



Safe in East Sussex

In Focus – Fraud, Rogue Trading and Cyber Crime

September 2017

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Royal Mail; BT; Get Safe Online; National Cyber Security Centre; Action Fraud



In 2016/17 the East Sussex Serious and Organised Crime Local Profile highlighted the range of frauds impacting East Sussex, primarily the targeting of vulnerable elderly victims. In response the Safer Communities Partnership adopted vulnerable victims of fraud and rogue trading associated with serious organised crime as a priority area. Further to this being adopted as a priority, there have been many developments in the county in the fight against fraud and rogue trading which include:

Victim Support: providing specialist support to scam victims (referred via Operation Signature)

The East Sussex Against Scams Partnership (ESASP): pledging commitments to take a stand against scams

The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership is supported by the Safer East Sussex Team, made up from Community Safety staff from Sussex Police and East Sussex County Council

**Neighbourhood Watch in partnership with the Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner and the Sussex Elders' Commission:
gathering intelligence eg joint fraud, scams and cyber crime survey**

Various initiatives and campaigns eg Friends Against Scams, Mail Marshals, and Scamnesty (National Trading Standards Scams Team), and Protect Your Privates (Sussex Police)

Financial Abuse Strategy - East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board

The Safer Communities Partnership continues to treat this as a priority as set out in our 2017-2020 business plan. This newsletter will highlight the work against fraud and rogue trading and a selection of the initiatives already in action to identify vulnerable adults at risk of fraud and rogue trading and the work underway to implement targeted preventative support.

Later this year the Safer Communities Partnership will be hosting the first SCAMS networking and engagement event. The event will incorporate a facilitated forum to test practice, share operational procedures, share results of surveys and plan strategies. The SCAMS Network & Engagement Event will also provide a platform for showcasing the excellent work of partner agencies in the fight against scams.

Work is also now underway to expand the 'Cube', a community profiling tool developed by the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service to identify and quantify vulnerability in a risk-based and evidenced way. It was developed as a support mechanism to enable local firefighters and dedicated Community Safety Advisors (CSAs) to deliver fire safety messages and fit smoke alarms to the most vulnerable members of the community. The Cube will now be developed to profile potential scams victims.

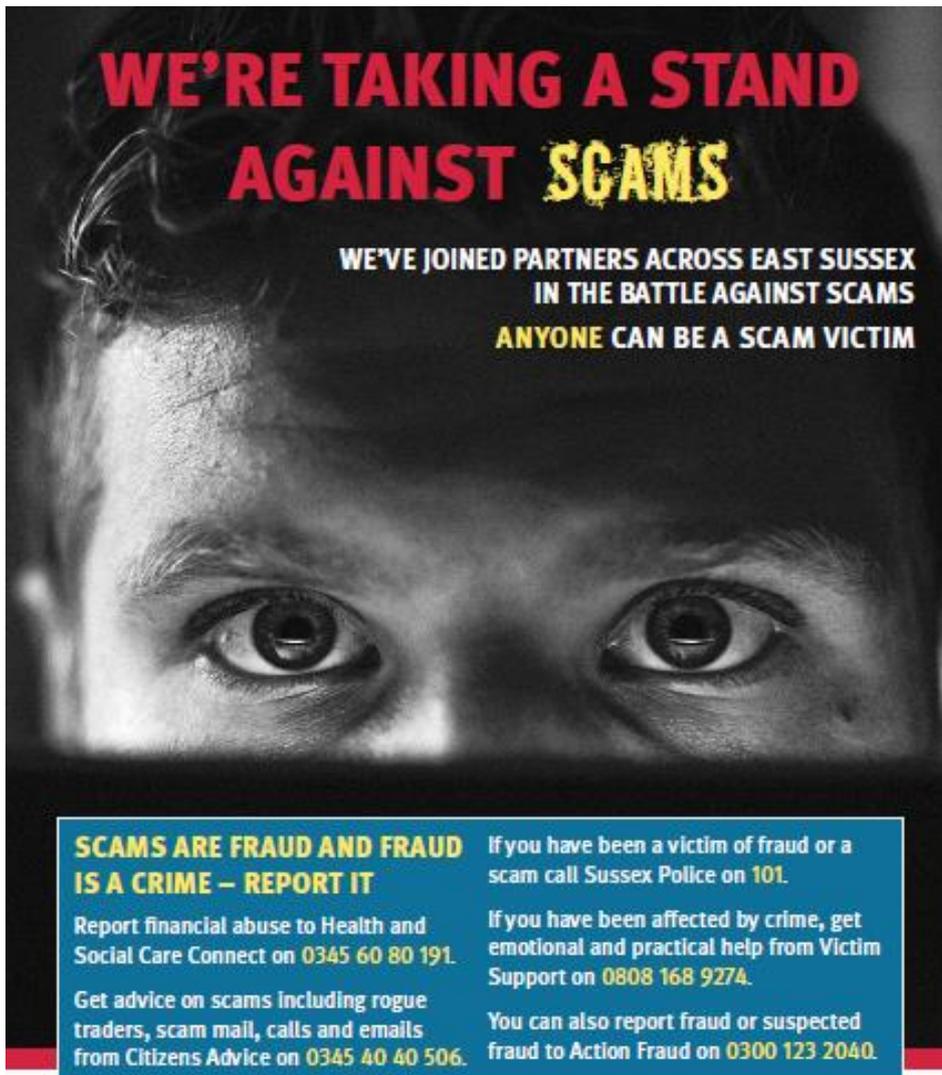
Respective colleagues from information governance in East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, Sussex Police and East Sussex County Council are working together to finalise an information sharing agreement to provide the Cube with a wealth of community information to enhance the collective understanding we have of risk and our ability to profile our communities.

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This edition also features a selection of national initiatives and cyber crime awareness articles.

Scams are Fraud and Fraud is a Crime – We shouldn't be ignoring them, we should report them so we know and can understand the true scale of the problem and allocate enough resources to try and reduce the impact upon society.

Scams may not just cause us financial hardship they could also impact upon our physical and mental health.



**WE'RE TAKING A STAND
AGAINST SCAMS**

**WE'VE JOINED PARTNERS ACROSS EAST SUSSEX
IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SCAMS
ANYONE CAN BE A SCAM VICTIM**

SCAMS ARE FRAUD AND FRAUD IS A CRIME – REPORT IT

Report financial abuse to Health and Social Care Connect on **0345 60 80 191**.
Get advice on scams including rogue traders, scam mail, calls and emails from Citizens Advice on **0345 40 40 506**.

If you have been a victim of fraud or a scam call Sussex Police on **101**.
If you have been affected by crime, get emotional and practical help from Victim Support on **0808 168 9274**.
You can also report fraud or suspected fraud to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**.

find us at **#ESxASP**

- SaferEastSx
- SaferEastSussexTeam



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East Sussex Against Scams Partnership (ESASP)

The East Sussex Against Scams Partnership (ESASP) is a partnership of organisations committed to taking a stand against scams. By working together our aim is to help make East Sussex a scam-free county.

Scams are fraud and fraud is a crime – report it! Being a victim of this crime can have devastating impacts upon people. These crimes are targeted at people in our communities who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including poverty, isolation, frailty, cognitive impairment, and because they are specifically targeted.

- 53% of people aged 65+ have been targeted by scams and criminals (Action Fraud);
- Scams cost the UK between £5-10 billion each year (Annual Fraud Indicator);
- Anyone can be a scam victim, regardless of age, gender, education or economic background;
- Scam victims might not always admit (or even be aware) they are a victim of a scam. Only 5% of victims report the crime (Age UK 2015);
- Scams are the product of organised, predatory criminals who gain trust to exploit and steal money.

The ESASP is united in taking a stand against scams and making East Sussex a hostile county to criminals. Join us in making a difference and commit to the Charter.

Charter Party Commitment:

We are working together in partnership to raise awareness of scams. Scams are fraud, and fraud is a crime – report it! Together we will be taking a stand against scams by assisting people to protect themselves, helping prevent people from being targeted by criminals; and identifying and supporting any victims of scams. We are committed to the Charter's three key aims:

- Raising awareness and de-stigmatising scams
- Prevention and protection
- Identification and recording

For further details on the Charter and how you can take a stand against scams, contact Elaine Bowdery:

Telephone: 01273 335670 or E-mail: elaine.bowdery@eastsussex.gov.uk



Elaine Bowdery promoting the Safer Communities Partnership's work around scam and fraud prevention at a recent Best of Eastbourne event

There are currently over 50 East Sussex organisations (businesses, charities, church groups, clubs, community enterprises, councils, societies, voluntary groups and other partners) committed to taking a stand against scams with the aim of making East Sussex a scam-free county. To become an ESASP Charter Partner, an organisation pledges to organise and / or support scams awareness and prevention-related activities.



Each of our Charter Partners has pledged to help raise awareness in a number of ways eg they share social media messages or organise a Friends Against Scams awareness session for their councillors, members, staff, volunteers, or the general public.

A [Scams Resource Pack](#) has been collated which includes a number of suggested Fraud Alerts for signing up to, internet links and videos for use in newsletters, websites or intranet articles as well as helpful websites. This is updated periodically.

We need more East Sussex organisations to help join the fight against criminals targeting people in vulnerable circumstances so please visit the [website](#) and / or email elaine.bowdery@eastsussex.gov.uk for more information. In the meantime, please do not forget to report any scams / fraud you come across.

Sussex Police – Operation Signature

Finance Abuse Officer, PC Bernadette Lawrie interviewed by the Argus on the fight against fraud



PC Lawrie became the country's first Financial Abuse Safeguarding Officer when she set up Operation Signature which focuses on informing potential victims and their families how to recognise fraud. PC Lawrie told the Argus that despite the scheme's success, more needs to be done to stop a crime she calls despicable.

"It's not just the money," she says, "it's the hundreds of letters and maybe 20 phone calls a day; people being woken up in the middle of the night – it causes terrible anxiety and really has an effect on people's health.

"All calls to the police which may indicate a vulnerable person has fallen victim to phone or internet fraud is flagged as a priority. Calls are dealt with according to guidelines created by the Signature team and police visit the person at home."



Operation Signature is about educating potential victims to identify fraud. We recommend the following checklist for anyone who believes family, friends or themselves are at risk:

- Check people are who they say they are. If you are not sure, don't answer the door or discuss financial matters by phone
- Never send or give money to anyone you don't know or trust
- Remember to protect your identity – don't share your personal information with unexpected callers
- Beware of email and computer scams. Treat all emails from unknown senders with suspicion and never click on links within them
- Never share your PIN number with anyone and do not enter your PIN into a telephone
- If in doubt, phone a relative friend or someone you know personally.

Police take on bogus Microsoft fraudsters

In collaboration with the City of London Police and the National Crime Agency (NCA), Sussex and Surrey Police's Cyber Crime Unit investigated a customer service fraud involving bogus contacts from Microsoft.



Vulnerable individuals were contacted about a fault on their system that preys on obtaining as much financial information as possible from those victims.

The police obtained information about a company in Woking targeting victims across Sussex and Surrey. A warrant was executed at the company's premises, two people were arrested and the NCA subsequently closed websites that were involved.

Detective Inspector Rob Walker said: "The key message is that everyone should be aware that companies like Microsoft will **NEVER** randomly contact individual customers and there is guidance out there to ensure you don't become a victim."

Stay informed and be aware

Cyber criminals often use publicly available phone directories, so they might know your name and other personal information when they call you. They might even guess what operating system you're using. Once they've gained your trust, the caller might ask for your user name and password or ask you to go to a legitimate website (such as www.ammyy.com) to install software that will let them access your computer to fix it. Once you do this, your computer and your personal information are vulnerable.

'Banking Protocol' introduced in Sussex

This is an initiative between police forces, the banks, building societies and the Post Office. Bank staff have been trained to identify customers who are making unusual withdrawals or money transfers.

They will ask questions to establish if the customer is potentially the victim of fraud and will make a 999 call to police quoting "Banking Protocol".

Despite only being introduced in June 2017, the process is proving to be very successful; with 37 calls received from banks this July identifying 32 separate crimes resulting in the arrest of 4 suspects. The average age of each person targeted by

these fraudsters was 75, with potential losses to those victims of around £196,000 being saved.

Victims will often be intending to withdraw funds to return to their home address to either pay rogue tradespersons who have cold-called at their addresses and completed sub-standard building works.



Please remember, you should NEVER:

- **Share your PIN with any other person or input it onto a telephone**
- **Withdraw funds on another's instructions**
- **Hand your bank card or cash to any unknown person calling at your address**

Increase in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) frauds

Elderly people are receiving a high volume of phone calls purporting to be from HMRC. It is vital that people are aware of the signs and act on them. A message is often left on an answerphone asking the recipient to phone 0161 8508494 and press "1" to speak to the officer dealing with the case.



If the recipient answers the phone, the caller will often say that the victim owes unpaid taxes and that they will be taken to court or threatened with arrest if they do not settle the alleged debt. The conversation will then often lead to a request for the victim to visit a location in another part of the country to hand over the money, a request that will be very difficult for the victim to comply with. As an

alternative, the victim is then told to go to a supermarket to purchase iTunes vouchers that are then to be passed onto the offenders.

In two separate incidents in early August, two men from Worthing aged 81 and 68, received telephone calls purporting to be from HMRC advising them they owed money for tax arrears. They were instructed to purchase iTunes vouchers to the

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value of £2,500 and £1,000 respectively to pay the outstanding amounts.

They subsequently bought the vouchers from the local Wilkinson's Store, one of them being refunded the money after the store manager became suspicious. The other provided the fraudsters with the codes and lost £2,500. They were both extremely shaken by the experience and have lost confidence in answering the telephone or door.

There were 85 of these incidents reported to Action Fraud and Sussex Police during July but thankfully very few of these resulted in any victims losing money.

Voicemails and text messages are some of the contact methods used to defraud people in Sussex and will often request that you urgently call them back on the number provided.

- **HMRC will never use a text message to inform you about a tax rebate or penalty.**
 - **HMRC will never ask for any payment in the form of iTunes vouchers or any other vouchers.**
-
- **If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud call Sussex Police on 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk**
 - **If you need to report a fraud or attempted fraud, you can do so by contacting Action Fraud at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or by calling 0300 123 2040.**
 - **The latest Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter www.sussex.police.uk/media/3473/fraud-newsletter-september-2017.pdf**



You can also read the latest Action Fraud alerts at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/news> or by following [@actionfrauduk](https://twitter.com/actionfrauduk) on Twitter.

East Sussex Trading Standards

It has been a busy summer for our Trading Standards team who have responded to a wide range of complaints concerning rogue traders. This has included investigatory work into an unscrupulous bailiff, a block paver, an insulation company, a tree surgeon, a plumbing and drainage company, a will writing company, and door to door sellers of cheap electrical goods and fresh fish!

Concerns have been raised across the county about tarmac gangs who target and cold call elderly residents offering 'surplus' material to lay at residents' homes. Work is often unnecessary and of poor quality, and the resident is pressurised into paying a much higher fee than was agreed. Investigations into one such gang who have targeted residents across East Sussex are ongoing.

Roofing continues to be a trade which rogue traders look to exploit. The team has two forthcoming court cases concerning alleged frauds against vulnerable residents. The combined financial loss to victims is over £80,000.

As well as the financial loss, it is important to highlight the mental and physical harm this crime can have on victims, especially those who are elderly and vulnerable. It is widely recognised that this crime is vastly under-reported and the Trading Standards team urges victims, concerned friends, family, neighbours or even passers-by, to report their concerns to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service Helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

The short film below describes the experiences of one victim of doorstep crime. Follow the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doczPoJvtKE>



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Scams Awareness Month – July 2017



Many organisations around the county – including Sussex Police, Trading Standards and a number of East Sussex Against Scams Partnership Charter Partners – played their part in supporting the national Citizens Advice Scams Awareness Month.

Activities included:

- Holding Friends Against Scams awareness sessions for councillors, staff, voluntary groups, the general public
- Organising display stands at banks, libraries, shopping centres
- Giving awareness talks to local business members, charities and meetings
- Handing out literature out at festivals, events, village fetes, cricket and croquet days
- Sharing social media messages via Facebook and Twitter
- Displaying posters and literature.

Many thanks to everyone who supported the campaign, it was much appreciated. Next year let's work with Citizens Advice to make it even bigger!

Members of the Safer East Sussex Team (including Sussex Police) and Trading Standards at display stands during Scams awareness month:



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‘Think Before you Click’ online safety video aims to bridge the generation gap

Members of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner’s Youth and Elders’ Commissions have teamed up to produce a video on online safety.

The two groups collaborated on this unique project in conjunction with Fixers, the National Charity which works with young people about issues which matter to them, with the aim of educating all generations about Cyber Crime.

Sefton Dosi, 22, from the Sussex Youth Commission, says:

“The opportunity to make a film with both the Sussex Youth and Elders’ Commission working together demonstrates that both young and old people can work together to achieve what will be a knowledgeable film to educate people surrounding online safety.

“It was good to see both groups agreeing on an idea and working together to overcome any issues. A fine example of how both young and old can integrate and benefit from one another.”

The Think Before You Click short film was based on research which shows that internet users can make themselves 80% safer online by following two golden rules: create a strong password and update your system regularly.



Detective Inspector Rob Walker from the joint Surrey and Sussex Cyber Crime Unit, says “Your data is an extension of who you are today: you exist as an entity on lots of different systems so if they know your date of birth, National Insurance number and so on, they can potentially obtain loans and credit cards in your name. Sometimes criminals won’t use that information immediately; they may wait a year before using it.

“Online safety is just as important for the younger generation because, although they don’t have assets, their accounts can be used for money laundering or they can be a future target for criminal enterprises. If they haven’t got the safest behaviours engrained into them then they are going to be just as vulnerable as the older generation.”

Sussex PCC Katy Bourne says “Around a third of the 2,300 residents interviewed during the Elders’ Commission’s Big Conversation last year were confident using computers and the internet but more than 500 were not. Not many had firewalls or anti-virus software in place and too many had easily identifiable passwords.

“Older people are likely to make more desirable targets for criminals and this certainly seems to be the case in Sussex.

“Nationally, though, younger people are most likely to be victims of fraud which is why this video is aimed at residents of all ages and backgrounds.

“The message is simple: create a strong password and make sure your system is updated regularly.”

You can view the video at:

<https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/about/news/pcc-s-video-aims-to-bridge-the-generation-gap/>





Rother Neighbourhood Watch

No Cold Calling Zone



Article by Ted Kemp, Chairman of Rother Neighbourhood Watch

“Over the last four years as Chairman for Rother Neighbourhood Watch (RNHW), I have learnt many things we take for granted in our everyday lives. I was approached by the Rother Policing team on 23 May 2014 asking if I would consider joining them in launching a Rother Neighbourhood Watch burglary initiative where we would offer follow-up visits to victims of crime.

“Many of the victims I have visited were traumatised that someone had entered their home uninvited. The first thing they needed was someone to give them advice on how to protect their homes from burglaries and scams. Secondly, they needed someone to talk to about how it had affected them, but mostly needed someone to listen.

“That is when I decided we needed to make Bexhill a ‘No Cold Calling Zone’. The first place I went to was our Rother Police Inspector, Dan Russell, to ask his views on the project. I was not surprised by his response giving us his full support. I then went to see our MP for Bexhill and Battle, Huw Merriman, who also gave his full support and wished to back us.

The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne, has backed the ‘No Cold Calling Zone’ which was launched on 7 August 2017.

“This is a great example of successful partnership working and credit must go to Chairman Ted Kemp for his tireless work making this possible. Rother Neighbourhood Watch is working closely with Sussex Police, Rother District Council and West Sussex Trading Standards to tackle fraud on the doorstep.”



If you have been a victim of fraud, you can report it to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2040 or visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk

However, if the victim is vulnerable or elderly, please contact Sussex Police directly by calling 101 or emailing 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk

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Age UK East Sussex - Edna Johnson Wills Trust Scams Prevention

Age UK has three Scam Co-ordinators covering Hastings and Rother, Eastbourne, and Lewes and the Havens. As part of their roles, they do home visits and group talks for people who have been victims of fraud or are vulnerable to fraud. Call blockers can be installed which help alleviate nuisance calls and therefore greatly reduce the number of scam telephone phone calls. They also work with Trading Standards and Sussex Police.

A recent example of Age UK's work was with an elderly woman with dementia. She was visited by a tree cutting service in her area and charged £300 to have three branches cut down. As it transpired, the tree may not have been hers as it was located outside her fence on the verge of the road.

Another example was of a hearing aid company that visited a woman in her nineties. They did a hard sell and were reluctant to leave her property before they had secured a sale. Her daughter - who lived overseas - heard this company were contacting her mother and specifically told them not to do so again. However, they did re-visit and were able to sell the lady a hearing aid costing over £5,000.



Both these companies were visited by Sussex Police and Trading Standards regarding their sales tactics. To try and prevent further incidents, in the first example a dummy camera and call blocker were installed. In the second, care was increased to every day, so carers could monitor who was visiting and what post the lady was receiving.

Age UK East Sussex is here to help with any concerns people may have for individuals, their relatives or friends and can be contacted on 01424 236258 for further information or by email at:

scams.prevention@ageukeastsussex.org.uk

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A Selection of National Initiatives:

National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team and Friends Against Scams



The NTS Scams Team is currently working on a number of projects to help identify, intervene and inform victims of mass marketing fraud.

Friends Against Scams (FAS)

Since the launch of FAS last October, the initiative has recruited 27,600 friends nationally as well as 667 SCAMchampions to deliver training across the country. Within East Sussex, 578 Friends have been trained with 47 SCAMchampions spreading the message to **Take A Stand Against Scams**. FAS has received strong support and feedback from local authorities, partners, organisations and members of the public and looks forward to celebrating its first birthday.

To become a “Friend”, find a local session or to complete the 20 minute online session, please visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk.

Call Blockers

The Call Blocking project with trueCall aims to provide people living with dementia a call blocking device to filter out nuisance calls. Already 250 devices have been distributed and over 80 units installed. So far users have received 8,171 calls of which 3,480 were nuisance or scam calls. 3,469 of these calls were blocked – 99.7%.

Mail Marshals

There are currently 143 active Mail Marshals who collate and forward their scam mail onto the NTS Scams Team (though none yet in East Sussex...). This gives individuals an instrumental role in combatting scams as, not only do they help provides the NTS Scams Team with intel but also removes scam mail from their homes. It also helps with the isolation many scam victims feel as it gives them the opportunity to communicate with people beyond their homes who aren't criminals. Many Mail Marshals go into retirement from the scheme after initially signing up to the project as the scam companies stop sending correspondence when they no longer receive money and / or replies from their victims.

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Royal Mail



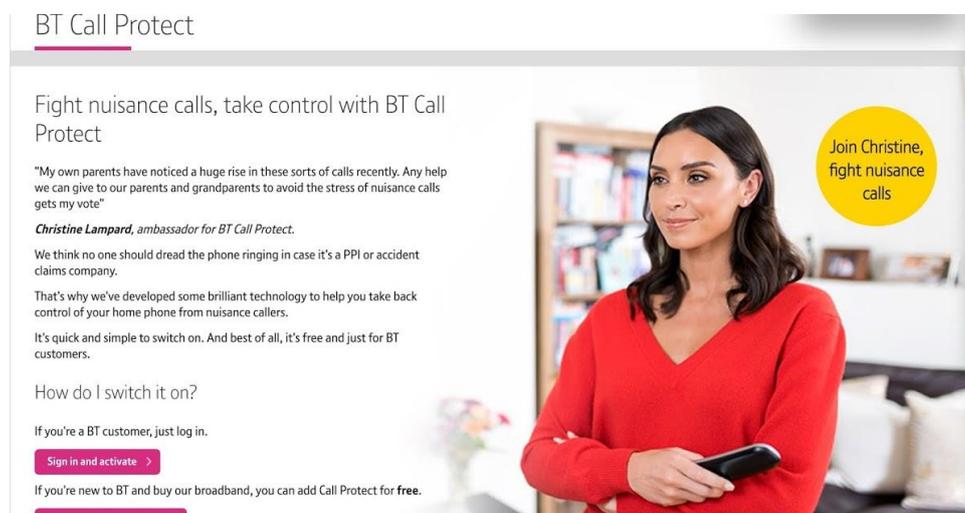
Since November 2016, [Royal Mail](#) has stopped 1 million scam mail items from reaching people's homes. It has warehoused the offending material before destroying it.

The firm teamed up with rivals Whistl and UK Mail at the end of last year to crack down on scam mail, blocking would-be illicit items before they get to our doorsteps.

BT

[BT](#) reckons it has "drastically reduced" the number of nuisance calls reaching customers, with two-thirds of unwanted calls automatically diverted to a junk voicemail box.

If all BT customers signed up to its free service, "BT Call Protect" this would divert a huge 1.6 billion calls every year. BT estimates half these calls are from PPI and accident claims companies. If you are not a BT customer, why not ask your phone provider if they offer a similar service.



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Get Safe Online

The Get Safe Online website provides unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety. www.getsafeonline.org/get-safe-top-10/

Visit their website for practical advice on how to protect yourself, your computers and mobile devices, and your business against fraud, identity theft, viruses and many other problems encountered online. It contains guidance on many other related subjects too – including performing backups and how to avoid theft or loss of your computer, smartphone or tablet. Every conceivable topic is included on the site – including safe online shopping, gaming and dating so you can stay safe with everything you do online.

The site also keeps you up-to-date with news, tips and stories from around the world. They are a Cyber Essentials and IASME certified organisation.



You can also find a selection of helpful videos (examples below) and PowerPoint presentations available for download www.getsafeonline.org/police/resources/

Videos



It's Personal



Vishing Scam



Computer Support Scam

Organisations of any size should be aware of Cyber Essentials - a Government-backed, industry supported scheme to help organisations protect themselves against common cyber attacks.



Visit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/317480/Cyber_Essentials_Summary.pdf to learn more about the scheme.

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National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC was set up to help protect our critical services from cyber attacks, manage major incidents, and improve the underlying security of the UK Internet through technological improvement and advice to citizens and organisations.

Their vision is to help make the UK the safest place to live and do business online.

They have a number of useful [infographics](#), free to download, helpful for small businesses and individuals:

- Password Security – how passwords are cracked and how to improve your security system
- 10 Steps to Cyber Security
- What you can do to combat cyber attacks
- Cyber Security Small Business Guide
- Glossary – some common words and phrases relating to cyber security ie

Action Fraud



The screenshot shows the Action Fraud website. At the top left is the logo for Action Fraud, National Fraud & Cyber Crime Reporting Centre, with the phone number 0300 123 2040. To the right of the logo, it states "Action Fraud is not an emergency service dial 999 if you are in immediate danger." Below the logo is a search bar. A navigation menu is visible with links for "About us", "Report it", "Types of fraud", "Support & prevention", "Resources", "News & alerts", and "Stats". The main content area features the headline "Action Fraud is the UK's national fraud and cyber crime reporting centre." and a sub-headline "The easiest way to report fraud and cyber crime is by using our online reporting tool." Below this is a red "Report" button. At the bottom of the main content area, it says "We provide a central point of contact for information about fraud and cyber crime."

As mentioned earlier, scams are fraud and fraud is a crime – they should be reported to Action Fraud. Visit their webpage to find out how, and see their online resources too.

Sign up to the Action Fraud Alert: <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/signup> to receive direct, verified, accurate information about scams and fraud in your area by email, recorded voice and text message.

Useful scams contact numbers

For support and advice on scams (eg rogue traders, romance scams, scam mail, telephone calls, text messages, emails), call Citizens Advice on **0345 40 40 506**

If you are concerned about financial abuse speak to Health and Social Care Connect on **0345 60 80 191**

For a non-emergency response (if you have been a victim of a fraud/scam), call Sussex Police on **101**

If you have been affected by crime, get emotional and practical help from Victim Support on **0808 168 9274**

To report a fraud, or suspected fraud, and share information to help stop others from becoming victims, call Action Fraud **0300 123 2040**

For more details about the ESASP, contact:

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01273 335670

elaine.bowdery@eastsussex.gov.uk

www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/ESASP.html