

SCAMS AWARENESS UPDATE



Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project

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Cost of living fraud

Our crisis is their opportunity

For months, there's been talk about the rise in the cost of living - on TV, in the papers, on social media and in our conversations. We've been talking to family and friends about how we will cope with the rise in energy prices and the cost of the weekly shop. We are also considering how the cost of living rise will affect our pensions or investments.

In short, we're all looking for ways to make our money go further. But, this can make anyone vulnerable to becoming a victim of fraud. Unfortunately, criminals know this. Where we see a crisis, just like the COVID pandemic, criminals see an opportunity to steal our money or personal information.

In these times, we may also be looking to borrow money to make ends meet. This means we could end up owing money to illegal money lenders, also known as loan sharks.

But, as Crimewatch used to say - "Don't have nightmares". Instead, read on and arm yourself with the latest top tips to spot and avoid cost of living scams.

We believe the best way to protect yourself from fraud is to have a personalised scams advice session. That way, we can talk about what's important to **you**. To book a free appointment, contact our Scams Awareness & Aftercare Team on 01625 612958 or at enquiries@ageukce.org

SPOTTING COST OF LIVING FRAUD...

The rise in the cost of living affects every part of our lives. This means there's far more cost of living scams than we could list here. So, we can spot any kind of cost of living scam by remembering our "SUNTAN".

Use this handy guide to help you to spot a scam and beat the fraudsters...

S	Special treatment	<p><i>They make you feel the offer is especially for you.</i></p> <p>For example, an email saying you've been specially selected for 1 of 50 free gift cards.</p>
U	Urgency	<p><i>They try to get you to act without thinking or having the chance to speak to someone.</i></p> <p>One example is a call pretending to be your bank telling you to move your money NOW to a "safe account" as fraudsters are taking money from your account.</p>
N	Not expected	<p><i>You didn't ask them to get in touch.</i></p> <p>A text message asking you to click on a link to apply for the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme.</p> <p>You do not need to apply for this - it will be deducted from your electricity bill automatically.</p>
T	Timing	<p><i>They contact you at a busy time of the day. Offers linked to events through the year.</i></p> <p>A phone call at this time of year offering a home energy survey to see if you're entitled to free energy saving work e.g. loft insulation.</p>
A	Authority	<p><i>They impersonate the bank, police or other trusted organisation.</i></p> <p>A phone call saying you could get a refund as your broadband is slow. They just need your bank details for the refund.</p>
N	No thank you!	<p><i>Scammers use some or all of these tactics.</i></p> <p>If you spot any of these - put the phone down, close the door and don't click on any links in emails or text messages.</p>

Help for Households

■ **Know the facts:** If we have trusted information about what we're entitled to from the government, we can avoid the scams calls, emails and texts about them.

The government has provided information about all the cost of living payments, from household costs, income support, help with energy bills and transport costs.

It is online at www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk. If you're not online, you could ask the library to show you the information on their computers.

■ **Know your property:** To avoid becoming a victim of rogue traders, take time now, in the daylight to identify any work that might need doing to your home. Walk round with family, a neighbour or friend and write a list of jobs to be done.

If you find there's work is needed, find a trader through recommendations from trusted friends or look up a Trading Standards approved trader at www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk or by calling **0300 123 5500**.

Then, when anyone knocks at your door or posts flyers through your letter box offering to do some work, you can say "No thank you; it's in hand".



■ **Know your friends:** As the cost of living crisis bites, people may be looking to borrow money to make ends meet. Unwittingly, some may be drawn into borrowing money from an illegal money lender, also known as a loan shark. More than two-thirds of people affected by illegal lending believed the lender was a friend when they took out the loan.

Be very wary of anyone who offers you a cash loan without any paperwork, even if you believe they are a friend. You could end up paying a huge amount of interest, being threatened or them taking your bank card, passport or benefits card.

Always check that the person you're borrowing money from is licensed to do so by contacting the Financial Conducts Authority at www.fca.org.uk/firms/financial-services-register, or call **0800 111 6768**.

More information about avoiding loan sharks can be found at www.stoploansharks.co.uk.

Know that when an offer is too good to be true, it usually is!

As always, if you have given money, personal or financial information to someone who you think is not genuine, tell your bank immediately and report it to [Action Fraud](http://ActionFraud.org) online or on 0300 123 2040.

Here are some recent frauds to look out for. Please share with family, friends and community.

Energy rebate fraudulent texts continue

As mentioned on page 2, a current scam is a message inviting you to apply for the £400 energy rebate. Here is an example. As with all fraudulent messages, clicking on the link takes you to a fake website where you're asked for your bank details to issue the rebate.

You do not need to apply for the £400 energy rebate. It will be deducted from your electricity bill in equal amounts between October and March.

GOV.UK: You are eligible for a discounted energy bill under the Energy Bills Support Scheme. You can apply here: <https://energy.support-rebate.com>

The lure of high-risk investments

Which? are warning us to be wary of offers of savings account rates and unregulated investments, such as cryptocurrency, that claim to offer high returns.

With inflation far outpacing traditional savings account rates, there's a growing temptation to be drawn into these schemes to make our investments go further.

Always seek independent financial advice before making investments and independently check whether any person or company offering investments is authorised to do so.



Aldi gift card fraud on social media

We've had reports of a social media scam. The post offers a free Aldi giftcard worth £200.

It asks people to click on a link, which then asks for personal details including addresses and bank details.

Remember, if it's something for nothing or sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

We recommend you don't click on any links on social media to win giftcards. Any suspicious posts can be reported to Action Fraud.



Fraudulent Amazon recruitment text

One of our volunteers has received this text offering the opportunity to work part-time from home. As we try to make our money go further, we could be tempted to respond. But, this text has many the hallmarks of "SUNTAN" (page 2) - specially selected, respond urgently and not expected.

No reputable company would recruit people through WhatsApp. If you clicked on the link, it would likely ask you for bank details for you to be "paid".

Hello, Amazon has invited you to work part-time from home. Make £50 - £300 a day on your phone and get paid on the same day. Simple tasks can be done anywhere, anytime. Add My Whatsapp now: + 447551020282 Sign up or click the link below to sign up wa.me/447551020282 Limited numbers available today only

COMING NEXT TIME

- Current fraud alerts
- Ho Ho Ho - Christmas frauds

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