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COVID 19 SCAMS





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AWARENESS RAISING



- Unscrupulous criminals are exploiting fears about COVID-19 to prey on members of the public, particularly older and vulnerable people who are isolated from family and friends. National Trading Standards is warning people to remain vigilant following a rise in coronavirus-related scams that seek to benefit from the public's concern and uncertainty over COVID-19.
- Members of the public should ignore scam products such as supplements and anti-virus kits that falsely claim to cure or prevent COVID-19. In some cases individuals may be pressurised on their own doorsteps to buy anti-virus kits or persuaded into purchasing products that are advertised on their social media feeds. In addition, some call centres that previously targeted UK consumers with dubious health products are now offering supplements that supposedly prevent COVID-19.



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COVID-19 SCAMS IDENTIFIED INCLUDE: DOORSTEP CRIME

- Criminals targeting older people on their doorstep and offering to do their shopping. Thieves take the money and do not return.
- Doorstep cleansing services that offer to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus.



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ONLINE SCAMS



- Email scams that trick people into opening malicious attachments, which put people at risk of identity theft with personal information, passwords, contacts and bank details at risk. Some of these emails have lured people to click on attachments by offering information about people in the local area who are affected by coronavirus.
- Fake online resources – such as false Coronavirus Maps – that deliver malware such as AZORult Trojan, an information stealing program which can infiltrate a variety of sensitive data. A prominent example that has deployed malware is 'corona-virus-map[dot]com'.



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REFUND SCAMS & COUNTERFEIT GOODS



- Companies offering fake holiday refunds for individuals who have been forced to cancel their trips. People seeking refunds should also be wary of fake websites set up to claim holiday refunds.
- Fake sanitisers, face masks and Covid19 swabbing kits sold online and door-to-door. These products can often be dangerous and unsafe. There are reports of some potentially harmful hand sanitiser containing glutaral (or glutaraldehyde), which was banned for human use in 2014.



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Telephone scams, Donation scams & Loan sharks



- As more people self-isolate at home there is an increasing risk that telephone scams will also rise, including criminals claiming to be your bank, mortgage lender or utility company.
- There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.
- Illegal money lenders are expected to prey on people's financial hardship, lending money before charging extortionate interest rates and fees through threats and violence.



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How to stay safe on Dating websites and Apps



- Scammers may take several months to build a relationship and can even pretend to book travel to visit you, but they never actually arrive.
- Once they have gained your trust and your defences are down, they will ask you, either subtly or directly, for money, gifts, or your banking or credit card details.
- Often, scammers will pretend that they need the money for some sort of personal emergency or insist they need the money to travel to visit you.
- Asking for money before they've met you is sign of a romance scammer and should set alarm bells ringing
- Visit the following link for more information:
- https://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-protect-yourself-on-dating-websites?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9IDehrTA7AIVitd3Ch1PyQb9EAAYAiAAEgLjePD_BwE



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CONTACT



If you think you have been scammed, contact your bank first. For advice on scams, call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 11 33. To report a scam, call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

To learn more about different types of scams, visit:

www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk

