Safety of henna hair and skin products

The City Council’s Trading Standards Service is warning the public about dangerous ‘black henna’ products. Henna products are popular all year round.

They can be found at summer shows and events where businesses supply henna tattoos to consumers, and are increasingly used around the Eid period by young children and adults to decorate hands, arms, and dye hair.

Henna is naturally a shade of orange and red, and in its natural form is perfectly safe to use, and a good alternative to chemical based hair dyes.

Henna has however been found on sale in premises in other parts of the country and these products have been found to contain additional chemicals.

These chemicals are added to the henna to make it a darker shade/black and these are usually Phenol and PPD.

The Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 2008 do not permit the use of phenol in any cosmetic product.

Phenol has been found to have a corrosive effect to the skin, and the side effects can remain for months after it has been used.

PPD is permitted in permanent hair dyes, but only at specific levels. As PPD has a sensitising effect, the symptoms may not appear at first. In this form, it has been known to have mutagenic effects and cause anaphylaxis.

Symptoms may include an itchy rash, the swelling of the throat or low blood pressure. As anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction, in some cases it may be fatal.

Throughout January 2013, the Trading Standards Service undertook a widespread inspection programme of retailers across Newcastle.

A variety of samples were sampled and then sent off to a laboratory that has expertise in the safety testing of henna products.

This project was supported by funding received from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
Welcome to the third issue of the newsletter produced by the City Council’s Trading Standards Service.

The City Council’s Trading Standards Service continues to ensure that all consumers within Newcastle are protected and safe from a wide range of issues which can affect their daily lives. The service also ensures that businesses within Newcastle are made aware of the legislative developments that govern their activities. This stance is clearly demonstrated by the recent safety survey carried out by officers in shops in Newcastle which sell henna hair and skin products.

In this issue of High Standard you can also find out about a number of other safety issues related to a range of products including electrical items, window blind cords and also ‘bling’ dummy clips. The dangers associated with these products together with the responses provided by the Service to the various issue are set out within the pages of the newsletter.

The Service also continues to play a significant role within the City Council’s Financial Inclusion Strategy, with its commitment with colleagues from the national Illegal Money Lending Team to stamp out illegal money lending, linked to the activities of so called ‘loan sharks’ in Newcastle.

The continuing implementation of no Cold Calling Zones in residential areas of the City, such as those recently implemented in parts of Fenham, Blakelaw and also Kenton; is another very positive step in protecting people from those rogue traders who can seek to take unfair advantage of residents on their doorsteps.

In this newsletter you can also find out how the Service continues to monitor and respond to issues of concern such as illegal sales of alcohol and niche tobacco products, together with bogus charity clothing collections. You will also find information on how to avoid scams and nuisance phone calls that may be received by residents.

Councillor Linda Hobson
Community Safety & Regulation

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For more information on how to contact Trading Standards

www.newcastle.gov.uk/business
tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk
Animal health 0191 211 6121
Citizens Advice Consumer Service 0845 040 506

If you need this information in another format or language, please phone Trading Standards on 0191 211 6121.
Henna hair and skin products

The test house examined each sample for compliance with the Cosmetic Product Safety Regulations 2008. They looked at three particular areas concerning the safety of the henna products, and these were compositional issues, misleading labelling, or for a lack of key information.

The Cosmetic Product Safety Regulations require that no person shall supply a cosmetic product unless the container and packaging is marked with the name and address of the person marketing the product within the European Union. If the product is made outside of the EU, the country of origin must also be specified.

Further labelling requirements specify that the batch number or reference must be present in order to identify the product, the function of the product unless it is clear from the presentation, and a list of ingredients appearing in descending order of weight. The regulations state that all of these shall be in English, but does not prohibit the additional use of other languages.

We received the report from the test house which found that over half of the samples sent had failed to meet the safety standards set out by the legislation.

One of the main issues with the henna products examined was misleading information on the packaging which would suggest to consumers that they were purchasing a natural product. However the analysts found that the colouring effect of the henna would have been as a result of the added chemicals, and that some natural ingredients which were claimed to be in the products weren't there at all.

Other issues uncovered included; absence of an importer name or address, unspecified ingredients, no period of durability or batch number, unspecified function of product, and a lack of prescribed warnings for henna products containing PPD, which would warn consumers of the dangers of its sensitising effect.

As a result of the findings, the City Council’s Trading Standards Service has taken action against the local suppliers of the dangerous henna products by removing the offending items from sale, and reminding the retailers of the legislative requirements by providing them with business advice packs that let them know how to make sure the products they sell comply with the Cosmetic Product Safety Regulations.

For information on the safety of cosmetics, please contact us 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.
Safety of sunbeds update

During May, June and July 2012, all the premises in Newcastle offering sunbeds for hire were visited in order to evaluate the UV levels emitted from individual sunbeds.

Of the 61 sunbeds tested during the survey only 16% were found to be fully compliant with the specified levels, which was very worrying.

The Trading Standards Service adopted an advisory approach, rather than taking formal legal action against any of the proprietors who did not comply at the time of the first inspections. Through this, and working alongside the proprietors, the installers, and distributors of sunbeds and UV tubes we have aimed to eliminate all examples of non-compliance within the city.

There was a single specific example of one tanning salon that had ignored the original advice offered, and during the period of revisits was found to be still in contravention of the standard. As such, under the relevant safety legislation, suspension notices were issues for all tanning equipment in that shop that did not comply.

However following the necessary remedial action taken by the owners of the shop and as confirmed following a subsequent visit to the premises, the suspension notice was lifted.

Such was the success of the project, the equipment and methodology used for examining UV levels of tanning equipment has been taken up by other local authorities in the region.

We have also advised other authorities throughout the country, based on the results of our survey, and have offered guidance on best practice when undertaking a project to examine UV levels within tanning salons.

Anybody thinking of opening a tanning salon or operating tanning equipment is advised to ensure that the tubes fitted are safe for consumers, and further tests will be carried out by officers later in the year to ensure that businesses around the city continue to comply with the legislation.

Advice and guidance on the operation of tanning equipment is available on our website at www.newcastle.gov.uk/business or contact 0191 277 7814.
No cold calling zones update
A guide to their locations...

Benwell and Scotswood
Whickham View
Broadmead Way

Blakelaw
Cheviot View

Castle
Dinnington ‘The Avenues’
Brunswick Village
Kingston Park and Ouseburn Park
Dinnington Mitford Way and Castle Way

Dene
Benton Lodge Estate
Fairways Estate
Daylesford Drive

Denton
Linbridge Drive
Greenlaw
Chapel House
Chadderton Drive
Hillhead Parkway

East Gosforth
Hollywood Avenue
Garden Village

Fawdon
Leagreen Court
Hillsview Avenue
Kirkwood Drive

Fenham/Blakelaw
Netherby Drive
Lanercost Drive

Kenton
Montagu Estate
The Gardens
Kenton Bar

Lemington
The Orchard
DunnoCK Court
Wedgewood Cottages

North Heaton
The Gardens
Holystone Estate

Walkergate
Maplewood

West Gosforth
Regent Farm Court

Westerhope
Mitford Drive Estate

Westgate
Rye Hill

Wingrove
Mill House

Woolsington
Broughton Close
Hopton Court
Wimbourne Green
Whorlton Grange

The Trading Standards Service is now looking towards the implementation of some further No Cold Calling Zones in 2013/2014. If anyone has a wish to see a new No Cold Calling Zone established in their residential area in Newcastle please contact the Service on 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.

For full details relating to the zones, including maps outlining the extent of the zones, please visit our website at www.newcastle.gov.uk/business.
Animal health

The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 defines a ‘zoo’ as an establishment where wild animals are kept for exhibition to the public, but not a circus or a pet shop which have separate licensing requirements.

This Act applies to any zoo to which members of the public have access, with or without a charge for admission, on more than seven days in any period of 12 consecutive months.

Here in Newcastle we have our very own zoo at the Great North Museum: Hancock. They have a variety of reptiles and amphibians on display throughout the year, and as such are subject to the requirements of a zoo licence.

Due to the specialist nature of the legal requirements, we have to work in close partnership with the Department of Food and Rural Affairs, and an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State in order to ensure that everyone is satisfied that all animals exhibited are going to be properly housed, given appropriate feed and water, and will be looked after by suitably qualified members of staff.

The GNM: Hancock is in the process of making application to renew its zoo licence as issued by the City Council again this year, which means a full inspection of the premise with all the various agencies attend, in order to ensure that all of the animals, no matter how big or small, are being looked after accordingly.

If you’ve any queries concerning zoos, pet shops, or animal boarding establishments, please contact our Animal Health Inspector on 0191 2116121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.

The Great North Museum: Hancock is open all year except for the 25, 26 December and 1 January, and is just a short walk from Haymarket Metro Station.

For more information on the collections and other events visit www.twmuseums.org.uk.
Newcastle's alcohol strategy: safe, sensible and social update

The Trading Standards Service and Northumbria Police are continuing their well developed partnership operation, which aims to respond to issues with known as proxy sales of alcohol, around a selective group of off-licences across the city through Operation Nestlé.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Operation</th>
<th>Areas Visited</th>
<th>No. Off Licences</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 October 2012</td>
<td>Byker and Walker</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No Issues Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 November 2012</td>
<td>Fawdon, Kenton, West Denton and Westerhope</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Alcohol Seized By Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 November 2012</td>
<td>Fenham, Blakelaw and Wingrove</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No Issues Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 December 2012</td>
<td>Scotswood, Benwell and Elswick</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Alcohol Seized By Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 January 2013</td>
<td>Byker and Walker</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No Issues Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 February 2013</td>
<td>Brunswick, Fawdon and Kenton</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No Issues Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 March 2013</td>
<td>Benwell and Elswick</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No Issues Identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
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Blind cord safety update

The safety of window blind cords was improved in 2009 in order to prevent young children from strangulation on exposed or loose cords, and as a result safer designs of blinds and cords came to the market, and the dangers were highlighted to those purchasing blinds.

However the risks from older products within households still exist, and as recently as February this year, a three year old boy died after becoming entangled in a blind cord at home in Northern Ireland. According to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, there have been at least 25 reported deaths where a blind cord has been blamed in the past 15 years.

We would like to remind parents and guardians of children to take all possible steps to ensure that there is a minimal risk from blind cords by making sure they are out of reach, away from furniture used by children, and that tie-downs or tension devices should be fitted to pull the cord tight.

An informative poster has been issued last year to nurseries and schools across the city. If anyone wishes to have a poster for their own premises, please contact us on 0191 211 6121 or visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/business to download a copy.
Illegal money lending

The national Illegal Money Lending Team is working closely in partnership with all local authorities in the region to highlight the dangers of so called illegal ‘loan sharks’, and to encourage victims to come forward with information about their experiences.

Through the money taken from illegal loan sharks, obtained under the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Illegal Money Lending Team has now funded an advertising campaign on City Council refuse vehicles and also a Newcastle licensed taxi; all of the advertisements each display the hotline number for reporting illegal loan sharks.

Loan sharks may appear helpful and friendly at first, but they can quickly change and trap borrowers in ever mounting debt, and as the debts are unenforceable, resort to unlawful means for forcing repayments.

Due to the lack of paperwork, victims often will never know how much they’ve repaid, or how much they need to pay off, with interest added at seemingly random intervals. In one particular case an illegal lender was found to be charging the equivalent of 131,000%.

There are an estimate 310,000 households throughout the country that are in debt to loan sharks, and in 20% of the cases victims have been taking out loans for pay for Christmas. There remains serious concerns that people who have been tempted to borrow from illegal money lenders over the festive period will now be subjected to exorbitant charges, intimidation, and potential threats of violence.

If you are in this situation, or know of a friend or family member who may be, please call the hotline number in the strictest of confidence.

For more information, visit the Moneywise site at www.moneywise.org.uk or to report illegal money lending call the national hotline on 0300 555 2222 or text LOAN SHARK and any information to 60003.

Above. Cllr Joyce McCarty at the launch of IMLT advertising on Newcastle City Council licensed taxis and refuse vehicles.

Below. Cllr Joyce McCarty at the Newcastle Falcons with players Will Welch and James Hudson, and the IMLT Shark!
Office of Fair Trading's payday lending compliance review

On 6 March 2013 the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) published its report on its compliance review of Payday Lending businesses.

The OFT is giving the leading 50 payday lenders, accounting for 90 per cent of the payday market, 12 weeks to change their business practices or risk losing their licensing, after it uncovered evidence of widespread irresponsible lending and failure to comply with the standards required of them. They must demonstrated within 12 weeks that they are fully compliant, or risk losing their Consumer Credit licence.

Particular areas of non-compliance included:

- Lenders failing to conduct adequate assessments of affordability before lending or before rolling over loans
- Failing to explain adequately how payments will be collected
- Using aggressive debt collection practices
- Not treating borrowers in financial difficulty with forbearance

The fifty lenders, each of which was inspected, will have to take rapid action to address the specific concerns the OFT identified with each of their businesses. Failure with cooperate with this process will trigger enforcement action.

Payday lending is a top enforcement priority for the OFT. Customers will often have limited alternative sources of credit and are frequently in a vulnerable financial position. Combined with this, the high rates of interest charged by many payday lenders can make the consequences of irresponsible lending particularly acute.

Lenders were found to compete by emphasising the speed and access to loans rather than the price, and also to be relying too heavily on rolling over or refinancing loans. The OFT believes that both these factors distort lenders’ incentives to carry out proper affordability assessments as to do so would risk losing business to competitors.

Too many people are granted loans they cannot afford to repay and it would appear that payday lenders’ revenues are heavily reliant on those customers who fail to repay their original loan in full on time.

Despite payday loans being described as one-off short term loans, costing an average of £25 per £100 for 30 days, up to half of payday lenders’ revenue comes from loans that last longer and cost more because they are rolled over or refinanced. The OFT also found that payday lenders are not competing with each other for this large source of revenue because by this time they have a captive market.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) will regulate consumer credit from April 2014 and it will be able to use the analysis and conclusions of the Competition Commission in developing its rules and applying its powers.

The FCA will have significant powers and resources beyond those available to the OFT, including powers to cap interest rates and to impose a ban or a limit on the number of rollovers lenders may offer.

Charity clothing collections

The City Council’s Trading Standards Service in recent months have received a number of enquiries from residents who are concerned over the legitimacy of individuals who may collect charity bags from their homes in the city.

The Service recognises that many charities now ask householders for old clothes and other items, which can be sold for charitable purposes. However, not everyone who comes to your home, or drops in a plastic bag is operating on behalf of a charity. Some collectors will be operating businesses, asking for unwanted items which can be sold for profit.

It has been estimated by the Association of Charity Shops that the potential value of donated clothing and other items 'lost' to legitimate charities as a result of these bogus collections amounts to over £50m per annum. Many genuine charities rely on such doorstep collections for a substantial proportion of their shop sales.

Typically, householders receive flyers through their letterboxes appealing for donations of unwanted clothes, footwear and sometimes other household and electrical items to be distributed to poor individuals and families in Eastern European or third world countries.

Householders are asked to leave the goods in a plastic bag at the front door. These are later collected anonymously.

The flyers give the misleading impression that the items are being collected for charitable purposes. In reality, the collections are often organised by commercial operators who sell the donated items for profit.

The Trading Standards Service offers the following advice if you wish to check the legitimacy of any charitable clothing collection:

- Visit the Charity Commission website or call their helpline on 0870 333 0123 to check whether the collection is for a registered charity.
- Contact the City Council’s Licensing service on 0191 278 3864, or you can mail licensing@newcastle.gov.uk to see if the collector has been licensed.
- If you want to make sure your donation will go to charity give direct to a local charity shop instead or put them in a charity container, located at many supermarkets.
- These should make clear reference to a charity registered number and may also carry the Association of Charity Shops mark.

We also published a new advisory poster, copies of which the Service will be distributing to various organisations for display. To get a copy of the poster please visit our website at www.newcastle.gov.uk/business.
Niche tobacco

Are you a business that sells chewing tobacco products such as Gutkha, Zarda or Khaini? Nasal snuff? Bidi or Beedi cigarettes? Shisha or Hooka tobacco? Or are you a consumer who uses such products?

Many people don't realise that these products contain tobacco. Just like smoking cigarettes, the use of such tobacco products is addictive and presents serious health risks. Holding one pinch of chewing tobacco in your mouth for 30 minutes delivers as much nicotine as 3-4 cigarettes. And 30 minutes of smoking a shisha can be the equivalent of smoking 100 cigarettes.

Anyone that sells any products which contain tobacco and is intended to be smoked, sniffed, sucked, or chewed, will find that similar laws will apply as if they were selling cigarettes. The requirements with regards to age-restricted sales and signage apply. There are also specific regulations about which warnings must appear on the packaging of the tobacco.

Business owners can obtain copies of the various Acts and Regulations related to tobacco products from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, or can be accessed for free at www.legislation.gov.uk.

If anyone is found to be selling tobacco products which do not comply with these requirements, it could lead to the products being seized and a prosecution will be considered which upon conviction can lead to substantial fines or imprisonment.

To report any concerns you have about a business that may be selling niche tobacco, or for advice about the signage and packaging requirements, please contact us on 0191 2116121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.

For more information on ‘Fresh, the Smoke Free North East’ campaign, please visit www.freshne.com and the NHS Newcastle and North Tyneside ‘Stop Smoking Service’ can be contacted on 0300 123 9290.
Cash for clothes project

The Trading Standards Service regularly provides advice and guidance to businesses in Newcastle upon Tyne in respect of weights and measures legislation. The City Council’s Weights and Measures Inspectors conduct routine visits and inspections to test and verify weighing and measuring equipment used in served and packing goods.

As well as our Inspector’s routine visits to a range of premises in Newcastle, including shops, petrol filling stations, public houses and restaurants the development of a new type of business activity has led to introduction of a new testing regime by our Weights and Measures Inspectors.

This new type of trade is the “Cash for Clothes” retail sector, where businesses through the use of shop premises and also mobile vans, purchase quantities of old clothes for cash from consumers.

As part of ensuring the legality of all such trade, one of our Inspectors has now visited and tested the weighing equipment used in each of the premises in Newcastle, where businesses are buying clothes from consumers.

All equipment used in determining a quantity of goods in a transaction must be legally approved, and this includes the likes of pub optics, petrol pumps, and the scales found in ‘cash for clothes’ shops. The equipment must carry the appropriate mark taking the form of the crown stamp or European approval sticker, and these marks are applied by Trading Standards Officers and will show that the equipment has been tested and has been found to be accurate.

Consumers should be reassured that projects such as this one mean that an truthful price should be offered for the quantity of clothes weighed because the weighing equipment has been tested for accuracy. If consumers have concerns over any equipment used in ‘cash for clothes’ projects, or any other measuring equipment they are asked to contact tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk or telephone 0191 211 6121.

The City Council’s Weights and Measures Inspectors perform an important statutory function in ensuring that consumers in Newcastle upon Tyne continue to get exactly what they are being paid for or indeed are paying for. For more information about our metrology service please visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/business.
Metrology laboratory services

Built in 1979, the Metrology Laboratory has over 30 years experience in testing a wide range of metrological equipment as well as a wide range of other products.

An agreement in 1985 between the five constituent Tyne and Wear local authorities established a Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee to secure uniformity and co-ordinate enforcement functions across the former metropolitan authority. Specifically, the Joint Committee resolved to provide and maintain the Tyne and Wear Metrology Laboratory in Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead.

Gateshead Council is responsible for the maintenance, management, control and staffing of the laboratory, subject to the approval of the Joint Committee. The laboratory is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for mass calibration and toy testing.

In 2002, the laboratory increased the services it was able to offer by gaining approval for mass testing to F1 level and is moving towards the higher level of accuracy E2. It is one of the few local authority laboratories in the United Kingdom that can offer this service.

Additional services and facilities available at the laboratory include a weighbridge, which is well utilised by local business; verification of weighing and measuring equipment, screen testing of electrical appliances, product safety testing and the maintenance of local standards (i.e. the reference standards for mass, length, volume and capacity required by legislation to be maintained by the Tyne and Wear authorities).

Gateshead Council is the Lead Authority on behalf of the Joint Committee, and is a UK Notified Body for EC verification of non-automatic weighing machines operating across the five Tyne and Wear districts. The Laboratory operates in accordance with quality systems meeting the requirements of ISO 17020 and ISO 17025.

The Laboratory is situated on Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead, NE8 3AH, and for further information on the services offered by the Laboratory, you can download a brochure on their website at www.legalmetrology.info

If you would like a discussion on the work of the Laboratory, or any metrological advice, please phone Andy Hayward on 0191 478 4550.
Product safety alerts

The Trading Standards Service is now warning parents to be on the lookout for unsafe baby dummy clips. These so called ‘bling’ dummy clips are becoming widely available on social networking sites and through other online outlets. The clips, which are designed to secure a dummy to the baby’s clothing are often brightly coloured with beads, diamante, and sequins placed on and around the clip.

The ‘bling’ dummy clips are typically homemade, and would not be subject to European product safety regulations, which require that such products are properly tested beforehand to ensure that they do not pose a risk of death or injury to babies. From the products examined for sale, there are no ventilation holes and the small beads present a very serious choking hazard, especially when the product is to be used near the baby’s mouth.

People who purchase these dummy clips for their children are potentially risking their child's life, because of the lack of a proper testing regime it is impossible to claim that they are safe to be used. These are part of a trend for customised clothing and accessories for children and babies, and we would ask any parent to consider the safety of the product and the welfare of their child before making such a purchase.

This important safety issue is a national issue and there are reports of problems with ‘bling’ dummy clips elsewhere in the country and we would specifically advise against the use of customised dummy clips.

The Trading Standards Service has also been recently alerted by RAPEX, the rapid alert system for consumer products about an issue with ‘fruit-head’ dolls that have been stopped at an European port and may have found their way into some shops within the United Kingdom.

When the seized dolls were tested, the arms of the doll were found to contain excessive levels of the chemical plasticiser ‘bis (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate’, which is also known as DEHP.

In line with the relevant safety regulations, DEHP is strictly prohibited from use in toys and childcare articles, the product failed to comply with labelling regulations with regards instructions and warnings, and also failed the Toys Safety directives.

If any parents or guardians have concerns over the safety of a product designed for use by a baby or child, or if a local business would like some advice about how to comply with product safety legislation, please contact us on 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.
First contact campaign

The City Council’s Trading Standards Service is very pleased to announce that the Service has now joined as a referring organisation for First Contact Newcastle. The involvement of the Service is directly related to the development of its electrical safety testing programme for domestic appliances in residential homes in Newcastle. The Scheme utilises the expertise of our technical expert who is based at the Metrology Laboratory in Gateshead.

In respect of the referrals made through to the Trading Standards service there have been 108 people or premises within the 3 sheltered housing schemes visited, together with a further 16 individual properties and there was a total of 367 electrical items tested which found the following issues:

- 7 electrical items identified as faulty which were 2 irons, 2 kettles and an electric blanket. All of these were replaced
- 7 multi-plug adapters replaced
- 6 cardboard wiring instructions were removed from 3-pin plugs
- 7 x 3-pin plugs and bare cables to wardrobe light modified
- Several cables behind one television were tidied up to prevent overheating
- When tested a vacuum cleaner was found to have damaged cable and the householder advised
- A damaged lamp cable shortened and replaced with an extension lead

First Contact Newcastle has now been in operation for over two years and has helped over 500 older people in Newcastle to keep their homes warm, recover their mobility after a fall, ensure they are receiving all of the benefits they are entitled too, ensure they have working smoke alarms in their homes and much more.

For more details about this service you can visit the Newcastle Older People’s Website at www.informationnow.org.uk, or if you require any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch with Trading Standards on 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk
Home fire safety

The Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service advise that every home should have at least one smoke alarm. Smoke alarms can be purchased from most supermarkets or DIY stores.

We would advise consumers to ensure that before they purchase a smoke alarm to check to ensure that the alarm carries the British Standards kitemark. The kitemark is a certification mark that ensures the alarm meets the strict criteria set down by British Standards, and you should avoid purchasing any alarm that does not carry the mark.

Alternatively, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service offer a home safety check, and as part of this service smoke alarms will be fitted free of charge.

‘A fire doesn’t have to kill you to take away your life but there are steps you can take to ensure Home Fire Safety. Fire can develop and spread quickly, producing heat and large amounts of thick smoke and fumes.

A working smoke alarm can give you important early warning but you will only have minutes to escape and it will be more difficult at night when people are asleep and it is dark. Escaping is easier if you have a planned escape route and everyone knows what to do. This section will give you advice on ways to prevent, protect and escape from fire.

Our primary focus is to prevent deaths and injuries from fires and other emergencies, and to do this we deliver a comprehensive Community and Home Fire Safety service. Our Prevention and Education teams focus on the need to prevent fires and other emergencies from occurring by encouraging all members of our community to know the dangers and take action to prevent fire, protect their homes and know what to do should a fire occur.

The majority of fire deaths and injuries occur in the home so we all need make our homes as safe as possible. The first step anyone should take is to fit a smoke alarm and to make sure it works by testing it once a week. To help you to make your home safer we have provided a range of information on prevention, protection and escape to help you to identify the potential hazards.’

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

To request a Home Safety Check in your household, complete the Home Safety Check Request Form online at www.twfire.gov.uk/community-safety, alternatively you can contact 0800 032 7777.
Second hand dealer registration

The City of Newcastle upon Tyne Act 2000 requires all dealers in second hand goods in Newcastle to register with the City Council. This Act came into force in September 2001, and the Trading Standards Service is responsible for the administration of the second hand dealer provisions under the Act.

The two main requirements for second-hand dealers are registration with the City Council and book-keeping in relation to transactions.

Both the dealer and the business premises must be registered. Dealers who do not have fixed premises within Newcastle should just register their business, and registration is valid for 3 years and there is no fee payable. The certification of registration must be displayed on a part of the premises open to the public.

If any of the details on the registration form change then a new registration must be made even if this is within three years.

In the interests of the prevention of crime, there is a requirement for dealers to keep detailed records of goods bought. These details must be entered in a book kept on the premises specifically for this purpose. In the case of dealers with no fixed premises this book should be available whenever doing business.

This book must be retained for at least one year after the last entry was made, and must be produced to a Police Constable or Trading Standards Officer if requested to do so. Details which must be recorded include the date of transaction, description of the article, and the name and address from whom the article was acquired.

It is illegal to buy second-hand goods from somebody under the age of 16 years. It is also an offence for a person selling second-hand goods to a dealer to give a false name or false address.

Compliance is a legal requirement and failure to register may render a business liable to a fine.

For more information and details about how to register as a second-hand dealer, please visit our website at www.newcastle.gov.uk/business.
Newcastle City Council’s Trading Standards Service is advising all consumers to be vigilant and fall prey to ‘phishing’ emails sent out by criminals after the deadline for self-assessment tax returns deadline from Revenue and Customs and which deadline expired on the 31 January 2013. ‘Phishing’ is a process whereby tens of thousands of emails are sent from a single source, requesting personal information such as name, address, date of birth and bank details, all in the hope that just a few people fall for the scam.

The latest scam involves an email purporting to be from Revenue and Customs suggesting that the receiver is entitled to a refund, usually to the value of several hundred pounds, having completed their self-assessment form. The form asks for personal details, along with bank details, and also asks the receiver to give card details so the payment can be refunded to it.

Fraudsters often use legitimate looking forms, and very official email addresses often including @hmrc.org.uk or similar suffixes. Revenue and Customs will never send any notification of a rebate by email, or ask you to disclose any personal information.

We would also advise people not to click on any links within these emails, as they may contain malware, or lead to other suspicious websites which may harm your computer, and put your personal information at risk.

People should delete emails that look suspicious, and not respond to them. You can also forward on anything that claims to be from Revenue and Customs to phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk as this helps to develop their defences against email scams.

We are more than happy to receive and act on intelligence received from members of the public. If you would like to report any suspicious online activity, please contact us directly on 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you may submit an online crime report at www.actionfraud.police.uk.
Top ten tips for nuisance telephone calls

1 Telephone Preference Service (TPS)

A study recently conducted by the Consumers Association discovered that people who sign up for the free Telephone Preference Service can reduce on average the number of unwanted telephone calls by one third. Registration with TPS takes 28 days to become fully effective, but once it does there will be immediate effects.

Although the TPS can’t stop scam telephone calls, or those from market research companies and abroad, all businesses based within the UK are not allowed to make unsolicited sales and marketing calls to residents who have registered with TPS, even if the call centre is overseas.

In order to register with the TPS, please call 08450 700 707 or visit their website at www.tpsonline.org.uk.

2 Ex-directory

Some local businesses may choose to use online or physical phone books in order to target people with telephone calls for sales. If you ask for your phone number to be excluded from these directories it will be mean that those companies will be unable to find your telephone number.

3 Remove your number from company lists

Data protection laws means that companies should not call you for marketing purposes if you've asked them not to, even if you’re a customer of theirs.

When completing forms, always carefully check for any marketing 'opt out/opt in' boxes to see if ticking or unticking them will prevent calls from the company itself, or from third parties. If there are no options to opt out, you can always directly ask the company not to call you for sales and marketing purposes.

Contact companies you already receive unwanted sales calls from and ask to be removed from their sales call lists, or send these in writing.

4 Set up call barring for unwanted calls

As many cold calls come from abroad which fall outside of the TPS scheme, unless you specifically need to receive them, you can ask your phone operator if it can block calls from international numbers. This will prevent them making contact with you.

It is also possible block calls from withheld numbers, but again this may prevent some calls you want to receive, such as from friends or relatives from office numbers.

Always consider first whether blocking such numbers may create more of a problem, and please be aware that some network providers may charge for call-barring services.

5 Screen phone calls

If you have caller-display or an answerphone, you should consider only answering calls from the numbers which you recognise. Any legitimate business callers are likely to leave a message which you can screen accordingly.
6 Consider using third-party call filtering

There are products available that connect directly to your telephone can offer call-barring for a one-off fee, which usually involves storing recognised numbers within the device or if the number isn’t recognised they can ask the caller to say their name, and if you don’t recognise the name you are able to reject the call.

7 Cold call pressure

Don’t ever let the caller intimidate or pressure you with apparent ‘now or never’ offers. If possible, never reveal your name, address and especially not your financial details. If you are in doubt, and it’s a legitimate call from a company you are interested in or are already a customer of, you will be able to call them back directly on a number you know to confirm this.

8 Cold caller’s number

If possible, try and get the cold call phone number and company name if you have caller display. These details will help organisations such as OfCom take action, or make a note of the time and your operator may be able to trace it.

9 Report cold callers

Please report TPS rule breaches to them. The TPS will contact the company and pass complaints to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), who can take action against repeat offenders. You can also report suspected scams to Action Fraud, and other problems calls to your provider or OfCom.

10 Distance Selling Regulations

If you buy something as the result of a cold call, under distance selling regulations you usually have seven working days from the day after you receive the item if you change your mind and want to return it.

For further advice on how to avoid cold callers, please contact us on 0191 211 6121 or email tradingstandards@newcastle.gov.uk, alternatively if you’re having a problem with a business please contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 08454 040 506.