

FREE



Leicestershire
County Council



Trading Standards CONSUMER AFFAIRS

June - September 2008

Up-to-date news for Consumers

WHAT'S IN A LOGO?

LIFT THE LID ON EXCESS PACKAGING

MUSIC FANS BEWARE

Calling time on PROXY PURCHASES

It's getting harder for children to **buy alcohol** from Leicestershire shops and as a result children are looking to friends, or even strangers, to buy for them, often hanging around outside shops hassling customers.

Some people agree to buy as a favour, for others it's tempting to give in rather than risk abusive comments. Either way, we're receiving more complaints than ever about these **"Proxy Purchases"**. A recent survey by The Portman Group found that a third of adults had been asked to buy alcohol for children and that a third of those had agreed.

Many are unaware that it's a criminal offence to go into a shop and buy alcohol on behalf of a child. If **"Proxy Purchasers"** are lucky they may walk away with a £80 fixed penalty notice, others will be brought before the Courts and get a criminal record and a fine of up to £5000.



In response to all the complaints that we are receiving, we have supplied warning notices to every off licence in Leicestershire and encouraged the owners to let us know if it's a problem at their shop. The next step is to set up surveillance operations in partnership with other agencies.

If you know of a shop where "Proxy Purchasing" is a problem, especially if you can provide details of when it occurs, please report it to Trading Standards via Consumer Direct.

For further advice and information contact
Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06

Music Fans Beware



Be careful not to be **'ripped off'** when buying the most sought after concert or festival tickets through unofficial channels. You could pay well over the face value or worse still the ticket may not materialise!

The simplest way to avoid the scam is to buy only from reputable ticket agencies. However, if you are determined to get tickets:

- Investigate the seller
 - run a web search to see what's being said about them.
- If one company is offering tickets although the concert is sold out, be suspicious.
- Be wary of buying tickets for concerts at online auction sites - often these are scams.
- Don't assume an internet company is in the UK just because its web address has 'uk' in it. Make sure they have a UK address and phone number.
- Be sure you know exactly what is being sold; seat location, total price, the delivery date and any cancellation policy.
- Check the web address starts https:// before you enter any personal information or payment details (the 's' stands for 'secure'). There should also be a closed padlock at the bottom of the screen.
- If you're paying over £100, consider paying by credit card - you may get protection through the card issuer.
- Save or print out all information relating to the transaction.

Buyers tips ...

Do you know that from May it is illegal for a salesperson not to leave your home when asked.

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A recent report says only 5% of us complain to agencies like Consumer Direct about faulty purchases - give them a call and make sure you know your rights.

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Get an engineer's report on your car before you agree to buy - you may even be able to get the price of the car down.

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Seen a special offer advertised but it isn't in store - report it to Consumer Direct, it could be investigated under new laws.

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If the offer through the post seems too good to be true, then it's probably not genuine.

What's In A Logo?

Thinking of having some work done on your house?

If you are looking for a trader to carry out some work, it's a good idea to look for someone that is a member of a trade association. Traders must meet certain standards to become members and undertake regular inspections by the association to ensure that they are still meeting those high standards. Many associations offer arbitration services to consumers in the event of a dispute with the trader.

However, consumers should still make further checks into a trader, as some use the logos of the trade associations

without actually being a member. Many associations have an online directory of members. It is also important to check what the association actually offers to consumers, as the services or assistance offered can vary.

The Office of Fair Trading promotes the 'Trust Mark Scheme', which requires traders to meet standards of work quality, financial trustworthiness and their ability to handle disputes.

If you have a dispute with a trader and need some advice, call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06, or if you think you know of a trader making false claims about membership visit www.ripofftipoff.net.

How to Contact us

If you have a problem with something that you've bought or work you have had done, please contact our consumer advice service.

Consumer Direct on:

Telephone: 08454 04 05 06*

Minicom: 08451 28 13 84

Website: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

* Calls to the Consumer Direct 0845 numbers are charged at no more than four pence per minute from a BT landline. Call charges from other landline providers or mobile phones may vary. Please check the rate with your phone service provider.

Opening hours:

8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday

9am to 1pm Saturday

CLOSED on bank holidays and public holidays.

After your call to Consumer Direct your complaint or enquiry may be referred to Leicestershire Trading Standards Service if appropriate.

Our Business Advice Service is available on 0116 305 8000

This information can be made available in large print or an alternative language. Please phone Consumer Direct.

Our aim is to promote a fair and safe trading environment for the people of Leicestershire.

Whether you are a consumer or a business you are equally important to us.

Product Recalls

Log onto the following website to check the **latest product recalls**:

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

If you have any topics that you would like covered in future editions or any comments about this publication please either email cscssmarketing@leics.gov.uk or telephone 0116 305 6988.