

saferbromley news

Supporting Safer Bromley Partnership

Winter 2019



Too good to be true

Need work on your garden trees? Be careful of unsolicited calls and flyers as it could be a scam, as one householder found out to their cost.

A vulnerable, elderly Bromley resident was quoted a low price for minor tree and garden work only to receive a final bill for an extortionate £8000 – which included much more for garden waste disposal – way beyond the quoted price.

The advice from the Council's Trading Standards for any type of work whether it's garden clearance, tree pruning or something else is to always use traders

from an approved organisation. Ask for references or speak to previous customers and check addresses. Get at least three quotes to compare and obtain a full written estimate prior to the start of work. The same advice applies to other garden work, with the principles equally true to repair and building works.

And remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is...

Please report it!

Reporting an issue means action can be taken which helps us be safe and feel safer in our neighbourhood.

Graffiti seen from the highway for instance, is removed proactively by the Council but if you report it yourself and don't rely on others, it's likely that the problem will be dealt with more quickly.

Likewise, if you are aware of other issues, including suspicious or criminal activity, please report it. In this way,

you are helping to keep us all safer. You may also want to consider joining your local Neighbourhood Watch group and being an active member.

Report issues to the relevant organisation, such as the Police or Council as needed and only when appropriate. Often there is advice about what to report on the relevant organisation's website and clearly, only use emergency numbers when it is genuinely an emergency.

Welcome to Safer Bromley News



As well as the work of the emergency services, the Council has a key protective role in helping make sure that residents and visitors across the Borough are as safe as they can be. Part of this involves enforcing legislation the Council is responsible for including laws relating to trading standards and issues such as rubbish dumping.

Crucially too, we also work with businesses, including food businesses, both inspecting and giving advice, not just so that there is compliance with the law but also to share best practice, all of which ultimately helps keep us all safe. Many organisations support the Safer Bromley Partnership work including housing associations and the voluntary sector. There is much we can all do to support this work, from reporting incidents we are aware of to taking simple anti-crime prevention steps such as locking doors and windows.

Finally, if you have a relative or friend living in the Borough who may be described as vulnerable, please consider sharing some of the advice in this newsletter, especially as we know that older more vulnerable residents are very often targeted by rogue traders. Even as I type, the latest scam seems to be to contact people about a potential flu-jab. Please be mindful of the potential and always make efforts to check whether someone is bonafide.

It is by all of us working collaboratively together that we will continue to keep our Borough as safe as it can be, with the news, information and advice contained in this Safer Bromley News helping to do that.

Councillor Kate Lymer
Executive Councillor for Public Protection and Enforcement

Driving the message home

Driving dangerously, under the influence of drink and drugs for example, not only affects the driver and other people, it can encourage certain choices. That's why we run the Driven by Consequences programme.

Aimed at young drivers and 16-18 year-olds that are learning to drive or those that have recently passed their test, the thought-provoking road safety initiative focuses on the outcomes of dangerous driving and making certain choices.

During the interactive event, students hear from the bereaved mother of a 16 year old, and prepare evidence for a reconstructed coroner's court inquest.

The event also brings together speakers from partners including the Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, London Ambulance Service and the London Air Ambulance while the Council's Road Safety Unit give hard-hitting accounts of the devastation that can be caused by irresponsible driving.

Find out more about our road safety work at www.bromley.gov.uk/roadsafety



Safe as houses

During these darker nights and in the run-up to Christmas, everyone needs to be extra vigilant when it comes to home security. Follow these simple tips and you'll be helping prevent more than a third of burglaries resulting from unsecured properties.

Make your property look like someone's home, especially during the winter months and the darker nights. Use timers to turn lights and radios on. Criminals are less likely to steal from a brighter home as they don't want to be seen.

Leaving valuables and house or door keys out of sight will reduce the chance of your home being targeted. Presents under a Christmas tree can also be tempting for a burglar.

Be confident in your right to say no at the door. If you aren't expecting anyone to visit, you don't have to open it. Be mindful of cold callers and scammers at the door and never accept offers of home improvement or other paid services at the door.

If you have any concerns about someone knocking on your door or someone who has promised to carry out works for you, call Bromley's Trading Standards Rapid Response Team on 07903 852090. They work all year round to keep our residents safe across the borough.

For more information and advice, visit www.bromley.gov.uk/tradingstandards or www.met.police.uk

Trick or treat

Scams come in all shapes and sizes but have one thing in common – they are designed to try to get your money or personal information.

Unsuspecting, trusting people often fall prey to scammers – not just the elderly and more vulnerable – as we saw with the collapse of holiday company Thomas Cook. Often the fraudsters will play on a big news story that everyone has heard about to legitimise their request for a fee or your bank details, for example.

Whether you are contacted by post, email, telephone or in person, our Trading Standards team can help. Their advice is, whether you've vaguely heard about something or not, don't be pressured into agreeing anything. Always take time to think about it and talk it through with family or friends. Fraudsters can seem very plausible and highly professional but be wary of anyone asking for money or your personal details.

If you, or someone you know, has concerns report to our Rapid Response team on 07903 852 090 or go to www.bromley.gov.uk/tradingstandards to find out more.

Safe munch

Our Food Team have been working tirelessly over the past year to ensure residents and visitors are able to enjoy eating food purchased from the Borough's food businesses.

The Food Safety Officers visit all types of food businesses, from large food manufacturers to small home producers, every day, including weekends and evenings, to ensure high standards of food safety are maintained.

You will see that many restaurants have a food rating sticker on their door or website. Ratings range from five which indicate a very good standard of hygiene to zero which indicate urgent improvements are necessary.

The vast majority of the approximate 2100 Bromley food businesses within the food hygiene rating scheme have good ratings, with just over 60% having currently received the maximum 5 rating and just over 100 being non-compliant with a rating of 2 or less. The Council's Food Safety Team does not allow non-compliant food businesses to continue to trade with poor food hygiene standards, without action being taken to improve standards.

Improvements are normally secured by advice and support but enforcement will also be taken if informal approaches are unsuccessful. This may mean closing down the business until officers are satisfied that conditions no longer present

a real risk of harm. For example, last year 4 premises were closed until they could be safely reopened. The relatively low numbers of premises where it was necessary to take this drastic action is testament to the success of the Bromley food team officers in keeping our residents and visitors safe.

More information about food safety is on our website www.bromley.gov.uk/food or visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk/> to view ratings for food businesses across the Borough and nationwide.



We're tackling fly-tipping



Flytipping often occurs in quiet country lanes as well as urban areas.

Apart from being an unsightly mess and making the area seem uncared for, fly-tipping and dumped rubbish is anti-social.

One fly-tipping hot spot for this type of anti-social behaviour has seen a reduction in the amount of dumped rubbish since being closed to vehicles. Star Lane St Mary Cray, is closed to traffic having had large concrete blocks installed at the road entrance earlier in the year. Now, owners of vehicles that may have been used to flytip cannot travel along the road and since then, the amount of dumped rubbish has fallen.

"We are tackling the issue of fly-tipping through all available means, including even this relatively unusual measure. We are encouraged by the decrease, with monitoring work continuing. Residents can also help by only using registered waste carriers" said Councillor Kate Lymer, Executive Councillor for Public Protection and Enforcement.

Although fly-tipping is a criminal offence, it is especially dangerous for drivers in country lanes where the road can be totally blocked by dumped rubbish. This is an example of successful partnership working and it is good news that flytipping has reduced.

Terry Gooding, Bromley Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade, commented "Fly-tipping and arson often go together and I'm pleased to say that the road closure seems to be working. It needs to be remembered that these fires have actually stopped us attending other emergency incidents, which is a serious issue."

For advice on reporting flytipping and offenders, visit www.bromley.gov.uk/envirocrime.

Trading Standards celebrate £3million of savings

The Trading Standards team at Bromley have now stopped more than £3 million being paid out to rogue traders as a result of their interventions and disruption activity. This is money which would have otherwise lined the pockets of scammers and criminals targeting our most vulnerable customers.

Many of these interventions were the result of calls to the Trading Standards Rapid Response number which would have prompted an immediate response to the resident in order to stop any money being lost. One of the largest savings involved a £450,000 house which had been signed over to a rogue trader in exchange for property repairs.

Bromley officers investigated the case following a report by a concerned neighbour and the case resulted in the fraudster receiving a 5 year prison term. Officers were able to transfer the ownership of the house back to the victim via the courts.

Call the Trading Standards Rapid Response number on 07903 852 090 if you or someone you know is being targeted by a rogue trader or scam.

Advice for your Resident Association or group

Our Trading Standards team regularly talks to a range of groups or organisations across the Borough, giving advice on the different types of scams and how to protect yourself, your family and friends. The range of groups we visit also includes faith groups, care homes, and sheltered accommodation and we would welcome the opportunity to come and meet with your group and outline what we do and the practical steps we can all take to help tackle rogue traders and help stop the scammers. Contact Beverley Nicklin, Senior Consumer Protection Inspector on 0300 303 8657 or email trading.standards@bromley.gov.uk

Crime summit

Over 100 people attended the event and the agenda included police updates from Borough Commander Dave Stringer and Assistant Commissioner for Frontline Policing Mark Simmons. There was also a presentation from Acting Inspector Cathy Thomas who spoke about Operation Star Fish, a police initiative to tackle and reduce burglary.

Bromley Youth Council delivered a fantastic anti-knives presentation and shared information about the "Make Your Mark Survey" which was completed by 9,000 pupils in Bromley, where knife crime was voted the number one cause for concern amongst young people.

Sharon Baldwin, Chairman of the Bromley Safer Neighbourhood Board said, "I would like to thank all those who engaged with us on this event, those that presented, the various groups who manned stalls and those that attended. The policing of our neighbourhoods and the prevention of crime can only be achieved with a strong partnership between the police, council and communities and these events show the strength of engagement that we have in Bromley. If you would like to get more involved or want further information, please do get in contact."

For details of the SNB's future community meetings and local safety news you can 'like' the SNB's Facebook page www.facebook.com/BromleySNB

Contracts for nuisance

Many of us will have seen threatening groups of youngsters on their bikes doing wheelies and the like which is not only anti-social, it's dangerous to all concerned.

To stop this anti-social behaviour we're now issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC) as an early warning from the Council and Police's Antisocial Behaviour Teams (ASB) to those involved.

The contract allows the young person to think and discuss their unruly behaviour and the impact it has. Further action can be taken if these ABC's are not adhered to. ABCs last about six months but may be extended in certain circumstances.

To find out more about Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC), search www.bromley.gov.uk

Community safety

Work to ensure that there is an overarching strategy to tackle serious youth crime is underway. Whilst Bromley remains a low crime Borough and does not generally have the levels of gang related violence associated with other parts of London, the Council is working with other public sector agencies to make sure that the work is effective and co-ordinated. The plan will include taking an intelligence led and partnership approach, working with public sector agencies, businesses and local communities to reduce crime, envirocrime and to improve safety.

Fly-tippers *we're watching you*

Fly-tipping or dumped rubbish. Whatever you call it, nobody should have to put up with it, let alone live near it. That's why we're doing all that we can to reduce incidents in our borough.

Our campaign 'Fly-tippers - we're watching you' aims to tackle all forms of fly-tipping – from a small bag of rubbish left on the street to a lorry load of construction waste dumped in a green space.

Besides prosecuting the people that do this, we can use a range of methods including issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), CCTV surveillance, vehicle 'stop and search' operations, seizing vehicles from those involved in fly-tipping and those unable to prove they are legitimate waste carriers, and road closures.

Everyone has a duty of care and is responsible for what happens to their unwanted goods and other waste. You could be liable for a substantial fine if fly-tipped waste is traced back to you, so always use legitimate waste carriers who will be able to provide a registration number which should be validated against the Environment Agency's live database.

Find or check waste carriers on the council's website by searching www.bromley.gov.uk/wastecarriers or call the Environment Agency hotline 03708 506 506. For more information and advice on all types of waste disposal, visit www.bromley.gov.uk/wastenews

Responsible retailers

Knife crime always seems to be in the news. In an effort to reduce this through illegal knife sales, a new responsible retailer initiative has been launched to help shops and businesses which sell knives to comply with the law prohibiting underage sales.

Jointly developed by London Trading Standards and the Metropolitan Police, knife retailers in the borough will be provided with a comprehensive pack of support materials, encouraging them and their staff to train and sign up to the voluntary agreement.

Shops and businesses signing up are encouraged to take this positive action to help reduce the theft of knives and underage sales and help protect their community. Those that join the scheme agree to use good practice when storing, displaying and selling knives, including using Challenge 25 age verification checks.

For further information about the initiative, please visit <https://nbcc.police.uk/guidance/knife-retailers-toolkit> or contact Trading Standards.



Old enough...

Many of us will want to give presents at this time of year but youngsters and businesses need to be cautious as some products and goods are restricted by age.

Shops and retailers risk a heavy fine if they flout the law so they should be vigilant and always ask children for proof of age. Goods like DVDs and alcohol have varying age limits and young volunteers make test purchases for Trading Standards to check they are

being sold appropriately. These goods include cigarettes, aerosol paints, knives, lottery tickets and fireworks for which businesses also need a licence and are restricted to selling during certain time periods.

If you believe that a local shop is selling age-restricted goods to children or you need advice let us know, visiting www.bromley.gov.uk/tradingstandards



Commemorate safely

What better way to celebrate or mark a special event than fireworks, sky lanterns or a balloon release, for example?

They all might look pretty but fireworks for instance, are an age-restricted product which means they can't be sold to young people under 18. Don't forget too, all of these airborne items can harm the environment, people and wildlife with their naked flames and rubbish they create when they land.

A safer alternative could be planting a tree or using static lanterns and outdoor lights, so you might want to consider other options instead.

Retailers and businesses selling dangerous age-restricted products to children, risk a heavy fine. Unfortunately, some still gamble and don't ask for proof of age even though our Trading Standards team have young volunteers making test purchases. We even give free advice to retailers in the borough about age-restricted products if they email trading.standards@bromley.gov.uk

If you think a business or retailer is selling age-restricted goods, report to Citizens Advice consumer helpline telephone number on 03454 04 05 06.

The Safer Bromley Partnership includes Bromley Council, Police, Fire Service, Health, Probation and Housing Associations working together to keep Bromley safe.

Contact us at:
community.safety@bromley.gov.uk
Follow us on Twitter@saferbromley