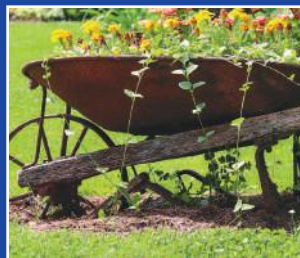




Lloyds helps aid fraud victims - P4



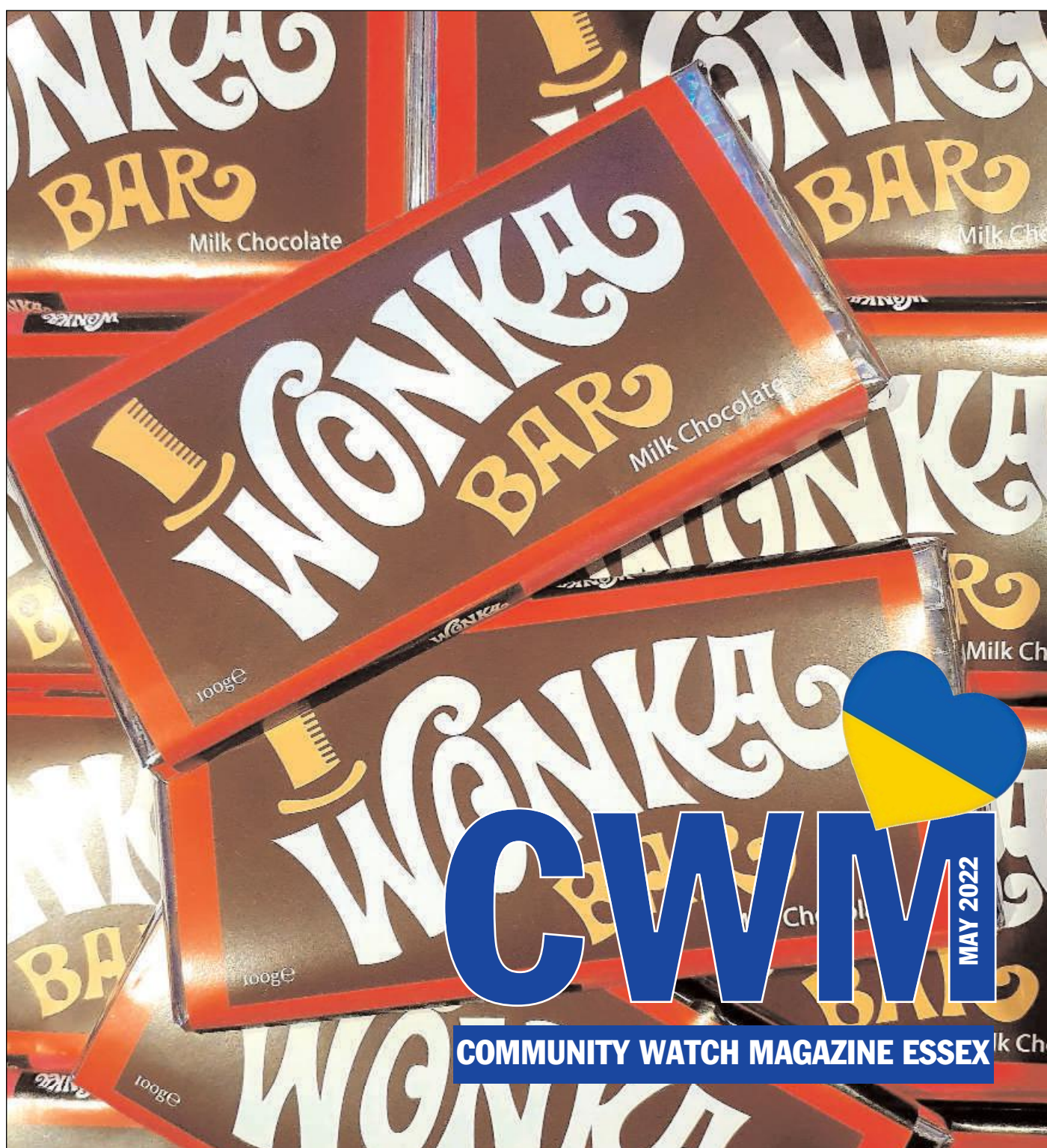
Crimestoppers fugitive hunt- P6-7



Crooks cashing in on a crisis - P8-9



Is your caravan in safety mode - P13





### New recruits

ESSEX Police celebrated 70 new officers reaching the rank of a Constable in a Confirmation Ceremony at Braxted Park, Witham, celebrating a significant milestone in their careers.

The new Constables were commended by Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Jane Gardner, Chief Constable, BJ Harrington, Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University, Rod-erick Watkins and In-spector Alison Smith.

### Face-to-face

MEMBERS from rural communities joined Essex Police for one of their online face-to-face meetings last month.

Key themes discussed were fly-tipping, dog theft and protecting isolated and vulnerable people and significant issues raised around hare coursing, police powers and unauthorised encampments.

### Bikes stolen

FOUR men have been arrested for stealing £18,000 worth of bicycles from a service station on the M11. They were later recovered in Purfleet.

#### Published by

Community Watch Publishing

110 Clifton Avenue

Benfleet, Essex SS7 5QU

Tel: 01268 566743

07958 475392

Email

peterfau67@gmail.com

Editor

Peter Faulkner

Website

communitywatchpublishing.co.uk

# How to safeguard your...



**That unknown caller could be a criminal after your life savings**

THE National Economic Crime Centre is targeting boomers in the run up to Christmas after latest figures from Action Fraud show more than £36 million has been lost to investment fraud via cloned company scams this year.

Warnings on how to spot and report cloned company investment scams will be shared across the National Crime Agency's social media channels, with those aged 55 to 70 in mind.

Data shows 34% of this age group were impacted by cloned company investment fraud in the first six months of this year, with average losses of £39,218 per victim.

Investment fraud by way of cloned websites has been on the rise in recent years, with Action Fraud reporting a total of £78 million lost last year – the year of the first coronavirus lockdown.

The crime is committed when fraudsters replicate or clone real company websites by using the name, address and 'Firm Reference Number' (FRN) attached to a company and

authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

Once a fake website is up and running, fraudsters typically draw people in with adverts on search engine websites and social media.

The promise is usually of an attractive return on an investment, most commonly on bonds, cryptocurrency and ISAs.

Returns advertised are typically moderate, but just above the market rate, making the adverts appear genuine.

Losses with one particular scam, which used the guise of a popular comparison website, recently totalled £750,000.

Victims of this scam described how they had searched online for investment opportunities, and were presented with an online form, similar to forms typically found on genuine comparison websites.

Those who completed the forms were then contacted by a fraudster purporting to be from a known investment firm.

**continued page 3**

# ...money from bogus companies



“ Even tech-savvy and seasoned investors can be vulnerable, given that many of the adverts for them appear on or through well-known and trusted websites.

JON SHILLAND - NECC

”

From page 2

They were able to persuade the victims to invest their savings in non-existent bonds, quoting legitimate company details and even using the identity of actual employees of the company.

The National Economic Crime Centre (NECC), part of the NCA, is working with City of London Police to reinforce steps that the public can take to protect themselves.

1. Reject unsolicited investment offers whether made online, on social media or over the phone. Be cautious when dealing with large sums of money, even if you initiated the first contact.
  2. Always check the FCA Register to make sure you're dealing with an authorised firm and check the FCA Warning List of firms to avoid.
  3. Only use the telephone number and email address on the FCA Register, not the contact details the firm gives you. Look out for subtle differences such as letters replaced with numbers (e.g. S and 5, O and 0), additional words, or spelling errors.
  4. If you have visited a website you think is suspicious, report it to the National Cyber Security Centre, using their quick and easy reporting tool.
  5. Consider seeking impartial advice before investing.
- If you think you've fallen victim to an investment fraud, report it to Action Fraud as soon as possible online at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk> or by

calling 0300 123 2040.

Jon Shilland, fraud lead at the NECC, said: "People can, and have lost their entire life savings to cloned website investment scams.

"Even tech-savvy and seasoned investors can be vulnerable, given that many of the adverts for them appear on or through well-known and trusted websites.

"Everyone should be highly alert and take caution before parting with any amount of money online. If it looks too good to be true then it probably is, but in today's low-yield environment investors should be mindful that criminals can tempt investors with rates of return which sound ever more plausible. It is becoming ever harder for investors to recognise these websites as being fraudulent.



Sgt Dickinson at the bus station

"The Online Harms Bill will be a great step forward but alone is not sufficient. It only covers user generated content and will not address the criminal exploitation of online advertising which is having a devastating impact through investment and pension fraud.

"We therefore welcome the Government's recognition that other steps will be needed, and look forward to working together with the tech sector, law enforcement, regulators and the Government to take them".

Temporary Detective Inspector Craig Mullish, from the City of London Police, said: "Every year, victims lose thousands of pounds to criminals imitating genuine investment firms with some even losing their life savings.

"This trend of 'cloned companies' is particularly worrying as it makes it even harder for people to spot a fraudulent investment opportunity.

"Investing any amount of money comes with an element of risk so always remember to stop and think as it could protect you and your money. It's really important people take time to do their research and seek independent impartial advice before making an investment.

"If you think you've fallen victim to an investment fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud as soon as possible online at <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk> or by calling 0300 123 2040."

## Fraud ring hit

OVER 100 people have been arrested by European police after busting an organised crime operation centered around cryptocurrency investment fraud.

Supported by Europol, the Latvian State Police and the Lithuanian Police, shut three call centers.

Investigators said they were being run by the same organised crime gang which has defrauded victims across the globe.

As many as 200 fake traders cold-called victims globally with lucrative-sounding investments.

## Donny's warning

POP idol Donny Osmond has warned fans to stay alert after scammers created fake accounts pretending to be him.

Donny, 64, took to Twitter, where he boasts 202,000 followers, to set the record straight and share his official account details.

The singer tweeted: "My only social media accounts are @DonnyOsmond on Twitter & Instagram, @therealdonnyosmond on TikTok, & Donny Osmond on Facebook!"

## £4m drug haul

DRUG dealer Fatjon Kurti, 34, has been jailed for 12 years after organising cocaine deals worth more than £4m in just three months.

Kurti, from London, used the encrypted platform EncroChat to deal the Class A drug.

Between 26 March and 2 June 2020, Kurti, was involved in deals to buy and supply at least 58kg of cocaine with a street value of more than £4m.

# Crime cash scheme to help victims of fraud



LLOYDS Banking Group has joined forces with City of London Police to launch the industry's first pilot scheme using proceeds of crime to fund a series of fraud fighting and victim support programmes across the country.

The 'frozen' cash – money captured from the fraudsters by the bank's specialist mule-hunting team – will be invested in several projects to tackle fraud as well as increasing education and awareness to keep more people safe by stopping scams from happening in the first place.

One of these is expanding the Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit (DCPCU)\* by funding a new specialist team to track down criminals through cyber investigations, which can lead to disrupting other illegal activity often associated with fraud such as drugs and people trafficking.

The money will also be used to provide additional support for people who have fallen victim to fraudsters. One initiative that will benefit is the National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) – run by the City of London Police – which provides one-to-one phone support, advice and after-care to victims.

This programme has already been trialled successfully across six forces, and will be expanded across all the forces, with an estimated 250,000 victims being reached.

The money will also be invested into projects to protect those who are most vulnerable to fraud, including an initiative run by Age UK. The charity's Scams Prevention and Support Programme will help older people increase their knowledge and confidence in recognising and dealing with attempted scams, helping reduce the number of people falling victim and supporting those who do in their recovery.

Philip Robinson, Retail Fraud Prevention Director, Lloyds Banking Group, said: "Fraud is the biggest crime in the UK and can have a devastating effect on people's lives as well as their finances.

"Our 24/7 fraud-fighting team is working hard behind the scenes every day to help keep our customers' money safe, but criminals are constantly finding new ways to trick people into handing over their money then disappear the second they have their hands on the cash.

"This initial funding will not only provide vital additional support to more victims, but also enable us to work closely with City of London Police and other organisations shaping future fraud prevention initiatives across the UK."

Clinton Blackburn, Temporary Commander, City of London Police, added: "The pilot scheme with Lloyds Banking Group is an innovative example of how through collaborative working we can improve the whole system approach to targeting the threat of economic and cyber crime.

"The DCPCU is a great example of how beneficial partnership working can be as the unit – funded by the banking industry – prevented £85 million worth of fraud being carried out in the first half of this year.

"Victims of fraud are at the very heart of the work that we do and the NECVCU is an invaluable service which helps and provides advice to the victims of fraud."



Philip Robinson, retail fraud director





“ All the agencies are working together to tackle anti-social behaviour and it has been suggested we are making difference.

**KAREN WILLIAMS**  
Castle Borough Homes

”

# Cracking a reign of terror

A GANG of teenagers inflicting misery on young and old residents have been warned by Essex Police that their reign of terror will be brought to an end.

Essex Police are working closely with Colchester Council and Colchester Borough Homes in a bid to tackle anti-social behaviour in Greenstead.

In recent weeks various reports have suggested a single cohort of young thugs, described as “out of control”, have been causing havoc throughout the estate.

Harry Ayan, 43, who has lived in Greenstead for 18 years, witnessed the gang’s latest attack, as 13 louts tormented an ill and elderly man.

“He hardly comes out but I think he saw them doing something to the Tripper House building and that is why he yelled at them,” added Mr Ayan.

“After going inside a hooded teen jumped over his fence and literally full pelt kicked his door open before running off with the others.

“Things had improved, but in the past year it has gone downhill. If any of these teens live with parents then they should foot the bill for any criminal damage.”

As part of the crackdown, six youngsters have been arrested on suspicion of causing £10,000 worth of criminal damage and racially aggravated offences.

In a bid to prevent further rampages officers are also engaging with schools to ensure children are aware of the consequences of getting involved in antisocial behaviour.

A police spokesman said: “This issue is being taken seriously and tactics are in place to tackle the issue, including patrols and using stop and search.

“Action is being taken in a variety of ways including, where

appropriate, criminal charges but also community resolutions and referrals to the Youth Offending Service.

“Greenstead also has a dedicated PCSO, who is acutely aware of the issues being raised by residents and councillors in Greenstead.

“The information provided to her informs our patrols as well as our preventative and response tactics.”

Karen Williams, head of housing management at Colchester Borough Homes said her team is determined to halt anti-social behaviour in the area.

She said: “A huge amount of coordinated work has been undertaken in the past few months to tackle youth related anti-social behaviour affecting residents in Greenstead.

“All the agencies involved are coordinated and working well together, and sources in the community have suggested our activities are beginning to make a difference – although we know there is still some way to go.

“CBH is fully committed to improving the situation and is confident that, with the continued support of the other agencies involved, we will succeed in ending the problem.”

Tim Young, Colchester councillor for the Greenstead ward, (pictured above) is aware of

the ongoing havoc being caused by the thugs and says their actions have left him sickened.

He said: “This group of youngsters is out of control and they are causing mayhem in Greenstead and we do not need it. The vast majority of people here have a great community spirit and are just getting on with their lives.

“Why they want to target elderly people is beyond me, and it is despicable because they are making their lives a misery.”



# CrimeStoppers. How you remain anonymous.

**We're an independent charity giving people the power to speak up about crime, 100% anonymously.**

When you make a report via our anonymous online form at **crimestoppers-uk.org**:

- We'll never ask for your personal details
- Your IP address is scrambled – it is impossible to retrace information back to your device
- You can tell us what you know in whatever language you feel most comfortable with, using your smartphone, tablet or computer

When you call our anonymous reporting line on **0800 555 111**:

- Your number can't be seen
- The call is not recorded
- The telephone line is scrambled – it is impossible to redial or track the source of your call
- The call won't show up on your phone bill

Our specially trained call agents will make sure your report contains no information that could identify you, and securely forward it to the most appropriate police or law enforcement agency.

### **Suspect something criminal?**

If you have crime information but don't want to reveal your identity, you can tell us what you know by phone and online, 24/7, 365 days a year.

In an emergency always call 999.



**CrimeStoppers.**  
**0800 555 111**

100% anonymous. Always.  
[crimestoppers-uk.org](http://crimestoppers-uk.org)



# Crimestoppers and NCA fugitive campaign pays off in just hours

CRIMESTOPPERS and the National Crime Agency work closely together to help catch dangerous criminals who are evading justice by hiding both in the UK and abroad.

As a charity that takes crime information completely anonymously, Crimestoppers plays a vital role by passing on what we're told about their whereabouts to local police forces, or the NCA, for those who are on the run abroad.

In January 2022, we launched a joint campaign with the NCA targeting UK fugitives hiding in Spain.

Within hours, having been named as one of Britain's most wanted fugitives, an alleged drug trafficker from Merseyside was arrested in Marbella as he walked his dog.

The capture came the day after we unveiled 12 of the UK's most wanted fugitives at a launch event in Madrid.

A few weeks later, another individual – who had fled to the Netherlands – was caught. The 12 most wanted in Spain are all men wanted for crimes including murder, large-scale drugs trafficking and supplying firearms and ammunition.



Crimestoppers CEO, Mark Hallas, at the launch of the campaign

## THE BENEFITS OF CLOSE CO-OPERATION

This campaign comes after the successful Operation Captura initiative which resulted in the arrests of 86 offenders.

Spain – along with countries like the Netherlands – is renowned as a popular destination for British ex-pats, including criminals, and the two nations have a long history of strong law enforcement partnership.

Crimestoppers is delighted to be working with the NCA and we look forward to further appeals in the future.

If you know of the whereabouts of anyone listed on our Most Wanted website, either here or abroad, you can tell our charity completely anonymously what you know.

We continue to appeal for information on people who are prime suspects for fatal shootings, those thought to be heading up major drug gangs, or individuals thought to be responsible for selling and using firearms in attacks on rivals.

Call freephone 0800 555 111 or fill in our simple and secure anonymous online form on our website.

Click on this link to view those fugitives who remain at large: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/most-wanted> You'll be helping to keep our communities safe from harm.

As our motto says, speak up, stay safe.

**THE UK'S MOST WANTED FUGITIVES**

Help us find them  
Call Crimestoppers anonymously on  
**0800 555 111**

**NCA** National Crime Agency  
**Crimestoppers.** Speak up. Stay safe.



# Beware as...

AS Trading Standards professionals, we see a clear pattern of when and how rogue traders operate, and we are seeing an increase in those who are using the current economic situation to line their pockets.

Essex Trading Standards has noted an upsurge of leaflets through the door offering gardening and tree services, often including driveway sanding and cleaning and much more.

Usually seen in Spring and then again in Autumn, when we are all thinking about having our gardens and outside space tidied up and naturally, we are on the lookout for honest and reliable tradesman.

### **So why are we susceptible to rogues?**

We all have a certain vulnerability when choosing a skilled tradesman. We assume, they are the experts with their expertise, skill and price, (sometimes not cheap) reflecting their work?

continued page 9

Kate, Aircrew Electricians  
Buy With Confidence Member

## Buy With Confidence

The only nationally available business approval scheme that's owned, controlled and operated by Trading Standards services.

Whether you need a plumber, electrician or anything else, visit [BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk) to find businesses that have been fully checked, vetted and continue to be monitored by Trading Standards.

**[BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk](http://BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk)**



## THINK YOU NEED WORK DOING?

### **Be sure at the door.**

Follow our advice - don't fall victim to a rogue trader

- Choose a 'Buy With Confidence' accredited trader
- Obtain several quotes
- Get a written quote detailing exactly what work will be carried out, how much it will cost and what the terms of payment are.
- Take your time to make sure you're happy with what you're undertaking
- Ask a trusted friend/relative for advice
- Ask to see identity

### **A genuine trader will not**

- Call without an appointment
- Ask you or offer to take you to the bank to withdraw cash or make a money transfer
- Ask you to pay in full before the work is complete
- Insist that you decide about the work they're offering to do on the spot
- Bully or scare you into doing work



**[www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)**



**Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for useful leaflets to share with your friends and family. Don't take chances, follow our advice and stay safe.**





# ...crooks cash in on a crisis

from page 8

So, it's even more important to protect yourself when making decisions about garden and other outside work.

Leaflets can be well timed to coincide with bad weather often resulting in tree, fence and other damage and rogue traders know all too well that a leaflet through the door at the right time might entice a homeowner to reach for the easy option.

Leaflets often contain fake or incomplete address details. It's long been established that this is not the best way for legitimate traders to advertise and can result in poor workmanship, overcharging and links to distraction burglaries.

Fraudsters may just knock on your door, saying they are in the area. Never let these people into your house uninvited, don't let them push you into having work done and never let them take money from you under duress.

Garden services such as tree work, fencing, landscape gardening and paving requires a high degree of technical competence supported by suitable qualifications and experience.

Always ask a company about their qualifications and check for evidence of a recognised trade association membership; this will help separate legitimate business from rogue traders.

Check on their insurances, rogue traders won't have the required liability insurance to cover any damages that might occur on a job.

**Remember:** Tree Surgeons operating without licences, or the correct qualification are just putting you at risk!

Check the trader is a licensed waste carrier and will dispose of the waste correctly, as this time of year always sees an increase in fly tipping garden waste.

Do your homework, go on recommendation from close friends and family, or look for a Trading Standards approved trader from our Buy With Confidence Scheme, where all traders have been vetted by Trading Standards

<https://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk/>

Follow our advice and stay safe.



Piling up the weeds - photo courtesy of Unsplash



Sprucing up the driveway - image by Boris Debusscher, Unsplash

To find a reputable trader approved and vetted by Trading Standards visit [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](https://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)

For general help and advice or to report a problem with a trader you can telephone the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**







**Do you  
know which  
businesses  
you can  
trust?**

# **Buy With Confidence**

The only nationally available business approval scheme that's owned, controlled and operated by Trading Standards services

It can be difficult to know who to trust. That's why Trading Standards created Buy With Confidence. Fully trained Trading Standards professionals independently check, vet and monitor businesses, who will treat you fairly.

So, whether you need a plumber, electrician, roofer or anything else, visit **BuyWithConfidence.gov.uk** to find Trading Standards Approved businesses you can trust.







“Criminal fraudsters are being let off and vulnerable victims are being let down, sometimes losing thousands in savings. The Home Secretary must start taking this damaging crime seriously.”  
YVETTE COOPER

## Fraud investigation scandal

JUST one in 1,000 frauds are solved by police as officers are accused of “looking for excuses not to investigate”.

Only 4,924 fraud offences resulted in a charge last year out of more than five million scams reported by people in the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS) annual survey of crime.

This means just 0.1 per cent of frauds resulted in a prosecution despite the number of offences rising by 32.4 per cent from 3.8 million in 2020, according to the analysis of official data by The Telegraph.

One senior police watchdog said the failure to tackle fraud was spurring criminals into it because they knew there was a less than one in a 100 chance of being detected.

“Why don’t the police take fraud seriously. It is because the politicians don’t take it seriously. Why is that? Because they think it is an invisible crime.

“The fact is it is not if someone loses their entire life savings and then takes their life as a result,” said the watchdog.

Some forces were actively “seeking reasons” not to probe allegations, according to HM inspectors of police,

with one force taking no further action on cases from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau - even those with strong evidence and suspects identified.

One member of staff told inspectors their role was to “reduce demand on investigators.” “If there is an excuse not to investigate, we will use it,” they said.

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, said it was “appalling” so few cases were being solved by police forces and Action Fraud, the national police unit. Criminal fraudsters are being let off and vulnerable victims are being let down, sometimes losing thousands in savings.

For some people, this can be the difference between security and hardship, between a happy retirement or years of anguish and worry,” she told The Telegraph.

“Ministers have been warned repeatedly that Action Fraud isn’t working and that police forces aren’t investigating this crime.

“Yet they have taken no action at all while fraud soars. The Home Secretary must start taking this damaging crime

seriously.”

Fewer than a tenth of the five million frauds recorded by people in the ONS crime survey are reported to police, largely because people are either ashamed at being scammed or believe it is such a low priority crime for forces that it is unlikely to be investigated.

Of the 428,489 frauds and computer misuse offences reported to Action Fraud last year, only a tenth were referred to police forces for investigation because the remainder were judged to be unlikely to secure a conviction.

This initial sift is completed by a computer system known as the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau’s “NFIB brain”, which rates a crime on its chances of being solved and its potential “threat and harm to individuals, businesses or the economy as a whole”, according to Action Fraud.

It follows the disclosure by The Telegraph last week that 14,000 people a day are falling victim to frauds and scams. Yet, the proportion of overall offences being solved has fallen by a third from 0.15 per cent (one in 666) to 0.1 per cent (one in 1,000).

## Prepare for your summer break...

THE hot weather will soon be upon us and thoughts turn to holidays and summer fun whether you stay at home or travel abroad.

For those lucky enough to own caravans and motorhomes, it is an opportunity to visit beautiful beaches and historic areas in Britain.

But if you are a caravan owner, here's our checklist to run through to ensure your caravan is holiday ready, with some extra support for first-timers.

### DO CARAVANS NEED AN MOT?

This is a common question for first-timers, or those looking into buying their first caravan. Unlike motorhomes, caravans don't need an MOT, with the owner being responsible for ensuring it is roadworthy.

Instead of an MOT, an annual service is recommended, to ensure the chassis, bodywork, ventilation and numerous other elements are in safe, working order.

If you haven't used your caravan before, or you haven't used it for some

time, ensure it is serviced before you head off on your adventures.

### CHECK YOUR CARAVAN'S TYRES

Check the condition and pressure of the caravan's tyres before towing. Not only are you checking they are pumped up, but they can perish due to them being left in one spot for a prolonged period with too much weight on them and being exposed to sunshine. The last thing you want on your trip is a tyre blowout.

### USE A NOSE WEIGHT GAUGE

Depending on what caravan or car you have and its kerb weight, you need to be sure you fall under a safe nose weight allowance.

A loaded caravan nose weight needs to be no more than 85% of the towing vehicle kerb weight, and a maximum of 100% of the towing vehicle kerb weight.

A good quality nose-weight gauge will allow you to make sure you are towing safely, after consulting your caravan and car handbooks for weight allowance.

### CHECK YOUR HITCHING

Once the steady jacks have been raised, the van has been hitched up to the car and the lights have been checked, use the jockey wheel winding handle to lower the towing hitch onto the tow ball of your vehicle.

Give the van a good firm shake using the handles on each corner, making sure that the hitch has been correctly secured (most modern caravans have a button at the hitch handle that indicates correct attachment).

Last thing to do is lift the jockey wheel completely off the ground and secure into place and you're good to go.

### TEST YOUR BRAKES

Apply the handbrake on the caravan once it is safely attached to the car. Securely attach the caravan breakaway cable to the tow bar. It is a legal requirement that a breakaway cable is fitted and properly attached.

**continued page 13**



**Tailor-made Home Insurance**

Your home is as unique as you are, so let us help find the right tailored cover for you. Call A-Plan Preston today.

**56 Fishergate, Preston, PR1 8BN**

**01772 230 470**

★ **Trustpilot** ★★★★★

**A-plan**  
Insurance

Trustpilot rating correct as of 02/09/21. A-Plan Insurance is a trading style of A-Plan Holdings who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered office: 2 Des Roches Square, Witley, GU26 4LE. Registration number 750464.

[aplan.co.uk/preston](http://aplan.co.uk/preston)



# ...but make sure you're road safe

from page 12

## CHECK YOUR ELECTRICS

Your caravan will either have single or twin electrics built into the towing hitch. Single electrics means that you have a connector for your caravan lights.

Twin electrics means that you will have the pin connector for your caravan lights, plus a pin connector to allow you to charge up your caravan battery and keep your fridge running whilst you tow your caravan.

The connecting wire(s) from the caravan electrics need to be secured to the electric point(s) on your towbar. Check at this point that the lights on the caravan work and correspond to the lights on your vehicle, i.e., brake lights, indicators and on tow lights etc. It is a good idea to keep spare bulbs for your caravan lights.

## TEST YOUR TOWING MIRRORS

Get hold of a decent pair of towing mirrors so you can see the cars behind you easily. Legally, you need to clearly see an area which is 4 metres wide from the side of your caravan, at a distance of 20 metres behind the driver.

## CHECK YOUR STABILISERS

If you're new to caravanning, then it might be useful to get hold of a stabiliser bar if your caravan has not got an automatic anti-snake device fitted into your caravan's towing hitch. The built-in



anti-snake device, sometimes known as an ATC (Automatic Trailer Control), provides some protection against swaying and pitching when you are towing your caravan on the road.

Your caravan manual will have details as to whether you have this device built into your towing hitch from manufacture.

It is also possible to get an ATC fitted as an aftermarket device. The ATC will only function with a rigid towbar and the electrical connection between the caravan and the towbar must be in good working order.

## TEST YOUR SECURITY

Hitch locks are often required by an insurer as a minimum security requirement. It's a metal box designed to fit over the coupling head while the caravan is stationary. Once locked, the box pushes a ball into the coupling head, so it is lodged in a way which makes it virtually impossible to hitch onto the tow bar.

This is handy when you pitch up your caravan on a park and go out for the day. There are a variety available so do check which is best for your caravan.

Wheel clamps are also usually required as a minimum security measure when insuring your touring caravan. Wheel clamps

encase the wheel and prevent them from rotating. You simply tighten the clamp over the wheel using bolts then attach casing to enclose the bolts with a second set of casing so they are inaccessible.

Like with hitch locks, you should check the wheel is suitable for your caravan. Some are not suitable for alloy wheels, but a quick Google search should help you establish if you're looking at the right device. For higher value caravans, you may find insurers requesting more security and a wheel lock. Just make sure you check which wheel locks are accepted by your insurer.

## OBTAIN THE RIGHT INSURANCE

Take some time researching caravan insurance before you take your caravan out, or work with a broker like **A-Plan** who can do this for you. The last thing you want on holiday is an uninsured break-in, or to have to deal with the cost of storm damage on your return. The policy needs to meet all your needs, and that of the make, model and year of your caravan.

**A-Plan's** caravan insurance experts are always on hand to help you make sure that you have the right cover in place and to answer any questions you may have. Contact our caravan specialists directly on 01527 879777.

The team also runs a community Facebook page for caravanners to connect and chat – you may even pick up a few hints and tips. Join the Facebook group 'Caravanners Chat UK' and be part of our lively community.



## CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS



Michael McKenzie

## ATMs blown up

FOUR men who were jailed following our investigation into the tragic deaths of 39 Vietnamese nationals in a Thurrock lorry park in October 2019 have been ordered to pay back more than £30,000 of their criminal earnings.

Maurice Robinson, 26, of Laurel Drive, Craigavon, Northern Ireland, was sentenced to 13 years and four months in prison for 39 counts of manslaughter, conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration and acquiring criminal property.

Christopher Kennedy, 24, of Corkley Road, Darkley, County Armagh, was sentenced to seven years in prison for

Valentin Calota, 38, of Cossingham Road, Birmingham, was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison for conspiracy to assist illegal immigration.

Alexandru-Ovidiu Hangu, 29, of Hobart Road, Tilbury, was sentenced to three years in prison for conspiring to assist unlawful immigration in July 2021.

Robinson was ordered to pay back £21,262, whilst Kennedy was told he must pay back £6,094.

Calota was told he must pay £1,137 and Hangu must pay £3,000.

## Quest for justice

WORK by specialist officers has seen a man, who indecently assaulted a teenage girl in the 1990s, jailed.

Michael McKenzie (pictured above) assaulted the girl between 1996 and 1998 in Southend.

He was arrested after the victim reported what had happened in July 2019.

The Essex Police Quest team carried out

the investigation into the allegations and charged the 63 year-old McKenzie, of the Grove, Southend with a number of offences.

He was convicted of indecent assault last October following a trial at Basildon Crown Court. At the same court last month, he was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison.

## Night club stabbing

A MAN who stabbed two other men outside a nightclub in Basildon has been jailed for more than three years as a result of quick work by our officers.

Wagner Silva had been at Unit 7 nightclub at Festival Leisure Park when a disturbance broke out at about 4am on Saturday 2 October.

Silva was in a group of about 15 people when a fight broke out in that group.

The 20-year-old then seen to pause and consider what is happening in front of him before withdrawing a large silver knife which he had concealed in his trousers and ran towards two other men.

Thankfully, neither victim's injuries were life-threatening nor life changing. In total, the incident lasted about 90 seconds.

He was sentenced at Basildon Crown Court to three years and six months for each count of GBH and 12 months for possession of a bladed article. Each sentence will run concurrently and there was no separate penalty for the cannabis charge.

## Drug dealer jailed

A MAN who was arrested by specialist officers as part of a targeted operation into the supply of Class A drugs has been jailed for eight years.

Luke Connor was arrested close to his home, in Riverside Place, Wickford, on July 15 last year.

During a search of his home, officers from our serious and organised crime unit uncovered three 1kg bricks of cocaine, about 1kg of loose cocaine in a number of containers, a substantial amount of cannabis, about £140,000 in cash, a number of weapons and several mobile phones.

The seized cocaine had a street value of about £400,000.

During a further search of the 28-year-old's Audi vehicle, officers found a 'bag for life' containing about £80,000 in cash in the boot of the vehicle.

Connor admitted all charges and was sentenced to a total of eight years at Basildon Crown Court.

## 30 years for kidnap

FOUR men have been sentenced to almost 30 years in prison after kidnapping a man and trying to get money in exchange for his safe release.

The victim was held in a Ford Transit van in Kirby Cross just after 6.45pm on 25 August last year.

Four men – Billy Jackson, Anthony Siequien, Mason Stewart and Jake Constable – had forced him to try and raise money for his safe release.

Officers pursued the van and the victim was recovered safely from the van and four men were arrested.

Jackson was sentenced to seven years in prison for kidnap.

Siequien was sentenced to six years in prison for kidnap, with a 12-month concurrent sentence for dangerous driving.

Stewart was sentenced to seven years and was also sentenced to 28 months – to run concurrently – for drugs offences which had been committed in Suffolk.

Constable was sentenced to nine years and was also sentenced to three years to run concurrently to his sentence, for drugs offence which took place in Suffolk.

## Cannabis bonanza

A MAN found to be growing millions of pounds worth of cannabis in an industrial unit in Colchester has been jailed for more than three years.

Rition Mone was growing more than 6,000 cannabis plants at the property in Hythe Station Road.

The cultivation was discovered on April 19, 2021, when officers became suspicious of the building and believed it may be being used to grow or store cannabis.

Mone appeared at Ipswich Crown Court and admitted the charge and was sentenced to three years and two months in prison.



## CRIME AND COMMUNITY NEWS

# When prison hurts those outside

A YOUNG boy on the road to depression has been given the tools to cope with the emotion of a parent being sent to prison.

The 11-year-old was struggling to cope when his father was jailed for six years for fraud.

He was shutting himself away in his bedroom and was quiet and emotional until he was referred to the Breaking Barriers project, which supports the children and families of prisoners in Essex.

Children attend up to eight one-to-one sessions working on setting goals to help them through the process of having a parent in prison – whether the sentence has just started, just finished, is for a few weeks or months or several years.

They learn about prison life, watch real footage of a prison, discuss their feelings about their relative being in prison, work on the child's relationship with the person in prison if appropriate and focus on any behaviour issues – whatever the child wants to discuss.

The boy's mum said: "Within the first couple of weeks of the sessions, my son completely changed. He has got his spark back; he is brighter. Over the eight weeks, I saw him come back to himself.

"We had been very open with him about what was going to happen, but he had not wanted to talk to me about how he was feeling for fear of upsetting me.

"He could speak to them about anything and everything and know it would not hurt me. He was given the techniques to cope with it all and responded really well.

"Without Breaking Barriers, I think he would have become quite depressed. He would have just withdrawn within himself.

"He is a bubbly, positive boy and I would have hated to have seen that



Making a prison sentence bearable for children

happen. This is such a good service. It made a positive change to our family."

Louise Duxbury, Breaking Barriers team leader, said: "The affect a parent going to prison has on a child and the rest of the family is horrendous. It is called the 'hidden sentence'.

"People think about the person in prison, but it is those at home who might not have money or food on the table, or someone to take them to school.

"Sometimes, our work is around

anger and sadness. Children do not want to speak to their parent who is at home as they feel they have enough worries of their own.

"They do not want to show they are sad or missing their other parent. We help them to deal with those emotions.

"At the end of our sessions, we meet with the parent at home and discuss what support we feel they need going forward."

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex (PFCC), Roger Hirst, contributed £15,193 to Ormiston Families in the form of a crime and disorder reduction grant.

Louise added: "This work is amazing. I feel really privileged to be able to do this job. When we first walk into a room, the children often do not want to talk.

"We do not have a magic wand, but we show them it is okay to feel sad and that there is an adult they can talk to. At the end, they are happy to talk and we see them flourish.

"We really are making a difference. The funding we get is helping us to make an impact."

## Quick facts

- In 2018, the service worked with 18 children affected by imprisonment
- Since the PFCC funding started, the service has had 85 referrals
- In 2021, the team worked with 41 children and young people
- More than 90% of children and young people have achieved their goals of improving their wellbeing, increasing their knowledge of prison and reducing negative behaviours caused by the anger, shame and confusion



How melotan sellers convince you it can make you look good

# The dangers of being under the influence of social media

DOZENS of social-media influencers are promoting banned tanning products to millions of followers, a **BBC News** investigation has found.

It is illegal in the UK to sell nasal sprays or injectables made with "melanotan-2", an artificial hormone that can accelerate tanning.

The unlicensed drug is dangerous, dermatologists say, and users should stop immediately.

And there is evidence the untested products may be linked to skin cancer.

The Advertising Standards Authority

says all influencers must act responsibly, including ensuring products and the companies they link to are not acting illegally.

Liv and Elaina both longed for a tan like the models on their social-media feeds. When influencers and friends started sporting golden-brown skin, they wanted to know their secret.

Soon, Liv was ordering tanning injections from a UK-based website. Elaina opted for a nasal spray, which she bought on social media.

For two months, Liv, jabbed her stom-

ach and went on a sunbed, which she had been told would "activate" the drug.

It gave her headaches but she felt it was worth it - until, eight months later, she found a strangely shaped mole on her thigh.

"It was dark and raised, the size of a pea," she says. "I'm not a 'moley' person, so I knew something wasn't right."

Doctors agreed with Liv. But shortly after the mole was removed, she was diagnosed with stage-one melanoma, a skin cancer that can be life-threatening.

**continued on page 17**





“ Shortly after Liv had the mole removed she was diagnosed with stage one melanoma, a skin cancer that can be life-threatening - and all due to using the illegal tanning product and sunbeds ”

from page 16

Liv needed surgery to remove the cancerous tissue around the area where the mole had been and her dermatologist told her the injections were the likely cause.

"A cancer diagnosis is terrifying, never mind when you're 27 years old," she says.

Within minutes of her first nasal spray, Elaina's face "burned up" and turned bright red.

"I was told my body just needed to get used to it," she says. "A week later, my throat started to close up - I literally couldn't breathe."

The 19-year-old, needed hospital treatment and was diagnosed with a serious throat and sinus infection. Doctors told her inhaling the tanning product was the cause and they had seen other patients develop similar symptoms.

BBC News has spoken to 20 people who have experienced complications, including lesions, fungal infections and abscesses.

'Unusually orange tan and strange moles'

Melanotan-2 can increase the production of melanin, the pigment that darkens skin, but it has never had rigorous safety testing.

Social-media sites have propelled the drug, previously sold in some gyms and salons, into the mainstream, with the trend mainly driven by young, white women.

The recent introduction of a nasal spray can also make it seem more appealing.

The British Association of Dermatologists is now on the alert for patients with warning signs of "unusual orange tans" and "disordered moles".

Some sellers claim their products are safe - but Dr Catherine Borysiewicz, from the association, says the only safe tan is fake tan.

"We have evidence these products are potentially dangerous and can potentially lead to cancer," she says. "We have cases which have shown melanoma developing after trying them. I talk about skin risks - but who knows what else it might be doing?"

Dozens of influencers have posted about using melanotan-2. It is not illegal to use or promote these tanning products, de-

spite the health risks, but it is illegal to sell them.

Geordie Shore star Bethan Kershaw (pictured) recently told her 700,000 followers she had used nasal sprays from a company called Real Tan. Both she and the company declined to comment.

Other influencers are more explicit - TikTok star Lauren demonstrated on camera how to inhale the drug.

A company had offered the 26-year-old, from Glasgow, free nasal sprays if she would promote their products. But after two months, she stopped taking them because they made her feel sick.

"As an influencer, I need to be more careful what I'm promoting," Lauren says. "I have got to look out for my followers, a lot of them are young."

BBC News has also seen many examples of celebrities directing their followers to businesses selling melanotan-2 products. The most high-profile example is reality-TV star Charlotte Crosby, who on one occasion told her followers to "check out" Real Tan and tagged the company in a separate post talking about her tan.

A representative for Ms Crosby, who has 7.6 million Instagram followers, says she "would never knowingly promote a company illegally selling unlicensed products".

The BBC was told she has only ever used items from Real Tan which do not contain melanotan-2; these are moisturising creams "gifted to her" and gels she posted about as a favour, to promote

their launch. This was not mentioned in her posts.

And there was no mention of creams or gels in Real Tan's price list after Ms Crosby posted about the seller, only injections and nasal sprays. A more recent price list says "sun accelerator creams available soon".

BBC News asked research chemists at Imperial College London to analyse 10 tanning kits. They would expect to find about 10 ingredients in a licensed medicine but were shocked to discover some of the products contained more than 100 unidentified ingredients. They also confirmed the presence of melanotan-2.



## Alert message

VODAFONE and other phone providers have now made it easier for Android users to report suspicious texts.

They claim that by sending messages to its '7726' service all messages can be checked and blocked if found to be malicious.

Android owners can report suspicious texts in Google's Messages app simply by tapping a button.

## Fraud avoided

OVER £200m worth of banking fraud has been saved due to new protocols.

Counter staff at banks, building societies and Post Offices have shielded savers from £202.8m of fraud through the Banking Protocol rapid scam response scheme launched in 2016.

Around £845m was lost to bank transfer fraud between July 2019 and June 2021,

## Fake romance

ROMANCE fraudster Frank Adozi, 32, who conned a Nottinghamshire woman out of £157,000 has been jailed.

Adozi used an alias to contact the woman on a dating website and social media using the name 'Mark McCarthy',

Over a two-month period, the woman made 34 transfers totalling £157,332.25.

Adozi, previously jailed for a similar offence, got four years.

# Wonka bars warning



“ Families should be aware of the risks these bogus chocolate bars could pose to their children, particularly those living with a food allergy or intolerance

TINA POTTER -  
Food Standards Agency

”

THE Food Standards Agency (FSA) is warning members of the public not to buy or eat counterfeit 'Wonka Bars', which are being sold in shops and online across the country.

The counterfeit bars may be unsafe to eat, as there is a possibility that they are being produced or repackaged by unregistered businesses and by individuals who could be contravening food hygiene, labelling and traceability laws.

Some counterfeit Wonka Bars removed from sale have been found to contain allergens which weren't listed on the label, posing a major health risk to anyone who suffers from a food allergy or intolerance.

The FSA's warning comes after a sharp increase in reports of the counterfeit chocolate bars on sale over the past year. Tina Potter, Head of Incidents at the Food Standards Agency, said: "With Easter not far away, it is more important than ever that parents and grandparents are aware of the risks that these bogus chocolate bars could pose to their children, particularly those living with a food allergy or intolerance.

"There is no way of knowing what ingredients are in these bars or what food hygiene practices are being followed by the people making or repackaging them.

"If you have bought these knock-off bars, do not eat them or give them to friends and family."

Any Wonka-branded chocolate which does not feature the official 'Ferrero' or 'Ferrara Candy Company' trademarks on the label is likely to be a counterfeit product and there is no way to know if it is safe to eat.

The Food Standards Agency is continuing to investigate further reports with support from local authority partners.

Letters have been sent to local authorities responsible for investigating and enforcing food law to advise them to remove any fake products from sale where there is a known or suspected public health risk.

Any members of the public who have bought or spot counterfeit Wonka Bars on shelves or online are advised to raise the issue with the retailer and report the matter to their Local Authority so that action can be taken.







# Cowboys getting roped in

THEY have become the scourge of many of our lives, that invisible army who hit us in the pocket.

Yes, cowboy parking operators have blighted most of us, but now they are about to be brought into line with the launch of a new code of practice, following years of campaigning for a fairer system for drivers.

The Private Parking Code of Practice outlines minimum standards expected by private parking operators and should root out the more dubious practices that have been prevalent by some operators in the sector.

Alongside this, a new national appeals system will be introduced to make it simpler for drivers to fight charges they believe are unfair.

**The range of measures will:**

- Reduce the maximum parking charge notice to £50 in most cases outside of London, with a 50% discount for early payment. The upper £100 limit for more serious breaches will be kept
- Ban parking debt collectors from charging additional fees when parking charge notices are not paid
- Introduce a compulsory 10-minute grace period before firms can issue a late fine and a compulsory five-minute cooling-off period in which a motorist can consider the terms and conditions and change their mind about parking
- Improve standards on signage, condi-

tions of parking and make it clearer on how to appeal a charge

● Implement a crackdown on parking firms using aggressive language to intimidate motorists into paying fines

The RAC called on the Government and MPs to act after being contacted by drivers who felt the actions of private parking companies were entirely unreasonable.

For instance, very minor breaches of car park terms and condition ranged from minor keying errors at payment machines to people receiving a charge for overstaying by seconds.

In addition to this, some operators were incentivising third parties by of-

fering them financial incentives for issuing parking charge notices.

In 2017, Sir Greg Knight MP introduced the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill which received Royal Assent in 2019 with cross-party backing and Government support.

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said: "The RAC has campaigned for years to end the sharp practices in the private parking sector, so we welcome the new national code that will usher in higher standards.

"Alongside this, drivers can expect a lower cap on penalty charge notices, an independent appeals system and an end to rip-off debt collection fees.

"Since clamping was banned on private land, there has been a shift to ticketing instead, with the number of parking charge notices being issued rising year-on-year at alarming levels.

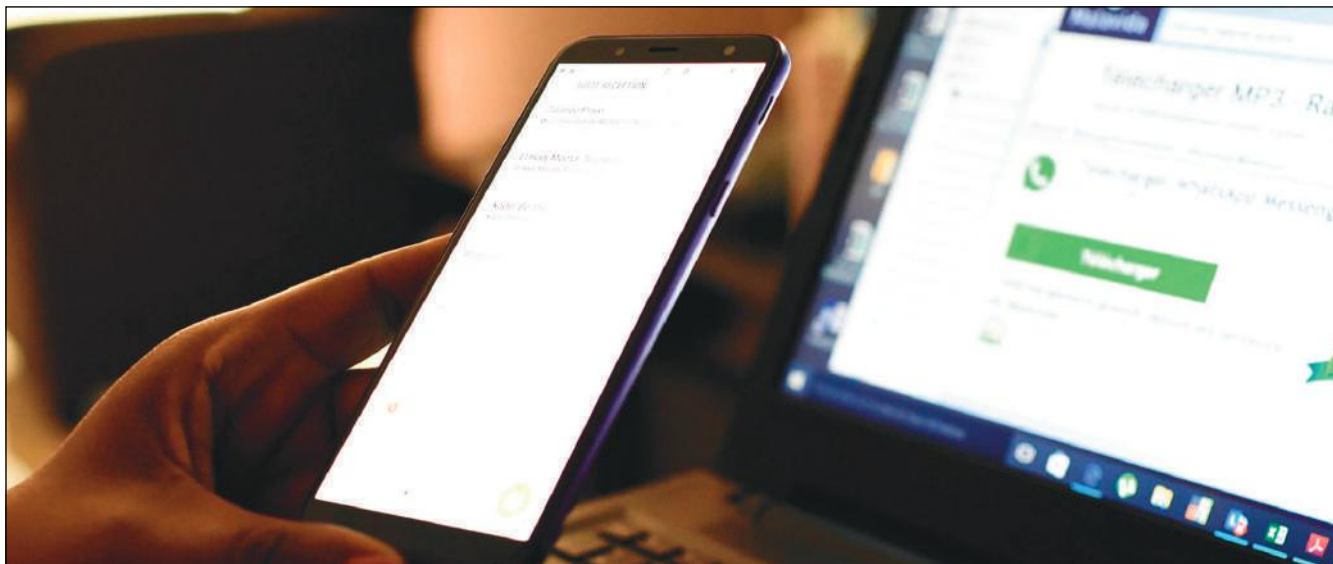
While some of these are justified, others are not and sadly in many cases drivers simply pay up in fear of the consequences.

RAC research found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of drivers wanted the sector to be brought under some form of regulation.

"This package of measures is not about stopping parking operators doing their jobs, it's about creating a system that is fair and transparent for all," added My Lyes.



Nicholas Lyes



Youngsters are now being targeted by online criminals who once preyed only on the elderly

# Now youngsters are the target of the online criminals

PEOPLE aged between 20 and 39 are the most likely to have reported being scammed in the past year, Which? research reveals, with many young victims losing huge sums of money to online shopping scams, pyramid schemes and rental fraud.

Which?'s analysis found that between November 2020 and December 2021, individual victims lodged a total of 448,838 fraud reports with Action Fraud. More than £1.9 billion was lost by victims as a result.

A recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) report also revealed that an estimated 5.1 million fraud offences were committed in England and Wales in the year to September 2021 – up 36 per cent in two years. It means that fraud now accounts for 40 per cent of all crimes recorded.

It is often assumed that older people are more vulnerable to fraud, but Which? found that those aged 20 to 39 were the most likely to report being scammed – accounting for two in five (39%) of all reports to Action Fraud.

Which? identified 12 emerging fraud threats and found that three quarters (74%) of rental fraud cases were reported by young people (20-39).

This is where victims are tricked into paying upfront fees to secure properties by fake landlords and letting agents.

Jonny Yeoman, 27, told Which? he was conned out of £2,500 after being tricked into paying a deposit to a fake landlord to secure a rental property.

The victim saw the flat advertised on Gumtree with a link to SpareRoom, and received a message from who he thought was the landlord.

The scammer then convinced Jonny to set up a viewing at the property with legitimate estate agents.

After viewing the flat, Jonny checked the Land Registry to verify the property landlord's name and decided to put down a deposit.

But when he tried to move in, the real landlord's daughter answered the door and said they had no knowledge of the rental agreement and realised the landlord's email was fake.

The victim reported the scam to Action Fraud and the recipient bank of the deposit, which was able to recover almost all of the money lost.

Those aged between 20-39 were also more likely to report pyramid or Ponzi schemes (57%) and online shopping scams (55%) than other age groups.

Meanwhile, people aged 60 to 79 made up one in five (20%) of all fraud reports. This age group makes up the highest proportion of reports for computer fixing fraud (47%), recovery fraud (38%), and '419' advance fee fraud (37%).

Online shopping scams and auction fraud were easily the most reported type of fraud, where victims pay for goods on an online marketplace that do not arrive, or do not receive payments for goods they have sold. These scams make up a quarter (23%) of reports.

Investment fraud is responsible for the biggest losses, with the average victim losing almost £50,400 to pyramid or Ponzi schemes - reports were up 59 per cent on last year according to the ONS.

These scams involve recruiting friends or family (pyramid) or paying returns to early investors to gain credibility (Ponzi).

Victims also lost £25,000 on average to share sales or boiler room scams (reports up 57%), and £24,000 to other investment scams such as cryptocurrency (reports up 34%).