

Covid-19 related scams to be aware of

On-the-spot fines

- Police are warning against fraudsters claiming to be collecting on-the-spot fines for breaches of the government's coronavirus guidelines. Officers were made aware of a teenage man being approached by three men in Brighton who claimed to be undercover police officers and issuing him with an on-the-spot fine for being out during the coronavirus lockdown. The men also had a device which took the payment on-the-spot. Sussex Police will not ask you to hand over money or make a card payment when they issue an on-the-spot fine, and officers will always be able to provide ID.

Doorstep crime

- Criminals are targeting older people on their doorstep and offering to do their shopping. Thieves take the money and do not return. None of the community hub volunteers in the district will knock on your door unless you have asked for help and they will have ID.
- Doorstep cleansing services are offering to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus.

Online scams

- Email scams try to trick people into opening malicious attachments, which put people at risk of identity theft with personal information, passwords, contacts and bank details at risk. Some of these emails have lured people to click on attachments by offering information about people in the local area who are affected by coronavirus.
- Fake online resources, such as false Coronavirus maps, in fact deliver malware such as AZORult Trojan, an information stealing program which can infiltrate a variety of sensitive data. A prominent example that has deployed malware is 'corona-virus-map[dot]com'.

Refund scams

- People seeking holiday refunds should be wary of fake websites set up to falsely offer holiday refunds. Instead they collect your personal data.

Counterfeit goods

- Fake sanitisers, face masks and Covid-19 swabbing kits are being sold online and door-to-door. These products can often be dangerous and unsafe. There are reports of some potentially harmful hand sanitiser containing glutaral (or glutaraldehyde), which was banned for human use in 2014. Please note that sanitisers bought from a reputable source are safe to use.

Telephone scams

- As people continue to self-isolate at home there is an increasing risk that telephone scams will also rise, including criminals claiming to be your bank, mortgage lender or utility company. If in doubt, end the call and call them back on a number from a recent bill.

Donation scams

- There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.

To report fraud online, visit the Action Fraud website: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or call 0300 123 2040.

More information about scams can be found here:

https://www.friendsagainstscaams.org.uk/article/505/beware_of_covid_19_scams

You can check if something is a scam here:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/>

Regular scam updates can be found here: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/sign-up-for-action-fraud-alert>.