



# STAND AGAINST SCAMS



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Scams are the scourge of our communities. They are operated by criminals with the sole purpose of identifying and exploiting often vulnerable, elderly and mentally impaired people.

Trading standards, a function of local government, is focused on combating criminals and protecting these vulnerable individuals.

The average victim loses about **£1,000** to scams but some have lost their homes, their life savings and many thousands of pounds.

Financial loss is not the only cost. Feelings of **vulnerability** can have an overwhelming impact on many victims.

Elderly victims are **2.4 times more likely** to die or go into a care home than those who are not scammed.

Many other public services are required to help pick up the pieces and all this has a cost.

## WHO ARE THE NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS SCAMS TEAM?

The NTS Scams Team is funded by National Trading Standards and is hosted by East Sussex Trading Standards. The team was founded in 2012 to tackle the problem of postal, telephone and doorstep scams, and related crimes. The team works across England and Wales with trading standards and

partner agencies to investigate scams, and to identify and support those who fall victim to them.

Together with the NTS Scams Team we are creating a cross-party network to protect everyone from scams and the damage they cause. This is the **#SCAMBassador** network.

## WHAT IS FRIENDS AGAINST SCAMS?

Friends Against Scams is a National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering communities to... 'Take a Stand Against Scams.'

Scams affect the lives of millions of people across the UK. People who are scammed often experience, loneliness, shame and social isolation.

Friends Against Scams aims to inspire action, highlight the scale of the problem, change the perceptions of why people fall victim to scams and make scams a local, regional and national topic.

By attending a Friends Against Scams awareness session or completing the online learning, anyone can learn about the different types of scams and how to spot and support a victim. With increased knowledge and awareness, people can make scams part of everyday conversation with their family, friends and neighbours, which will enable them to protect themselves and others.

**Within the initiative there are:**

### **Friends**

People from all walks of life who attend a short training session, commit to talking to others about scams and potentially identify victims.

### **SCAMchampions**

Friends who attend a further training session to enable them to recruit new Friends Against Scams.

### **SCAMBassadors**

MPs, senior officials or someone who will use their influence to raise the profile of scams.

**CONTACT US TO SIGN UP TODAY**  
**SCAMBASSADORS@TSI.ORG.UK**



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## SO WHAT ARE SCAMS?

If someone is persuaded to part with money as a result of **postal, telephone or electronic communication** received into the home they have been scammed. This can often take place on an industrial scale through:

- Fictitious prize draws
- False investment opportunities
- Pension fraud or bogus equity release schemes
- Clairvoyant or dating scams
- Fake lotteries

These scams often use techniques such as sales scripts, data collection and targeted mail. They may play on the aspirations as well as the vulnerability of the victim. Victims' details are often passed around criminal groups, leading to repeat victimisation.

Several forms of this crime take place on the doorstep. Victims are cold called at their homes and persuaded to part with money. The most common form is charging an extortionate price for unnecessary work not completed.

## THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

For all that is known about scams it is believed that there is a great deal of information yet to be discovered.

- Victims don't report being scammed because of shame or intimidation
- With diminishing funding for local trading standards services there are fewer opportunities to follow up on suspicious activity
- Developing technology enables scammers to access victims in new ways

When it was founded the NTS Scams Team had uncovered **106,000** potential victims on captured criminal target lists also known as 'suckers lists'. Further investigations have suggested that there are **750,000** victims in circulation with many more anticipated.

Only **5%** of scams are reported

# WHAT ARE LOCAL AUTHORITIES DOING ABOUT SCAMS?

Combating scams is rarely easy. Many criminals operate overseas out of the reach of UK authorities, hide under company identities or intimidate their victims into silence. Trading standards have seen staff numbers fall by half over the last five years. Criminals know this and are targeting consumers because of this.

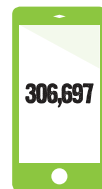
Local authority trading standards step in when they are aware of a victim, disrupting the criminals and where possible attempting to bring them to justice.

Officers work with victims to prevent future scams, using innovations such as call blockers to safeguard individuals. When a call blocker is installed it shows the targeting of the vulnerable.

Local authority trading standards have piloted call blocking software to help tackle scam calls up and down the country. In partnership with trueCall we have found that:



Over 100 **trading standards, charity, social services, adult safeguarding** and **police teams** have been involved in successful call blocking projects all across the UK



nuisance calls  
blocked



of all calls received  
were nuisance calls



of nuisance and  
scam calls blocked

Residents were receiving **53 nuisance calls**  
per month – **6 times** the national average



## MANY INTERVENTIONS ARE GUIDED BY THE WORK OF THE NTS SCAMS TEAM

### Aims of the National Trading Standards Scams Team are:

- To **IDENTIFY** victims of scams
- To **INTERVENE** and protect victims from further victimisation
- To **INVESTIGATE** criminal activity
- To **INFORM** local authorities and agencies on how to work with and support scam victims
- To **INFLUENCE** people at local, regional and national levels to **TAKE A STAND AGAINST SCAMS**

### The NTS Scams Team is fighting for a scam free nation by 'Taking a Stand Against Scams.'

The team shares its data with local authority trading standards services who are then able to intervene with victims on a one-to-one basis. Partner agencies are advised to make face-to-face visits to ensure that the victim receives the best possible care and support.

Local trading standards work tirelessly to ensure a long term support network is established. Where possible local teams will also link victims with other support mechanisms and befriending services such as those run by the charity Age UK.

### Successes of the NTS Scams Team

- **177** local authorities are signed up to the NTS Scams Team initiative
- **20,464** victims identified throughout the UK
- **£1,469.88** average savings per person as a result of trading standards work

**3,628**   
postmen and postwomen  
trained by trading standards



**110,000**  
items of mail seized

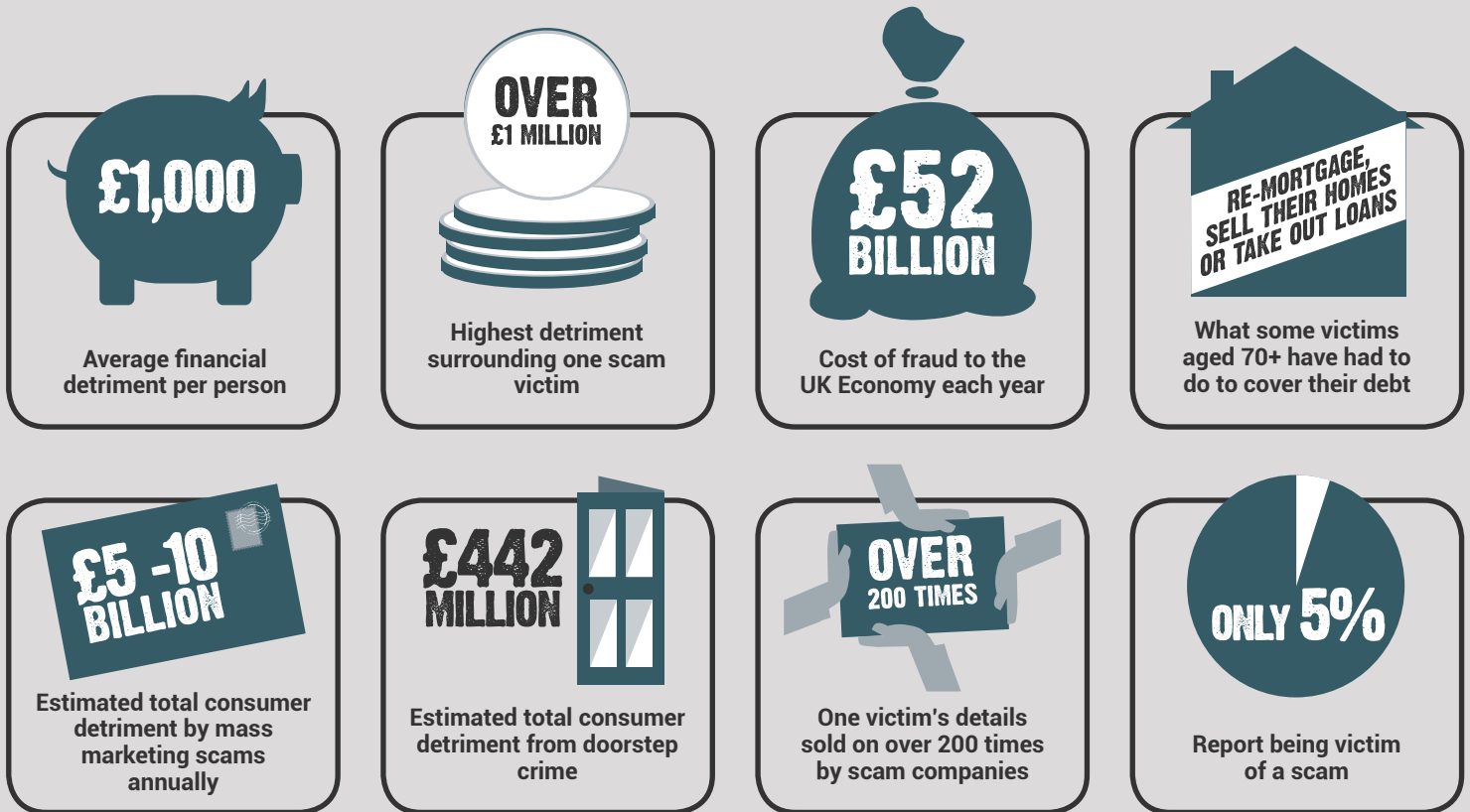


**150,000**  
cheques seized



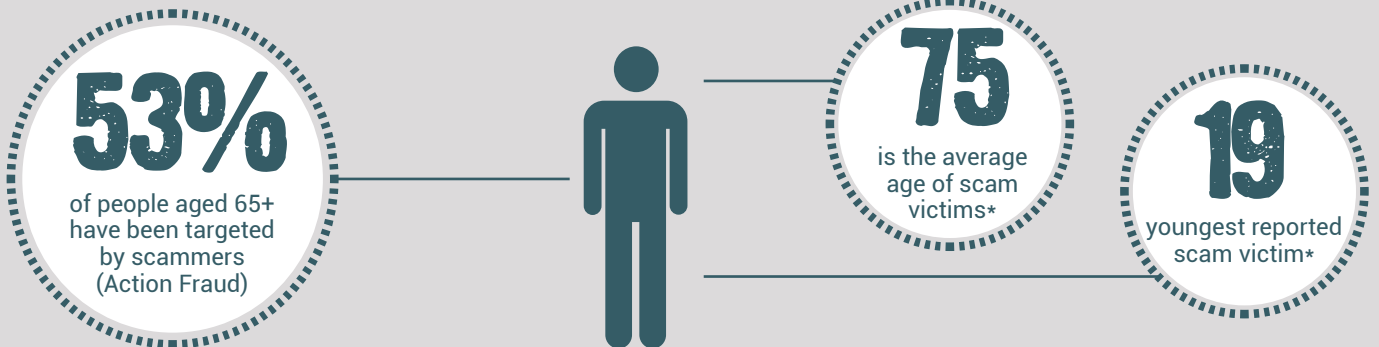
**750,000**  
victims have been identified  
on so-called 'suckers lists'

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## ANYONE CAN BE THE VICTIM OF A SCAM

yet it is the elderly and vulnerable who are often systematically targeted by scammers



\*based on 'suckers list' intelligence

## RESEARCH HAS CONFIRMED

older people are more susceptible to becoming victims due to lower levels of cognitive function. This is a concern because the ageing population is on the rise:



11.4 million (17.7% population) were aged over 65 in mid-2014



Set to rise to 20 million by 2050



Number of people with dementia set to rise by 40% by 2025

# HOW TO HELP A SCAM VICTIM?

By signing up to the initiative, as both a new **#SCAMBassador** and as a prominent figurehead of the community, the cases of local scams victims and their families will inevitably surface and require action.

It is important to remember that victims are all unique. There are, however, some common things to remember for every victim:

- Experts have described victims of scams and financial abuse as being groomed by scammers
- Because of this they may not accept that they have been a victim of crime, believing the criminals even over their own family
- Their family may have made several attempts to stop repeat victimisation only to find that their family member cannot accept that they are being defrauded
- Many victims suffer from dementia and other debilitating mental conditions which contributes to the difficulty to accept a crime has taken place

**Trading standards becoming involved will bring safeguarding support to victims and help to investigate criminal activity.**

**If you or a constituent wishes to report a potential scam contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline.**

**03454 04 05 06**  
or  
**03454 04 05 05**  
(Welsh speaking line)

If you would like any further information on the issues around scams, trading standards and what happens to an issue once it is reported please get in touch with CTSI

**SCAMBASSADORS@TSI.ORG.UK**  
**WWW.FRIENDSAGAINSTSCAMS.ORG.UK**

**PRINT OUT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**



# JOIN THE FIGHT

CTSI and the NTS Scams Team will support you every step of the way in becoming an effective **#SCAMBassador** for your community. We will provide media support and can help give you ideas for local community actions that might work well in your area.

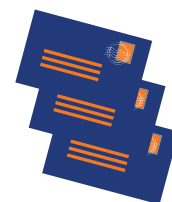
**Some initiatives that have worked well in the past include:**

**WRITING** to your local newspaper/magazine. Include a column on the latest scams reported in the area, warn constituents to be aware, provide info and keep us updated.



Use social media to raise awareness of issues **#FRIENDSAGAINSTSCAMS**. Become a **#SCAMBassador** today!

Co-ordinate a **MAIL COLLECT** in your constituency – this is a great way to get scam mail out of your constituent's homes and into the hands of the trading standards teams who will be able to investigate it fully. Send findings over to the NTS Scams team.



## YOUR COMMITMENT TO US:

**BY SIGNING UP AS A #SCAMBASSADOR YOU ARE COMMITTING TO:**

- Help us to raise the profile of the problem of fraud and financial scams at a national level
- Raise the issue of scams as a key topic of concern in parliament
- Encourage your local authority to sign up to the NTS Scams Team and start taking information on scam victims

As the **#SCAMBassador** network grows we hope to be able to bring increased national attention to the issues

**CONTACT THE TEAM  
TO SIGN UP TODAY**  
**SCAMBASSADORS@TSI.ORG.UK**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT THE POLICY TEAM**

tel **01268 582250** or email  
**[scambassadors@tsi.org.uk](mailto:scambassadors@tsi.org.uk)**

Published by Chartered Trading  
Standards Institute

