

BTS NRC MUC - NRC - TC

Britain's worst scams

FREE HOLIDAY Consumers are approached while on holiday or at home in the UK. The promise of a free holiday is used to lure them to a presentation where they are pressured into signing up to a holiday club offering great value holidays all over the world in top-class accommodation.

In reality dates or destinations are not guaranteed and holidays are often not available when and where wanted. Victims later find out that the 'free' holiday isn't free, as they must pay for flights and other add-ons and go somewhere they don't want to go at a time that doesn't suit.

PYRAMID SELLING AND CHAIN LETTERS

Consumers, often friends or relatives, are asked to pay to become a member and are promised large commission earnings if they recruit others to the scheme. If enough new members join, the pyramid will grow, possibly enabling some members to make money. But, in order for every member to make money, there would need to be an endless supply of newcomers.

- Victim profile – Nearly three-quarters of victims are aged between 35 and 64.

AFRICAN ADVANCE FEE FRAUDS

Consumers are contacted by someone saying they need help transferring money overseas, usually millions of dollars. Writers, who often claim to be a relative of a deposed or dead politician, say they need to transfer this cash to a bank in their country, and that if the recipients let them use their bank account they can keep a big slice for themselves. Victim supplies bank details which are used to plunder their account.

- Victim profile – Mainly men, many of whom are middle-class.

FOREIGN LOTTERY SCAMS

Consumers receive a letter, phone call or e-mail telling them they have won a major cash prize in an overseas lottery. They will often be told to telephone a sales agent who will ask the victim to send money to cover administration, customs and taxes. The winnings do not exist and are never received.

- Victim profile – Slightly more men than women believe it is possible to win a prize in a lottery without ever buying a ticket.

LOAN SCAMS

Consumers reply to an advert offering fast loans regardless of credit history. Targets are told their loan has been agreed but before they can have the money they must pay a fee to cover insurance on the loan. After the fee is paid the victim never hears from the company again.

- Victim profile – More women than men. Most are short of money, but very few report the crime.

WORK AT HOME AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY SCAMS

Consumers respond to adverts offering a quick way to make a lot of money without any skills or expertise. First, victims have to pay a registration fee or to buy goods. Later they find there is no work or they will not be paid for any work done. Here are some common examples:

Addressing or stuffing envelopes: A registration fee is payable to join in return for simple advice on how to place similar advertisements to attract other people into the scam.

Home assembly kits: A fee is payable to receive a kit for making items such as from baby boots, aprons or toys. The kit is usually inadequate for making the goods required. The scammer promises to pay for the goods but then rejects them on the grounds that the work is sub-standard.

- Victim profile – Often less well-off young women looking after young children at home.