



If you are the owner or manager of a public building such as a community hall, school, hotel or church hall, you may get requests from traders who wish to book the hall for one-off sales. Many of these events will be legitimate. Some will not. This sheet is intended to help you decide which bookings to take and which could cause you problems.

The typical problem sale

The trader distributes leaflets locally at the last minute, giving details of unbelievable offers - colour TVs £10, computers £25, tea towels 5p, blank video tapes 10p. Stock is often described as 'bankrupt' or similar. Before the sale starts customers are usually told that none of the colour TVs are left but there are plenty of other bargains. They are charged 50p or £1 to enter -'to cover costs and ensure that only serious buyers attend', then the doors are shut (occasionally locked).

Small free gifts are given away. This is illegal, so a token effort to collect pennies is made. Nobody is allowed to buy the 'lots' until the salesperson says so. Cheap items are sold to people 'planted' in the crowd. Bidding on items is restricted to people who have bought earlier in the sale. People pay £10, £20 or £50 for empty boxes, as nobody wants to lose out. Credit cards are accepted, and many customers spend hundreds on things they don't want.

This is a Mock Auction - a criminal offence. Traders may make thousands of pounds in one evening by preying on the vulnerability of consumers to hysteria selling.

Don't allow your premises to be used for mock auctions!

What you can do?

- **Have a system**

Make sure that everyone who might take bookings has seen this sheet and knows what to look out for and what questions to ask. Ensure that a written record is kept of all requests to book your premises.

- **Ring them back**

If the request is by phone, ask for a number and call back. This will establish whether or not they exist as a company at that number, provided it is not a mobile number. Keep the number handy.

What you can do? (continued)

- **Ask questions**

Use the checklist overleaf as a reminder of what to ask -particularly for copies of any leaflets and adverts, and for the locations of previous sales. If you feel suspicious politely refuse the booking. You don't have to give a reason. The last thing you want is a flood of complaints to YOU after the sale, and the resulting damage to YOUR reputation.

- **Share the information**

If you turn a trader down they will probably try somewhere else. Warn other local organisations. Call us at Trading Standards with all the details. We can't tell you whether a particular trader is legitimate as some change their ways and others have learned how to keep just within the law. However, we can help you spot the danger signs.

- **Let them know you're wise**

Tell traders you know about consumer law and reserve the right to attend yourself, and that you will notify Trading Standards of the sale.

This is a brief guide to help prevent you allowing unlawful one-day sales to be staged in your premises. For further details or clarification please contact the Trading Standards Service.



Contacting us

email trading.standards@nottscc.gov.uk
phone **01623 452005**
fax **01623 452059**
post Trading Standards Service, County House,
100 Chesterfield Road South,
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 7AQ
internet www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk

This information can be made available
in other languages and formats.

For further information please contact

0115 977 2021.

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Booking one-day sales

Photocopy this page and make copies available to all staff who may take bookings.

CONSUMER PROTECTION CHECKLIST

	Tick
<i>Will you provide us with copies of all leaflets and advertisements which will be used?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you give us the name and address of two other locations where sales have been held?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will everything you sell be price-marked in advance so that customers can see how much they are paying?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you put up a clear notice with your name and address, and include the same information in promotional material?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you honour all consumer rights, including giving refunds for faulty goods?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you comply with the Mock Auctions Act by not giving free gifts, restricting bids or reducing prices in competitive bidding?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you allow people to buy what they want, when they want to?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you only advertise in the press and in leaflets those goods you will actually have available for sale?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you allow anyone who wishes to leave the sale to do so whenever they wish?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you co-operate with Trading Standards enforcement officers should they attend the sale and intervene?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you deal promptly and properly with any consumer complaints made after the sale, whether notified direct or via us?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Will you guarantee that goods are accurately described in terms of their source, appearance and price?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any negative or fudged answers should raise suspicions. You may wish to extend this idea by drawing up a formal contract, requiring all traders who book your premises to complete it. If you do make a contract it may be advisable to take the hire fee in advance and perhaps a returnable damages deposit.

Remember this is about fair trading. By refusing to allow rogue traders access to your premises, you'll be helping protect the community and local business from unfair competition.