



Sefton Trading Standards Newsletter

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Support for Homewatch AGM

Southport Homewatch Association held its Annual General Meeting at the Floral Hall Southport on Tuesday 21st June 2005. Sefton Trading Standards helped support the event and were amongst 12 organisations offering help and advice on the night. Over 400 people attended the meeting with representatives from the various local schemes present. The schemes collectively cover over 10,000 households in the borough and help to create an environment that is unattractive to criminals.

Trading Standards provided free "Stop. Think twice" advice packs contained in an easy to use door hanger. The packs are also supplied in a spoken word version and are available on a compact disc or audiocassette. The advice packs provide simple advice on how to

avoid becoming a victim of doorstep crime.

The Homewatch Association is part of the Sefton Consumer Support Network whose aim is to promote the co-ordination and delivery of quality consumer advice within Sefton.



ROGUE TRADERS

Trading Standards officers have issued a warning about door-to-door "traders" operating in Sefton trying to rip off people.

Conmen have been delivering colour leaflets in the Ainsdale and Formby areas offering to under take tarmac and block pavement work on driveways and pathways and carry out repair works at a cheap price. The traders arrive in new looking vehicles and can look legitimate. The leaflets contain a false address in Formby along with two phone numbers – a freephone number and a mobile phone number.

The work carried out by these traders is of an extremely poor standard at expensive prices. For

example, one person in Aintree has paid put £6,400 for block paving which will require replacing in the immediate future. The traders are committing criminal offences by not providing written cancellation rights, by not providing a proper name and address on business documents and several statements have been made about the work, which may amount to breaches of the Trade Descriptions Act.

Trading Standards are continuing to investigate any instances reported but urges anyone who receives an unsolicited visit from these traders to firmly tell them to go away.

Sefton's Knockback scheme receives national attention



An initiative set up by Sefton and Liverpool Trading Standards to help prevent the sale of alcohol to under 18s is gaining national recognition.

Sefton and Liverpool Trading Standards launched its Knockback scheme before Christmas, and already the success of the programme is attracting interest from around the country. The Knockback scheme sees workers in the off licence trade receiving practical guidance in preventing sales of alcohol to underage teenagers.

Advice packs are available to off licences, mini markets, supermarkets and general stores which agree to sign up to the scheme. Each information pack includes a staff training booklet, window sticker, posters and fact sheets. Trading Standards manager, Andrew Naisbitt, said: "To date more than 100 off licences and convenience stores have signed up to the Knockback scheme in the borough.

The programme is protected by copyright by Liverpool and Sefton Trading Standards and already both Knowsley and Stoke Trading Standards have agreed to purchase the material. A number of other Local Authorities have expressed an interest in obtaining the scheme and it is intended to promote Knockback at the Trading Standards Institute's conference in Brighton later this year. This just shows how popular the Knockback scheme is, and results of a recent underage survey show that it is starting to work."

Trading Standards officers in Sefton along with Merseyside Police recently carried out test-purchasing exercises and found just one outlet out of 21 willing to sell alcohol to a youth under the age of 18. Further exercises are planned throughout the year. To sign up for Knockback or for more information on the scheme, businesses in the borough should contact Sefton Trading Standards on 0151 934 2089/2090. Liverpool businesses should contact Liverpool Trading Standards on 0151 233 3002.

10 TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR MONEY

1. Try not to withdraw money too often for example, withdraw money for the week. Look carefully at your weekly shopping bill. Are there any less expensive brands or money saving offers you could take advantage of? Remember packed lunches for school or work are usually the cheaper option.
2. Work out your weekly/monthly budget. You will only be able to work out how much you can spend, when you know how much is coming in!
3. Takeaway meals can be expensive! Check your fridge or freezer first or you may be throwing your money into the bin along with the contents of your fridge!
4. Consider setting up Standing Orders and Direct Debits where you can e.g. telephone, utility bills and other regular payments. You may be able to get a discount and it will help you to plan and ensure you are making consistent regular payments to all the places you need to.
5. You may think money matters are complicated but you can become more informed by reading the money pages of the weekend newspapers and by watching or listening to personal finance programmes. Save where you can and try to plan for extra costs such as special occasions, family birthdays etc. Check you bank statement each month.
6. All fuel companies offer some kind of pre-payment facility which can be more expensive than paying via a Bank Account, so try to avoid this method of payment if you can.
7. Shop around different companies to find out ways of reducing regular payments on gas, electricity, the phone and insurances. If you live by yourself, consider getting information about fitting a water meter since this may reduce the monthly cost of your supply.
8. Where possible try to pay for goods outright. Don't be persuaded to take out credit unless it really does work out cheaper. Buy now pay later may seem like a good idea but unless you put money aside on a regular basis so that you can pay for it before the credit agreement ends, then the cost of the goods may considerably increase.
9. If you are offered optional insurance to cover your payments, think about whether or not it is suitable for you or whether you need it at all. You may have cover on another policy i.e. Building and Contents policies.
10. If you have credit card debts, then pay off the one which is charging the highest rate of interest first (just make the minimum payments on the other cards). When you have paid off 1 then move to the next highest card. This way your debts will be paid off faster! Don't forget to budget for your Priority bills first.





The Licensing Act, 2003

In 2001, the Government announced plans to reform the country's licensing laws. These changes finally come into effect on 24th November 2005 and affect anyone concerned with:

- **pubs and nightclubs,**
- **indoor sporting events,**
- **off-licences,**
- **restaurants that serve alcohol,**
- **businesses offering hot food between 11 pm and 5 am (with certain exceptions),**
- **hotels, guest houses and other places that sell alcohol,**
- **private member's clubs and social clubs,**
- **theatres and amateur dramatic groups,**
- **cinemas,**
- **organisers of occasional entertainments**

The Licensing Act 2003 changes the existing laws about the type of licences needed to provide any of the above regulated entertainments. Under the new system:

- **A premises licence will be required where any of the above activities are going to take place.**
- **Takeaways offering hot food between 11pm and 5am will now require a premises licence to provide "late night refreshment".**
- **A personal licence will be required by anyone who wants to allow the sale of alcohol as part of his or her business.**

- **A club premises certificate will be required for 'qualifying clubs'.**
- **Temporary Event Notices will replace Occasional Licences and Occasional Permissions.**
- **Sefton Council, and not the Courts, will be the Licensing Authority.**
- **Licensees, the Council and other agencies must all work to promote four Licensing Objectives, which are:**
 - **The prevention of crime and disorder;**
 - **Public safety;**
 - **The prevention of public nuisance; and**
 - **The protection of children from harm.**

Until premises licences, club premises certificates and personal licences come into force on 24th November 2005 existing licensed premises will continue to operate under the current law with their existing licences and certificates; these licences and certificates must be maintained as usual until then.

For further information you can contact the Council's Licensing Unit on 0151 934 4015 or e-mail Licensing@environmental.sefton.gov.uk. You may also visit Sefton's website at www.sefton.gov.uk/content-3220 or the Government's Culture Department website at www.culture.gov.uk for further information on this subject.



Useful contacts for money advice

Citizens Advice:	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Bootle	Tel: 0151 922 1114
Crosby	Tel: 0151 928 9702
Formby	Tel: 01704 873 009
Southport	Tel: 01704 531 456
Consumer Credit Counselling Service	
Tel: 0800 138 1111	www.cccs.co.uk
Financial Services Authority	
Tel: 0845 606 123	www.fsa.gov.uk

Wrist Band Rip Off

Trading Standards officers in the borough are urging consumers to be on their guard against unscrupulous conmen who are cashing in on the craze for brightly coloured charity wristbands.

Officers are concerned about the growing numbers of counterfeit wristbands being sold on Sefton's streets.

This has an impact on the consumer, who believes they are giving to a good cause, and also the charity, which never receives the money.

The worldwide appeal for charity wristbands started with the launch of the yellow 'Livestrong' bracelet in aid of the Lance Armstrong Foundation, set up by the six times Tour de France winner to highlight his crusade against cancer.



Sport and pop idols pictured wearing wristbands have helped boost their appeal to youngsters and made them must-have fashion accessories.

Even the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has been spotted sporting a 'Make Poverty History' wristband.

Other charities and causes, such as Breast Cancer Care and anti-racism, are using bands to raise funds and awareness.

Trading Standards manager, Andrew Naisbitt, said: "We have made several seizures in Sefton over the last few months and received several complaints about shops and itinerant sellers which we are acting upon.

"We deplore the increasing number of people who want to make money from charities by taking advantage of people in Sefton in this way.

"It is despicable that they are taking away money from such worthy causes and conning the consumer to make money, and sometimes committing criminal offences and we will do our utmost to prosecute them."

Trading Standards officers are urging people in the borough to buy wristbands from official outlets such as registered charity websites, well-known high street retailers and charity shops.

Crime and Disorder

Don't be a victim

Doorstep traders and bogus callers are a big concern as they cannot be classed as just "cowboys". They have a golden tongue, and a practiced patter. This can lull the public into a false sense of security, making them believe that this person can be trusted.

When asked, they can provide identification albeit fake. Never rely on the phone number on the ID card, use your telephone directory to search for the correct number to call, to check the caller is genuine.

Do not let anyone in your home if you do not know them, or if you were not expecting them. Most utility companies can provide their employees with a password they can use, it would be a word specifically chosen by you.

Have a security chain fitted to your door, and always use it.

Put a sign in your window, stating that you do not buy goods or employ workmen to carry out repairs to your home from your doorstep.

Any leaflets that have been put through your door with an offer to carry out work or repairs on or in your home, should be discarded. It is very likely the trader will not be able to be re-contacted if problems occur. The cost will probably be extortionate and the work provided, shoddy.

Never keep large sums of money in the house, and keep purses, keys and valuables out of sight and not near the door.

Sefton Trading Standards along with the Consumer Support Network has created an information pack to give the public a guide to reduce the risk of doorstep crime. The guide is designed to be easy to read and is packaged in such a way, it can be kept close to your front door for easy access. Also available is a new crime and disorder CD and cassette.

For further information regarding the packs, c.d's or cassettes, you can contact Trading Standards on 0151 934 2089/2090.



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