

Please find below a message from Lancashire Trading Standards:

15 February 2010

Trading Standards Alert

Trading Standards are advising residents that there are several scams and possible unfair practices hitting Lancashire at the moment:

South Ribble- consumers have complained about a cold caller who phones, saying that he is from British Telecom, and that he is offering a new service called "Do Not Call". For a one off payment of £9.95 the consumer can take advantage of a life-long service banning cold calls. Financial information to pay for this service is then requested over the telephone. Consumers are warned that these phone calls are not made on behalf of BT, and asked not to give personal information to companies they do not know over the phone.

South Ribble, West Lancs- "Supporting Arms" bags have been left for collection at various locations, asking for unwanted goods. These are not left on behalf of a registered charity, and unfortunately the collections sometimes coincide the collection of other bags left by properly registered charities. Please be aware that the profits from sales of goods given to such companies as Supporting Arms are likely to go to support private businesses rather than charitable enterprises.

Throughout Lancashire- consumers selling goods on ebay are warned that after notification by ebay that a sale has been successful, you may receive a fake email, very official in appearance and purporting to be from Paypal, requesting that you post the item and send them the tracking number. The email states that payment has been received but is in a holding account till paypal receives the requested information, at which point they will release the money. Believing that the email is genuine, the seller then posts the item abroad, only to find later that the paypal email is fake when no payment is received. Please be very careful when sending any goods abroad, especially to Africa where many of these scams originate.

Throughout Lancashire- Businesses, schools and nursing homes across the county are being warned to watch out for bogus invoices that claim to be from directory publisher Yell in relation to its products and services. The warning comes after a number of complaints, including one from an Accrington primary school that recently received a

bogus £500 invoice. The scammers seek to mislead Yell customers into signing up to fake advertising contracts which sometimes result in repeated requests for payment by phone. Some people may be duped into thinking they are taking out Yell advertising or renewing existing advertising programmes. Bogus order forms are sent by e-mail or fax and contain look-alike "Yellow Pages" branding. Customers who return the form subsequently receive invoices and requests for payment. Some have even received threatening telephone calls. In one instance, scammers set up copycat websites resembling Yell.com. Yell customers should be particularly alert to any correspondence they receive containing contact or bank account details in Holland or Germany. Some of the names to beware of are:

- Yellow Page UK or Yellow Page AG, which displays an inverted "walking fingers" logo.
- Yellow Pages 24.
- UK Yellow Guide.

Anyone receiving contact from these traders or anyone similar should ignore any order forms and should not pay any invoices.

Throughout Lancashire- Another lottery scam apparently based in Italy- the name given is Chic Express, giving an address in Piemonte- the unsolicited letters claim the consumer has won £66,000 but needs to send a £20 administration fee in the envelope provided. The letters purport to come from Collins & Partners Practice, so-called experts in security & financial transfers.

Residents are strongly advised never to give out personal bank details in response to an unsolicited call or mailing.

Please refer any complaints to Lancashire Trading Standards Service, 55 Guildhall Street, Preston, Lancs PR1 3NU via Consumer Direct tel 08454 040506. If there is any loss of money the matter should also be referred to the police.

Warning issued by Dawn Robinson, Lancashire County Council Trading Standards Service, please call 01772 532763 for further information.