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Warwickshire Trading Standards Scam Alert: Green Homes Grant, Amazon Scams, Bogus Loan Offers, Bitcoin Fraudsters, Scam Texts and Tax Returns

Dear All,

For your information. Please distribute this message as you see fit.

Kind regards

Simon Cripwell
Senior Trading Standards Officer
Warwickshire County Council

Green Homes Grant

The Government has launched its 'Green Homes Grant' created to improve the energy efficiency of homes and boost the economy.

Only approved and checked traders can carry out the work agreed through the grant scheme. However, Trading Standards are concerned that rogue traders may attempt to exploit the scheme.

Warwickshire Trading Standards wants to ensure that Warwickshire residents wishing to take advantage of the scheme, access the home improvements voucher in the correct way.

1. Say no to cold callers.
2. Apply for a voucher first, not all improvements are in the scheme
3. Don't be rushed in to making a quick decision
4. For full scheme details, including help to find a trustworthy installer, visit:
<https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/pages/green-homes-grant>

Don't fund fraudsters, do your homework, and support good traders.

Amazon Phone Scam Resurfaces

Several Warwickshire residents have recently reported Amazon related phone scams. These include being asked for a £39 payment over the phone to 'renew' their Amazon account. Consumer magazine WHICH reported on this scam in

March: <https://conversation.which.co.uk/money/amazon-prime-renewal-scam-phone-call/>

Cold Call Loan Offers

Warwickshire residents have reported receiving unexpected phone calls claiming they have been 'approved' for a loan. Bogus offers of loans usually involve people being asked for an upfront payment to receive the loan. When the payment is made the fraudster disappears. No loan is ever paid. Never accept offers of loans from cold callers.

Bogus Texts

Warwickshire residents are reporting bogus texts, some that appear amongst genuine threads of texts from banks, other service providers or retailers. One Warwickshire resident reported receiving a bogus text from the Halifax bank stating that his online account would be cancelled if he didn't log in to it via a link in the text. Another reported receiving a scam O2 text stating that 'we were unable to process your latest payment' and requesting the recipient 'login in and update your information' to 'avoid late fees'. Again, a bogus link was provided. A third said she had received a bogus PayPal text stating that her 'billing address needs to be updated' and that therefore her account had been placed temporarily on hold. To 'resolve' the matter, again, she was directed to a scam web page via a link.

Most of these scam texts contain a link that directs the recipients to a fake login page from which usernames and passwords can be stolen. Never log into a web account via a link in an email. Always log in via the company official website or app.

Bitcoin Investment Fraudsters Target Warwickshire Residents

Investors are warned to beware of approaches from fraudsters via social media, offering huge profits from Bitcoin investing. Trading Standards has received reports of residents losing hundreds of pounds after transferring money to people who claimed they could invest the money in Bitcoin for large profits. When no profits are forthcoming, the victims of the fraud are usually asked to pay hundreds more to see their non-existent gains!

Financial advice on products can only be provided by FCA regulated firms. Financial guidance is a much broader term and includes more general information about financial products. Anyone can give financial guidance, but they will not recommend a specific course of action to you or give a personal recommendation about how you should invest. Guidance can include information about different types of investments or general principles for you to consider when investing.

Further information can be found here:

Financial Conduct Authority: <https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart>

WHICH: <https://www.which.co.uk/money/investing/financial-advice>

Bogus Tax Returns

Warwickshire residents have reported receiving cold calls from fraudsters offering to assist people to make a tax return claim. The fraudster requests a copy of the person's payslip or P45 before claiming they will be able to obtain several thousand pounds from HMRC. The catch is that they ask for a smaller upfront payment. At this point the fraudster stops taking calls from the scam victim and no tax refund is ever paid.

DVLA Phishing Email

Beware bogus DVLA phishing emails that state that there are 'irregularities with your current profile', (whatever that is), and direct you to an online form to 'update your details'. Many crude phishing emails direct you to online forms designed to steal personal and financial information. Delete phishing emails!

New hotline launched to report COVID fraudsters

A new hotline has been launched to stop fraudsters illegally targeting COVID stimulus schemes.

In an initiative between government and the independent charity Crimestoppers, the public can now call a new **COVID Fraud Hotline (0800 587 5030)** anonymously and free of charge to report suspected fraudulent activity.

Over 150 COVID support schemes have been introduced by the government to help those struggling financially, but a minority of individuals have been abusing these schemes by claiming support illegally.

Although fraud is a hidden crime and can take time to be discovered, the public can still look out for tell-tale signs. These can include unusual buying activity by companies and individuals, as well as cold calling by those falsely claiming to be from the government, offering money for schemes.

- This scam alert is available to view online here: <https://safeinwarwickshire.com/2020/10/20/green-homes-grant-amazon-scams-bogus-loan-offers-bitcoin-fraudsters-scam-texts-and-tax-returns/>
- 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
- Warwickshire Trading Standards Approved Trader Scheme: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/approvedtraders>
- If you no longer wish to receive these alerts, please email: tradingstandards@warwickshire.gov.uk

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