

# SCAMS AWARENESS UPDATE



## Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project

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## Sun, Celebrations and Scammers!

Last year, just eight days into the first national lockdown, we started our Older Persons Scams Awareness and Aftercare project; a partnership between Age UK Cheshire East and Cheshire East Council Trading Standards.

Twelve months on, with over £34.5 million lost to COVID-19 scams alone in the last year, we are proud to have delivered the first year of our project, empowering older people to spot, avoid and report scams, and supporting victims of fraud get back on their feet. Read on to see what we've achieved.

As the road map to freedom continues, many of us are looking forward to swapping our Zoom calls for zooming off on holiday; from a day trip in the UK to a bit of sun abroad later in the year. Don't let the scammers be the ones sunning themselves with your holiday cash! This month we highlight common holiday scams and how to avoid them.

As always, for more information about our project, to book an awareness session, ask for support or to volunteer with us, visit our website at [Age UK Cheshire East](https://www.ageukcheshireeast.org) or contact Sally Wilson at [sally.wilson@ageukce.org](mailto:sally.wilson@ageukce.org); 01625 612958 / 07932 999902.

## It's been a busy year for our Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project...

<p>More than <b>99</b> scams reported to the project</p> <p>Scam information provided by <b>32</b> volunteers with <b>7</b> volunteers sharing information in their communities</p> <p><b>93</b> one-to-one support sessions for scams advice and post scam support</p>	<p><b>12</b> scams awareness update bulletins now issued to over <b>5,000</b> older people each month...</p> <p>Direct work with <b>551</b> different older people to improve their scams awareness or support post scam recovery</p>	<p><b>27</b> scams awareness sessions delivered to <b>478</b> delegates</p> <p><b>93%</b> older people have stated their confidence in scams awareness has improved</p>
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We're proud to have empowered so many older people to spot, avoid and report scams, and pleased to have helped victims of fraud rebuild their confidence and get back on their feet.

This has been possible thanks to the generosity of our funders, Garfield Weston Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund, and the partnerships we've made along the way. Here are just a few...



### ...and there's still more to come...

- ✓ We'll continue to produce this useful bulletin.
- ✓ We'll be expanding our scams awareness sessions.
- ✓ We'll be supporting more older people who have been a victim of scams to get back on their feet.

### Volunteers still needed!

Our [Scams Awareness Champions](#) feed information into our project about scams they've seen and older people groups that may like a scams awareness session. They raise awareness of scams in their local community and get involved in the project's awareness raising events.

We're currently looking for volunteers in the northern part of Cheshire East.

**Holiday fraud** is when people hand over money only to discover the holiday, accommodation or flight they paid for doesn't exist. It also extends to fraud associated with holiday documents such as passports, visa and health documents.



**Here are a few holiday scams to look out for in the UK and abroad:**



**Incredibly cheap or “free” holidays** - be wary of “free” holidays, as they may be a way of stealing your personal and financial details, or you may end up paying over the odds for extras that the company deem essential. If a holiday offer is so cheap it's too good to be true...it probably is and the holiday may not exist.



**Fake listings on popular sites** - Even if a holiday listed isn't cheap, it could be a scam. Fraudsters sometimes list non-existent holidays or accommodation on reputable holiday letting sites, asking you to pay outside the website's system.



**Sports and religious trips** - fraudsters may take advantage of the limited availability to certain events, but at extortionate prices, or offer tickets that simply don't exist. This may happen more, with the need for social distancing.



**EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) scams** - fraudsters may take advantage of the UK's departure from the EU to persuade you that you need to pay for a new GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card). Current UK-issued EHICs are still valid, and offer the same protection as the GHIC in the EU. Once your EHIC has expired, you'll be able to replace it with a *FREE* GHIC by applying online or by post.



**Passport and visa application fees** - visas are required in many countries around the world for a fee. Fraudsters may take advantage by charging additional fees with no additional benefit.

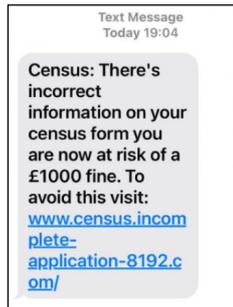
## HOW TO NOT GET STUNG!

Planning a trip can be exciting and really gives us something to look forward to. By following these top tips, you can avoid the scammers and enjoy your holiday.

- ▶ Never reply to unsolicited emails, texts, calls etc. for holiday offers. Do your own research, read a range of reviews, and approach companies independently.
- ▶ Check whether the company is an ABTA Member. You can verify membership by online at [ABTA Member search](#). For flights, you can check whether a company is an ATOL holder by visiting the [CAA website](#).
- ▶ Always pay by debit or credit card. You have more protection with a credit card when payments are over £100. Never pay by direct bank transfer into someone's account.
- ▶ Only use official government websites to apply for GHICs, passports and visas.

Here's our monthly round-up of current scams to watch out for:

## Census 2021 - 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

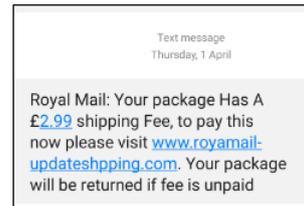


We've had reports of text messages around £1,000 fines for non-completion of the Census 2021. These are a scam, as there's still time to complete the census, and fines would never be issued by text, phone call or email. Census

Field Officers cannot fine you on your doorstep either.

Action Fraud answers lots of your census scam & security questions in the [news section of their website](#).

## Royal Mail scam with a sting in the tail

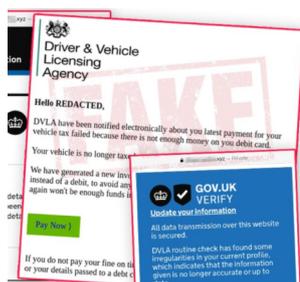


You may receive a text purporting to be from Royal Mail that claims payment is required for a package to be delivered. As with most

scams, the link takes you to a fake website to steal your details.

The sting in the tail is, a few days later, you receive a call allegedly from your bank, stating your account has been compromised and asking you to transfer money to a "safe account". This isn't your bank...it's the scammers, using the details from the fake website.

## DVLA car tax scams



We featured these scams almost a year ago, but they've reared their ugly heads again.

Action Fraud received 440 reports

in just one day of scam emails purporting to be from the DVLA. The email states the recipient's payment has failed and their vehicle is no longer taxed. It then gives a link to make payment to a genuine-looking, but fake, website designed to steal your personal and financial information.



Over £270,000 lost to ticketing fraud in just one month.

With the road map to freedom progressing, you may be looking for

tickets to your favourite concerts and sporting events; but scammers are looking to exploit this.

Remember, be wary of unsolicited emails, texts or adverts offering prices too good to be true. Only buy tickets direct from the venue or from reputable ticket sites and avoid paying by bank transfer.

## COMING NEXT TIME...

- Current scams

- Romance fraud

Though we don't like to see you leave, you can unsubscribe from these bulletins by emailing [sally.wilson@ageukce.org](mailto:sally.wilson@ageukce.org)

The Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project is brought to you by



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