

SCAMS BULLETIN

November 2014

The purpose of this scams bulletin is to enable Isle of Wight Council residents to be aware, and therefore guard against the type of scams currently being reported to the Isle of Wight Council Trading Standards Service.

Trading Standards will collate information on scams to provide information and intelligence to the public and other agencies but will normally only intervene when the victim is **vulnerable and has been financially abused**.

In appropriate cases Trading Standards will also seek to take enforcement action through the courts.

If you are worried about a potential scam please contact:

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on
03454 04 05 06

or online using the
[Online consumer complaint form](#)

HANDLING: This bulletin may be distributed to the public

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Bogus 'Police Officer' Phone Call

The police have asked Isle of Wight Trading Standards Service to make residents aware of telephone calls which falsely claim to be from the police.

In some cases, to reassure and make the calls appear genuine, names of officers, rank numbers and police station addresses have been falsely quoted.

The bogus caller will raise concerns over the resident's credit card and financial issues. The caller will request bank and other personal information to aid the security of the call.

Once the caller has this information they may be able to access the resident's bank account or ask them to transfer funds to a separate 'secure' account. Once the money is accessed or transferred, there is very little chance of recovering it.

The Trading Standards Service has also received reports that once a resident has disclosed security information about the account, the bogus caller will arrange for a courier or a taxi to collect the bank card. They can then use this card to access the resident's account.

This is a criminal scam that is being investigated by the genuine police who advise anyone receiving similar calls to refrain from giving any details and to end the call immediately.

If you have received a call of this nature and you would like some assistance or to report it for intelligence purposes please telephone the Police on 101.

If you require further advice or wish to report a scam, contact;

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Nuisance Phone Calls and Text Messages

Island residents are warned to be careful when receiving unsolicited phone calls or text messages. These may appear to be from an official body or company but the caller may give out false information to mislead the consumer into parting with money for goods or services they do not need or want.

Real life case study

Mr N received a call from someone claiming to work for the National Health Service (NHS) and that they needed to talk with him about various services they could offer. During the course of the conversation they gave a website for a NHS Trust which, on checking, was genuine. However, Mr N began to question the purpose of the call, and it transpired this was a private company attempting to sell medical insurance. At this stage Mr N terminated the call.

If you have registered with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) and you receive nuisance phone calls, you can complain and the TPS may investigate. Although the TPS can not take enforcement action they will refer complaints to the Information Commissioners Office if necessary.

Nuisance or spam text messaging is also on the increase, especially messages about debt management, accident claims and mis-sold Payment Protection Insurance (PPI). You can report this directly to your mobile phone provider, who may be able to block certain numbers.

Silent Calls

Receiving a 'silent call' can be very unsettling. However, the majority of silent calls are due to call centres using automated systems that dial more numbers than can be handled.

The regulatory body for reporting silent calls to is Ofcom. Although they don't respond to individual complaints, they will use the information for monitoring purposes.

For further information on please contact;

Telephone Preference Service on 0845 070 0707

Ofcom on 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Information Commissioners Office on 0303 123 1113

If you are worried about scams please contact;

For further advice or to report a scam please contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 04 05 06 or online using the [Online consumer complaint form](#)

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Nuisance Phone Calls

Residents on the Island have been contacted by various different companies offering a call blocking service. The companies claim that you previously gave permission to join the scheme and they are contacting you to renew or pay a one off lifetime payment of around £89.

Most companies will just register you with the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) which is completely free to consumers, but some do send you a device to plug into your phone.

Consumers can buy an accredited device (by organisations such as Trading Standards Institute, Alzheimers Society and Official Police Security Initiative) called a CPR CallBlocker from various retailers such as Tesco, Maplin, Argos, John Lewis, QVC, Amazon or Robert Dyas.

These callblockers start from £39.99 and come pre-programmed with over 200 numbers. They can also be set up to intercept international calls. If a nuisance phone call comes through, the consumer just presses a number on the device and the callers telephone number will never be allowed through again.

Real life case study

Mr A, who is an older man living alone, was contacted by a person, alleging to be his phone line provider. They alleged he owed them money, and unless this was paid his phone would be cut off. The scammer asked for the money to be paid through an electronic transfer service at his local shop. The scammer continued to contact Mr A over the course of several months, when a total of £11,000 was paid.

The Trading Standards Service was asked to contact Mr A to talk to him about scams, and to put in place various measures to help protect him in the future. An officer visited Mr A and discussed ways they could help. Due to the regularity of the phone calls, it was suggested Mr A could change his telephone number as this would stop the scammer from calling. However, Mr A was reluctant to do this. The officer suggested installing a call blocker which Mr A agreed to. In the four weeks since the call blocker was installed, records show that fifty callers have hung up as part of the screening service, and Mr A is no longer receiving unsolicited phone calls.

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Council Tax Refund

Island residents have been targeted by a phone scam claiming to be able to reduce your Council Tax banding.

For an initial fee of £55 the Company offer to see if they could arrange for your Council Tax banding to be lowered. They then arrange for a direct debit for his new reduced Council Tax to be taken monthly.

If you wish to check your Council Tax banding then this can be done for free through the Valuation Office Agency.

PDS

Island residents have been receiving cards through their doors from a company called PDS, stating that they tried to deliver a parcel. The consumer is required to phone and rearrange delivery. The telephone number given is a premium rate number and the consumer will then clock up extensive phone charges.

There is no parcel trying to be delivered just another way of getting people to use the premium rate telephone number.

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