

Police advice to avoid scammers during COVID-19 pandemic

Police Scotland is advising the public to be cautious of strangers offering bogus services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



Police Scotland. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com
Social distancing and self-isolation mean more people than usual are in their homes at the moment. This presents an ideal opportunity for criminals to take advantage of elderly and vulnerable people, in particular.

Across the UK there is evidence fraudsters are increasingly targeting members of the public, as well as organisations of all sizes, with emails, texts, telephone calls and social media messages offering advice and treatments for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Scammers have set up fake websites to sell products and offer so-called cures or testing kits, as well as requesting donations to help victims. In some instances, cold callers have contacted organisations suggesting a legal requirement to have certain measures in place by a specific deadline.

Launching the campaign, Chief Superintendent David Duncan, Safer Communities Division said: "We are aware that community groups are being set up to help vulnerable members of our communities and we do not, in any way, want to impact on the good work being carried out.

“However it is imperative that we are all aware that vulnerable people can be seen as easy targets by criminals seeking to take advantage of this unprecedented and dynamic situation.

“Anyone can be a victim of doorstep crime – it is nothing to be embarrassed about. Criminals can be very clever, and play on your emotions and insecurities. If someone comes to your door claiming to be from a legitimate organisation, always ask for identification.

“Don’t give people money or your bank details if they come to your door and offer to do shopping for you if you don’t know them. And never give your debit or credit card and PIN to anyone.

“If you are self-isolating, let friends and family know and if in doubt about anyone offering services at your door, step back and take a few minutes to contact them for advice. You can also visit the Police Scotland website for more information.”

Between April and September 2019, more than £600,000 has been taken from householders in 306 instances of doorstep and bogus crime.

Fiona Richardson, Chief Officer of Trading Standards Scotland said: “Trading Standards is at the forefront of tackling consumer related scams.

“Working in partnership with the police and other Shut out Scammers partners means that we are better able to protect our most vulnerable citizens from COVID related scams.”

Police Scotland is working with a number of partners on the Shut Out Scammers campaign to signpost the public to relevant prevention advice and support services. These include: Trading Standards Scotland; Advice Direct Scotland; Neighbourhood Watch Alert; Age Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue

Service.

If you want to read more of our advice and guidance on preventing crime, visit our dedicated webpage at <https://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/personal-safety/Shutdown-Scammers>.