?

If you are an honest and reputable trader based in the Northamptonshire area, then it's time you joined the Buy with Confidence scheme – show your customers you are Trading Standards Approved.

How do you apply?

If you are committed to providing a quality service and are willing to abide by the spirit and letter of the law, you may be eligible to join.

- If you are interested in joining the scheme please visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk where you will find full terms and conditions, fee details and an application form.
- Alternatively, for more information email: bwc@northamptonshire.gov.uk or call 0300 126 1000.

To make a complaint, provide information or get advice

Our partner organisation, the Citizens Advice consumer service provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues and will refer cases to us where further action may be appropriate.

The service will provide information on all consumer issues, including:

- advice before you buy
- businesses acting unfairly or illegally
- cancellation of contracts for goods or services
- faulty goods
- guarantees
- scams
- unsatisfactory service



Therefore, if you have a complaint about a trader or need advice or information on problems with goods or services please visit www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer, or call the Citizens Advice consumer service helpline on **03454 04 05 06**.

Please give us your feedback on this newsletter or our work

Please write, call or email us on the contact details below; we really value your opinion.

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Website: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards



*Scan to view
our website*

If you would like to receive future issues electronically please email tradedstd@northamptonshire.gov.uk with 'Newsletter' in the subject box.



If you have had reason to contact us or the Citizens Advice consumer service and would like to take part in a short online survey regarding satisfaction with our service and suggestions for future improvements please visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/TradingStandardsConsumerSurvey201415