

Coronavirus Scams – a Trading Standards Perspective

There are signs that the current coronavirus pandemic has led to several scams and unscrupulous practices targeting both consumers and businesses; we can expect to see more.

People will lose money trying to purchase items such as face masks and hand sanitisers, from online marketplaces – payment will be taken but the goods won't arrive. **The safest thing to do is only shop online with retailers you know and recognise.**

People and businesses will receive calls, emails, texts and other messages on their social media, that will look official and helpful – regarding the claiming of rebates, grants and other benefits but these will be bogus. They might be opening their devices to hackers or duped into sending money or banking details to criminals. **We keep saying it because it's right, if it seems too good to be true then it will be so avoid! Citizens Advice (CitA) has a scam checker, and you can access it here:**

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/>

Distraction Burglars posing as healthcare workers have been using the virus to engineer their way into people's homes to steal from them. **If someone comes to your door attempting to gain access for this reason DO NOT LET THEM IN and call the police on 999 right away.**

There's also been bogus *Good Samaritans* offering to fetch shopping for older people but taking their money and never coming back. **Be very wary of strangers offering to do this; maybe a trusted friend or neighbour can help with this instead.**

The coronavirus won't stop Rogue Traders seeking out opportunities for work carrying out home improvements, especially with their core target market of older people being encouraged to self-isolate at home. They will be looking to convince you that roofing, gardening and driveway work in particular, is worth doing and that they can do special deals. Invariably they'll charge more than agreed, carry out poor and ineffectual jobs and will push the work through ignoring the consumer's rights to a 14-day cooling off period. **Now more than ever it's best to simply reject any discussion and tell them to go away. Don't get involved, you are almost certain to regret it.**

Always remember too that if you are self-isolating in line with Government advice you should avoid contact with personal callers to your home anyway.

Carers, neighbours and family, bear this in mind for those who you are in contact with or are concerned about. If you have any concerns or wish to report anything suspicious, please contact Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0808 223 1133**