

Avoiding getting caught out by scams

It's Scams Awareness Month and people are being warned to beware of being caught out by fraudsters. There are countless ways that criminals have found to scam people out of their money, but there are steps to take to be wiser about scams.

Do some research

New technology has made scamming a fine art. Telephones, smartphones, computers, and tablets has inspired a new generation of scammers from home and abroad.

People need to be much more careful. Just as the internet is used to search for products and services, people should use the internet to:

- research the seller or provider
- check reviews and scam alerts from those who have already been caught out

It is one of the easiest ways of protecting yourself.

Scams and what to do

Each month Trading Standards Service's [Consumerline](#) receives hundreds of complaints, many from people who have been scammed from a few pounds to many thousands of pounds.

For example:

- phone calls catch the unwary who are frequently too quick to agree business over the phone
- instead of being given money, some consumers have lost hundreds of pounds applying for loans
- fake websites supposedly selling cars and even outboard motors have caught local consumers out in recent weeks

Lots of people also fall for 'free trials' of various lotions and potions. Thinking they have paid only a few pounds for post and packaging, they discover that they have had sometimes hundreds of pounds withdrawn from their account under a Continuous Payment Authority. In many cases, goods are simply never delivered.

Anyone who feels that they have been a victim of a scam should [contact Consumerline](#).

Report a scam

Many people who are scammed feel they are to blame to falling for it, but it's not their fault.

If you have – or know someone who has – been a victim of fraud, no matter how small, you should report it to the [PSNI](#) or [Action Fraud](#).

Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

More useful links

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[Physical activity advice for pregnant women](#)

If you are pregnant, there is new advice about the types of physical activity that are safe to do while you're expecting. Taking part in safe, responsible and appropriate physical activity while pregnant can have many health benefits.

Addressing health concerns

The new recommendations aim to address concerns around obesity, diabetes and other health issues during pregnancy.

Research shows that taking regular physical exercise during pregnancy can:

- boost the immune system
- help prevent health risks such as Type 2 diabetes
- improve mental health and wellbeing

If you are pregnant you should listen to your body and adapt your exercise accordingly.

As a general rule, if it feels pleasant, keep going; if it is uncomfortable, then stop and seek advice from your health professional.

If you are already active then try to keep up your physical activity levels.

You may need to adapt your activity throughout your pregnancy. For example, replacing contact sports with a non-contact sport or an appropriate exercise class – 'don't bump the bump'.

There is no evidence of harm for expectant mother or baby resulting from moderate intensity physical activity.

If you weren't active before pregnancy, it is recommended you slowly increase the amount of exercise you do. Begin with 10-minute bouts of moderate-intensity exercise, gradually building up to 150 minutes in total spread

throughout the week. It is important to remember that 'every activity counts'.

If you were not active before your pregnancy you should avoid intense exercise, such as:

- running
- jogging
- racquet sports
- strenuous strength training

Activities to avoid

If pregnant you should avoid activities where there is an increased risk of falling, trauma or high impact injuries. These include:

- skiing
- water skiing
- surfing
- off-road cycling
- gymnastics
- horse riding
- contact sports, such as ice hockey, boxing, football or basketball

After the first trimester of your pregnancy you are also discouraged from exercise that requires lying flat on your back.

Medical advice

You should seek medical advice if you experience:

- breathlessness before or following mild exercise
- headaches
- dizziness
- chest pain
- muscle weakness affecting balance
- calf pain or swelling

If you experience pregnancy complications such as vaginal bleeding, regular painful contractions, or amniotic fluid leakage, you may also be advised to reduce or stop physical activity.

More useful links

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Speak to your family about organ donation

Everyone is being encouraged to sit down with their loved ones and talk about their organ donation wishes. A family will always have to agree to donation, whether or not their loved one is on the Organ Donor Register. You can sign up to the register online.

Organ Donor Register

The organ donation system in Northern Ireland is based on opting in to being a donor, and donors' families giving consent for their organs to be used.

Some families do not consent to the donation of their loved one's organs, when faced with this choice. A common reason for refusing is that the potential donor's family was not aware of their loved one's wishes. So everyone is encouraged to make their organ donation intentions clear.

When you sign up to the Organ Donor Register you will be able to register to:

- be a donor
- not be a donor
- record the details of up to two representatives, if you feel you would want someone to make that decision for you after death

How to register

By signing the register and talking to your family about your wishes, you could help save the lives of up to seven people. Organ donation really is the gift of life.

You can find out more, including how to join the register, on the page below:

Age isn't a barrier to being an organ or tissue donor, and neither are most medical conditions.

People in their 50s and over are encouraged to join, and people in their 70s and 80s have become donors and saved many lives.

More useful links

Put safety first at bonfires

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The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) is appealing to the public to think 'safety first' when attending bonfires. If bonfires are not built as safely as possible and properly supervised, they can easily get out of control.

Act responsibly

NIFRS is urging people to act responsibly and be safe around bonfires by using the following advice:

- keep the bonfire to a manageable size
- site the bonfire in a clear, open space, well away from houses, garages, sheds, fences, overhead cables, trees and shrubs
- as a guide the distance from the bonfire to the nearest property should be five times the height of the bonfire
- build the stack so that it is stable and will not collapse
- do not burn tyres (the burning of tyres releases toxic fumes, which are harmful to the environment and also cause hazardous health conditions for those attending or living close to the bonfire)
- do not burn foam-filled furniture, aerosols, tins of paint or bottles
- never use flammable liquids, such as petrol or paraffin, as these can produce explosive vapours – use domestic firelighters
- keep everyone away from the fire – especially children, who must be supervised at all times
- never build a hut or den inside the bonfire
- responsible adults should look after lighting the bonfire, and before lighting the fire, check that no children or pets are hiding inside it
- for an emergency keep buckets of water, a garden hose or a fire extinguisher ready

You can find information on the [bonfire safety](#) page.

If your bonfire gets out of control, call 999 immediately and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service.

More useful links

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[Jury notice form of return online](#)

Members of the public will be receiving jury notices in the post. If you get one, you must fill in the Form of Return. You can do this online.

Jury service

Each year people are randomly selected from the Electoral Register to potentially be called for jury service.

If you [get a jury notice](#), this means that you may be called for jury service at any time during a 12-month period from the beginning of July 2019 until the end of June 2020.

You must fill in a Form of Return within 14 days of receiving your jury notice. The most straightforward way to do this online at the following link:

If you fail to make a return within 14 days, or make a false statement, you will be liable on conviction of a Magistrates' Court to a fine of up to £1,000.

You should fully read the documents attached to the notice.

Jury summons

If you are selected at random for jury service, you will receive a jury summons.

This will have further information, including where and when you are required to attend to meet your legal obligations as a juror.

The jury summons will give you at least 10 days' notice to enable you to make arrangements to attend. However, longer notice will try to be given where possible.

You can find more information in the [jury service](#) section.

More useful links