

From mountain to sea

# Bogus Calling and Scams Bulletin No. 64

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR.

## **Bogus Callers**

Nothing to report.

## **Scams etc.**

### Jewellery scam

One resident from the Marr area recently contacted Trading Standards to report that she had been on social media where she had seen a jewellery page. The company concerned implied that they were a British company (goods were priced in sterling and strap lines suggested this) and they were advertising what they claimed were handmade pieces of jewellery, of high quality, at discounted prices as they were closing down a 'collection'.

The resident e-mailed the company and placed an order, paying £80 with her credit card for a number of pieces of jewellery which were intended as presents for friends and which the company claimed was valued at over £300.

Two weeks later the order arrived from China. Much to the resident's disappointment the jewellery pieces were all of very poor quality, cheaper materials and even at the discounted prices were what she considered poor value.

Enquiries by Trading Standards established that the company was actually based in Texas, not Britain.

When considering making similar purchases, some points to consider:

- Buying from social media pages can be a risky matter in itself as there are many scammers who set up pages there, purely to deceive people.
- Spelling and Grammar. This company claimed to be British but the spelling of the word jewellery in the company name was 'jewelry'.

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'Jewellery' is the accepted British and Australian spelling and that of most of the English speaking parts of the world apart from north America. In north America and large parts of the rest of the world, 'jewelry' is the accepted spelling.

- This company has a number of other pages on social media, all of similar names, designs and logos, but most have been set up in the past year yet have relatively few posts. This can be an indication that the page is high risk to buy from. It would be worth making a search on your chosen social medium to see if this is the case with the company you're considering buying from.
- Clicking on the hyperlinks on the company's social media pages led to web pages which were still under construction or to security warnings that the destination page was unsafe due to possible malware. These results should be taken seriously.
- An independent internet search using a browser led to a separate website with the same branding, photos etc. Also, there were no physical company addresses shown on this website.
- Many of the reviews from previous customers on social media indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with their purchases. These types of reviews should be heeded. The greater the proportion of dissatisfied previous customers, the greater the chance that you will become one of them if you continue.
- This company offered substantial discounts for prices as they were closing a collection. An alternative explanation for low prices may be that the materials used and/or standard of workmanship is of a low standard, even if any goods are actually shipped to you after you've paid.

Unfortunately, this was a classic case of 'too good to be true'. As we have mentioned previously, financial transactions with businesses over social media can be a very risky business as there so many scammers who operate there, just looking for new victims. We would recommend dealing directly with companies over their websites or via reputable marketing websites, but always remember to do your due diligence, as described above, before parting with your money.

### Subscription Scam

In recent bulletins, we have covered reports of subscription scams, or subscription traps as they are sometimes called; when a consumer pays a small fee up front for a service and finds out later than the Terms and Conditions of the service also involves a subscription which can often go unnoticed for many months.



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Trading Standards were recently contacted by a resident of south Aberdeenshire who reported that for the last year he had £15 per month taken from his bank account by a company he did not recognise. He initially contacted the company directly to find out more but received no response, so reported the matter to his bank and to Trading Standards. The resident's bank immediately put a block on any further payments.

Inquiries by Trading Standards revealed that the company was based in Switzerland and that they promised frequent online shoppers ways to obtain discounts and cashback if they shopped at approved stores.

Our resident could recall no dealings with this company. He certainly had not given any permission for them to make monthly deductions from his account and did not knowingly sign up to any such subscriptions.

The resident later got back in touch with his bank to see if he can claim a refund either from the company or from the bank, if the company refuses.

This is yet another example of why it's a good idea to make regular checks on your bank statements so that if you see any unusual transactions you can act promptly.

Please be cautious when using online services which you use for converting document formats, downloading users' manuals, online dating services or similar. Always carefully check any Terms and Conditions for details about subscriptions before proceeding. If in doubt, steer well clear. It is a good idea to check your bank statement a week or two later, just in case there have been any additional deductions. Should you find yourself subject to one of these traps, remember to:

- Report the matter to your bank immediately so that any further payments can be stopped and if you can claim a refund from the bank via Chargeback. Further details about Chargeback can be found by clicking [here](#).
- Contact the company concerned directly and demand a full refund, that your details are deleted from their computer systems and that you do not receive any further correspondence from them once this matter is settled.
- Consider the possibility of reporting the matter to Police Scotland if there has been criminality (fraud, theft etc.) involved.
- Consider also reporting the matter to Trading Standards for consumer advice.



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### **Misc.**

All too frequently we have reports in this bulletin of unscrupulous roofers who take advantage of desperate or vulnerable householders by providing them with shoddy workmanship (if any) whilst also taking large sums of money from them.

The Journal of Trading Standards recently featured a report of two such 'roofers' from Oxfordshire who got their just desserts. Further details can be found by clicking [here](#).

### **Conclusion**

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or to Keep It Out at <https://keep-it-out.co.uk/anonymous-reporting/>

### **Contact Info**

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing [tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.



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For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> or Take Five at <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Please direct any media queries to [news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found at:  
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>