

## SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JULY 2024

### *Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division*



- **ROGUE TRADER PLUMBER ADMITS DEFRAUDING CUSTOMERS**

A rogue Suffolk trader has admitted taking thousands of pounds from customers for work that was never carried out or which was sub-standard. Grant Phillips took a total of £23,511 from eleven customers between April 2021 and October 2023 while operating under three different names. Phillips traded as Superdry Plumbing & Drainage, Rhino Plumb and Plumb Fix, operating around East Anglia before being brought to justice in a prosecution by Suffolk Trading Standards.

At Ipswich Magistrates Court on Monday June 3, he admitted fraudulent trading contrary to Section 9 of the Fraud Act 2006 - trading fraudulently by failing to provide materials for work or not completing projects. Phillips, 44, previously of Bath Road, Felixstowe but now of Bailey Gardens, Brantham, is due to be sentenced next month.

The prosecution was brought by Suffolk Trading Standards after customers complained to the Citizens Advice Helpline and Action Fraud. The victims said payments were made to Phillips for home improvement projects that were not completed or were substandard, requiring expensive remedial work.

He also took money for materials which were not provided, were not as ordered or were not suitable.

The losses ranged from £200 to more than £4,000.

Some victims were elderly and had commissioned home improvement projects to improve accessibility to bathroom facilities in their homes.

Some were not able to afford to complete the project or have the work re-done for a lengthy period and one elderly victim found it difficult to trust another trader in her property.

**Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:**

“This was a complex case with some vulnerable victims who have suffered financial loss and have been caused personal stress because of Phillips’ actions.

These people trusted Phillips and they were let down by him either keeping the money and not doing the work, or by carrying it out poorly.

“It is to their credit that they came forward and reported him so that we were able to take action, which we will do against any individual or business that behaves in this way.”

Mr Crisp advised people to use the Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme when having work done. It is a business partnership scheme where participants have completed a full vetting process and agree to trade fairly under a Code of Practice.

This covers transparent quoting and conducting work, only charging a fair and reasonable price, and dealing with complaints promptly.

For details go to [trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/](https://trustedtrader.team/Suffolk/)

- **COMPANY AND DIRECTOR FOUND GUILTY OF BREACHING FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS**

An Ipswich property management company and its director is found guilty of breaches of fire safety legislation.

An Ipswich property management company and its director has been found guilty of breaches of fire safety legislation. Home from Home Property Management Ltd, and company director Edward Ottley were found guilty at Colchester Magistrates Court of eight offences of non-compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 following a prosecution brought by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

The properties at 2-100 Wolsey Street. Picture: SFRS Home from Home manage the premises at 2-100 Wolsey Street, Ipswich.

The verdict was returned at Colchester on Thursday June 6 following a two-week trial, having been referred there from Ipswich Crown Court. Sentencing is scheduled to take place at Ipswich Crown Court in July.

The court heard that in July 2017 it was identified the premises had aluminium composite material, similar to that found to be the cause of the dramatic fire spread at the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in London the previous month.

A fire risk assessment had been undertaken of the building, but it did not take into account the high fire risk posed to the residents by the cladding. It was established that Home from Home had commissioned a fire risk assessor but had given inaccurate information in connection with the level of risk. When it became apparent, the risk assessor invalidated the fire risk assessment they had produced.

In 2019 officers from SFRS attended the premises and identified that the fire risk assessment had not been reviewed and updated as required by the legislation. Other areas of non-compliance with the legislation were identified, relating to fire safety measures provided to protect the means of escape and allow the residents to exit safely in event of fire.

In August 2021, Home from Home appointed the services of a new fire risk assessor who corroborated the findings of SFRS in respect of the ongoing risk to residents.

The new fire risk assessor has worked to ensure that there is no longer a significant risk to life and Home from Home are working towards the removal of the cladding with government funding support.

A spokesperson for SFRS said: "The actions by Home from Home regarding the existence of the cladding has prolonged the potential risk of harm to residents had a fire occurred.

"This is a clear message to all managing agents that fire safety is important, and as an enforcing authority Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service will not hesitate in prosecuting where lives are placed at risk."

- **RESIDENTS ADVISED - DON'T DO BUSINESS WITH COLD CALLERS**

Suffolk Trading Standards is reminding people to stay alert to the risk of being ripped off by cold callers knocking on their doors. The warning comes after recent incidents of people approaching householders on the doorstep and touting for business. Suffolk Trading Standards advises people to only use businesses registered with the Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme.

Trading Standards urged anyone thinking of having home improvement work done to use a business that has been vetted and approved under the Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme.

Residents can also protect themselves and their neighbours by nominating their area to become a No Cold Calling Zone, of which there are now more than 200 across Suffolk.

**Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards said:**

"These doorstep traders target the vulnerable and are very persuasive, delivering poor, shoddy work then all too often just disappearing, leaving their victims out of pocket.

“We strongly advise householders and companies to use Trusted Trader, it is a scheme where consumers can be confident in the work that is being done and in the businesses carrying it out.

“No Cold Calling Zones make it clear that residents in that zone will not deal with any trader who knocks on their door out of the blue.”

In the last few weeks, Mr Crisp said Trading Standards had been made aware of:

- Kessingland – A trader called at a property offering various home improvement services. The resident was looking to have a conservatory installed which the trader advised that they could do and could provide a quote. The trader returned later in the day and stayed for more than four hours until the resident agreed to have the work carried out and paid a 25% deposit. The consumer has since tried to contact representatives of the company and cannot get any reply.
- Brandon – A consumer contacted a trader who had delivered leaflets in the area to look at a leak in their roof. The trader visited and advised there were two broken tiles which would cost £2,000. Work started the next day and the trader then advised that a new roof was required and quoted £29,900 to remove all roof tiles, felts, batons and repointing and rebuilding chimney, to install new tiles and batons and install a new ridge system. The resident paid £9,000 deposit by cheque. The trader then advised that new beams and insulation would also be required at a further cost of £800. The trader requested two cheques for £13,000 and £8,000 but asked for the payee details to be left blank. Thankfully, the customer’s bank became suspicious and froze the cheques.
- Bury St Edmunds – A doorstep caller persuaded a resident to change their broadband provider after a sales pitch lasting two hours, only leaving after the resident finally caved in just to get rid of them. The resident has now been without a phone and call alarm service for five weeks.
- Hadleigh – A doorstep caller convinced the elderly individual to have foil insulation installed, despite the property being a new-build bungalow. £7,600 was paid. The client’s son later learned of the installation and on investigating found only half the loft space had had the insulation added. He also found old insulation had not been removed and was in perfect condition.

Mr Crisp said there had also been reports of traders going door to door in Barking, near Needham Market, offering driveway work, and in Lowestoft offering window and door installations.

Suffolk Trading Standards launched its first No Cold Calling Zone in 2009 in Ipswich. It now has 219 across the county, with 91% of the residents receiving less or no doorstep visits since the introduction of their zone and 94% of residents saying they feel safer. Anyone wishing to nominate their road should go to the No Cold Calling page on the [Suffolk County Council website](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/trusted-trader). For more details about Suffolk Trusted Trader go to [trustedtrader.team](https://trustedtrader.team)

Anyone contacted by traders on the doorstep should report them to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

- **BLUE BADGE ABUSER PROSECUTED FOR MISUSING BLUE BADGE IN IPSWICH**

Nurul Rahman, of Kelvin Road Ipswich, pleaded guilty on the 17/06/2024 at Ipswich Magistrates to wrongful display of a blue badge contrary to Section 117 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Rahman was fined £153 and ordered to pay £1,000 in investigatory and legal costs, and £61 as a victim surcharge.

On 19/10/2023 a joint blue badge enforcement day was carried out in Ipswich by Suffolk County Council’s Blue Badge Team and Counter Fraud Service; together with Ipswich Borough’s Civil Parking Enforcement Team and Corporate Fraud Team.

During the day, Officers came across Rahman who was parked at King Street, Ipswich displaying a blue badge issued by West Sussex County Council to a Hospice. During the inspection of the badge, Rahman stated to Officers that he worked for the Hospice who also operated in Ipswich and had dropped off a disabled person in town. This appeared unusual to Officers and the County Council’s Fraud Service launched an investigation.

Enquiries found that the Hospice do not operate in Suffolk, had no link to Rahman and only support children. The Hospice was also unaware their Blue Badge was being used in Suffolk.

**Cllr Stephen Burroughes**

*County Councillor for the Framlingham Division*

*Suffolk County Council*