

NEWS RELEASE

Home Improvements

On Day Two of National Consumer Week, West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service is once again warning householders of the activities of itinerant traders. These are rogue traders that may be door knocking for work such as driveway tarmacing, tree felling, replacement fascia boards and other home improvements.

Vulnerable consumers are regularly ripped off by home maintenance criminals, often being bullied into having unnecessary work carried out and then being overcharged and sometimes intimidated if they refuse to pay.

It is difficult for consumers, especially those who are vulnerable, to know if they are dealing with traders who comply with all the rules and regulations which apply to their business, who operate in a fair and honest way, and who offer high standards of workmanship.

The Home Services Directory is a scheme set up by Trading Standards in West Yorkshire to provide consumers with the means of finding a local tradesperson they can trust and to help promote reputable traders in the County. The directory lists a range of traders, such as electricians, decorators, joiners and gardeners, who have undergone an assessment process. Trading Standards are promoting the Home Services Directory to residents throughout the area, particularly older and vulnerable people, advising them to use members of the scheme when looking for a local tradesperson to work in the home or garden.

In the last year, Consumer Direct Yorkshire and the Humber - the Government-funded national telephone and online consumer advice service – has received over 4100 complaints from West Yorkshire residents in relation to home improvement issues, representing 16% of total calls in the County. Typical complaints include poor quality work, unfinished jobs or excessive prices.

Graham Hebblethwaite, West Yorkshire's Chief Trading Standards Officer said, 'The message I would like to send to consumers of West Yorkshire is not to trade on the doorstep. If you require work to be carried out on your property ask friends or relatives if they can recommend a trader or call Consumer Direct for pre-shopping advice and information on members of the Home Services Directory in your area. I would also encourage local traders to join

the scheme and demonstrate their commitment to providing good quality services at a reasonable price.'

Councillor Keith Wakefield, Deputy Chair of the Trading Standards Committee said, 'Trading Standards will not tolerate traders who are intent on ripping off consumers, whether that be from shoddy workmanship, excessive pricing or bullying tactics on the doorstep. By using a Home Services Directory member, consumers can be confident of a fair deal at a fair price. For advice on finding a reputable trader contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06'.

Notes to Editors:

About National Consumer Week 2006

NCW 2006 is themed "Hey Big Spender!" and focuses on the problems, pitfalls and best practice for consumers when they make major purchases, including homes, cars, holidays, furniture and audio-visual equipment.

National Consumer Week, which has been running for 17 years, provides a platform to inform and educate consumers; to support fair traders; and to lobby businesses, trade organisations and the Government to improve the service to consumers.

The Trading Standards Institute (TSI) coordinates the week, supported by local authority Trading Standards Services. This year Consumer Direct, the Government-funded national telephone and online consumer advice service, is our partner.

For further information contact Helen Andrews on 0113 3836 433 or email handrews@wyjs.org.uk