

Wash your hands of coronavirus scams!

Friends Against Scams aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams.

Be aware of people offering or selling:

- Virus testing kits - these are only offered by NHS.
- Vaccines or miracle cures – there is currently no vaccine or cure.
- Overpriced or fake goods to protect yourself from coronavirus such as anti-bacterial products.
- Shopping or medication collection services.
- Home decontamination services.

Protect yourself and others:

- Don't be rushed into making a decision. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
- Only purchase goods and services from legitimate retailers and take a moment to think before parting with money or personal information.
- 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.
- If someone claims to represent a charity, ask them for ID. Be suspicious of requests for money up front. If someone attempts to pressurise 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.

Be a good friend,
help to protect
your family, friends
and neighbours
from scams.

Read It.
Share It.
Prevent It.

#Coronavirus
#ScamAware



Contact

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**
Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed.

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

To learn more about the different types of scams visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk

You may have seen the above being shared around social media sites such as Facebook.

The reason why National Trading Standards and Friends Against Scams among other security websites are raising this awareness is due to the huge rise of criminal activity.

Action Fraud has reported a huge spike in coronavirus related scams in March.

[Coronavirus-related fraud reports increased by 400% in March](#)

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.

Lord Toby Harris, Chair, National Trading Standards, said:

“At a time when neighbourhoods and communities are coming together to support each other, it is despicable that heartless criminals are exploiting members of the public – including some of our most vulnerable citizens – to line their own pockets. I urge everyone to be on their guard for possible COVID-19 scams and to look out for vulnerable family members, friends and neighbours who may become a target for fraudsters.

“We’re calling on communities to look out for one another. If you see anything suspicious, report it to Action Fraud or to speak to someone for advice, contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.”

People are being encouraged to protect their neighbours by joining *Friends Against Scams*, which provides free online training to empower people to take a stand against scams. Visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk.

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.

Communities are also being urged to look out for signs of neighbours being targeted by doorstep criminals. While there are genuine groups of volunteers providing help during self-isolation, there have been reports of criminals preying on residents – often older people or people living with long-term health conditions – by cold-calling at their homes and offering to go to the shops for them. The criminals often claim to represent charities to help them appear legitimate before taking the victim's money. There are genuine charities providing support, so consumers should be vigilant and ask for ID from anyone claiming to represent a charity.

[Councils are warning people about doorstep scams and cold callers](#) _BBC news report.

Council are warning people that criminals are pretending to be health officials or offering to pick up food and deliver medicines. Criminals are also selling fake face masks and hand sanitisers, say the Local Government Association - with hand sanitiser containing an ingredient banned for human use being seized in Birmingham.

I believe local support groups setup by the councils and the NHS volunteers are being provided with badges and a number to identify them.

Malwarebytes have pulled together a useful overview of coronavirus-related scams that are being seen on the internet. They discovered multiple email scams that attempt to use the fear and confusion surrounding the coronavirus to steal personal and financial information from consumers. Click on [more](#) to see the full article.

Be particularly aware of email phishing attempts of fraudsters impersonating the World Health Organization WHO. I think this equally applies to stuff being shared on Facebook that purports to be from the WHO.

Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber-crime where you should report fraud if you have spotted a scam or have been scammed, defrauded or experienced cyber-crime...www.actionfraud.police.uk or call on [0300 123 20 40](tel:03001232040).

Citizens Advice Consumer Service can offer support if you or someone you know has been scammed. They will give you advice on what to do next. www.citizensadvice.org.uk or call Citizens Advice Consumer Service on [03454 04 05 06](tel:03454040506).

The Police

Beware of calls claiming to be from banks or the police asking you to move money, always call your local police if you receive one of these calls.

I would also add here that banks etc would never ask for you to confirm your password.

Age UK run a Freephone service offering advice and information on money, care and health. Your local Age UK may offer scams support for people in your area.

You can visit the website www.ageuk.org.uk or call Age UK on [0800 055 6112](tel:08000556112).

In summary some sobering facts about scams generally. The average age of a scam victim is 75, which backs up what has already been said that scammers prey on older and often more vulnerable members of society. 53% of people aged 65+ have been targeted by scammers.

I intend to add these and further security resources to the IT Group page on the U3A website.

Andrew Challis