

# Cold-call car blues

Next time you want to sell your car, be wary of enticing offers from cold callers



Sara Bewes was told there were buyers for her car but no one called

**D**esperate to sell your car? If you are, be careful you don't have the same experience as Sara Bewes. Sara came to Which? after a company cold-called, offering to help sell her Peugeot 106.

Premier Search UK called her after seeing her advert in *Exchange & Mart*. It told Sara there were several buyers interested and it could put her ad on several websites if she paid £79.99, so she took up the offer.

## No buyers later

After a week she had heard nothing from any buyers. Attempts to call Premier Search were unsuccessful. After around three weeks, Sara finally got through and was promised an upgrade, but after another week without any contact from buyers, she called for a refund. Sara was sent a letter stating that the company's terms and conditions meant it did not 'give refunds'.

Sara told us: 'I found its customer service appalling. The phones just rang and rang, when anyone answered, they just said "hello" in an uninterested voice.'

We approached Premier Search UK and asked about Sara's experience. Director Ketan Tailor told us the company offered an alternative avenue for sellers to advertise, but 'cannot guarantee a response'.

Mr Tailor added: 'If she thinks she is

definitely going to get calls, there has been a misunderstanding.'

He said that in the light of this, Premier-Search would send Sara a refund, less a £15 admin fee, plus hotel vouchers.

## Our investigation

So, was Sara's case bad luck or are there other companies whose customers have had similar experiences? We did our own investigation and found at least two more.

We placed an advert in *Exchange & Mart* (£40) and one in a number of local Hertfordshire newspapers (£67) offering a Peugeot 106 for sale. We were contacted by Cardata, Motor Help UK and Vehicle Seller and paid £80 to £90 each for the service. Cardata came up with three prospective buyers, as did our newspaper adverts. But Motor Help UK and Vehicle Sellers produced no potential buyers – a poor return on our money. This is even though Vehicle Seller told us: 'We have buyers today'; and Motor Help UK said it was illegal to sell to us if it didn't have anyone interested.

When we suggested to Motor Help that we could lower the car's price to get more interest, they dissuaded us and said they had buyers. We had a similar experience to Sara's when we told these two companies

we weren't impressed with their service. David Matthews of Motor Help UK said it didn't guarantee it would sell your car: 'All we do is market your details. We don't follow up with buyers or put pressure on them.'

## Further enquiries

Leicestershire Trading Standards Service (TSS) also carried out its own separate investigation into an undisclosed canvasser following complaints. Its officers paid £80 for a website advert and had no calls from buyers and failed to get through to customer services. TSS told us there was little it could do for any disgruntled customers now, but it thought that selling methods of the canvasser they were investigating were on the borderline of the law. Keith Regan of Leicestershire TSS said: 'Sellers should treat these unsolicited offers with caution.'

If you are tempted to use a cold-calling company, check the terms and conditions. While you may have luck with some, it's most likely that they will make few guarantees. Find out where the company advertises and decide whether you are likely to get any more success here than with better-known advertisers.

**'Sellers should treat these unsolicited calls with caution'**

## WHICH? SAYS

### If companies claim they have buyers...

It's not an offence for these companies to fail to sell your car, but saying they have buyers, if they don't, may be going too far. The advice from Which? Legal Service ([www.whichlegalservice.co.uk](http://www.whichlegalservice.co.uk)) is that if a company tells you it has buyers waiting to buy your car when it doesn't, you could have a claim for misrepresentation. In this

case, you could ask for your money back and consider taking a small claim against them if they refuse. From next April, companies could fall foul of the new Unfair Practices Directive, which deems it an offence to make false claims that lead to a customer paying. Consider putting 'no cold callers' on your advert as a deterrent.