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Warwickshire Trading Standards Scam alert: Bogus puppy sellers, fraudulent online traders, test & trace scams and scam phone calls

Scam Phone Calls

Residents are warned to beware of scam phone calls after a spate of bogus calls were reported recently to Warwickshire Trading Standards. They included:

- Phone calls from fraudsters claiming to be calling from Amazon, saying that the resident owes money for an order or that there has been an unauthorised purchase on the resident's account.
- Bogus phone calls from people falsely claiming to represent HMRC, stating that they have either defrauded the Government or owe money to the Government and will be arrested if they don't immediately resolve the problem.
- False threats to cut off utilities, in particular broadband because of unpaid debts.
- Fraudsters claiming to be calling from 'Scotland Yard' to say that the resident's bank account had been cloned and money used to purchase consumer electricals. The caller asks the resident to dial 999 on their keypad.

In all cases residents are encouraged to reveal personal and financial information, including passwords, or send money, often via bank transfer or gift cards. Trading Standards advice is to put the phone down. It is highly unlikely that you will receive an unsolicited genuine phone call from any company or Government department. If you believe a call to be genuine, phone them back on a publicly listed telephone number.

Bogus Puppy Sellers

During lockdown, the popularity of buying a puppy has increased and this has encouraged scammers to take advantage of the increased demand. Buyers have reported attempting to purchase puppies via Internet small ads and social media websites where they are often asked to pay hundreds of pounds up front. Prospective owners are shown photographs or video of the puppy before fraudsters then take the money and disappear; no puppy is forthcoming. Buyers should also beware of purchasing illegally bred puppies (including illegal imports) and stolen puppies. Guidance is available from the RSPCA:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/puppy> and Dogs Trust:

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/buyer-advice/>

Fraudulent Online Traders

COVID-19 has led to a boom in online sales and with it have appeared bogus sellers. Their websites appear glossy and professional and advertise what at first glance appear to be good quality products. The companies themselves claim to be based in the UK or Europe. In reality, these websites are selling poor quality products. The traders are often based in the Far East and many consumers have reported that products either don't arrive at all or take months to be delivered. They have been unable to get their money back when problems are found, including damaged, poor quality and counterfeit goods.

Shopping online advice: <https://www.getsafeonline.org/shopping-banking/shopping1/>

Investment Scams

Residents interested in investing are warned to beware of bogus 'celebrity endorsement' advertisements that often appear on the Internet and social media, directing people to scam investment websites that take money but deliver little or nothing. The Financial Conduct Authorities' Scam Smart website has advice on how to avoid investment and pension related scams: <https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart>

Be Alert to Test and Trace Potential Scams

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has issued a warning to residents to be vigilant after being alerted to new reports of fraudsters posing as people from the NHS Test and Trace programme, launched to help control the COVID-19 virus.

The District Council is concerned that the system is being targeted by scammers, who are pretending to be contact tracers in a bid to trick people into parting with their personal information.

People will be alerted by the NHS Test and Trace service if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Contact tracers will:

- call from 0300 013 5000
- send text messages from 'NHS' · ask people to sign into the NHS test and trace contact-tracing website
- ask for full name and date of birth to confirm identity, and postcode to offer support while self-isolating
- ask about the coronavirus symptoms
- ask people to provide the name, telephone number and/or email address of anyone they have had close contact with in the two days prior to symptoms starting (as with your own details these will be held in strict confidence and will be kept and used only in line with data protection laws)
- ask if anyone they have been in contact with is under 18 or lives outside of England

They will not ask:

- for bank details, or payments
- for details of any other accounts, such as social media
- set up a password or PIN number over the phone
- to call a premium rate number, such as those starting 09 or 087

Find out more about the NHS Test and Trace service by visiting – <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

If you have been a victim of fraud or cybercrime you can report it to Action Fraud at <http://www.action.fraud.police.uk> or by calling 0300 123 2040.

- Please feel free to re-distribute this scam alert
- Citizens Advice Consumer Service, tel: 0808 223 1133
- Visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards for more help and advice
- An online version of this alert is available to view here: <https://safeinwarwickshire.com/2020/09/30/bogus-puppy-sellers-fraudulent-online-traders-test-trace-scams-and-scam-phone-calls/>
- If you no longer wish to receive this email, please contact me

Best Wishes

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