

TRADING STANDARDS CONSUMER NEWS BULLETIN

Welcome to issue No. 14 of South Ayrshire Council's Trading Standards news bulletin.

In this issue we begin by examining sales of tobacco and nicotine vapour products and the Challenge 25 scheme.



All retailers must operate an age verification policy to check the age of anyone, attempting to buy a tobacco product, cigarette papers or a Nicotine Vapour Product (NVP), who appears to be under the age of 25. These laws exist to safeguard the health of young people.

So, if you are lucky enough to look under 25 you will be asked to prove that you are aged 18 or over when you buy tobacco or NVPs. It is an offence for retailer to sell these products to anyone under the age of 18.

The ability to determine the age of young people has become increasingly difficult over the years. This has led to problems for both retailers and young people when trying to purchase and sell age related goods. Trading Standards works with businesses selling these products to ensure that owners and their staff are aware of what is required of them.

It is also important that we carry out checks to make sure our advice and guidance is being put into practice. During the past year we carried out a series of test purchases using a young volunteer who was aged 21. Out of 41 premises visited the volunteer was sold cigarettes in 11 premises without being asked to prove their age.

The premises who failed to ask for proof of age were visited by our team and reminded of why it is so important to carry out these checks in all instances.

Having let a period of some two months pass a further round of test purchasing was carried out. This time we used a volunteer who was under the age of 18 and out of 24 premises visited one shop disappointingly sold the volunteer cigarettes. No identification was asked for. The failure resulted in the issue of fixed penalty fines of £200 to both the owner and the member of staff.

A recent survey by Trading Standards of S1 and S4 South Ayrshire school pupils, to which we received 757 responses, showed that the prevalence of cigarette and NVP use among the 12-13 and 15-16 age groups is relatively low. The work undertaken by Trading Standards in compliance and test purchases is clearly having a positive effect with the results showing that the purchase by pupils is low and it would seem that the most common source of supply is by proxy purchase i.e. an older person buying cigarettes or NVPs for an underage person which is a criminal offence. Trading Standards will continue to ensure that all retailers of age restricted products are carrying out the necessary checks.

Trading Standards action against puppy smuggling

The illicit puppy trade has been very much in the public eye in recent years. This has also been reflected by the Local Authority Trading Standards teams who are receiving and responding to an increasing number of consumer complaints regarding this particular issue.

Every year, criminal gangs smuggle thousands of puppies into the UK. The continuing demand for fashionable breeds of dogs such as French Bulldogs, Pugs and Dachshunds, and a limited supply of puppies from reputable breeders within the UK, has created a lucrative market

which is driving the illegal importation of puppies from Central and Eastern Europe. Many of these illegally imported puppies are underage and few have been vaccinated against diseases such as rabies. Moreover, they are forced to travel thousands of miles across Europe in appalling conditions before sold on to unsuspecting UK buyers.

At South Ayrshire Trading Standards we take the issue of illegal trafficking of dogs and puppies very seriously. All pet animals travelling into the UK on approved routes need to have their documents checked at the border and individuals found to be illegally moving dogs into the country can face harsh penalties.



With our proximity to the port of Cairnryan, there is an increasing risk of potential illegal dogs coming into South Ayrshire. Trading Standards work constructively with the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#), and other government agencies as well as charities such as [Dogs Trust](#) and [Scottish SPCA](#) to share intelligence on the illegal movement of animals. We rely on the information gathered from these agencies, together with public complaints and information from vets to enable us to act.

Buying a dog responsibly means asking yourself how much time, space, and money you can dedicate to your new hairy friend. But in the UK, another pressing consideration has emerged: Are you funding organised crime? If your pet is found to be illegally imported, then you may find yourself having to pay for costly quarantine and veterinary bills. If you are unable to meet these costs, dogs can be seized, put down or turned away at the borders.

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Please help tackle puppy smuggling by buying responsibly

How to buy a puppy responsibly

Always...

- ✓ Ask to see mum and pup together
- ✓ Ask the breeder lots of questions
- ✓ Expect a breeder to quiz you too
Visit your new pup more than once
- ✓ Get all your pup's paperwork before you take them home
- ✓ Walk away if you have doubts or feel pressure to buy
- ✓ Report suspicious online sellers or breeders to Trading Standards

Never...

- ✗ Meet somewhere that isn't the pup's home
- ✗ Buy a pup from anyone selling multiple breeds of dog
- ✗ Buy a pup that looks small and underweight
- ✗ Buy a pup that you suspect has been imported illegally

For more advice and to help put a stop to #PuppySmuggling visit www.puppysmuggling.org.uk

1. Report suspicious sellers or breeders to Trading Standards. Call 0300 123 0900.
2. If there are signs of obvious neglect or cruelty, contact the Scottish SPCA as soon as possible on 03000 999 999.

Scam Alert!

A South Ayrshire resident recently contacted us regarding an e mail he received from what seemed to be the TV licencing people. The message told him that something had gone wrong with his payment and that he should follow a link to set up a new payment arrangement or face possible fines and referral to debt collectors.

When he clicked on the link it took him to a website that looked like it could be run by TV Licencing. The website then asked him to enter his personal details, including bank information. It dawned on the consumer at this point that this was a scam and he quickly exited the site. In reality, the website is run by scammers who

would have used the information to access his bank account and potentially strip it of funds.



And Finally...

This month we have been joining in with over 60s taking part in the Council's [Invigor8](#) classes. After the physical work is finished and a well-earned refreshment is being taken, Trading Standards staff take the opportunity to provide information to the group about avoiding scams and rogue traders.



If you are looking for further advice on any of the topics in this issue, or indeed any other Trading Standards matter, please call South Ayrshire Council on 0300 123 0900 and ask for Trading Standards or contact us via www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards/



Trading standards offer free, impartial, expert advice and assistance with any consumer problem.