

★ JOIN THE FIGHT ★
Suffolk Consumer Champion
Weekly Bulletin

15/12/2017

This week's top features



Fake Fingerlings Seized in Ipswich

Suffolk Trading Standards is issuing advice to parents after more than 50 counterfeit copies of a popular toy were seized from a shop in Ipswich town centre last week.

Fingerlings are this year's must have toy for Christmas and are sold out at most retailers across the country, as demand has outstripped supply.

The fake toys were spotted by a member of the public who reported them to Trading Standards. Officers then visited the store and identified that all Fingerlings on sale in the store were counterfeit, with samples being sent off for testing as there are suspicions the products could be dangerous.

Two versions of the fake toys were on sale in the store, easily spotted by errors on the packaging.

Following this discovery, Suffolk Trading Standards is issuing advice on how to spot genuine Fingerlings:

- Genuine Fingerlings will clearly say have the manufacturers details "WowWee" printed on the packaging: WowWee Canada Inc. 3700 Saint Patrick Street, Suite 206, Montreal, QC, H4E 1A2
- Genuine Fingerlings are sold in packaging with a moulded plastic top sealed onto a cardboard backing sheet
- Genuine Fingerlings have the WowWee logo on both the front and back of the packaging
- Copy and fake versions will often have different names like 'Baby Monkey', 'Happy Monkey' or 'Finger Monkey'

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Environment and Public Protection, said: "The swift action by Suffolk Trading Standards Officers to get these items off sale sends out a strong message to businesses that the sale of counterfeit toys will not be tolerated in Suffolk.

"Not only does this type of illegal activity put our residents at risk, it also affects our legitimate businesses who are being compromised by unscrupulous sellers.

"Toys must meet strict safety standards and undergo rigorous testing to ensure that they are safe. Counterfeit toys will have been manufactured with absolutely no regard for their safety.

"If you spot counterfeit Fingerlings on sale, please report it to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 03454 040506."



Ipswich trader prosecuted for illegal tobacco sales

An Ipswich trader has been sentenced to two years imprisonment - suspended for two years for offences under the Fraud Act 2006 and the Trade Marks Act 1994.

Hedi Ibrahim, trading as IKI Grocery Store in Franciscan Way, Ipswich, was also sentenced to six months imprisonment, suspended for two years for offences under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 and the Tobacco and Related Product Regulations 2016.

He was also ordered to complete 240 hours of unpaid work in the community. Any further offending within the two year period, or failure to complete the community service will result in the activation of all or part of the suspended sentence.

A case was made against Ibrahim, owner of the store, after a search of the premises was conducted in December 2016. More than 2,500 illegal cigarettes and 57 packets of hand rolling tobacco were found and seized – along with £1,000 in cash.

Following the seizure, evidence was sent to relevant trademark holders as well as a product safety laboratory for testing. A quantity was found to be counterfeit, infringing the trademarks of Regal, Richmond, Winston and Marlboro.

A number of the cigarettes were also found to be unsafe, without any self-extinguishing protection built into them. A large quantity was found to have been imported illegally, failing to bear health warnings in English.

Evidence obtained from the premises on the day of the search, and subsequent formal interviews led to admissions by the 32-year-old to making 35 sales of tobacco under the counter in six hours on the day of the search, including a single sale of 30 packets of Golden Virginia, valued at £270. The evidence obtained established that profit from illegal tobacco would be in the region of £620 a day.

The fraud charge showed there were ongoing and concerted sales of illegal tobacco making up a significant part of the businesses activity.

Hedi Ibrahim now faces a confiscation hearing under the Proceeds of Crime Act to recover the money he made.

In sentencing, Judge Goodin said: "Operating a part or mostly genuine business, you were presented with the opportunity to sell dodgy tobacco, some counterfeit, some dangerous and some not packaged correctly. Most alarming is that a letter was left for you in July 2016 and a visit followed on the 12th of December 2016 by Trading Standards. You clearly knew who they were [Trading Standards Officers], as they announced themselves and you made yourself scarce. The offending took place over a 4-5 month period."

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for environment and public protection, said: "Compelling evidence showed Ibrahim was using his store as a front for the selling of illegal tobacco and cigarettes. These cigarettes, while cheap, are often extremely dangerous and are sold at pocket money prices. Those who sell illegal tobacco do not discriminate to whom they sell to. Children are therefore able pick up these products easily and could therefore become addicted.

"Cigarettes sold legally also provide vital tax revenue, so the public purse is protected, by keeping illegal products off the streets and out of stores.

"Those found to be storing, selling or distributing illegal tobacco could also face losing their alcohol licence if they hold one, as well as being prosecuted.

“I would urge anyone who is aware of a premise selling illegal tobacco or cigarettes to report it in confidence by contacting Trading Standards on 0345 4040 506.”



Loneliness in Suffolk

It is estimated that around 10% of those aged over 65 feel lonely ‘all or most of the time’, which would equate to almost 17,000 over 65s in Suffolk. Given that this age group is predicted to grow by 47% over the next 20 years – there could be over 25,000 over 65s who are lonely by 2037.

It is generally accepted that feelings of loneliness are higher amongst females than males, regardless of age.

There is a higher risk of loneliness for the over 65s in more urban areas across Suffolk. Also, proportionally, the risk of loneliness for 65+ is higher in Ipswich and Mid Suffolk, than the other districts across Suffolk.

The risk of social isolation (absence of social contact) for the over 65s in Suffolk tends to be on the outskirts of main towns and cities and along the east coast; specifically around Lowestoft, Woodbridge, Stowmarket, Felixstowe, Sudbury, and Leiston. 6,679 households containing single people aged 65+ fall into the higher isolation score areas.

Loneliness in the elderly can make them more vulnerable to scams. In fact, lonely people are four times more likely to fall victim to scams.

According to research, the five most common types of scams affecting those who are always lonely are:

- Romance scams (16%)
- Lottery or prize draw scams (16%)
- Energy-saving scams (15%)
- Clairvoyance scams (10%)
- 419' scams (9%)

We're calling on everyone in Suffolk to show some Christmas spirit & think of ways they could help. Small acts of kindness might just help prevent someone you know from being scammed.

Join our #EndLoneliness conversations on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



Top Tip

Thinking about buying a pet puppy this Christmas? [Check out Defra's five simple tips.](#)

Back the fight against puppy smugglers and backstreet breeders.

[Product Recalls](#)

[Fraud and Scam Advice](#)

[Consumer Rights](#)

Checkatrade.com
Where reputation matters

