

Milton Keynes Trading Standards says beat the rogue callers!

Energy Companies

Many electricity and gas companies will visit you to try and get you change your provider. Some unscrupulous sales people will use underhand tactics. Be wary when someone comes to read your meter as they will often use this as a method of getting into your home where the hard sell may start. Make sure you know who provides your gas and electricity and always check a seller's identification and confirm it with the company directly.

If you do want to change your supplier never sign anything straight away, discuss it with friends and family first. If you feel as though you are under pressure from the sales person, ask them to leave, if they do not then call the police as by not leaving they may have committed a criminal offence.

If you do sign a contract in your home for a new energy supplier you legally have the right to cancel the contract within 7 days. You should do this by writing to them at the address on the contract and send the letter with a Certificate of Posting (this can be provided by the Post Office free of charge) – remember to keep a copy of the letter for your own records.

Charity Doorstep Collections

Some residents have reported that a minority of door to door charity collectors have become aggressive and more forceful with their collections.

It is your decision to give to charity so you should not feel pressured into handing over any money. If you feel that collectors are acting unreasonably then report them both to the charity they represent and also to the Charity Commission.

The Charity Commission have provided the following advice for dealing with doorstep collectors.

Does the organisation state that it is a charity, or that it is collecting on behalf of a charity?

- The 'needy in developing countries' and 'poor families in the Third World' are not specific charities – look for a charity name.
- Where the organisation states clearly that it is a charity, look for the charity number.
- Where a collection is for 'charitable purposes' or is 'on behalf of a charity', are you told which specific charity will benefit and how much of your donation will reach them?
- Ask if the charity has a formal agreement with the collector. If in doubt, you can give the charity a call.

Can the collector reassure you of their credentials?

- Be wary of ID that looks photocopied or home-made, or leaflets with no address or land line telephone number.
- Where a leaflet or envelope appears to be from a charity, check the contact details – it has been known for a charity's name to be falsely used with different addresses or telephone numbers.
- Some organisations make a small donation to charity and use the subsequent 'thank you' letter as proof of an agreement with the charity – it's not.

How can I check if the organisation is a charity?

- All charities registered in England and Wales can be checked on the Charity Commission's online register at www.charitycommission.gov.uk or call 0845 300 0218.

Clothing Collection Bags

Clothing collections bags are put through our letterboxes on a regular basis. Some of the organisations are charities and will show their registered charity number on their leaflet. If the collection company only shows a company number then it is not a charity and will make money by selling on the items you donate. If you would like to donate to a charity make sure you read the leaflet accompanying the bag or drop your items off to a local charity shop or supermarket offering collection facilities (normally by using bins in the car park).

Cooling off Period

If you buy any goods or services that cost more than £35 and the contract was made in your home you may have this 7 day unconditional right to cancel your contract.

By law the seller must give you written details of your right to cancel. If the trader does not do this then they may be committing a criminal offence and the contract could be unenforceable, meaning you do not have to pay a penny, even for goods or services already supplied.

If you want the work to start before the end of your 7 day cooling off period (eg an emergency plumber), then the trader must ask you to sign to agree for the work to start immediately.

Some goods and services contracts are excluded from these rules (insurance contracts, contracts relating to food and drink supplied by regular roundsmen, contracts relating to shares and investments and contracts relating to construction, sale or rental of property).

Buy With Confidence

If you are having work done in your home use a Buy with Confidence trader. These companies are independently checked by Trading Standards. Please contact 08454 040506 for details or visit our website: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/BWC.

Other sorts of doorstep callers

Beware, doorstep callers can be very persuasive to try and get into your home. They may use these types of lines.

“I've noticed there are a few loose tiles on your roof.”

“This offer is only available for you today...”

“I'm in your area doing a survey...”

“We have just done some work for your neighbour...”

“We can give you a discount if you pay by cash”

A lot of these statements are criminal offences, so if a doorstep caller use one of these lines please contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040506

The following numbers are provided to help you check that a caller is legitimate:

British Gas Sales - 0800 048 0202

BT - 0800 800 150

Npower -0845 071 4525

E-on - 0800 051 0760

Meter Plus - National Grid (formerly Transco) 0845 605 6677

Anglian Water Billing & General enquiries - 08457 919155

Southern Electric - 0800 117 116