

Welcome to the National Trading Standards Scam Marshal newsletter: April 2019

NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS

Scams Team



Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 999

84,000 VICTIMS INVOLVED IN BANK PAYMENT SCAMS

In the last six months, bank payment scams have seen a 45% increase resulting in £135 million being transferred directly out of peoples accounts to the criminals.

It's important to remember that no bank will **ever** ask you to transfer any money out of your account over the phone or in an email.

If someone you do not know is asking you for money, it is important to 'Take 5'. Take 5 minutes to think about what you are doing, never be rushed into making a decision if you have any doubts. Talk to a friend or family member or phone citizens advice on 03454 040506.



TO STOP FRAUD™

DO YOU NEED YOUR MAIL BAG?

We ask our Scam Marshals to help raise awareness of scams by talking to family, friends and neighbours, They can also send any scam mail that receive into the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team for investigation.

If you do not receive any scam mail and would no longer like to receive our freepost mail bags, please let us know by writing back to us at the freepost address:

NTSST, FREEPOST, MAIL MARSHALS or send an email to FriendsAgainstScams@Surreycc.gov.uk

SCAM MARSHALS HELP IN AMERICA!



Thanks to the information supplied by Scam Marshals, the NTS Scams Team investigators recognised some mailings coming out of the USA last year. They worked with the US Authorities and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (their version of Trading Standards) to convict these criminals.

The mailings which were identified were asking for a fee between £10 and £140 to 'release the persons winnings' from a fake prize draw.



The settlement with the FTC and the State of Missouri required the defendants to turn over more than \$21 million in cash, as well as two luxury vacation homes, a yacht, a Bentley automobile, and other personal property. The case represents the largest forfeiture the FTC has ever obtained in a case against sweepstakes scam, and the proceeds will be used to refund money to victims.

PENSION & INVESTMENT SCAMS

Throughout 2019, our newsletter will concentrate on a particular pension or investment scam each month.

The most common of these include:

- Binary option scams - February
- Carbon credit trading scams—March
- **Cryptocurrency investment scams—April**
- Early pension release
- Forex trading scams
- Get-rich-quick, Ponzi and pyramid schemes
- Graphene investment scams
- Land banking investment schemes
- Overseas property and crop scams
- Pension review scams
- Rare earth metal investment scams
- Restricted US share scams
- Share, bond and boiler room scams
- Unregulated investment scams



Cryptocurrency investment scams

Cryptocurrencies (such as Bitcoin or Ether) themselves are not currently regulated in the UK. So the transfer, purchase and sale of cryptocurrencies, including the operation of a cryptocurrency exchange, all fall outside the regulatory remit of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

How cryptocurrency investment scams work

Cryptocurrency fraudsters tend to advertise across social media – often using the images of celebrities or well-known individuals to promote cryptocurrency investments. The adverts then link to professional-looking websites where consumers are then persuaded to make investments with the firm using crypto or traditional currencies.

The firms operating these types of scams are usually based outside the UK but will claim to have a UK presence, often a prestigious City of London address. After an investment has been made these scam companies will then close down the account or often ask for more money to release the funds (which they will never do).

How to protect yourself

Be wary of adverts online and on social media promising high returns on investments in cryptocurrencies or cryptocurrency-related products. Most firms advertising and selling investments in cryptocurrencies are not authorised by the FCA. This means that if you invest in cryptocurrencies you will not have access to the Financial Ombudsman Service or the Financial Services Compensation Scheme if things go wrong.

Always be wary if you are contacted out of the blue, pressured to invest quickly or promised returns that sound too good to be true.

If you have been scammed

You can report the firm or scam to the FCA by contacting their Consumer Helpline on **0800 111 6768** or by contacting Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**

Because cryptocurrencies themselves are not regulated by the FCA, your investment **is not protected** by the UK's Financial Services Compensation Scheme and you're unlikely to get your money back.

If you have already invested in a scam, fraudsters are likely to target you again or sell your details to other criminals.

The follow-up scam may be completely separate or related to the previous fraud, such as an offer to get your money back or to buy back the investment after you pay a fee.

Is there anything else you would like to see in this newsletter?
Please feel free to give us some feedback, just pop it into your
freepost envelope when you send in your scam mail.

For more information on the team and our initiatives please
visit our website:

www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/ScamMarshals

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