

ISSUE 61

SCAMS AWARENESS NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME TO OUR Monthly Newsletter

The 12 Frauds of Christmas



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For many of us, the festive period is a time for family, familiar traditions, and a bit of much-needed cheer. Sadly, it's also a time when scammers become more active. Criminals know that people are shopping and giving more than usual, and they often look to take advantage of the busy season.

By being aware of the most common Christmas frauds, you can help protect yourself and those around you while enjoying the holidays with greater confidence.

In this issue we feature 12 Frauds of Christmas, along with some simple tips to help you stay safe.



1. The Fake Charity Scam

December is the biggest month for charitable donations, and scammers take advantage by pretending to represent well-known charities or creating fake ones from scratch. They often call, send emails, or create social-media posts designed to tug at the heartstrings.

Signs of a scam:

- Pushy requests for immediate donations.
- Collectors without official ID or sealed charity buckets.
- Emails that link to unfamiliar websites.

Stay safe:

Check if a charity is real by searching the [Charity Commission](#) register. Donate only through an official website or by calling the charity on a number you look up yourself.

2. Online Shopping “Bargains” That Aren’t Real

Scam websites often pop up at Christmas, offering unbelievably cheap electronics, toys, or branded items.

Signs of a scam:

- Prices much lower than major retailers.
- No physical address, no returns policy, or only an email for contact.
- Only accepting payment through bank transfer, prepaid card, or cryptocurrency.

Stay safe:

Stick to well-known shops or trusted platforms. Look for online reviews and be wary of sites with spelling mistakes or a strange web address. Check if the website is legitimate - [Free Website Scam Checker - Check a website by Get Safe Online](#)

3. Delivery and Parcel Scams

With so many people ordering gifts online, scammers send fake Royal Mail, DPD, Evri, or Amazon texts claiming a parcel couldn't be delivered.

Signs of a scam:

- Texts asking you to pay a small “redelivery fee.”
- Links that do not match the company's official website.
- Messages when you aren't expecting a parcel.

Stay safe:

Never tap the link. Visit the courier's official website or app to check delivery status.

4. Gift Card and Voucher Fraud

Gift vouchers are popular at Christmas, but scammers misuse them to steal money.

Common scams include:

- Someone phoning and demanding payment using gift cards.
- Online adverts selling discounted vouchers that turn out to be empty or fake.

Stay safe:

Buy gift cards directly from the retailer. Never use them to pay bills, fines, or fees - no legitimate organisation will ask you to.

5. Fake Seasonal Job Ads

Extra seasonal work is attractive, and scammers know it. They post fake job listings on social media or send them by email.

Signs of a scam:

- Being “hired” immediately without an interview.
- Requests for your passport, bank details, or NI number right away.
- They send you a “cheque” and ask you to send money back.

Stay safe:

Apply only through official employer websites or reputable UK job boards such as Indeed, the GOV.UK job portal, or the company’s own careers page.

6. Travel and Holiday Booking Scams

Fraudulent travel agents and fake booking sites target people looking for seasonal getaways or family travel.

Signs of a scam:

- Offers that are far cheaper than everywhere else.
- No ATOL or ABTA protection.
- Requests for payment via bank transfer instead of card.

Stay safe:

Always check for ATOL protection when booking holidays. Use trusted UK travel companies and never pay by bank transfer unless you are absolutely sure of the business.

7. Christmas Romance Scams

Scammers know that loneliness is more common during the festive period. They use romance sites, social media, and even messaging apps to build emotional connections—then ask for money.

Signs of a scam:

- They refuse to video chat or meet in person.
- They claim to be working abroad or in the military.
- They ask for money for flights, medical bills, or “a Christmas emergency.”

Stay safe:

Never send money to someone you haven’t met in person. If something feels wrong, talk to a trusted friend or family member.

8. Fake Tech Support and Computer Warnings

Pop-up messages or phone calls claim your computer has a virus and you must act quickly. Around the holidays, scammers take advantage of the surge in online shopping.

Signs of a scam:

- Screens claiming your computer is infected and urging you to call a number.
- Requests to take remote control of your computer.
- Demands for payment to “unlock” your device.

Stay safe:

Shut down your browser or restart your computer. Never let an unexpected caller access your device.

9. “Grandparent” or Family Emergency Scams

Fraudsters phone pretending to be your grandchild, child, or a police officer, claiming someone is in trouble and needs urgent money.

Signs of a scam:

- They start with, “It’s me, do you know who this is?”
- Requests to keep it secret.
- Demands for money via bank transfer or vouchers.

Stay safe:

Hang up and call your family member directly using the number you already know. Police will never ask you to transfer money.

10. Fake Event and Pantomime Tickets

Christmas concerts, markets, and pantos are prime targets for fake ticket sellers.

Signs of a scam:

- Tickets sold through unofficial resale sites or private sellers.
- Prices that are unusually cheap or strangely high.
- Only accepting bank transfers or payment apps.

Stay safe:

Buy tickets only from official venues, recognised ticketing services, or reputable UK resale platforms with buyer protection.

11. Pet and Puppy Scams

Many people look for a pet during the holidays, but fraudulent sellers advertise animals that don't exist.

Signs of a scam:

- Refusal to video call or show the animal in real time.
- Claims that "courier fees" or "holiday transport costs" need to be paid in advance.
- Prices far below normal for the breed.

Stay safe:

Use trusted UK pet-adoption sites, visit in person, and never pay deposits before verifying the seller.

12. Christmas Gift Exchange & Social Media Scams

Social-media "Secret Santa" games and giveaways often exist to gather personal information or trick you into buying items for strangers.

Signs of a scam:

- Promises that you'll receive multiple gifts if you send one.
- Requests for your home address, age, or other personal information.
- Schemes that require you to invite more people to qualify.

Stay safe:

- Avoid any online game or giveaway that asks for personal details or sounds too good to be true.

Your Festive Fraud-Prevention Checklist

- Pause and think before responding to unexpected calls or messages.
- Never share passwords, PINs, or banking details with anyone who contacts you unexpectedly.
- Don't click on links in suspicious emails or texts.
- Use your bank/credit card, not bank transfer, when paying online for extra protection.
- Check for ATOL/ABTA when booking holidays.
- Call organisations back using a number from their official website.

If you are affected by the content of this bulletin, you can talk to us. Our Scams Awareness and Aftercare Team can offer free support, advice and guidance. Contact our team today on:



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Merry Christmas

From all of us at Age UK Cheshire, we wish you a happy, healthy, and fraud-free Christmas and New Year.