

Watchout

NOVEMBER 2016

Surrey edition

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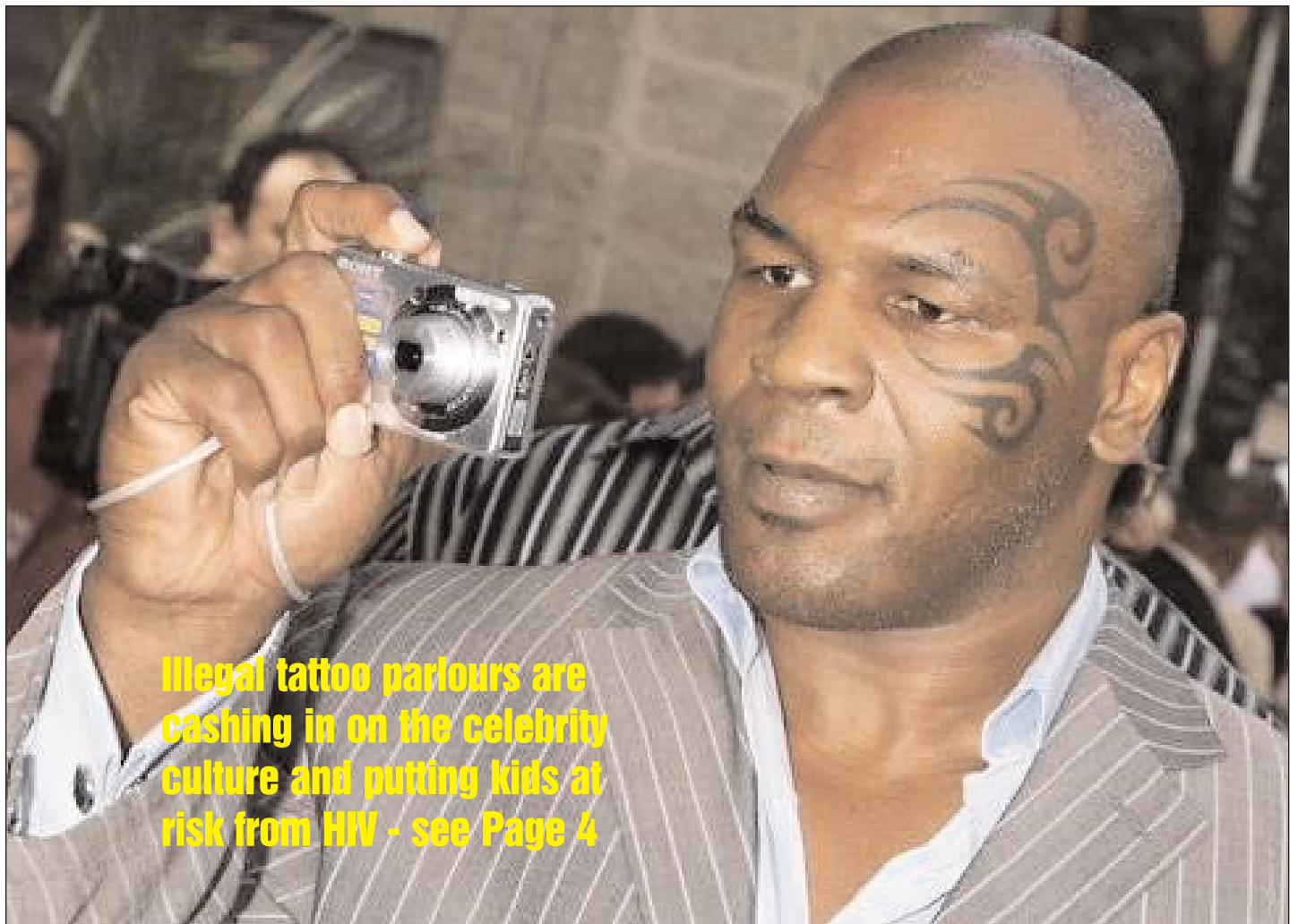
Chip pan accidents
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**Illegal tattoo parlours are
cashing in on the celebrity
culture and putting kids at
risk from HIV - see Page 4**

**How do you choose a
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Joining Checkatrade has allowed us to reach new customers, as our work is monitored by the people who really matter... our customers. It provides new customers with the ability to choose a trade with honest reviews and also the peace of mind that every year we have to meet the strict criteria set by Checkatrade."

Sunrise Plumbing & Heating



So when you're thinking about choosing your next tradesperson, take the guess work out of your decision and don't be the victim of a rogue trade.

Kids put at risk of HIV

"Illegal tattooists operating under the radar pose a real danger to people's health as they often have low hygiene standards"



Angelina Jolie

By Peter Faulkner

ILLEGAL tattooists are offering ink designs at "pocket money" prices to children and putting people at risk of contracting hepatitis and HIV, claim council leaders.

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 370 councils, says unlicensed tattooists are using cheap equipment bought online in makeshift, unsterilised home 'studios', which are often just kitchens or garden sheds.

As council environmental health teams carry out raids and prosecute illegal tattooists across the country, the LGA is urging online retailers to provide warnings to children on the dangers of using DIY tattoo kits – which can be bought for less than £25 – and for tougher sentences for illegal tattooists.

Although you have to be 18 to have a tattoo or tattoo someone else, it is not illegal to tattoo yourself.

Fuelled by celebrity culture, tattoos remain

popular with nearly one in three (29 per cent) of people aged 25-34 in the UK said to have at least one tattoo and more than 1,500 licensed tattoo parlours in the UK.

But unregistered tattooists are undercutting legitimate tattooists by offering cut-price deals, taking dangerous short-cuts with health and safety, and advertising their services on social media.

Illegal tattooists and DIY tattoo kits can also provide an avenue for under-18s to get a cheap tattoo, as they cannot access regulated premises.

Anyone using an illegal tattooist is not only at greater risk of blood borne infections such as hepatitis and HIV, they are more likely to get a bad tattoo, which requires expensive removal or cover-up procedure.

Cllr Morris Bright, Vice Chairman of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Illegal tattooists operating under the radar pose a real danger to people's health as they often have low hygiene standards.

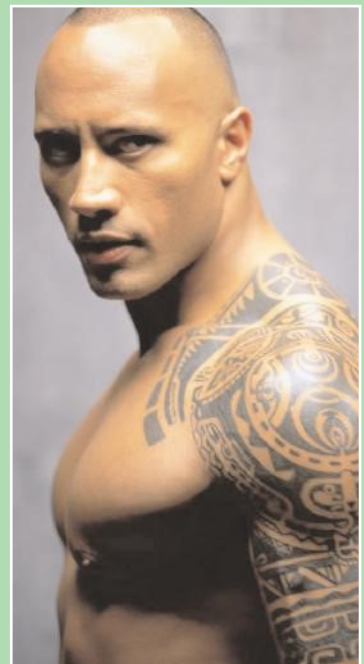
"They can use unsterilised equipment that seriously increases the risk of spreading diseases such as hepatitis or HIV, and causing permanent, ugly scarring. Unregulated tattooists are also associated with bad tattoos, which require expensive work to put right.

"These unregistered tattooists are undermining legitimate businesses and are often willing to illegally tattoo children by tempting them with pocket money prices, which can cause damage that lasts a lifetime.

"This issue is becoming more rife as people set up businesses from home and tattoo equipment is becoming more widely available and cheaper on the internet.

"We are urging young people under 18 and adults not to visit illegal tattooists or tattoo their friends or themselves using cheap tattoo equipment obtained online because the health risks are too great and there may be safeguarding concerns about the premises they are visiting.

"Prospective tattooists should register with their local council who can provide advice on legal requirements and appropriate hygiene practices.



The Rock, Dwayne Johnson

Tattoo safety

ANYONE having a tattoo should always check the following:

- The establishment should be registered with the local council. If in doubt ask to see the registration certificate.
- Check whether the person you're dealing with has undergone recognised training and qualifications.
- Ask to see examples of the person's work.
- Ensure that you have read and signed a consent and medical form.
- Make sure tattoos are done with new needles. If you don't see the needle removed from a sealed package, don't allow the tattoo to be done.
- Check that a proper tattoo ink is being used and that it is sterile at the start of your treatment.
- The tattoo artist should always wash their hands and put on a fresh pair of medical-type gloves before each new procedure.
- Ensure that you are given advice on the aftercare for your tattoo.

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Roofing rogues

ENFIELD Council is investigating reports of bogus callers offering to carry out guttering and roofing work for initially low fees, then hit people with extortionate prices..

The authority say the fraudsters will offer to clean pipes and rooves for between £30 to £180, but claim there are more problems when they get on the roof and start demanding cash upfront for men and materials.

The work done "is almost always substandard and the price charged exorbitant." Cases have been reported across the borough, in Enfield Lock, Highlands, Enfield Chase, Bush Hill Park and Palmers Green.

More information and advice is available from Citizen's Advice on 03454 040506.

Such a Smart idea

THE partnership between the Met Police Service and SmartWater was launched last year under a joint initiative called 'MetTrace' where SmartWater was appointed the sole supplier of traceable liquid forensic technology.

Twelve months into a three year contract to protect 440,000 homes across the capital, the crime-reduction initiative is well on track to delivering outstanding results.

Last year, 129,780 MetTrace SmartWater Kits issued to London homes.

This resulted in a 27.5 per cent reduction in residential burglary in the MetTrace initiative areas (5.7 percent reduction in non MetTrace areas) with 1000 less victims. This is estimated to have saved £676,489 and over 18,790 police hours.

Our apologies

IN last month's issue of London Community News we used an article on the fund set up by Diana Lamplugh in memory of her estate agent daughter Suzy.

Unfortunately the photograph we used of Suzy was wrongly captioned Diana Lamplugh.

We would like to apologise to the Lamplugh family for any embarrassment this may have caused.

A potential fireball

"Unscrupulous traders have no interest in safety and some have now taken to selling mattresses which could create a fireball."



By Peter Faulkner

THE Local Government Association, which represents more than 370 councils and all fire authorities, is hoping that most of you across the country are getting a good night's sleep.

Because many residents have complained that the mattresses they are sleeping on are potential fireballs.

Investigations by the LGA reveal that these mattresses are being sold from the back of a van by unscrupulous operators and many of them not only have fake fire-resistant labels, but they fail fire safety tests, could endanger lives and are filthy and unhygienic inside.

The LGA It said one council has reported a ten-fold increase in reports of doorstep traders offering fake branded mattresses for sale at 'discounts' of 70 per cent. Often they are simply old discarded mattresses that have been recovered and packaged to look like new.

Some sellers are even using genuine brand names on the mattresses and vans to fool people into thinking they are getting a bargain.

The van scam traders try to convince prospective customers by describing the mattresses as clearance stock or as 'going cheap' after a local hotel ordered too many.

They often issue professional looking paperwork to buyers, but this contains false or limited contact details which makes it almost impossible for a consumer to get their money back. Councils have been cracking down on rogue traders selling illegal mattresses.

Devon and Somerset Trading Standards Service has issued a warning to residents after a large spike in mattress scam complaints, from two in 2014 to 20 between January and August 2016.

Dorset County Council prosecuted a trader for

possessing 213 mattresses - and supplying two - which failed fire safety tests. He received a suspended prison sentence and was ordered to pay £500 costs. The council also prosecuted an online business which sold mattresses which failed fire safety tests. The company was fined £2,000.

Enfield Council prosecuted a father and son who used false trade marks on mattresses and misleading van signage. They were ordered to pay £3,520 and 21 mattresses were seized.

Derby City Council has warned of a rogue trader selling mattresses for £180 from a van after a victim paid for a "lumpy, useless mattress".

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "These unscrupulous traders have no interest in the safety of the products they sell and some have now taken to selling mattresses which could create a fireball in people's homes.

"These fly-by-night sellers don't care about the risks these mattresses pose, they just want to make a quick buck and leave you with phoney details so they can't be traced.

"Many victims won't realise they have been conned and could be sleeping on a potential death trap. These mattresses may be described as memory foam but are carefully wrapped so you have no idea what you are buying.

"They generally fail fire safety tests and are often worn-out, dirty and unhygienic items destined for the tip. Anyone offered a cheap mattress on their doorstep should not buy one. People should only buy mattresses from reputable suppliers."

Anyone with concerns over suspicious mattress sellers should call Citizens Advice on 03454 04 05 06, who will pass on your information to trading standards or the police.

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No laughing matter...

“We would appeal directly to the people who are carrying out these stupid acts to think seriously about what they are doing.”

CLOWNS are no a laughing matter. In fact police right across the country have lost their sense of humour when it comes to men with big red noses and huge boots.

And that's because people dressed as clowns have been involved in incidents across the country prompting police forces to issue warnings about the so-called killer 'clown craze' trend.

The trend, which is believed to have started in California, has spread like wildfire in Britain and instead of being funny, it has been scaring youngsters and the elderly.

Now police have decided to get tough following incidents in Sussex, Thames Valley, Surrey, London, Suffolk, Essex, Kent and Nottingham – and soon to come to a town near you.

School children are being targeted on their way to school as part of the “clown craze”, – a trend that seems to have been inspired by clown-related pranks in the US, police said.

A masked man carrying a knife left a group of children aged 11 and 12 “upset and distressed” when he jumped out on them on; in Suffolk, a boy was chased by “several people dressed as clowns”; Thames Valley police had to deal with 14 incidents in a 24 hour period; in Essex, two Clacton County High School schoolgirls were approached by two people dressed as clowns who asked them if they wanted to attend a birthday party.

Sussex Police are warning residents and visitors

to be aware of a new trend involving individuals dressed as clowns following an incident when a clown chased terrified down the street

Eastbourne Police have also received a report from a cyclist, who was riding along the national cycle route to Golden Jubilee Way when a clown jumped out from a bush holding what he thought was an offensive weapon.

A police spokesman said: “We would like to appeal directly to the people who are dressing up and carrying out these stupid acts to think seriously about what they are doing, the distress they are causing to young children is unnecessary and it needs to stop.”

While others have mostly escaped unharmed from the “frightening” incidents, police are warning potential offenders they still may be committing a Public Order Offence.

Acting Chief Inspector Darren Deex, of Essex Police, said: “It would appear the intentions of these ‘clowns’ is to scare members of the public however to date there have been no reports of physical threats of harm or violence being caused.

“We would also like to warn people who are thinking of being actively involved in this ‘craze’ that in doing so they may commit offences under the Public Order Act 1986 and to be more considerate of the feelings of others, especially young children and the elderly.”

100 year debt

A **BENEFITS** cheat pensioner has been ordered to pay back the proceeds of a 10-year fraud – but his £12-a-week payments mean clearing the debt would take more than 100 years.

Chung Fong, 75, previously avoided jail after pleading guilty to two counts of benefit fraud after wrongly claiming £64,451 in pension credit and £4,328 in council tax benefit between 2004 and 2014.

A Proceeds of Crime Act hearing in Cardiff on Friday saw him ordered to pay back a total of £73,581 plus a further £1,150 towards prosecution costs.

Cardiff Crown Court was told while Fong had paid back the council tax benefit he was paying back the pension credit at a rate of £24 per fortnight.

That equates to £624 a year – meaning paying back the pension credit alone would take 103 years.

Prosecutors said that while Fong, from Eveswell Street in Newport, was claiming the benefits, his wife had more than £200,000 of savings in several bank accounts.

Solar swindlers

HOMEOWNERS with solar panels are being targeted by salesmen making false claims about their existing solar panels.

False claim 1

Salesmen are encouraging homeowners to replace their existing solar panels and claiming that fire crews will not attend a fire involving older solar panels.

This is false! The Fire Service will always attend a fire no matter the cause.

False claim 2

Salesmen are offering free health checks on Solar PV installations in conjunction with The Microgeneration Certificate Scheme (MCS) (an industry-led and nationally recognised quality assurance scheme).

This is false! MCS has not partnered with any installation or maintenance companies and does not carry out health checks or maintenance.

For more information visit the MCS website.

Trust betrayed

ANTHONY Shaw was trusted by the elderly woman who asked him to carry out work on her home. But Shaw took advantage of her good nature and vulnerability.

Shaw, 56, from West Molesey, carried out property and gardening work for the lady in Walton-on-Thames for two years.

But some of the work wasn't requested and the majority of it was substandard and grossly over-charged.

When Shaw appeared at Guildford Crown Court he pleaded guilty and the judge said that because of the defendant's current medical issues and his late guilty plea, he would suspend a sentence of imprisonment for 24 months with a 12 month supervision order.

Top of the cops award

SURREY Police has been recognised for its continued dedication to workplace diversity, ranking as the fourth highest in The Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers.

Surrey Police temporary deputy Chief Constable Gavin Stephens said: "We are proud to have been awarded this position which shows our dedication to creating a diverse workforce and we will continue to work towards maintaining an inclusive organisation."

Attacked three women

A 24-year-old man from Lightwater has been found guilty of two counts of false imprisonment and two counts of committing an offence with intent to commit a relevant sexual offence.

During a five day trial at Kingston Crown Court, the jury heard that Ross Henson of Lightwater Meadow, Lightwater, attacked three women in Guildford town centre during the early hours of February 13 this year.

Prior to the attacks Henson had told a witness that he intended to rape a woman that night. He will return to court for sentencing.

Danger on the doorstep

Excuses used include their car has broken down or they have lost their pet in the hope of gaining access to the properties.



Beware of rogue traders targeting the elderly and vulnerable

SURREY Police is warning elderly residents in the Waverley, Woking and Hampshire areas to be alert to rogue tradesmen.

They have been investigating several distraction burglaries in these areas where the victims were all aged between 74-95.

They were deliberately targeted because they were elderly and vulnerable and have been purposely targeted by two men. Typical excuses used include stating that their car has broken down or they have lost their pet in the hope of gaining access to the properties.

Items reported to have been stolen include:

French mantelpiece clock with two dials, probably French dating from the 1800's.

"Frobisher" wall clock dates from around 1850.

Wedding band inscribed with a man and woman's name and a date in 1970.

Gold ring with an Amethyst stone surrounded with diamonds.

Ruby and diamond ring.

V-shaped diamond ring.

2 Silver picture frames.

Whippet dog silver ornament with a porcelain/ivory face.

Old fashioned "shell" petrol can with Brass knob

Brown "faux leather" POLO bag containing the victim's, small leather wallet and other personal belongings.

Alternatively, if you have found, were offered or know someone who has been offered the above items, please do the right thing and contact Surrey Police on 101 and ask for Detective Constable Jo Smith or quote crime reference number 45160072371.

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A typical chip pan fire

Chip pan fire warning

Chip pan fires cause one fifth of all accidental dwelling fires in the UK each year. Nearly 20 people are killed or injured daily in accidental fires, the most common of these caused by deep fat frying.

FAMILIES across the country are putting themselves at risk of serious burns because they are unaware of the measures they should take in the event of a chip pan fire.

This year alone chip pan fires in London, Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Nottinghamshire and Buckinghamshire have caused heartache for families.

These fires sparked a warning from fire chiefs across the country and if you follow their advice you and your family will be safe.

In Kent last year a chip pan blaze wrecked a home causing a staggering £100,000 worth of damage and leaving a family homeless.

In Buckinghamshire more than half of all accidental fires in the home (125 of the 247 accidental house fires in Buckinghamshire, and 119 of the 185 accidental house fires in Milton Keynes), started in the kitchen.

London Fire Brigade figures also show that in London in the last five years there were 1,754 chip pan fires, over 500 people were injured and three died

Chip pan fires cause one fifth of all accidental dwelling fires attended by the Fire and Rescue Service in the UK each year. Nearly 20 people are killed or injured every day in accidental fires that start in their kitchen, the most common of these caused by deep fat frying.

Precautions to take.

- Never fill a chip pan more than a third full of oil.
- Consider using a thermostatically controlled deep fat fryer.
- Never leave your cooking unattended. Even if the phone or doorbell rings. Remember – fires start when your attention stops.
- If you've consumed alcohol, don't be tempted to cook with a chip pan.
- Test the temperature with a small piece of bread or potato. If it crisps quickly, the oil is hot enough. If the oil starts to smoke don't put the food in. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool.

If you do have a chip pan fire:

- Call the Fire and Rescue Service on 999 immediately.
- Don't take risks.
- Have a clear escape route.
- Never move the pan.
- Turn off the heat (if its safe to do so).
- Never use water on chip pan fires, as this will cause a fireball.

The most common type of fire is caused by deep fat frying with 4,000 people injured in these kinds of fires each year.

Think about what you're doing when you're deep frying. You're heating several pints of oil to extremely high temperatures. The oil can not only cause terrible burns, but it can go up in flames. In fact, it's an ideal fuel for a fire, and difficult to put out.

Dodgy plumbers jailed

A TEAM of dodgy plumbers charged a Warwickshire resident an emergency rate of £672 an hour (plus VAT) just to unblock a toilet and do emergency work. The total bill came to £5,642.

But thanks to a Trading Standards investigation they were all brought to justice and jailed at Stafford Crown Court

Duane Linton, aged 34, of Wood Lane, Handsworth was company director of Plumb-Tech Plumbing and Heating Ltd, based in Great Barr, Birmingham, and Plumb-Tech Plumbing and Heating 1 Ltd, of Wood Lane, Handsworth, was jailed for two years and eight months.

Sub-contractor Otis Wray, aged 44, of Birdbrook Road, Birmingham was jailed for nine months and ordered to pay £2,000 costs and compensation of £1,113.

Peter Hawketts, aged 55, of Vardon Way, Kings Norton was jailed for 16 months and Patrick Thawe, aged 45, of Little Park, Quinton, Birmingham was sentenced to 20 months.

Cowboy builders

TWO cowboy builders who made a pensioner pay out £10,000 for "shoddy work" on his home have been jailed.

Anthony Pritchard and John Birks kept going back to the 75-year-old's home in Alvaston telling him of jobs that needed to be done and asking for more money.

Police were alerted to the rogue traders by the elderly victim's bank, after he tried to withdraw more money than he had in his account to pay the men.

Derby Crown Court heard that the work done by the defendants amounted to just under £3,000, and the cost to correct it could be as much as £13,000.

Birks, 27, of Kemble Place, Alvaston, was jailed for 10 months and Pritchard, also 27, of Harvey Road, Alvaston, was sent to prison for eight months. They both pleaded guilty to fraud by false representation.

Sentencing the men, Judge John Burgess said: "The fact that the bank were alert to the withdrawal of large sums of cash by the man you were cheating indicates the sad state of affairs that exists in our society, because there are people like you who are prepared to rip off elderly people who are vulnerable."

News from home and abroad

Doctors prescribe treatments that don't work

DOCTORS have drawn up a list of 40 treatments they say bring little or no benefit to the patient and should no longer be used. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges - which represents all 21 medical royal colleagues in the UK - says doctors are giving patients too many tests and drugs that they don't need.

More than four in five medics said they had given a treatment to get pushy patients off their backs. The Academy has previously estimated £2bn a year is wasted on useless medicines, operations and tests. It will later publish a full list of up to 150 treatments it believes should be reconsidered.

It recommends doctors listen closely to what patients want rather than using new technologies for the sake of it, and tailor care more to the individual.



No cheer for Spanish wine

ACCORDING to the EU Intellectual Property Office, Spain's local producers lost an estimated /173 million on assorted alcoholic beverages, and a further /90m on wine thanks to an influx of fake alcohol coming into the market.

The new trend is also appearing to have a negative effect on jobs as over 1,000 Spanish workers have been made unemployed since the report of the full economic cost of fake alcohol began.

It is estimated that the EU in total has lost an annual average of /3 billion between the years of 2008 to 2013, according to The Olive Press. Italy, Germany and France have also been heavily affected, but Spain has been hit the heaviest as the country has the highest number of businesses - 3,700 - specialising in alcohol and wine.

Jail for cowboy builders

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Fakeaway pizzas

TRADING standards officers investigating food fraud have caught a 'fakeaway' boss who was selling cheese and ham pizzas, that contained neither cheese nor ham.

A test purchase operation, by Warwickshire County Council, saw its trading standards officers buy 40 pizzas from

small independent takeaways across the county.

Five of the pizzas contained an oil/fat substitute known as 'analogue cheese', instead of dairy cheese, and a further five did not contain the types of meat described on the menu.

One takeaway boss was cautioned and several warning letters were issued.

According to the www.businesscompanion.info website offenders could face unlimited fines and up to two years imprisonment.

The Warwickshire findings are the latest in a long line of UK food frauds that frequently contravene consumers' beliefs, often have significant health implications and could even be fatal.

Earlier this year a takeaway boss in North Yorkshire, was jailed for six years after a customer with a nut allergy died from eating a supposedly nut-free curry.

Last year a national report considered up to date information on food labelling. This is available on the government-backed www.businesscompanion.info website.

For advice or to report an issue to trading standards consumers should call the Citizen's Advice helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

Car buyers beware

BUYERS of second hand cars advertised on websites are being warned to beware of a new scam involving the use of false vehicle registration numbers.

These days consumers can now find a lot about a car they are interested in buying by putting the vehicle's registration number into a free Government website, including information on a vehicle's mileage and condition.

This has led some sellers of dodgy vehicles to remove or obscure the licence plate of the cars they are selling on photographs posted on the Internet.

One resident expressed an interest in a vehicle being sold on a popular Internet classified advert website. It was shown without the number plates visible, so the buyer contacted the seller to ask for the registration.

The seller gave them this and the buyer carried out a range of free and low cost checks on the vehicle. Satisfied with the

result he paid for the vehicle online and went to collect the car.

When he arrived it turned out the the seller had given him a registration number for another vehicle of the same make/model, but not the one he had purchased. This car, the one he had paid for, was in very poor condition with a high mileage!

Dodgy funeral plans

RESIDENTS have been urged to be on their guard after reports of doorstep cold callers attempting to sell funeral plans.

Officers at Norfolk Trading Standards have had reports from the Norwich, Acle and Coltishall areas. The watchdog says it has also received information that some doorstep sellers may be making false claims including:

- That the government has passed laws that require over 60s to have a funeral plan;
- That their funeral planning service is "government backed".

Call 03454 04 05 06 if you have a complaint about dodgy dealers.

Directors to be hit

DIRECTORS of companies that harass consumers with nuisance calls could be directly liable for fines of up to £500,000 under Government plans that will take effect from spring 2017.

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) has received over 100,000 complaints about nuisance calls and texts this year alone, and firms that flout the current rules can be fined up to £500,000.

However, many companies have been sidestepping these fines by declaring bankruptcy and then reincorporating under a different name. The problem is widespread, and only £340,000 of the £2.7 million fines issued to date have been paid. Only six fines have been paid in full.

However, the new rules will hold company directors, as well as the company itself, directly to account. Directors could be fined up to £500,000, as could the company, though actual penalties will depend on the circumstances of each case.



Leon Livermore says courts may not be imposing strong enough sentences

War on Illegal tobacco

"Projects like OH2 allow trading standards to share information and develop intelligence to help get illegal tobacco off the streets."

A RECENTLY released report by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) has highlighted the rise in the illicit tobacco trade.

Operation Henry 2 was a coordinated enforcement campaign by Trading Standards Services to tackle the local supply of illicit tobacco products across England, including London, and was the second largest of its kind.

Delivered between December 2015 and April 2016 illicit tobacco products worth almost £1m were seized during the operation. This was 18 per cent higher than the first operation, carried out by trading standards in 2014.

In London 13 boroughs received funding to take part with the following results;

Over nine days 51 retail premises were visited; 57% of these were found to be selling illicit tobacco; 80,360 cigarettes were seized along with over a quarter of a tonne of hand rolling tobacco; over half of the premises found with illicit stock were repeat offenders

The biggest haul was found in Westminster where some 28,000 cigarettes were found in one premises along with £80,000 cash.

Across England, trading standards officers confiscated around 2.9 million cigarettes and 1,272kg of illicit hand-rolling tobacco – an additional 205,591 sticks and 547.22 kg of illicit hand rolling tobacco compared with Operation Henry 1.

OH2, developed and managed by the

Chartered Trading Standards Institute on behalf of the Department of Health, was conducted across all nine English regions by 67 trading standards services.

In total, 42 per cent of premises visited in the intelligence-led operation were found to be selling illicit tobacco products of which 57 per cent were repeat offenders.

Leon Livermore, chief executive of CTSI, said: "The illegal tobacco market makes it easier for children and young people to start smoking and get hooked.

"With around two-thirds of smokers starting the habit as children, it is vital that we do everything we can to discourage them from developing a habit that places a huge burden on the NHS, while making no contribution towards it.

"Projects like OH2 allow trading standards to share information and develop intelligence to help get illegal tobacco off the streets.

"Local authorities must take appropriate enforcement action against individuals that disregard the law but it could be that the current sanctions and penalties available are not acting as a sufficient deterrent to criminals.

"In addition, courts might not be imposing the maximum penalties available range of sanctions are no longer fit for purpose.

"A further review of this is necessary to tackle the problem."

Facelift for taxis

LONDON'S traditional black cab has been given a boost by The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, who has written to private hire drivers and their passengers outlining plans for a safer and cleaner service.

The Mayor responded to an Uber email campaign about the future of the capital's taxi and private hire trades by outlining plans to drive up standards, enforce regulations fairly and improve safety for London's passengers and drivers.

His response comes after Uber asked their passengers to email the Mayor after he published a new Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan.

His plan will ensure that the private hire trade is of the highest standard, both in terms of safety and quality, for the benefit of customers."

The Mayor's new plans include:

- Proper hire-and-reward insurance
- Drivers must be able to speak English to improve passenger safety if someone requires medical assistance or wants an alternative route.
- Introduction of advanced driving assessment to raise standards.
- TfL insists taxis should be purpose designed for London's streets and have wheelchair access.

'Mean and nasty'

A WOMAN has been sentenced for what the judge described as a 'mean and nasty offence' after she continued to fraudulently pick up her mother's pension payments three years after she died.

Maria Blacklock, 58, of Maida Vale, London was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, (suspended for two years) at Inner London Crown Court and was also ordered to carry out 150 hours unpaid work.

Blacklock previously pleaded guilty to fraud by false representation and money laundering offences linked to the £66,000 fraud..

In the mid-2000s, Blacklock moved out to Las Vegas with her mother from the UK, but when her mother died in June 2011, Blacklock falsified life certificates to make it look as though her mother was still alive and living in Las Vegas.

She then went on to use her mother's bank cards and accounts to withdraw and spend the pension money being paid into her account after her death – a total of £31,320 in state pension payments and £35,111 in pension payments from Phoenix Group.

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Sign here and lose your cash

Sportsmen could be target of criminals after jockeys were hit by a series of frauds

SPORTSMEN could be targeted by fraudsters posing as autograph hunters.

The fear comes after jockeys were forced to avoid giving their signatures to autograph hunters following a series of frauds.

The Professional Jockeys Association has criticised the "ineptitude of the major high street banks" in tackling the scam, which has seen more than £200,000 stolen from around 30 jockeys.

The fraud has been ongoing since 2014 and the body is now urging its members to move their money out of the "unwilling and incapable" banks.

The money has largely been withdrawn over the counter, by fraudsters possibly using fake IDs.

The ongoing scam, which was first reported in 2014, has been taking place across the country and involves a number of major banks. It was described as "frightening" by jockeys.

West Sussex-based rider Jim Crowley, who had more than £10,000 taken from his account, said he has had to change the signature he gives to autograph-hunters after he was defrauded twice, despite changing banks



Jockey Jim Crowley

after the first fraud.

He added that he even received a phone call from a man purporting to be one of the fraudsters, who warned him the group would continue to target his account.

"It is very frustrating because you have got things like direct debits and mortgages and you can't just shut your bank account down," he said.

"One of them actually rang me and told me they were doing it. He was giving me the heads-up and told me to leave the high street banks, but by this stage I had already left."

Andrew Tinkler, a jockey from Cheltenham, said: "It was a little bit frightening that someone would do that and it was a disappointing that they were able to."

"Whether there are people trying to get an autograph for the wrong reasons, it's a possibility. Personally I would be very wary of it."

In a newsletter to its members, the PJA said banks were "unwilling and incapable" of stopping the fraudsters.

Paul Struthers, the body's chief executive, said it is suspected that the jockey's details had been "leaked".

He said: "The only conclusion we can come to is that somehow, somewhere, whether it's one individual or a group, there is a leakage of information."

"You are fundamentally left with the question of why it is happening. It's not like it happens with one bank and then stops and never happens again. It's ongoing and these are not small sums of money."

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Tumble dryer fires are on the rise

A TOTAL of 133 dodgy tumble dryer incidents have been logged by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service since January 2010.

They led to a total of 19 injuries, including the most serious incident - at a block of flats in Radstock Way, Merstham, in 2012 when three children and one adult had to be taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation and seven people were treated at the scene by ambulance crews.

The figures have been revealed as an investigation is under way to establish whether a faulty machine was the cause of a fire which devastated a family home in Guildford.

The Garnham family have claimed the recent incident was caused by a tumble dryer.

Whirlpool is urging anyone who owns Hotpoint, Indesit and Creda tumble dryers manufactured between April 2004 and October 2015 to check if their machine is one of those potentially identified as a fire risk.

The company has said excess fluff can come into contact with the heating element and present a risk of fire.

Out of the 133 fires from 2010 to 2016, there were 31 involving Hotpoint, Indesit or Creda tumble dryers

In the UK as a whole, firefighters were called out to 3,777 incidents of tumble dryer fires since 2010 and 270 people have been injured.

The company is asking owners not to leave their dryers unattended during operation.

Anyone who thinks their tumble dryer might be affected should check their model at <https://safety.hotpoint.eu> or <https://safety.indesit.eu>.

Alternatively, owners can call the dedicated freephone helpline on 0800 151 0905.

CONTACT US

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Dipak steps in and stops £4000 scam



Chobham Post Office

DIPAK Mehta is a hero and the villagers of Chobham should be proud of him.

The Chobham postmaster didn't save someone's life in an act of bravery nor did he do anything that was above and beyond the call of duty.

But what he did prevented an old lady in her 70s from being scammed out of £4000.

Mr Mehta acted neighbourly and made sure he kept his eyes and ears open to anything that would be detrimental to his customers.

The elderly woman, from Windlesham, was visiting Chobham Post Office, and was about to send large amounts of money to Russia.

Mr Mehta said: "She wanted to do two transactions, one for £2,000 and the other for £2,700.

"We kept on asking her all the questions that we should: do you know these people in Russia? Have you met them personally?"

"She said I met them several years ago but not recently but they are in need of some food and medicines and that's why I want to send it."

The postmaster permitted a transaction for £2,000 but telephoned the money transfer company, MoneyGram, at the same time, to be told if the customer was "insisting", they should send the money.

"I was not happy with that," the postmaster said. "I cancelled the transaction, she hadn't even left the post office at that time.

"We didn't give the reference number to her

and when she started to do another transaction then I got more suspicious.

"The other transaction also didn't go through."

Mr Mehta said he believed the woman to be "very vulnerable" and called the police.

"The police went to her home where they found her on the phone to the Russian people and they were instructing her to do it through Western Union," he said.

"The police were at her door at that time. That saved her. They came back [to the shop] and said you just told us in time, otherwise she would have gone to somebody else."

This was the second time Mr Mehta and his wife Mina have prevented an elderly person from becoming a scam victim.

Around a year ago the postmaster intervened when an elderly man was about to send money.

"If it's a big amount and especially people sending money to other countries, that makes us worry," he said.

A police spokesman said: "Surrey Police was informed of a suspicious transaction a woman in her 70s was attempting to carry out at a post office in Chobham.

"Officers have put measures in place to prevent her being targeted again."

More information about fraud and how you can keep yourself and others safe can be found by visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk.