

Consumer Alerts – October 2020

Driveway Repairs Scam

A householder in Bamber Bridge was cold called and agreed to work resurfacing her driveway for £3700 cash. Unfortunately all the trader did was paint the driveway black. They later disputed the money received claiming they had only charged £400.

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

Beware Doorstep Covid Scam

A householder in the Preston area received a cold call from a man claiming he was disinfecting the outside of houses for Covid on behalf of the council. The householder sent him away, but he returned later that day claiming he needed to disinfect inside the property. Again the householder sent him away but he returned the following day with the same story and this time gained entry, stealing the householders purse.

Be suspicious of anyone calling claiming to be from the council if you are not expecting a visit. Ask for identification but always check independently with the council if you have concerns.

Covid Test and Trace

The NHS Test and Trace service plays an important role in the fight against

coronavirus and it's vital the public have confidence and trust in the service, however we understand the concerns people have about the opportunity for criminals to commit scams. What you need to know:

Contact tracers will only call you from the number 0300 013 5000 or 0300 123 7790. Local contact tracers will contact you from a local council number. If you're unsure if this is genuine, please contact your local council for advice. Anyone who does not wish to talk over the phone can request the NHS Test and Trace service to send an email or text instead, inviting them to log into the web based service.

All texts or emails sent by NHS test and trace will ask people to sign into the contact tracing website and will provide you with a unique reference number. We would advise people to type the web address <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk> directly into their browser followed by the unique reference number given to you rather than clicking on any link provided in the message.

The NHS test and trace service will never:

- Ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to them (for example those starting 09 or 087)
- Ask you to make any payment or purchase a product of any kind
- Ask for any details about your bank account
- Ask for your social media identities or login details or those of your contacts

- Ask you for any passwords or PINS or ask you to set up any passwords or PINS over the phone
- Ask you to download any software to your PC or ask you to hand over control of your PC or smartphone or tablet to anyone else
- Ask you to access any website that does not belong to the government or NHS

Age UK Lancashire Bogus Calls

Residents in Morecambe and Preston have been contacted by phone by an alleged representative of Age UK Lancashire wanting to visit to see if any help could be provided. These calls have not come from Age UK Lancashire and the concern is that the name is being used to try to access homes of older people.

Please remember to always check identification, all Age UK Lancashire staff will carry this with them, but if you have received a call regarding support from Age UK Lancashire that you have not requested, call 0300 3031234, the Customer Services Team at Age UK Lancashire will be able to check appointments booked by their staff.

HMRC Phone Scams

A call received on a landline in Lancaster stated it was from Revenue and Customs and that before legal enforcement action was taken, which had been filed against the recipient's name, they needed to phone 02071830380 immediately.

A similar very pushy automated call received by a Burnley resident on their mobile phone alleging to be from the HMRC stated that if the recipient did not press '1' they would be arrested shortly.

Advice from HMRC on how to deal with any suspicious contact that you receive can be

found at www.gov.uk/topic/dealing-with-hmrc/phishing-scams

Potential TV Licence scams

The free TV licence for over 75's came to an end at the beginning of August. Unfortunately this may provide a potential for scams. Please be aware, if you are over 75 you do not need to do anything until the TV Licensing team write to you. They will not phone or email you requesting payment.

Any genuine communication about your TV licence will have your licence number on. You can check your licence number online at www.tvl.co.uk/yourlicence. TV Licensing will always use your last name and title if it is known to them. Fraudulent communications will often address the homeowner, tenant, or other variants of this.

If you're unsure about any communication you've received from someone claiming to be from TV Licensing, please call them on 0300 303 9695

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