NO COLD CALLING ZONE

'Know your rights'

Trading Standards

☎ **020 8407 1311**

CROYDON COUNCIL
www.croydon.gov.uk

METROPOLITAN POLICE
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Notes

No Cold Calling Zones

What are they and why should we have them?

Quite simply, No Cold Calling Zones are about local residents or communities having the confidence to say “NO” to uninvited salespeople and to warn rogue traders and cold-callers that they are not welcome in an area.

It is now well established that distraction burglaries and rogue trading are interlinked. Whilst this type of criminal behaviour can impact on anybody in any place, research shows that older people can be particularly vulnerable, especially those living alone or who are isolated in the community.

The number of serious doorstep crime incidents reported to both the police and trading standards services has grown significantly over the past few years. Incidents involving older people losing thousands of pounds are now not unusual and what has become clear is that the law has not kept up with this kind of crime. Zones are an initiative that helps to provide support to residents and send a clear message to rogue traders that they are unwelcome and their trading practices will be investigated if they cold call residents within the designated area.

Not all traders turning up on your door are rogues. However, you may have heard of incidents where older or isolated people have been the victim of a doorstep crime or unscrupulous practice of one sort or another.

Examples of problems:

- paying an exorbitant price for house repairs or garden maintenance.
- having to pay in cash in full before the job is finished.
- being left with an incomplete job and refusal from the trader to finish the job or undertake necessary repairs.
- being unable to get the job finished and having only a mobile telephone number to contact the trader.
- the final price for the work being far greater than the initial quote.
- having possessions stolen whilst being distracted by a doorstep caller/bogus official or their accomplice.

There are laws that seek to protect you from unscrupulous traders ripping you off for goods and services supplied following a visit to your home. So it is important for consumers to be aware of their rights and responsibilities to help them avoid these problems.

Cancellation rights in law can be complicated so it is best to be careful in the first place. It is far better to proceed only if you are happy with the price, quality of the goods or services and integrity of the company.

Legal rights and wrongs

It is not illegal for traders to sell goods or services by knocking on doors. Consumers can take charge on their doorstep and can tell traders that they do not want to deal with cold callers.

Neither is it illegal for traders to advertise their services by putting unsolicited mail shots or flyers through your letterbox.

The law provides you with some legal protection if you agree to buy goods or services on the doorstep or in your home. This protection only applies where the value of the purchase is more than £35. While this protection is useful, you can only exercise this right if the company is genuine.

Cancellation rights

Regulations provide a seven day cooling off period for pre-arranged as well as unannounced visits, provided the price is more than £35. They also require doorstep sellers to inform customers of their cancellation rights in writing.

They must provide you with a **notice in writing** of your right to cancel.

It is a criminal offence if you are not provided with this notice.

If the trader has not given you written notice of a right to cancel, report the incident to the trading standards service.

Safety first: REMEMBER

Take care when opening the door to anyone. Here are a few simple steps to follow when you get an unexpected caller:

- fit and use a door security chain every time you open the door.
- **always** ask for identification that you can verify. Do not let the caller into your house until you have verified the caller's identification.
- check the identification of the caller by ringing his/her employer. Use the telephone number from your local telephone book. It is not a good idea to ring the telephone number the caller gives you, as this may not be a genuine.
- do not agree for anyone to carry out work in your house until you get a second opinion as to whether you actually need the work done.
- do not agree to any work where the caller says "we are only in the area today".

If you agree to buy any goods or services from a doorstep seller, then you may have a short period of time to cancel the contract after it has been signed:

- keep all paperwork in a safe place.
- in order for the contract to be completed successfully by both parties, the trader must service you a notice of your cancellation rights. This will be in the form of a printed document giving you details of how to cancel the contract.

- generally the goods or services must be over £35 in value in order to cancel the contract. There are other circumstances where you have no right of cancellation. Contact your trading standards department for further advice.
- you have at least seven days to cancel - the 'cooling off' period. This applies whether you invited the trader into your home or not.
- never keep large sums of money in the house and keep purses out of sight not near the door.
- keep a list of numbers of your credit cards and important documents in case of loss.
- free security advice is available from the police crime prevention officer. The telephone number is at the back of this leaflet.

Choosing a reliable tradesman

- ask neighbours, families and friends for recommendations.
- do not agree for work to be carried out until you have obtained at least three written quotes from similar businesses.
- make sure the quotes state what work will be carried out, the full inclusive price and when the work will be started and finished.
- any work carried out by the tradesman must be of **reasonable quality** and be completed within a **reasonable time limit.**

- arrange a pre set time and date for the tradesman to call to start the work.
- do not pay any money for the work unless you are satisfied it is of acceptable quality.
- do not accept transport from the tradesman to your bank or building society in order to withdraw money to pay for the work.
- do not feel pressurised into having the work carried out immediately.

Know who is calling

Do not agree to buy goods or services from doorstep sellers without checking their identification cards and confirming the identity of the caller.

Any reputable trader will carry identification cards that you can examine. Do not use the telephone number given by the caller. Look up the company telephone number in the directory and use this to confirm whether the caller is genuine. Keep the trader outside when you are checking identification.

If you are uneasy for any reason about a trader being in your home, you have a right to ask them to leave immediately. If they refuse, they are trespassing on your property. Phone 999 and contact the police. However, it is much better not to let them in at all.

Any reputable trader will provide written notice of your legal rights. Beware of traders who don't do this.

Utilities password schemes

A good way of checking whether a caller is genuine is to register a password with your utility company that will be used whenever a **genuine** representative comes to visit you.

Details can be obtained from individual companies – ask for their **priority services register.**

There is a list of contact numbers for various utility companies at the end of this brochure.

Other things you can do

To reduce the number of unsolicited telephone calls you should register with the Telephone Preference Service. The service is free, to register call **0845 070 0707.**

If you don't want to receive uninvited mail shots from traders, you can stop them by registering with the Mail Preference Service. The service is free, register by calling them on **020 7291 3327.**

The Mail Preference Service cannot stop unaddressed leaflets; items addressed the 'The Occupier', 'The Householder' or a business, nor free newspapers and inserts in magazines and bills. Some local mailings may also not be stopped.

In addition, it may not stop mail from overseas; organisations will often base themselves overseas in order to avoid legal and self-regulatory restrictions.

If the telephone number is for a mobile telephone, don't let them in.

Think before you buy

Always ask yourself: would you have bought this item or had these repairs if the trader had not called?

If the answer is no, do think very carefully about your decision:-

- Do I want it?
- Do I need it done?
- Can I afford it?
- Do I know the name and address of this person?
- Do I have the right to cancel?
- Can I get a quote from someone else?
- Have I been given an estimate or a quote?

An estimate is only a rough guide to the price; a quotation is a fixed price and is binding.

Consumer Direct will advise on general consumer queries 08454 04 05 06.

Here is a list of the telephone numbers for various utility companies - ask for their **priority services register.**

Thames Water	0845 9200 800 0845 7200 898 (Minicom)
EDF Energy	0800 269 450 0800 096 2929 (Minicom)
E.ON	0845 059 9905 0800 056 6560 Minicom
British Gas	0845 955 5404 18001 0845 604 0345 (Textphone)
Northern Power	0845 166 3535
Scottish & Southern	0800 622 838 0800 622 839 (Textphone)
Scottish Power	0845 2700 700

How to beat the bogus caller

LOCK

Home or Away - keep **ALL** doors locked

STOP

Are you expecting anybody?

CHAIN

Put the chain on **BEFORE** opening the door

CHECK

Always ask for identification. If they don't have an identification card, **don't let them in**

Finally .....

Never keep large amounts of money in your house.

Keep purses, wallets, cheque books, pension books, credit cards, door keys and car keys out of sight.

Telephone the police if you are concerned about your personal safety or concerned about damage to your property.

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