

Consumer Alerts – July 2021

Cold Caller Scams

In Lancaster a householder hired cold callers offering to jet wash and seal the driveway. The job escalated to include guttering and roof repairs, the trader then left, having only completed part of the driveway work. The next day, the trader advised the job couldn't proceed due to bad weather but was very persistent in requiring payment upfront for materials. The householder paid the bulk of the required amount of nearly £1000, the trader has since not returned.

In South Ribble a resident hired a cold caller, who claimed to be carrying out work in the area, and agreed for them to do some building repair work for nearly £3000. The traders persuaded the householder to pay upfront, claiming it was a discounted price only available that day, the traders will now not return, no work has been carried out.

In Wyre a resident was door knocked after receiving a flyer through the door, gardening and paving work were agreed for £2000, at the end of the job the trader stated the price had increased to over 4 times this amount as extra work had had to be carried out.

Cold callers have been reported in the Ribble Valley offering driveway work. One resident agreed to work for nearly £5000, then carried out some checks online and realised the company they were supposedly dealing with had recently dissolved, so luckily cancelled the job.

Best advice is to always use known reputable traders, get 3 quotes and make sure you have the full name and address details of the trader. It is a legal

requirement for all business paperwork to contain the name and address details of who you are dealing with.

Reputable traders will never ask you to pay the full amount upfront for the work and will never pressurise you for payment.

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

Mobile Phone Upgrade Scam

The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau are aware of an ongoing scam where consumers are being cold called by individuals impersonating employees of legitimate mobile network operators and suppliers.

Victims are offered early handset upgrades, or new contracts, at significant discounts. Once customers have been convinced that the deals are genuine and agree to proceed, suspects then ask for their online mobile account credentials, including log-ins, address and bank account details.

Suspects then place orders with genuine companies on behalf of victims, however select a different handset to that requested and have it shipped to the customer's address.

Upon receipt, suspects assure victims that this has been an error and instruct them to 'return' the handset to a different address not affiliated to the mobile company. These addresses are usually residential.

Upon intercepting the 'returned' handsets, the suspects cease contact and victims find themselves stuck with no phone and liable

for the entirety of a new contract taken out in their name.

Only contact your mobile network provider on a number you know to be correct. If you receive a device that you did not order or expect, contact the genuine sender immediately, be suspicious if asked to return to a residential address.

Scam Covid Passport email

Neighbourhood Watch are alerting people to an email claiming to be from the NHS offering a digital passport for you to be able to 'travel safely and freely around the world without having to self-isolate' The scam email asks you to click the button below to 'get digital passport ' and takes you to a convincing NHS website but asks for personal and payment details.

It is understood that this specific website has been taken down, but other similar scams may follow. Your vaccination status is obtained free through the NHS App, website or by calling the NHS on 119.

Scam emails can be forwarded to the suspicious email reporting service (SERS) at report@phishing.gov.uk.

Post office Scam Text

The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) is warning of a new Post Office scam that claims that the recipient's parcel delivery failed and returned to a Post Office depot.

The text contains a link to a fake website created to look exactly like an official Post Office platform. The website asks the target to enter their postcode and personal details supposedly to identify their closest depot and reorganise the delivery. The information requested includes the full name, address, date of birth and phone number. Whilst payment is not asked for directly, the information provided is sent directly to scammers who might use the information to commit many different kinds of identity fraud.

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