

Keep your money safe

Although this information came from a recent Surrey & Sussex Police newsletter the advice is relevant for all of us in the Thames Valley Police area.

Each month we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting our residents in an attempt to defraud them. We're working hard to prevent this and support vulnerable victims of fraud or scams. By following our tips and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you can reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

Don't fall victim to Covid-19 fraudsters

Fraudsters are taking advantage of the spread of the Covid-19 virus to scam people out of their cash.

We have seen reports of fraudsters sending fake lockdown fine texts from scammers claiming to be from the UK Government, telling people they owe money for going outside.

The messages typically say that a £35 fine has been added to the victim's gov.uk account – and it needs to be paid.

The Government has only sent one text message to the public regarding new rules about staying at home to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Any others claiming to be from UK Government are false.

Criminals are able to use spoofing technology to send texts and emails impersonating organisations that you know and trust. If you receive an unexpected text or email, asking for personal or financial details, do not respond.

Nationally, Action Fraud has identified a spate of over 100 cases of Covid-19 related fraud since the start of February. The majority of reports are related to online shopping scams where people have ordered and paid for protective face masks, hand sanitiser and other products, which have never arrived.

There have also been over 200 reports of coronavirus-themed 'phishing' emails.

These attempt to trick people into opening malicious attachments which could lead to fraudsters stealing people's personal information, email logins and passwords, and banking details. You can now Report suspicious Phishing emails to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) at report@phishing.gov.uk.

Keep your money safe from scammers:

- Watch out for scam messages – don't click on the links in suspicious emails and don't respond to unsolicited messages.
- Remember – the Government will not be texting people to enforce lockdown guidelines. Don't fall for this trick.

- Be careful when shopping online and avoid companies you don't recognise. Carry out your research and ask a family member or friend if you're unsure.
- Protect your devices from the latest threats by making sure your software is up to date.

For the latest information on cybercrime and the coronavirus, please see [here](#).

HMRC and TV licensing fraud

We've seen HMRC and TV licensing fraud attempts creep up, as scammers are trying to exploit the elderly.

An 84-year-old victim from North Surrey was contacted by phone by someone claiming to be from HMRC. They said he owed £3,000 and had to transfer the amount over or he would face going to court. The victim was told paperwork would be brought to his address later on in the day to confirm this was all paid for.

The victim attended his local Barclays branch and asked to send £3000 to the given account details. Thankfully bank staff recognised this scam and called in banking protocol preventing any money from being sent to the suspect.

Meanwhile in East Sussex, a 94-year-old woman received an email relating to her TV Licencing which said she needed to renew her direct debit details as they were soon to expire. Thankfully the victim recognised this scam as she does not have to pay for her TV licence and raised the scam to the police.

Fortunately, neither of the victims lost any money. Let's keep it that way. If anyone cold calls you and says they're from TV Licensing, HMRC, or anyone else for that matter, please remember our advice:

- Never give money to anyone you don't know or trust
- Check people are who they say they are
- Don't share your personal information
- Make decisions in your own time

Purse and wallet theft at supermarkets

There have been a number of cases of purses and wallets being taken from victims while they're at the supermarket in Surrey.

Luckily the victims were quickly notified of unusual transactions by their banks and able to quickly block their cards.

Remember:

- Keep your valuables close to you at all times.
- Pay attention to your surroundings.

How you can help

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud call: Thames Valley Police on 101 or visit www.thamesvalleypolice.uk

If you suspect you've been scammed, defrauded or experienced cyber-crime, the [Action Fraud](#) team can also provide the help, support and advice you need, or call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.