

MRS Launches Hotline to Combat Practice Which Breaks Their Code of Conduct

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The Market Research Society (MRS) has launched a hotline to combat the practice of selling under the guise of research known as ‘sugging’, and fundraising under the guise of market research, referred to as ‘frugging’. The hotline enables organisations and members of the public to report unsolicited calls which contravene MRS Code of Conduct.

As the UK regulator and professional body for the market research sector, MRS is actively trying to address the growing prevalence of traders and organisations using the guise of research as a means of generating sales or fundraising. A study by regulator Ofcom into nuisance calls revealed that consumers who experienced unwanted calls received around two per week on average.

Typically these unethical calls are labelled as ‘lifestyle surveys’ and used to lead respondents into the mistaken belief that the survey is genuine market research. The respondent is unaware of the reason that his or her information is being used and how it will be stored and shared. Often these ‘surveys’ are conducted by a commercial third party to generate sales leads, or even sold on to a further commercial third party to exploit.

By launching a sugging hotline, tel: 0800 975 9955 or email sugging@mrs.org.uk, MRS provides the opportunity to report suspicious calls to be formally investigated. If a call is found to be in breach of the MRS Code of Conduct, the individual or organisation can be referred to the Information Commissioners Office or Police as appropriate.

Jane Frost CBE, chief executive officer of MRS said:

‘The sugging hotline is designed to help members of the public and organisations report suspicious calls. We understand that it can be difficult to distinguish between genuine research and a sugging or frugging call. Members of the public can feel confused, frustrated and even threatened by unsolicited calls. The practice of sugging also undermines the value of true research which is an essential tool for the development of evidence-based policy and decision making.’