

Public urged to protect themselves from online sales scams

The public must be vigilant in protecting themselves from the threat of online scammers during the Boxing Day sales, the Government has urged today (26 December) after a year which saw a record number of cyber attacks and online scams.

Reports to Action Fraud, the national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime, reveal that almost 100,000 people in the UK have fallen victim to online shopping fraud in the past 13 months – with over £60 million being reported lost, leading to this call to action for the public to take five simple steps to protect themselves and their families from fraudsters.

Traditionally, Boxing Day marks one of the busiest days on the high street for retailers, however in recent years more people have been shopping online – with Barclaycard estimating £2.7 billion was spent online by UK shoppers on Boxing Day 2020, an average of £162 per shopper.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is encouraging people to shop online securely by following five actionable steps:

1. Keeping accounts secure – strong and separate passwords should be used for the most important online accounts, including email, banking or payment accounts (such as PayPal). The NCSC recommends using three random words to create a password. Turning on two-step verification can add an extra layer of protection.
2. Be aware of emails, text messages or websites that look too good to be true or suspicious – many scammers set up fake messages designed to steal financial and personal information. Members of the public can report suspicious messages to the NCSC via text to 7726 and email to report@phishing.gov.uk.
3. Choose online retailers carefully – research stores before buying to confirm they are legitimate through trustworthy consumer websites. Some emails or texts about amazing offers may contain links to fake websites. If unsure, don't use the link.
4. Use a credit card for online payments if possible – most major credit card providers protect online purchases, and are obliged to refund individuals in certain circumstances.
5. Only provide enough details to complete a purchase – only fill in the mandatory details on a website when shopping online (often marked with an asterisk).

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Cyber Crime Steve Barclay said:

With a record number of cyber attacks this year, it is crucial we all take some steps to keep ourselves and our families safe from

scammers while shopping online, particularly in the Boxing Day sales which have become a firm favourite for fraudsters.

In the past year, government and police action has seen numerous convictions on cyber fraud, and we should all play our part to stamp out this terrible crime that can ruin lives.

Paul Maddinson, Director of National Resilience and Strategy at the NCSC said:

Scammers will use any opportunity to try and trick the public and businesses into parting with their money so it's really important that we all know how to protect ourselves.

Whilst scams can be convincing, there are practical steps you can take to avoid falling victim to cyber crime which can all be found on the NCSC's website.

This warning against online scams comes alongside growing concern about the vulnerability of people's personal technology. Hackers are targeting individuals' applications and email accounts, gaining access to personal and financial information and exposing individuals to considerable risk.

As people receive new laptops and smartphones over Christmas, the risks are magnified. The government is also encouraging individuals to ensure that any new devices are protected to keep personal and financial information secure from hackers. However, these dangers are easily avoidable by adopting two key Cyber Aware behaviours:

- Turning on two-step verification
- Using three random words to secure your email accounts

For further guidance on how to stay secure online, visit www.cyberaware.gov.uk

[Consultation to extend licensing hours for Queen's Platinum Jubilee](#)

The government will seek to extend licensing hours across England and Wales to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year, Home Secretary Priti Patel announced today (26 December 2021).

The Platinum Jubilee will mark Her Majesty's 70-year reign and a blockbuster weekend of celebrations is planned. This will include a [4-day bank holiday](#)

[weekend](#) from Thursday 2 June until Sunday 5 June to allow the nation to celebrate this historic milestone.

To support the celebrations, the Home Office will shortly launch a public consultation on extending licensing hours for pubs, clubs and bars from the normal 11pm to 1am on Thursday 2, Friday 3 and Saturday 4 June.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

Her Majesty The Queen is an example to us all – she has served the UK and the Commonwealth with the utmost dignity, steadfastness, and resolve throughout her remarkable reign.

The Platinum Jubilee is a truly historic occasion, and it is right that the country should mark this celebration in a special way.

This extension will enable families, friends and communities across England and Wales to raise a glass to toast Her Majesty The Queen and mark her incredible service to our country.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

Next year we will celebrate an unprecedented milestone in our national life. No other British monarch has served for 70 years and it is fitting that, as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June, we toast Her Majesty for her dedication and service.

2022 will be a year of pride, celebration and coming together with the Platinum Jubilee alongside our other blockbuster events including the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Unboxed, championing creativity in the UK.

Section 172 of the Licensing Act 2003 allows the Home Secretary to make a licensing hours order, giving permission to premises to open for specified, extended hours to mark occasions of exceptional international, national or local significance.

The extension of licensing hours will be subject to a month's public consultation, giving the public the opportunity to submit their views on the proposals as well as seeking the views of specific stakeholders, including the police, licensing authorities and alcohol awareness groups.

The public consultation will ask for an extension of licensing hours for premises already licensed for the sale of alcohol for consumption and premises already licensed for the provision of regulated entertainment.

The consultation will focus on whether licencing hours should be extended and the scope of a licensing hours order, including the dates, times, geographical extent and licensable activities to which it should apply.

Past national occasions where the government has extended licensing hours have included the royal wedding in 2018, when the government extended licensing hours until 1am for 2 nights to facilitate the country's celebrations. Licensing hours have also previously been extended for The Queen's 90th birthday in 2016, the FIFA World Cup in 2014, The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 and the royal wedding in 2011.

Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will see a 4-day bank holiday weekend from 2 to 5 June which includes Trooping the Colour, the lighting of beacons, a Service of Thanksgiving, a concert, Platinum Pageant and nationwide street parties.

Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee will form 1 of the 3 main pillars of landmark events taking place next year alongside Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the Unboxed festival, in addition to other events such as Coventry City of Culture and the centenary of the BBC.

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James Webb Space Telescope Launch celebrated by UK

The telescope, known as 'Webb', blasted off from the Arianespace spaceport in French Guiana on 25 December 2021 at 12:20 pm – the culmination of decades of scientific collaboration.

The mission is led by NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Canadian Space Agency, with the UK playing a major role by leading the European consortium, which designed, built and tested one of the four main science instruments, working closely with partners in the US.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

Today is a monumental milestone for international and UK space science: the Webb Space Telescope will allow us to go further and deeper to explore and discover our planetary universe.

The project draws heavily on the world-class expertise of top UK scientists and engineers who were able to deliver vital pieces of this complex and powerful telescope.

Being at the heart of this international project showcases the innovative talent of the UK's world-leading scientists and engineers, and emphasises our position as a global science powerhouse.

[Minister Freeman – JWST launch](#)

Seeing the Universe

The telescope is set to redefine our understanding of the cosmos and unveil some of the secrets of the distant Universe.

Webb will peer through dusty clouds in space to allow scientists to determine how the first galaxies were formed and will see our own solar system in whole new ways and in never-before-seen detail.

Scientists and engineers in the UK were crucial to the development and launch of the Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI), which will be able to see the faint light from the most distant stars, effectively looking further back in time than ever before, and to peer through dust and gas to spot stars being born.

JWST's Mid Infrared Instrument (MIRI), for which the UK leads the European Consortium. Credit: STFC RAL Space

The MIRI development has been funded by the UK Space Agency and the Science and Technology Facilities Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, and ESA.

Caroline Harper, Head of Space Science at the UK Space Agency, said:

Webb is set to re-write the text books on astronomy, showing us things about the universe we have never been able to see before. I am excited to see the fascinating discoveries the spacecraft makes as it reveals the evolution of the universe.

The UK has played a crucial role in this once-in-a-generation mission, developing the Mid-Infrared Instrument, which will examine the physical and chemical properties of objects in the early universe in greater detail than ever. This has been a fantastic example of academic-industry partnership, showcasing the skills and expertise of our scientists and engineers.

[The UK in the James Webb Space Telescope](#)

Webb in the UK

MIRI will deliver a host of capabilities, boasting a spectrograph to break up light into its constituent wavelengths, a coronagraph to block starlight and look at fainter objects next to stars, and a camera to take pictures.

MIRI was designed, built, and tested by a European Consortium of 10 member countries led by the UK, in partnership with the US. The European contribution is led by Professor Gillian Wright MBE of STFC's UK Astronomy Technology Centre (UKATC), and includes STFC RAL Space, University of Leicester, and Airbus UK.

The UK's lead role in the instrument involves taking responsibility for the overall design, science performance, and the mechanical, thermal and optical design, along with the assembly, integration, testing and calibration software.

The UK (UK Space Agency since 2011 and STFC) has invested almost £20 million in the development phase of MIRI and has continued to support essential post-delivery testing, integration, calibration and characterisation activities by the UK MIRI team.

Professor Gillian Wright, European Principal Investigator for MIRI and Director of UKATC, said:

To see Webb launch, with MIRI on board, after more than two decades is a seminal moment.

MIRI is a special instrument, for the breadth of its science, the team that built it, and being the coolest instrument on Webb. The

MIRI team rose to the challenges and brought some exquisite engineering solutions to make it a reality.

The Webb mission as a whole is an amazing technological breakthrough in scale and complexity, and this extends to the instruments, including MIRI. With the launch, all of us are excitedly anticipating the first MIRI data and the new view of the universe we will have.

What's next for Webb

Credit: NASA

Although Webb has successfully launched, its journey is only just beginning.

The giant mirror for the telescope had to be launched as 18 segments folded inside the launch vehicle and it must be unfolded, and all the segments perfectly aligned, in space. A huge sunshield the size of a tennis court is needed to keep the instruments cold enough to work and this must also be unfurled in space.

Webb will then go on a month-long journey to its destination, a million miles from Earth. In the six months after launch, the observatory commissioning will take place – with first results expected in the summer of 2022.

[Biggest visa boost for social care as Health and Care Visa scheme expanded](#)

- Care staff to be added to the Shortage Occupation List in response to pandemic pressures
- Visa Boost complements £462.5m investment in Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund

Thousands of additional care workers could be recruited to boost the adult social care workforce following temporary changes to the health and care visa to make social care workers, care assistants and home care workers eligible for a 12-month period. This will make it quicker, cheaper and easier for social care employers to recruit eligible workers to fill vital gaps.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted a range of staff shortages within the social care sector, placing pressures on the existing workforce, despite the incredible and tireless efforts of social care staff.

This boost follows the recommendation from the Migration Advisory Committee

(MAC) to make care workers and home carers eligible for the Health and Care visa and add the occupation to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

Inclusion on the Shortage Occupation List will stipulate an annual salary minimum of £20,480 for carers to qualify for the Health and Care visa. The UK is committed to becoming a high-skilled, high-wage economy and minimum salaries must reflect the professional skills that are required to provide quality care. The Health and Care visa will allow applicants and their dependents to benefit from fast-track processing, dedicated resources in processing applications and reduced visa fees.

The temporary measures are expected to come into effect early next year and will be in place for a minimum of 12 months, providing a much-needed staffing boost while the sector deals with the additional pressures of the pandemic, at which point they will be reviewed.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

It is vital we continue to do all we can to protect the social care sector during the pandemic and beyond.

These measures, together with the series of support packages announced since September, will help us ensure short term sustainability and success for our long-term vision to build social care back better.

I also urge all care staff yet to do so to come forward to Get Boosted Now to protect themselves and those they care for.

Care providers who do not already hold a sponsor licence in the Skilled Worker route can prepare to take advantage of the offer by registering for a sponsorship license ahead of implementation.

Providers who are new to visa sponsorship will be supported through the process through a series of engagement activities in January and February, to introduce them to the system and find out how to act as a visa sponsor.

Care workers and carers recruited to the UK will be able to bring their dependents, including partner and children, with the Health and Care visa offering a pathway to settlement should they remain employed and wish to remain in the UK.

Home Secretary Priti Patel MP said:

The care sector is experiencing unprecedented challenges prompted by the pandemic and the changes we've made to the health and care visa will bolster the workforce and helping alleviate some of the pressures currently being experienced.

This is our New Plan for Immigration in action, delivering our

commitment to support the NHS and the wider health and care sector by making it easier for health professionals to live and work in the UK.

The move follows an investment of £465.2 million in supporting recruitment and retention of social care staff through the challenging winter period.

This is on top of the £500 million for workforce training, qualifications and wellbeing announced as part of the Health and Social Care Levy.

This funding is in addition to £6 billion committed to councils through un-ringfenced grants to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on their services, including adult social care, with total funding for adult social care over the pandemic coming to over £2.5 billion.

This follows wider plans to improve social care and fulfil the ten-year vision set out in the adult social care reform white paper – ‘People at the Heart of Care’, which provided details on how over £1 billion for system reform will be spent over the next three years to improve the lives of those who receive care – as well as their families and carers. Further details on integration will follow early next year.

Minister for Care Gillian Keegan said:

Our social care staff have done a phenomenal job delivering care under the most challenging of circumstances.

We recognise the challenges the workforce has faced, with ever growing demand for services combined with the pandemic and existing staff shortages.

This change will support getting more people into care as we implement our long-term strategy for a fair and sustainable care sector that meets the needs of everyone

It is a requirement for anyone working in CQC-regulated care homes to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to comply with regulations. Those working in wider social care settings must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 1st April 2022.

Social care staff are also being urged to come forward and get boosted now to protect themselves and those they care for against COVID-19 this winter.

NHS England has requested all vaccination centres offer priority access for frontline staff, including unpaid carers and social care staff, which includes access to queue management and priority lines making it as easy as possible for anyone who is receiving or giving care, whether paid or unpaid, to get their booster this winter.

Notes to editors

- The Health and Care Worker visa was launched in August 2020 and it allows medical professionals to come to or stay in the UK to work with the NHS, an NHS supplier or in adult social care. The Visa offers 50% visa fee reduction, an exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge and a speedier decision following application.
- All roles in SOC Code 6145 will be brought into scope of this visa change. According to ONS this includes the job titles: Care Assistant, Care Worker, Carer, Home Care Assistant, Home Carer and Support Worker (Nursing Home).