



NOTICE FRAUD - MARCH 2021

With the new lockdown well in force fraudsters have been looking to take advantage of us. Here's what to watch out for:

COVID VACCINE SCAM

Several reports have been received of people being contacted by fraudsters offering the Covid Vaccine. The report shows text messages being sent providing a link for people to apply for their Covid Vaccine, some of which require payment.

These text messages and links are not sent from, or linked to, the NHS. When you are eligible for the vaccine you will be contacted by your GP. NHS and other frontline staff will be contacted directly by your employer.

(Source: Gov.uk).

TWO-FACTOR AUTHORISATION - 2FA

Two-Factor authorisation is the process of requiring secondary authorisation to make a key change such as password or bank details.

Banks and other organisations will send a code to an email address or telephone to ensure the genuine user is aware of the change, but fraudsters have identified ways in which to beat this process.

Fraudsters have been discovered contacting fraud victims purporting to be from the bank/organisation, they state that to verify the call and pass through the security process they will send a 2FA code to the victim.

At the same time, they go through the password reset / bank change process, which automatically send the code through. They then ask the victim to read the code back to verify their identity, which they can input to the system and bypass the control.

Staff should be reminded never to give out their password or a 2FA code over email or the telephone.

COVID FRAUD HOTLINE

A new initiative has been launched between the government and the independent charity Crimestoppers.

One hundred and fifty Covid support schemes have been introduced by the government to help those struggling financially due to the pandemic, but with all schemes a minority of individuals have been abusing these by claiming support illegally.

If you have any concerns, the Covid Fraud Hotline is open 24/7, 365 days a year on 0800 587 5030, or you can fill in the simple and secure anonymous form at Covidfraudhotline.org. Alternatively, you can contact your LCFS directly for advice and guidance. (Source: National Crime Agency).

EMERGING RISKS

Voice spoofing: We have been made aware of a new tactic being used by fraudsters where they can spoof/imitate voices of key staff in order to telephone junior staff within an organisation and instruct payments be made, or suppliers set up.

The fraudsters will initially make contact with the victim and ask them seemingly innocuous questions, which are being recorded. Once they have enough voice material recorded, they can use free opensource software to replicate the voice using any script they write. This is then used to telephone others and commit fraud, but requesting personal details, requesting payments be made or suppliers set up. The spoof is so good that the person receiving the call would not be able to distinguish between the voices.

RECENT CASES

Two men, who siphoned £2m through fraudulent bank accounts, have been jailed.

Victims who thought they were paying for goods or services were actually sending money to the suspects, who were posing as the legitimate suppliers.

The duo would use 'cash-out' pages on social media to move small amounts of money into other accounts that they owned to avoid suspicion and cover the illicit source of the funds.

The prosecution used a wealth of evidence in this case, including the IP address of one of the suspects had used to access the bank accounts the fraudulent money had been moved to.

Both suspects were jailed for 13 years and made subject to a proceeds of crime act claim to pay back the money. (Source: cps.gov.uk)

Three men arrested amid inquiry into £6m Covid loan fraud.

Three men have been arrested as part of an investigation into [fraudulent coronavirus bounce-back loans](#) totalling £6m. The National Crime Agency (NCA) said all three men worked for the same London financial institution and are suspected of using their "specialist knowledge" to carry out the scam.

The government's [bounce-back loan scheme](#) was introduced in May to give small and medium-sized firms access to low-interest finance quickly. Companies can borrow between £2,000 and up to 25% of their turnover, up to a maximum of £50,000. Under the terms, the government guarantees 100% of the loan and there are no fees or interest for the first 12 months, with an interest rate of 2.5% a year after that.

The £6m in bogus claims are believed to have been made through the use of false data and documents, the NCA said. The three suspects have been released while inquiries into the extent of the fraud and the possibility of others being involved continue. (Source: NCA)

NHS Foundation Trust boss faces review over law degree.

The incoming chief executive of an NHS trust in special measures faces an inquiry into his qualifications.

Annual reports submitted to parliament state the incoming chief executive holds a Master of Laws (LLM) from the University of Georgia in the US however the subject did not graduate.

The degree qualification appears on at least three annual reports submitted by both NSFT, a mental health trust, and the East London Foundation Trust, the subject was previously director of corporate affairs and director of planning and performance.

In response to the BBC's inquiry, the university said: The subject attended the University of Georgia from 1999 through spring 2000. Two semesters completed. "He did not graduate but was in the law school graduate program." (Source: BBC news)

Reporting concerns

Don't be embarrassed to report a scam. Fraudsters can be cunning and clever; there is no shame in being deceived. By reporting, you will make it more difficult for them to deceive others.

It is easy to report fraud, bribery or corruption affecting the NHS.

Contact your Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS) directly or call the national anonymous, 24-hour reporting line on 0800 028 4060 (powered by Crimestoppers). You can also report online, completely confidentially via <https://cfa.nhs.uk/reportfraud>.

It is the LCFS' role to take every allegation of fraud or bribery seriously and to provide anonymity and confidentiality for anyone who reports a concern. It is recommended that you refer to your organisation's policy on fraud when reporting allegations for further information on how you are protected.

Remain vigilant during this time.

Spot it. Report it. Together we stop it.

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