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## Brighton Residents Lose Almost £1,000 Each Year to Rogue Traders

Homeowners in Brighton are increasingly falling prey to rogue traders, wasting nearly £1k on average fixing botched home improvement works, the annual survey by Checkatrade.com has revealed.

The **£966** lost by unsuspecting Brightonians is a whopping **£242** more than the national average and the **third highest loss** in the country.

Kevin Byrne CEO of Checkatrade.com, which provides access to qualified and vetted tradespeople, commented: "It is horrifying to see Brighton residents being conned out of such a large chunk of money.

"Taking the time to check up on a tradesperson before hiring one is essential. Verify their credentials and ask for two or three references. Reputable traders will not mind you doing this. If they are evasive or refuse to provide you with information then beware, you run the risk of falling victim to a cowboy."

More than **60%** of homeowners in Brighton have fallen victim to a rogue trader, compared with just a **third** of respondents in the South East from last year's Checkatrade.com survey. Such a rise in rogue trader activity is a warning for those looking to fix up their properties to sell as house prices in the South East continue to soar (ONS 2013).

**Nearly two thirds** of respondents experiencing a poor service complained directly to the tradesperson but just a fraction of these saw the tradesperson return to rectify the work. The survey also revealed that **almost 12%** of Brightonians **took no action** following their ordeal, more than the average for the entire South East. When asked why, **two out of three** respondents said they didn't think their complaint would make any difference.

Checkatrade.com's survey also reveals:

- Compared to other UK regions, people in the South East were **least likely** to complain to the police about a poor service.
- Nearly **31%** of the Brighton's homeowners falling victim to a rogue trader said the experience put stress on their relationship, while **over 20%** blamed the ordeal for causing family arguments, more than in any other city in the UK.
- A **third** of South East residents think that tradespeople should be legally required to show ID.
- Less than **5%** of level headed Brightonians would be suspicious of a quote which appeared too good to be true.

**Methodology:**

Fieldwork: Censuswide

Sample: 1308 homeowners

Survey period: September 2013

**Checkatrade.com:**

Checkatrade, which recently expanded into Birmingham, Bristol, Oxford, Suffolk and the North East, helps combat the UK's rogue trader problem by continuously vetting and monitoring local tradespeople. These include builders, plumbers and electricians as well as service providers. The idea was born in 1998 after a tornado hit the small West Sussex town of Selsey. Traders poured in from across the country. Unfortunately, some ripped off the inhabitants of the town. Local businessman, Kevin Byrne, realised there was nowhere to check out the traders' credentials and the company that became Checkatrade was formed.

Since then, Checkatrade has grown to employ **110 staff** with a turnover in excess of **£7.5m**. It includes over **11,000** genuine trade members, growing by an average of **300** new members every month. Over the past 12 months, Checkatrade-certified tradesmen carried out a combined total of **£1.4b** worth of work, with complaints at just **one in 215**, compared to the national average of one in four.

**Linda Barker**, one of the UK's best-known interior designers and famous for shows such as **60 Minute Makeover** and the BBC's **Changing Rooms** recently teamed up with Checkatrade.com. She said: "Checkatrade.com is by far the best service I've found to help keep the good guys in business and keep the cowboys out. The website is updated constantly and allows everyone to share recommendations and warnings."