

Free burglar alarm scam could cost thousands

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Monmouthshire residents are being warned by the council's trading standards service about a current scam offering a free burglar alarm or one for as little as one pound.

Once people sign for the alarm and its installation they are hit with costs of thousands of pounds for its upkeep.

Often companies claim that they are working with the police or on behalf of the government. A salesperson will typically cold call by telephone, keen to make an appointment for a home visit the same day to discuss the installation of a free or cheap alarm. The companies are reported to use high-pressure tactics to scaremonger residents about rising crime levels in the area.

What they fail to mention are the fees that residents will have to pay for the monitoring, upkeep and rapid response facilities, which can add up to thousands of pounds. Some have found themselves tied into a six year contract agreement costing up to £6,000.

Consumers who sign on the dotted line will have a seven day cooling off period during which they can change their minds because they are doing so away from trade premises – but if the consumer agrees in writing for installation to take place within this period they waive this consumer right.

County Councillor Phillip Murphy said: "I would urge anyone who is offered free or cheap goods such as these burglar alarms to really seriously consider whether the offer is genuine and to remember the mantra, any deal that seems too good to be true probably is".

Talk to family, friends or neighbours if you are unsure or worried, or contact Consumer Direct, who will be able to advise you and refer the case to the relevant trading standards department where appropriate.

Contact Consumer Direct for help and advice by calling 08454 040506 or visit www.consumerdirect.gov.uk.