USEFUL CONTACTS

If you have been caught out by a scam or you think a friend or family member has been affected, contact Consumerline, which can give advice and, if necessary, pass the matter onto the Trading Standards Service.

Consumerline
Tel: 0300 123 6262
Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk/consumerline

Report bogus callers to the PSNI
Tel: 101 (or 999 in an emergency)
Web: www.psni.police.uk

Report scams to Action Fraud
Tel: 0300 123 2040
Web: www.actionfraud.police.uk

Reduce unwanted mail and calls by registering with:

Mailing Preference Service
Tel: 0845 703 4599
Web: www.mpsonline.org.uk

Telephone Preference Service
Tel: 0345 070 0707
Web: www.tpsonline.org.uk

For more help and information visit:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/scamwiseni
www.facebook.com/scamwiseni

The Consumer Council
www.consumercouncil.org.uk

This leaflet was produced by The Consumer Council on behalf of the ScamwiseNI partnership.

COVID-19 Scams

Know the signs...

...stop the crime

The Consumer Council

scamwiseNI PARTNERSHIP

TOP TIPS

– Contacted out of the blue? Think – is it too good to be true?

– If you haven't bought a ticket – you can't win it. You should never have to pay anything to claim a prize, not even the cost of a stamp.

– Telephone scammers will often ask you to call another number, but then stay on the line. Check the number is genuine and ensure the line is clear.

– Your financial institution will never phone asking for your online password and will never come to your home to collect cash, your PIN, payment card or chequebook if you are a victim of fraud.

– Genuine computer firms do not make unwanted phone calls to help you fix your computer.

– Never click on links or files in emails unless you are sure of the source.

– Never respond to social media advertisements or click on links unless you are sure of the source.

– Just because they sound professional and say they are from financial institutions, the PSNI, HMRC, utility companies, internet providers or public bodies, does not mean they **actually** are.

– Never feel pressured into buying something on your doorstep. Never hand over cash or go to the bank with the person to take money out. Always ask for ID to avoid bogus callers.

– If in doubt, don't reply. Bin it, delete it or hang up.

MAIL AND PHONE SCAMS

Be particularly wary of letters, calls and texts relating to:

Pension scams – People are concerned about the value of their pensions and scammers will try and persuade you to switch your pension to a better one. Be careful when receiving unsolicited offers to review your pension;

Investment scams – Scammers are tempting consumers to invest their money with an offer of high returns. If you were contacted out of the blue then stop and think – is this too good to be true?;

Fake competitions – Watch out for fake competitions at this time. If you haven't bought a ticket, you can't win it. You should never respond to these types of scams;

Automated messages from your service providers – Watch out for automated messages stating your subscription service or internet has been cancelled. Be sure to check directly with your service provider if you have any doubts. However, do not use the number you were contacted from;

Travel scams – There are scammers contacting consumers pretending to be from travel agents, tour operators, claims companies and insurance companies offering to help you with your travel concerns. If you receive unsolicited calls, texts or emails, then call/email the official contact details of the company from their website and double check that it is real;

Charity scams – Scammers may attempt to trick you into sending money for a fake charity, a sick loved one, or someone stranding abroad. Be sure to check the details of the charity; and

Fake fines for leaving your property – Consumers are now receiving fake text messages/automated messages from scammers pretending to be from law enforcement bodies informing them that they are being issued with a fine for leaving the house during the lockdown period.

DOORSTEP SCAMS

Not all doorstep traders are bogus but watch out for rogue doorstep traders, rogue sales persons and bogus callers. Ask for ID as bogus callers can pretend they are from the Council, a health organisation, a charity, a utility company, the PSNI or other public bodies.

Be wary of scammers calling at your door offering to go the shops, collect prescriptions or offering to withdraw cash on your behalf for a sum of money. Never hand over money to strangers and contact a family member or friend immediately if you are in doubt.

Scammers may try and sell fake or expensive Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), anti-bacterial products, cleaning products, deep cleaning services, fake miracles cures, vaccines or offering to sell you a coronavirus testing kit.

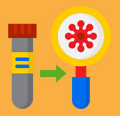
Don't be taken in by warnings from rogue doorstep traders or rogue sales persons. Never hand over cash or free pressured into buying goods or services. It is best not to decide on the doorstep and to talk it over with someone you know.

If you have concerns, speak to a family or friend in the first instance. Always report bogus callers to the PSNI on 101.

There are a number of local community centres/community support groups working within the local community offering free assistance in whatever way they can help for those isolated in their own home as a result of coronavirus such as going to the shops.

Further details on support available for vulnerable consumers is accessible on The Consumer Council's website:
www.consumercouncil.org.uk/coronavirus/vulnerable

ONLINE SCAMS



There are many different types of online scams including scams on the different social media platforms:

Free COVID-19 testing – Consumers are receiving emails/texts/automated messages and direct messages through social media about free COVID-19 testing in an attempt to scare you. Ignore and delete these messages;

Free payments from the government – Scammers are pretending to be from the government. Make sure that correspondence from official UK government website addresses is official by ensuring the URL ends with 'gov.uk';

Tax rebate scams – Scammers pretending to be HMRC are offering a tax rebate. HMRC will never contact you via text message/social media/email offering a tax rebate;

DVLA refunds – With many people self-isolating, scammers are pretending to be from the DVLA offering a refund for those that cannot use their car during this time. Make sure that correspondence from official UK government website addresses is official by ensuring the URL ends with 'gov.uk';

Free supermarket vouchers – Consumers are receiving alerts that supermarkets are offering free vouchers for those in need. Be cautious when receiving unsolicited messages;

Free school dinner vouchers – Consumers are receiving alerts offering free school dinner vouchers. Do not follow any links or enter any payment information. For information on free school meals, go online to www.eani.org.uk/getfsm; and

Websites selling fake PPE – As with doorstep scams, watch out for fake websites selling fake PPE, anti-bacterial products, cleaning products, deep cleaning services, fake miracles cures, vaccines or coronavirus testing kits.