

# GOOD NEIGHBOURS STOP ROGUE TRADERS!

Are you a good neighbour? Do you want to protect vulnerable residents from rogue traders?

## Neighbours asked to help in the crackdown on doorstep crime

*Local people are being asked to look out for their neighbours to help crackdown on doorstep crime as part of a national campaign 'Good neighbours stop rogue traders'*

Trading Standards officers from West Berkshire and Wokingham Trading Standards Service will be visiting community groups in the area to advise residents how they can take an active role in protecting neighbours who may be vulnerable to falling foul of doorstep scams. Examples include taking details of suspicious callers and contacting the police or Trading Standards to report any cold callers.

In West Berkshire the Trading Standards team has joined forces with the West Berkshire Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) to put the national campaign messages out.

Dominic Boeck, West Berkshire's Executive Member for Public Protection said: "Doorstep criminals exploit vulnerable citizens by convincing them to pay for shoddy, unnecessary or incomplete repair work, charging extortionate fees for their services, or threatening residents who do not comply. Despite vast under reporting, latest research shows that nationally there could be as many as 170,000 incidents of doorstep crime each year"

Locally we have seen a number of examples of this type of criminal activity where victims have lost significant amounts of money and have been left feeling frightened to be in their own homes. Very often neighbours prove to be the best source of protection and information as victims are often reluctant to report the crime for a variety of reasons".

"If neighbourhoods stand together against this unscrupulous style of crime, then the joint enforcement initiatives between the Police and Trading Standards are likely to be much more effective in identifying the perpetrators and bringing them to justice as well as ensuring that victims are properly supported."

Awareness raising information is being distributed through a wide range of organisations including Parish Councils, Police Neighbourhood Teams and Neighbourhood Watch.

In addition there will be a display in Newbury Library and Trading Standards officers and the CAB will be at the library on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November between 12 noon and 2 pm to take enquiries and offer advice on how to deal with cold callers.

Jan Rothwell, Chief Executive of West Berkshire CAB said: "There is strength in numbers and presenting a united front against those seeking to use cold calling to commit crimes is a very effective way of dealing with this growing problem. Simply by recognizing the signs and reporting these people, you could be saving someone thousands of pounds and an immeasurable amount of stress and worry. Anyone can fall prey to cold calling scams so working together is the way forward."

Members of the public can report their concerns to the Trading Standards Helpline on 01635 519930 or if they believe a crime is in progress or somebody is at imminent risk they should call 999.

### Signs an unwanted doorstep caller is visiting a neighbour:

- Traders have been cold calling in the area
- A builder's van is parked nearby, particularly one that doesn't include a company name or contact details
- Building or maintenance work on your neighbour's garden or house starts unexpectedly
- Poor quality work is visible on the roof, driveway, or property
- Your neighbour appears anxious or distressed
- Your neighbour visits the bank, building society, or post office more frequently, particularly if they are accompanied by a trader

### What can I do?

- ✓ Ask your neighbour in private - in person or on the phone - if things are OK
- ✓ If they are displeased, suggest calling a relative or carer on their behalf
- ✓ Note any vehicle registration numbers
- ✓ Keep hold of any flyers you have received through your door
- ✓ Ask if the trader has left any paperwork and put it in a clean food bag
- ✓ If you suspect a crime, call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06 or your local trading standards office
- ✓ If the situation with the trader becomes volatile, call the police

