

Shut out Scammers Campaign

Summary and Recommendations

- The purpose of this paper is to provide Members with an overview of the 2024 Shut out Scammers campaign.

This paper invites Members to:

- Note the overview of the 2024 Shut out Scammers campaign;
- Champion the campaigns emphasise on the importance of community and
- Support any preventative messaging, where possible, to prevent doorstep crime.

References

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Shut out Scammers Campaign

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is provide Members with an overview of the 2024 Shut out Scammers campaign.

Background

2. Shut out Scammers is the yearly campaign coordinated in partnership by Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) and Police Scotland. It is delivered and promoted across Scotland by local authority trading standards services and local police divisions.
3. In 2022, the initial two week long campaign was expanded to a four week period, with the premise of highlighting a different theme every week. This was to allow for individual local authorities and police divisions to determine what worked best for them. This focussed four week period was continued in 2023.

Shut out Scammers 2023

4. The weekly breakdown for 2023 began with the theme empowering consumers. This was followed on with a focus on impersonation scams (such as criminals purporting to be from the local authority), then home improvements and maintenance scams (including where consumers proactively seek traders often using online sites) with the campaign concluding with cost of living scams (drawing significantly on energy efficiency measures, especially with many consumers struggling with high energy bills)
5. In addition to the social media campaign, Consumer Scotland generously provided funding which allowed the team to undertake a range of additional awareness raising activities including:
 - The production of an advert for television which aired at primetime on STV between April and May 2023;
 - The commissioning of research via ScotPulse, a platform which can reach a wide demographic of consumers and for Shut out Scammers in particular, could help establish their knowledge and experience of doorstep crime. Some of the key points emerging from the research are listed under Annex A; and
 - An awareness raising van hosted by Police Scotland and local authority trading standards services. The van visited a variety of locations in a number of council areas within Scotland to engage directly with consumers. Police Scotland also provided additional funding to allow the van to be hired for a much longer period of time, allowing for each local division to have access to it for a week each to ensure substantial coverage across Scotland.

6. The 2023 campaign reached almost 2 million consumers with 660K reached via digital platforms. TSS is keen to build on this reach for the 2024 campaign.

Shut out Scammers 2024

7. For 2024, a similar four week format has been planned. The campaign launched at the start of April with messaging around empowering consumers following on with impersonation scams, before considering maintenance and home improvements, whilst concluding with energy scams. A link to the campaign page can be found [here](#). As before, the campaign messaging is supplemented by encouraging consumers to report any suspicions they have about traders and to look out for their friends, family and neighbours.
8. As with the 2023 campaign, the awareness raising van will be a focal point to engage directly with consumers. It is worth noting that whilst the social media element of the campaign will officially conclude in May, the awareness raising van will continue to promote the messaging across Scottish local authorities until mid-July ensuring longevity for the campaign messaging.
9. In addition, Consumer Scotland has provided funding for television advertising on STV. The advert will go live on Monday 15 May with placement predominantly around the most popular television shows such as The Chase, This Morning and the early evening news. The advert can be viewed [here](#).

Maintaining Momentum

10. Though intelligence suggests that doorstep crime is most prevalent in Spring, the perpetrators remain active throughout the year. In order to maintain momentum, TSS is committed to highlight prevention messaging all year round. TSS is aware that not all local authorities have the resource to commit time to prevention work with the awareness raising van, and as such, TSS would be delighted to work with individual local authorities to develop a bespoke prevention package in their area.
11. TSS is keen to continue to work with as many partners as possible to raise awareness about doorstep crime to ensure consumers are aware of what they can do to prevent doorstep crime.

Conclusion

12. Preventing consumer detriment through education, awareness raising and early detection/ intervention achieves better outcomes than simply reactive enforcement. Building on the previous success of the 2023 campaign and with funding from Consumer Scotland, it is hoped that even more individuals and communities can be reached throughout the course of the campaign. However, TSS acknowledges that we cannot be complacent and consistent messaging is key and are actively considering ways to maintain momentum of the campaign messaging.

April 2024

ANNEX A

ScotPulse Findings - Shut out Scammers

The most common doorstep scams experienced were:

- Insulation;
- Roof repairs; and
- Gardening services

It is important to note that there currently seems to be a trend where consumers are being cold called in relation to 'inspecting' previous work which had been undertaken. We will continue to monitor this MO in the coming months.

The majority of incidents took place in Spring, with significantly less identified in Summer.

Doorstep scammers most commonly approached consumers by saying that they were carrying out work for their neighbours. Consumers were also told that they may qualify for a special government grant or that there was a time limited offer available.

For those affected by doorstep scammers, more than half required remedial work to be carried out.

91% of respondents would tell someone if they encountered a doorstep scam.

When asked who they would report an experience of doorstep crime, the Police was by far the most popular answer, at 75%. Next up was the bank, Citizens Advice & Trading Standards, all at 6%. In total, 64 respondents mentioned trading standards. When provided with named options, Police Scotland remained the most common choice, 341 consumers said Trading Standards.

41% of respondents would know where to go to find traders who have been approved by Trading Standards, whereas 36% would not so we will continue to promote the Approved Trader Scheme.

Finally, Citizens Advice remains the most popular organisation consumers turn to when requiring advice and information.