

SCAMS BULLETIN

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

Trading Standards will collate information on scams to provide information and intelligence to the public and other agencies but will not normally intervene unless the victim is **very vulnerable and has been financially abused**.

We will also seek to take enforcement action in the civil and criminal courts where it is appropriate in order to punish the offenders.

If you are worried about scams please contact:

**Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on
08454 04 05 06
or online using the
[Online consumer complaint form](#)**

HANDLING: This bulletin may be distributed to the public

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INHERITANCE SCAMS

The Trading Standards Service has continued to receive complaints about inheritance scams.

This fraud operates when the scammer makes contact normally by post or email alleging there is a large inheritance left by a distant relative or unknown benefactor who has died overseas. The scammer will usually write in the guise of a lawyer, banker or foreign official.

Sometimes the scammer will provide a made-up name or they may use a family name to make the scam seem more convincing.

The size of the supposed inheritance can be very large, sometimes many millions of dollars and is often quoted in foreign currency. They will allege the supposed inheritance is difficult to access due to government and bank restrictions or taxes in the country, and that the victim will need to pay money and provide personal details to claim it.

The stories told by the scammer can be quite elaborate and they will go to great lengths to convince you that a fortune awaits. Other times, the letter may make threats to frighten victims to part with their money. The initial fee they try to charge may be relatively small, but once they receive this they will continue to send letters asking for more money and introduce additional costs.

The scammer will continue asking for money as long as the victim sends it but they will never send the inheritance in return. They will only stop when their victim becomes suspicious or when they realise they will not be getting any more money.

NEVER give your credit card, bank account details or copies of important personal document to anyone you do not know or trust. If you would like to report an inheritance scam please contact;

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COMPUTER VIRUS TELEPHONE SCAM

Residents are warned to take care if they receive an unsolicited phone call about an alleged virus on their computer.

The scammer will ring and ask for the householder, normally quoting their name, to make the call seem genuine. They will then claim they work for a computer company, most likely Microsoft, as they know this is the software most people use. The caller will then tell their intended victim that they have received a report from their internet service provider of serious virus problems on the computer.

At this stage the scammer may;

- Install an antivirus program on the computer – typically the kind that can be downloaded from a reputable company for free.
- Ask for credit card details but install nothing. The victim's details might then be sold to other parties or used for fraudulent purposes.
- Install malware on the computer which may enable the computer to be controlled remotely for other illegal or harmful purposes.
- Access and steal personal and financial details from the computer.

If you receive a phone call that you believe may be a scam, do not engage in conversation and hang up immediately. If you receive a similar notification by email or text message, do not open the link and delete it.

If you feel pressured to act, disclose personal details or send money to a stranger, this will certainly be a scam.

Please report any concerns to:

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BANK TRANSFER FRAUD

Residents are urged to be on their guard against scammers who phone claiming to work for their bank's fraud department.

The scammer will phone and allege it has come to the bank's attention that there are some irregularities with the account – either a third party has tried to access it, or there is a problem with any cards associated with that account. They will ask the victim to phone the bank or another organisation to check the validity of their claim and arrange to transfer the money into a separate account. However the scammer will hold the telephone line open, so when the victim makes a new call they will be connected back to them. The fraudster will then advise the victim to transfer their money into a new account. Once this has been done, the victim will not be able to trace the new account and their money is lost.

Real Life Case Study

Mr N, who is older man living alone since his wife moved into a care home, received an unsolicited phone call from a man who alleged to work for the fraud department at his bank. He said he was investigating his account. Mr N was advised to phone back to arrange a bank transfer. When Mr N phoned the number he was given, he was advised to transfer his money into a new account. He was told this was a different branch of the bank. Mr N agreed to do this and transferred his life savings of £28,000. It was only afterwards when he spoke to his branch that he realised he had been a victim of a fraud. Mr N reported this fraud to the police and Trading Standards, where he received support.

The banks have advised that they will never ask customers to transfer funds or disclose their passwords, so any phone calls must be treated with caution. The best advice is to end any suspicious calls immediately and not give out any personal information.

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SHAREHOLDER SCAM UPDATE

Further to the warning in April's Bulletin, Isle of Wight Council has continued to receive information about this scam.

The scammers will access information on shareholders from a public register, offering to purchase a percentage of their shares from them. The scammer will not correspond by post, and will suggest vulnerable consumers use their local library's fax machine. However, new information suggests that scammers are now starting to advise consumers to use their NHS library at their local hospital. They are then asked to return the fax along with a payment which is made by bank transfer. Once a payment is made the scammer will persist in chasing for more money.

Consumers are urged NOT to respond to any offers of this nature and to report any concerns to the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline.

Five Tips to Protect Yourself against Scams

Scams come in many forms, but there are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself.

- **DO NOT** give out any personal information to organisations or people before verifying their credentials.
- **DO NOT** click on a link in an email if you are unsure of its source.
- **DO NOT** respond to any offer that seems 'too good to be true'.
- **DO NOT** send money or pay a fee to claim a prize or lottery winnings.
- **DO NOT** phone a number starting with 090 – they are charged at a premium rate and can be very expensive.

Isle of Wight Trading Standards Service is warning consumers to be aware of similar scams and to report any concerns to:

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