

Credit Crunch Workmen Warning

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Unskilled builders, roofers and gardeners are targeting home owners in Aberdeen. In past years some traders would offer their services door to door but increasingly the same traders are operating via leaflets pushed through letter boxes. The Trading Standards Service is advising people to be very careful when buying goods and services from people who call at their homes or who post leaflets through their doors.

Last year the Trading Standards dealt with complaints concerning workmen not only offering gardening work and driveway repairs but also roofing, guttering and cladding work. Incidents included examples where driveways became infested with weeds within weeks of being laid, unstable garden walls and sinking garden pathways.

Low prices were often quoted. Usually there was nothing in writing. Payment was required in cash (sometimes prior to the work being done) and no receipts were given.

The problem is that after the workmen have gone there is no way of tracing them to put right any faults. Whilst they may claim to be a local company this not may be the case even if they use an Aberdeen telephone number. Without a genuine name and address there is little chance of finding them.

Carole Jackson, Trading Standards & Commercial Manager said, "It would appear that the Credit Crunch is leading to more and more people offering such services. Leaflets are being used or the services are touted door to door. In some cases the work is done to a very poor standard, leaving the owner facing a second bill to have the work done properly."

"Just because someone has a newly painted van with a name written on the side does not mean they are a legitimate business nor does it mean that they will do a good job."

If you need work doing to your home, the Trading Standards Service advises the following –

1. Don't be forced in to making a quick decision on the doorstep.
2. If you want work doing, get at least two quotes from local reputable companies who have reputations to maintain, and if possible seek recommendations from neighbours.
3. Only deal with traders who have a genuine name and address.
4. Be very wary of companies that only use mobile phone or 0800 numbers.
5. Fix a price and be specific about what you want done. Make sure you have everything in writing – don't rely on spoken agreements.
6. Anyone who makes a contract at home has 7 days in which to cancel it. You must be told of your right to cancel if you are not please report it.
7. If you require further help or advice contact the Trading Standards Service via the Consumer Direct call centre – 08454 040506