

Trading Standards Scams News



A round-up of the latest scams alerts

Summer 2024

Welcome....

to the latest edition of the Leicestershire Trading Standards Service scams newsletter. Here you will find details of the latest scams and information about how to protect yourself and report a scam.

Lifeline Scams

Trading Standards are warning telecare customers to be aware of fraudsters taking advantage of the digital switchover, as it seems that they are trying to take advantage by tricking vulnerable residents into giving out personal information, and even their bank details. Between now and 2025 telephone providers will be moving their customers from old analogue landlines over to new upgraded landline services using digital technology. This means services that rely on the old landline system such as home phones and healthcare devices will need to be switched over.

The digital switchover is free of charge and residents should be aware that councils and their home care alarm providers or contractors will never ask for personal or financial information over the telephone.

Local Government Association

What is the #DigitalSwitchover?

The UK's old telephone lines are being replaced with a digital network. This may affect some items or services you use.

A graphic with a purple background. On the left, the Local Government Association logo is at the top, followed by the text 'What is the #DigitalSwitchover?'. A white arrow points from this text to a white-bordered box on the right containing the text: 'The UK's old telephone lines are being replaced with a digital network. This may affect some items or services you use.'

Charnwood Lifeline has been made aware that several customers have recently received calls from someone claiming to be from a lifeline company. During the phone call the caller stressed the need to update the customer's lifeline unit from an analogue to a digital unit, and they then asked the customer to disclose their bank details.

Charnwood Lifeline is in the process of updating their equipment to a digital system, however **they will never call you to ask you to disclose your bank details.**

If you receive a call of this nature, do not disclose your bank details or any personal information. We would also encourage you to make your family aware if you receive one of these calls.

Don't assume a call is genuine if the cold caller already knows your name and address, and to further gain your trust, they may say they're a local health worker, from the Council or a lifeline provider.

Other tactics fraudsters could use is to claim you're eligible for a free pendant alarm, or that you need an upgrade of your equipment, asking for card details to cover the ongoing subscription costs or a one-off installation fee. This could be to gain money, or get people stuck into a subscription trap.

If you have any concerns as a Charnwood Lifeline customer, please feel free to call their office on 01509 643970.

Please be vigilant to these sorts of scams, and please report any concerns you may have to the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133

Action Fraud Campaign

Action Fraud urges the public to continue reporting phishing emails. Over 32 million phishing emails have been reported to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS), which has led to more than 329,000 websites addresses being removed by the National Cyber Security Centre.

Action Fraud, the national fraud and cybercrime reporting service, launched a phishing awareness campaign in June 2024.

Together with emails, there has also been a huge number of text messages reported to 7726, which led to more than 60,000 malicious websites being removed from the internet. This is a free service, offered by mobile network providers, allowing customers to forward suspicious text messages.



What is phishing?

'Phishing', or 'smishing' is when criminals use scam emails, text messages, or phone calls to trick victims. It could be an email asking you to "verify" your bank account details, or a text message claiming you've missed a delivery and are required to pay a redelivery fee; the goal is to trick you into revealing personal and financial information.

For example, victims have lost more than £150 each to a fake email claiming to be from TV Licensing. The email claimed that they needed to renew her TV licence as soon as possible. What made the phishing email so believable was that the victim's TV licence had recently expired and the link in the scam email led to a fake TV Licensing website that replicated the real one.

How can you protect yourself?

Fake emails and text messages are becoming more difficult to spot as criminals are constantly creating genuine-looking messages.

Here is some practical advice that you can follow when it comes to dealing with phishing, and protect yourself from fraudsters:

1. If you have any doubts about a message, contact the organisation directly using the contact details on their official website or from a recent bill or invoice you have received.
 - ✓ Do not use the number or website link address in the message. Your bank, or any other official source, will not ask you to provide sensitive information by email or text message.
2. If you have received an email that doesn't seem right, report suspicious emails by forwarding them to: **report@phishing.gov.uk**. Send emails to this address that look suspicious, even if you're not certain they're a scam – they will be checked.
3. Always report suspicious text messages or scam call numbers, free of charge, to 7726. Your provider can find out where the text came from and block or ban the sender.
 - ✓ To report a scam text, forward it to 7726 and then send the sender's number when prompted.
 - ✓ To report a scam call, simply text 7726 with the word 'Call' followed by the scam caller's number.
4. If you've lost money or provided financial information as a result of a phishing scam, notify your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud at [actionfraud.police.uk](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Caller at the door?

Leicestershire County Council Trading Standards have seen a rise in complaints about rogue traders knocking on doors and offering to carry out home improvement works such as roofing, driveways or gardening work. Reports highlight that rogue traders are pushing consumers to have unnecessary works done, through using scare mongering tactics by saying things such as, roof tiles are coming loose and you could have a leak, or loose tree branches could fall on someone. Then they may claim there are further issues such as rotting in the roof, increasing the amount for the cost of the works and very little being done by the traders, if at all.

It is important that Leicestershire residents follow this advice:

- Do not answer the door to cold callers, and if you do, just say 'no'.
- Never agree to work at the door. If you need the work doing that is offered, obtain at least 3 quotes from reputable traders, this will allow you time to consider whether the work is required, to compare the price and discuss with family and friends.
- Don't be pressured as reputable traders will understand if you want time to think about the quote given to you, to check reviews and carry out your own research on the trader before agreeing for works to be carried out.
- Always pay by card or cheque rather than paying by cash and never be pushed into being driven to your bank to withdraw cash.

Family, friends, and neighbours play an important role in looking out and keeping each other safe, particularly those who are more vulnerable. Rogue traders target vulnerable

consumers, and Trading Standards are urging family members and neighbours to help by watching out for signs and prevent their loved ones becoming a victim, by ensuring they are aware of the above advice.

Leicestershire Trading Standards provides information, support, and intervention to residents to enable you to keep safe from fraud, scams and doorstep crime.

We have produced this advice card on how to protect yourself from cold calling as a reminder of the Do's and Don'ts, so you don't get caught out.



Leicestershire Trading Standards

Leicestershire County Council

Caller at the door?

Bogus callers can be very convincing and may look and sound the part, but will often give false details. Be aware of who you answer your door to:

- Do** stop and think first - are you expecting anyone?
- Do** use a door chain if you decide to open the door and make sure your back door and windows are locked
- Do** you know who they are? Check their identity with the head office, a number from the telephone directory or recent bill. **Don't** use any number on their ID badge
- Don't** buy any goods or services from traders on your doorstep
- Don't** agree to have any home improvements done by a cold caller
- Don't** give money to or sign any forms for people who turn up on your doorstep
- Don't** let somebody take you to the bank to get money for them

For further free advice and guidance, call **0808 223 1133**.
To report to police, call **101**, or **999** in an emergency.

Whether you receive telephone calls, emails or even a cold caller at the door, you can keep this handy card by the front door. The advice cards would be useful for those who may live alone and be particularly vulnerable to cold callers.

If you, a family member, friend or neighbour could benefit from having one of these advice cards, you can get in touch to obtain one by calling 0116 305 8000, or email tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk.

Events

In support of Carers Week 2024, last week, our Trading Standards Scams Officer attended an event hosted by [Leicestershire Support For Carers](#). The event, on 11th June was held at Syston Community Centre.

It was a pleasure to share a space with [Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland](#) and provide scams and doorstep crime prevention advice to residents, as well as network with colleagues in attendance from partner organisations.





As part of Dementia Action week, our Trading Standards Scams Officer attended the Memory and Dementia Information Event last at the Braunstone Civic Centre.

She helped raise awareness and provide advice and information on scams and doorstep crime. A very well attended event, it was a pleasure to work with [Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland](#).

If you would like Trading Standards to attend your event or to request a scams awareness session, please

email: tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk

Holiday booking scams

Have you spotted a last-minute holiday deal online? Does the travel company only accept payment by bank transfer? Be careful – this could be a scam.

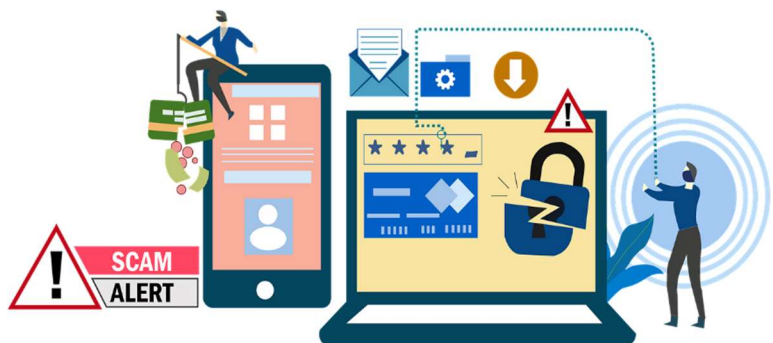
Fraudsters are creating fake adverts and emails to scam holidaymakers. They often impersonate travel companies to trick people into visiting a bogus website.

These websites can look very convincing, and some may even be clones of real travel companies. Fraudsters may ask you to pay for your holiday by bank transfer, but this makes it much harder for you to get your money back.

Holiday cancellations

Fraudsters can use a flight or hotel booking cancellation to scam tourists. They may:

- Send emails posing as your travel company and ask you to claim a refund by going to a fake website.
- Pretend to be from your hotel and ask you to cancel and rebook with them directly to 'save money' or fees.



You may also get a call from a 'refund agent'. These fraudsters may promise a quick refund if you hand over your bank details, sometimes asking for upfront payments disguised as fees.

How to stay safe

- Be careful of deals that come directly to you, especially if they're out of the blue
 - Always research the travel company if you've never heard of them before
 - Always check if your travel company is protected by ABTA or ATOL – you can do this by searching on the [ABTA website](#) or by entering the firm name and reference number on the [ATOL database](#)
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Finally....

If you would like to report a scam, or you have been a victim fraud, you can get in touch with the following organisations:

Action Fraud – <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline - 0808 223 1133

If you think fraudsters may have obtained your money, contact you bank immediately using the contact details on the back of your card.

To keep up to date with the latest scams information and advice, you can follow the Leicestershire Trading Standards Service Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/leicstradingstandards

Leicestershire Trading Standards Service

Tel: 0116 305 8000

Email: tradingstandards@leics.gov.uk

 /LeicsTradingStandards