

Used car dealers admit fraud

David King and his daughter Danielle King, who ran Auto Direct Car Centre at JBJ Business Park in Blisworth (until August 2010) have pleaded guilty to a total of 14 counts of fraud.

We received complaints about the double sale of vehicles, non return of deposits and clocked cars.



The “double sales” involved the business selling a car to one customer, then before that customer took delivery of the car, selling it again to a second purchaser for more money. The first purchaser was then incorrectly told that there were problems with the car and given the option of having another car from Auto Direct or having a refund. The business then deliberately delayed finding an alternative vehicle or providing a refund.

David King, who pleaded guilty to 12 charges of fraud by false representation, was sentenced to a 10 month prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to carry out 180 hours of community work. Danielle King pleaded guilty to two similar charges and was sentenced to 100 hours community work.

If you wish to report issues to Trading Standards contact our partner organisation, Citizens Advice consumer service, by visiting www.adviceguide.org.uk or by calling **08454 04 05 06**.

Three rogues jailed following cross county fraud investigation



A rogue roofer who defrauded vulnerable consumers has been jailed for four years following a successful operation between Trading Standards and Police in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

William Wallace of Market Harborough, pleaded guilty at Leicester Crown Court to nine charges of fraud. The victims, who ranged in age from 70 to 88, were cold called, advised that unnecessary work needed doing and paid for work that had not actually been carried out.

The offences came to light when a building society cashier in Desborough became suspicious about a request from a customer, who had been escorted there by Wallace, to raise a cheque for £7,600. The cashier refused to grant the cheque and raised concerns with us.

Enquiries found that in the previous three months the victim had paid three cheques totalling £21,600 for work to her property. A surveyor examined the work and valued it at £900. As the investigation proceeded, it became apparent that similar offences had been committed in Leicestershire and Suffolk during 2011.

Continued on page 2

.../Continued

Lee Warburton and Craig Taylor of Market Harborough pleaded guilty to charges of money laundering as they had helped Wallace by processing cheques through their bank accounts and then giving Wallace the cash. They were each jailed for six months.

If you're not sure, don't open the door. Our advice is not to buy any work on your doorstep. If you need some work carrying out on your home or garden, use one of our approved traders – see details on page 6.

Second jail term for rogue trader



Gary Allbones, who was a supplier of garage doors has been sent back to prison for just over 18 months for failing to pay a Confiscation Order of £54,000.

Allbones was convicted (February 2011) of operating a fraudulent business where garage doors were supplied very late and in some cases not supplied at all. Allbones who repeatedly misled his customers has already served a 10 month jail sentence for these offences. He will still have to pay the Confiscation Order when he is released from prison.

Scammer convicted after joint investigation

Fraudulent company director Mark Gaffney has been jailed for three years for fraud thanks to the combined efforts of a number of agencies.

The offences first came to light after we received 20 complaints from Northamptonshire residents about the trading practices of National Maintenance and Arena Maintenance who carried out heating maintenance. Gaffney made unauthorised transactions totalling £144,900.00 from customer bank and credit accounts after they handed over bank cards to pay for work done. Some victims had lost thousands of pounds.



Due to the businesses being based in Bedfordshire, the case was passed to Central Bedfordshire Trading Standards and Bedfordshire Police to be prosecuted.

83,000 illegal cigarettes seized



A crackdown on illegal tobacco by us and Northamptonshire Police has resulted in a series of seizures across the county. This included one premise where 2,500 packs of cigarettes were discovered hidden in a concealed room. 1,900 pouches of hand rolling tobacco were also found with the help of a trained sniffer dog. Northamptonshire Police seized a large quantity of cash and two vehicles associated with criminal activity at one address.

All tobacco sold in the UK must have a picture warning and English wording on its packaging. Illegal tobacco costs the UK economy nearly £3billion in lost tax revenue and is often linked to other criminal activity such as drugs and people trafficking. It is estimated that 22% of cigarettes smoked in the East Midlands avoid UK tax.

Illegal tobacco, which is sold at lower prices, harms the interests of honest businesses, who only stock legal products.

Anyone with information about illegal tobacco can inform us by contacting the Citizens Advice consumer service by calling **08454 040506** or visiting www.adviceguide.org.uk

Warning – Giant lighters could ‘detonate’ causing injury

We are warning the public about the sale of dangerous giant lighters (approximately 16cm tall) which do not meet relevant safety standards.

Recently 136 were seized from a shop in Northampton and subsequent testing found that when the lighters were dropped they ‘detonated’ producing a cloud of flammable gas and flying debris which could cause burns to anyone in close proximity. The lighters have a torch at the bottom which increases the risk of ignition.

If you know of anywhere selling these products please let us know by contacting the Citizens Advice consumer service at www.adviceguide.org.uk or calling **08454 040506**.



Fire hazard furniture supplier fined

A national furniture supplier has been fined £3,325 plus £2,675 costs after pleading guilty to supplying furniture not meeting fire safety standards.

We purchased an Iowa sofa bed from a Northampton retailer and submitted it for testing – the back cover fabric failed the relevant tests. The sofa bed was imported and supplied to the retailer by Sweet Dreams (Nelson) Limited of Nelson, Lancashire.



A previous example of unsafe burning furniture, at 1 minute and 2½ minutes respectively

In 2010, we bought the same product and tests found the same failure. The company was informed and understood to have taken action to avoid future occurrences.

Research shows that fire safety standards save 54 fatalities and 780 injuries each year and therefore compliance with them is vital.

Unsafe Electric Blanket Recall

Morphy Richards has issued a product recall notice on its Over Electric Blankets range with the model number 75310 and 75312.

This range of over blankets were sold in the UK and Ireland through national and independent retailers and on Morphy Richards’ website between October 2008 and January 2010.

The blanket can develop a fault that has the potential to cause it to overheat and catch fire. As a precautionary measure, customers are asked to stop using it immediately.

Owners of the affected blankets (identifiable by the model number 75310 or 75312 on the product’s rating label) should stop using the blanket and contact Morphy Richards by telephone (01709 572570) or by e-mail (blankets@morphyrichards.co.uk). Telephone lines are open Monday – Friday between 8:30am – 4:00pm.

No other Morphy Richards electric blanket is affected by this product recall and we wish to thank all affected customers for their co-operation and apologise for any inconvenience that this has caused.

For a full list visit www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards and click on the link ‘Product Recalls and Safety Warnings’.

Age restricted products – safeguarding young people

Underage sales results



Checks carried out between April and December 2012 resulted in six illegal sales of age restricted products from 96 test purchase attempts. Our target is to ensure that sales are below 10%, although we would obviously like to see no sales taking place. There has been a marked improvement in compliance in the last six years – in 2005/06 illegal sales were as high as 39%. This area of work is one of our priorities, along with tackling rogue trading, and we will continue to combine work to educate businesses with robust enforcement action where appropriate.

Corby stores have alcohol licences suspended

Two Corby shops have had their licences to sell alcohol suspended for two months and one month respectively following illegal sales to underage test purchasers.

Mini Sam, 80-82 Rockingham Road, Corby – two sales of alcohol to underage test purchaser within two months. Licence suspended for two months from August 2012.

Pysio, 64a High Street, Corby – two sales of alcohol to underage test purchaser on different occasions within three months and two incidents where non-duty-paid alcohol was found on sale at the premises without any business records to show where they had originated. Licence suspended for one month in January 2013.



Shop to pay £1300 for underage cigarette sale

Akniks ADS Ltd, t/a Brackley Post Office and Stores have pleaded guilty to selling cigarettes to a 16 year old test purchaser following complaints made to us. The company was fined £500, ordered to pay £798 costs and a £15 victim surcharge by Northampton Magistrates.

Magazine owner gives undertaking over horror DVDs

The owner of a Northampton based horror magazine has given an undertaking to comply with the law in relation to age warnings on DVDs following an investigation.

18

His business published magazines with free horror DVDs that had not been age rated by the British Board of Film Classification. The DVDs were labelled as '15' when four of the DVDs contained material requiring an '18' age warning.

A prosecution was brought, however on public interest grounds, an undertaking was accepted. The undertaking can be used in evidence should further offences be committed. Anyone with any information about underage sales can inform us by contacting Citizens Advice consumer service – details below.



To make a complaint, provide information or get advice

The Citizens Advice consumer service provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues and will refer cases to Trading Standards where further action may be appropriate.

The service provides information on all consumer issues, including:

- advice before you buy
- businesses acting unfairly or illegally
- cancellation of contracts for goods or services
- faulty goods
- guarantees
- scams
- unsatisfactory service

Therefore, if you have a complaint about a trader or need advice or information on problems with goods or services please visit www.adviceguide.org.uk and click on 'Consumer', or call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **08454 04 05 06**.

Have you been bitten by a Loan Shark?

A Loan Shark is someone who lends money without the appropriate licence issued by the Office of Fair Trading. Loan Sharks rarely, if ever, give any paperwork and if payments are missed they often use intimidation and violence to get money from their 'clients'.

The Illegal Money Lending Team is here to help. If you have any information, however small, on loan shark activities we can help.



- Have you been offered a cash loan?
- Have you been threatened when you couldn't pay?
- Has your bank card been taken from you as a security?
- Does what you owe keep growing even though you are making payments?

If you can answer yes to any of the above then you may have been bitten by a loan shark. If you, or anyone you know, is experiencing any of the above or has any knowledge of loan shark activities then contact our team in confidence:

We can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **0300 555 2222**

or by e-mail at: reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

or by text to: loan(space)shark(space) + your message to 60003

For more information visit:

www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks OR www.facebook.com/stoploansharksproject

Do you need help with debt?

Recent energy price rises, along with other rising costs and falling incomes, have left many people struggling to pay their energy bills. With the extra cost of winter heating bills ahead, many more people may go into debt to their energy supplier.

It can be daunting to be unable to afford your bill, with many people unaware of where to turn for help and what their next steps should be. That's why Consumer Focus and Citizens Advice are launching the joint campaign, 'Plug the Debt'. The aim is to help you find out what to do and what your rights are when you fall behind on your energy bills.



Anyone who wants to find out more about getting help or advice through the 'Plug the Debt' campaign should visit www.consumerfocus.org.uk/plugthedebt or contact Citizens Advice Bureau on 0844 855 2122 or 08444 111 444.

For further help and advice with any type of debt you can contact the following not-for-profit organisations for free, confidential and impartial advice, or for details of where to get advice in your area:

National Debtline: Telephone 0808 808 4000 or visit www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Citizens Advice: For advice and information on debt and other topics, visit your local Citizens Advice Bureau or go to www.adviceguide.org.uk or 0844 855 2122 / 08444 111 444

If you would like advice on managing your money better contact -

The Money Advice Service: Telephone 0300 500 5000 or visit www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

How do you find a trader that measures up?



**TRADING
STANDARDS
APPROVED**



To find local businesses who are Trading Standards approved:
Visit: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk Or Call: 0300 126 1000

New Members!

The following local businesses have recently become Trading Standards approved members of our 'Buy with Confidence' scheme, which takes the total number of members to **130**:

- **A1 Rubbish Clearance Services** (Rubbish/house clearance), Northampton www.a1rubbishclearance.co.uk
- **Ken Chick Home Improvements** (Home improvements), Northampton (email chicken.chick@gmail.com, tel 01604 844056 or 07966 474668)
- **Ascott Builders Ltd** (General builders), Northampton (email antony.elderton@btopenworld.com, tel 01604 585151 or 07973 982465)
- **Simon Rye** (Ceramic tiling), Northampton www.simonrye.northampton.yellsites.co.uk
- **Ashby Computer Services** (Computer services), Northampton www.ashbycomputers.net
- **Wilbytree Surgeons Ltd** (Tree surgeons), Northampton www.wilbytree.co.uk
- **Smarter Security Solutions** (Security installers), Earls Barton www.smartersecurity.co.uk
- **Care & Repair (Northampton) Ltd** (Handyperson service), Northampton www.care-and-repair.org.uk
- **Andrew Pipework Services Ltd** (Plumbing and heating), Kettering www.andrewpipework.co.uk
- **Timotay Landscapes Ltd** (Landscape gardeners), Wollaston www.timotaylandscapes.co.uk
- **Creative Construction & Design (UK) Ltd** (General Builders), Yardley Hastings www.ccdltd.org.uk
- **J & D Mobility Services Ltd**, (Mobility provider) Northampton (email nicola@jd-mobility.co.uk, tel 01604 645336)
- **Paals** (Builder), Northampton (email paals.savva@yahoo.co.uk, tel 01604 760436)
- **Secure Developments Ltd** (Builder), Northampton (email securedevelopments@yahoo.co.uk, tel 01604 628882)
- **1st Gas Engineers Ltd** (Gas engineers), Northampton www.1stgas.com
- **Bee Safe Pest Control** (Pest control), Northampton www.beesafe.net

For more information on the above traders, or to search for a business who has been approved by Trading Standards, please visit www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk

Please give us your feedback on this newsletter or our work

Please write, call or email us on the contact details below; we really value your opinion.

Northamptonshire Trading Standards Service
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 0GB

Tel: 0300 126 1000

Email: tradedtd@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Website: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards

If you would like to receive future issues electronically please email tradedtd@northamptonshire.gov.uk with 'Newsletter' in the subject box.