



July is 'Scams Awareness' month. This is a joint campaign between the Citizens Advice Bureau and Trading Standards. Essex Police welcome the opportunity to support them. This week we address 'online scams'. For more essential information visit Trading Standards and Citizens Advice Bureau websites.

Online shopping and auction scams – internet shoppers get lured into buying phantom cars, mobile phones, pets or anything else you can buy online. Scammers use a range of tricks including bogus websites, spoofed payment services and 'second chance offers' tempting losing bidders with bogus opportunities. Online property market places are also infiltrated by scammers harvesting legitimate property details and posing as landlords.

Dating scams – using online dating websites, scammers groom victims into long-distance relationships using emails, instant messaging, texting and phone calls. Once they are confident of the victim's trust, scammers will tell them about a problem they are experiencing and ask for financial help.

Software scams – fraudsters often use the names of well-known companies to commit their crime as it gives a mask of legitimacy to their cruel schemes. Methods include asking for credit card details to 'validate' copies of operating systems, stealing personal information, and installing malware before charging to remove it.

Top tips for avoiding scams

- If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
- If you haven't bought a ticket – you can't win it.
- You shouldn't have to pay anything to get a prize.
- Never send money to someone you have never met.
- Your bank will never phone you to ask for your PIN or your online banking password.
- Your bank will never ask you to transfer money to a new account for fraud reasons.
- Genuine computer firms do not make unsolicited phone calls to help you fix your computer.
- Don't suffer in silence – speak out about scams.

If you've lost money because of a scam report it to Action Fraud, the national fraud reporting centre.

You can report the scam through their website or by phone. You can also forward scam emails to them.

Action Fraud

Website: www.actionfraud.police.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 2040.