

# Rogue Traders

A free advice pack designed to help elderly and vulnerable consumers protect themselves against doorstep rogue traders has been launched by Essex County Council Trading Standards and its partners.

The pack contains a do's and don'ts leaflet, a doorstep 'no cold calling' sticker and information about Buy with Confidence – a Trader Approval Scheme run by Trading Standards. It also gives information about how to register for telephone and mail preference services which block spam calls and mail.

The pack will be given out by Essex County Council Trading Standards officers and its partners Brentwood Borough Council and Braintree District Council – as part of the Essex County Council Trading Standards, Brentwood Borough Council and Braintree District Council partnership which was launched last year. This financial year Essex County Council Trading Standards has dealt with 214 doorstep incidents in the county. The pack, designed by the three councils, gives elderly and vulnerable people the tools to help prevent doorstep crime and feel confident about living independently.

Neighbours, families and friends are asked to remain vigilant and keep an eye on elderly and vulnerable residents living in their area. If you think you or a friend or neighbour may have been the victim of a scam, call Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 08454 040506.

Essex County Councillor Roger Walters, Member with responsibility for Trading Standards, said: "We hope this pack will give those most at risk the tools to protect themselves and the confidence to say no to rogue traders. Our aims for the pack are to give people simple hints and tips on how not to fall victim to rogue traders on their doorstep. The packs are also a good opportunity to promote the use of the Buy with Confidence scheme to assist consumers with making informed decisions on which traders to use for services in their home."

## **Follow this advice to protect you and your friends and family from rogue traders:**

1. Never agree to have work carried out on your house or garden by anyone who knocks at your door.
2. Always check that the information provided in leaflets posted through your door is genuine for example check the address actually exists.
3. Don't feel pressurised into signing a contract and do not respond to scare tactics such as your roof/chimney is in a dangerous condition.
4. Always obtain at least three quotations before signing a contract and be specific about what work should be covered.
5. If you need household repairs or maintenance use a Buy With Confidence business via 08454 040506 or [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk) These businesses are audited and approved by Trading Standards.
6. Keep an eye on elderly, vulnerable neighbours, friends and family members and report any doorstep activity to Trading Standards via the helpline on 08454 040506.
7. Never pay money up front. If asked for a deposit only agree to a small percentage of the full price.
8. Never let anyone into your property unless you have checked their identity; keep the door chain on or shut the door while you check.
9. Don't be embarrassed or frightened if you have been caught out by a doorstep/rogue trader, Trading Standards can help.
10. Report any suspicious activity to Trading Standards via the helpline on 08454 040506 or to Essex Police on 101.