

Dear all

There has been a reported **400% increase** in scams in March 2020; a clear indication of scammers taking advantage of the current COVID 19 virus. The police and Action Fraud are expecting this to rise as time goes on and more of us are staying home and for longer periods of time.

A number of **phishing/scam emails** are circulating; some examples below:

- Fraudsters purporting to be from a research group that mimic the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organisation (WHO). They claim to provide the victim with a list of active infections in their area but to access this information the victim needs to either: click on a link which redirects them to a credential-stealing page; or make a donation of support in the form of a payment into a Bitcoin account.
- Fraudsters providing articles about the virus outbreak with a link to a fake company website where victims are encouraged to click to subscribe to a daily newsletter for further updates.
- Fraudsters sending investment scheme and trading advice encouraging people to take advantage of the coronavirus downturn.

#### **Text Message Scams**

There have also been reports of text messages that have been made to appear to come from the government. The government have only sent ONE text so far advising everyone to stay home. The other texts are scams – do NOT click on any links. Please see pictures attached.

#### **Other general scams to be mindful of:**

#### **Online Shopping Fraud**

More people may fall victim to online shopping fraud as they self-isolate due to COVID 19. You are a victim of online shopping fraud if you buy goods from an online seller that never arrive. The majority relate to the online sale of protective items such as facemasks, and other items in short supply due to the outbreak, that don't exist.

Find out more at: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/online-shopping-fraud>

#### **Loan scams**

People may be worrying about their finances during the outbreak. Lender loan fraudsters will use the opportunity to:

- approve your application for a fast loan regardless of your credit history
- ask you to pay an upfront fee
- take your payment and never provide the loan

Find out more at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/loan-scams>

#### **Mandate Fraud**

As more people work from home due to COVID 19, fraudsters may try to get you to change a direct debit, standing order or bank transfer mandate, to divert funds to their bank account, by purporting to be an organisation you make regular payments to.

Find out more at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/mandate-fraud>

#### **Computer Software Service Fraud**

As more people work from home due to the pandemic, fraudsters may capitalise on slow networks and IT problems, to commit computer software service fraud. Be wary of cold calls or unsolicited emails offering you help with your device or to fix a problem

Find out more at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/computer-software-service-frauds>

#### **Investment Fraud**

Fraudsters could try to take advantage of the financial uncertainty surrounding COVID 19 by offering people sham investment opportunities. If you get a cold call or unsolicited email offering you a deal that sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Find out more at <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/investment-fraud>

Please be extra careful!!

Best

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