Cheshire East Age UK

ISSUE 3 JUNE 2020

SCAMS AWARENESS UPDATE

Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project

In this update:

COVID-19, Investments & Phishing

It's already time for the June edition of this bulletin!

There are still many scams around COVID-19. As restrictions are relaxed, we see an opportunity to connect with loved ones. Unfortunately, fraudsters see it only as another opportunity for gain.

Beyond COVID-19 criminals are still attempting to scam us. This month, we focus on investment and pension scams. There's also top tips on how to spot a scam (phishing) email.

The Scams Awareness and Aftercare project is going from strength to strength, even in lockdown. People have let us know about scams, so we can warn others. We can now also offer virtual awareness sessions to older persons groups in the northern part of the Cheshire East borough.

For more information, please visit the Age UK Cheshire East website or contact Sally Wilson at sally.wilson@ageukce.org or on 07932 999902.

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

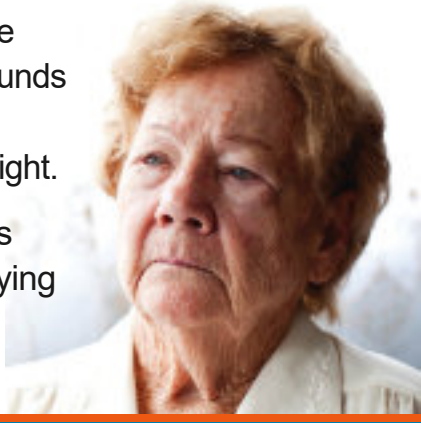
Cheshire East Age UK · Cheshire East Council Trading Standards · Garfield Weston Foundation · Community Fund

INVESTMENT SCAMS

Anyone can become a victim of investment fraud. Many people lose their entire life savings to investment scammers. Fraudsters may cold-call you by telephone, on the doorstep or online. They will try to sell you investments that they claim will lead to higher financial gains than those of established investments like ISAs. In reality the investment offered may not exist or is worthless.

Pension scams are a type of investment fraud. Scammers design attractive offers to persuade you to transfer your pension pot to them (or to release funds from it). It is then often invested in unusual and high-risk investments like overseas property, renewable energy bonds, forestry, or simply stolen outright.

Since April 2015, people have been able to access their pension savings when they reach 55. Scammers are now targeting this age group and trying to con them out of their pension money.



Fraudsters spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down. They will look plausible, may have mocked-up glossy brochures and use befriending techniques over a period of time to gain your trust.

Here's how to protect yourself:

1

Reject unexpected offers

It's okay to refuse any offer.

2

Check who you are dealing with

Check with the Financial Conduct Authority (0800 111 6768) to see if a company is registered; don't rely on data from Companies House.

3

Don't be rushed or pressured

Genuine companies will give you time to consider your options.

4

Get impartial information or advice

You can find an adviser through the Society of Later Life Advisers (0333 2020 454) or Unbiased (0800 023 6868)

If you suspect you have been a victim of a pension or investment scam:

Report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk

Report it to the FCA on 0800 111 6768 or at www.fca.org.uk/consumers/report-scam-us

CURRENT SCAMS

The government launched the Test and Trace system towards the end of May. Already, scammers could be exploiting this to send fake Test and Trace messages. The message asks for personal details by directing you to a fraudulent website. Here's a reminder of what the Test and Trace contact tracers **will** and **won't** do.

HM Government

NHS Test and Trace

Contact tracers will NEVER

- ✗ Ask you to make any form of payment
- ✗ Ask any details about your bank account
- ✗ Ask you for any passwords or PINs
- ✗ Ask you to download anything

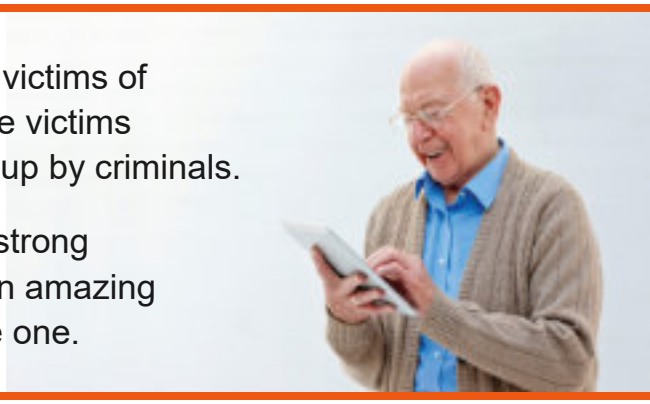
Contact tracers WILL

- ✓ Ask you to confirm or provide your full name, date of birth and contact details.
- ✓ Ask for details of any COVID-19 symptoms you may have had.
- ✓ Contact you my email, text or phone.
- ✓ Only use the number 0300 013 5000.
- ✓ Ask you to sign into the contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk website

If you feel uncomfortable talking on the phone, or suspect the call to be a scam, ask for an email or a text that will invite you to use the Test and Trace web site instead. To check if the link to the website is genuine go to fullfact.org/online/test-and-trace-scam/

Action Fraud has received thousands of reports from victims of coronavirus-related online shopping scams, where the victims purchase goods from legitimate-looking websites set up by criminals.

Research any seller you don't know or trust and use strong passwords on your accounts. Avoid clicking on links in amazing offers emails and use a credit card to pay, if you have one.



There are still reports of fraudsters offering COVID-19 testing kits on the doorstep. They offer to carry out the test and give the results in a quick turnaround time. These are a scam. They will take your money and never return.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 you can book a free test by contacting NHS online or calling 119.

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

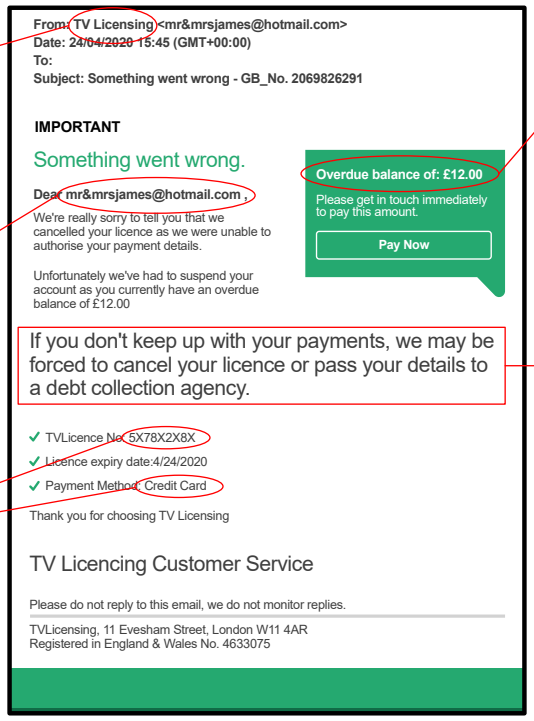
HOW TO CATCH A PHISH

Phishing is when criminals send bogus emails to thousands of people, in an attempt to get you to disclose private information (e.g. your login or password) or to infect your device with viruses.
These emails may look as though they come from reputable organisations, but they are actually from fraudsters. Here's an example:

The sender's email address may include the company's address, but not correctly. Check directly with the company.

The email starts with impersonal greeting instead of your real name.

Check basic details - this licence no. and payment method did not match the customer's real licence.



There may be a request for money, personal information or bank details.

The message creates a sense of urgency.

The email may have errors in its spelling or grammar, or be written in an unusual style.

It may contain a link to a website that looks very similar to the company's real one but is actually a fake site asking for your personal details. Be aware that you can be taken to a fake website even if the link appears to be correct.

HM Revenue & Customs

HMRC is another organisation scammers like to mimic in emails. The government has produced some useful information on [Genuine HMRC contact and recognising phishing emails]

COMING NEXT TIME...

- **Current scams**
- **Focus on romance scams**

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

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