

Coronavirus and Scams

Advice for volunteers



With the impact of the Coronavirus and Lockdown criminals are targeting vulnerable and older people on their doorstep, over the phone and email and also via the post.

They are very inventive with their scams. Some examples are below.

Doorstep scams

Cold calling stating they are volunteers and offering to do their shopping, they take the money and do not return.

Doorstep cleaning services that offer to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus

A cold-caller may offer you a service you don't really need. They may claim to have noticed something about your property that needs work or improvement, such as the roof, and offer to fix it for cash or an inflated price.

People claim to be from your utility company as a way of gaining access to your home. Always check the ID of any official, and if they're genuine they won't mind waiting while you check.

A fraudster may pretend they're from a charity and ask you to donate money, clothes or household goods. Legitimate charities will all have a charity number that can be checked.

Some scammers ask you to complete a survey so they can get hold of your personal details, or use it as a cover for persuading you to buy something you don't want or need.

Someone may come to your door and ask you to help them out with cash, ask to use your telephone or claim they're feeling unwell.

Telephone scams

As more people self-isolate at home there is an increasing risk that telephone scams will also rise, including criminals claiming to be your bank, mortgage lender or utility company.

There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting telephone donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.

Illegal money lenders are expected to prey on people's financial hardship, lending money before charging extortionate interest rates and fees through threats and violence

ADVICE for volunteers to share with the people they are supporting

NEVER give your card or your card details to anyone else, whether it's in person, online or over the phone, unless they're someone you know and trust.

Banks almost never contact customers by email or telephone. If you receive an email or a phone call requesting your bank details, you can safely ignore it. Then contact your bank by other means, telling them about the call or email you received. If there's genuinely an issue with your account, you can sort it there and then.

Take care when clicking links online or in emails – even if they seemingly come from trustworthy sources.

Fake emails are unlikely to use your real name. They might say “Dear Sir” or “Dear Customer”. Or they might use a part of your email, thinking it's your name. We've received some fake emails that start with “Dear Joe-Bloggs”.

If someone's offered to shop for you, don't give them your card. Instead, ask them to provide a receipt, and arrange to send them money afterwards.

As a frontline worker you are the eyes and ears that may first pick up any signs of abuse. Here is a checklist of things you can do:

Talk to your person about the increased risk of abuse at this time.

Be aware that any changes in behaviour or demeanor could indicate abuse.

Advise people not to answer the door to strangers – and be aware of fake ID.

Try not to alarm people but ask them to be wary of offers to help, particularly from strangers.

Advise people to check with family, friends or paid support that offers of support, advice and help are legitimate.

Warn people against responding to any text, email or phone call from an unidentified source. Explain that fraudsters will imitate official bodies such as the Council, Charities, Government or the NHS - and they do it very well!

Advise people that they should never give their personal data, passwords or pin numbers to anyone. Official financial bodies and other organisations will never ask for them.

If you know of a person who has been subjected to, or is at risk of, domestic abuse – if it is safe to talk to them, try to assess the current situation. Make sure they know that help is available if they need it and who to contact both for advice and support and in an emergency.

What do I need to do?

Know how to report your concerns. If you believe a person to be at immediate risk of harm or in need of emergency medical attention call the emergency services on 999.

Otherwise if you are worried about a child or young person call Rochdale Children's Social Care on 0300 303 0440. If you are worried about an adult then contact Rochdale Adult Care on 0300 303 8888 (or 0300 303 8875 out of hours)