



No, you didn't once have your own TV series, Colin - you were featured on Rogue Traders

## **COLIN'S BLOG**

### **DON'T BE FOOLED**

Rogue traders are people who call at your door pretending to be qualified tradespeople and offering to do work on your home.

They may seem friendly and persuasive but too often they target vulnerable elderly people and carry out poor quality household repairs to roofs and driveways

**They may claim to know your neighbours and have done work for them but often the**

**work they promise to complete didn't need doing in the first place.**

Essex Police work with Essex County Council and Age UK Essex and other partner organisations, as part of a campaign to warn residents to 'Be Sure at the Door'.

**You decide whether you need any work done to our house, not them.**

If you think you've been taken in by a rogue trader, please let us know by calling 101, contacting Trading Standards on 08454 040 506 or talk to a friend or relative.

Take a look at our advice to make sure you don't fall victim to a rogue trader.

A genuine trader won't:-

- Call without an appointment
- Ask you to go to the bank to withdraw cash or make a money transfer
- Offer to take you to the bank to withdraw cash for payment
- Ask you to pay in full before the work is complete
- Insist that you make a decision about the work they're offering to do on the spot
- Bully or scare you into doing the work

**If you do think you need some work doing:-**

- Contact a Buy With Confidence accredited trader
- Get a number of quotes
- Get a written estimate detailing exactly what work will be carried out, how much it will cost and what the terms of payment are
- Take your time to make sure you're happy with what you're undertaking – ask a trusted friend/relative for advice or ring the Buy with Confidence number

08454 040506.

## Doorstep sellers

As well as calling at your door and offering to carry out work on your home, other rogue traders try to sell poor quality goods for highly inflated prices.

It can be difficult to refuse some sales people on your doorstep and you can be pressured into buying something you do not want or that is not good value for money.

It is your doorstep and your decision and we would advise people to follow a few simple steps to help them handle any high pressure techniques.

1. Check the trader's identity: were you expecting them? If not, but you are interested in what they are selling, ask them to come back at a more convenient time and try to have another person with you.
2. Take control: you ask the questions and try to remember that it is a business situation.
3. Be aware that doorstep sellers are not your friends: watch out for clever sales techniques where you may be made to feel like you have lots in common.
4. Don't sign on the spot: even if it means that you could lose a 'special discount'. Take time to reflect, think about your purchase and shop around.
5. You have a right to cancel: If you do purchase something for more than £35 from doorstep sales people you have 7 days to change your mind. This information should be given to you in writing by the sales person.
6. If in doubt, **ask the person to leave**: phone Consumer Direct or Essex County Council Trading Standards on 08454 040 506 for further advice.

You can also contact Essex Police using the non emergency number: **101** if you feel threatened by a sales person in your own home call **999**.

Police comment: "Rogue traders often target vulnerable members of the community offering household property services. Using any method to obtain as much money as possible, they will often only do the job to a poor standard or not undertake the work at all."

**KNOCK, KNOCK, WHO'S THERE?**

**NOTTINGHAM KNOCKERS ARE HERE AGAIN**

You may know this group as **'the duster sellers'**. They are normally young lads that turn up on your doorstep with a huge black holdall full of cleaning products ranging from tea towels, dishcloths and dusters to sprays, polishes and even small clothing items. Initially they all came from the Nottingham area, (way back in the 1970's – 80's, they used to use stolen plastic food delivery trays from suppliers such as bakeries, walls and other companies, and I used to nick the culprits for theft of the containers, which then gave me an opportunity to check them out in respect of their criminal history etc)., apparently, they have been known to obtain their goods from a warehouse at Clifton just outside of Nottingham and they then come 'knocking' on your door to trade, hence the term 'Nottingham Knockers'. Unfortunately not only are they after selling you poor quality items at highly inflated prices they are also checking out suitable targets for details to be sold onwards to professional burglars.

Once they have their holdall of products, the teams, normally six in number, are shipped out in vans and mini buses to work an area. They will readily admit to being ex-convicts trying to make a new start in life by working for a living and may show a card purporting to be part of a probation scheme or claim to be deaf or dumb, again showing an appropriate card. **These ID cards are all mocked up and have no legal bearing.** The probation service does not and would not be involved in any such working methods. Again, these young men deal in cash on the doorstep, trying to work sales into £ notes by using the 'I've got no change' routine.

It has been held that the Knockers look out for fresh notes and may even smell the notes to see if they are musty with a view to then 'trading' that persons location to other criminals, thinking that the note they have been given comes from a much larger cache.

It is a known fact that people who have purchased from Nottingham Knockers and 'paid in cash' on the doorstep have become victims of a household burglary shortly afterwards. Some victims have had weekly visits from these criminals, starting with selling items for £10 but escalating week on week until the weekly price reaches £60 or £70.


Many people purchase from sellers just to get shot of them, others because they feel sorry for them. But once into purchasing from them they will keep returning and it is not un-heard of for them to demand more money than they are receiving, even becoming violent and forcing their way into people's homes to obtain further cash handouts. Once you are on this 'suckers list' you run the risk of continual visits from the Nottingham Knockers or their burglar friends as the list is sold on and on.

## **REMEMBER:**

- **Do Not deal with Nottingham Knockers**
- **Do Not allow Nottingham Knockers into your home**
- **Do Not pay CASH on the doorstep**

Be aware of Nottingham Knockers visiting your neighbourhood and report any such activity immediately to police. By doing this you may well prevent another person falling into the cycle of repeated visits and cash hand overs.

**In Essex, the only legal ID for people such as 'Nottingham Knockers,' is a PEDLAR'S CERTIFICATE** issued by the Chief Officer of Police, or an authorised deputy like the specimen below, a Pedlar's Certificate will not be issued if the applicant has a criminal record: -

ESSEX POLICE 

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**PEDLAR'S CERTIFICATE** Ref.

LPA  Station

**Photo**

**In pursuance of the Pedlars Acts, of 1871 and 1881,  
I certify that:**  
\_\_\_\_\_ (name)  
of \_\_\_\_\_  
aged \_\_\_\_\_ years is hereby authorised to act as a  
Pedlar for **ONE YEAR ONLY** from the date of this  
Certificate.

Photograph must bear the official stamp of Essex Police

Certified this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

**This Certificate expires on** \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Commander

**taking a lead in  
making Essex safer**  
[www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)

# Latest news from Action Fraud

## Sharp rise in reports of council tax rebate fraudsters at work

Posted 28th July 2017

Fraudsters may be posing as local council officials or professionals and cold-calling customers stating that they are eligible for a **general tax or council tax rebate**, with a sharp increase in the number of reports relating to fake council tax refunds in the last few weeks.

They've been reported to calling potential victims or use a range of other techniques, such as send text messages, to convince the intended victims that their tax rebate is legitimate, when in fact this may not be the case. The fraudsters will tell you how much tax you can claim back but emphasise that an advance fee payment is required in order to make the tax claim successful.

**Whilst it may not be easy to identify if a tax rebate is legitimate, you should take care and know for certain that the tax you are planning to claim is genuine. A genuine company or organisation will never ask you for an advance fee payment to cover the administration costs in order to claim tax.**

### Protect yourself from tax rebate fraud

- Make vigorous checks if you ever get a cold call associated with a tax rebate.
- Never take up offers of tax rebates on the spot from cold calls and texts messages. Take a look at the **recent tax rebate scams by HMRC** – the same technique of offering an enticing-looking refund can be applied to private companies and public organisations.
- Don't give your bank account details or sensitive information to anyone without carrying out your own research on them.
- Get **independent financial advice** before claiming any form of tax refund.
- Check the caller's credentials. Ask if they have a permanent business address and landline telephone number. Any mobile numbers given by fraudsters are often pay-as-you-go numbers which are virtually impossible to trace.
- Always check a company's contact details (such as a website, address and phone number) are correct and that they registered in the UK.

**Have you been affected by council tax refund fraud?**

# The latest fraud & cyber alerts to watch out for: -

- 'Money hungry' employees sought for Wolf of Wall Street style Boiler Rooms.
- A scammer who used a kids party as a hook to socially engineer parents.
- Jaff ransomware being spread by infected attachments.
- Dating fraudsters on match.com.
- Non-existent prescription drugs sold on dodgy websites.

**Action Fraud is highlighting the latest fraud and cyber crime alerts to watch out for based on reports from the public assessed and analysed by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB).**

## **'Money hungry' employees sought by investment fraudsters**

A recruitment company has been placing job adverts on totaljobs.com seeking overseas employees for Boiler Rooms. Boiler Rooms involve salesmen, usually based abroad, cold-calling people in the UK and pressurising them into buying shares which turn out to be worthless because they are non-tradable, overpriced or non-existent.

The adverts state they want “young, ambitious and money hungry” individuals who “must be between 22-45 years old for Visa purposes. One jobseeker travelled to Indonesia having secured a role and when they realised the job was to be involved in a Boiler Room the jobseeker (and others) had to go to the British Embassy to ask for assistance in returning to the UK. There were over 4,400 applicants that applied for that one role and we are working with totaljobs.com to get fake adverts spotted quicker and taken down.

Job scams are on the rise and in the last 2 years Saferjobs have witnessed a **300% rise** in recruitment fraud. Take precautions whilst looking for jobs online.

## **Children's parties used as a cover up for fraud**

This type of social engineering is unusual and earned this one fraudster a huge amount of money. It involved the fraudster inviting all of her son's Chinese classmates round for a children's party. Whilst all the classmates were there, the

fraudster managed to get all of their parents' details (mainly based in China), and contacted them via the Chinese social media app, **WeChat**.

The fraudster then asked one of the parents of a classmate for help getting her mother some Chinese currency in China. The fraudster then requested that the parent send her Chinese currency and in return promised to pay the son's tuition fees in the UK.

Once the funds were sent by the victim, the school fees were never paid as promised. We have also seen dating fraud reports where the same scammer befriended victims using this type of social engineering. The total reported loss from 5 reports we have received is **£395,389.00**.

### **Jaff ransomware**

Jaff ransomware is currently being distributed in **phishing** campaigns sent out by cyber criminals. Victims are typically being infected after opening PDF attachments disguised as invoices/scans in emails, which open up in Word. The ransomware changes all file extensions to '.jaff' or '.wlu' on computers. It also changes the desktop background and places a ReadMe.txt or ReadMe.html which directs victims to a website to pay for the decryption of files.

Global **cyber incidents** which have taken place have highlighted the significant and growing threat posed by ransomware. Here is how to **protect yourself**.

### **Dating fraud victims are being targeted again**

Scammers are swindling previous victims of dating fraud out of more money through **Match.com**. One regular user of the website who had reported losing £32k to us in February found the confidence to start using the service again in March.

The victim got in contact with a new Match.com user and whilst in conversation mentioned that they had previously been a victim of this type of fraud. This new fraudster then explained that he was able to recover the victim's money for them - known as **recovery fraud**. Although the recovery fraud was perpetrated by someone with a different dating profile, they knew precisely how much the victim lost on the initial dating fraud, which suggests they may be on a **suckers list** or part of the same criminal gang.

There has been an average of **£10k** lost by dating fraud victims in the UK. Learn to **spot the signs** when looking for love online.

### **Non-existent prescription drugs sold online**



We have had 14 reports from people who have purchased prescription drugs via suspicious websites and never received them. The drugs that were purchased included; Valium tablets, Diazepam tablets, Viagra tablets, anxiety medication and sleeping tablets. Victims have lost a total of **£938.50**.

We have identified 9 websites so far that are selling these non-existent drugs and we are working with our Disruptions Team to get them taken down offline.

Report fraud and cyber crime to Action Fraud and receive a police crime reference number. [http://actionfraud.police.uk/report\\_fraud](http://actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud)

**ActionFraud**  
Report Fraud & Internet Crime  
**0300 123 2040** or



## This and That



**Sense and Sensibility, from the land of grass skirts and flower garlands, where using a mobile phone, whilst walking across a road, is now illegal. Now there's a thought!**



**LONDON'S MET POLICE STILL STUCK ON UNSAFE WINDOWS XP.**

Apparently the Met runs 18,293 XP machines, with 14,450 others upgraded to Windows 8.1

Most Essex Police computers run Windows 7 (Microsoft are withdrawing Windows 7 support in 2020).



I found myself in London again last weekend, standing with members of my family, at the roadside in Pimlico, watching the 30,000 cyclists participating in the Prudential Ride London, a challenging 100 mile ride through London and the home counties. Pass by. Why's that you ask, well, my son (pictured left), was indeed one of the participants riding in support of Diabetes UK. He has suffered from Type 1 Diabetes since the age of 18, and wanted to give something back, for all the wonderful support that he has received over the years. I am both pleased and indeed proud, to say that



he successfully completed the race, and managed to raise in excess of £3,000 in sponsorship!

I understand that this was the fifth year that the race has taken place, and, it was brilliantly organised, hence everyone was in good spirits, and one felt a strong sense of community, from both the participants and their supporters. A pleasant change from witnessing demonstrations and riots, in our great multicultural and diverse capital city.



## ***64th Toot Hill Show on 5th August 2017***

**OPENING TIMES, 12pm to 5pm - ADMISSION Adults £3 Children £2**

**Come along and visit the Rotary Club of Ongar's Tombola alongside the Neighbourhood Watch stand**

## **Copycat website overcharges for blue parking badge**



Trading standards officers across England and Wales are getting complaints about a copycat website that charges disabled motorists £49.00 for applying for blue badges they can get for £10 from their local council.

People searching for disabled blue parking badges can easily end up on the copycat site, because the company behind the site uses online techniques to rank higher in search than the councils who officially supply them. People are often unaware they are on the wrong site.

You can apply for a disabled blue parking badge from: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge>

Copycat websites charge consumers premium prices for government services they can get for free or cheaper from GOV.UK. If you ever need to search for a government service, don't use a search engine, go to GOV.UK and search there instead.

# TRESPASS WATCH

## BACK ALMOST ON OUR DOORSTEP - TRAVELLERS RETURN TO LOW HALL

Report received on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August.

Here we go again: Apparently a NEW convoy of travellers have set up shop in a council-owned field behind a supermarket car park.

Whilst writing this report, that came in three hours ago, rubbish is already strewn across the entrance to the sports field behind Low Hall Sainsbury's, in Walthamstow Avenue, in Chingford.

According to reports, the new group of about 20 caravans and motor-homes have turned up in the same field as another group last week. The land is council owned and they are already working with the Police to get the trespassers removed as soon as possible.

A council spokesman said: "We are reviewing our security measures at all our open spaces and trying different measures to see what can be done to prevent a recurrence."

Some motor-homes and caravans have even parked up in Sainsbury's car park, and according to some shocked shoppers, young children have been seen driving quadbikes around Sainsbury's car park.

This follows the illegal camping by travellers in the field next to Peter May Sports Centre, in Highams Park, their selfish action, forced organisers of a park run to cancel their weekly event.

According to the council, there have been many camps set up over the last few weeks in Chingford and Highams Park.

If they try to our way: Further information about dealing with such situations can be found at: -

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/residents/your-environment/crime-safety/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-services-in-essex>

If they dare to venture unlawfully and try to setup camp in Harlow:-

<http://www.harlow.gov.uk/illegal-encampments>

Harlow Council Community Safety Partnership – Leading the Way in Traveller enforcement.



Don't forget that your new Essex Watch Liaison Officer covering Epping Forest, Brentwood, Harlow and Uttlesford is Paul Harris. Paul is now responsible for sending out the Burglary Hotspots information which you will receive separately from my blog.

Paul.harris@essex.pnn.police .uk



## Trading Standards at V Festival



We look forward to this year's V Festival with officers working in the week before the event as traders arrive on site.

This year there are over 85 food concessions and our officers will be conducting inspections of these traders to ensure that they understand what is required of them. Food being provided onsite needs to be within its use by date, stored correctly and with clear messaging around allergens. We want to ensure that festivals goers can feel confident in the standard of food on offer.

Our teams will also be working to ensure that the bars strictly observe their Challenge 25 policy. Younger festivals goers do make up a high proportion at the event and we work closely in partnership with not only the bars, but also the official welfare providers' onsite to ensure that children are protected from harm.

We look forward to a fun but safe event in 2017.

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## Sunbeds - Know the risks



Do you use sunbeds for tanning? If you do please watch this [short film](#) to understand the risks and to know the facts before choosing a tanning salon in your local area.

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## Friends against scams



We're continuing to work with the National Trading Standards Scam Team with the [Friends Against Scams](#) campaign to support Essex residents who have been identified as repeat victims of postal and telephone scams.

It is estimated that 5 million scams operating in the UK are costing victims up to £9 billion a year. 53% of people over the age of 65 have been targeted by scammers and the problem is getting worse. In addition to debt problems, the impact of scams on individuals causes severe mental and physical health deterioration.

Since the project started, our officers, along with Essex Police, have visited over 400 scam victims, providing advice and support to prevent victims being further targeted by scammers. July was Citizens Advice's Scams Awareness Month and to mark the event the National Trading Standards Scam Team launched the [Friends Against Scams Facebook Page](#).

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## Rogue Trader Notice - Solar PV kill switch warning



We are warning owners of solar PV systems that a number of companies in the area are attempting to sell additional equipment including battery packs, inverters or fire kill switches.

Consumer complaints indicate that the companies are claiming that there are changes to regulations requiring these devices to be fitted, exaggerating potential savings, and that there is imminent fire risk or that the fire service will not attend an emergency if these devices are not fitted. These claims are untrue and the items are both unnecessary and overpriced.

Anyone who may have purchased these items or may have any concerns are requested to speak to Trading Standards on the Citizens Advice consumer helpline number on 03454 04 05 06.

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## Rogue Trader Notice - Door step mattress sales



The Colchester area is presently being dogged by doorstep mattress sellers. They are going door-to-door selling 'memory foam' mattresses for upwards of £100 each. Mattresses are likely to be mis-described (i.e. memory foam) and may not have the flammability resistance required by strict UK furniture regulations. Please be aware of these sellers and if you have any concerns report them via the [Citizens Advice Consumer](#) helpline on 03454 04 05 06.