

## **A message from Suffolk Police around COVID-19 SCAMS**

### **24 March 2020**

Suffolk Constabulary is issuing advice on social media channels to combat unscrupulous individuals who look to exploit the vulnerable during the coronavirus outbreak.

The messages on social media urge vigilance against criminals who will be using the publicity around the virus as a chance to target the vulnerable.

For example, the social guidance includes making clear to always ask for identification of anyone claiming to be from the emergency services or the voluntary sector and not to open the door to anyone, especially from someone you are not expecting.

Other scam include coronavirus tax refunds, fake cures, World Health Organisation impersonation emails and bit coin payments.

County Policing Commander for Suffolk Chief Superintendent Marina Ericson said: "We are living through unprecedented times, and while we are seeing mostly positive and very helpful community based activity to support the vulnerable, there continues to be a heartless and scheming group of criminals who will look to exploit the current situation for their own needs.

"Scams are likely to come in many different forms – from, for example, calling on people to say they are testing for the virus, to those fraudulently selling protective face masks, or offering to do shopping and taking money.

"The majority of groups are well intentioned and will be working through the voluntary or charity sector and will be very happy to provide you with proof as to who they are.

"The message is simple, if you have any doubts about the honesty of the person or offer of help, we urge you not to engage further – put the phone down or shut the door and report suspicious behaviour."

Vulnerable people will be most at risk so we ask that people protect themselves and we ask relatives and neighbours of the vulnerable to have a conversation with their loved ones or neighbours to stay alert and be wary of unsolicited offers of help.

If you feel in immediate danger call 999 or if you know someone is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud, please contact Suffolk Constabulary on 101 or Action Fraud at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) call 0300 123 2040.

#### **Advice:**

- Only accept help from people you know and / or trust. Never deal with unexpected cold callers
- You do not have to agree to anything you don't feel comfortable with
- Police, health workers and others will not and do not call at your house to test for coronavirus or ask for money regarding investigations
- Check the person calling at your door has valid identification, even if they are dressed in uniform
- Do not transfer any money across to someone who calls you over the phone, banks

will not ask for your personal security details

- Do not trust anyone asking for money transfers or cash over the phone
- Do not make shopping purchases from a company or person you do not know and trust. Use a credit card to pay to protect yourselves.

Further advice can be found on our website:

<https://www.suffolk.police.uk/sites/suffolk/files/coldcallers1.pdf>

<https://www.suffolk.police.uk/sites/suffolk/files/fraudprevention1.pdf>

The advice attachments can be viewed via <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/news/latest-news/16-03-2020/coronavirus-scam-warning>

Help us keep our communities safe.

Police advice on a variety of subjects can be accessed

via <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/advice>

To report something, or to otherwise contact Police, use the link

<http://www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us>

To report something anonymously call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or visit

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

Alternatively call **101** for non-urgent matters.

**Always call 999 in emergencies, or if an immediate police response is required.**

Police Connect Team