



Awareness

Watch out for legal and financial scams, warns South Worcestershire Citizens Advice.

People need to be on their guard against financial and legal scams following a rise in cases reported to the Citizens Advice consumer service. Citizens Advice South Worcestershire is now showing people how to spot scams as it launches Scams Awareness Month.

A total of 1200 financial and legal scams were reported to the national consumer service in the year ending April 2018 - a 6% increase on the year before.

The median loss for these scams was £330.

A range of investments scams were reported to the consumer service, including:

Cryptocurrency - Fake websites claim to offer cryptocurrency investments, like Bitcoin. Often, scammers will pretend that household names have endorsed the company to give it some legitimacy.

Binary options - Scammers pose as stockbrokers and get you to place bets on whether phoney shares will rise or fall within a certain date. They'll promise big returns. You should check if they are on the [FCA Register and not on the warning list of firms to avoid](#)

Holiday timeshares - Scammers promise to buy your membership off you for an advanced fee.

Bogus solicitors - A scammer will intercept emails from a legitimate solicitor and pose as them. Scammers often strike when a property is being exchanged on and get the funds diverted to their bank account instead. Check if they are on the [Solicitors Regulation Authority](#) to see if they are genuine.

To help stop more people being fleeced by these types of scams, here are some tips on how to spot them:

- ? Be suspicious if you're contacted out of the blue, even if it's from a name you recognise
- ? Don't be rushed – you never need to make a decision straight away
- ? If it sounds too good to be true it probably is
- ? Never send money to someone you have never met
- ? Never give out your bank details unless you are certain you can trust the person contacting you
- ? Walk away from job ads that ask for money in advance
- ? Genuine computer firms do not make unsolicited phone calls to help you fix your computer
- ? Suspect a scam? Hang up, wait five minutes to clear the line or use another phone to call
- ? Persuasive sales patter? Just say: "No Thank You"
- ? Don't suffer in silence – speak out about scams

For further information and advice, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or see www.adviceguide.org.uk.

Your local Bureau – South Worcestershire Citizens Advice Bureau at 52 Prospect Close, Malvern WR14 2FD is open:

Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri 10 am - 4 pm

Wed (Specialist Debt Advice) - by appointment Tel: 01684 563611

