

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

2010 - time to turn the scammers in

Residents in East Sussex are once again being asked to help in the fight against con artists, criminals and scammers by taking part in a month-long 'Scamnesty' campaign.

East Sussex County Council Trading Standards is running the Scamnesty campaign during February, asking the public to hand in any suspicious 'scam' mailings to their local library.

All of the County Council's libraries are taking part in the campaign which is being replicated by Trading Standards across the UK with the support of the Office of Fair Trading. This follows a similar campaign held by the Council last year.

Councillor Bob Tidy, Lead Member for Community Safety, said: "During our previous Scamnesty campaign in East Sussex, we received information from our residents on over 1000 scams. This helped us to better understand how the scammers are operating, how the scams are evolving and how best to tackle them.

"Unfortunately there seems to be a scam designed for everyone from foreign lottery scams, clairvoyant scams and prize draw scams to unclaimed inheritances, easy-money offers and home-working job opportunities - the list goes on. Anyone can be targeted and fall victim if they are not alert to the problems."

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In November 2009, based on information provided by East Sussex residents, the Council's Trading Standards team took legal action to stop a company responsible for sending out 136,000 misleading prize draw letters.

Trading Standards in East Sussex respond to every request for assistance from anyone who may have been a victim of a scam or know of a friend or relative who may have suffered. Trading Standards work with people affected by the scams to try to help them understand the situation and to cut off their contact with the fraudsters.

The following scams have all been reported by East Sussex residents in recent weeks:

Foreign lottery wins: You've won a fortune! (Despite you never having entered a lottery in Spain or Canada, and before they can send you the cheque you have to send them money to pay the "tax" on the win).

Clairvoyant scams: A mystic is warning you that dark forces surround you, and can only be banished by buying a mystical amulet. (But they send the same letter out to thousands of people).

Prize draw wins. You've won thousands! (But you have to buy their overpriced products first, and the prize never materialises, or is of little real value).

Unclaimed inheritances. Someone with the same name as you has died abroad and left a huge inheritance, and that could be yours! (But you have to send that dodgy bank worker in the far east some money first).

Easy money "job" offers. All you have to do is send the registration fee first and the work will materialise. (Only it doesn't).

Home-working job opportunities. Earn hundreds every week and work from your own home! (So if this is a genuine job offer, how come you have to pay them first?)

If in any doubt, or you are concerned for a friend or relative, contact the Consumer Direct advice line, 08454 040506 in the first instance. Mailings handed into the libraries are used for intelligence purposes and the information on the scammers is shared with appropriate enforcement bodies.

For further information please contact East Sussex County Council Trading Standards on 01323 463466 or visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/consumeradvice and click on 'scams, fraud and product alerts'.

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