

SCAMS AWARENESS UPDATE

Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project

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Gardening, TV and Romance

Welcome to July's Scams Awareness Update Bulletin.

This month we feature romance , as last year alone, over £68 million was lost to romance fraud. Action Fraud received 5820 reports about this, with the average loss to victims being almost £18,000.

Other features inside include gardening and home maintenance scams, along with being alert to TV licence and covert operations scams.

Every month the Scams Awareness and Aftercare project team hear how this bulletin has reached far and wide to empower older people in the fight against scams.

Information about the project and further resources can be found on our [Age UK Cheshire East website](https://www.ageukcheshireeast.org) or by contacting Sally Wilson at sally.wilson@ageukce.org or on 07932 999902.

For readers in the northern part of the Cheshire East borough, turn to page 4 for how you can benefit from the project.

We all like to feel wanted, especially if we're feeling lonely. Unfortunately, scammers play on this natural human emotion to defraud people of their money. Put simply, criminals will pretend to have romantic feelings for you, gain your trust, and then use your goodwill to commit fraud against you.

Scammers will build a relationship with you to then ask you for money or gifts. They may also use conversations you have to find out enough personal information to steal your identity.

Here are some real-life examples:

A 73-year-old lost in the region of £16,000 after having to pay for every email sent and received from a dating website.

A man built up an intense online relationship with a woman over several months, only to go on to con her out of over £16,000, claiming his company was in financial difficulty.

A 86-year-old man conned out of thousands of pounds by a woman stealing his credit card details when buying a train ticket to visit him. She had a false online profile and never visited, instead using the credit card to buy £6000 of goods.

In cases of romance fraud, the emotional damage often outweighs the financial loss. Many become victims due to isolation and loneliness. Keeping a healthy lifestyle and active social life can prevent people becoming victims of scams.

REMEMBER:

-  Don't share too much personal information
-  Don't reveal any financial details. If someone asks for them, stop communicating with them and report it to the dating site.
-  Don't click on links or attachments in emails from someone you've just met on a dating site.

KEEP SAFE BY...

-  Avoiding posting details such as your full name, date of birth, home or work addresses. Criminals use these types of personal information to steal your identity.
-  Never responding to any requests to send money, or have money transferred into your account by someone you don't know and trust.

If you have been a victim of romance fraud you can report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk. To get advice from a Citizens Advice Scams Action Advisor, call 0800 250 5050.



Homes and gardens can look lovely at this time of year. Don't be fooled by some leaflets put through your door offering 'cut price' garden or home maintenance services.

Whilst these glossy leaflets MAY look to be from genuine companies (the 'phone numbers, addresses or even websites make the firm appear to be local) many are from rogue traders based elsewhere.

Prices initially quoted will sound 'too good to be true', which usually means that they are! A simple gardening job, which should cost hundreds, can end up costing you thousands of pounds!

If you need a job doing why not ask around locally or visit the [Buy with Confidence](#) government website to find a Trading Standards' approved trader.

From 1st August 2020 most over-75s will have to pay for their TV licence.

TV Licensing will write to all over 75 licence holders starting in August to let you know what action you'll need to take for your next licence.

TV Licensing will only contact you by letter about your new licence. So, if you receive a request for information or money by email or phone, it's a scam.

Age UK has also [published guidance](#) about the changes and how to avoid potential TV licence scams.



Criminals, pretending to be the Police, continue to try to trick local residents into thinking that their bank account or credit/debit card has been compromised. They ask the account holder to help and to NOT tell anyone, especially bank staff, that they're helping the Police.

Remember - the Police NEVER asks members of the public to take part in operations to catch crooks. If you are approached over the 'phone or online do NOT agree to do anything. Simply **ring 101** and pass on the details to the real Police.

The lockdown may be easing but Coronavirus scams continue - be careful when shopping online, goods offered on your doorstep and be wary of any calls, texts or emails offering refunds, or asking for payment for NHS Test and Trace.

If you spot these or other scams, you can report them by following the advice in the [May edition of this bulletin](#).

The Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project, which produces this bulletin, runs in partnership with Cheshire East Council Trading Standards, and is funded by The Garfield Weston Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund.

If you live in the towns of Macclesfield, Knutsford, Congleton, Wilmslow, Poynton, Alderley Edge and their surrounding areas, you may also be interested in...

Aftercare Support

Being scammed leaves people feeling isolated, alone and anxious. Feeling isolated can make you more vulnerable to scams.

We can support older people to rebuild their confidence and reengage with their community.

If you have been a victim of fraud and would like support contact sally.wilson@ageukce.org or **07932 999902**.

Scams Awareness Sessions

Calling older people interest groups

Are you meeting online through lockdown?
Would you like to become scam aware?

We're excited to offer scams awareness sessions on Zoom.

Contact sally.wilson@ageukce.org (**07932 999902**) for more information.

Project Community Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers with local community knowledge to be the eyes and ears of our Scams Awareness & Aftercare project.

You can offer as little or as much time as you would like.

Interested and want to find out more? Contact us today at volunteering@ageukce.org or on **01625 612958**

COMING NEXT TIME...

- **Current scams**
- **Focus on online shopping scams**

Though we don't like to see you leave, you can unsubscribe from these bulletins by emailing sally.wilson@ageukce.org

The Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project is brought to you by