

Norfolk Trusted Trader – Briefing Paper to Norfolk Older People’s Strategic Partnership Board 12th September 2012

Norfolk Trusted Trader currently has 250 Traders members, offering a range of services from the Home Improvement, Home Care and Garage Services sectors. The directory also includes providers from financial services, retail and computer and IT services.

1. Criteria for Traders joining the scheme – what checks do we make?

- ✓ Insurance details – Trusted Traders must have Public Liability insurance in place, typically at £2 million, although this depends on the type of work they carry out. We verify directly with their insurance companies to make sure public and employer’s liability insurance is in place.
- ✓ Background checks – We check against our complaints database and where appropriate gather intelligence from other third parties.
- ✓ Companies House and credit checks – We check company and director details held at Companies House, and carry out credit checks on the company, directors and partners.
- ✓ Other Memberships/Trade Associations – We verify membership of any body or scheme by contacting any organisation a trader claims to be registered with, e.g. Gas Safe Register.
- ✓ CRB checks – we require any Trusted Traders and their staff to be CRB checked if they work directly with older or vulnerable customers.
- ✓ Before completing accreditation all traders are required to obtain three satisfactory customer references. Once they are accredited they agree to continue to invite customers to use the scheme’s feedback system.
- ✓ Traders must agree to comply with our terms and conditions, including not to use high pressure sales techniques or cold calling.

2. Complaint Handling

We look into all complaints that we receive about Trusted Traders. Customers may complain directly to us, or we may be notified if the Trader receives a low score through the scheme’s feedback system.

Where possible we offer mediation to the customer and the business, to try and resolve the issue.

If the complaint is of a serious nature and indicates that the Trader could be in breach of the terms and conditions of the scheme, or indeed the law, then disciplinary action and investigation will ensue, which could result in the Trader’s removal from the scheme and possible prosecution.

3. Marketing and promoting the scheme - ensuring equal coverage and access to Traders in all seven districts of Norfolk

We have a marketing budget which we use to raise awareness of the scheme to residents across Norfolk and to encourage traders from different sectors to join the scheme. This has included targeted and direct marketing.

We have used local publications to promote the scheme, such as parish newsletters, and local advertisers through Archant, as well as radio adverts, and press releases.

We also work with partners and networks to promote the scheme, including Home Shield, Community Services, Age UK, district councils, community hospitals, the Heron website, our consumer champions and other Consumer Support Network partners.

We attend many events in all parts of the County, some aimed at consumers including older and vulnerable people, and some aimed at recruiting businesses to join the scheme.

We are currently working with Community Services to recruit community meal providers across the county, targeting each locality in turn. This has proven a very successful method to recruit as we have been able to assess the need for each locality and to approach suitable organisations to meet that need.

4. How do we work with older people to improve the scheme and make sure it meets their needs, and is accessible?

The majority of consumer complaints received by Norfolk Trading Standards come from older people. The trends set by these complaints give us useful information for developing the scheme, and indicate which sectors require better coverage.

Access to the scheme: We are aware that it is not possible for everyone to access the internet so we still dedicate a large proportion of our budget to produce a paper directory. We print around 10,000 of these a year and distribute them via our partners to older and vulnerable people across Norfolk.

We use a readers' panel to review the paper directory to make sure that it will meet the needs of its target audience.

We provide leaflets to promote the scheme via libraries, council information centres, doctor surgeries and housing associations.

Consumers can also contact the Customer Service Centre who can provide them with information and trader details straight from the online directory.

We also raise awareness of the scheme at a number of events aimed at older people. Since September 2011 we have attended or given talks at around 40 different events specifically aimed at older generations. This gives us a good opportunity to speak to service users and hear their views about the scheme.

We also listen to colleagues from other services if there is a need to develop certain sectors. For example, we worked closely with Adult Community Services in light of the introduction of personalised budgets and as a result have targeted mobility equipment suppliers to join the scheme, as well as developing the community meals section of the directory.

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