

Regulatory Committee

10.00am, Monday, 7 August 2023

No Cold Calling Zones in Edinburgh

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Regulatory Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the ongoing preventative benefits of No Cold Calling Zones ('NCCZs') operating across Edinburgh; and
 - 1.1.2 Supports the creation of further NCCZs where residents or Community Councils raise issues related to cold callers or doorstep crime.

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Report

No Cold Calling Zones in Edinburgh

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of No Cold Calling Zones (NCCZs) in Edinburgh. NCCZs help to empower and protect residents from doorstep crime, and can be formed when the majority of residents in a proposed area indicate their support for the proposal. After a NCCZ is established, no businesses should cold call within the zone for commercial purposes.

3. Background

- 3.1 No Cold Calling Zones (NCCZs) are designated areas of the city in which a majority of residents have indicated that they do not wish to have uninvited cold callers for commercial purposes. NCCZs are set up by the Trading Standards team, usually in cooperation with Police Scotland.
- 3.2 In 2006 the outcome of a [NCCZ pilot](#) was positive and was then extended to cover other areas of the city. NCCZs have now been established throughout the city - some consisting of single streets, and others covering multiple streets within a neighbourhood or local area.
- 3.3 The number of zones has continued to grow and there are currently 135 zones in Edinburgh.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Uninvited in person visits ('cold calling') are often linked to 'doorstep crime'. This phrase covers a variety of Consumer Protection offences which are enforced by Trading Standards, but also extends to other common law offences within the remit of Police Scotland, such as fraud and distraction burglary.
- 4.2 A zone is formed when a majority of residents indicate that they wish to designate their local area to be a NCCZ. This generally involves appointing a resident as a Zone Champion to act as a contact point and distributing

questionnaires to residents of the proposed zone. Trading Standards, often accompanied by Police Scotland, can also assist with questionnaire distribution to residents.

- 4.3 NCCZ residents are provided with a 'No Cold Callers' sticker for their doors, and the zones are designated using lamppost signs. Supplementary pavement stencils (using temporary paint) are used to reinforce the signs where feedback indicates that traders have unwittingly found themselves within a NCCZ.
- 4.4 NCCZs can also be proactively proposed by the Trading Standards team or Police Scotland in response to a particular doorstep crime event, or an identified area which is receiving a high level of crime reports which are believed to be related to cold callers/doorstep crime.

Current and Proposed NCCZs

- 4.5 A list of the current NCCZs can be [viewed](#) on the Council website. A further two are in the the process of being formed, having been proposed by Trading Standards in response to a number of complaints.
- 4.6 Guidance documents with details of NCCZs, an interactive map showing where the zones are located, and how residents can apply to form a new NCCZ can also be [viewed](#) on the Council website.
- 4.7 Due to the nature of complaint recording by the agencies involved, it is impossible to statistically attribute a fall in doorstep crime to the formation of a NCCZ.

Feedback

- 4.8 Feedback is gathered periodically once zones have been established for over a full calendar year, to ensure that it is seasonally representative.
- 4.9 Resident feedback is very positive. The results of the last feedback exercise in 2017 indicates that the level of cold callers has reduced within NCCZ areas, and residents feel more confident in refusing any traders who do call within a NCCZ, with 167 residents confirming:

Cold calling had fallen	99%
NCCZ stickers and signage had helped	81%
Residents felt more confident refusing any cold caller	89%
Zone was successful	100%

- 4.10 Informal feedback collected during 2021 from the Champion for Swanston NCCZ (a large zone set up in 2019) suggested that cold calling had definitely decreased, and that the zone has been successful.

- 4.11 Some NCCZs have been in place for many years and a small number no longer have a contact point. Moreover, the resource requirements to complete a full feedback exercise on all 135 established NCCZs would be significant.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Trading Standards will continue to support the formation of NCCZs in response to resident requests, or where intelligence indicates that this may be necessary due to elevated levels of doorstep crime and cold calling.
- 5.2 Recognising the challenges in carrying out a full feedback exercise with all of the NCCZs, during summer a smaller exercise is scheduled for a representative sample of established NCCZs.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of manufacture and mounting of NCCZ signs has significantly increased since 2019. Mitigations or alternatives are being sought where possible to offset this cost.
- 6.2 Officer costs have to be contained within existing budgets and vary depending on the size of the proposed NCCZ. This can be a limiting factor when considering increasing the number of NCCZs as, due to the amount of time and effort required to successfully establish a NCCZ, the required resources can be significant.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The implementation of NCCZs forms part of the Trading Standards team's strategy to reduce financial harms. Victim profiling [indicates](#) that those most vulnerable to doorstep crime are often elderly and live alone. Furthermore, Age UK [confirm](#) that victims are 2.5 times more likely to require residential care or to have died within a year of an incident.
- 7.2 Residents in a proposed NCCZ are consulted by questionnaire as to whether they would like to progress, generally administered by a local 'Zone Champion' supported by Trading Standards and Police Scotland.
- 7.3 Residents within NCCZ indicate a positive impact. The Trading Standards team will continue to support local communities to set up further NCCZ where residents think that this would be beneficial.
- 7.4 The preventative benefit of one NCCZ is estimated using an assumption that each zone will prevent one Doorstep Crime incident per year (at an estimated

cost of £2,952). This is the most conservative estimate of scams detriment calculated by the National Trading Standards Scams Team.

- 7.5 The preventative value of NCCZ per year in the city is therefore estimated at £398,520.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [No Cold Calling Zone Edinburgh webpage](#) including maps, street names etc.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.