



Wigan Council



TRADING STANDARDS NEWS

Issue 32

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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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National Consumer Week - Buying from afar

This year, National Consumer Week (12 - 16 November) was all about buying from afar.

This can mean buying from a website, via a TV shopping channel, from a catalogue, ordering over the phone or responding to a magazine advertisement.

Some 20 million people shopped online last year, spending more than £21 billion - but many of them are in the dark about their rights and the potential pitfalls involved.

During National Consumer Week, Trading Standards manned three display stands across the borough, in order to help the residents of Wigan learn about their rights when shopping from afar. Staff gave out information and advice to passing shoppers.

The displays were at Tesco in Wigan, Sainsbury's in Leigh and on the Friday in the main concourse of the Grand Arcade Shopping



Pictured above John Martindale of Morris House, Wigan, with Jean Glover and Lynn Kendrick from Trading Standards in the Grand Arcade

Centre in Wigan. The displays were a great success with hundreds of shoppers showing an interest and picking up information on how to avoid the hazards and finding out what their rights are when shopping from home. Many of the shoppers who spoke to the Trading Standards staff also filled out a questionnaire which was designed to find out how many Wigan residents do shop from home and what sort of problems they encountered.

All the questionnaires went into a prize draw and Mary Berry from Ince was the lucky winner of a £50 Grand Arcade gift card. (picture overleaf). If you missed the displays, here are a few Top Tips to bear in mind the next time you buy online – Make a note of the company's contact details, including a street address and landline telephone number. Never rely on just an email address or a post office box.



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 and search for Fair Play Charter or ring 01942 827476 for a list of Wigan members of the charter, who are committed to fair and honest trading.

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If the goods or services you are buying cost over £100 and you pay by credit card, the credit card company is equally liable for any defects.

Therefore, should a problem arise, you can claim either from the trader or from the credit card company.

Problems can arise when the company you are buying from is based outside the EU, for if things go wrong it might be very difficult to get any money out of them.

Make sure that the web address of the page starts https:// before you enter any personal information or payment details. The 's' stands for 'secure'. There should also be a small padlock

that appears in the bottom of your screen.

Always check your bank statements carefully if you purchase something on the internet.

You should never be asked to tell anyone your card's PIN number - even if they claim to be from your bank or the police. Never send your PIN number to anyone over the internet.

If you buy goods on the internet, you still have the same rights as if you were shopping on the high street, in relation to faulty or poorly described goods.

In addition, you are entitled

to a seven working-day 'cooling off' period, during which time you can change your mind and send the goods back even if they are not faulty.



“Mary Berry, from Ince pictured receiving her £50 Gift Card prize at the Grand Arcade from Julie Middlehurst, Chief Trading Standards Officer, with Jean Glover, Trading Standards and John Sanson, Grand Arcade Manager”

Booze and fags—students come clean!

Earlier this year Yr 10 and 11 students were invited to participate in a North West Survey to find out if and where youngsters get alcohol and cigarettes.

In total 11,724 questionnaires were completed. Six schools from around all areas of Wigan took part and were amongst the biggest participants in the region. The youngsters were asked to answer questions honestly and were assured that all responses would be anonymous. We wanted to thank the students for their efforts in providing us with these details, so all who participated were entered into a prize draw to win an i-pod at each school. This information provides us with an important guide to whether actions we've taken so far have been effective and where we need to target our resources in the future. Thanks to the students and congratulations to the lucky winners!

The results provided us with a

slightly more positive picture in some areas, when compared with a similar survey carried out in 2005. It also highlighted a number of issues, some new, which need to be addressed. Nearly half of 14 - 17 year olds claimed to drink alcohol at least once a week, although this figure had fallen slightly from 2005. 28% claimed to buy their own. This showed a reduction from 40% in 2005. 55% said they had been challenged for ID when purchasing alcohol and this figure rose to 62% for those who purchased from off licenses. This suggests that advice and test



purchase work carried out by trading standards at off licences has had an impact. Efforts need to be maintained to ensure all are asked to provide ID.

A need for work to educate adults and parents was also identified. Over half of 14-17 year olds who don't purchase their own alcohol said they get it from their parents. 17% claimed they get adults outside shops to buy it for them.

22% of 14-17 year olds stated that they smoke. Nearly half of those claimed to purchase cigarettes themselves from shops. Over a third claimed to have bought them from illegitimate sellers such as private houses, market stalls, car boot sales or ice-cream vans. The results will be used by trading standards departments and partner agencies to plan intelligence led campaigns to prevent sales of alcohol and cigarettes to under 18's and educate the youngsters and parents about their use.

A Date To Remember!

“Use By Date”, “Best Before Date”, “Sell By Date”, “Display Until.....”

We've probably all heard these phrases mentioned at some time, but what do they mean in Trading Standards terms?

The legislation which states how the food that we eat is labelled is covered by the Food Labelling Regulations 1996.

Under this area of law, only “Best Before” dates and “Use By” dates have any legal status.

'Best Before' dates are used for foods which are less perishable and have a longer shelf-life e.g. dried foods or tinned products. This date ensures that foods are used at their best. The 'Best Before' date indicates the



date up to and including that which the food will remain in good condition.

It is not illegal for shops to sell or offer to sell food (except eggs) past their 'Best Before' date providing that they are still in good condition.

“Use By” dates are used for highly perishable foods and those foods likely after a short period of time to constitute an immediate danger to public health if eaten e.g. dairy products, fish, pate. This date shows the final date by which the food should be used or consumed.

It is an offence for shops to sell or offer for sale food marked with the 'Use By' date after the date has expired.

The **labelling of eggs** has it's own rule.

Generally speaking, eggs must be sold to the consumer at least 7 days **before** the stated Best Before date. This is why you will often see egg boxes with a “display until” date as well as a “Best Before”. This date will usually be 7 days earlier than the “Best Before” Date. It is an offence to sell these eggs if the Best Before date is within 7 days from the date they are sold.



However, eggs that have a **“Lion Mark”** can normally be sold up until the “Best Before” Date.

The Lion Quality Code of Practice was launched in 1998 and uses a "Best Before" Date stamped on the shell and pack which uses a shorter timescale than that required by law.

You're a winner - or are you?

Lottery Scams are nothing new, but Trading Standards in Wigan have experienced an upsurge in complaints from residents who have received letters from bogus lottery companies apparently based in Spain.

The letters have a variety of headings including EL GORDO LOTERIA PRIMITIVA, GANDORES LOTTERY, EURO CITY LOTTERY and EUROMILLONES LOTTERY, but they all claim that the recipients have won thousands of pounds on the Spanish Lottery. But in order to collect their prize the



'winners' have to:

- Send the company an 'administration fee', or
- Send the company their bank details, or
- Ring a Premium Rate (090) telephone number to get further details

All of these are just ways to get money from you and there is unlikely to be any prize even if you pay up! One Wigan resident has sent over £5500 to one of these bogus lotteries in the belief she would be getting a substantial cash prize in return, but has never received anything. Trading Standards' advice is simple –

if you haven't entered a lottery or prize draw then you cannot win anything, so don't send any money or give personal details to these types of companies. If you are still unsure, ring the

Remember – if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is!

Consumer

Direct Advice Line on 08454

040506 and they will be able to give you advice on what to do.

If you want to know how to spot a scam go to the Office of Fair Trading web site at www.of.t.gov.uk



Digital Deals



There are always people who use clever and persuasive tactics to make a fast buck on the back of something new, like the digital switchover.

Rogue traders may call door to door in your area and make you an offer that seems too good to be true... it probably is!

Be wary, and if you need information or help about the switchover, go to the Digital Uk website

www.digitaluk.co.uk or call **0845 650 5050**.

Digital UK is an independent, non- profit organisation leading the process of digital TV switchover in the UK. It provides impartial information on what people need to do to prepare for the move to digital and when they need to do it.

They advise :

- No one from Digital UK will call unexpected without an appointment, and they urge residents to turn away uninvited doorstep callers who claim to be linked to Digital UK.
- Demand identification from Callers

and then call the company to check they are who they say they are.

- Don't agree to work on the spot... **The switchover will only happen in this area in 2009...** you have plenty of time to think about what work you want done.

If you are suspicious about any cold caller, or you think you've been ripped off, call the **Consumer**

Direct helpline on 08454 04 05 06.



EARLY WARNINGS

Watch out Wigan – The Bogus Waterboard Official is in your area!

A 92 year old woman answered her door to a man who claimed to be from the waterboard, and said he wanted to check the water. She let him into her home, and he followed her into the kitchen and asked her to turn on the taps, and watch them until the water stopped running. When he opened the cupboard under the sink, and asked her to empty it, she became suspicious and refused. The man left the house, but said he would be back later. A similar incident occurred in a nearby street shortly after, but the elderly resident refused to let the caller in.

Bogus officials use any excuse to distract you from what they are actually there to do – which is to steal money or valuables. Always answer the door with a security chain on, and close it while you check to see if the caller is genuine. Don't worry, a genuine caller will be happy to wait, or even to call back by appointment.

Trading Standards urge all residents to be wary of any “official” calling unexpectedly. If the callers are genuine they will offer to show you an ID and you should check this out by ringing United Utilities. To be extra sure, why not ring them to set up a unique password, so all callers can prove they are genuine? – just call 0845 746 1100

Antique Dealer or distraction burglar?

An elderly man had a leaflet through his door from a company based down South, and later that day had a caller asking if he had any jewellery or antiques he wanted to sell or have repaired. A second man aged 75, also had a similar caller and when he challenged the company about cold calling, they claimed to be “registered”.

Callers often use this ploy to gain access to your home, in order to steal, or suss out what valuables you may have in your home. Even if they are a legitimate business, they can often put a low, false value on your belongings to persuade you to sell to them cheap, so they can make a big profit on re sale.

Trading Standards advise all residents to say No to doorstep callers. We do not “register “ any doorstep callers, and residents should be very wary of allowing any callers into their homes, or showing them their valuables. Always get a second opinion on the value of your goods, before agreeing to sell.

Can I do your drive Sir ? Special low price just for today!

A man was cold called by a team of men offering to block pave his driveway for a bargain price. They began work, and were half way through the job when they asked for more money. He wasn't happy with the workmanship, but rather than have his drive left in a mess, he agreed to pay more to get the job finished. The next day, they said that their still saw had broken, and they couldn't afford to have it repaired, and finish the job, unless he gave them the balance of the money .He paid them and they left, but have never returned. The man had to employ another firm to come and finish the job, and put right the faults, and ended up severely out of pocket.

Trading Standards advise all residents not to fall for the offer of a “cheap job” from so called builders who cold call. The names, addresses and telephone numbers given are often false, and if they fail to complete work or do shoddy work, after payment has been made, it is often impossible to contact them again.

HOW TO CONTACT US

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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

If you are a member of a
group or association and
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We're on the Web

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/services/businessregeneration/tradingstandards>