



Be in the know ...

telephone and mail scams

This leaflet deals with scam mail and scam telephone calls and forms part of South Gloucestershire Council Trading Standards' commitment to help residents protect themselves from such crimes.

£3.5 billion are lost each year to scams and scammers with only a very small number being reported.

What are scams?

Scams are schemes to con people out of their money or valuable information, such as personal and financial details. Trading Standards prefer to use the term 'fraud' because these scams are criminal offences which can have significant impacts upon the victims.

Scams can be perpetrated using the telephone, post, internet, email and on the doorstep.

Telephone scams – be alert

Many telephone scams involve calls from strangers claiming to be from your bank or a well-known company, such as Microsoft or PayPal. The aim of the call is to trick you into believing they are genuine and to provide your bank or other financial details.

Other scams include the caller offering deals that are usually too good to be true; such as being able to reduce your council tax bills, concern investment opportunities, recover compensation for missold pensions or insurance products or deals on home improvement work, such as insulation or roofing work.

Be suspicious if you receive calls of this nature. You do not know who you are talking to or what they are saying is genuine.

Never give **personal** or **financial details**, like your **card numbers** or **PIN**, over the telephone.

Be suspicious of any deals being offered to you over the telephone.

Ask for details to be sent to you in writing – genuine businesses will be happy to do this for you.

If in doubt, **HANG UP** and **REPORT** it to the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **03454 04 05 06** (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm).

Mail scams – be aware

Most mailing scams originate from overseas letters, offering products and promising a cash prize in the form of:

- foreign lotteries
- prize draws
- investment opportunities
- catalogues
- from clairvoyants / psychics.

Their aim is to convince you that you have won money, high value prizes or have been selected for an opportunity that is too good to miss.

You will be asked to send money to claim your winnings and often for personal information such as your date of birth and telephone number. Clairvoyant letters will ask for money in exchange for good luck or to help prevent bad luck. You will then be asked to send more money over time to cover expenses such as administration fees and taxes and your supposed winnings will never arrive.

The prizes offered to you do not exist.

Those who have responded will see an increase in the amount of letters they receive, sometimes up to 10+ a day, and they will also receive telephone calls from them. Victims can lose their life savings chasing the promise of a win.

Be suspicious, if you receive unsolicited letters of this nature. Do not respond, even if it is to say you do not want to receive the letters.

Remove your details from the letter and dispose of it. We suggest to seek advice and call **03454 04 05 06** if you or someone that you know:

- receives a lot of telephone calls from strangers offering goods or services;
- receives a lot of letters from overseas promising large cash prizes or from clairvoyants promising good fortune;
- receive catalogues from overseas offering goods for sale and promising a cash prize if you place an order;
- gets through cheque books very quickly;
- visits the post office often, sending mail overseas;
- has lost money to a scam, whether it is a telephone, mail, internet or email scam.

This pack includes:

Two cheque book stickers

Position them in a prominent place on your cheque book so you can see them every time you write a cheque.

Two phone stickers

Position these stickers on the handset of your telephone/s as a reminder that people who don't know shouldn't be asking for any details from you.

Additional advice to protect yourself from telephone and mail scams:

- To reduce the number of unwanted telephone calls you receive, register with the Telephone Preference Service. Call **0345 070 0707** for free or go to **www.tpsonline.org.uk** for more information.
- To help reduce the number of unsolicited letters you receive you can register with the Mailing Preference Service, which is also a free service. Call **0207 291 3310** or to **www.mpsonline.org.uk** for more information.
- If you require assistance to register with either service ask a family member, friend or neighbour to help.
- Please note that registering these services will not completely stop all unwanted telephone calls and mail but it will help to reduce the volumes you receive.

Trading Standards works in partnership with the Citizens Advice consumer helpline to offer advice and support in matters relating to scams and rogue traders.

If you have any concerns about scams or rogue traders report it and call **03454 04 05 06** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Remember the quicker it is reported, the quicker action can be taken.

Scams and Rogue Trading Prevent and Protect materials produced by South Gloucestershire Council Trading Standards are funded by assets recovered from convicted criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

**If you need this information in another format
or language, please contact: 01454 868009**