



TRADING STANDARDS NEWS

Issue 25

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Who are Trading Standards?

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



Inside this issue:

Be On Your Guard For Rogue Traders	2
Safe & Secure	2
Sloppy Slipper Exchange	2
Brake Man In Court	3
Fairs Fair	3
New Call Centre for Consumer Help	3
Recalls	4

Trading Standards—Fighting Back

In response to the growing problems of doorstep crime, problems associated with young people and alcohol, and counterfeiting, Trading Standards now has a new "Crime and Community" team.



What will the new team do?

Before the new team was created, Trading Standards were already involved in "Under Age Sales" of alcohol, and Counterfeiting. Doorstep Crime issues and our intervention in relation to the "stolen goods market" are new areas of work for Trading Standards.

Whilst it is a very small team, the Principal Officer, Julie Middlehurst, and her team, are very committed to making a difference. Julie says: -

We want to make communities feel safer and secure.

We all understand the anti-social behaviour issues that are associated with youths and alcohol. We are also aware that the majority of off licences do not want to sell to children. As such we regularly visit and advise on ways of ensuring that they only serve to over 18's. The "Under 21's Policy" is one way that we help licensees and their staff ensure that this is the case. Where staff feel that the person does not look 21, they will ask them for proof of age.

Whilst they only have to prove that they are 18, it helps to overcome the difficulty that staff face in determining somebody's age. For the minority of off licences who do flout the law, we regularly use a young volunteer to carry out test purchasing exercises. Where a sale is made, the licensee and the seller will be interviewed by Trading Standards and may subsequently face prosecution. Rogue Traders and Bogus Callers exist by exploiting our most vulnerable members of the community. They take the form of any number of guises - the bogus official, the "roofer who was just passing and noticed some slates were missing", the "I'm doing a survey in the area". What all of these do have in common however, is the theft of money - either overcharging or by charging them for work that was completely unnecessary. The latter scenario is the typical "Rogue Trader" who does not respond to advice, nor in most cases, prosecution. As such the best way to beat these

traders is to ensure that consumers are armed to deal with these unwanted doorstep callers. We are, and have already been, involved in events in partnership with other agencies e.g. Age Concern, Victim Support, and Police to offer advice and practical ways of dealing with and

keeping out these rogue traders. We will respond, support and intervene whenever possible and take steps to cancel contracts and "renegotiate" prices for work already carried out.

What's in the future?

We have lots of ideas in the pipeline that we would like to develop. One of the first things that we would like to do is to introduce a "No Cold Calling Zone". This is an area where local residents have the confidence to say "NO" to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are not welcome. A Wigan and Leigh Bogus Callers Group has recently been established, which consists of Trading Standards, the Police, and other partner agencies, and this group will work together to introduce the scheme.



Be On Your Guard For Rogue Traders

Wigan Trading Standards are warning residents to be on their guard when it comes to doorstep callers.

Complaints have been received about a home improvement business who cold calls on elderly residents in the Borough offering to do a free damp survey. In one case, the "surveyor" advised the couple that they had rising damp and that they needed to spend £2765 on a Damp Proof Course. Within 20 minutes of agreeing to the work, a second workman arrived at the house and started drilling holes in the outside walls.

Fortunately for this couple, a friend contacted Trading Standards who visited the couple whilst the

workman was still there. As the trader had not given the couple their statutory 7-day cancellation rights, the contract was unenforceable. The work was stopped and the trader was asked to leave without any payment for the work already carried out. A subsequent inspection revealed that the property had no rising damp whatsoever and so the damp proof course was completely unnecessary. For this couple, it was a happy ending as they saved themselves £2765, but for many others this is often not the case.

Residents are advised by Trading Standards not to agree to have any work carried out by people who call at your door. Never agree to have

work done by somebody who is just passing, or take their word that it needs to be done at all. Always get a number of quotes to ensure that –

- 1) *the work is necessary, and*
- 2) *that you are getting it for a fair price.*

If you do agree to have work done by somebody who calls on you uninvited, remember that you have 7 days to change your mind and cancel. Trading Standards will assist if you find yourself in this position.

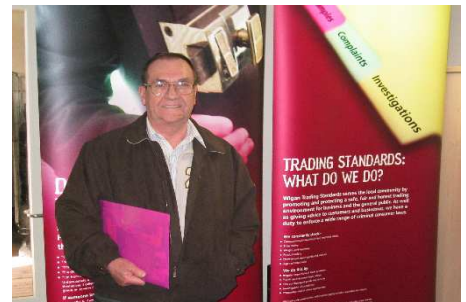
The most important thing is not to get into a position of having to cancel a contract and to simply **SAY NO TO DOORSTEP CALLERS.**

Safe And Secure?

Trading Standards were on hand to offer advice on Rogue Traders and Consumer Rights, at Age Concern's **Safe and Secure Surgery** on Wednesday 22nd March. Trading Standards, the Fire Service, the Police and other Age Concern Services handed out information and advice on a wide range of issues to ensure consumers are well equipped to protect themselves,

and feel safe and secure in their own homes.

The Drop In Centre, Pennyhurst Mill, Haig Street, Wigan will host the regular advice days on the 4th Wednesday of every month, from 1.30pm to 3.30pm. Why not call in and have a brew? No appointment necessary.



Mr Hugh Flannigan, of Sherwood Grove, Wigan gets good advice and a free pack of useful information.

Sloppy Slipper Exchange



For the 5th year running, the Sheltered Housing and Information Partnership (SHIP) are once again hosting a FREE

event targeted at the over 50's, and demonstrating services and housing provision available in the Wigan Borough.

On **Tuesday, 16th May, at Wigan Town Hall**, there will be displays and entertainment from 10am till 3 pm. including a vintage swing band, free tour of the Town Hall, and a chance to swap your old slippers for new! The event will showcase many local organisations that provide services to the over 50's, including Age Concern, Over 50's Forum and the Pension

Service. Trading Standards will have a display on Doorstep Crime/Bogus Callers.

The **Sloppy Slipper Exchange** will hand out **free** slippers to the first 250 over 50's who bring in their old slippers

The Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor and Mrs Brian Jarvis will visit the one-day event, and the whole event is free!

Brake Man In Court

- Story Courtesy of Wigan Evening Post



A MOTOR technician was fined £1,500 after telling a car owner that he needed unnecessary work doing.

Andrew Mountford told Alan Kennerly that his Vauxhall Vectra's brake discs needed replacing, Wigan and Leigh Magistrates heard.

But Mr. Kennerly, who had only taken the car to Victoria Garage in Chapel Street, Leigh for windscreen wiper repairs, was skeptical of the diagnosis

and contacted Wigan Metro's Trading Standards Department, the court was told.

Mountford, 27, of Fairhurst Street, Leigh, pleaded guilty to recklessly saying the front brake discs needed urgent attention as they were of minimum thickness and corroded.

The case against him was brought by Trading Standards.

Simon Ward, prosecuting, said Mountford carried out the windscreen wiper work and then did a condition report to see if any additional work was required on the car.

Mr. Ward said: "He concluded the front discs were on their minimum thickness, they were heavily lipped and corroded and required urgent attention."

The court heard Mr. Kennerly was quoted £291.40 for the work, but declined as at a service 3,000 miles earlier there had been no mention the discs were close to needing replacement.

Wigan's Trading Standards Department

arranged for the car to be examined by an independent mechanic.

Mr Ward said the brake discs should have been 28mm wide when new and Vauxhall recommended replacement when they had worn to 25mm. Mountford had said they were 25.12mm and 25.02mm but tests showed they were actually 27.04mm and 26.92mm

Mountford, who was not represented, told the bench he had made a mistake in measuring the discs, was sorry for the situation and that it would not happen again.

Magistrates fined him £1,500 with £1,128.50 costs

After the hearing, Chief Trading Standards Officer Alan Blundell said "It is crucial car owners have confidence in knowing what they are told by the garage is true."

The garage, against which no charges are brought, declined to comment.

Mr. Kennerly said he was pleased with the outcome.

Fair's Fair

Trading Standards Fair Play Charter makes it easy for customers to identify reputable motor traders. Look for the logo or visit Trading Standards/Fair Play Charter sections of the Wigan Council's website.



New Call Centre For Consumer Help

Wigan residents will find it easier to get advice from Trading Standards with the launch of a new telephone advice service.

CONSUMER DIRECT is a government backed initiative set up to handle all calls to Trading Standards across the NorthWest.

From 1ST April calls from Wigan customers will go through to Consumer Direct allowing thousands more consumer problems to be dealt with each year.

Wigan Trading Standards currently deal with more than 6,500 enquiries a year but increasing demand for the service means that many callers cannot get through at busy periods. A highly trained team of advisers at Consumer Direct will now handle all complaints about consumer issues while referring urgent matters or calls about crime, underage sales and public safety, and complex complaints requiring assistance, to staff at the Wigan office.

Chief TSO Alan Blundell said "There is growing demand from the public for consumer advice, and research has shown that Trading Standards alone can no longer keep up. By using Consumer Direct as the first contact for consumers, our staff will be freed up to tackle the more serious problems of consumer fraud, rogue traders and doorstep criminals. Government has recognised the value of supporting Trading Standards services in providing access to consumers who need advice and help with their problems."

Consumer Direct is a government backed initiative, funded by the Department of Trade, aimed at supporting Trading Standards advice services by providing first line consumer advice from regional call centres. The Consumer Direct centre for the North West is based in Barrow-in-Furness and is staffed by advisers who



have trained by working alongside our Fair Trading Officers who currently answer consumer enquiries.

Alan Blundell added "The only change in the quality of service people receive is that their calls will be answered quicker than ever before."

Consumer Direct can be contacted on 08454 04 05 06. People who call the existing Trading Standards consumer helpline after the 1st April, will be put through to Consumer Direct at no extra cost. The number for Textphone/Minicom users is 08451 28 13 84.

Consumer Direct North West opening times are Monday to Friday 8 am - 6.30 pm and, 9 am - 1.00 pm on Saturdays, excluding bank holidays and public holidays.

PRODUCT RECALLS

Heavy Duty Booster Cables Sold at Poundland - Recall

HEAVY DUTY BOOSTER CABLES

Item No: 26864 - Barcode: 5025066268640

Additional testing on this product has revealed a safety concern hazard. Poundland are recalling all stock they have sold.

What you should do : Discontinue use immediately and return the item to your nearest Poundland store as soon as possible.

Should you have any queries or concerns regarding this recall please call the free customer services number 0800 731 5622. Lines are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Visit www.Poundland.com to find your nearest store.



O2 X1 Mobile Phone, Battery And Charger - Recall

IMPORTANT PRODUCT RECALL NOTICE: O2 X1

O2 is recalling the O2 X1 mobile phone, battery and charger. There are reports of a very small number of O2 X1 mobile phones overheating while charging, creating a fire risk. The phone was sold in the UK from September 2003 in O2 retail stores and other mobile retailers.



If you have an O2 X1 mobile phone, return it, with the battery and charger, and you will be provided with a replacement mobile phone.

The O2 X1i and O2 X1b are not affected by this product recall.

Please note, O2 will impose a call bar on all O2 X1 handsets from Monday 27 March 2006.

For further information including how to return the O2 X1 and details on the replacement phone please visit o2.co.uk/help/x1 or call 0800 902 0212

Kallo Socrispy Bake Soy Bites, Salt & Vinegar Flavour, 28g - Recall

Kallo Foods Ltd is recalling one batch of Socrispy Baked Salt and Vinegar Flavour Soy Bites 28g as this batch may contain milk or dairy ingredients and the pack is labelled as dairy free. This product can be safely consumed by the majority of people but is unsuitable for people who are allergic or intolerant to milk and dairy products.

The products affected are coded with Best Before End Jul 06. This best before end date is found on the back of the pack. No other Best Before End dates or codes of other Socrispy products are affected.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

If you are allergic or intolerant to milk do not eat this product, please dispose of the contents and for a full refund including postage please return the empty pack together with your name and address to:

Kallo Foods Ltd, Coopers Place, Combe Lane, Wormley, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 5SZ
For more information please call the freephone number 0800 652 3990 or e-mail marketing@kallofoods.com or visit the website www.kallofoods.com.



For a full list of product recalls see the Trading Standards Website at www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/consumers

HOW TO CONTACT US (OPENING HOURS 9:00AM-5:PM MON-FRI)

Community Protection Department
Trading Standards Section
Town Hall
Library Street
Wigan
WN1 1YN

Consumers Phone: 08454 04 05 06
Traders Phone: 01942 827476
Fax: 01942 488405
Email: ts@wiganmbc.gov.uk

We're on the Web

<http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/ehcp/ts>

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