



iCAN goes from strength to strength

Membership of the Warrington Consumer Alert Network has now passed the 600 mark. People all over Warrington are receiving the messages by phone, e-mail and text.

The feedback we are receiving from members is very positive and we have reports from a number of members that messages sent have directly resulted in members and other residents being warned prior to receiving a call from the trader.

We are working hard to improve the service to members and Marjorie Jackson has now taken on the onerous task of maintaining the membership database. Marjorie has been through the entire database checking for errors and correcting them. Very few e-mails are now returned as undeliverable and the system is also reporting that there are far fewer failures to deliver telephone messages.

If you are not receiving messages or if you have any problems with the delivery of messages whether by e-mail, phone or by text please contact Marjorie on 01925 442679 or mzjackson@warrington.gov.uk

Remember, you can receive messages by phone, e-mail, or text to a mobile phone and you can opt to receive messages by any or all of these methods. If you want to change any of the arrangements for the way you receive messages again please contact Marjorie on 01925 442679 or mzjackson@warrington.gov.uk

Undelivered parcel scam

"Postal Force are sorry as we were not able to deliver your item because it was perishable. We are holding your item at the local delivery office. Please call 09050 000165 to arrange delivery"

What's wrong with that? Well the small print says calls will cost £1.50 a minute, maximum duration 13 minutes. The better known Parcel Force is not connected in anyway with this business but you can't help wondering if the choice of business name was calculated to confuse.

Do you want to be an iCAN member?

Anyone in Warrington can be a member and receive alert messages by phone, e-mail or mobile phone text message. You choose which method you prefer (you can have any or all) and, if you are receiving phone messages, you can specify the time of day you want to receive calls. For more information and a registration form call Trading Standards on 01925 442678.

Spreading the Word

One of the strengths of iCAN is delivering warnings directly into member's own homes. We encourage members to take this a step further and spread the word among family, friends and neighbours and many members receiving messages by e-mail do this by printing off and posting warnings through neighbours doors. We do encourage members to do this and to spread the word however you can but please avoid editing or adding to the original text. Our messages are worded carefully to limit the possibility of legal action.

Doorstep crime week

For a week in March Trading Standards and Warrington Police were out and about in town looking for property repairers. A number of vehicles were stopped on the road and traders were approached who were working on properties at the time. The feedback from legitimate traders who were stopped was incredibly positive, "It's about time somebody did something about that lot, they give us all a bad name". The business details of all traders stopped were checked out and advice given. Two men were arrested for matters unrelated to doorstep crime and were stopped because of the vehicles they were being carried in. We will be repeating the initiative again.

Plastic everything

Gutters, fascias, end caps, soffits, barge boards and drainpipes; uPVC everything is all the rage, easy to install, easy to maintain until it all falls off again revealing the original timbers rotting beneath. The weather is improving and we are getting increased number of calls relating to this type of work. Watch out for cold callers offering this type of work and watch out too for the glossy flier that promises everything and quotes British Standards at you. The same flyer is being used by lots of different traders, topped and tailed with their own business details. The other thing these traders have in common is that when you call them to get them back to do remedial work.... they hang up on you.

Eyes and Ears

Trading Standards is now also getting more information in from members alerting us to suspicious activity. This information is invaluable in identifying and tracking the movements of doorstep sellers and bogus repairers in and around Warrington. Please look out for suspicious activity and pass this on but...please don't ever put yourself at risk to gain information.

Contact Us

Trading Standards
Phone : 01925 442678
Website : www.tswarrington.co.uk
E-mail : tradingstandards@warrington.gov.uk



When good neighbours become good friends....

A Warrington resident became concerned that his elderly neighbour had men doing roofing work. His concern increased when he learnt that the trader had taken his neighbour to the bank to get £800 in cash. He called Trading Standards who called on his neighbour and spoke with the trader. An independent inspection of the work done revealed that it was of very poor quality and that the total cost of putting everything right would be £1500.

Because the trader cold called without any invitation from the householder and failed to give written notice of cancellation rights Trading Standards were able to advise the trader that they would receive no payment for the work done.

Even if you don't think it will help, give us a call, it might make all the difference.

You wouldn't get caught out by any of these cons would you?

But what about your neighbour? Or your friends and relatives? Please share the information you receive, let people see this newsletter and if you want more copies to distribute please ring Trading Standards on 01925 442678.

iCAN members are well informed about all the sorts of scams that are doing the rounds - but we never cease to be amazed at the imagination of the conmen. There is always something new which at first sight may look quite plausible.

Want to reduce your water, gas or electricity bill?

Most people are keen to keep spending on their utilities down and Trading Standards has received a complaint that reveals a disturbing cold calling scam. A telephone call is received offering advice on how to reduce water bills but the cost of the advice is £100. This kind of advice is available free from "Water Voice" on 0161 236 6112

Written notice of cancellation rights? What's all that about?

The Doorstep Selling Regulations say that if a trader calls at your door uninvited, you agree for work to be done that will cost more than £35 and you are paying by cash (this includes cheques etc) the law says you must be given a notice, in writing, which makes it clear that you have seven days to change your mind and cancel the deal.

If you do get this notice and the work proceeds within seven days you may have to pay for goods or services supplied up to the point of cancellation if they have been installed into your property.

If you were never given notice in writing of these rights the contract is unenforceable. Under these circumstances if you have any doubt as to the quality of work carried out get advice from Trading Standards before you pay.

Watch out though if you respond to an advert or flyer, you have no cancellation rights if you contact them.

However other laws say you may also have a right to cancel where you pay for goods or services with credit and the agreement is signed at home.

For more information on your rights when traders cold call or for information on other circumstances in which you may have cancellation rights call Trading Standards 01925 442678.

Sales tactics of the doorstep cold caller

An elderly gentleman in Culcheth was taken aback when someone knocked on his door and told him it would cost £140 to replace his guttering. The caller said that the householder's daughter had asked him to call. The gentleman did have a daughter but she had never spoken to the trader. This sort of trick is common with doorstep sales, they will often try to gain personal information about a householder such as first names or names of relatives or neighbours. This information is dropped into conversation and used to inspire false confidence and makes it harder to resist a persuasive sales pitch. Don't be taken in either by smart appearance and official looking ID badges.

Intercom systems and household alarms

Selling security to vulnerable householders is probably one of the most well established door to door selling trades. The most predatory businesses of this type will select houses to target very carefully and will be looking for people who can be easily be persuaded into buying systems that will usually be installed very quickly. The commonest products are house alarms and intercom systems that allow the resident to talk to someone on the doorstep without opening the door.

It may well be that many of the people targeted might benefit from such systems but people buying as a result of a cold call will usually pay well over the odds and may also end up in a finance agreement committing them to monthly payments for years to come. Some victims are unaware that they have even signed such an agreement along with a direct debit instruction to their bank.

REMEMBER

- Always seek quotes from a number of reliable, recommended traders.
- Make sure you have full name and address details before agreeing work. Discuss how and when payment will be made.

➤ Make sure you have full name and address details before agreeing work. Discuss how and when payment will be made.

➤ Use recommendations from friends, family or neighbours.

If you get traders at the door offering to do work and you are remotely suspicious of their intentions please tell Trading Standards.

➤ In the current economic climate the best traders never need to go knocking on doors to get work.

REMEMBER