



CORONA VIRUS SCAM ALERT

WEST YORKSHIRE TRADING STANDARDS NEWSLETTER

Keeping products safe during COVID-19

Trading Standards have seen a huge shift in its workload as part of its response to the current pandemic. Seldom complained about products are now at the forefront of enforcement work, and businesses are hungry for advice to get new, safe and compliant products to the marketplace quickly. Over the recent months here are some of the things we have been involved in:

- Worked closely with Port Authorities in the identification and detention of non-compliant consignments of PPE coming into the EU.
- Overseen the reworking of non-compliant products.
- Removed from multi-seller platforms a large number of unsafe products
- Provided the five district councils within West Yorkshire advice on the procurement of safe products for staff across the councils, with particular regard to their Health and Social Care provision.
- Issued a number of Withdrawal Notices to West Yorkshire businesses who have persisted to sell unsafe PPE following advice from Officers. These Notices are statutory Notices effectively banning from the market place goods which can't be shown to meet the required standard.
- Guided business big and small through red tape to get safe, compliant products to the market quickly.

Scams Trending Locally, Regionally & Nationally

- **Costco Loyalty Reward Scam Message.** Cybercriminals are sending out fake Costco messages attempting to trick victims into visiting a fake link and completing surveys that steal personal and financial information, steal account credentials or infect their devices with malware.
- **HMRC Job Retention scams.** The Job Retention Scheme has launched and fraudsters are attempting to take advantage of this with a subsequent rise in business owners targeted by phishing emails purporting to be from the HMRC.
- **Bitcoin payments.** Emails are on the increase claiming to be from reputable organisations such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or the World Health Organisation (WHO) and requesting Bitcoin payments.
- **Reports of doorstep crime in Leeds involving gardening services targeting elderly and vulnerable consumers– overcharging for shoddy workmanship and impersonating a genuine business with the same name.**

Beware of Loan Sharks during the COVID-19 pandemic

The England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT), also known as Stop Loan Sharks, is a government funded criminal enforcement agency, working to identify, investigate and prosecute illegal money lenders, commonly known as loan sharks. The IMLT has warned that loan sharks may be looking to take advantage of those who have found themselves in a vulnerable position during the pandemic. Stop Loan Sharks is committed to helping victims of illegal money lending and providing support that is immediate, practical and tailored to their needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

Anyone working with vulnerable people who is concerned that a client, resident or service user may be a victim of loan sharks can make a referral to the Stop Loan Sharks service 24 hours a day on 0300 555 2222.

Stop Loans Sharks has launched a number of new services to help it stay in touch during the pandemic:

- An online chat service on Tuesdays between 9am and 5pm is available at www.stoploansharks.co.uk
- Online training for partner agencies, including health, care and housing staff – email reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk to register your interest.
- A new animation to coincide with Scams Awareness fortnight to help people spot the signs of illegal money lending https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g3_6BxSkdU&t=7s



Listen to free Podcasts!

A new awareness-raising podcast series, including campaigns such as Cheltenham Says No and an interview with a loan shark victim. Your Money and Your Life series is available on all major podcast directories.



Phishing Emails

Top Tips

- Never click on links or download attachments from emails you receive out of the blue as they can release malware onto your device or steal your bank details.
- Always make sure emails requesting financial or secure information are legitimate and from a trusted sender before you take action.
- Try not to panic and feel pressured into making rash decisions.
- It is important to ensure your security settings are up to date on all your devices. Never share your screen with anyone you cannot confirm is legitimate.
- Take time to do your research beforehand if you wish to donate to a charity, and always send money through a secure online portal.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is



@wytradstandards

Regular updates can also be found on:

@SAFERProject

 JUNE 2020

The week in stats...

West Yorkshire = 17 COVID-19 intelligence logs submitted from 15.06.2020 to 21.06.2020 and 7 complaints / enquiries

COVID-19 intelligence logs for Yorkshire & Humber Region from 15.06.20 to 21.06.2020 = 38

Total Amount of National Trading Standards Sanitised Intelligence Logs = 5696 (01.03.2020- 21.06.2020)

Receiving lots of nuisance calls?

Have you checked to see if you are on the open register? Your details may be sold on the open register to third party marketing companies. You can contact your local councils' electoral services department & opt into the closed register if you wish. You can also register with the Telephone Preference Service- it's Free!

www.tpsonline.org.uk

Report to us:

New mailbox to deal with reports of Covid-19 Scams in West Yorkshire:
Covid19.Scams@wyjs.org.uk

Report complaints to
Citizens Advice
Consumer Helpline: 0808
223 1133

Report scams to Action Fraud:
0300 123 2040