

From mountain to sea

# Doorstep Callers and Scams

## Bulletin No. 110

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.**

#### Telephone Scam

One resident in the Buchan area recently reported to Trading Standards that she had been called by someone who claimed to be a part of a 'Tenancy Support Team'. This caller stated that they could get the resident free housing repairs done on their home within the next 7 – 14 days.

The caller then gave the resident a mobile number to call back on if she was interested. The resident also noted the caller's number on the Caller ID and that it showed a number with the prefix of 020, normally a number based in London. Believing rightly that this was a scam, she hung up and reported the matter to Trading Standards.

In truth this was a scam, one which is called claim farming. This scam involves the caller, who works for a claims management company, cold calling and signing up a resident for the company to act on their behalf in engaging a law firm which sues the property's landlord or Local Authority Housing team for repairs not attended to, on a no win-no fee basis. The resident is hooked with promises of compensation by the claims management company in the event of a successful action. The claims management company then pays the law firm for its work and the resident a pittance of the compensation, or nothing at all, and then severs contact with the resident. The only real winner is the claim farmer.

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Some points to consider:

- A search on the 020 number used by the caller on the [Who Called Me](#) website shows that the number has been searched over 3200 times before with 25 reports that the number is associated with housing repair scams,
- Although the area code 020 suggests that the caller is in London, in truth this is a VoIP (internet based) number where the caller could be based almost anywhere. The company which owns the number is based in Ireland,
- The mobile number passed to the resident is a UK number owned by Vodafone,
- Neither the Irish company nor Vodafone took any active part in this matter,
- The law firms involved have behaved ethically throughout in their actions, it's the claims management company who are the scammers,
- Many claims management companies are ethical and operate legally, but there is a proportion who do not,
- Reports from other areas suggest that some residents have been left in debt after dealing with certain claims management companies,
- Some of these claims management companies have also been known to fabricate information and dishonestly inflate claims, to increase possible compensation payouts,
- Under the Financial Claims and Guidance Act 2018, cold calls like these are now unlawful and can be reported to the [Information Commissioners Office Scotland](#),
- Further information about claims management companies can be found here on the [UK Government website](#),
- If you receive such a phone call, please try to note down the Caller ID and as much other detail as you can. Please don't divulge any personal or financial information, but report the call to the Information Commissioner,
- Remember too to report the matter to your local Trading Standards office, so we can keep abreast of scams like these and offer people advice on how to avoid falling victim to them.

### **Misc.**

#### A message from Environmental Health

Aberdeenshire Council's Environmental Health Service would like to warn local food businesses to be aware of national consultancy companies contacting north-east operators in a misleading and intimidating manner.



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EH Officers have recently been made aware of these consultants implying that they were acting on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council then using high pressure sales techniques to drive sign-ups.

These companies offer health and safety and food safety risk assessment services and are trying to tie people into contracts costing £200- £250 per month.

Food Standards Scotland has also been made aware of reports concerning misleading and potentially intimidating approaches by consultants to food business operators. Recent incidents in other local authority areas highlight instances where businesses have been pressured into paying for services under misleading pretences.

To ensure clarity and protect businesses, Aberdeenshire Council has reaffirmed the following key points:

- Aberdeenshire Council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and Food Safety Officers do not issue fines during food inspections. Instead, they provide advice and clear timescales for any required improvements,
- Advice is available free of charge from the Environmental Health Service. Businesses seeking guidance may wish to contact us before engaging with external consultants via [environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk),
- Local authorities do not routinely work directly with private consultants. If an individual claims to be affiliated with a council or regulatory body, businesses should verify their credentials,
- All official Environmental Health and Food Safety Officers carry local authority identification and communicate via official [aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:aberdeenshire.gov.uk) email addresses,
- Any instances of aggressive or misleading behaviour should be reported to the relevant local authority and, if necessary, to Police Scotland
- If you have been approached recently by a consultant, please let the team know at [environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

### Know Your Rights Campaign 2025

On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April, the 2025 Know Your Rights campaign, which is being spearheaded by Trading Standards Scotland, kicked off. The campaign has a number of objectives and these aim to:

- Increase awareness of consumer rights in relation to purchases and contracts with cold callers, online sellers or salespeople,

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- Increase awareness of where to find legitimate and trusted information on issues such as consumer rights, dispute resolution, trusted traders, finances and reporting issues,
- Encourage consumers to report consumer issues and scams to the appropriate organisation and increase awareness of these organisations (such as Consumer Advice Scotland),
- Encourage people to talk to neighbours, family and friends about scams and consumer issues, Increase awareness of the Approved Trader scheme, the ADS ScamShare tool, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland Alerts and the ScamShare bulletin,
- Promote the hashtag #ConfidentConsumer.

Further advice on Consumers' Rights can be found [here](#) on the Consumer Advice Scotland website.

**Has something gone  
wrong with a trader and  
you're not sure about  
your consumer rights?**

*Contact Advice Direct Scotland  
(0808 164 6000) or your local  
Citizens Advice Bureau to  
find out what to do*



**Be a #ConfidentConsumer**  
*Know Your Rights, Know You're Right*

Single use vape ban is a moving target

**By Jack Stott, Marketing & Communications Officer**

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April was when the ban on single use vapes was originally meant to come into force in Scotland, for which Aberdeenshire Council voiced its support

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back in June 2023. However, that date was shifted to align with the rest of the UK.

Back in October 2024, it was decided that from 1 June 2025, it will be illegal for businesses to sell or supply, offer to sell or supply, or have in their possession for sale or supply all single-use or 'disposable' vapes.

Single use vapes, when thrown away, damage our environment, cause fires in our waste streams, and place a significant financial burden on those who must clean up the mess.

For us in Aberdeenshire, the problem is massive. More than [25,000 vapes are likely swept up every month from Aberdeenshire's streets and from within the drainage fittings on roads and highways.](#)

Research into vapes, commissioned by Material Focus and conducted by Opinium, found that new big puff style vapes are set to grow in popularity despite the coming ban. An estimated 8.2 million vapes (such as single use, pod and big puff) are now thrown away every week or recycled incorrectly—13 per second.

3 million big puff vapes are being bought each week in the UK, with 63% of puffs now being taken from the big puff style vapes.

Retailer recycling is improving, but much more easily accessible recycling options need to be in place. More and more people are recycling their single-use vapes in store: 20% this year compared to 8% last year.

However, [vape sellers have a legal responsibility to take back customers' old vapes for recycling and to tell their customers that they offer this.](#)

Vapes contain some of the most valuable materials on Earth, such as lithium and copper, but are regularly being binned or thrown away. The number of vapes thrown away per annum could instead be powering more than 10,000 electric vehicles.

Vapes should never be placed in household bins or battery bags as they are a major cause of fires in the waste stream.

Material Focus research identified that the number of battery fires in the waste stream had increased to over 1,200 in the last year, an increase of 71% from 700 in 2022.

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Fires occur when electricals containing batteries, such as vapes, are thrown in with household waste or recycling and get crushed or damaged in bin lorries and recycling centres. They cause serious damage to the local community, put collection crews in danger, impact local services, and cause air pollution levels to spike in local areas.

One local example of this was in September 2023 when a collection of disposable vapes exploded during the routine compaction of a general waste skip at Westhill's recycling centre, igniting its contents and leading to local fire services being called upon to extinguish the blaze.

The safe disposal methods for vapes in Aberdeenshire are:

- Take them to the specialised drums at household recycling centres, separate to the WEEE container, and preferably with battery removed,
- If the battery inside a vape is easily removable, then that battery alone can be removed and disposed of in battery recycling receptacles,
- Ask your retail outlet if they provide a take-back scheme or a recycling point.

The specialised drums at all household recycling centres across Aberdeenshire can safely store vapes or e-cigarettes before they are transported to Veolia in Portsmouth for recycling, where 94% of all the materials inside them can be recovered.

### **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**



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For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact the [Consumer Advice Scotland](#) website or call them on 0808 164 6000. For urgent Trading Standards matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222.

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing [tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](#).