

## Staying safe from scammers during the coronavirus outbreak

Our trading standards team is urging residents to be extra vigilant and keep themselves safe from scammers during the coronavirus outbreak.

Working with Derbyshire police, trading standards officers are urging people to be wary of possible new coronavirus-related scams being used by doorstep callers and online fraudsters.

We have issued the following advice and are urging people to be aware and stay safe:

### On the doorstep

- Anyone offering to carry out a coronavirus test at your home or sell you a self-testing kit is bogus. Neither the police nor the NHS are offering such a service
- Companies that offer to clean your drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus are also bogus
- Don't hand over cash or bank cards to strangers offering to do your shopping or other errands so that you can stay at home. You may not see them again
- Only answer the door to people you trust
- Make sure doors and windows are locked, even when you're home
- If someone visits and claims to be from a utility service, the health service or similar, ask to see their ID. Ask them to wait while you close the door, call their employer and check their credentials. If they're a genuine caller, they won't mind
- Some people are putting notices in their windows asking for help which may make them vulnerable. It's better to use trusted channels of support.

### On the phone

- Remember your bank will never call and ask you for your PIN number or to transfer money from your account to another. If you receive such a call, hang up.

### Refund scams

- Companies offering fake holiday refunds for people who have been forced to cancel their trips. If you're seeking a refund also be wary of fake websites set up to claim holiday refunds.

## Online

The general online advice applies at this time. Do make sure you have the latest software protection on your devices and don't click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails. Never respond to unsolicited messages and calls that ask for your personal or financial details. There are some coronavirus specific scams to be aware of:

- The biggest area of these is people ordering protective face masks, hand sanitiser, and other products, which never arrive. Don't be tempted by these sites. For any online purchases use a credit card if possible for better protection in case of fraud
- Another area of concern is 'phishing' emails. These attempt to trick people into opening malicious attachments which could lead to fraudsters stealing people's personal information, email logins and passwords, and banking details. While these are always a threat there are some specifically coronavirus-themed ones to look out for:
  - These include fraudsters pretending to have detailed information of coronavirus infections in your area. They will offer you details and updates which will either be bogus or never arrive. Delete them
  - Likewise delete emails offering investment scheme and trading advice to take advantage of the coronavirus downturn
  - Also look out for fraudsters pretending to be from the HMRC tax office offering a tax refund. They set up fake websites, often using the HMRC logo, where they aim to get you to hand over personal and financial details.

Our Cabinet Member for Health and Communities Councillor Carol Hart said:

"It's shocking that people are using the coronavirus to come up with new ways to take money from people through scams, but our trading standards team is continuing to work hard in these challenging times to protect Derbyshire residents.

"It's fine to accept help from trusted friends and relatives but otherwise please be cautious. While a lot of people are being kind and offering to help older and vulnerable people, unfortunately there are people who will see this as an opportunity to take advantage of them.

"We don't want people to worry, but just want them to protect themselves and there's lots of ways they can do this."

Relatives, friends and neighbours are being asked to keep an eye on anyone who may be vulnerable and report anything suspicious. Derbyshire Police can be [contacted on Facebook](#) or [@DerPolContact on Twitter](#). People who can't report via social media should call on someone else to do it for them. If this isn't possible they should call 101 although there may be a longer wait than usual before calls are answered.

You can help to protect your neighbours by joining [Friends Against Scams](#). Their website provides free online training modules to empower people to take a stand against scams.

There are other sources of support including:

- For the latest health information and advice about COVID-19 please visit [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/coronavirus)
- Call Derbyshire: 01629 533190
- Citizens Advice Consumer Service 0808 223 1133
- Action Fraud 0300 123 2040
- Crimestoppers you can call anonymously on 0800 555 111
- For more information on how to shop online safely, please visit [Action Fraud's website](#)
- For information on how to update your devices, please visit the [National Cyber Security Centre website](#).