

**Q. In more normal times I do a lot to help my elderly mum, like picking up shopping, sorting out her finances, making important calls and organising her post. But unfortunately with lockdown in place I'm not able to see her as frequently, and though I've still been able to drop off her shopping, I'm no longer able to help her with the other things. I'm particularly worried about how much I've read about scammers at the moment, and I wondered whether there's anything I can do from a distance to help protect my mum?**

A. There are a few steps you can take from a distance to keep your mother safe and lessen your need to worry.

With your mother's permission you can register her landline with the Telephone Preference Service. It's free to register and doing so will reduce the amount of unwanted sales and marketing calls you receive. This won't block all unwanted calls (it won't work on calls from abroad or companies she's given her number to already, for example), so your mother will need to continue to remain vigilant, but it'll certainly lessen the number of them.

You can encourage your mother to talk to her phone provider to see what privacy services and call-blocking services are available. These services aren't always free but are useful in ensuring any call coming through is from a trusted or known source.

In terms of unwanted post, with your mother's permission you can contact the Mailing Preference Service to have her name taken off of any marketing lists. You can also contact Royal Mail and opt out of receiving any leaflets or unaddressed promotional material. Attaching a 'no junk mail' sign to her front door may also help with this.

When it comes to your mother's finances, if you supply an organisation with a letter of authority from the account holder, this may allow you speak to them on her behalf. This may not always be accepted, so if you find yourself needing to take over your mother's finances in the future, it's worth looking into a long term solution like a Power of Attorney.

It's also vital that you chat to your mother to help her spot the marks of a scam herself. At Citizens Advice we always advise the following:

- Be suspicious if you're contacted out of the blue, even if it's from a name you recognise
- If it sounds too good to be true it probably is
- Never give out your bank details unless you are certain you can trust the person contacting you
- Don't be rushed – you never need to make a decision straight away and if you feel pressured say "no", hang up the phone, or close the door.

Lastly, if your mother is receiving care from her local authority and you think she might be being scammed, it's worth reporting your concerns to their Adult Safeguarding team.