

Public Protection Partnership Press Release – 7th January 2021

Coronavirus – COVID-19 – Update from Public Protection Partnership Trading Standards Team

As we move into a New Year in these unprecedented times we have seen a lot of courage, compassion and dedication from so many people, but it is very regrettable that some will use the current situation to their own advantage, seeking to exploit individuals and businesses.

Around the UK, Trading Standards are experiencing an increase in the number of complaints about scams, designed to prey on the concerns of people.

Covid scams we are currently aware of:

- Fake NHS text telling people they're eligible to apply for the COVID-19 vaccine. The text includes a url link and takes you through to an extremely convincing fake NHS website. You're asked to complete various personal details, including a field asking for card / payment details to verify your identity. Do not click on the link and NEVER give your bank details from an unsolicited text such as this. If you are eligible for the vaccine you will be contacted directly via your own GP surgery.
- The elderly and the vulnerable are being called via an automated call out telling them they're being called to organise their COVID vaccine. They're then asked to press a number to be put through to organise the vaccine. **HANG UP AND DO NOT PRESS A NUMBER.** The number will allow them to access your phone company and access your account to charge money. Only deal directly with your GP with regards to the COVID vaccine.
- Scammers are selling fake 'Vaccination Cards'. Once you have had the COVID vaccine you are given a record card of the vaccination. Fraudsters are selling these fake cards. Obviously the implications of use of such cards, fraudulently demonstrating that you've had the vaccine when you haven't could have fatal consequences for those you come into contact with. If you see instances of this fraud please report it to Citizens Advice so it can be traced and removed.
- Financial scams where text and email messages are received, which appear to be from Government departments, NHS, banks, or other trusted organisations, seeking to trick people into providing their personal and bank details. You should never click on the links or respond to such messages. If you have any concerns, then report it to <https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/covid-19/coronavirus-enforcement-form/>
- Reports of the sale of fake Coronavirus testing kits and vaccines. Any Covid testing should be accessed via your GP or the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. If you wish to pay for a private test then only use organisations registered with the NHS and Government see link [here](#).
- Emails / text messages purporting to be from HMRC regarding claiming tax back or grants, which are again a way of tricking people into providing bank details.

Genuine Covid financial support can be found at the links below, or see Local Support further in this article.

[Business Support](#)
[Individual Support](#)

Unsolicited text messages, and emails, such as those listed above will be scams – do not respond, delete immediately. HMRC / Your Bank / NHS do not contact people out of the blue asking for these details.

Our advice is:

1. Never click on any suspicious text or email links and do not engage with these messages. If you have any queries with your bank, HMRC, NHS, the Local Authority or any other business, then contact them directly. Do not click on any links or use any contacts given in these messages.
2. Never give out any financial information.

In times of crisis when fear of the unknown is heightened, people – particularly the vulnerable, become more susceptible to trickery. Unfortunately, there are plenty of malicious individuals out there who are willing to exploit this. The government are relying on emails and text messages as communication channels and we are already seeing scams circulating which have untrustworthy links in them. Many have seen text messages which look like they come from GOV.UK and suggest that some kind of financial support package is available. They require your bank details and provide a link for you to click on. **These texts are scams and should be deleted immediately.** Remember, if the link does not end in "[gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)" or "[nhs.net](https://www.nhs.net)", it is not legitimate.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) are taking down a lot of these malicious websites as soon as they become aware of them. If you are sent a suspicious email or text, you can report it via the Netcraft website at: <https://report.netcraft.com/report>

Keep up to date:

The nature of scams is that they change on a regular basis, and we will continue to monitor these and push out further information. Your help is vital in reporting issues so that we can all stay safe.

Report any issues relating to Coronavirus to:

<https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/covid-19/coronavirus-enforcement-form/>

Scams can also be reported to Action Fraud and your local Citizens Advice:

Action Fraud - <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

Citizens Advice - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/reporting-a-scam/>

Or to the non-emergency contact details for Thames Valley Police at:

Thames Valley Police - Call 101 (non-emergency number)

www.thamesvalley.police.uk/ro/report/

For day to day updates from PPP follow us on social media and/or see the dedicated Coronavirus page on our website.

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Website](#)

Where to go for local support regarding Coronavirus:

West Berkshire

www.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub

01635 503579 open 9.00-17.00

westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk

Bracknell Forest

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/coronavirus-information-and-support/council-services-during-coronavirus

01344 266911 open 8.00-22.00

community@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk

Wokingham

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/health/public-health-campaigns/community-support-for-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Citizens Advice Bureau Support on 0118 9787258 open 9.00-17.00

Notes:

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards to over 450,000 people and 10,000 businesses on behalf of three authorities (Partners), Bracknell Forest Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

These services encompass a wide range of areas of responsibility from environmental protection to fair trading, food safety to animal health, housing standards to taxi licensing, and more.

Website: www.publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/publicprotectionpartnershipuk>

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