

## **Scams advice during coronavirus outbreak**

(We) are writing to you with regards to the coronavirus and how you can access support and safeguard yourself against scams.

(We) hope that you are well. As a reminder, we would like to re-iterate the government and NHS guidelines about protecting yourself and others. You should: maintain good hygiene, only go outside for food, health reasons or essential work, and stay two metres away from other people outside of your household.

It is particularly important for people who are over 70 and/or have an underlying health condition.

You can check the government ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) and NHS ([www.NHS.uk](http://www.NHS.uk)) websites for the most up to date information.

Things such as Facebook Community Groups, WhatsApp Groups and the Nextdoor social network that send neighborhood alerts can be great ways of staying in touch with those around you, however it can be difficult to know who to trust. These are all online and not everyone has access to the internet.

Please be aware that not everyone out there is trustworthy and some people will take advantage of this unusual situation our society is facing.

**Here are just some of the scams we are aware of, but please note that criminals come in all shapes and sizes and can contact you at the door, by phone, post or online:**

- Be aware of people offering miracle cures or vaccines for coronavirus – there is currently no cure or vaccine for coronavirus (COVID-19). Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms until you recover.
- Home decontamination services.
- People impersonating healthcare workers, claiming to be offering ‘home-testing’ for coronavirus.
- Emails saying that you can get a refund on taxes, utilities or similar are usually bogus and they are just after your personal and financial details.
- There are lots of fake products available to buy online that say they can protect you from coronavirus. Follow the government advice on protecting yourself and ensure any protective products (such as hand sanitizer) are purchased from genuine companies.
- There are new mobile phone applications that claim to give you updates on the virus but instead, they lock your phone and demand a ransom.
- Your bank or the police will never ask for your bank details over the phone.
- People offering to do your shopping or collecting medication and asking for money upfront and then disappearing.
- Impersonation of officials, including HMRC and government agencies.
- Subscription and streaming service emails prompting account updates or requesting personal details.
- Social media quizzes and games that ask for personal information (i.e. your mother’s maiden name).

### **Tips to avoid being scammed:**

- Take your time; don't be rushed.
- If someone claims to represent a charity, ask them for ID. Be suspicious of requests for money up front.
- Don't assume everyone is genuine. It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you. Check with family and friends before accepting offers of help if you are unsure.
- If you are online, be aware of fake news and use trusted sources such as [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or [www.NHS.uk](http://www.NHS.uk) websites. Make sure you type the addresses in and don't click on links in emails or messages.
- Only purchase goods from legitimate retailers and take a moment to think before parting with money or personal information.
- Know who you're dealing with - if you need help, talk to someone you trust
- Protect your financial information, especially from people you don't know. Never give your bank card or PIN to a stranger.
- Be suspicious of requests for updating your account details. If someone pressures you, they are unlikely to be genuine.
- Be aware of the amount of personal information you share on social media; not all quizzes are harmless.

### **Contact information:**

- If you think you've been scammed, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040
- If you need advice, call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133.
- If you are in immediate danger, contact the police on 999.
- Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed.

To learn more about different types of scams and how to protect yourself and others, visit [www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk](http://www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk) and complete the free online training.

Why not become a Scam Marshal? A Scam Marshal is any resident in the UK who has been targeted by a scam and now wants to fight back and take a stand against scams. Scam Marshals do this by sharing their own experiences, helping others to report and recognise scams and sending any scam mail that they receive to the National Trading Standards Scams Team so that it can be utilised as evidence in future investigative and enforcement work. Visit [www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/ScamMarshals](http://www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/ScamMarshals) for more information and to sign up.