

Coronavirus Scams - March 2020

Consumer Alerts

Price increases for goods

The Service is receiving a number of complaints about shops excessively increasing the prices of goods, particularly food stuffs and sanitisation products that are in high demand. Whilst suppliers are free to set their own prices, Trading Standards work closely with the Competition and Markets Authority and will consider any evidence that companies may have broken competition or consumer protection law.

Reports have also been received regarding misleading claims being made about the efficacy of protective equipment and sanitisation products.

Please report such practices to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 2231133.

Bogus door to door sellers

Lancashire Police have received reports of door to door sales people offering "home Coronavirus testing kits". Please be aware, such items are fake, no such testing facility is currently available to the public in the UK.

The Police have also received reports of cold callers selling hand sanitiser, masks and rubber gloves and whilst this may not be a scam, this Service would urge you against purchasing these items from anyone other than recognised retailers.

Remember Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers.

Scammers shopping for elderly

A number of genuine community groups across the County are setting up, offering to help the elderly and vulnerable with tasks such as shopping. Although we are unaware of problems in the county so far, there is the potential for scammers to take advantage of the situation, taking payment up front, and not returning. Reports of such incidents have already been received in the Rochdale area where the scammers pretended to be from the council.

Be particularly wary of those going door to door and offering these services with no paperwork and contact details. Genuine schemes should be properly organised, with clear paperwork and should give you the option of responding or not.

COVID-19 email tax scam

Beware emails alleging to be from HM Revenue and Customs offering a precautionary tax measure due to the coronavirus outbreak 'in co-operation with National Insurance and National Health Services'. The scam email asks you to click on a link for a refund of £128.34.

HMRC will never contact you in this way, be suspicious of emails alleging to be from government services and never click on any link or give your personal or financial details.

Scam emails from WHO

Hackers are sending emails pretending to be from the World Health Organisation. The email claims that the attached document details how recipients can prevent the spread of the disease. Clicking on the attachment gives the hackers the opportunity to infect the computer with malicious software.

If you would like to read information given out by the WHO, go directly to their official website.

Scam emails from 'Researchers'

Beware receiving any email claiming to be from researchers asking for donations. One such email claimed to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, downloading to a fake Microsoft login page requesting email and password.

Bogus online suppliers

The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau has identified reports where victims have attempted to purchase protective face masks from fraudulent sellers.

Always use known, reputable online suppliers. Best advice for any transactions over £100 is to pay by credit card for extra protection.

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 2231133

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers.

The Safe Trader scheme can help you find a trader in your area, contact 0303 333 1111 or go to www.safetrader.org.uk