

# Bogus workman jailed for three years



A man who defrauded an elderly victim out of almost £150,000 has been convicted and jailed for three years.

At Edinburgh Sheriff Court yesterday, Robert Stewart (21) was found guilty of bogus workmen offences committed at a property in Priestfield Road last year.

In December, Stewart attended at the home of an 87-year-old man and offered to repair a television antenna.

Stewart then advised the homeowner that extensive work was required on the roof, which his company Abbey Building & Roofing could carry out.

The man agreed to the maintenance and between late December 2015 and March 2016 made several online payments to the building company totalling £147,460.

Staff at the victim's bank contacted police after becoming suspicious and officers began investigating during which time they arranged for two independent surveys on the Priestfield Road house.

It was established that the work carried out was inferior and valued at far less than the fee charged.

Detectives carried out financial inquiries and linked the payments to an account held by Robert Stewart. He was detained and subsequently charged on 14th April this year.

Detective Sergeant Gary Reid said: "Robert Stewart preyed on an elderly man and was able to extort a large sum of money for work that was sub-par and nowhere near the valuation of such

repairs.

“After bank staff observed a pattern in the victim’s payments they became suspicious and reported their concerns to police. We then launched a robust investigation alongside the City of Edinburgh Council’s Trading Standards department resulting in Stewart being charged with bogus workmen offences.

“His sentence should send a clear message that we will continue to work closely with our partners to actively pursue those involved in crimes of this nature to bring them to justice.

“I would like to take this opportunity to remind our communities never to allow unsolicited work to be carried out on your home or property and to always use individuals or companies you know or trust.

“In addition, family, friends and neighbours of vulnerable people are asked to be vigilant for any suspicious or unusual activity around their homes and report any concerns they have to police.

“We are committed to tackling bogus workmen and rogue trader crimes and whenever these incidents are reported to us we will investigate thoroughly to bring those responsible to justice.”

Community Safety Leader Councillor Cammy Day said: “This court case should send a warning to those who are involved in this type of criminal behaviour. Doorstep Crime remains one of our top priorities and incidents can be devastating for victims, both financially and in terms of having the confidence to live independently.

“We must ensure that everyone has the confidence to come forward – every complaint is taken seriously. Consumers must be able to trust what they are told by tradesmen, and we advise the public to use Edinburgh’s Trusted Trader scheme if they need any work carried out. You can report incidents or

ask for advice by calling 0131 529 3030”