



Phantom Debt Collectors and Bailiffs Fraud Alert

This is a message sent via Lincolnshire Alert. This information has been sent on behalf of Action Fraud (National Fraud Intelligence Bureau)



Phantom Debt Collectors and Bailiffs Fraud Alert

Action Fraud has recently experienced an increase in the number of calls to members of the public by bogus bailiffs requesting payments for a “phantom” debt. The fraud involves being cold-called by someone purporting to be a bailiff working on behalf of a court, attempting to recover funds for a non-existent debt.

The caller will request payment by means of bank transfer and if this is refused, will threaten to visit the premises to recover the debt that is owed. A range of different businesses and individuals are being targeted.

Though this type of fraud can occur throughout the UK, Action Fraud has noted that a significant level of reports are being made from those in the Yorkshire area.

Tips for staying safe:

- Confirm what the debt is regarding; bailiffs are only used to recover certain debts such as council tax, child support and compensation orders. Bailiffs are not used to recover debts relating to private advertisement; these would be collected by debt collectors. Debt collectors do not have the same legal powers as bailiffs and will not have special court authorisation to act. For more details regarding this, please look at the Citizens Advice website.
- If you work for a business and receive a call or visit from bailiffs or debt collectors, be sure to speak with your manager or business owner first. **Never** pay the debts yourself on behalf of the business you work for; some fraudsters have suggested employees do this whilst talking with them, suggesting they can then be reimbursed by their employer, when in reality the debt is non-existent.
- Double check with the court or originating company to confirm whether the call is legitimate; if you use a landline make sure you hear the dialling tone prior to dialling as the caller could still be on the line and you could potentially speak to the fraudster(s) to confirm the non-existent debt. Also be sure to independently search for a telephone number to call and clarify; never use a number provided by the caller without carrying out your own research.
- Request details of the debt in writing to confirm its legitimacy.
- Do not feel rushed or intimidated to make a decision based on a phone call.
- You can report suspicious calls like these to Action Fraud by visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.