

# Welcome to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scam Marshal Newsletter: December 2022

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,363



**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

## Merry Christmas!



I would just like to thank all of you for your hard work this year in helping to make your communities safer places to live by raising awareness of fraud and scams and helping to keep your loved ones safe from these horrible crimes.

This year we have reached over one million people that have completed the Friends Against Scams awareness session and Scam Marshals have sent more scam mail into the team than any other year.

In the last six months we have been able to return over £60,000 in actual cash to scam mail responders. The local Trading Standards Officers are also working hard to return over £500,000 to victims identified following the successful prosecution of a sweepstake scam coming out of the USA as mentioned in the previous newsletter.

**Thank you again and wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a great 2023.**

*Louise Baxter MBE – Head of National Trading Standards Scams Team*

## SCAMnesty 2022



The Friends Against Scams team are once again running a SCAMnesty (a scam mail amnesty) campaign aiming to encourage everyone in the UK to send in any unwanted scam and nuisance mail that they receive into us at the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team completely free of charge.

More information can be found on the Friends Against Scams website and we would encourage you to share on any social media platforms you might use. You can talk to family, friends and neighbours about this campaign and encourage them to send in any unwanted mail to:

**NTSST  
FREEPOST  
MAIL MARSHAL**

The amount of mail received during last year's campaign highlighted new trends in mail fraud that the team had not seen before so please help spread the word.

**We've also added some address sheets that can be cut out and added to any parcels of scam mail to send back to us.**

To learn more about scams, visit [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk)

## 12 Scams of Christmas



**1 - Subscription trap;** This scam offers a gift or trial offer. If you pay postage and packaging to receive the 'gift' you may, without realising it, set up a Continuous Payment Authority (CPA) allowing the company to take any amount out of your bank account at any time. You should report these to Citizens Advice.



**2 – Bogus charities;** Fake charities prey on the victim's sense of good will at this time of the year, and their marketing techniques can be very convincing. Make sure that the marketing you have received is genuine. If you aren't sure – don't take the risk. **You can check if a charity is genuine by visiting the gov.uk website.**

**3 – Fake online shops;** Criminals create fake websites which look reliable and offer all kinds of products from jewellery to clothes, technology and more at cheap prices. Don't be attracted by these low prices as after sending the payment, you may not receive the product! Check if the website you order your Christmas presents from is legitimate by visiting **www.getsafeonline.org**

**4 – HM Revenue & Customs;** Criminals phone unsuspecting members of the public and claim they have over/under paid their tax. Beware - **never give out your bank details**, hang up the phone immediately and report to Action Fraud. HMRC will never contact you in this way.

**5 – Bank scams;** Criminals may phone you and claim to be calling from your bank to report 'suspicious activity' on your account. If you receive a call like this, hang up immediately and phone your bank on a number you know to be legitimate (e.g. from the bank's website)

**6 - Purchase scams;** you may be tricked into sending money via bank transfer to buy goods or services, often advertised online, which do not actually exist. When you shop online this Christmas, the best ways to keep safe are to buy from a trusted retailer whenever possible, and always pay by card for the greatest protection.

**7 - E-greeting (online) cards;** Be careful when sending/receiving online greeting cards as they can contain malware which can find address books and bank details stored on your computer.

**8 – Bogus gift cards;** Gift cards are ideal for that 'hard to buy for' person, but be aware if you are buying these online, as gift cards are easy to illegitimately replicate and could cause embarrassment to your friends and family when they try and use your gift... and they are fake.

**9 – Delivery scams;** Deliveries will inevitably increase this time of year as presents are bought so it's hard to keep track. Criminals use this as an opportunity to target consumers. If you get a text saying that your package requires payment for it to be delivered, it's probably a scam!

**Report it by forwarding the message for free to 7726.**

**10 – World Cup Lotto –** This scam comes around every time there is a major sporting event like the World Cup or the Olympics. It takes the form of a letter stating that you have won a large amount of money on the 'official' sporting events lottery. It will ask you to contact an email address or phone number to claim the fictitious prize. Once contact is made, they will start to ask for copies of identification and ask you to make payments for various fees to claim.

**11 – Cost of living scams;** Messages usually by text saying that you need to apply for your energy bill rebate or are entitled to extra support. These are designed to get you to click a link and input your personal/financial details. **If its out of the blue, don't click through.** You should forward suspicious text messages to 7726!

**12 – Extortion scams;** Criminals contact you claiming they have embarrassing or incriminating information about you and threaten to release that information if you don't send them payment. If the criminal shows you, they have a password you're currently using, **change that password immediately.** Remember, these scam messages are designed to scare you!

