

FREE



Leicestershire
County Council



Trading Standards

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

June - September 2009

Up-to-date news for Consumers

In this issue...

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- Underage Sales / Test Purchasing
- House Buying or Selling

Watch Out For 'TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE' Franchise Opportunities



If you have money to invest from savings or a redundancy payment, you may consider purchasing a business franchise to enable you to be self employed. However, unlike the USA, Canada and Australia, the UK franchise industry is not regulated and there is no guarantee that a franchise will be without risk.

Before spending your money, we would recommend that you consider taking the following steps:

- Check out fully any claims (especially projected earnings) made by the franchisor.
- Ask to see the latest accounts.
- Check out the company - see what else they are doing or have done.
- If the franchisor is claiming that the franchise has been tried and tested in certain areas - find out full details so that you can check these claims for yourself.
- Ask to speak to other franchisees (the franchisor should have nothing to

hide) and visit them - to see how the franchise works for them and to see if any claims are true.

- Ask a solicitor to examine the contract before signing - to ensure that you understand both your own and the franchisor's obligations.
- Franchisors who are members of the British Franchise Association agree to comply with the European code of practice - look out for members on their website - www.bfa.org.

To report, confidentially, any business trading unfairly visit www.ripofftipoff.net. If you have been conned by a franchise opportunity contact Trading Standards via Consumer Direct.

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

Avoid a Scam

If it's too good to be true, it's probably a scam.

Scams are designed to con you out of your cash. Here are some valuable guidelines:

1. Be suspicious of unsolicited letters, phone calls or emails asking you to send money or phone a "09....." number or give personal or bank details. Check it out with family, friends or **Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06**.
2. If an offer, win or investment looks too good to be true, it is probably a scam. Never send money to receive a prize or to collect an unexpected package, even if you are told it's to cover administration costs, money transfer laws or delivery costs.
3. Ask yourself 'can I afford to give this money away?'
4. **NEVER** send money to anyone who says

you have won the lottery or a big prize - you will never see your promised winnings. Why do they not just deduct the money from your winnings?!!!

5. **NEVER** ring an '09....' number unless you're certain how much the call will cost and what you are likely to receive. Never trust the "value / worth" claims of unexpected goods.
6. **NEVER** disclose your bank account, credit card or personal details to people you don't know - identity theft and / or fraud could follow!
7. You can get advice about your rights and report any suspected scams to **Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06** - Trading Standards uses this information to help stop the 'scamsters' and to protect the vulnerable.



Underage sales Test purchasing

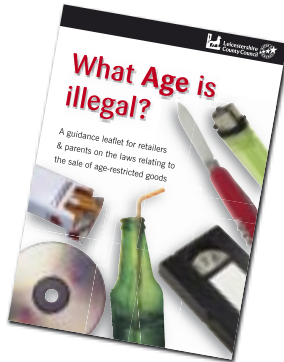
Over a 12 month period, we have carried out 159 attempts for a person under the age of 18 to buy alcohol from shops in Leicestershire. The operations were, at times, supported by Leicestershire police and the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel which provided some of our volunteer test purchasers. Out of the 159 attempts there were 129 refusals and 30 sales.

The sale of alcohol to a child is a serious matter and can lead to health problems and anti-social behaviour.

Of the 30 shops that sold:

- 2 were prosecuted.
- 2 signed formal written cautions.
- One business had its alcohol licence reviewed and one person surrendered their licence to sell alcohol.
- Most of the remaining offenders, who were shop assistants, were issued with a fixed penalty notice, costing them £80 each.

We have started work with colleagues in Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council to provide further support to businesses. We will also concentrate our



enforcement work on the irresponsible minority of shops that continue to sell to children. The full range of penalties will be used, including the alcohol licence review process, which can stop a shop from selling alcohol if it makes more than one illegal sale.

If you are aware of a shop or a house selling alcohol to under 18s, please contact Trading Standards via **Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.**

House Buying or Selling

From 6th April 2009 there have been important changes to Home Information Packs (HIPs). They now contain a Property Information Questionnaire, which the seller has completed. The HIP contains important information such as the risk of flooding, electrical safety and car parking. For more information visit: www.homeinformationpacks.gov.uk.

If you are buying a house make sure that you request a HIP from the Estate Agent.

Tips ... Sunglasses

When purchasing new sunglasses, select a pair that complies with the British Standard BS 1836:2005 and bears the CE mark. Make sure that the lenses of sunglasses worn when driving allow sufficient light to pass through, to enable you to recognise light signals.

Sunscreen

When purchasing sun cream check that the product is within its expiry date and make sure you follow the warnings and usage instructions. If this information is not in English report it to Trading Standards via **Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.**

Tell us what you think about

Consumer Affairs



Mr Mrs Miss Ms Other

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

(please only provide if you are happy to receive emails)

Telephone: _____

Mobile: _____

1. Where / how did you obtain your copy of Consumer Affairs?

2. What do you think of this publication?

<i>Very useful</i>		<i>Not useful</i>		
5	4	3	2	1

3. Are there any topics you would like to see covered in future editions of Consumer Affairs?

4. If you are not already on our mailing list would you like to receive Consumer Affairs via email?

- Yes (please supply email address above)
 No

Post back to the **Marketing Team, Community Services Department, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8TD** or drop into any Leicestershire County library by **30th September 2009**.

All entries must be submitted by an adult over 18 years of age. Enter your contact details above and send in by 30th September 2009. This form collects information about you and will be used for marketing purposes. It will not be disclosed to any organisation not associated with LCC except where law requires us to release that information. The information will be removed from our database when you request it. If you do not want us to use your information for direct marketing purposes, **please tick this box []**. We would like to share your information with other areas of LCC, if you prefer we do not pass on this information, **please tick this box []**. Please let us know at any time if you want to stop receiving information from us.

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.



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 Mon- Fri, 9am to 1pm Sat
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 email cscssmarketing@leics.gov.uk or telephone 0116 305 6988.

Cut-out and fill in the details (to be completed by an adult over 18 years of age)