

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 120

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



Beware of Bogus Businesses

Not everyone may be who they seem

- Say no to doorstep traders & cold callers
- Only use reputable companies
- Always try and get 3 quotes

Ask friends or use official schemes

 Scotland
Trusted Trader

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Trading Standards

Trusted Trader Week 2025 is currently running across the whole of Scotland, from Monday 1st September until Sunday 7th September and this year's theme is "Beware of Bogus Businesses".

The purpose of the campaign is to increase awareness about doorstep crime, phone scams and spam e-mails. By keeping a few key points in mind residents can help protect themselves from scammers. Some of those key points are:

- Ask friends or use official trader schemes,
- Only use reputable firms YOU have chosen,

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- Contact [advice.scot](https://www.advice.scot) if you need support,
- Do your own research and only use reputable sources for that research,
- Contact firms directly (if you need to contact them),
- If it sounds too good to be true...(it probably is),
- Help stop doorstep crime and rogue traders,

More information about Aberdeenshire's Trusted Trader scheme can be found by clicking [here](#).

#TrustedTraderWeek

Scams etc.

Phone Scam

In previous weeks we have discussed texts scams apparently from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), contacting people to get them to click on a link in the text to claim their 2024-2025 Energy Allowance (which they implied was the replacement for the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA)).

One resident in the Banff & Bucha area recently had a phone call from someone who was much more forward about the matter. Our resident received a call from a middle-aged man with a British accent who claimed to be calling from the DWP about the resident's WFA. The caller claimed that he wanted to pay him the allowance via the resident's bank card. Notably, this caller called the resident by name. Very early in the conversation, the caller asked the resident if he had recently changed his bank card as the WFA was being paid into people's bank accounts via their debit card (completely untrue). The resident confirmed that he had not changed cards.

The caller asked and, unfortunately, received the resident's 16 digit bank card number. When the caller then asked for the 3 digit security number on the back of the card, the resident balked and refused to divulge this information. The resident suggested that he call the caller back, to which the caller gave him his name as 'James Brown', his 'office' phone number and his personal direct mobile number.

The resident did not call James Brown back but instead used the 1471 service to obtain the number James was calling from. This came back as yet another mobile number. The resident thereafter called the DWP, who confirmed for him that the call was a scam.

Several hours later, the resident received a phone call from a man claiming to be from the royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). This caller advised that they had stopped



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his debit card due to an attempted scam with it earlier that day. The resident told this caller that he was having trouble hearing him and asked him to call back on the resident's mobile number. The caller asked for that number and the resident responded that RBS already had that number. The line then went dead.

Next morning, the resident received a call from a man claiming to work for BT. This caller told the resident that there was a problem with the security of his phone line and asked the resident to go onto his mobile phone. At this point, the resident recognised the caller's voice as the same as the previous two calls so told him (rightly) "This is a scam" and hung up.

The matter was later reported to Trading Standards.

Some points to consider:

- Neither the DWP, RBS or BT played any part in this matter. Their names were misused by the caller to perpetrate this scam,
- The question early on in the first call about the possible change of debit card was a deliberate distraction to the resident, to divert his attention away from the real reason for the call,
- The real purpose of the call was for the caller to obtain the resident's bank card details so that he could commit frauds with that information. It had nothing to do with fuel payments,
- The last two calls were simply attempts by the scammer to get the resident's mobile number, to continue with the scam,
- Although the WFA has been withdrawn, in Scotland it has been replaced by the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment (PAWHP),
- The PAWHP is paid directly into people's bank accounts and NOT via their debit card,
- The name given by the caller to the resident, James Brown, is undoubtedly fictitious,
- The 'office' number given by the caller to the resident was an 0800 number which, when checked on the reverse number look up service [Who Called Me](#), showed that it had been looked up over 13,000 times by members of the public and had links to DWP scams,
- The personal mobile number given by the caller to the resident, when looked up, showed it had 31 look ups and 1 report of scam activity,
- The caller's number, looked up on the 1471 service, has been searched twice with no reports attached,
- Please NEVER divulge any banking information to a cold caller on the phone, no matter who they say they are or even if they appear to have your personal details. As illustrated by this incident, they may actually be a scammer,

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- If you receive a suspected scam or spam phone call, while the call is ongoing, try to note down the number displayed on the Caller ID then simply hang up. Afterwards, use the 1471 service to double-check the caller's number with the one you have noted down,
- Never call these numbers back as you may be simply be giving the scammer another chance to scam you,
- If you receive a suspected scam or spam phone call and are able to note down the caller's numbers, we would encourage you to register a comment against those numbers on [Who Called Me](#). It is quick and straightforward,
- We would also encourage people to use the Who Called Me service to check phone numbers they are unsure of,
- If, as in this case, you think you may have fallen or even part-fallen for a scam like this please use the short code phone number 159 (similar to the Police 101 and NHS 111 codes) to report the scam to your bank,
- If you receive a suspected scam or spam phone call, please remember to also report the matter to your local Trading Standards office.

Misc.

One of the most frequent complaints that Trading Standards receives relates to the purchase of second-hand cars, mainly with pre-existing faults coming to light after the vehicle has been paid for.

One way to get a clearer idea about the vehicle you're considering, and if it has had any serious issues in its past, is to use the UK Government's free facility to check on a vehicle's MOT history. This can be found on the 'gov.uk' website at <https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-history> (you will need the vehicle's registration number when making these checks).

This service will initially confirm the vehicle's make, model, basic colour, fuel type, the date the vehicle was first registered (and therefore its true age), if it has a current MOT certificate and when the certificate runs until.

By then clicking on the link on this page to 'show MOT history', the page expands to show the MOT history of the vehicle for the last several years including:

- The date of each test,
- The vehicle's mileage on the dates of those tests,
- Whether the vehicle passed or failed each test,



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- If the vehicle failed a test, a general description of any major defects requiring immediate repair is given along with more minor defects (advisories),
- Where the same advisories appear year after year, this can give a general idea of the level of maintenance the vehicle has received.

Combined, all of this information could prove useful in deciding where a potential buyer might focus their attention when viewing the vehicle and where future problems might arise with it. It may also provide a clearer idea of whether a vehicle is suitable for buying or not.

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 trading_standards@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



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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](#).