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Consumers warned about 'local' traders

Consumers are being warned that local doesn't always mean legitimate - especially when it comes to phone numbers.

It's now possible for companies to buy a local number to advertise their business despite being located elsewhere in the country, which can lead to a false sense of security for customers

Ian Treacher, Assistant Head of Kent Trading Standards said: "People often distrust companies that just use a mobile number and feel safer with companies that have a local landline. We want consumers to be aware that it's not necessarily a sign of legitimacy and they should carry out further checks to protect themselves.

"Anyone considering having work done should always get a written quote and not be pressured into having work done."

Examples brought to the attention of Kent County Council's Kent Trading Standards include a maintenance company chosen from a Kent local phone book, which was actually based in Bedfordshire and a driveway company that had purchased a Maidstone number.

The driveway company cold-called a retired couple in Folkestone and they agreed to work being carried out because they felt reassured by the local landline number. They were quoted £2200 to have their driveway re-surfaced and fortunately sought advice and cancelled the work before any money was paid. However their old driveway had already been taken up and they had to call in a legitimate trader to re-surface it.

Consumers can find legitimate and responsible traders in their area through the Buy With Confidence scheme, run by Kent Trading Standards. Businesses have to pass rigorous assessments to be accepted onto the scheme and, once approved; they are listed on the buy with confidence website at www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk

Further help and advice is also available from Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.