

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: 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 maintaining 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.

Things such as Facebook Community Groups, WhatsApp Groups and the Nextdoor social network that send neighbourhood 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, so please see the telephone numbers below if you require assistance.

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 no specific treatment for COVID-19. Treatment available aims to relieve the symptoms until you recover. The fake products available to buy online say they can protect you or cure coronavirus.
- Home cleaning services
- People impersonating healthcare workers, claiming to be offering 'home-testing' for coronavirus – this is a scam and these kits are not currently available to buy.
- Emails saying that you can get a refund on taxes, utilities or similar are usually bogus and they are just after your personal and bank details.
- 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. Criminals are experts at impersonating people, organisations and the police.
- People offering to do your shopping or collecting medication and asking for money upfront and then disappearing.

Read it. Share it. Prevent it.

#ScamAware #Coronavirus

Tips to avoid being scammed:

- Be cautious and listen to your instincts. Don't be afraid to hang up, bin it, delete it or shut the door. They spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down for just a moment.
- Take your time; don't be rushed. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
- If someone claims to represent a charity, ask them for ID. Be suspicious of requests for money up front. If someone tempts you into accepting a service they are unlikely to be genuine. 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 GOV.UK or NHS.uk websites. Make sure you type the addresses in and don't click on links in emails.
- Only purchase goods from legitimate retailers and take a moment to think before parting with money or personal information.
- Protect your financial information, especially from people you don't know. Never give your bank card or PIN to a stranger.
- **Take Five to Stop Fraud** Take Five to Stop Fraud is a national campaign offering straightforward, impartial advice on how to stop scams.
- **Stop:** Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.
- **Challenge:** Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests.
- **Protect:** Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud

Contact information:

- If you think you've been scammed, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 and 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.
- Age UK telephone support service (for older people and carers) 01865 411288.
- Local authorities across Oxfordshire have worked with the local voluntary and community sector, to develop a simple point of contact for those who have been told by government that they have been identified as extremely vulnerable, and who have no support network and would otherwise be completely isolated. Call 01865 897820 South, Vale, West, Cherwell district areas or 01865 249811 for Oxford city.

To learn more about different types of scams and how to protect yourself and others, visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk and complete the free online training.

Yours faithfully,

Jody Kerman



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Head of Trading Standards, Oxfordshire County Council

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

**Read it. Share it. Prevent it.
#ScamAware #Coronavirus**