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## BRITISH HALLMARKING COUNCIL

Established by Parliament to oversee hallmarking in the UK

### Press release

**4 December 2019**

#### **What to do if you see someone breaking hallmarking law**

A real frustration for jewellers who make sure they comply with hallmarking law is seeing instances of others flouting the law and apparently getting away with it, selling items without a valid UK hallmark.

The hallmark is a vital form of consumer protection because you can't judge the composition of a metal item just by sight or touch. Consumers need to know that what they are buying is the real thing, and that it is worth what they are paying for it. The hallmark provides that assurance.

The fact that many sellers don't comply with hallmarking law is a recurring theme in queries raised with the BHC, and also at the NAJ, and is a particular concern in the festive season when consumers are looking for that special gift.

We are hearing of this happening with sellers in shops, at craft fairs and also online. Recent press coverage of the survey by the WRi on behalf of the BHC and The Goldsmiths' Company revealed the possible likely extent of online sellers flouting the law: a third of "gold" jewellery sold online is suspected to be fake. The BHC has received reports of items listed as Vermeil without saying that the item is plated; items listed online as 14k but with no legal UK hallmark, and sellers failing to display the Dealer's Notice. Amongst current Christmas promotions there are instances of items described as gold in the main listing, but the small print shows that the item is in fact gold plated.

If you see breaches of this kind, the route for reporting them is via Citizens Advice, even if you are a business. The link is on the British Hallmarking Council website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hallmarking-in-the-uk-consumer-protection#get-help> Trading Standards departments are also happy to help but in the first instance the referral route is via the consumer helpline.

- ENDS -

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

- Sue Green, Secretary, British Hallmarking Council Secretariat  
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#### **ABOUT THE BRITISH HALLMARKING COUNCIL**

*The BHC supervises the hallmarking activities of assay offices to ensure there is adequate provision of hallmarking in the UK. The BHC is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).*

*The BHC aims to protect consumers by:*

- *Ensuring the adequacy of hallmarking facilities in the UK*
- *Supervising the working of UK assay offices and their sub-offices, including offshore sub-offices*
- *Applying and keeping under review the system for applications for and monitoring of sub-offices*
- *Overseeing proportionate, risk-based regulations*
- *Overseeing relationships with and between assay offices, trade, consumers, trading standards and government concerning the market in precious metals.*