



BE IN THE KNOW ABOUT

Rogue Traders

This guidance has been produced by
South Gloucestershire Council Trading Standards

www.southglos.gov.uk



Delivering with you



BE IN THE KNOW ABOUT ROGUE TRADERS

Rogue traders and scams hit the headlines almost every day with British consumers estimated to lose around £3.5 billion every year – the equivalent of £70 for every adult.

We want to give you the knowledge, support and confidence to deal with uninvited traders at your door and in your home.

This booklet provides information on how to recognise a rogue trader, how to protect yourself, friends and family and who to report these matters to.

What are rogue traders?

These people do not necessarily look like the rogues portrayed in television programmes. They are traders who have no regard for the law and take advantage of being in your home.

They may call uninvited to your home to sell goods or services, often gardening or home maintenance work. You may have invited them into your home after responding to an advert or a leaflet put through your door, or you may have used the internet to ask for traders to provide quotes for a job. Rogue traders will use the opportunity of being in your home to disregard the law by failing to provide you with accurate information about the services they are offering or the cost of it, by failing to notify you of your cancellation rights or by pressurising you into making a purchase decision on the spot.

The work carried out by rogue traders is often poor quality, unfinished or unnecessary.

The price quoted by a rogue trader is often raised after work has started, leading many residents to feel they have no choice but to agree to the increase to avoid having an unfinished job.

Often people do not realise what has happened may be rogue trading and is, therefore, illegal. Many will be visited by other rogue traders in the future offering further work. Some people can lose a lot of money. This can lead to a loss of confidence and a generally increased feeling of isolation and loneliness.

Rogue trading is often linked to distraction burglary - this is where the resident is occupied with an unexpected caller who keeps their attention with a lie, such as there being an urgent problem with the water supply for example, while another person enters the home and steals valuables.

EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES USED BY ROGUE TRADERS:

Paving and driveways

Someone knocks on your door claiming to be working in the area and offers to re-pave your driveway. They are persuasive and appear professional. They give you a business flyer and a quote for cash, claiming the low price is only available today. Rogue traders will look for unkempt gardens, damaged fencing, driveways or roofs in need of attention.

The work is started immediately, before you are given any paperwork or notice of your right to cancel the contract. The rogue trader then claims there is an unforeseen circumstance and the price increases as a result. The work has already started so you feel you have no option but to agree. The rogue trader then claims they did not include drainage or VAT in their original quote, which will cost more – they have already done the work so you feel obliged to pay the increase.

After they leave, you notice damage to your or your neighbour's property or there is a problem with the work, for example weeds are starting to grow between the pavers. The rogue traders never return to rectify the problems.



Garden maintenance

You post on social media or a website asking for someone to do some gardening work for you. The trader gets in touch with you and arranges to attend your property. They will offer to do the work for a low cash price but fail to give you a contract detailing the work or notice of your right to cancel the contract.

They start immediately, fail to use any personal protective equipment and ask if they can borrow your tools.

They only complete half of the work you expected. You question them but they claim you misunderstood and to complete the work you expected will cost double the original price. Their attitude changes from friendly to aggressive when you question the price and you feel intimidated and unsure, so pay the increase.

Home or roofing repairs and maintenance

You have noticed a small leak in your home and think it may be coming from the roof. You check a trader recommendation website and find someone you think is a reputable trader. You contact them and arrange for them to come and take a look.

They offer to do the work immediately, claiming further damage will be done to your property if the problem is not sorted now, however, they need payment upfront for materials. You pay using cash you have in your home. The trader then leaves without doing the work and never returns.

These are just a few examples, be wary of anyone who comes to your house cold calling, who asks for payment upfront or who fails to give you details of your statutory right to cancel a contract agreed in your home.

Disposing of waste

Many rogue traders fly tip waste. It can be dangerous, pollutes land and waterways and can cost significant amounts of council tax payers' money to clear away. One of the ways you can help is by knowing your own responsibilities. **Avoid being caught out by carrying out these simple checks when using someone else to take your waste away.**

- Ask to see a copy of the company's waste carrier registration certificate, and where your waste is being taken.
- You can check whether your waste carrier is registered by calling the Environment Agency on 08708 506 506 or online at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/publicregister
- Ask for a registered trading address and telephone number.
- Ensure you have an official receipt and make a note of the registration number of the vehicle taking the waste away, along with the waste carriers licence number.
- Don't be tempted by 'cash in hand deals' or cold callers.

Ways to dispose of your waste correctly

- Take your waste to one of our Sort It recycling centres or bring banks.
- Book a bulky waste collection at www.southglos.gov.uk or call 01454 868 000
- Use a registered waste carrier to dispose of your waste.



OUR ADVICE

- If you are not sure who is at your door, do not open it.
- Rogues are known to use trader recommendation websites to advertise their services. Before relying on any such website check the requirements for membership, whether the site verifies the trader's details, how does the site monitor the performance of the trader, does the site have a complaints process and compare different traders taking account of their experience and qualifications.
- Be cautious of online reviews. Fake reviews are common and it can be hard to spot them.
- If an unexpected caller is selling something or offering to do work on your home, tell them you are not interested and ask them to leave. Genuine tradespeople will not need to drum up business by cold calling.
- Remember it is your home and your decision whether work needs doing on your home. Do not be persuaded otherwise by a stranger at your door.
- Make sure your windows and doors are locked and use a door chain.
- If you believe you have paid money to a rogue trader, report this to your bank and/or building society who may be able to assist you.

If you want work carried out on your home or garden:

- Be wary of advertising your needs on a website or social media platform inviting traders to get in touch. Many of those who respond to you will be reputable businesses but rogue traders also use these sites.
- Always obtain at least three written quotes from different traders – remember an estimate is a 'best guess' whereas a quote is the price you pay.

- Do not agree to anything until you are happy and have had time to think/research.
- Reputable traders will provide you with a written description of the work to be carried out, the cost and details of your right to cancel the contract if you have agreed to it in your home.
- Read the small print as you will be bound by these terms and conditions.
- Do not pay for work or materials in advance or pay a cash deposit.
- Ensure you have the trader's full name, address and business details.
- Talk to someone you trust for a second opinion.

YOUR RIGHTS

If you agree to buy goods or services when at home, at someone else's home, at work or whilst out and about, and the price is £42 or more, you may have rights under the Consumer Contracts (Information Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013.

Your rights include

- The trader must give you information about your right to cancel, if applicable, preferably in writing and which should include a cancellation form that you can use if you wish. Having a statement on a business flyer about your cooling off or cancellation rights is not enough. You should receive proper notification of your rights and how to exercise them.
- If the trader fails to give you this information they may have committed a criminal offence so please – **report this to Citizen Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.**
- If you have the right to cancel, you must do so in writing. The cancellation period is 14 days, but please seek advice about when

this period ends by contacting the Citizens Advice helpline as there are different rules for purchasing good or services.

- The cancellation comes into effect on the day you send the letter or email – not the day it is received – so keep a copy and get proof of postage.
- If you have asked for a service to start during the cancellation period, this must be done in writing. If you then cancel, you may have to pay for some or all of what's been provided. In some cases you may lose your right to cancel altogether.
- If you make a credit or hire agreement at home, you still have a cooling off period but the rules are different. Your right to cancel must be set out in your agreement.

Remember, it is your home and you have the right to refuse to deal with any trader whether invited or unsolicited. If you feel threatened or intimidated at any point, close the door and call the Police.

SO, YOU ARE NOW IN THE KNOW...

Hopefully you found the information useful. Please share this information with friends and family to help spread the message and protect more people.

We also ask that you look out for those less able to look after themselves. If you are unsure there are warning signs including:

- large cash withdrawals
- unplanned building work or home maintenance
- becoming withdrawn or behaving out of character.

Reassure them, offer your support and encourage them to speak to the authorities. These crimes can affect anyone, at any age, it is nothing to be ashamed of.

REPORT A ROGUE TRADER

If you or someone you know has fallen victim or been harassed by a rogue trader and for advice on consumer issues contact:

The Citizens Advice consumer service

 0808 223 1133

 www.adviceguide.org.uk

For advice on preventing fraud and what to do if you are a victim contact:

Action Fraud

 0300 123 2040

 www.actionfraud.police.uk

To report concerns to the Police:

Non-emergency  101

Emergency  999

Note it, report it

To help Trading Standards tackle rogue trading quickly and robustly we need as much information as you can provide about a suspected rogue trading incident.

Please use this form to record as much as you can.

Date and time of call

Did they say they would come back?

If so when?

Names

People or company name

Description
(height, build
age, hair)

How many callers?

Male or female?

Any memorable features

- such as scar, tattoo, accent or facial hair?

Vehicles

- Registration number, make, model, colour, anything unique - dents

Reason for calling

What did they offer you?

Why did they say they were calling?

Paperwork

- Did they leave a business card, flyer, contract or invoice?

Additional Notes: