



Cowboy traders to be given the boot in Lancashire

Whether it is a home extension or a repair to the plumbing, it is extremely difficult for customers to know whether a trader they are thinking of using is reputable and competent.

So, to give residents peace of mind, Lancashire County Council's Trading Standards and Help Direct have worked to establish a 'Safe Trader Scheme'. The scheme will enable people who are looking for anyone from plumbers and electricians to builders, gardeners and double glazing firms to check a list of traders who have given a commitment to treat customers fairly and honestly.

So far over 250 traders in Lancashire have signed up to the Safe Trader Scheme and there are around 200 on the waiting list.

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, deputy leader of the County Council, said:

"Lancashire receives around 2,000 complaints about property repairs and home improvements every year. Some older and vulnerable people in particular, may be specifically targeted by dishonest cold calling 'home improvers'. The Safe Trader Scheme will enable customers to make an informed decision over which trader they choose to use."

"Residents can rest assured that Trading Standards Officers will monitor the Scheme and take action against any traders who fail to uphold the highest standards."

People wanting to find out more about the Safe Trader scheme including details of traders who have already signed up, can either do so online at www.safetrader.org.uk or by phoning Help Direct on 0303 333 1111.

Case studies

In the last few weeks, Lancashire Trading Standards have received complaints from vulnerable consumers cold called and pressurised by men offering to repair or coat roofs in Nelson, Haslingden and Lancaster, to re-tarmac driveways in Thornton Cleveleys and Lancaster, and to replace windows and doors throughout the West and North of the county. One woman in Barnoldswick was visited by a man asking if he could buy her wooden dormer windows- when she did not have any- while a man in

Skelmersdale had a fascia board replaced without an initial quote and was then pressurised into paying £800 by the workman. Another lady made four payments of up to £280 each to a workman with little to show for the money, while one man was landed with a £7000 bill for driveway repairs by a cold caller who tried to take him to the bank.

Notes to Editors

Lancashire County Council Trading Standards Service makes every effort to ensure that members of the Safe Trader Scheme comply with the law. However, we cannot guarantee the financial standing of members, their health and safety procedures, or that their work will never give rise to complaint. By using a member firm, consumers can minimise the risk of dispute and be assured that if there are problems Trading Standards will assist in resolving them.

