

Coronavirus Scams

Q. “I’m really worried about my elderly relatives being targeted by coronavirus scams - are there any warning signs that I can tell them to look out for? What should they do if they think that something is a scam?”

A. Unfortunately, we’ve seen an increase in scams since the beginning of the pandemic, so it’s good to be thinking about the steps you can take to help protect friends and family.

Common scams we’re seeing are about bogus testing kits, coronavirus vaccinations and government refunds or fines. You should watch out for messages about coronavirus from unusual email addresses or phone numbers, and shouldn’t click on any links. Be aware that you won’t be asked to pay for coronavirus vaccinations - they are provided for free by the NHS.

Here are some general warning signs to look out for:

- You suspect you’re not dealing with a real company – for example, if there’s no postal address
- You’ve been asked to transfer money quickly or to pay in an unusual way – for example, by iTunes vouchers or through a transfer service like MoneyGram or Western Union
- You’ve been asked to give away personal information like passwords or PINs
- You haven't had written confirmation of what's been agreed

If you think something is a scam you should hang up the phone, close the website, or shut the front door. Never feel pressured to make a decision straight away, and don’t give out personal details or money unless you’re certain that they can trust the person. If you feel threatened or unsafe you can ring 999.

For help with online scams, contact a Citizens Advice Scams Action adviser by calling 0808 250 5050. For more information about other types of scams, visit the Citizens Advice website.