

Rogue car salesman jailed for three years



Spencer Hannon of Rushden pleaded guilty to defrauding 27 customers who had purchased vehicles from his business, Village Cars. The car dealership was most recently based in Souldrop, Bedfordshire, having previously traded from premises in Little Addington and Finedon in Northamptonshire.

Hannon was aggressive towards customers who complained about the poor quality cars he had sold them. His methods included failing to disclose that vehicles he sold had been insurance write-offs, promising to tax and MOT cars but instead pocketing the money, and failing to honour warranties when customers reported faults with vehicles they bought from him. In numerous cases he failed to register third party warranties that customers had paid extra for, meaning the warranties simply didn't exist. Hannon was jailed for three years and banned from being a company director for seven years.

We encourage people to report similar concerns about other disreputable businesses to our partner organisation Citizens Advice consumer service on **03454 04 05 06**, who will pass details on to us where appropriate.

Two-year jail sentence for counterfeit DVD importer... he also has to pay a £66,000 confiscation order

Keith Liggins, 62, who lived in Milton Malsor at the time of the offences, sold £145,000 worth of counterfeit DVDs, imported from China, through online auction site eBay. He received three warnings from FACT (the Federation Against Copyright Theft), but continued to import and sell the illegal products until we intervened. He was convicted of eight offences under the Trade Marks Act at Corby Magistrates' Court following a two day trial.

At Northampton Crown Court he was sentenced to two years' in prison and ordered to pay a confiscation order of £66,032 made under the Proceeds of Crime Act.



Kieron Sharp, Director General of FACT, said: "In the UK our creative industries support more than 1.8 million jobs, however criminal enterprises – like the one Liggins was running – put the livelihoods of those working in the industry at risk."

18-month suspended sentence for Corby car clocker



Gershom Hatinawedu, who ran a car workshop in Corby, has admitted 17 counts of fraud after altering the odometers of 13 vehicles that he then sold. Hatinawedu used false identities to buy cars cheaply on online auction sites. He then changed the odometers to a lower mileage before selling the cars on the Auto Trader website in order to make a greater profit. One car had 130,000 miles taken off the clock. In total over 750,000 miles were removed from odometers of cars he sold on.

He was sentenced to 18 months in prison, suspended for two years, and 250 hours of unpaid work, and he was ordered to pay £500 costs. The court also imposed a six-month curfew between the hours of 7pm and 7am.

Rabies prevention – illegally imported puppies seized

A four-month-old puppy from Slovakia and a six-month-old puppy from Moldova have been taken into quarantine by us after they were illegally imported into the UK without meeting rabies vaccination requirements. The puppies were seized from residential properties in Kettering and Daventry respectively.



For dogs, cats and other mammals to enter the UK, it is necessary for them to have either spent four months in approved quarantine kennels or to have complied with the requirements of the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS).

For more information please visit www.gov.uk and search 'importation of pets'

Illicit vodka costs shop director more than £4,000

A complaint was made to us about the Nisa Local shop in Birchfield Road East, after a customer bought a bottle of what appeared to be Glen's vodka but he found it didn't smell or taste right. Our officers carried out a search of the premises and found almost 300 counterfeit bottles in an unlit cellar at the back of the store.



Kulasingatharmarasa Nimalathan, the director of the business, pleaded guilty to three charges of selling food i) not of the substance demanded by the purchaser; ii) which bore a false label and iii) to not being able to prove traceability of the product. He was fined £3,300 for the offences and also ordered to pay prosecution costs and a victim surcharge, totalling £1,120. A forfeiture order was

made for the destruction of the counterfeit product that was seized.

Fines for illicit tobacco suppliers

We have recently prosecuted :

- Rafal Witkiewicz of Corby – fined £400 and ordered to pay costs of £1,726 – foreign labelled and counterfeit product
- Himn Farag Sharif trading as Grosik, Silver Street, Kettering – fined £900 and ordered to pay costs of £2,161 – foreign labelled product
- Shamel Ali trading as Mini Euro, Wellingborough Road, Northampton – fined £1,250 and ordered to pay costs of £950 – foreign labelled and counterfeit product.
- Shaho Abdulla trading as JaJa, Kettering Road, Northampton – ordered to complete 40 hours unpaid work and pay £200 towards costs – foreign labelled and counterfeit product.

If you have information about the supply of cheap tobacco being sold please inform us by contacting the Citizens Advice consumer service on **03454 04 05 06**

Rogue trader jailed for highways con

A fraudster who tricked schools, health centres, community centres and churches into paying for unnecessary highways work has been jailed for 16 months.

Leslie Smith, of Minsterworth, Gloucestershire, would cold call victims, claiming he was working on behalf of the local authority's highways team on roads nearby and had paint leftover. He often claimed there was a legal requirement for the work to be done but it was usually of poor quality.



Among the 30 victims was St Edward's Church in Kettering, which Smith charged £4,980 for some line painting in their car park – the work was worth about £500. Smith was convicted of fraudulent trading and sentenced at Bristol Crown Court after a lengthy investigation led by Trading Standards South West. Smith conned his victims out of more than £57,000 using bogus trading names including Ringwood Traffic Management and Traffic Management Solutions. His offences spanned the country, including Cheshire, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Essex, Humberside, Kent and Bedfordshire.

Rogue builder given 18-month suspended prison sentence



James Richardson of Raunds has been sentenced to 18 months in prison, suspended for two years, after pleading guilty to a charge of fraudulent trading.

Richardson, who ran the business A&J Builders with his father-in-law Alan Fitzgerald, became aware of dishonest business practices by his business partner but turned a blind eye to them. Fitzgerald is currently serving a six-year jail term after he was convicted in January 2014 of two counts of fraudulent trading following a prosecution by us.

The offences took place over a 12-month period and involved 21 victims, many of them elderly, across Northamptonshire, plus one in London, resulting in the total loss to victims of over £140,000.

Sentencing Richardson, Recorder Roger Evans said: "The mode of operation was serious and organised criminal fraud and was mean and vicious, targeting consumers in their own homes. This is the worst kind of fraud as far as the consumer is concerned."

Looking for a reliable trader? We can help!

Our Buy with Confidence scheme brings together gardeners, plumbers, builders, electricians and many other types of businesses from across the county who have been individually checked by us for trustworthiness and compliance with consumer protection laws.

Traders are only accepted onto our Buy with Confidence scheme if they pass stringent checks carried out, such as a full audit of the business and CRB checks for all employees.



To search for a business approved by us, please visit the Buy with Confidence website www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk or call the Northamptonshire County Council Customer Service Centre on 0300 126 1000 and ask for details of the Trading Standards approved trader scheme.

Furniture failures

In recent months we have carried out a furniture survey to check compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. A number of sofas failed the tests and investigations are continuing. All upholstered furniture must meet fire resistance standards and new furniture must be permanently labelled, with the exception of mattresses and bed bases. It is a criminal offence for a furniture supplier not to meet the safety standards. Any second-hand furniture made after 1950 must be fire resistant and meet certain tests.

If you are aware of a trader selling furniture that is not fire resistant, you should report them to us, via the Citizens Advice consumer service, on **03454 040506** or by visiting www.adviceguide.org.uk

Scam mail update



Our work with the National Scams Team, Northamptonshire Police and Age UK is continuing to identify and support the victims of mass marketing fraud, more commonly known as scams. In one case, a local couple who have been the victim of scam mail have described our intervention as ‘immeasurable’ and now feel back in control of their financial situation. They are no longer sending money off to scams and have changed their bank account details. They are now using a telephone call blocker device to avoid being contacted by scammers over the phone. In some cases our intervention is saving vulnerable consumers several thousand pounds per year.

For further information and advice on how to protect yourself from scams visit www.thinkjessica.com or www.actionfraud.police.uk

Warning over hoverboards

More than 17,000 self-balancing scooters – or ‘hoverboards’ – have already been examined on entering the UK since mid-October due to safety concerns. Of these, over 15,000 (or 88%) have been assessed as unsafe and have been detained at the borders. Many of the items detained and sent for testing have been found to have non-compliant plugs without fuses, which increases the risk of the device overheating, exploding or catching fire.



If you suspect any retailers or websites of selling unsafe Hoverboards, please report them to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice consumer service helpline: **03454 04 05 06**

No Cold Calling Zone launched in Corby



A scheme to fight rogue traders and distraction burglaries has been launched in Corby. A No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) has been set up around Welland Vale Road where elderly or vulnerable residents have previously been targeted. High visibility signs have been put up to indicate the area is a NCCZ and crime prevention packs including door stickers delivered to local residents.

Residents are also being reminded of the message not to open the door if they don't know the caller. Over the past ten years, we have been working in conjunction with Northamptonshire Police, local councils and other community safety partnerships to introduce 60 NCCZs in various parts of the county where vulnerable consumers live.

If you wish to report any suspicious callers please call the special police hotline on **0345 23 07 702**

New law on consumer rights

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 came into force on 1 October 2015 and the Act says goods must be as described, fit for purpose and of satisfactory quality. The Consumer Rights Act replaces a number of previous laws with regard to business-to-consumer transactions, including the Sale of Goods Act 1979 and the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982.

During the expected lifespan of your product, you're entitled to the following:

Goods ordered at home

Goods bought in a shop

up to 30 days	If your goods are faulty, you can get a refund.	up to 30 days	If your goods are faulty, you can get an immediate refund.
up to 6 months	If it can't be repaired or replaced, then you're entitled to a full refund in most cases.	up to 6 months	If it can't be repaired or replaced, then you're entitled to a full refund in most cases.
up to 6 years	If the goods do not last a reasonable length of time you may be entitled to some money back.	up to 6 years	If the goods do not last a reasonable length of time you may be entitled to some money back.

In addition, the Consumer Contracts Regulations 2013 say:

up to 14 days	After receiving your goods, in most cases, you can change your mind and get a full refund.
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NB: You DO NOT have a legal right to a refund or replacement just because you change your mind, however, you could ask about the stores returns policy.

The above information is a summary of some of your key rights. For detailed information from Citizens Advice please visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk and search for 'Consumer Rights Act' or call **03454 04 05 06**

Northamptonshire Credit Union

Northamptonshire Credit Union (NCU) provides a range of affordable financial services, including safe savings, low cost loans and banking facilities. Anyone living, working or studying in Northamptonshire or the Cherwell district of Oxfordshire can access these services.

A Credit Union is a type of community bank, which is owned and run by its members. NCU is overseen by Directors who are elected each year from the membership at the Annual General Meeting. If you become a Northamptonshire Credit Union member you will be supporting a local and ethical savings and loan scheme that is owned and managed by local people for local people. There are about 400 Credit Unions in Great Britain with over 1 million members.

Like all Credit Unions, NCU is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. As a member, this gives you the peace of mind of knowing that your savings are 100% safe and secure, as they are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. See more information on the website – www.northamptonshirecu.co.uk/index.asp



To make a complaint, provide information or get advice

Our partner organisation, the Citizens Advice consumer service provides free, confidential and impartial advice on consumer issues and will refer cases to us where further action may be appropriate.

The service will provide 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/consumer, or call the Citizens Advice consumer service helpline on **03454 04 05 06**.

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.

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Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 0GB

Tel: 0300 126 1000

Email: tradedstd@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Website: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards



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our website*

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