

## Consumer Alerts – April 2020

### Beware Property Repair Cold Callers

Trading Standards have received reports of householders being cold called by property repairers and are concerned that rogue traders may take advantage of the current situation, targeting older or vulnerable residents who are self-isolating or shielding.

In South Ribble an elderly gentleman, after being cold called, agreed to have his drive and patio jet washed, the price of initially £7000 was reduced to £3500, but when Trading Standards intervened, the traders alleged a misunderstanding, the price being £350. In Fleetwood a householder agreed to groundworks and fencing but was concerned that the monies, over £12,000 were excessive. Reports have also been received regarding cold callers offering roofing services in the Burnley area.

In the Garstang area a lady in her 80's received a flyer offering gardening services. The traders arrived at her house within 10 minutes of her contacting them, giving her no time to think, and after just over an hours work charged her £750 for cutting back a conifer. The lady felt bullied into paying this excessive amount for poor quality work.

Best advice is to get a written quote before agreeing to any work and remember for most contracts agreed at your home you should be given a 14 day cooling off period in writing.

### Bogus Gas Man

A vulnerable lady in Thornton Cleveleys received a knock on her door from a man claiming to work for the gas board stating it had shown up on their computer that she had a leak. Coincidentally she had recently

had a legitimate gas repairman out to her property. The bogus caller looked at the meter but then called his 'boss' on the telephone who told her she would have to pay to have a tree outside her house, trimmed down. The lady argued that the tree was not her responsibility and got the individual to leave. It is suspected the callers may be linked to a bogus roofing job she had previously had done.

Be suspicious of utility providers turning up unannounced at your door. Always ask for identification but check independently with the utility company. In most cases you will have received a letter in advance letting you know work will take place.

**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](http://www.safetrader.org.uk)**

### White Goods Insurance

Please be wary of telephone calls offering warranties for white goods. Often the callers can be persistent, repeatedly calling the householder and once you have agreed to a warranty, you can be targeted by other similar calls. In one case a man, suffering with dementia, had given his bank card details to several of these companies, paying around £90 each time. In another case a customer had paid £1800. Remember, you will have cancellation rights of 14 days for most contracts agreed over the telephone.

**To reduce telesales calls join the Telephone Preference Service on 03450 700707**

### **Bit Coin Scam**

Be wary of telephone calls stating they can claim money back for previously paid investments.

A Lancashire resident who had paid out £18,000 for a Bit Coin investment over 3 years ago received a telephone call from a scam company claiming they had been ordered by the bank to refund her the investment money. They needed her bank account details and would also need a payment from her of £2000.

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