

Trading Standards Scams News

A round-up of the latest scams alerts



Spring 2024

Welcome....

to the latest edition of the Leicestershire Trading Standards Service scams newsletter. Here you will find details of the latest scams and information about how to protect yourself and report a scam.

Stop! Think Fraud Campaign

Fraud accounts for around 40% of all crime in England and Wales, with an estimated 3.2 million offences each year. The cost of fraud to society is approximately £6.8 billion in England and Wales. The UK Government has launched a National Campaign Against Fraud, called Stop! Think Fraud. Essentially, fraudsters aren't fussy, they'll pick on anyone and will use a wide range of methods to steal your money, or obtain personal information, for their own financial gain.

Fraudsters are becoming more sophisticated in their approach and fraud is becoming less easy to spot, so it is important to understand how you can protect yourself.

Be wary if anyone:

- asks you to share a one-time-passcode
- asks for your PIN or password in full
- asks for payment before sending a prize or lost delivery
- asks for a direct transfer of cash or cryptocurrency
- asks you to move away from an official payment site to make a direct payment
- asks for money before you've met in person (typical of romance scams) or checked with your loved one directly to make sure it's actually them asking for money
- asks you to click on suspicious links.

For further information about the campaign, you can go to <https://stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk/>



Postal Scams

Postal scams are letters that contain fake claims or offers that are designed to cheat you out of your money. They will typically offer something that sounds attractive but doesn't really exist. Don't be fooled by a letter that addresses you personally as scammers can obtain your details fraudulently or from junk mailing lists. It can be difficult to spot the difference between scam mail, junk mail and offers from legitimate companies, and it's important to note there is a difference between scam mail and legitimate mail sent by companies to advertise lawful services or the sale of genuine goods or services. Letters impersonating lotteries or offering large prizes are typical of postal scams.

There are many different types of scam mail, such as:

- fake lotteries and prize draws
- bogus health cures
- investment scams and pyramid selling
- psychics and clairvoyants
- unclaimed inheritance.

You will often be asked to pay an upfront administration fee (or call a premium phone number) to 'receive' what's on offer, so always look out for the catch; this type of scam is called advance-fee fraud. Two of the most common scams of this type are non-existent competitions and fake foreign lotteries.

Before responding you should always consider whether what's on offer seems too good to be true. If it does, then it's likely to be a scam.

TAKE A STAND AGAINST MAIL SCAMS

Send £25 to claim your prize
LOTTO WINNER
YOU ARE A £250,000 WINNER
Limited Time Offer Confirm your details

Everyday thousands of people become a victim of mail scams. Don't believe the false promises and protect yourself.

Top 5 Tips To Take A Stand Against Mail Scams

1. Never send money to a company in order to claim a prize or winnings.
2. Watch out for letters with too good to be true offers, it's probably a scam.
3. Don't disclose personal information to people or companies you do not know.
4. If you get a lot of mail get a trusted friend or family member to help you sort through it.
5. If you think the letter is a scam report it and shred it.

Remember if you're not sure, get advice and always report a scam

For advice on scams call
Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline: **0808 223 1133**
To report scams contact
Action Fraud: **0300 123 2040**

Friends Against SCAMS
www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS
Scams Team

How to spot a postal scam

If you can tick off one or more of the following, it's probably a scam and you should be suspicious:

- Bad spelling or grammar in a letter claiming to represent an organisation or company.
- Unsolicited requests - if you don't recall ever signing up to the company or sharing details with them, you should be suspicious.
- You are being asked for money or to send personal information.
- You're asked to pay up front to receive what's on offer – processing or handling fees can be a ploy.
- A sense of urgency, such as 'reply within seven days' or 'before the deadline'.

There are also certain letter styles that are often used in competition or lottery scam mail.

Look out for letters that includes the following:

- coats of arms
- seals
- serial numbers
- barcodes
- watermarks
- reproduced signatures
- rubber stamps

A letter containing these and promising you've won a prize draw or lottery you've never entered should ring alarm bells and you should never reply.

What should I do if I receive a postal scam?

If you've received a postal scam, there's support available:

- [Royal Mail](#): Contact Royal Mail if you think you've received scam mail and send it to them with a covering letter.
- [Citizens Advice consumer service](#): Contact them by phone or online if you've received a postal scam.
- [Action Fraud](#): If you'd like more information about scams, or would like to report a scam, contact Action Fraud.
- Sign up to become a [Scam Marshal](#) with the National Trading Standards Team to help tackle this problem (see article below)

Could You Be a Scam Marshal?

What is a Scam Marshal?

A Scam Marshal is any resident in the UK who receives postal scam mail but wants to put it to good use. Scam Marshals collect scam mail and sends it to the National Trading Standards Scams Team.

- Are you, or someone you know, inundated with postal scam mail?
- Are you tempted to respond to it?
- Do you want to help track down the criminals behind scams and help put a stop to their activities?

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above, then why not become a Scam Marshal?

Becoming a Scam Marshal can be very rewarding and fulfilling work. You can:

- Save money by no longer responding to this type of scam
- Take control of your situation
- Improve self-confidence
- Reduce clutter in the home
- Assist with investigations

The poster is titled 'Friends Against Scams' at the top left and 'NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS Scams Team' at the top right. It features a central illustration of a diverse group of people, with a yellow shield in the center that says 'Friends Against Scams SCAM MARSHAL'. Below the illustration, the text reads: 'ARE YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW INUNDATED WITH SCAM MAIL? Become a Scam Marshal today!'. At the bottom, there is a phone icon with the number '01323 463917', an email icon with the address 'FriendsAgainstScams@surreycc.gov.uk', and social media icons for Facebook (@FriendsAgainst), Twitter (@AgainstScams), and YouTube (Friends Against Scams). The website 'www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk' is listed at the very bottom.

- Reduce the temptation to respond
- Increase awareness of scams
- Educate and help others
- See a reduction in scam mail

All Scam Marshals receive a certificate confirming their status. They receive a monthly newsletter in the post that includes enforcement updates, and sometimes special requests from investigators.

Each month one Scam Marshal will have a spotlight feature as a 'Scam Marshal of the Month' and have the chance to share their story.

Scam Marshals also have access to the Scam Marshal pen pal scheme where they can befriend other Scam Marshals.

If you would like to become a Scam Marshal, please contact the Scams Unit, on the contact details on the poster above.

Coffee Mornings

Our Trading Standards Scams Officer attended the Armed Forces Wellbeing Coffee Morning at [Blaby District](#) council offices. She helped raise awareness and provide advice and information around scams and doorstep crime. A very well attended session, and it was a pleasure to work with staff and volunteers who run this group.



We also attended a coffee morning at Newbold Verdon Baptist Church Hub, where we met local residents and offered lots of advice on avoiding scams.

If you would like Trading Standards to attend your event to provide awareness of fraud, scams and doorstep crime, you can email:

tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk

SAY NO TO DOORSTEP CRIME.

Are you a target?

Criminals won't approach your home if you make it clear that they are not welcome.

- Doorstep cameras and video doorbells have been proven to put off rogue traders
- You can create your own 'No Cold Calling' signs, request one from your local authority trading standards team, or downloaded from:

www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/NCC

**If you're not sure,
don't open the door!**



To report a scam, contact:
Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040

For advice on scams, contact:
Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**
Scams Team

Get more advice at: Citizensadvice.org.uk/getting-home-improvements

No Blame No Shame

The National Trading Standards Scams Team are proud to launch their 'No Blame. No Shame.' campaign. The shame that victims can feel, combined with the worry of not being supported if they come forward, prevents so many from reporting scams. Talking about fraud, scams and financial abuse will reduce the stigma, helping victims to feel supported and able to report it.

Let's change the approach to victims of fraud, scams, and financial abuse. Here's how you can help:

Change the language you use to describe victims. No Blame. No Shame.

Take Action! Talk to your friends and family about fraud, scams, and financial abuse. Share your stories and help to raise awareness.

Protect yourself and loved ones from fraud and scams by taking the @FriendsAgainst online training: www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/training/friends-elearning



Finally....

If you would like to report a scam, or you have been a victim fraud, you can get in touch with the following organisations:

Action Fraud – <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline - 0808 223 1133

If you think fraudsters may have obtained your money, contact your bank immediately using the contact details on the back of your card.

To keep up to date with the latest scams information and advice, you can follow the Leicestershire Trading Standards Service Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/leicstradingstandards

Leicestershire Trading Standards Service

Tel: 0116 305 8000

Email: tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk

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