

January 2014

Consumer Alerts

Telephone Scams

The bogus 'Microsoft' scam seems to be around again. The usual scenario is that the consumer gets a phone call from the trader saying they are calling from 'Windows' or 'Microsoft' and that their computer is infected. The trader then tricks the consumer into giving them remote access to their computer and then demands money to 'fix it' or tries to sell insurance. In one incident the trader offered insurance cover for 6 years for £200. In another incident the trader asked for the consumer's bank account details.

Unfortunately, scams claiming to reclaim your mis-sold Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) are still operating. In one incident the householder received a phonecall, allegedly from the OFT, saying they had been awarded £5,000 for mis-sold PPI from a building society. The caller said the consumer would need to get a UKash voucher for £250 and then a courier would deliver the £5,000.

Trading Standards advice is never deal with cold callers.

UKash vouchers should always be treated as cash. For more information on how to use UKash vouchers securely visit www.ukash.com.

Email Scams

This email, allegedly from DIRECT GOV, says the recipient is eligible for a tax refund of £415.25 following miscalculations of Pay As You Earn (PAYE) last year. In order to claim this 'refund' you are requested to

complete a form which asks for personal information including details of your bank account.

Doorstep Callers

There have been several reports of a business offering to sell bags of garden compost which they spread on the garden. One resident was told they were working for the council. The trader charges £3.99 per bag. In each case consumers were charged for 35-40 bags but there are concerns that much less than this was actually used. As all the victims live in sheltered housing it is believed that the trader was deliberately targeting elderly and vulnerable residents.

Another consumer reported a man selling wall coatings. When the consumer said they were not interested he said that the house had damp coming through the wall via the roof. The consumer said this was impossible as a recent full structural survey had not found any problems. At this point the man said 'Oh! I've probably got it wrong – I'm new to this job' and left.

In another doorstep incident the trader cold called a vulnerable person and offered to do gardening for £225. He took the consumer to the cash machine for the cash and then said he would be back in hour for the cash. He didn't return.

Trading Standards advice is never deal with cold callers. If you need help finding a reputable trader visit www.safetrader.org.uk or call Help Direct on 0303 333 1111.

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 08454 04 05 06