

Report to the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee

22 February 2018

Trading Standards Responsibilities under the Care Act 2014

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Purpose of the report

To update the Committee on the continuing role of Trading Standards services under the Care Act 2014.

The Care Act 2014

1. The Care Act 2014 has consolidated existing care legislation and sets out the local authority's responsibility for both older people and people who care for them. It seeks to improve communication between all agencies that have a role to play in terms of safeguarding older and vulnerable people who may be at risk of harm- whether through deliberate act or by neglect.
2. The definition of adult safeguarding is given as, 'working with adults with care and support needs to keep them safe from abuse or neglect'. Safeguarding is aimed at people with care and support needs who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect. Local services are required to work together to spot those at risk and take steps to protect them.
3. Trading Standards services already work with partner agencies such as Adult and Social Care, Community Safety, Public Health and Northumbria Police to protect older residents, but this Act also requires the services to evidence that they have acted on intelligence about Safeguarding issues; that they are making appropriate referrals and have processes, procedures and records to evidence that steps have been taken to protect those people at risk from abuse or neglect.
4. Trading Standards services have sought to prioritise support for older and vulnerable people living across the UK in a number of ways.

Doorstep Crime

5. 'Doorstep Crime' is the name given to fraudulent transactions that are perpetrated in people's own homes, often - but not always - by itinerant traders that arrive unsolicited 'on the doorstep' offering to sell a variety of goods or services that may be particularly appealing to older residents. The initial approach may be an unsolicited telephone call. Whilst direct selling is perfectly legal, there are a minority of rogues who will seek to take advantage of vulnerable householders by selling goods (tarmac/block driveways, mobility aids, double glazing etc) or services (garden maintenance, energy assessments) at inflated prices and following pressurised selling techniques.

6. A key part of the Trading Standards response to doorstep crime is to raise awareness amongst older householders and their friends, neighbours, relatives about the potential harm. This is achieved through our work with groups such as the Elders Council and Age UK. The continuing development of the No Cold Calling Zones is also a key component of our work.

Scams

7. Raising awareness about the potential harm from 'scams' has formed a vital part of trading standards work for many years. Older residents in particular are targeted by scammers via telephone, mail and internet communication. Whilst most people recognise these communications for what they are, a significant minority are misled into parting with thousands of pounds. The scams come in a variety of guises. Some claim to be investment opportunities or lottery winnings, others offer goods and services. Relatively small sums of money are requested, but once successfully targeted the scammers will relentlessly pursue their victims some of whom become addicted.
8. Each year mass marketing mail scams, which often target vulnerable or disadvantaged consumers, cause approximately £3.5 billion worth of detriment to UK consumers.
9. The National Trading Standards Scams Team helps tackle mass marketing scams and disrupts the operations of perpetrators behind mail scams. It works in partnership with agencies across the country to identify and support victims of mass marketing fraud. The team provides guidance, best practice and establishes a centre of excellence to assist local authorities in supporting local victims and taking local enforcement action.

The National Team in action

10. The team launched an initiative with Royal Mail and Trading Standards Scotland to create a new process for cancelling the contracts of companies that send fraudulent mail. So far over 6,000 items of mail have been returned as part of the operation in the UK and more than £186,985 has been returned to victims.
11. Friends Against Scams is a National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative that aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering communities to... 'Take a Stand Against Scams.' It is designed to inspire action, highlight the scale of the problem, change the perceptions of why people fall for scams and make scams a community, regional and national topic.
12. Anyone can be a Friend Against Scams and make a difference in their own way.
13. The team has also been working with the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Regulator to ensure that charities do not inadvertently or otherwise support or encourage scams. Reporting scam mail

14. Potentially fraudulent mail should be reported to Royal Mail:

- Write to Freepost Scam Mail
- Call 03456 113 413
- Email scam.mail@royalmail.com

Illegal Money Lending

15. Illegal money lenders, are unlicensed (lending without a Consumer Credit licence) and operate outside the law. They are commonly referred to as loan sharks. These loan sharks not only take advantage of vulnerable borrowers but also bring disrepute to legitimate lenders.

16. Consumers who may find themselves unable to access credit due to a poor credit history, an inability to manage finances or because their income is simply too low to provide reassurance, may resort to illegal money-lenders.

To report a loan shark: Call the 24/7 confidential hotline 0300 555 2222, Text 'loan shark + your message' to 60003. E-mail:

reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk.

www.facebook.com/stoploansharksproject Log-on to

www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks.

Home Office Seminars

17. The Home Office is currently conducting a series of regional seminars which will bring together stakeholders at working professional level from law enforcement local authorities, the health sector, community groups and third sector organisations; with the aim of building the understanding of crime impacting on older people and explore ways to collaborate to improve our response.

18. The regional event for the North East is scheduled to be held at the Great North Museum in Newcastle on Thursday the 22 February 2018.

19. Event Objectives

- Delegates will gain an increased awareness of the types of crime against older people in the local region, including “hidden crime”, and the effects of these crimes upon older people,
- Delegates will improve their understanding of local projects, activities and initiatives designed to help prevent older people becoming victims of crime,
- To explore how delegates can create sustainable and resilient partnerships and networks to deliver positive impact for vulnerable older people.

Recommendations

20. The Committee is asked to note the information as contained within the report.

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