

TRADING STANDARDS NEWS



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Who are Trading Standards?

The Trading Standards Service is part of Wigan Council's Environmental Services Department. Our aim is to achieve a fair, safe and honest trading environment within the borough. Whether you are a consumer or a trader, you are equally important to us.

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It's a cracker! - Competition crowns chocolate egg champs

When it comes to getting good value for money from an Easter Egg you need to call in the experts. And who better to tell us all about the merits of an all-round good egg than their biggest fans...children.

Each year in the run up to Easter, Wigan Council's Trading Standards team runs a competition which challenges young people to get to grips with the sweet subject of chocolate eggs.

Now in its 12th year, the popular competition pits teams of primary school pupils from all over the borough against one another in the quest to find the perfect Easter treat.

The teams are asked to compare three eggs in terms of weight, packaging, content, price and, of course, taste. They then had to create a colourful display all about their findings, which was entered for judging by the council team to find an overall winner.

Wigan Council's Chief Trading Standards Officer Julie Middlehurst says:



"We wanted to get the children thinking about the value of products and not just go for the products they see on the telly. We feel that this is a skill that will be useful to them in later life.

"The entries were all fantastic and it's clear that the children had thought long and hard about the task and put in a lot of research.

"The judges were looking for a really high standard of display which had to be informative, topical and fun."

And ticking all the right boxes was the team from St George's CE Primary School, Tyldesley, with its display being hailed as the overall winner.

The school will receive £100 in vouchers for wet weather toys, as well as a

framed certificate. Each pupil in the team will also receive a certificate and a crème egg.

The runners-up in the competition, which attracted 16 entries, were Lowton St Mary's Primary School and St Oswald's School, Ashton. Both these schools also received voucher prizes.

Julie adds: "We were really delighted by the enthusiasm of the children, the standards of their research work and their fun and informative finished products.

"We're sure that this Easter we will have plenty of well-informed young consumers in the shops hunting out their own best value Easter Eggs. They may even be able to teach mum and dad a thing or two about shopping!"



Fair Play Charter - Are you looking for a reputable garage?

Need a reputable garage to buy a car from or have your car serviced? Visit www.wigan.gov.uk/fairplaycharter or ring 01942 827476 for a list of Wigan members of the Charter, who are committed to fair and honest trading.

Hindley aiming high

Winners of the Young Consumers of the Year 2008 competition in Wigan are **Hindley Community High School, Hindley.**

The Young Consumer of the Year competition is a well established and government supported national competition.

The competition is aimed at developing team-building skills and will help pupils become skilled and informed consumers.

It makes them aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights and gives them essential life skills as they prepare for the world of work. The Young Consumers of the year competition is a lively challenge for young people in the 14-17 year age group.

Participants take part in a knock out style quiz, and pit their consumer affairs knowledge against other



Winning team from Hindley Community High School Arts College
Zoe Golding, Elyssa Clayton, Rachelle Beckett and Ben Walker with their teacher Jane Cantwell

teams from other schools in Wigan, the Northwest and nationally. In Wigan, the first round is a question and answer book. The team from Hindley Community High School –

Arts College - Zoe Golding, Elyssa Clayton, Ben Walker and Rachelle Beckett scored the highest marks.

The team shares a prize of £100 in vouchers, and a certificate for the school.

Teams were tested on a wide range of issues, including food and health, safety and the environment, travel, managing money and finance and the European dimension.

The Hindley Community High School team will go on to compete against 9 other teams from the North West region, at the regional final, held at the Orient, Trafford Centre on Thursday, March 13 at 1.30pm.

The winners of the regional final will take part in the Grand Final Competition held in June at the Trading Standards Annual Conference in Bournemouth.

Community Improvement Programmes

Trading Standards have offered the people of Hag Fold a full service, and taken an active role in the Community Improvement Programme. (CIP)

The Community Improvement Projects are aimed at providing a concentrated multi agency 'hit' to 4 selected geographical areas in the borough. The 4 areas, selected after considering crime, fire, environmental and deprivation issues, are Hag Fold, Platt Bridge, Higher Folds and Lower Ince. The project focus is on working with the people who live in the communities to improve their area, making them cleaner, greener and safer places.

The Hag Fold CIP ran from 10th

December 2007 – 11 February 2008, and all partners were invited to participate in the project.

Trading Standards ran "advice clinics", that were held at the local community centre. Fair Trading Officer Jean Glover set up shop in the Dorset Road



Mr. Derek Shaw of Atherton visiting the Trading Standards display

Community Centre on two days, when Trading Standards (along with other agencies) held events aimed at helping local residents tackle their problems.

Callers to the centre could get useful information about what Trading Standards do, and anyone with a shopping problem was given help and practical advice on the day.

They were also involved in a joint exercise with the Police, whereby a roadside check was set up in the area. Using the ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) system, they identified motorists who may have been uninsured or driving un-taxed vehicles, and stopped and checked traders working in the area to ensure that they were genuine.

All traders who call uninvited on the doorstep are obliged to provide a full name and address, and also a written notice of cancellation. This gives the customer a cooling off period during which time they can change their mind. In many

cases, "rogue traders" do not provide these documents, and if things go wrong, the customer is often unable to contact them for faults to be rectified, or to claim money back.

Officers were able to give advice to the traders who were stopped, and to reassure law abiding local traders that we were "policing" the Borough in this way to ensure fair and honest trading.

Trading Standards have a zero tolerance policy towards traders who they see as "rogue traders". Finally, a series of test purchase attempts were made in relation to cigarettes and alcohol. Following the recent legal change to the age at which cigarettes can be bought, it was decided to test levels of awareness and compliance with local traders.

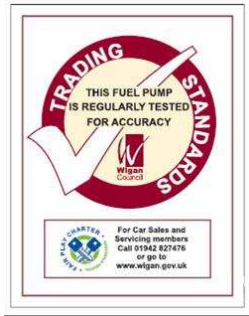
A total of 7 cigarette test purchases were attempted by a 15 year old volunteer, resulting in 3 sales. These traders have received a warning and further advice to ensure future compliance. This will be monitored by further test purchase attempts. In addition 7 alcohol test purchase attempts were made which resulted in no sales.

Fill Up With Confidence - Fair Measure For Motorists

MOTORISTS can be reassured they're getting a Fair Measure on the forecourt thanks to a new scheme being launched by Trading Standards.

Fuel pumps are already regularly checked by Trading Standards to ensure they give an accurate measure and correctly display the price. As part of the new scheme bold stickers will be displayed on fuel pumps so that motorists can see that the pumps are tested and have more confidence when they are filling up.

Julie Middlehurst, Chief Trading Standards Officer said: "Motorists spend hundreds of pounds each year



on fuel and with the price of fuel now over £1.00 per litre, it is more important than ever to have confidence in the measure they are getting. Many motorists are unaware that Trading Standards check equipment to make sure it is accurate for them to use.

Local petrol stations have said that they welcome the scheme and encourage the chance to promote consumer confidence in their equipment. We are encouraging all petrol stations to participate." She added "The stickers will also promote the FAIR PLAY CHARTER and encourage motorists needing a car service or even a new car to contact Trading Standards. We can supply a list of local traders who are members of the scheme who have demonstrated to us a commitment to fair and honest trading."

One of the first stations to adopt the

stickers is the BP Snax 24 on Wigan Road, Atherton. Julie recently met up with station manager Gillian Evans and Area Manager Julie McAtee to hand over the sticker. Motorists are encouraged to look for the new stickers next time they fill up as the stickers start to appear at petrol stations throughout the area.



Julie with station manager Gillian Evans and Area Manager Julie McAtee

Scamnesty Month - February 2008

Each year three million people in the UK fall victim to scams sent by post, e-mail, text, phone and internet. In fact scams cost the public £3.5bn every year.

Wigan Trading Standards are regularly sent scam mailings by concerned residents who have received letters advising them that they have 'won a prize' or have been 'specially chosen to receive' something. Most residents realise that these letters are just scams, which are promoting bogus lotteries and prize draws, and pass them to Trading Standards for our information.

Sadly, not all our residents are as savvy and some do send off money or bank details in order to collect their 'prize'. One elderly



Scams in here: Principal Trading Standards Officer Terry Gregson and Wigan Town Hall receptionist Barbara Gaskell with one of the 'Scamnesty' boxes.

Wigan resident was conned into sending £5000 in order to claim her lottery 'winnings' but received nothing. Office of Fair Trading research

suggests that less than 5% of scam victims report the scam to Trading Standards.

In order to raise awareness and put Wigan residents on their guard against these scams, Wigan Trading Standards, in conjunction with the Office of Fair Trading declared February 'Scamnesty' month. As well as increased publicity to warn the public about the various scams, the public were asked to bring any scam mailings to collection points set up across the

Borough in Town Halls and libraries. Over 50 scam mailings were collected from the 'Scamnesty' bins and they provided crucial intelligence to Trading Standards and the Office of Fair Trading. This information will help to target future investigations against the rogues behind the scams, and prevent others from being scammed.

The advice from Trading Standards to anyone who receives an offer they think might be a scam is: Stop, think and think again. Don't be rushed into sending off money to someone you do not know, and ask yourself how likely it is that you have been specially chosen to receive an offer? The chances are that millions of others have received the same offer. Read what the offer says carefully and think again, if you are unsure speak to a friend or relative or seek advice from Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.

If you would like to reduce the amount of unwanted mail, register free with the Mailing Preference Service on 0845 703 4599 or go to www.mpsonline.org.uk

EARLY WARNINGS

Don't be alarmed !..... An 83 year old woman opened the door to a man who informed her he was there to fit an intercom/alarm, implying he was from the Council. The woman didn't know anything about it, but before she could stop him, the man drilled a hole through the front door, and asked for £45 for fitting the intercom/alarm. She only had £10, which she gave him, and he left saying he would be back for the rest of the money another time.

Trading Standards advise all residents to fit and use a security chain when opening the door, and always say NO to doorstep callers. If a caller claims to be from the Council, always ask him to give you his ID, so that you can check it properly. If you are suspicious, call Trading Standards on 08454 04 05 06 or the Police on 0161 872 5050, or in an emergency 999.

Be careful...not conned! The Orrell area was targeted recently by a bogus roofing company. They leafleted the area offering many different types of building services, but only gave the name of the company and an 0800 telephone number. This 0800 number was answered by a man who claimed to be taking calls for the company, but could not give a name and address of the owner of the company, and could not give details of where they were based.

Trading Standards advise all residents to say NO to doorstep callers. Traders are legally obliged to give their customers written information about their name and contact details, and should also offer written cancellation rights, so that you can change your mind about having work done. If they don't, and you have work carried out that is shoddy or unfinished, it will be impossible to trace them to claim money back. An 0800 number, can be diverted to any telephone, even a mobile, and should not be relied on as a legitimate contact number.

From the Waterboard? ... An 86 year old woman was approached by two men at her door, claiming to be from the waterboard. They followed her into her kitchen and asked her to empty the cupboard, so they could check the pipes, and while she was distracted, one of the men took £50 from her purse.

Trading Standards advise all residents to be aware that United Utilities are responsible for the water in this area, and that their representatives will never use the word 'waterboard' to introduce themselves. Anyone who does say they are from 'the waterboard' is probably bogus and should not be allowed in your home. Please report all bogus callers to Trading Standards on 08454 04 05 06 or the Police on 0161 872 5050.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you are a member of a group or association and would like to receive a regular supply of this free newsletter
Ring 01942 827476

Or if you would like to receive this newsletter by e-mail - send a message to ts@wigan.gov.uk to register your name and e-mail address

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