Following reports of Covid-19 related scams Oxfordshire County Council’s Trading Standards Service is urging the public to remain vigilant against criminals using the publicity around the coronavirus as a chance to target their victims with fraudulent emails, phone calls, text messages or door to door services.

We are encouraging residents to look out for their friends, family and neighbours.

There are examples of communities working together to help local residents and we don’t want to discourage this so we ask that people consider the following advice to avoid falling victim fraudsters:

**Protect yourself**

**Door scams:**

We are aware reports of people knocking on the doors of elderly and vulnerable people offering to shop or other services for them and then taking money without providing what they have offered.

* If you can, only accept help from people you are familiar with or who can prove who they are.
* Do not hand over a bank card or large sums of cash to anyone on your doorstep.
* Please look out for your neighbours and family members who may not have access to social media and therefore will not be receiving this information.

If someone knocks at your front door claiming to be from a company, utility or agency, our advice is do not let them in unless they have a pre- arranged appointment with you.

However, if you want to consider letting them in: first check their ID. If you’re not happy, don’t let them in. Never call the phone number on their ID card to check them out. Ask the person to wait outside, shut the door and find the company number on the internet or via documentation they may have sent you directly, such as a bill or statement. If they’re genuine, they’ll understand. Remember, it’s easy to fake ID cards and scammers will make themselves seem plausible and kind.

**Watch out for scam messages:**

A number of online scams offering fake services are being reported nationally.

Don’t click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails and never respond to unsolicited messages and calls that ask for your personal or financial details.

**Shopping online:**

If you’re making a purchase from a company or person you don’t know and trust, carry out some research first, and ask a friend or family member for advice before completing the purchase. If you decide to go ahead with the purchase, use a credit card if you have one, as you may have additional protection from your credit card provider, particularly if the individual price of the goods is over £100.

For more information on how to shop online safely, please visit: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/shoponlinesafely>

**Coronavirus Testing Kits and Treatments**

We are aware that some maybe trying to sell fake coronavirus tests. At this time the public are not being offered COVID-19 tests to purchase and no companies have been deployed to carry out checks in homes or businesses, this will be a scam.

Ignore any offers or claims of vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges, remedies or other prescription or over-the-counter products claiming to treat or cure Coronavirus.

**Who to contact**

If you are concerned that a crime is in progress, or you feel intimidated or threatened, call **999**

If you have been a victim of fraud or cyber-crime, report it to Action Fraud [online](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/) or by calling **0300 123 2040**

To report a matter to your local Trading Standards Service, or get advice on your consumer rights, call the national consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133** or via their online form <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/>

For general advice on fraud prevention, or to report a possible fraud, contact Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**, or at www.actionfraud.police.uk

For more advice from Trading Standards on how to protect yourself from scams: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/advice-communities/scams>

To learn more about the harms that scams cause and how you can protect yourself and others, why not become a Friend Against Scams: <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

Key sources of support and information in Oxfordshire if you need some practical help, advice or reassurance during this time:

<https://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Information/COVID>