

## Consumer Alerts – July 2020

### Beware Doorstep Callers

Cold callers reported to Trading Standards this month have been in relation to gardening services, driveway work and roofing repairs. In South Ribble a trader offering gardening services has been reported by a resident charging £400 for a couple of hours of poor quality, unfinished work and will not return.

In a case in Fulwood, an elderly resident was cold called and agreed to some driveway repairs for £1800. The trader was very pushy, would not take no for an answer and took the householder to the cash point. The price later increased, again the work is of poor quality and unfinished and the trader will not return.

In Chorley a gentleman in his 80's agreed to a minor roof repair. The trader then told him more work was needed as the chimney was about to collapse. The work took no more than half a day but the resident paid £2000.

Trading Standards would advise you to always make sure you have a valid address of any trader before agreeing to a contract. Remember, for most contracts agreed at your home you will have 14 days cancellation rights. Best advice is to use local known trades people, shop around and obtain 3 quotes.

**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)**

### Scam personal alarm telesales call

Information has been received from a Poulton le Fylde resident who received a

telephone call offering to sell a personal alarm that could be worn using a neck cord, claiming that the service was run by a doctor. These calls appear to target the over 60s, and attempt to obtain a large amount of personal information from the consumer, but do not want to provide information about the company when challenged. The caller used a 07733 mobile number that appears to be linked to online scams.

Always use known, established traders for such services.

**To reduce telesales calls join the Telephone Preference Service on 03450 700707. Many telephone service providers can also offer help to reduce the number of scam calls you receive.**

### Scam O2 Text Message

Beware receiving a fake message being sent to O2 customers claiming that payments have not gone through, so customers need to update their payment details. The link leads to a fake website enabling your bank account details to be stolen.

### Advance Fee Dating Scam

Dating scams can use untraceable messaging services such as Hangout and WhatsApp. An East Lancashire resident was groomed for some weeks by a potential partner, who claimed to be working in Europe and about to fly home. He asked for her to pay a diplomatic delivery fee via first MoneyGram and secondly via online banking, in order for him to receive his wages from a foreign government. This was due to him not having a bank account or friends in the UK

due to his long absence. A £1000 was paid following a network of credible contacts involving a second person, a diplomatic agent, and foreign Customs contacts.

Be careful not to give your address, full date of birth or any financial details when chatting online. Scammers aim to gain your trust and ask you for money or for enough information to steal your identity.

**If you have been a victim of such a scam, please contact the Police. Suspected romance fraud scams can be reported to Action Fraud, contact 0300 123 2014 or go to [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).** |

### **Beware Free Trials**

Take care when signing up to free trials – there can sometimes be pitfalls where we find we have signed up to more than we bargained for. Ask yourself:

- What am I agreeing to in order to claim this offer?
- Is the trial really ‘free’? Or could I have money taken from my bank account or card?
- Do I have to provide my payment details? If yes – stop and ask why.
- If there can be a charge, do I know how much it is and when the payment will be taken? Also, what exactly will I get in exchange for that charge?
- What must I do to stop the payment and by when?
- If I do get charged – what does the company say about giving me my money back?
- If I do get charged and do nothing, what happens next? Might the company take more payments in the future?

Look carefully at the wording of the ad and always check the terms and conditions to make sure you fully understand the extent and nature of an offer. If you think you may not want to pay to continue after the trial

period, it’s a good idea to set a reminder to cancel.

### **Suspicious Email Reporting Service**

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has launched a suspicious email reporting service in partnership with the City of London Police. The service makes it easier than ever to flag suspicious emails

Members of the public can send their suspicious emails to **report@phishing.gov.uk** and the NCSC’s automated programme will immediately test the validity of the site. Any sites found to be phishing scams will be removed immediately. As well as taking down malicious sites, the service will support the police by providing information and identifying new patterns in online offending.

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