

Consumer Alerts – December 2021

Scam Omicron message.

Reports have been received of a scam email currently doing the rounds which claims to be from the NHS and asks you to 'Apply now for Omicron PCR test to avoid restrictions'. The scam message suggests the PCR test kits on offer will detect the Omicron variant and preys on people's concerns and vulnerabilities.

A link within the email leads to a fake NHS website that may ask for payment or bank details.

Be suspicious of emails received that offer such tests and forward them to report@phishing.gov.uk

Information on how to get a PCR test if you have Covid symptoms can be found at [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-free-PCR-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus-covid-19) or by calling 119.

Cold callers selling household items.

Reports have been received of ex-offenders cold calling in the West Lancashire area offering kitchen wares and household goods. The doorstep salesmen can be very pushy, heading to the back of the property if the householder does not answer the door, making residents feeling ill at ease.

Please be aware neither the Council or the Probation Service run schemes where ex-offenders call door to door selling such items. Often items offered for sale on your doorstep can be expensive and of low quality.

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers.

Cold callers offering energy measures

Further reports are being received from the Chorley area about cold callers offering free energy measures such as free loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and boiler replacement. Please be aware the measures may be free to some households, but eligibility criteria do apply around receipt of benefits, low income and fuel poverty.

If you wish to enquire as to your eligibility or for further information on energy saving measures, contact Cosi Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) via www.chil.uk.com or 03306 061 488. CHiL is a partnership set up by the 15 local authorities in Lancashire.

Concerns about participating businesses can be made via the Green Deal Oversight and Registration Body ([Green Deal ORB \(beis.gov.uk\)](https://www.beis.gov.uk/green-deal-ORB)), who manage the authorisation scheme and to Ofgem who administer the scheme.

Scam windfall letter

A Ribblesdale resident has reported receiving a letter addressed to him from a Mr Qing Zhen claiming he could help secure a potential windfall from a deceased person's estate. The alleged deceased person shared the same surname as the resident receiving the letter who was encouraged to contact the sender by email.

This is a scam, do not reply. The letters can look very personalised with the envelope giving the impression you are the only recipient, often bearing an actual stamp rather than being part of a larger mail drop.

Scam email targeting eBay sellers

Ebay sellers please be aware of a scam email purporting to be from PayPal that is actually from a scam purchaser. The email is sent by this fraudulent purchaser, is misspelt and claiming to be from PayPal, from an incorrect PayPal address, stating that the seller has been paid but that their new policy is for the seller to send the parcel first then send a tracking number to PayPal to release the correct funds.

The email in these cases looks tampered with when examined. Sellers and buyers on these kinds of platforms are advised not to carry out transactions outside the safeguards provided by the platforms.

BT scam telephone call

Please be aware of a phone call alleging to be from BT who request that software 'Any Desk' is installed to fix faults. Whilst the software itself is genuine, the scammer will then remote onto the customer's computer in an attempt to get payment for fixing the non-existent fault and possible access to further personal information.

Bit coin scam seller

Residents are warned about bitcoin investment scams currently doing the rounds, after a Lancashire consumer lost almost £500 following a personal recommendation on a friend's Facebook page (the friend had been hacked).

The link also claimed the scheme was linked to billionaire Elon Musk, with a personal recommendation and article supposedly written by him, and several other links to articles from around the world about the benefits of Bitcoin.

She was advised on the benefits of Bitcoin investment on the phone, then led through a process of making a Bitcoin wallet, using a shared screen showing balance, equity and profit, with security features reassuring her it was all above-board. She was completely unaware that the screen was

not set up in her name, and when she went to sign in at a later time, she was denied access. The traders appear to be based outside the EU, and she cannot now get in touch with them.

Advanced fee lottery scam

The City of London Police are warning people to be aware of lottery scams. Lottery fraud occurs when criminals use fake messages and calls to convince a person that they have won a lottery or a prize draw. The victim is then informed that they will need to pay an advance "fee" in order to receive the winnings.

Victims are commonly asked to pay these advance fees by purchasing gift cards and relaying codes to the fraudster. In some instances, victims have reported being asked for personal and financial information in order to obtain their "winnings". Some victims reported providing their bank details thinking they would be sent a small payment to verify the account. In reality, criminals use these details to steal the victims money.

Trading Standards advice is to always say no to cold callers. The Safetrader scheme can help you find a trader in your area, contact 0303 333 1111 or go to www.safetrader.org.uk

Contact the Trading Standards Service via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133