

## Doorstep Issues

22 January 2010

Residents are asked to be aware of the following trader currently operating in Lancashire:

Following several consumer queries, Lancashire Trading Standards Service wishes to warn Lancashire residents that sacks which have been left on people's doorsteps on behalf of Essex-based company **Supporting Arms Ltd** should not be mistaken for the ones usually deposited by charities.

The firm involved in this case is a profit-making concern. We cannot say for certain that no money is ever given to charity, however it is likely that the only people who benefit from the public's generosity in this instance is Supporting Arms Ltd and those employed by or for them.

The company has been handing out bags (usually blue) throughout Lancashire, recently targeting the Preston area, and currently collecting in the Chorley and Eccleston areas. It requests donors to supply it with anything from clothes to household goods which are then apparently sent to Eastern Europe and Africa where people are employed to sort out the goods for sale and distribution. The managing director of the company is Lithuanian but based in Essex.

We do not believe any criminal acts are being committed by the company, but are anxious to ensure that residents do not read more into the wording on the bag than is actually stated. The number on there - 06846572 - is a registered company number and not an indication that Supporting Arms Ltd is a charity or has any charitable status.

Please refer any complaints and further information to Lancashire Trading Standards Service, 55 Guildhall Street, Preston, Lancs via Consumer Direct tel 08454 040506. If there is any threat or fear of burglary contact the police at once on 999.

Warning issued by Dawn Robinson, Lancashire County Council Trading Standards Service, please call 01772 532763 for further information.