

PRESENTATION TO LAMBETH AGE UK – 21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2018

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## Scammers and examples of their practices – Counterfeit goods and more

### SCAMS

As Home Safety Ambassadors we need to pass on messages to residents about the many instances where rogue traders seek to take advantage of anyone who is unaware or vulnerable.

- Face to face in the street – Researchers and some Charity workers often make an approach whilst you are out in shopping areas. My advice would be to refuse to enter into conversations – unless you wish to and feel safe and ideally have someone else with you. Never give your home contact details or banking information. If you wish to donate to a charity there are more secure ways to do this
- On your doorstep – be very wary of all uninvited callers – never open your door without asking the caller to identify themselves first or only as far as a door chain will allow. Even if they have an ID and are wearing a uniform such as Gas Board, Water Board, Local Council, etc – disbelieve everyone till proven – before you let them in look up the phone number of the company or utility and phone it before you let them in. Don't just phone a number on their ID as that will probably fake as well.
  - There are a number of organisations that give lists of approved traders that clients can contact to ensure they get a good deal and reliable service. These include
  - Age UK recommended handyman services
  - Trusted Trader Scheme through Which?
  - Rated People .com
  - Checkatrade.com
  - Other local schemes via your local trading standards websites [www.tradinstandards.uk](http://www.tradinstandards.uk)

One of the best ways to find a good handy person is still the oldest and best - that is by personal recommendation from a friend or neighbour

- Get a door chain - display a sticker telling callers you never buy goods from a cold callers or will never agree to have work done on your property and you will call the Police if they persist. Pre-printed notices are available from Local Councils and some Charitable organisations or can be found on the internet.

Here is a link to the money saving expert website to print off a free A4 sign

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/phones/no-more-junk#freesign>

- **Cold Calling Control Zones** – talk to your local authority and find out about creating such areas in your locality. Individual streets or blocks of flats etc can have signage erected to warn possible cold callers they are not welcome. There are some in Lambeth see this link – click on section 2 to see where they are and how to set others up

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/business-services-rates-and-licensing/food-safety/trading-standards-guide>

- Tell residents not to be worried about phoning 101 to report all incidents or even 999 if they feel threatened. Advise residents to tell relatives and neighbours about any such visits.
- **Distraction burglary** – warn residents about unwanted callers – explain the method of operation of these people of these people – if two people cold call, never let them both in at once as one is likely to keep you chatting whilst the other will wander round your home stealing anything valuable
- **Scam Mail**
  - Whilst visiting look out for piles of letters saying the resident has won a prize OR offering large sums of money to use their bank account for money transfers OR a relative is in trouble abroad.
  - These should be ignored and disposed of in the recycle bin as it is unlikely that any offer will be genuine

If the letter has the senders address on (usually on the back of the envelope) Suggest they put the mail back in the post box unstamped and marked – **UNSOLICITED MAIL RETURN TO SENDER**

The sender will then have to pay the return postage which may prompt them to remove contact details from their mailing lists.

If you want to report a potential postal scam you can contact Royal Mail at

**Freepost Scam Mail,**  
**Or by phone on 03456 113 413**  
or email: [scam.mail@royalmail.com](mailto:scam.mail@royalmail.com)

Please also report instances to your local Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Service hotline 03454 040506

#### **Mail Preference Service**

If you are having a problem with the overall amount of junk mail that's addressed to you, it might help to register your name and address for free with the [Mailing Preference Service \(MPS\)](#) on-line or try phoning 0207 291 3310

This is a free service set up by the direct marketing industry to help people who don't want to receive junk mail.

Its good practice for organisations to check the MPS list before sending marketing material out but it is not a legal requirement that they do so.

### Door-to-door opt out

You can reduce the amount of 'unaddressed' mail you receive by registering with the Royal Mail's door-to-door opt-out service. However, this will not stop mail addressed to 'the occupier'.

To opt out of door-to-door mail, write to the address below requesting your name and address be added to the door-to-door opt out scheme.

Freepost RRBT-2BXB-TTTS,  
Royal Mail Door to Door Opt Outs,  
Kingsmead House,  
Oxpens Road,  
Oxford, OX1 1RX

### Nuisance phone calls on land lines

If a resident has a problem there are appliances that can filter and dismiss unwanted calls these aren't free but can prevent a great deal of worry for anyone receiving lots of calls look on line or ask your local Age UK contacts to give information. Some of these have proved very effective in limiting the worst cases of nuisance calls

- also try BT call barring
- register with Telephone Preference Service TPS by phone on 0345 070 0707 or by the internet [www.tpsonline.org.uk](http://www.tpsonline.org.uk)

Nuisance call and Text messages on mobiles - if residents are having such contacts, numbers on mobiles can be blocked on the phone itself

Nuisance Email – ask if they are troubled by begging letters etc most computers have a junk mail option

Social media – Facebook, Twitter, etc – report any incidents to the controlling body

### National Trading Standards – Scams Team

The national team are asking hundreds people to register as SCAMBassadors. Please follow the link and register your name:-

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/article.php?xArt=39>

The National Trading Standards website has lots of useful information and is at:-

<http://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/>

### Think Jessica Campaign

One of the hardest hitting cases of an elderly woman being hounded until she died is told on this Charites website. It contains a massive amount of information and advice for people caught in the web as well as their carers, friends and families <http://www.thinkjessica.com/>

## PRODUCT SAFETY - PRODUCT RECALLS

For the latest product recall information please follow this link to the Trading Standards Institute website: [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk)

The website lists a huge range of recalled goods including food, household appliances, clothing and toys. There is also a link to the European Product recall site called RAPEX this lists many more items. There is also a link to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency where anyone can search for recalls of motor vehicles but be warned there are 100's of these.

Electrical products recalls can be seen on the Electrical Safety First website

<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/>

The Government have recently agreed to put up to £12million into setting up the new Office of Product Safety and Standards – might have been better giving it to Trading Standards to make up for all the cuts they have suffered already!!

## **COUNTERFEIT GOODS**

There is an increasing volume of look-a-like goods flooding our market place, not just in shops and market stalls but also on line. These are mainly imports and are so similar in looks to the real thing that

people are easily fooled. These 'hooky' goods are often referred to in a light hearted way using references to 'Del Boy' etc. Don't touch them with a barge pole!

Advise people to shop at recognised and established High Street shops and market stalls and make sure they use the official sites on the internet. It is quite easy to look at sites that use the name of a genuine trader but are often a totally fictitious site or an agent who may charge you for connecting with the real site. The latter is quite common for things like on-line tax returns or other Government sites who actually provide free services.

The old saying that if it 'looks too good to be true - it is' is still the best guide to remember when looking at bargains.

Any dodgy goods or practices should be reported to trading Standards through the Citizens Advice contact line 03454 040506

### Selling Counterfeit goods is fraud

Counterfeit goods regularly include a massive range of goods. Designer clothes, bags, accessories and perfumes as well as pirate DVDs, CDs, computer games as well as Medicines and car parts. It seems that nothing escapes the fakers.

Many counterfeit goods are sold at car boot sales, in pubs by itinerant traders, markets or fairs. This makes it difficult to trace the fraudster once you've bought from them.

Fake goods are also sold online, although auction sites such as eBay. These companies are doing their best to clamp down on counterfeiting and piracy.

### Are you a victim of counterfeit goods fraud?

You've bought an item and discovered that it is not original or made by the brand it claims to be made by. The quality might well be inferior, which might make the product unusable or unsafe.

### What should you do if you've been a victim of counterfeit goods fraud?

If you think you have been sold counterfeit goods, or if you suspect somebody is selling fake goods, contact Citizens Advice and Trading Standards on 03454 04 05 06 for advice.

Your statutory rights apply if the goods you buy aren't satisfactory quality or are different from the seller's description. So, if you buy goods that are not as described, you should be entitled to a refund or an exchange for the real goods. The problem in some cases is will you be able to find the seller??

### Why should you avoid counterfeit goods?

- You're helping the trader to break the law and many fraudsters use the proceeds from selling counterfeit goods to fund drug dealing or other types of organised crime.
- Buying fake goods contributes to job losses because genuine manufacturers are unable to match prices charged by rogue traders. You're also depriving the genuine manufacturers of any profit.
- Some counterfeit goods may be substandard, possibly dangerous and may even contain hazardous substances.

### Protect yourself against counterfeit goods fraud

- If something seems too good to be true, eg a Rolex watch being sold for £10, it probably is. Don't be fooled into thinking you're getting a great deal.

- Always examine the quality of any goods you're thinking of buying and check the labels to see if they are genuine. It's often very easy to spot a fake as their labels may have spelling mistakes or other distinguishing marks.
- Always ask the trader you're buying from whether they offer an after-sales service, or a guarantee. Most rogue traders won't.
- Always get a proper receipt with details of contact information from the seller

If fraud has been committed, report it to Trading Standards 03454 040506

### Two especially dangerous areas of counterfeits are:- Counterfeit Cigarettes Tobacco and Booze

Illegal tobacco can be fake products, smuggled genuine products, or brands specifically made for the illegal tobacco market.

The trade in illicit tobacco and alcohol has serious consequences for health, crime and community cohesion.

They are sold cheaper than legitimate products but this practice is not a victimless crime.

The trade in illicit tobacco and alcohol is a priority for Trading Standards as:

- Illicit tobacco causes four times as many deaths as illicit drugs because it discourages smokers from quitting and encourages them to smoke more
- Counterfeit alcohol can be dangerous as some counterfeit products - such as vodkas - are made from industrial alcohol and methanol without any control over what is going into them
- Lower pricing and lack of responsibility by sellers makes it easier for children to smoke and drink alcohol
- It is linked to low level and large scale organised crime, nationally and internationally
- It goes hand in hand with drugs and alcohol, child exploitation, money laundering and even terrorism
- It targets poor and disadvantaged communities
- brings organised crime into communities
- encourages children to start smoking
- prevents adult smokers from giving up.

Suppliers of illegal tobacco and alcohol are often linked to drug dealing, people trafficking and even terrorism. Don't let illegal tobacco or booze into your community.

If you know anyone selling counterfeit versions of these products you will probably also know the people who buy them as well.

### Types of products on sale

- Illicit (duty free) – foreign products brought into the UK in illegal quantities and resold in the UK
- Counterfeit – fake packaging often made to look like premium brands. Counterfeit products contain cheap/low quality tobacco or industrial alcohol often containing harmful substances and contaminants

Trading standards prioritises its work to tackle the trader in illicit tobacco and alcohol and work regularly with HM Revenue and Customs, Police and other partners to tackle this trade.

If you want to report the sale of counterfeit or illicit tobacco or booze please contact Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 03454 040 506. They will take your report and alert trading standards.

## How can Ambassadors help to protect clients?

- All home visitors need to be an extra pair of eyes and ears for signs of concern by talking to clients
- Family, friends and neighbours can often be enlisted to be aware as well
- More advice handouts to be distributed where available

Where can we all look for help? Most is now on line so not always directly available to older people

- Local Age UK groups
- CTSI website
- Local Trading Standards Services e.g. Lambeth
- Citizens Advice Services
- Police
- Fire services

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