

PRESS RELEASE

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MLA expose scam locksmith operations

An initiative to expose scam locksmith operations from the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) has gained the support of the Trading Standards Institute (TSI).

To counter the lack of industry regulation - which has provided a fertile breeding ground for rogue traders - the MLA's two-pronged initiative includes funding the development of a nationally recognised locksmithing qualification and working to identify and report unscrupulous traders.

The MLA has long been involved in bringing scam locksmiths to justice, with legal action being taken against traders engaging in fraudulent activity. The huge increase in internet-based rogue trading in recent years has prompted Trading Standards to open a dedicated e-crime unit.

Andy Foster, Operations and Policy Director at TSI said: "We are delighted to be working with the MLA to raise consumer and industry awareness of scam locksmith operations and to ensure a joined-up approach in targeting e-crime. MLA's surveillance activity provides valuable intelligence that will help the specialist e-crime trading standards team in their fight against illegal online operations.

"E-crime is one of the greatest consumer threats we face. Online 'scam' operations are growing at an exponential rate and it's essential that we create a robust front against this activity. "

MLA Member Julian Korosec, proprietor of G.K. Locksmiths, Stoke Newington has particular reason to applaud the MLA's action against scam operations. It was only when a member of the public came into the shop to complain about a job his team had not done that he became aware his company's details were used by a rogue trader:

"The traders were operating under the name 'The Lock Shop' but using our address.

When a customer came in to complain about work carried out by the scam operator, we explained that the work had not been done by ourselves. We invited her to explain her experience and reported the incident to the MLA.

“The problem is endemic. Just the other day I checked online and there was yet another rogue locksmith company trading out of our address, with another company in nearby Chingford trading under the name ‘The Lock Shop’. When I called the number provided I was put through to a call centre in India – who were evasive when I asked them for specific details of where the company was actually based.

“It opened up my eyes to a whole world of unregulated trading activity being conducted via the internet. As an MLA member company, we support the MLA’s development of a national qualification and their commitment to improving regulation within the industry.”

Selve Krishnan, of Stoke Newington was on the receiving end of the scam: “I always like to support local businesses where possible so I found ‘The Locksmith Shop’ online and called them out because the address listed was in my area.

“The man who turned up to replace my Chubb and Union locks asked for £8 more than what I had been quoted on the phone, but because I was in a rush I paid him and didn’t immediately check the quality of the work that had been done.

“It was only when he had gone that I noticed that he had replaced the Chubb lock with an inferior model, taking my Chubb lock and keys with him. When I called the number on the bottom of the invoice to complain, the ‘locksmith’ refused to return my original lock and keys and would not accept that he had not replaced like for like.

“I put the phone down and checked the online listing for ‘The Locksmith Shop’ again, as the address on the bottom of the invoice was different. I discovered that not only was the address listed online different to that on the invoice, but there was another company, G.K Locksmiths also listed at that address. I realised that G.K. Locksmiths were being scammed, and that a rogue company was using their address to operate under.

“This infuriated me as I hate the idea of a local business being the victim of a scam, especially in these difficult economic times. I called G.K. Locksmiths to inform them of what

had happened and they confirmed that the locksmith who had come out to change my lock was not one of their staff.

“When I realised I had been scammed I was disappointed that I had been taken advantage of by a company I engaged in good faith, and that a genuine local firm was losing business because of this unscrupulous operation. I was angry that there was no legislation currently in place to prevent unregulated trading within the locksmithing industry.

“I’m delighted to hear that the MLA are developing a national qualification and working with Trading Standards on the issue of scam operators to try and bring greater regulation to the industry.”

Dr Steffan George, Development Director of the MLA commented: “It’s very positive for the MLA to have cemented our relationship with Trading Standards to bring rogue traders to justice. Our development of a nationally recognised locksmithing qualification and apprenticeship is well underway and we look forward to unveiling it in the near future. These two strands of activity will help bring improved surveillance and regulation, enabling the public to have the confidence they deserve in the locksmithing industry.

“It’s also important to be aware that as well as using bogus addresses, some scam sites claim approvals which they simply haven’t got. So if you’re in doubt as to the authenticity of a locksmith website, but they’re claiming to be an MLA member, it’s worth quickly double-checking that the company is listed on the MLA’s site: www.locksmiths.co.uk to be sure they are a bona-fide MLA Approved Company.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Issued on behalf of the Master Locksmiths Association by Karol Marketing Group.

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About the MLA

The Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) was established over 50 years ago to set and promote standards of conduct, practice and materials within locksmithing. The MLA is recognised as the authoritative body for locksmithing by the police, home office and other leading organisations such as the British Standards Institute.

As a not for profit association, the MLA ensure its member companies undergo strict vetting procedures so the public, government and industry receive the appropriate service and advice. MLA members share the ethos that 'skill and integrity' remain paramount in locksmithing and are able to provide sound advice based on knowledge and experience.

A list of approved MLA companies can be found on the MLA website, for further information please visit: www.locksmiths.co.uk