

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 114

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

Trading Standards have recently received reports of doorstep callers operating in the north Garioch area. These callers appear to have been visiting the homes of vulnerable and elderly residents, attempting to sell cleaning materials to those residents from backpacks and hold-alls. The callers have also claimed to be part of the 'Work Scheme 2025'.

These reports have the hallmarks of Nottingham Knockers, where lone men (as they are usually men) go from door to door trying to sell cleaning materials or small garden implements to residents from large hold-alls. These men often claim to be on a prison release scheme or have just left the armed services.

The truth of the matter is very different:

- Although they may appear to be alone, these men often travel in groups, with a driver and vehicle nearby to transport them from place to place. They simply appear at people's doors as lone males,
- The goods which they try to sell are often of poor quality and are usually very over-priced and they do indeed carry them about in large hold-alls,
- The schemes which they claim to be part of are normally fictitious,
- In the recent past, Trading Standards have received reports that some of these men have been either under the influence of drink or drugs,
- Legally, what these men are doing makes them pedlars, so they should have a Pedlars Certificate (as per the Pedlars Act 1871, Section 4) to permit them to trade in this fashion. This certificate is issued by the Police Service which has responsibility for that area, in this case Police Scotland. These certificates should also be available for inspection by the



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public and it's a criminal offence to act as a pedlar without one. Very few Nottingham Knockers have these certificates,

- In January 2025, a male was arrested in the Stirling area for committing the above offence,
- Police and Trading Standards have received reports from residents of having had Nottingham Knockers at their door, then property going missing from their gardens,

Our advice, if a Nottingham Knocker comes to your door, is:

- Remain calm and polite when dealing with them, in case they have been drinking or taking drugs beforehand,
- Politely decline to buy anything from these callers; it is usually over-priced shoddy goods. Stick to your guns,
- NEVER let them into your home,
- Once you've told them 'no, thanks' go back inside and lock the door. Don't wait for their approval to do this,
- Keep a discreet eye on the caller to ensure he leaves your garden, without taking your property with him,
- Try to note down a description of this male and any others you see with him and details of any vehicle you see them enter or alight from,
- Contact your neighbours about these callers, in case they are on the caller's list,
- Please report these incidents to Police Scotland or Trading Standards to make us aware of their presence in our area.

Scams etc.

Crypto Scam

One resident in the Formartine area recently reported to Trading Standards that she had seen an advert on Facebook offering people the chance to invest in cryptocurrencies and decided to give it a go. She then clicked on the advert and was taken to a website where she had to input her contact details, which she did.

A few days later she was called by phone by a woman called Chloe, who explained what she did. Chloe claimed to be an investment broker in Canada and advised the resident that she could make a lot of money by investing in cryptocurrencies.

Chloe also persuaded the resident to open a trading account with a legitimate trading platform and to transfer £500 into the account. This money would initially go to Chloe by way of commission for her services. Chloe then walked the



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resident though the process of transferring the money from the trading account to Chloe's own business account.

A short time later, when the resident tried to make a second payment, for investing in crypto, her bank stepped in, blocked the payment and advised the resident that they thought the matter was a scam. The resident, heeding the bank, closed the trading account. So far, she has been unable to recover her £500.

In truth, Chloe, if that was her real name, was not an investment broker but a scammer.

Some other points to consider:

- Facebook took no active part in this matter. It was simply the platform misused by Chloe the scammer,
- Taking financial advice from strangers on Facebook makes as much sense as thinking you can get your car tyre changed at the local chip shop,
- Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Tether or Ethereum are simply strings of numbers on the internet with no commodities giving them value. Their value comes only from participants agreeing that they have value, nothing more,
- Investing in cryptocurrencies is a highly specialised and extremely risky matter. Their prices can vary vastly within very short periods,
- Remember that for every winner in the crypto stakes, there will also be a loser, usually more than one. Your odds of being a loser are far greater than coming out a winner,
- Cryptocurrencies by their very nature are very poorly regulated. Indeed, their purpose is to exist beyond the regulatory framework of most countries. Criminals involved in drug dealing and gun-running have also used cryptocurrencies to move their ill-gotten gains around the world outwith the knowledge of law enforcement agencies,
- Some cryptocurrencies, such as OneCoin, have been found to be, in and of themselves, scams,
- Investing in cryptocurrencies is in effect no better than gambling,
- If you lose money to a cryptocurrency scheme, most banks will not compensate their customers,
- Should you see any adverts or anything else promising to make you rich by investing in cryptocurrencies, please, please just ignore it,
- If you think that you may have fallen victim to a crypto scam, please contact your local Trading Standards office for advice.

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Misc.

Nicotine Pouches

Some of our readers may be aware of the growing popularity of nicotine pouches (small cloth pouches containing nicotine salts which are placed in the mouth between cheek and gum), especially with younger people and particularly with young men. There are currently no specific laws governing the sale of these products (not to be confused with tobacco pouches, which are completely illegal due to the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Act, 2010).

Our own researches locally suggest that, quite sensibly, most supermarkets and many large chains have already adopted an '18 and over' policy, using the Challenge 25 procedure to deal with young customers wishing to buy these products.

The Journal of Trading Standards covered this subject recently in an article which is part-reproduced below. The full article is quite lengthy (but well worth a read) and can be found [here](#).

The opening section of the article can be found below:

Nicotine pouches: Suck it and see

From supermarkets to corner shops and music festivals, all of a sudden nicotine pouches seem to be everywhere. But what are the risks – and will new legislation address them?

By Richard Young

In February of this year, Kent Trading Standards Ports Team intercepted a shipment of [66,000 tubs of nicotine pouches](#) which failed to comply with UK labelling regulations. Kent's Vapes Team – a collaboration between Kent Trading Standards and Kent Public Health – have seized a further 4,000 tubs from shops in the county over the past 12 months. Nicotine pouches have also come to the attention of several other Trading Standards services, with teams including those in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Dorset removing thousands more from sale in the past year.

At present, nicotine pouches – small rectangular sachets containing a powder infused with nicotine that are designed to be tucked between the lip and the gum – occupy something of a legislative blind spot. Perhaps surprisingly, there is currently no legal restriction on their sale to minors in the UK – nor are there any restrictions on their nicotine content, their advertising or branding, or where they can be displayed in stores.

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The seizures made by Trading Standards have only been possible because of non-compliance with chemical labelling rules (many of the products intercepted by the Kent Trading Standards Ports Team were labelled in Spanish) rather than legislation specifically tailored towards nicotine and tobacco products.

Now however, with the Tobacco and Vapes Bill making its way through parliament, and its likely implementation later this year, that loophole looks set to be closed. Under the Government's proposals, nicotine pouches will be included under the blanket term 'nicotine products' in order to 'ensure that [they] are regulated without the need for further primary legislation'.

The Bill will restrict the legal age of sale for nicotine pouches to those aged above 18, as well as introducing restrictions on where they can be advertised and displayed.

The change in the law can't come soon enough according to some, amid concerns that the products – some of which have packaging and flavours that appear designed to appeal to children – could help create nicotine addiction in a new generation.

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 the [Consumer Advice Scotland](https://www.consumeradvice.scot.nhs.uk/) website or call them on 0808 164 6000. For



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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

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](#).