

Watch out for Census scammers

Scots have been warned not to get caught out by Census scammers as the official count of Scotland's population begins this week.

Advice Direct Scotland, which runs the national consumer advice service [consumeradvice.scot](https://www.consumeradvice.scot), urged people to be aware of the signs of potential fraudsters attempting to gather personal or financial information.

The charity said scammers may request money for a fine or fee, or ask for personal financial information like a national insurance number, bank details or debit or credit card details to be provided.

It stressed that Scotland's Census will never ask for money or this type of personal financial information.

Advice Direct Scotland said people should only provide personal information in the formal online Scotland's Census questionnaire, and explained that this will only be sent as a paper copy if the person specifically requests it.

The charity also said Scotland's Census field team will only visit someone at home after 20 March if they have not completed their questionnaire, or if they have been selected for the Census Coverage Survey.

Here, Advice Direct Scotland answers a series of questions on what a Census scam might look like, and what someone should do if they suspect they have been targeted:

What could a Census scam look like?

A scammer may request payment of money for a fine or fee, or personal financial information, such as your national

insurance number, bank details, or debit and credit card details. Scotland's Census will never ask for money or personal financial information – if you receive a request for these, you can be sure it is a scam.

How do you know if communication claiming to be from Scotland's Census is real?

You will be contacted by letter to ask you to complete the Census and tell you what you need to do. After that, you will only be phoned, emailed, or sent a text by Scotland's Census if you have asked them to, or if you have requested something from them.

Will Scotland's Census visit me at home?

You may be visited by one of the Scotland's Census field team, but only after March 20, 2022, if you have not completed your Census questionnaire or if you have been selected for the Census Coverage Survey. Scotland's Census will never cold call you over the phone for any reason.

Will Scotland's Census gather any personal information?

Although the Census does collect some personal information, remember you should only provide this information in your Census questionnaire, either online or on paper. You will only be sent a paper questionnaire if you have asked for one.

Reporting a suspected Census scam

If you suspect you have been approached by a scammer claiming to be from Scotland's Census, you can report this to dataprotection@nrscotland.gov.uk, or Advice Direct Scotland at www.consumeradvice.scot.

If you have made a payment, or provided any personal financial information, you should contact your bank or building society. If you feel threatened or intimidated by someone calling at your property, you can contact Police Scotland on '999' in an emergency, or on '101' (non-emergency number).

Scottish citizens can also report suspected scams and

suspicious activity at www.scamwatch.scot.

Colin Mathieson, spokesperson for Advice Direct Scotland, said: "The official Census of everyone in Scotland starts this week and our tips highlight some of the ways scammers may attempt to gather personal and financial information.

"One of the most important things to remember is that Scotland's Census will not ask for money or personal financial information like a person's bank details.

"If you suspect you have been approached by a scammer claiming to be from Scotland's Census, you can report this directly to National Records of Scotland or to us at www.scamwatch.scot and our advisers will be able to assist you."