



March 2020

Hampshire County Council Trading Standards is aware that fraudsters are exploiting the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation for their own gain. These are troubling and uncertain times for all of us, and we are warning residents to stay especially alert to scams/fraud and doorstep callers.

Tips to avoid being defrauded of your money:-

- Be **sceptical**, not everyone has your best interests at heart.
- Unless you are expecting a visitor, **do not open the door** to cold callers. This is especially important at this current time of social distancing and self-isolation.
- Do not accept help from people who want **money up front**, for example for shopping.
- Never give your debit/credit card or PIN number to anyone.
- Take your **time**, don't be rushed on the phone, and if in any doubt, hang up and check with a friend or relative.
- **Do not** click on links in text (SMS) or emails unless you know who they are from.
- If you are online, be aware of **fake** news and use trusted sources such as .gov.uk or NHS.uk.
- Facebook Community Groups, WhatsApp Groups and the Nextdoor App that send neighbourhood alerts can be great ways of staying in touch with those around you. However, it can be difficult to know who to trust.
- Know who you are dealing with; if you need **help**, talk to someone you know or get in touch with your local Council.
- Connect to Support Hampshire have a very useful '[Coronavirus Resources Page](#)'.

Some of the scams/fraud we are aware of are outlined below. **Please be aware** this is an ever changing situation, and fraudsters will come up with other ways to

reach their targets via different mediums, for example phone, letter, text, email, at the door

- **Miracle cure.** There is **no current cure** or vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19). Any such claims are **false**, and the products **fake**.
- **Tests for sale.** At this present time, tests cannot be bought and any tests on sale will be **fake**.
- **Testing at home.** Tests **are not** being offered at home. Any callers at the door, offering 'home-testing' for Coronavirus will be **fraudulent**.
- **Deep cleaning.** Do not allow people into your home, even if they claim to be the Council carrying out a deep clean. This includes cleaning drive ways, paths, etc.
- **Protective equipment.** Fake face masks, hazard suits and gloves claiming to protect from Coronavirus will not give the protection promised.
- **Fake Hand Sanitisers.** These products can contain harmful, even banned substances. Ingredients must always be listed on the product itself.
- **Goodwill payments, tax rebates, offers of money.** Email or Text (SMS) messages claiming to be from HMRC or other organisations offering a 'goodwill payment' or a tax rebate will be phishing attempts. An example would be: *"As Part of the NHS promise to battle the COV- 19virus, HMRC has issued a payment of £258 as a goodwill payment. Follow link to apply"*. **Do not** follow such links.
- **Fake Apps.** There are new mobile phone apps that claim to give you updates on the virus, instead they lock your phone and demand a ransom. **Do not** use them.
- **Bogus Officials.** Your bank or the police will **NEVER** ask for your bank details over the phone.
- **Overcharging.** Certain products, such as toilet rolls, hand sanitiser and handwash can be difficult to get hold of because of panic buying. Unscrupulous people are selling such items at inflated prices. Trading Standards are interested in knowing who is selling such items.

To report overcharging, scams, or to obtain advice, contact our partners at the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133 (please note that this service is receiving a higher than average number of calls at present).

You can download a '[We do not buy goods or services at the door](#)' notice from our web site.

Doorstep Crime can also be reported to Hampshire Police on their **non-urgent number 101** or dial **999** if you feel threatened or intimidated.



This email was sent by Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UJ

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