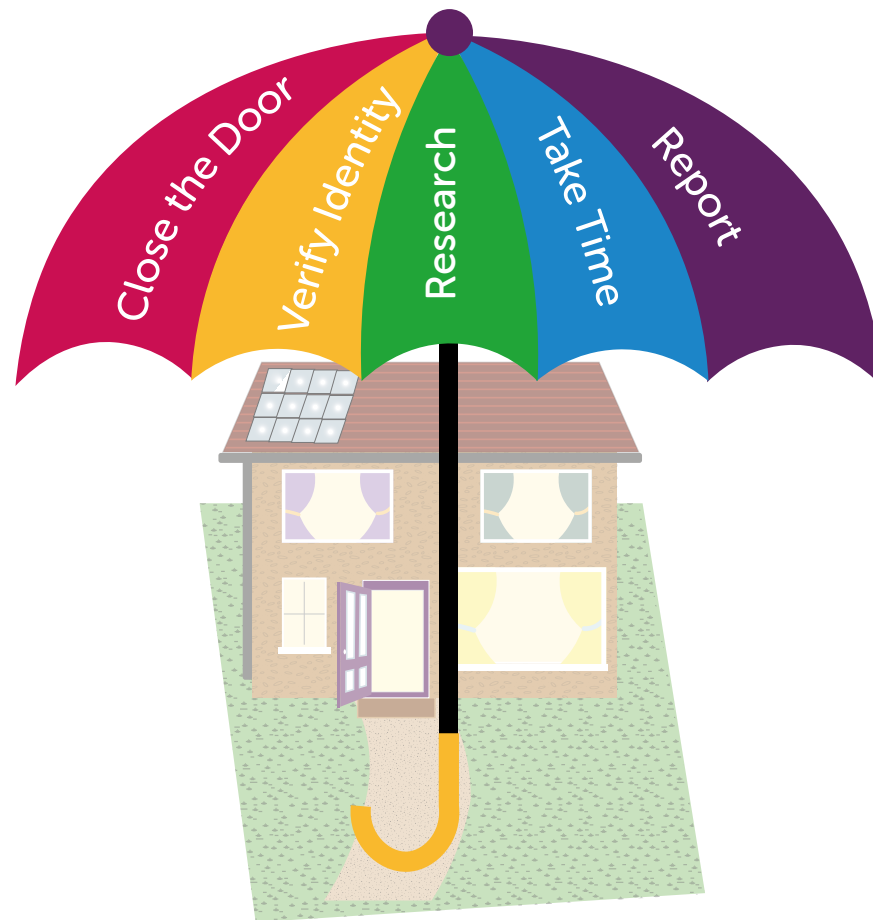


Shut out Scammers

Consumer Awareness Campaign



SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT: 1-28 April 2024



Campaign Overview

As people continue to struggle with price increases and rising energy bills, rogue traders and companies are exploiting the cost of living crisis and are scamming consumers by providing misleading information about products and services and posting misleading reviews online.

The key aim of this year's Shut Out Scammers campaign will be to empower consumers and to raise awareness of how they can protect themselves from misleading information and rogue traders.

Campaign Objectives

- To reduce the impact of doorstep crime by providing information and advice on how to prevent being affected by bogus callers and rogue traders
- To ensure that consumers know where to find trusted information and advice
- To ensure that consumers are aware of their rights
- To highlight the most common doorstep scams and tactics used by rogue traders/bogus callers
- To encourage consumers to look out for friends, family and neighbours and to report suspicious activity and rogue traders

Links and Resources

A selection of social media images and printable leaflets can be downloaded via the TSS website at www.tsscot.co.uk/shut-out-scammers-resources

Partners should feel free to use social media messaging and images throughout the campaign as suits their organisation. Please use #ShutOutScammers on all posts.

Social Media Messaging

Week 1 - Empowering Consumers

Monday 1 April (launch & close the door)

Today we're launching the #ShutOutScammers campaign to combat a rise in doorstep scams linked to the cost of living crisis and to raise awareness of how to protect yourself from misleading information & rogue traders

Read more: <https://www.tsscot.co.uk/shut-out-scammers/>

Protect your home and #ShutOutScammers:

- Close the Door on uninvited callers
- Verify that the caller is genuine
- Research - get at least 3 quotes
- Take Time to think before making a decision
- Report suspicious behaviour to @policescotland & scams to @advisedotscot

Close the door on uninvited callers. Don't feel obliged to answer the door to a cold caller - it is your home and you should not let anyone in unless you feel comfortable. #ShutOutScammers

You're not being rude if you close the door on uninvited traders and refuse to talk to them.

Decorate your front door with a No Cold Calling sticker and let scammers know they're not welcome. #ShutOutScammers

Tuesday 2 April (verify identity)

Verify the identity of cold callers before dealing with them.

Legitimate traders will expect you to challenge them and will be happy to wait while you check their ID. Close the door and look up their company online or in the phone book. #ShutOutScammers

If you agree to buy goods or services from cold caller, make sure that you take a note of their company name and contact details in case something goes wrong.

Find out more about your consumer rights at <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/> #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders often pretend to be local in order to gain your trust and may use the addresses of legitimate local businesses.

Verify their real address with the local council or through Companies House. #ShutOutScammers

Wednesday 3 April (Research)

Do plenty of research into traders before dealing with them.

Check as many different review sites as possible and check whether they are members of an approved trader scheme or professional trade organisation. #ShutOutScammers

Any unsolicited trader who offers to carry out work on your property must give you their business name and address. Do plenty of research into their company and, if something doesn't look right, don't deal with them.

#ShutOutScammers

Not sure how to avoid rogue traders?

Many local authorities run approved trader schemes, listing local businesses who have been vetted by Trading Standards and who have made a commitment to treat customers fairly

Find out more: <https://www.tsscot.co.uk/consumer-advice/approved-trader-schemes> #ShutOutScammers

Thursday 4 April (Take time)

When dealing with uninvited salespeople at your door, don't sign any paperwork unless you're happy that you understand what you're agreeing to.

Always take your time to make a decision and get a second opinion from someone you trust. #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders may try to elicit sympathy and make you feel obliged to buy goods or services from them.

Don't feel under pressure to make a decision on the spot – ask someone you trust for a second opinion. #ShutOutScammers

If you have agreed to a home visit from a salesperson after being cold called, you may want to ask a friend, neighbour or family member to be there with you to give a second opinion.

Take as much time as you need to make a decision. #ShutOutScammers

Friday 5 April (Report & Protect)

If a suspicious cold caller knocks at your door, report them to Police Scotland on 101 to make sure that they don't reach someone vulnerable in your community. Call 999 if you feel threatened or unsafe.

#ShutOutScammers

Scottish consumers can report all doorstep scams to Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or via www.scamwatch.scot

#ShutOutScammers

Worried that a vulnerable neighbour or relative may answer the door to a rogue trader?

You can request a free No Cold Calling sticker from their local council - make sure that scammers know they're not welcome.

#ShutOutScammers

Sign up for Neighbourhood Watch Scotland free alerts to receive timely local alerts about community safety and crime prevention from Police Scotland and other partners.

<https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/sign-up-for-alerts/>

Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 April (Consumer Rights)

If you agree to buy goods or services from cold caller, make sure that you take a note of their company name and contact details in case something goes wrong.

Find out more about your consumer rights at <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/>

If you regret a decision you made to purchase goods or services over £42 from a cold caller, remember that you legally have 14-day cancellation rights.

Find out more about your consumer rights at <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/>

Are you having work done on your home and want to make sure you know your consumer rights?

Call Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or visit <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/> to find out what to do if anything goes wrong with a trader or company

Week 2 - Impersonation Scams

Monday 8 April (Council/Housing Association/Police impersonation)

Has a cold caller told you they are working for the local council?

Never take their word for it - close the door and call the council using a publicly listed number. Legitimate callers will be happy to wait while you do this. #ShutOutScammers

Doorstep scammers may claim to work for the local council or housing association and ask to enter properties to carry out boiler, gas, water or smoke alarm checks.

Council or housing association employees will only carry out these checks by pre-arranged appointment and will happily show ID.

If in doubt, shut the door #ShutOutScammers

Police officers will never cold call and ask you:

- for bank details/PINs
- to transfer funds
- to hand cash/cards to a courier
- to pay a fine over the phone or online

If you're unsure if the person you're dealing with is a genuine police officer, call 101 to verify #ShutOutScammers

Tuesday 9 April (Energy efficiency grants/funding)

Have you been told by a cold caller that you're eligible for a grant for insulation, solar panels or other energy saving measures?

Don't take their word for it - contact Home Energy Scotland for free, impartial advice about grants and funding for energy efficiency measures: <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/> #ShutOutScammers

Scammers are knocking on doors and saying they work for an energy company. They say you may be eligible to receive a free boiler from the council or government, but ask you to pay a £500 deposit.

Don't provide details/payments to a cold caller on the spot - take their details and do some research before making a decision.

#ShutOutScammers

Never allow a cold caller to pressure you into purchasing energy efficiency measures for your home.

The products they're offering might not actually offer you any benefit – always get an impartial assessment done to find out which measures are best for you.

Seek legitimate and trusted advice from Home Energy Scotland: <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/> #ShutOutScammers

Wednesday 10 April (Broadband)

Doorstep scammers are impersonating BT staff and asking to enter people's homes to check their broadband speed.

Always verify the identity of a cold caller before dealing with them. Shut the door and call the company they say they represent.

#ShutOutScammers

Scammers are knocking on doors and saying they are working for the council to improve broadband provision. They ask for a payment of £200 upfront and an ongoing monthly payment of £20, which they say they would return to collect.

Don't provide details/payments to a cold caller on the spot - take their details and verify their identity. #ShutOutScammers

There have been reports of doorstep scammers saying they work for Martin Lewis and are updating WiFi cables in the area. They ask to see your phone or device to 'check the cable'.

Don't deal with a cold caller until you have verified their identity. #ShutOutScammers

Thursday 11 April (Council impersonation - roofing/property maintenance)

Rogue traders may say they are working with the Council and can offer a discount on roofing work.

They often imply that the urgent work is required on your roof.

Verify their identity with the council before dealing with them #ShutOutScammers

There have been reports of doorstep scammers offering to carry out painting work, saying they have funding from the council. They ask for a £500 deposit up front, but don't return to complete the work.

Find traders who have been vetted by Trading Standards: www.tsscot.co.uk/consumer-advice/approved-trader-schemes
#ShutOutScammers

There have been reports of cold callers who say they are inspecting windows on behalf of the local council and ask to enter people's houses.

Close the door and phone the council to verify the identity of the caller. #ShutOutScammers

Friday 12 April (Council impersonation - driveways)

Has a cold caller told you they are working for the local council and have some materials left over so can offer a cheap deal on a new driveway?

Ask them to wait and close the door while you phone the council to verify their identity.

#ShutOutScammers

Scammers regularly offer to repair/replace driveways with tarmac left over 'from a recent job with the council'.

Don't let a cold caller start work straight away - if a trader starts work on your property without being authorised and then demands payment, report them to Police Scotland on 101.

#ShutOutScammers

Cold callers recently offered to use leftover tarmac to patch potholes on a couple's driveway. They quoted £500 but didn't provide any paperwork.

They actually used the tarmac to cover the whole driveway and charged over £4,000.

Find out about your consumer rights at <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/>

Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 April (Stay safe & find trusted advice)

Sign up for Neighbourhood Watch Scotland free alerts to receive timely local alerts about community safety and crime prevention from Police Scotland and other partners.

<https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/sign-up-for-alerts/>

Rather than dealing with cold callers, find traders who have been vetted through a national or local authority approved trader scheme at <https://approvedtrader.scot/> #ShutOutScammers

Are you worried that you've dealt with a rogue trader? Not sure about your consumer rights?

Call Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or visit <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/> to find out what to do if anything goes wrong with a trader or company

Week 3 - Maintenance / Home Improvement Scams

Monday 15 April (Finding a reputable trader)

Are you thinking of making improvements to your home this spring?

Don't deal with cold callers - many local authorities run approved trader schemes, listing local businesses who have been vetted by Trading Standards and who have made a commitment to treat customers fairly

www.tsscot.co.uk/consumer-advice/approved-trader-schemes #ShutOutScammers

If you need a new kitchen or bathroom, do plenty of research before choosing a company:

Base your choice on credible reviews - check at least 3 different sites

Get at least 3 quotes from trusted companies

Check they are members of an approved trader scheme or professional trade organisation #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders often pretend to be local in order to gain your trust and may use the addresses of legitimate local businesses.

Research traders before dealing with them – verify their real address with the local council or through Companies House
#ShutOutScammers

Tuesday 16 April (Reviews)

Stay safe when searching for traders online: avoid falling for fake online reviews

- Check timing & spacing of reviews
- Check the reviewer's activity history
- Be suspicious of reviews with vague, generic language
- Use browser plug-ins to detect fake reviews

<https://www.tsscot.co.uk/fake-online-reviews/> #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders go to great lengths to appear legitimate, with genuine-looking websites, leaflets and online reviews. But they can't fake membership in a council-run approved trader scheme or professional trade organisation.

Find out more: <https://www.tsscot.co.uk/consumer-advice/approved-trader-schemes/> #ShutOutScammers

Don't be taken in by glossy leaflets with 5-star reviews – rogue traders often fake reviews.

Look out for spelling mistakes and similar reviews from the same person for different companies.

Always check at least 3 different review sites and if in doubt, say no #ShutOutScammers

Wednesday 17 April (Tactics used by rogue traders)

Thinking about sprucing up your garden? Don't be taken in by shiny leaflets and liveried vans – rogue traders often go to great lengths to appear legitimate.

Always do plenty of research - get 2 or more quotes and check companies on different review sites #ShutOutScammers

Has a cold caller told you they can offer a special deal on home maintenance or gardening work which is only available today?

Take time to think before making a decision - don't let an uninvited trader start work straight away #ShutOutScammers

If an uninvited trader knocks on your door and tells you that urgent work needs done on your house or garden, don't take their word for it.

Get a second opinion from someone you trust before having any work carried out. #ShutOutScammers

Thursday 18 April (Social Media)

Social media ads for home improvements or landscaping companies are often designed to gather your data so that scammers can cold call you.

Research companies independently before giving them any contact details or filling out online questionnaires. #ShutOutScammers

Consumers who have responded to social media ads offering amazing deals on home improvements have been cold called and visited by companies who pressured them into signing expensive contracts for products they didn't want or need.

Always do plenty of independent research before having any work done #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders have posted adverts on social media offering 'Council funding' for new storage heaters.

If a trader mentions council funding in a social media advert, always contact the council to verify that the funding exists before dealing with them. #ShutOutScammers

Friday 19 April (Common doorstep scams)

Have you heard these common doorstep scams?

"We're offering a special deal on landscaping: only available today"

"I notice that your roof needs urgent repairs"

"We're offering free boilers - covered by a government grant"

#ShutOutScammers

Cold callers who say they're selling goods as part of an 'ex-offender rehab scheme' often don't have a licence and offer poor quality, overpriced goods

Never feel pressured into buying goods from a cold caller – if you feel threatened at any time call Police Scotland on 101

#ShutOutScammers

For our #ShutOutScammers campaign we've published videos featuring case studies from Scottish consumers who have been affected by common doorstep scams

View them all: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrFecxRhIhT9FR7kwqzSyxLVkQSluH-pO>

Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 April (Stay safe & find trusted advice)

Sign up for Neighbourhood Watch Scotland free alerts to receive timely local alerts about community safety and crime prevention from Police Scotland and other partners.

<https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/sign-up-for-alerts/>

Rather than dealing with cold callers, find traders who have been vetted through a national or local authority approved trader scheme at <https://approvedtrader.scot/> #ShutOutScammers

Make sure that vulnerable neighbours/family know that they should never feel guilty about saying no to uninvited traders. Decorate their front door with a No Cold Calling sticker and let scammers know they're not interested.

Report any suspicious activity to Police Scotland on 101.

Week 4 - Energy Scams

Monday 22 April (General Information)

As more people struggle with rising energy bills, we want to help you avoid common energy scams:

“You need new insulation”

“You qualify for a grant for a free boiler”

Don't believe cold callers or online adverts– get trusted advice at <https://www.homeenergyscotland.org> #ShutOutScammers

Thinking of making your home more energy efficient? Get an independent assessment carried out first.

Cold callers may try to sell energy saving measures that you don't actually need & which won't provide any benefit

Get free, impartial advice from Home Energy Scotland #ShutOutScammers

If you get a cold call or see an online ad offering cheap energy saving measures for your home, seek impartial advice before agreeing to have any work done.

Many claims made about grants and money-saving benefits are misleading #ShutOutScammers

Tuesday 23 April (Cold caller tactics - lowering energy bills during the cost of living crisis)

Doorstep scammers are taking advantage of the cost of living crisis. They are providing misleading information about services and products, saying that they will save money on energy bills or increase the value of your house.

Don't take a cold caller's word for it - do some research and get an impartial opinion. #ShutOutScammers

A couple were recently visited by a rogue trader who offered to provide thermal roof coating for almost £2k, saying that it would save money on energy bills

They took a £500 deposit, power washed the roof, then left

#ShutOutScammers

There have been reports of doorstep scammers offering to top up electricity meters for a cut-price fee

Energy companies can detect when they haven't received correct payment. This means you could pay twice - first to a scammer and then to the company. #ShutOutScammers

Wednesday 24 April (Discounts/Funding)

Rogue traders will often tell you that they're offering a special deal on home maintenance which is only available today and which will make your home warmer in the winter months.

Don't let an uninvited trader start work straight away - take time to think before making a decision #ShutOutScammers

Confused about which grants and loans are available for energy efficiency measures in your home?

Don't believe cold callers who say you are eligible for grants/funding – seek legitimate and trusted advice from Home Energy Scotland:

<https://www.homeenergyscotland.org/> #ShutOutScammers

Have you been told by a cold caller that you're eligible for a grant for insulation, solar panels or a new boiler?

Don't take their word for it - contact @HomeEnergyScot for free, impartial advice about grants and funding for energy efficiency measures and #ShutOutScammers

Thursday 25 April (Insulation)

Has a cold caller offered to carry out a free survey of your loft insulation or told you it needs to be replaced in line with Government advice?

Don't take their word for it - always get an impartial assessment carried out #ShutOutScammers

Cold callers are providing misleading information about the safety of householders' existing loft insulation. They may say that it is toxic and try to scare people into paying for expensive and unnecessary new insulation. Always seek an impartial opinion #ShutOutScammers

Rogue traders are telling homeowners that installing spray foam insulation will keep their energy bills down. But banks are warning that they could reject mortgage applications on homes that have spray foam insulation if it's not been installed correctly. Get an independent expert to check the insulation is suitable for your home before having it installed #ShutOutScammers

If a suspicious cold caller knocks at your door and tries to sell you energy efficiency products, report them to Police Scotland on 101 to make sure that they don't reach someone vulnerable in your community. #ShutOutScammers

Friday 26 April (Protect friends/relatives/neighbours, stay safe & find trusted advice)

Thinking of making your home more energy efficient but not sure how to avoid rogue traders? Find local traders in Scotland who have been approved by local council trading standards at approvedtrader.scot #ShutOutScammers

Are you worried that you've agreed to purchase energy efficiency products from a rogue trader? Not sure about your consumer rights? Call Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or visit <https://consumeradvice.scot/knowledge-centre/> to find out what to do if anything goes wrong with a trader or company

Scammers are trying to take advantage of people who are worrying about the rising cost of living. If you're concerned that a neighbour or relative may answer the door to a rogue trader, you can request a free No Cold Calling sticker from the local council. Let scammers know that they're not welcome. #ShutOutScammers