

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH – ALERTS AND ADVICE

Public Urged To Be Vigilant To Scam Vaccine Messages – January 2021

Following reports in other parts of the country we are warning the public to be wary of messages claiming to be from the NHS asking the recipient to apply for their vaccine. At a time when people are already feeling anxious and eagerly awaiting details of the impending vaccine, scammers are using this to their advantage to commit fraud. If you receive such a text, don't follow the link or share any personal or financial details. The link will take you through to a fake NHS website which is purposefully designed to exploit vulnerable people.

Fraudsters have tried to use the vaccine as a convincing subject to hook potential victims since the pandemic began. Thankfully reports have been relatively low, however there has been an increase in the last two months. The vaccine roll-out brings further hope of fighting coronavirus and keeping people safe. Now that this is imminent and has been so widely covered, some people may be more easily misled.

You will be contacted by the NHS when you're invited to receive the vaccine which will be offered in some hospitals, some pharmacies and hundreds of local vaccination centres run by GPs. Remember that the vaccine is free of charge, at no point will you be asked for payment details.

Detective Sergeant Sean Tregunna commented: "Although we've not been made aware of any cases in Wiltshire yet, it's likely to only be a matter of time before we are. The text message some people have received was shared on social media over the Christmas period and although this does help to raise awareness of the issue, the most vulnerable may not be on social media themselves so we're asking people to share the information and warn their friends and family. "The same scam has also been reported as being conducted over the phone, the caller often asks for a number to be pressed on their keypad, resulting in a charge likely being added to their phone bill, so you simply need to hang up. "We're keen to prevent as many people falling victim to these scams as possible and urge people to not only share the warning but if they do receive a suspicious text, forward it to 7726 which is free of charge."

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, report it to Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk or call on 0300 123 2040.

Spotting the Scammers March 2020

Wiltshire Police wants to remind residents to be aware of fraudsters trying to take advantage of others during the current global situation. We've heard from other police

forces of new scams which are targeting the elderly and most vulnerable who are self-isolating at home. Examples of fraud include, people visiting homes posing as police officers and/or health officials trying to gain entry with a view to burgle them. The criminals will often offer fake coronavirus testing as well as bogus food and medicine delivery services. So far, we have not seen any such cases in Wiltshire - but we want to make people aware.

Top tips to thwart the fraudsters:

- Be a good neighbour - keep an eye on an elderly or vulnerable person living near you.
- Check ID - volunteers working with the health and emergency services will be in possession of the necessary documentation to prove they are genuine.
- If in doubt call us - if you are not sure about someone, don't engage and report any serious suspicious behaviour.
- Online fraud - don't click on links or attachments in suspicious emails, and never respond to unsolicited messages and calls that ask for your personal or financial details.
- Shopping online - if buying from a company or person you don't know and trust, carry out some research first, and ask a friend or family member for advice before completing the purchase. If you decide to go ahead with the purchase, use a credit card if you have one as most major credit card providers insure online purchases.

The majority of groups are well intentioned and will be working with charities or a local authority and should have proof that they are doing so.

Remember, currently in Wiltshire, police officers and medical professionals are not doing door-to-door checks or administering tests.

Report any suspicious person or activity to us straight away so we can gather evidence and take action against the individuals.

Call 101, if non-urgent, or 999 in an emergency. You can also report crime online now via our website www.wiltshire.police.uk

COUNCIL TAX SCAM

Scammers are trying to get people to hand over their financial details by sending emails pretending to be from the Government. The message claims that you are owed a council tax refund and when a link is clicked, it takes you to a convincing GOV.UK-style website. They then ask for your personal details so they can send you the cash, but you won't receive any money and they're likely to take some from you.

HMRC ALERT - What you need to know

Action Fraud has experienced an increase in the reporting of malicious calls and voicemails, to members of the public purporting to be from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Fraudsters are spoofing genuine HMRC telephone numbers to deceive their victims over the phone. The fraudsters state that as a result of the victim's non-payment of tax or other duty, the victim is liable for prosecution or other legal proceedings in order to settle the balance. The fraudsters suggest victims can avoid this, by arranging payment to be made immediately by methods such as bank transfer or by purchasing iTunes gift cards. If the victim is hesitant or refuses to comply, the suspect makes a threat such as immediate arrest, sending bailiffs to the victim's address or, in some cases, deportation. Often, the period for which the tax is allegedly due is distant enough to guarantee the victim will have little, if any, paperwork or ability to verify the claims. Once the money is paid the suspects sever all contact with the victim.

In genuine cases, HMRC will initially make direct contact with you via post/letter and potentially follow up that letter with a phone call at a later date. If HMRC contact you via telephone they will quote the reference number on the initial letter you should have received. HMRC will not discuss something you are not already aware of, like a tax investigation, and will NOT demand immediate payment. It is vital that the public exercise caution when receiving messages or telephone calls of this nature.

What you need to do:

Always question unsolicited requests for your personal or financial information. Just because someone knows your basic details (such as your name and contact details), it doesn't mean they are genuine. Instead, contact the company directly using trusted methods such as a known email address or phone number. Legitimate organisations wouldn't ask you to pay taxes, bills or fees using an iTunes gift card, or any other type of voucher. If you're contacted by anyone that asks you to do this, you're likely the target of a scam. Don't be rushed or pressured into making a decision. Under no circumstances would a genuine bank or some other trusted organisation force you to make a financial transaction on the spot. Report Phishing attempts. If you receive a call, text or email of this nature and have not lost money, you can report this as phishing to Action Fraud