

## No Cold Calling Zones

### Doorstep Crime

This is crime arising from doorstep callers, bogus workmen, high pressure salespeople, bogus officials and distraction burglary. It is now well established that distraction burglaries and rogue trading are interlinked – all too often, the seemingly innocent doorstep seller is actually checking things out for a re-visit to carry out a burglary or distraction burglary.

Whilst this type of criminal behavior can impact on anybody in any place, research shows that older people are particularly vulnerable, especially those living alone.

A national Trading Standards Institute survey involved feedback from 9,000 randomly selected households. The results showed that nationally, 96% of people simply did not want doorstep cold-callers and nobody actually welcomed them.

The number of serious doorstep crime incidents reported to both the police and trading standards services has grown significantly over the past few years. Incidents involving older people losing thousands of pounds are now not unusual and what has become clear is that the response and support mechanisms of enforcement agencies has not kept pace with the skills and organisation of the criminals.

In responses to this increase in doorstep crime two pilot no cold calling zones were launched in Stockton in February 2007.

## **No Cold Calling Zones**

The aim of these zones is to reduce the number of bogus callers, distraction burglars and rogue traders operating in an area by restricting all commercial cold callers. We can consider the introduction of a zone where the majority of residents are in favour of a zone and there is evidence of the need for a zone.

## **Evidence Needed To Support The Introduction of A Zone**

Legal advice from the Office Of Fair Trading has set out clear guidelines for determining when it is appropriate to set up a zone. We must be able to show that the protection afforded to consumers by the introduction of a zone is proportionate to any additional burdens this may impose on businesses. The factors we consider in deciding whether it is proportionate to introduce a zone in a particular area include:

- The core objective of the zone is the prevention or reduction of crime; this includes the fear of crime.
- There is a real prospect that the establishment of the zone will assist in achieving the crime reduction objective
- An identified problem in relation to crime exists e.g. specific intelligence or evidence of high levels of doorstep crime in relation to the specific geographic area in question
- The size of the zone is limited and directly corresponds to the geographic scope of the identified problem. Zones that are very large and are not tailored to the specific problem which has been identified are unlikely to be defensible as proportionate.
- There is a high concentration of residents who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation (including residents who have a higher propensity to be misled) within the area

Once you have collected/supplied your evidence the following scoring criteria will give you an indication as to whether your application is likely to be successful:

Criteria		Score
<b>Problems With Crime</b>		
No of incidents of doorstep crime or reports of suspicious traders in the previous year	More than 5	30
	2-5	20
	1	10
% of residents who are fearful of doorstep crime	over 75%	30
	50-75%	20
	under 50%	10
<b>Geography Of The Area</b>		
Number of houses in the proposed zone	over 150	10
	100-150	20
	under 100	30
Is the area clearly defined at its boundaries?	yes	20
	no	10
How many entrances are there by foot or road into the zone?	over 10	10
	6-10	20
	5 or less	30
<b>Vulnerable Residents</b>		
% of vulnerable residents	over 75%	30
	50-75%	20
	under 50%	10
<b>Local Support</b>		
% of residents in support of the zone	over 75%	30
	50 –75%	20
	under 50%	10
<b>Total Score</b>		

Areas scoring over 170 are suitable for a No Cold Calling Zone

Areas scoring 130-160 will be considered for both types of zone, with resident's wishes being a priority

Areas scoring 120 or less are suitable for a Doorstep Crime Watch Zone

## Estimated Costs

These costs are based on a zone of approximately 50 houses and relate to year 1 of operation:

<b>Residents Consultation</b>	<b>£150</b>
Includes arranging residents meeting, production and distribution of information packs and officer time	
<b>Street Signs</b>	<b>£50</b>
£10 each x 5	
<b>Door Stickers</b>	<b>£100</b>
£200 per 100	
<b>Enforcement @ £60 per hour *</b>	<b>£300</b>
Estimate 5 referrals per year taking on average 1 hour to deal with	
<b>On-going Support #</b>	<b>£50</b>
Re-enforcement of message, re-issue of information, publicity etc	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£650</b>

\*These are also additional costs associated with the operation of the zones once launched. These costs include additional enforcement duties to deal with notifications of breaches of the zones. In the first instance residents have been asked to notify trading standards about any trader ignoring the zones.

#The consultation exercise has identified that there is a need to ensure that the information on how the zones operate is reinforced on a regular basis.

## Doorstep Crime Watch Zones

Where there is insufficient evidence of need in support of a No Cold Calling Zone a Doorstep Crime Watch Zone is an option. In these zones residents' awareness of the problems with doorstep callers is increased but cold calling is allowed to continue. Door stickers (example below) are issued so that residents can individually say "no cold calling" if they wish.

## How A No Cold Calling Zone Works

Ideally, the area chosen as a 'No Cold Call Zone' should be a relatively small group of homes (less than 100 properties) and easily defined by its boundary, e.g., a street, cul de sac, small estate or a Neighborhood Watch area. The most important thing is that the initiative has the support of local residents. How this is achieved will depend on the local situation, but consultation with residents is a vital first step, not only to get consent (from the majority), but also to raise awareness of the issues and encourage community involvement. It is known that doorstep criminals will target particular properties, areas or residents. Older people, living alone, are especially vulnerable.

Fundamental to the success of the scheme is to mark the area's boundaries with signs which clearly say that it is a "No Cold Calling" area. These signs are fixed to a lamp-post, wall etc.



It is also important to educate local residents about how to deal with cold callers and to give them the confidence to say "NO", and direct the cold caller out of the area. One way of doing this is to give residents window stickers which callers can easily read explaining that they are in a "no cold calling zone" and that they do not buy from doorstep sellers. The advantage of this is that it is less confrontational and doesn't need anything to be said. Door stickers (shown left) are issued to residents in a zone.



## Sanctions

There are no specific criminal sanctions for instances of breaches of a no cold calling zone. However any call that is received concerning cold callers will be treated with importance. We will look at the details of each case and identify any illegal trading practice upon which we can act.

We will always follow up a report of cold calling within the zone by contacting the trader or organisation in question. In some cases we may respond in person.

## Exemptions

At the launch of the pilot zones it was felt that it was important to keep the message simple. For this reason no exemptions are given on the street signs or door stickers and the wording chosen for the zone was no cold calling as opposed to no doorstep selling. However our information leaflet which is issued to residents makes it clear that utilities staff, political groups canvassing for election purposes and at other times throughout the year and a range of other totally legitimate individuals i.e. religious groups may still call without an appointment.

## Pilot Zone Results

Both zones were officially launched in February 2007. The zones were operated for 6 months before a residents questionnaire was delivered to all houses in the zone canvassing views of residents in September 2007. Out of 147 households, 55 responses were received. The results were as follows:

Question Posed	Yarm	Burnside
% who thought the information they received about the zone prior to its introduction was very or fairly clear	89%	92%
% who felt that the number of cold callers they had received since the start of the zone in February 2007 decreased	87%	73%
% who said that the scheme has made them feel safer at home	97%	82%
% who have a door sticker in place	80%	42%
% said that since the start of the scheme they felt better able to avoid becoming a victim of a rogue trader?	95%	82%
% who thought the scheme was worthwhile ?	98%	92%
% who thought there should be an exemption for some organisations from the scheme	15%	42%

## How To Apply

Once an application is received we make an assessment against the criteria above. If the criteria are met, consultation with local residents to gauge the level of support must be undertaken. This can either be carried out by an officer from Trading Standards or by a local residents group.

For further information please contact Frankie Russell at Stockton Trading Standards & Licensing on 01642 526525 or Email [frankie.russell@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:frankie.russell@stockton.gov.uk)