

Fraud on the increase during the Covid-19 pandemic

The national consumer advice service consumer advice.scot says today that fraud is on the increase.

Police Scotland reports that crime is down overall, but fraud has increased by over 10 per cent. There is evidence that criminals are exploiting the health emergency to commit offences.

There are scams about business grants and in East Lothian there have been reports of people going door to door, pretending to be NHS workers and collecting donations. They also offer to shop for the person targeted, if they give them the money to do so.

Consumeradvice.scot has the authority to report instances of potential scams to Trading Standards Scotland for investigation.

While serious assaults have fallen by 40% and common assault by a quarter compared to the same period last year. Possession of drugs is down by a fifth. Around a fifth of incidents reported to the police relate to people reporting those who they believe are breaching social distancing guidelines.

Marjorie Gibson, head of operations with consumeradvice.scot, said: "These latest figures show that unscrupulous fraudsters are trying to exploit a public health emergency for their own gain.

"Evidence of this sickening behaviour is being picked up across Scotland, and we urge everyone to be vigilant.

“Fraudsters can sound very plausible and persuasive, and it can be easy to be taken in by them, which is why it’s always important to check emails very carefully and not to immediately contract with someone who cold calls on doorsteps. “Our advisers are on hand to offer tips on what to look out for to avoid being scammed, and we can report any instances to Trading Standards for further investigation.”

Consumeradvice.scot is operated by the Glasgow-based charity Advice Direct Scotland, and can be contacted on 0808 164 6000 or online.