**Trading Standards**

Crime & Scams Bulletin 3

**Doorstep Crime and Scams**

* The annual ‘Shut Out Scammers’ campaign commences on 15th June and concludes on 26th June. The campaign is coordinated by Police Scotland in partnership with Trading Standards Scotland and this year focusses on **doorstep crime**. We will be supporting the campaign via our Twitter and Facebook accounts where updates and guidance will be posted regularly. [www.twitter.com/AberdeenshireTS](http://www.twitter.com/AberdeenshireTS)

[www.facebook.com/TradingStandardsAberdeenshire](http://www.facebook.com/TradingStandardsAberdeenshire)

* Due to movement restrictions reports of doorstep crime are currently below the average for this time of year, however we expect these to rise as lockdown restrictions continue to ease. Instances of doorstep crime and concerns about illegitimate doorstep callers should be reported to Police Scotland and to Trading Standards. When reporting doorstep crime, try to remember key details about the trader such as vehicle type, signage and registration. Note the appearance, age, accents and names of any callers and keep all original paperwork, leaflets and brochures.
* A guide has been produced by the Consumers Association which can help to identify suspicious websites and scams. To access the guide, please click on the following hyperlink. <https://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-spot-a-fake-fraudulent-or-scam-website> Our next bulletin will include a special focus on the best resources for reporting scams and crime.

**Scams Recently Reported by Aberdeenshire Residents**

* A new variation of the HRMC scam exploiting the Self Employment Income Support Scheme has targeted self-employed workers in Aberdeenshire. Recipients have been informed that they are eligible for a tax refund under the scheme and to click on a link that takes them to a fake HMRC website. <https://www.gov.uk/topic/dealing-with-hmrc/phishing-scams>
* We have received reports nationally that phone calls are being made to Scottish residents advising that as part of contact tracing they or someone they know has tested positive for Covid-19. They are then advised to purchase a testing kit that can range from £50 to £500. There have been no similar incidents reported in Aberdeenshire to date, but we would advise residents to be on their guard as contact tracing is rolled out.
* Reports have been received about a Facebook Messenger/ Amazon Voucher scam currently in circulation. A vulnerable resident was informed that they had won a large sum of money but in order to receive this prize taxes had to be paid by purchasing Amazon Vouchers and forwarding photos of the ID numbers and receipt to the scammer. The resident lost over £1000 as the scammer had all the information they required to spend the value attached to the vouchers.

**Business Scams Reported**.

* Businesses and residents are encouraged to make appropriate safe checks if they are considering undertaking any training or certification that is Covid-19 related. Businesses should consider Environmental Health for advice on how to put suitable hygiene and other measures into place.
* Criminals have made numerous attempts to exploit the business grant scheme and have sought to apply for grants through the use of legitimate business details. Businesses are warned not to disclose business rates reference numbers and company details that could be used for fraudulent applications.
* We are aware of counterfeit PPE being supplied to an Aberdeenshire business. The PPE was supplied with fake certification and documents. Trading Standards are concerned that the current supply shortages will increase the availability of substandard PPE and warns businesses and consumers to be careful when purchasing these items.

**Other Local Issues**

* We are still receiving complaints that non-complaint hand sanitisers are being sold in Aberdeenshire and officers are currently advising suppliers and manufacturers. We ask that consumers and businesses look out for poorly labelled hand sanitisers and report to Trading Standards if they come across any. We have been approached by several local business asking for guidance on the manufacture and labelling of hand sanitisers and this has been provided.
* Reports relating to the supply of illicit tobacco in Aberdeenshire continue to be received. We would encourage anyone with concerns over illicit tobacco to report the matter to Trading Standards or Police Scotland. Warning signs to look out for are poor quality and foreign language labelling and below normal market prices.

For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council’s Trading Standards at 01467 537222. For non-urgent enquiries, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://www.consumeradvice.scot/> or on 0808 164 600.

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

For more information about scams please visit Friends Against Scams at <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.