

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 113

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

Nothing to report.

Scams etc.

QR Code scam



Aberdeenshire Council Trading Standards have been made aware of a scam involving fake QR codes placed on some of our pay-and-display parking meters.

Fake QR codes have been placed on parking signage and meters in Fraserburgh which, once scanned, may take the user to fraudulent websites which take their details and payment.

Our Parking Team has removed these stickers and are checking our other facilities. We would remind motorists that we don't have QR codes on any of our pay-and-display parking meters anywhere in Aberdeenshire.



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If you spot these fake signs please report it to us at
<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/apps/CarParkFaults/>

Text Scam

In previous bulletins we have addressed the issue of the 'Hi Mum' scam and how it began life as an e-mail scam, then morphed over to WhatsApp and finally moved to simple text services.

Originally, these messages were aimed at parents of older children or adults and alluded to said children or older adults getting into financial difficulties, often abroad, asking for their parent to send them money to get them out of the fix they were in. As time went on, the wording of these messages mellowed and were a bit less doom-laden but the intent was always to cheat someone out of their money.

A resident in the Formartine area recently brought to our attention a text which he'd received on his mobile phone, which is essentially the same scam but where the wording had been modified once again. This is the message:

Dad my screen is cracked and it's not turning back on I just tried to put my sim in but I don't get any service can you save this number for now and let me know if you get this x

Reading between the lines a little, the sender (scammer) is implying that they are the recipient's child, that their usual mobile phone is no longer working, they ask for Dad to save the new number (as this will be the number that all new messages will be coming from) and to reply, if the original (scammer's) text got through.

Of course, when someone replies to 'let me know if you get this' it's simply a ruse to alert the scammer to a potential victim whose money they can steal.

These types of scams are sent out by computer to thousands of people at one time and that the scammers are 'playing the numbers game' in that, of those thousands, they know that a certain proportion of people will be fathers and that some of those fathers will be panicked enough into simply replying to the text to find out what's wrong and what they can do to help. From that group, some may be worried enough to transfer money to a bank account whose details will be provided by the scammer in a later part of the text thread. The scammers know



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that by using tactics like this they will make enough money from concerned parents that the scam will make it worth their while.

A search on the reverse phone number look-up service Who Called Me shows this sender's number as being owned by Vodafone and primarily associated with 'smishing scams' (smishing is similar to phishing but the method is attempted via SMS (short message service) commonly referred to as text message). This number has been looked up over 300 times in the past with 8 reports of attempts at scams of this sort.

If you receive a text like this please remember first and foremost that it may be a scam, so take a moment to think this over. Remember, scammers are usually after people's money. Consider too:

- If it may be genuine, try to contact the supposed sender(s) by other means; by phoning their usual number (which you already have) or speaking to them in person to see if they sent the text. If they didn't, you know you're dealing with a scam, so deal with the text accordingly (see below),
- If you can't get hold of them, check with someone else, who might know, about the possible sender's whereabouts and their situation,
- Don't panic and simply reply to the text,
- If you think the text may be genuine, if you do reply, insist that the sender initiates a video chat with you using FaceTime or similar. A scammer will avoid doing that as he knows the game's up. A genuine sender will try to accommodate you, to convince you that they and the text are real,
- Until you're satisfied that the text was real, DO NOT send any money to an account specified by the text sender,

If you suspect that the text is a scam:

- End all contact with the sender immediately,
- If you can, forward the text to the Spam/Scam text number of 7726 for your telephone service provider to examine or use the 'Report Spam' facility which some phones have. Your phone company will then consider having the text sender's number closed down,
- Block the text sender's number from your phone,
- Remember to report the matter to your local Trading Standards office for them to consider. Ideally, if you can, as in this case, take a screen grab of the text and send this to Trading Standards too.

Misc.

Shops urged to ditch single use vapes

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Shops are being reminded to get rid of their stocks of single use vapes before the 1 June deadline.

By JTS Staff
Journal of Trading Standards' in-house team

Retailers are being urged to sell off all of their remaining stocks of single use vapes before new legislation banning them from sale is introduced on 1 June.

The ban, which is an initiative of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), will make it illegal for businesses to sell or supply, offer to sell or supply, or have in their possession for sale or supply all single-use or 'disposable' vapes. It will apply to online and bricks-and-mortar sales, and includes all single-use vapes, whether or not they contain nicotine.

The ban applies in all of the four nations of the UK. In England, any businesses which fail to comply could face a stop notice or a fine of £200 in the first instance, with all products seized by Trading Standards. If any further infractions occur, businesses could be hit with an unlimited fine or face prosecution. The sanctions in Wales are similar to England, while businesses in Northern Ireland and Scotland could face fines of up to £5,000.

The single use vape ban complements the upcoming Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which will incrementally increase the legal age of sale for tobacco and introduce tougher controls on the sale and advertising of tobacco and vapes. As previously announced, the Bill is being supported by an additional £10m funding investment for Trading Standards to bolster enforcement capacity through apprenticeships.

In addition to public health concerns, the ban on single use vapes is driven by environmental considerations; [analysis by Material Focus](#) found that an estimated 8.2 million vapes are discarded every week in the UK, the equivalent of 13 every second. However, recycling single use vapes is notoriously difficult, with waste industry workers needing to dismantle them by hand. Their contents also present a fire risk to recycling facilities and they can leak harmful chemicals into the environment.

According to DEFRA, "With less than two months until the ban comes into force, businesses must take action now to ensure they are prepared for its implementation. This includes ensuring all remaining stocks of single use vapes are sold, and only buying vapes that follow the new regulations. If businesses have any single use vapes in their possession after 1 June 2025, they will not be able to sell them to shoppers and must ensure they are disposed of safely."

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Scott Butler, executive director of Material Focus, said: “The upcoming ban will take some of the most environmentally wasteful vape models off the market. But it is important now and going forwards that vape producers and retailers meet their long-standing obligations to provide and pay for the takeback and recycling of all types of vapes sold historically and in the future.

“This means offering in-store takeback wherever they are sold and financing the costs of recycling and recovering the materials from them to support a more sustainable and circular economy. Material Focus has produced a [vapes briefing paper](#) that explains how vape retailers and producers can do this and also provides guidance for local authorities.”

Minister for Public Health and Prevention, Ashley Dalton, commented: “Single use vapes are one of the most wasteful products on our high streets, with 13 being thrown away every second across the UK. But this isn’t just an environmental crisis – it’s a public health one too. Single use vapes, often sweet in flavour, are the product of choice for many young people, drawing a new generation into nicotine addiction.

“The ban will complement the world-leading Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which will tackle youth vaping and safeguard our children’s health. I urge retailers to plan accordingly, as we work together to create a cleaner, greener, and healthier Britain for future generations.”

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.



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Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact the [Consumer Advice Scotland](#) website or call them on 0808 164 6000. For 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](#).