

Warwickshire County Council

Trading Standards Service

Briefing Document



Briefing Document

This briefing document is designed to provide our Portfolio holder, other councillors, partners, stakeholders and others with information on the recent and current work being undertaken by Warwickshire Trading Standards.

Please feel free to cascade this document to whomever you feel appropriate.

For more information on any of these items, please contact Simon Cripwell, Trading Standards Officer on 01926 738987 or email: simoncripwell@warwickshire.gov.uk

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Trading Standards Drives Economic Growth

Aim: This short video is designed to help Elected Members understand how the work of trading standards contributes to your local community.

It focuses on three of the impacts of the service:

- Safeguarding vulnerable people from scams and fraud which affect their financial, physical and mental health.
- Protecting young people's health and welfare by preventing underage sales of harmful products.
- Helping businesses to grow and thrive through expert advice on regulation.

Visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=ndZ7maY-0a0 (short video lasting 1:47).



Roadshow Tackles Illegal Tobacco

Aim: To raise awareness of the dangers of illegal tobacco, the financial impact its sale is having on genuine businesses and gather intelligence on sellers across Warwickshire

The roadshow, which visited towns across Warwickshire was organised by Warwickshire Trading Standards Service and Public Health Warwickshire. Visitors were able to speak to Trading Standards officers and meet some of the sniffer dogs used to detect illegal tobacco.

The sale of illegal cigarettes is harmful to the health of young people (sellers don't care who they sell to and charge pocket money prices) and is detrimental to genuine local businesses, as well as depriving the Treasury of tax revenue that could be spent on hospitals and schools.



The roadshow proved popular with local residents and officers were able to gather intelligence about the sale of illegal tobacco that will be used to inform future enforcement exercises.

A number of illegal tobacco investigations are underway and further enforcement exercises are planned.

Electric Blanket Safety Tests More Popular Than Ever!

Aim: To protect Warwickshire residents, in particular the elderly and vulnerable by removing old and dangerous electric products from use

Warwickshire Trading Standards carried out safety tests on over 350 electric blankets and small electrical appliances as part of this year's free electric blanket campaign, the highest number in over three years.

Trading Standards Officers and an expert electrical engineer tested 288 electric blankets and 63 other small electrical appliances such as kettles, fan heaters, Christmas tree lights and irons.

Faults were identified in one in every three electrical blankets and almost a quarter of small electrical appliances.

Sellers of Dangerous and Unroadworthy Vehicles Targeted

Aim: To protect car buyers and in particular those buying budget vehicles and improve road safety

Second hand cars are one of the most complained about consumer purchases. Not only are they one of the most expensive purchases consumers make, without proper maintenance checks vehicles are potentially dangerous. For this reason Trading Standards conducts regular "mystery shopper" exercises targeting dealers who attract the most complaints.



Two independent car dealers were prosecuted by Warwickshire Trading Standards for selling unroadworthy second hand cars. Problems identified included poor brakes and faulty suspensions. In both cases it was evident that the cars had not been prepared and checked properly for sale.

Steven Alan Ring, who trades as Impact Autos, was ordered to pay pay fines and costs totalling £2,260.91. John Paul Hunt, who formerly traded as JPH Autos, claimed he was destitute after being declared bankrupt and ceasing to trade. The Court nonetheless ordered Hunt to pay fines and costs totalling £630.

‘Snake Oil Salesman’ Receives Suspended Prison Sentence

Aim: Protect consumers from misleading claims and dangerous products

Aaron Nickols, whose business involved selling ‘revolutionary’ weight loss devices that were both misleading and unsafe has been given a nine month prison sentence (suspended for two years), ordered to complete 150 hours unpaid work and pay £5000 toward prosecution costs.

This followed a successful investigation and prosecution by Warwickshire Trading Standards Service.

Mr Nickols, ran his business, the ‘UK WeightLoss Network’ from offices in Rugby and Wolston. Nickols purchased 400 devices from a Chinese manufacturer on eBay at a cost of £170 each before renting them out for £199 per month to consumers across the UK.



In advertisements in national newspapers, Nickols (who used the name Paul Jones to hide his identity) claimed that the ultrasonic liposuction device would enable the user to lose weight without dieting, exercise or surgery.

In reality, the claims made about the product were false and misleading, and there was no scientific evidence to back the claims he was making. The products were also electrically unsafe.

In court His Honour, Recorder Mr levins described Mr Nickols as a 'snake oil salesman' said the devices were 'entirely a sham'.

New 'No Rogue Trader Zones' Launched in Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Monks Kirby

Aim: To prevent doorstep crime and protect the elderly and vulnerable

New 'No Rogue Trader Zones' have been launched in Ryton-on-Dunsmore and Monks Kirby, under a scheme operated by Warwickshire Trading Standards and supported by Warwickshire Police.

The 'No Rogue Trader Zones' comprise a number of doorstep crime 'hotspots' identified using Police intelligence.

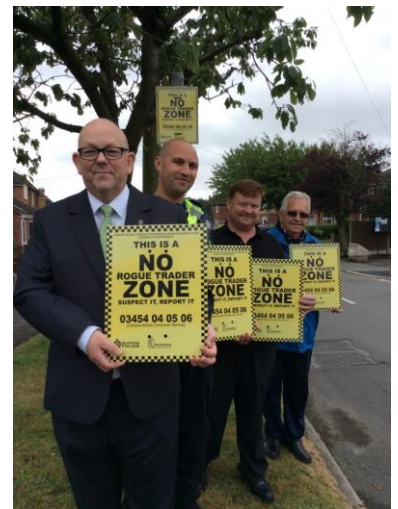
Trading Standards Officers issued residents with No Rogue Trader door/window stickers and information booklets following the theme of staying safe from rogue traders and bogus callers.

Street signage reinforces the No Rogue Trader message and acts as a warning to rogue traders that they will be reported if they attempt to trade in the area.

'Talkingshop'

Aim: Helping young people to become confident consumers develop their financial literacy and protect them from scams and frauds

'Talkingshop' is a free on-line educational and interactive programme for secondary schools and colleges, developed and run by Warwickshire



Trading Standards. The programme covers 'becoming a confident consumer', 'managing personal finances' and 'protection from cyber-crime'.

The programme seeks to meet the needs of school curriculums in the area of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and is particularly popular with sixth form staff wishing to prepare their students for life after school.

The Talkingshop programme includes: opening a bank account; budgeting; credit and debt; consumer rights; buying a used car; safe shopping online and protecting your computer.

In the last three years almost 2000 students have successfully completed the Talkingshop programme. The programme is currently running in schools and colleges in Rugby, Nuneaton and Leamington Spa.

Protecting Consumers from Potentially Harmful Food Products

Aim: Ensuring that food standards and safety are maintained for consumers

New advice on allergens has been launched by Warwickshire Trading Standards and District and Borough Council Environmental Health Teams.

This follows a Warwickshire Trading Standards food safety project which revealed that some Indian, Chinese, Italian and fish and chip takeaways were failing to adequately warn consumers about potentially dangerous allergens in their meals.

The visits were prompted by the death of a customer of a North Yorkshire restaurant who suffered a fatal anaphylactic shock after eating a curry containing peanuts. The owner had claimed the product was nut free. He was subsequently jailed for six years.

Trading Standards officers visited 18 takeaways across Warwickshire as part of their project and discovered that some owners were not preventing the cross contamination of foods, potentially resulting for example in nut free meals containing nuts.

Where problems were identified, Trading Standards officers worked with the businesses to improve their compliance.

The new allergen leaflet can be downloaded at:
<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/foodsafety>

Keeping Children Safe from Harm

Aim: Protecting children from potentially harmful products

Warwickshire Trading Standards and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services have launched their annual competition to help warn children about the dangers of fireworks. Children are asked to design a poster or write a poem that will help warn children and young people about the dangers of fireworks.

Over 1000 entries are received from schools across the county with the ten district and borough winners each receiving a £25 book token and a visit to their local Fire Station.

