



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 123

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

Nothing to report

Scams etc.

One resident of the Kincardine area recently received a call on his landline at home which caused him some concern. We are also aware that other people in that area received similar calls.

The caller was a young woman with an Asian accent. She was very polite. The worrying aspect of the situation was that this caller knew the resident's name and address and that he lived at home with his wife. This caller advised the resident that she worked for a company which monitored Council house repairs and acted on behalf of tenants to get any outstanding repairs on the property completed then bill the relevant Council for any repairs done.

However, the caller did not offer the resident her name nor that of the company she worked for.

As chance would have it, the resident had some experience in the Housing sector before his retirement, so was not fooled by the call which he found suspicious. He thanked the caller for her call, noted her telephone number from his Caller ID display and hung up. Before he did so, the caller said that she would call him back again after he'd had a chance to consider things but thankfully, she never has. The resident later reported the matter to Trading Standards for investigation.



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Some points to note:

- Reports from other areas suggest that what companies like this actually do is try to sue the relevant Council on behalf of the tenant rather than simply monitor repairs. If they are successful in obtaining compensation as the tenant, the company usually keeps a substantial proportion of this for its fee. Some reports suggest that a small minority of these companies do not pass anything back to the tenant,
- These calls are similar to calls which normally start with “We’re calling about the recent accident you had...” where the callers will contact large numbers of people, expecting that a certain per centage will proceed with a claim. It is from this per centage that the callers make their money, thereby making the scheme financially viable,
- It is not clear how the caller obtained so much information about the tenant,
- The caller’s number, which appears to have been a UK mobile number and not a land-line, has been looked up over 20 times on the reverse phone number look-up service [Who Called Me](#), though there are no reports held against it,
- As with any cold caller on the phone, you really don’t know who they are or what their real intention is, so please don’t divulge any personal information about yourself to them. They called you; let them explain themselves and how they had your details,
- Similarly, never discuss any financial information with a cold caller on the phone or reveal your log-on details for any of your accounts. Remember, it’s “Thanks but no thanks”, firm but polite, then hang up,
- If you receive a similar call to this one, please report the matter to your local Trading Standards office.

Misc.

Bitdefender Scamio

I’m obliged to Alan Parker of SHMU FM in Aberdeen for bringing this matter to my attention.

One of the areas which has caused people a fair bit of concern over recent months is the use of AI by scammers to deceive people and ultimately to cheat them out of sums of money. These are indeed valid concerns. As with many things though this can cut both ways such as with [Daisy the AI granny](#) whose purpose is to defeat scammers through pure exasperation.

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There is now a new AI program available which has similar aims, to advise people if something is likely to be a scam or not. This new program is called Bitdefender Scamio and can be found [here](#).

Scamio is an AI powered service from the multi-national cyber security company Bitdefender (which specialises in providing a wide range of cybersecurity products including antivirus software and identity protection).

In a nutshell, Scamio is a web-based AI Chatbot which operates with services such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Discord or through its own web page. It is not an app for downloading.

Users first have to create an account for themselves, which takes only a few seconds. Once that has been done, the user can then send Scamio a text, e-mail, social media message, hyperlink or QR code and ask Scamio to decipher if it is likely to be a scam or not. A user can also describe a situation to Scamio and ask if it seems like a scam.

Scamio then breaks down the message to identify key elements like sender information, message structure and language patterns which are then compared against Bitdefender's own database of known scams and phishing attempts. Scamio will then highlight any suspicious elements or if the message matches with a known scam and will alert the user to these. Scamio is fairly easy to use but best of all, the service is free.

While no system is perfect, coupled with erring on the side of caution when faced with possible scams, Scamio may yet prove very useful in protecting people from scammers.





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Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via tradingstandards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).