

# CORONA VIRUS SCAM ALERT

WEST YORKSHIRE TRADING STANDARDS NEWSLETTER

West Yorkshire Trading Standards monthly update on COVID-19 related scams.

## TICKET SCAMS

With pubs, restaurants, cinemas and museums set to reopen, demand for tickets is likely to be high. We're reminding people to take extra care when buying tickets online. Only buy tickets from the venue's box office, official promoter or agent, or a well-known and reputable ticket site. Avoid paying for tickets by bank transfer, especially if buying from someone unknown. Be wary of unsolicited emails, texts or adverts offering unbelievably good deals on tickets. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

## Avoid being caught out by Rogue Traders



West Yorkshire Trading Standards has seen a 57% increase in doorstep crime related reports in the past year 2020. Here are a few things to consider when thinking about work being done on your property,

- Check to see if you need permission or approval for any work doing.
- Get the contractor's full contact details before work starts. If you know how to get in touch, it's easier to deal with any problems that come up.
- Recommendations from friends and family are always best.
- If you can't get personal recommendations from people you know, ask contractors for references.
- Try to get written quotes from at least 3 different contractors before you decide on one. Comparing quotes will help you decide if you're getting a fair price.
- Check there's insurance in place.
- Always try to get a contract in writing before you give the go-ahead.

## HMRC Tax Refund Scam

We have seen several reports in West Yorkshire of the HMRC tax refund scam in recent weeks. HMRC will never ask for personal or financial information when they send text messages. Do not reply if you get a text message or email claiming to be from HMRC offering you a tax refund in exchange for personal or financial details. Do not open any links in the message. HMRC only informs you about tax refunds through the post or through your pay via your employer.



## Money Laundering A.K.A Money Muling

### WHAT IS MONEY LAUNDERING?

Money laundering is a way of hiding how funds have been obtained which is usually via illegal channels and concealed by passing the funds through a series of complex bank transfers. Examples of criminal connections to money laundering are but not limited to Drugs, Human Trafficking, Weapons, Terrorism, Embezzlement, (A Professional Enabler) and Modern Slavery.

### WHO IS TARGETED?

**EVERYONE!**

### HOW ARE WE TARGETED?

Attempts to lure people into money laundering can happen via E-mail, Text, Social Media and in some rare cases, in person!

### E-MAILS

Fortunately the junk/ spam folder catches these attempts but sometimes, they'll land in your main mailbox. The e-mails can appear to be from a friend, family or colleague as the e-mail addresses may look familiar. The sender usually states their bank account has been compromised and they need to transfer funds out, very quickly, into another bank account. Please **DO NOT** follow the instructions in the e-mail, mark it as "Junk" or "Spam" and block the sender where possible.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Do you have someone on your friends/ follower list that you've never met but they seem to have a lot of mutual friends/ followers? It may not seem unusual as that's what social media is for, to connect people however is the person behind the profile who you think it is? Money Mules tend to be targeted on social media regularly and it starts with, "Want to earn some free cash?". Now there's no such thing as free cash... you still have to buy a lottery ticket to be in it to win right?

Once you begin engaging with the person offering you free cash, trust is built and small transfers of money from them, to you, from you to another account will begin increasing. When the authorities take notice, the only person traceable is you! This can carry a prison sentence of up to 14 years.

# TEXT SCAMS

Always be cautious if you receive a text message containing a link requesting you to log into your Online Banking, Paypal or any account linked to your bank account. Various messages are constantly in circulation trying to prompt you to log in and make a payment or check your bank account.

Examples of these scams are but not limited to, owing money to the courier for a parcel to be delivered, an update on your business grant/ loan requesting confirmation of your bank details, suspicious activity on your bank account, a bill that hasn't been paid meaning your service is going to be cut off.

# SCAM CALLS

Have you heard of "Robo-calls"? When you answer the phone a pre-recorded message plays, usually giving you bad news about your bank account, National Insurance number or National "assurance" number being compromised, your Amazon account renewal or an outstanding tax bill or fine.

What should you do? Don't follow the prompts given to you by the caller. Hang up, block and report the phone number (if visible) to Action Fraud.

# EMAIL SCAMS

All of the above scams can appear in different form, including e-mail! Checking the details of the sender is the first thing we advise you do before following through with any prompts contained within the e-mail.

It may seem tempting to click the links contained within the e-mail, especially if the wording makes you nervous i.e. "fraudulent activity" however scammers can see when you've opened the e-mail, if you've actioned any of the prompts and will attempt to target you using another method. Look out for spelling errors, web addresses with extra letters e.g. HMRCC instead of HMRC.

Take 5 is a National campaign to encourage you to

**STOP,  
CHALLENGE and  
PROTECT  
yourself!**

Visit <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/> to find out more.

## IT PAYS TO STOP AND THINK

- 1 Never disclose security details
- 2 Don't assume an email, text or phone call is genuine
- 3 Don't be rushed
- 4 Listen to your instincts
- 5 Stay in control



# NEW SCAM WARNING: CENSUS SCAM

There have been reports nationally of fraudsters ringing, texting and even visiting individuals claiming to be from the Office of National Statistics or local councils. Please be vigilant as these fraudsters are claiming that people have incorrectly completed census forms and asking for a payment to cover a fake fine.

## Things to remember



Now that the Census date has passed, official Census branded letters are being sent to people who have not yet completed their Census.



Census field officers may also be used and may knock on doors offering help and encouragement to anyone who has not completed or who is having difficulty completing.



Those officers will have ID, they will also NEVER ask for any form of payment or bank details and will not request your National Insurance number. There is no need for them to enter your home.

Past issues of our news alert can be found on the West Yorkshire Joint Services website. Just look for the Trading Standards Service and Covid-19 resources page.

For information about SAFER online workshops contact [safer@wyjs.org.uk](mailto:safer@wyjs.org.uk)



**@wytradstandards**

Regular updates can also be found on:



**@SAFERProject**

Report scams to Action Fraud:  
0300 123 2040

Forward scam emails to  
[report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

**Report to us:**  
Mailbox to deal  
with reports of Covid-19 Scams in West  
Yorkshire:  
[Covid19.Scams@wyjs.org.uk](mailto:Covid19.Scams@wyjs.org.uk)

Report complaints to Citizens  
Advice Consumer Helpline:  
0808 223 1133