

Consumer Alerts – October 2022

Cold callers offering gardening services

Residents in the Ribble Valley area are being asked to beware of being cold called or responding via a flyer posted through their door offering tree and shrub pruning services. In one such case an intimidated householder paid nearly £3,000 for an afternoon's work.

Best advice is to use known local reputable traders, ask family and friends for recommendations. Please do not be tempted to agree to work on your doorstep. Remember that contracts agreed in your home provide a 14 day right to cancel and you can cancel even if the work has begun within this time, you may in some circumstances just have to pay for the work already done.

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers. The Safetrader scheme can help you find a trader in your area, contact 0303 333 1111 or go to www.safetrader.org.uk

Chartered Trading Standards Institute scam letter

Investors who have previously put money into potential scam land and wine investments are asked to be aware of another scam, received via letter, claiming to be able to release and return their money.

The letter purports to be from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), providing the Institute's genuine Basildon address on deceptively convincing letter headed paper. It encloses an invoice stating that there will be an upfront cost of £2000, saying the payment will give them authorisation to release the money from an escrow. They claim that this money is

refundable five days after a successful funds transfer to the consumer.

This is a scam, the CTSI are not an enforcement agency, they do not send out letters offering refunds, or carry out investigations.

Beware Student Scams

Students are urged to be aware of fraud and phishing scams as they receive their student loans for the new academic year.

In previous years, scams promising tax refunds, fraudulent job opportunities and fake rental properties have targeted students. Phishing scams claiming to come from the government owned Student Loans Company or from HMRC may try to get students to hand over personal information which may enable their identity to be stolen.

Students should also take care when sharing information on social media and elsewhere online, to help guard against identity theft. Identity theft happens when fraudsters access enough information about a person's identity, such as their name, date of birth, current or previous addresses, customer reference number or in the case of students, course information, to impersonate them online and over the phone.

Beware fake Ofgem emails

Scam emails relating to energy rebates continue to target bill payers. Action Fraud warns the public about a sharp rise in reports relating to emails purporting to be from Ofgem.

The emails claim that the recipient is due a rebate payment as part of a government scheme and provides links for the recipient to follow to apply for the rebate. The links in

the emails lead to malicious websites designed to steal personal and financial information.

All the emails display the email subject header "Claim your bill rebate now". Offenders are using the Ofgem brand logo and colours to make the emails look as authentic as possible.

Details of phishing scams can be forwarded to the National Cyber Security Centre at report@phishing.gov.uk

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133