

Scam Marshal Newsletter

April 2025

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,679

Address box



**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Scams Team

Welcome to your first quarterly Scam Marshal newsletter for 2025

In this edition we will touch on the increasing use of WhatsApp by criminals exploiting the UK public, the rise in Energy Bill Support Scams, and give you some tips on how to stay safe from holiday fraud this year.

WhatsApp Warning

Data analysed has found that between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024, British consumers had more money stolen from them from scams using WhatsApp than any other country in Europe.

It also revealed that WhatsApp fraud accounted for one in five of all reported scams in the UK and victims had an average of £2,437 stolen per fraud incident. In the second half of 2024, WhatsApp's fraudulent activity surged by 33%.

Some of the biggest scams on WhatsApp were job scams, investment scams, HMRC impersonation messages, family member impersonations, fake giveaways etc.

You can report a WhatsApp message by selecting it in your conversation and tapping 'report'.

To report the sender on WhatsApp, open the chat, tap on the sender's contact details and select 'block and report'.

Energy Bill Support Scheme Scam

A scam email which tells you you're 'eligible to receive a £400 discount under the Energy Bill Support Scheme' leads to a malicious phishing website.

To apply for the scheme, the email states you'll be asked for your name, address, date of birth and financial details. This information will then be used to try to scam you now or in the future.

Remember to check the sender's email address to check it is legitimate before entering your details.

You can report scam emails to report@phishing.gov.uk.

Scam websites can be reported to the National Cyber Security Centre.

Return address: FREEPOST, NTSST, MAIL MARSHALS

When you send us your scam mail, please keep the letter/s in their original envelope and write the date received as it will help with our investigations. Throughout the Summer, the National Trading Standards Scams Team are running a SCAMnesty campaign to ask everyone in the UK to look out for any scam mail and send it in for investigation. If you need more Freepost envelopes, email us at friendsagainstscams@surreycc.gov.uk.

Holiday Fraud Focus

Over £11m was stolen from victims in the UK to holiday fraud in 2024. Action Fraud has launched a holiday fraud campaign, urging the public who are looking to snap up their next holiday deals online to look out for suspiciously enticing offers, including on social media, and do their research before booking their getaways.

New data shows there were 6,066 reports of holiday fraud made to Action Fraud last year, with July recorded as the highest month of reporting, with 647 reports. Insights from holiday fraud data suggests more than 50% of reports mentioned social media platforms. Other reporting suggests fraudulent branding from travel protection agencies, like ATOL, ABTA, or ABTOT, was used to provide false reassurance that the agency or the holiday package the victim booked was covered.

What can you do to protect yourself from holiday fraud?

- **Check the travel company is legitimate:** About to book a holiday? Do some research first to check that the company is legitimate, especially if you haven't used them before.
- **Look for the logos:** Look for and check the ABTA, ABTOT or ATOL logos on the company's website.
- **Use a credit card to pay:** Use a credit card for payments.
- **Only provide required details at checkout:** When making your payment, only fill in the mandatory details (often marked with an asterisk).
- **Keep your accounts secure:** If 2-step verification is available, always enable it.
- **Watch out for suspicious links:** Whether it's in an email or social media post, be wary of promotions for unbelievably good holiday offers. Be alert and check the links are legitimate.

Friends Against Scams

The National Trading Standards Scams Team raises awareness of mass marketing fraud through the Friends Against Scams initiative. Anyone can access the free online training at www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk, or attend a face-to-face meeting organised by one of over 2,500 SCAM champion volunteers throughout the UK, and join the over 1 million friends against scams!

www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk has a free short (15min) scams awareness course that can help you protect yourself and loved ones from scams. Anyone completing this session becomes a Friend. So far, over 1,100,000 people have completed this training, helping to take a stand against scams. You can complete the training at www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk/elearning/coop.

Action Fraud – 0300 123 2040 – www.Actionfraud.police.uk

Police Scotland – 101 (from within Scotland) - www.scotland.police.uk

Citizens Advice – 0808 223 1133 – www.citizensdvice.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland - 0800 028 1456 - www.cas.org.uk