



NIFC COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE



NIFC COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE - 4 JUN 26

(The Community Awareness Update provides general information to enable personnel to keep up-to-date with routine crime prevention and security awareness correspondence; it is not provided for mission-related items and does not replace the Emergency Messaging System.)

WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW 'FAMILY' MEMBERS; THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS UPDATE IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH, HOPEFULLY, INFORMATIVE AND USEFUL INFORMATION.

- Report Fraud is urging online shoppers to stay alert.
- Catalytic Converter Thefts.
- Latest scams in the UK.
- Staying safe in London.
- UK Speed Limits.
- Fake £5 & £20 notes in circulation.
- British Gas scam call.
- 'Fuel Subsidy' and 'Winter Allowance' texts.
- Scam advert for an energy-saving device.
- Reporting energy scams.
- How to keep your data safe when using public wi-fi – quick tips.
- Stay Alert, Stay Alive.

REPORT FRAUD IS URGING ONLINE SHOPPERS TO STAY ALERT:

Report Fraud is urging online shoppers to stay alert for unusual activity on their accounts following a rise in criminals gaining access to buy expensive goods.

Recent reporting highlights Argos as a key trend in this activity. Report Fraud has seen a significant increase in cases mentioning the retailer, reflecting how criminals are targeting well-known brands. Argos is actively working with authorities and its customers to identify suspicious activity and strengthen safeguards.

Criminals are using login details obtained from data breaches to gain unauthorised access to retailer accounts. This is possible due to the practice of reusing the same password across multiple online accounts. Once they have control of the account, criminals will place online orders and then collect the good in-person at a physical store. In some instances, the goods are paid for using payment details not connected to the victim of the compromised account. These fraudulent orders are frequently fulfilled through 'click and collect', allowing offenders to retrieve goods in person.

In May, Report Fraud received 652 reports which mention Argos, a 323% increase compared to April, when 154 reports mentioning the retailer were made. Since the start of 2026, there have been 1,175 reports mentioning the retailer, with May seeing the highest number to date.

Argos has been contacting customers who may have been affected and continues to work closely with partners and shoppers to help protect accounts and prevent further incidents.

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How can you protect yourself? All shoppers with any retailer should take measures to protect their online account. Here is what you can do:

- **Reset passwords:** if you noticed any unauthorised activity on an online account, you should change your password immediately. You should also do this for any accounts that use the same password. A good way to make sure your passwords are secure and strong is to combine 3 random words to create a unique password. You should opt for a passkey if you can.
- **Enable 2SV:** whenever available, protect your online accounts by enabling 2-step verification (2SV).
- **Shopping online:** if you decide to create an account for the store you're buying from, don't allow them to store your bank details for future purchases.

CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS - Catalytic converter thefts are a growing issue, with criminals targeting vehicles for the valuable metals inside these parts.

What are catalytic converters? Catalytic converters are devices fitted to your vehicle's exhaust system, designed to reduce the amount of harmful gases released into the environment.

Why are they targeted by thieves? They contain precious metals and can be removed quickly, often in less than a minute. Hybrid vehicles are particularly vulnerable as they tend to contain higher-value metals, but any vehicle could be at risk.

How can you protect your vehicle?

- Park your vehicle in a garage or well-lit, secure area overnight.
- Register your catalytic converter and mark it with a forensic marker, making it harder for thieves to sell on.
- Speak to your vehicle dealer about approved locks or protective guards.

LATEST SCAMS IN THE UK - UK consumers are currently targeted by five prevalent scams: Reservation Hijacking, WhatsApp "Hi Mum" Fraud, Royal Mail/Courier Delivery Texts, Ticket & QR Code Scams, and Bank Impersonation Texts.

- **Reservation Hijacking:** Following a hotel or travel booking, scammers contact you via messaging apps claiming a payment issue. They provide fake payment links or request card details to steal funds.
- **WhatsApp "Hi Mum" Fraud:** Criminals message you from unknown numbers pretending to be a friend or family member. They invent a crisis—such as a lost phone or an urgent bill—and ask you to transfer money to a new bank account.
- **Delivery Impersonation Texts:** Fraudsters text pretending to be Royal Mail, DPD, or Evri, claiming a parcel is awaiting delivery. They link to look-alike websites that ask for "redelivery fees" to steal your personal and banking details.
- **Ticket & QR Code Scams:** Scammers advertise sold-out concert, festival, or sporting tickets on social media and demand upfront bank transfers. They issue fake, invalid, or reused QR codes and then block the buyer.

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- **Bank Impersonation Texts:** Messages appearing to come from banks (e.g., Barclays) claim suspicious activity, a new direct debit, or a loan approval. They urge you to call a spoofed phone number to "secure" your funds, ultimately tricking you into revealing passwords or transferring money.

How to protect yourself and take action:

- **Stop, Think, Check:** Never click links in unexpected messages. Verify all payment requests by calling the official organisation using a number you trust, not the one from the message.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** Forward scam texts to 7726 and emails to report@phishing.gov.uk.
- **Verify Travel Bookings:** Call your accommodation directly through official contact details to confirm any unexpected payment demands.

Official Advice: Stay updated on active threats by consulting the Stop! Think Fraud campaign, managed by the UK government.

STAYING SAFE IN LONDON - As we head through Spring into Summer, day and overnight trips to popular tourist locations will be on many radars; London is an obvious target – it is a vibrant city with incredible cultural, entertainment and shopping opportunities. We want your visit to the UK's capital city to be a safe one, and for you not to become a victim of crime. Officers from London's Met work hard 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help protect you. However, they also want you to know the ways to help keep yourself safe.

Stay safe from street robbery: Look up and look out. You should always be aware of your surroundings and keep your valuables and mobile phone hidden. Try to avoid wearing headphones as this reduces awareness of your surroundings. If you wear a valuable wristwatch try to keep it hidden by your sleeve. It is not a good idea to carry large amounts of cash on your person. Instead, look at other options for storing it safely.

Be alert near roads: Criminals use mopeds, bikes and E-scooters to snatch phones and other valuables. They may ride along the pavement or target you at road crossings. When walking, face towards oncoming traffic. This will help you spot someone leaving the roadway and approaching you.

Beware of pickpockets: Keep your wallet and valuables close to you at all times. Pickpockets may try to distract you or physically bump into you, especially in crowded places. If you realise you have been pickpocketed, shout out to warn others.

Be wise to cons and scams: You may be more vulnerable to different scams as a tourist or visitor to London. Unfortunately, what looks like an entertaining 'cups' game will most probably lead to you losing money and you are more likely to be pickpocketed when distracted or in a crowd. Although a 'rickshaw' or pedal cycle can seem like a fun way to travel and see central London, these are unsafe, cause a noise nuisance to London residents and often lead to people being ripped off when drivers demand excessively high fees for very short distances. Only buy theatre tickets from official sources and not from sellers in the street.

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Shop safely: You're not the only person looking for a bargain, thieves are too. Be aware of who's around you in busy shops as they are ideal places for people to brush past people, take items and then blend into the crowd. Keep designer and expensive purchases discreet. An expensive branded bag could be advertising something worth taking. Whilst browsing in shops keep phone and valuables in a zipped bag or front pocket and return cards to your wallet straight away. When using a cashpoint, check that no one is looking over your shoulder and that the ATM hasn't been tampered with. Cover the keypad so no one else can see your PIN number. When taking a well-earned break from shopping, avoid placing handbags on the back of chairs or leaving them on tables. Use bag hooks, if provided, and either keep your shopping in sight, or tucked away in front of you under the table.

Beware of bogus police officers:

Protect yourself from thieves who impersonate police officers. If you get stopped by someone in plain clothes who claims to be a police officer, remember a real police officer will:

- Always tell you why you have been stopped.
- Always produce their official warrant card with their photograph, name and identity number.
- Never ask you for PIN numbers or cash.

The officer details can be verified if you call police on 101. Please call 101 if you have any other concerns about the search.

Keep your luggage safe: Never leave your luggage alone, even for a few seconds, as this could cause a security alert. If you see an unattended item of luggage, alert a member of staff or security, or if no one is present call 999. Always keep bags in your possession and close to you. Clearly mark your luggage with your contact telephone number and email. Lock your suitcase if you can and secure a strap around your case to make it more difficult to gain access.

Enjoy safe nights out: Don't leave drinks unattended or accept them from strangers. Be aware of strangers being over friendly in bars, clubs and large gatherings. They may be trying to use a 'hugger mugger' approach to steal from you. It's better to stick to well-lit and busy streets if possible. Check up on your friends by phone or text to make sure they got home safely and vice versa.

Travel safely: Only taxis, or 'black cabs', can be stopped in the street. These look like purpose-built taxis with an illuminated sign on the roof. Minicabs must be pre booked by phone, email or in person at the minicab office. The driver should have ID and the vehicle should have a licence displayed on it. Minicabs that pick-up fares on the street, without being pre booked, are illegal and uninsured and could put you at risk of sexual assault or robbery. For rickshaws, see 'Be wise to cons and scams' further up this page.

Plan your journey home: It's a good idea to plan how you will get home by checking the time of your last train, bus or tube back to your accommodation.

UK SPEED LIMITS

In the UK, speed limits depend on the vehicle you are driving and the type of road. For cars and motorcycles, the national defaults are 30 mph in built-up areas, 60 mph on single carriageways and 70 mph on dual carriageways and motorways.

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Car and Motorcycle Speed Limits:

- Built-up areas (with street lights): 30 mph (48 km/h) *(Note: In Wales, the default limit is 20 mph)*
- Single carriageways: 60 mph (96 km/h)
- Dual carriageways: 70 mph (112 km/h)
- Motorways: 70 mph (112 km/h)

How to Stay Legal:

- **Watch for Signs:** Speed limit signs will always override national limits.
- Street Lights Rule: If you see street lights but no speed limit signs, it is almost always a 30-mph zone.
- Local Variations: Be aware of locally set 20 mph zones and temporary variable speed limits on smart motorways.

FAKE £5 & £20 NOTES IN CIRCULATION

Various reports of fake notes in circulation, including £5 & £20 notes. If you look at the BOTTOM hologram & tilt the note it changes between Twenty & Pounds or Five & Pounds.

The fake notes only show 'POUNDS'



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BRITISH GAS SCAM CALL

Recent reports show that scammers are impersonating British Gas through cold calls; some recipients of this call noted that the caller knew information about them, including their email address and postcode.

A similar report explains that a cold caller claimed to be from British Gas and asked for personal information, including sort code, to check the recipient of the call was covered for boiler breakdown and repairs.

Other reports warned that callers have asked for their billing details and meter information, and that they were told that there was a problem with their upcoming bill.

All appear to be an attempt to get bank details.

Reports are also circulating about cold calls from 'your energy savings adviser'. This is also likely to be a scam, and you should end the call and contact your energy supplier using a trusted contact number taken from a recent bill if you believe it could have been genuine.

'FUEL SUBSIDY' AND 'WINTER ALLOWANCE' TEXTS

Scammers are using text messages to impersonate the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The winter allowance scam text has been circulating for some time and reports of this text have spiked again.

The scam text tells you that the winter allowance offers a one-off payment of £200 to £300. Another version of this message mentions an 'application for the fuel subsidy', which results in a 'one-time' payment of £300.

The messages will contain a link to claim, but this link will send you to a copycat government website, which will steal your personal and financial information.

Avoid this scam by only accessing government services on the Gov.uk website, and do not follow links from text messages.

Most people will get the Winter Fuel Payment automatically if they're eligible in November or December 2026.

SCAM ADVERT FOR AN ENERGY-SAVING DEVICE

As energy bills are forecast to rise, remain alert to adverts for a plug-in energy-saving device. The advert claims the device 'analyses and optimises' your power usage after plugging it into a power socket.

The website claims that the device needs to be plugged in 24/7 and will lead to up to 90% savings on your electricity bill without changing your usage habits.

These devices don't work and could be dangerous.

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REPORTING ENERGY SCAMS

Scam calls can be reported on an iPhone by texting the word 'call' followed by the phone number to 7726.

If you have an Android phone, text the word 'call' to 7726. You'll then receive a message asking you for the scam number.

For scam calls received on WhatsApp, open the WhatsApp chat with the dodgy phone number and tap 'block.' You can report the contact by tapping 'report contact' and 'block'.

Scam texts can be reported to your phone operator by forwarding them to 7726.

Scam websites can be reported to the National Cyber Security Centre, and suspicious ads on Facebook and Instagram can be reported by clicking on the three dots in the top right corner and selecting 'report.'

If you've lost money or spot an unauthorised transaction on your account, you should contact your bank immediately using the phone number on the back of your card.

Scams should also be reported to Report Fraud

HOW TO KEEP YOUR DATA SAFE WHEN USING PUBLIC WI-FI – QUICK TIPS

Whether you're connecting from a coffee shop or a hotel lobby, take steps to keep your personal information hidden from prying eyes – the following information has been collated from a Which? article.

Public wi-fi hotspots are undeniably convenient when your mobile network lets you down, but it's worth taking a few precautions and running some checks before you connect.

For one, you'll need to be wary of onlookers peering at your screen if you're in a bustling café. But aside from subtly shielding your display, there are plenty of other ways to keep your information private.

Here are some security tips for phone and laptop users who regularly rely on public wi-fi. Precise steps on Android devices will vary depending on which brand of phone you're using. If you're unsure, check your manufacturer's website.

Is public wi-fi safe?:

This isn't to discourage you from connecting to public wi-fi entirely, but instead to highlight what you need to be aware of when connecting to an unsecured network.

Before connecting – Install the latest security updates, enable antivirus if you're using a laptop, and verify the wi-fi network's legitimacy (ask a staff member if you're unsure). You can use a VPN for additional protection, if you want to. (See also: Best VPNs).

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While connected – only visit secure websites (look for HTTPS) and avoid accessing sensitive personal data. Don't click links or download files from unknown emails.

After disconnecting – 'Forget' the network on your device so it doesn't auto-connect in the future without your consent.

Stay secure when using public wi-fi:

Verify the network you're connecting to: At a glance - Not all public wi-fi hotspots are equal – some are safe, while others might be designed to trick you into connecting and handing over information without realising.

In theory, a seemingly safe wi-fi hotspot could be used by a hacker to track what you're doing on your phone or laptop. They might label the network in a way that makes you think it's innocent – 'Coffee_wifi_official', for example.

With this in mind, you should consider the legitimacy of any public wi-fi network before you connect. If you're using a hotspot provided by a restaurant or hotel, check in with a staff member (or permanent signage) to confirm the hotspot details.

Typically, an unsecured (and potentially dangerous) network will give you internet access without you having to enter a password. Meanwhile, secured alternatives will often ask you to register an account and agree to terms and conditions. Several UK mobile networks, for example, provide free wi-fi across the UK.

If you have a spare couple of minutes, you might want to create a brand new email address that becomes your go-to when signing up to public wi-fi hotspots. That way, spam messages will be sent to that address instead of your main one (see also: How to block spam emails for good).

Check for HTTPS: At a glance - Websites that use HTTPS provide improved security compared to those that don't.

Try to get into the habit of only accessing websites that use HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure). This means data transmitted from your device to the website is encrypted, adding an extra layer of security. Websites designed to steal your data will often (but not always) use HTTP instead of HTTPS.

To confirm if a website is using HTTPS, check the start of the URL in your browser – it will appear before the 'www.'

- On Chrome – Select the View site information icon, to the left of the site's website address. Look for the padlock icon and the Connection is secure confirmation message. You can also double-click the URL on desktop to reveal the HTTP or HTTPS tag.
- On Safari – Look for a padlock icon in your URL bar at the top of the screen.
- On Edge – A padlock icon will appear in the top-left corner of your browser window next to the refresh page button. Clicking it provides more details on the security of the website and its permissions.

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Crucially, HTTPS doesn't guarantee that a website is 100% secure. It is, however, a good indication of trustworthiness.

Keep your software updated: At a glance: Keeping your gadgets updated will protect them against weaknesses hackers can take advantage of.

Before you connect to a public wi-fi hotspot, ensure your device is running the latest security software.

The process of checking which software build you're running only takes a couple of seconds. If you find that you need to download a chunky update, you might prefer to do that at home over your own wi-fi so you don't eat through your mobile data allowance.

- On iPhone – Select Settings > General > About to see your iOS version. You can also choose Software update to check for updates.
- On Android – Open Settings and look for About phone or similar. From the main Settings screen, you can also find an Update option. On a Google Pixel, for example, the steps would be Settings > System > Software updates.
- On Windows 10 – Click Start > Settings > Update & Security. Choose Windows Update and Check for updates. Find out what you need to do when Windows 10 loses security support later this year.
- On Windows 11 – Click Start > Settings > Windows Update. Select Check for updates.
- On a Mac – Open the Apple menu and select System Preferences > Software Update.

Disable the auto-connect feature: At a glance: Stop your device from automatically connecting to potentially unsafe networks without your knowledge.

By default, some devices will automatically connect to a network you've used previously – but that's risky if the network turns out to be unsafe.

Check your current settings by following these steps:

- On iPhone – Go to Settings > wi-fi and select the  icon next to the network. Disable Auto-Join. From the wi-fi screen, you can also select Ask to Join Networks > Ask. If no known networks are available, you will be asked before joining a new one.
- On Android – Head to Settings > Network and Internet > Internet. Select the  icon next to the wi-fi network, then toggle Auto-connect.
- On Windows 10 and 11 – Visit Settings > Network & Internet > wi-fi > Manage known networks. Choose a network, select Properties and toggle Connect automatically when in range.
- On a Mac – Open the Apple menu and choose System Preferences > Network Preferences. Click Network > wi-fi > Advanced > Manage known networks. Select a network and then toggle Automatically join this network.

Of course, you can go a step beyond disabling auto-connect and instead delete a wi-fi network from your device entirely – we've got the details below.

Delete (or 'forget') networks: At a glance: Avoid unintentionally connecting to a problematic wi-fi hotspot by removing it from your device's network list.

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You can delete the details of potentially dangerous or unsecured wi-fi hotspots from your device in just a couple of taps or clicks. Simply follow these steps to remove saved connections:

- On iPhone – Go to Settings > wi-fi and select the I icon next to the network. Choose Forget this network.
- On Android – Head to Settings > Network and Internet > Internet. Select the Cog icon next to the wi-fi network, then choose Forget.
- On Windows 10 and 11 – Visit Settings > Network & Internet > wi-fi > Manage known networks. Click a network and select Forget.
- On a Mac – Open the Apple menu and choose System Preferences > Network Preferences. Click Network > wi-fi > Advanced > Manage known networks. Select a network and then click the Minus icon.

Enable two-factor authentication (2FA): At a glance - This makes your online accounts more secure by requiring a second form of verification – a pain for hackers who might have gathered details from an unsecured wi-fi hotspot or a wider data leak.

Take a moment to activate 2FA for your online accounts. Doing so means that, when you attempt to access an account from a new device, the associated website or app will send a code to your phone. You then have to enter the code before you can continue using the service.

To enable it, open the app you're looking to secure (Gmail or Outlook, for example) and search through the account security settings. Typically, you'll be asked to enter your mobile number, and then the service will send you a code.

Install antivirus software on your PC: At a glance - Strengthen your defences against unsecured wi-fi networks.

Try a VPN: At a glance - VPNs are used to keep some parts of your online activity private. Simply put, they make it harder for hackers to intercept and read your data. They are not for everyone, though.

A VPN (virtual private network) creates a secure tunnel of internet connection between your device and the web. Data and information sent and received via an active VPN is encrypted and converted into unintelligible code, largely preventing third-party websites, your internet service provider (ISP) and any potential eavesdroppers (such as hackers) from reading key information.

By obscuring this information, you become much more anonymous online and more difficult to identify. It's not a one-stop shop to creating online anonymity, but it does reduce your online footprint. This can help keep intrusive companies from collecting your data, while also acting as a potential further line of defence against hackers.

Alternatively, use your phone's hotspot. In some cases, you might find it easier to rely on your mobile network to give you internet access on the move.

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But if you decide to create a mobile hotspot on your phone and connect from your laptop, be wary of your data allowance – you don't want a shockingly high bill on your doorstep at the end of the month. Check your mobile network's app or website to see how much data you have remaining.

To create a wi-fi hotspot on your phone that you can use from a second device, do this:

- On iPhone – Go to Settings > Personal Hotspot, then turn on Allow Others to Join and set a wi-fi password if needed.
- On Android – Open Settings > Network & internet > Hotspot & tethering (this may vary slightly by device). Tap Wi-Fi hotspot, set a hotspot password, then switch on Use Wi-Fi hotspot.

When creating a hotspot, note that you can change the default name if you don't want it to include any identifying details. You also need to pick a security tier that includes a password so only you can gain access. Monitor your battery drain, too.

Going on holiday? Find out how to prepare your phone for holidays abroad so you won't get stung by unexpected costs.

STAY ALERT, STAY ALIVE:

The Counter Terrorism Policing message remains in that you should trust your instincts and report anything that doesn't feel right when you are out and about in the coming weeks.

Sadly, the threat from terrorism is a real one. Every year across the UK, Counter Terrorism Policing receives over 10,000 reports from the public and a fifth of those provide intelligence which is particularly useful to investigators. Since 2017, CTP, along with partners, have disrupted over 40 terrorist

Policing and security authorities encourage the public to trust their instincts and report anything that doesn't feel right to security or the police.

- You can help by sharing campaign messages for any events you are organising or supporting.
- You can increase your awareness by taking the free online ACT Awareness e-learning training.

Promoting the awareness and vigilance is also a powerful way of using communications as an extra layer of protective security. By supporting the campaign and using security-minded communications, you could help to deter hostile activity at major events.

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We all have a role to play in keeping each other safe.

Wherever you are, whatever the situation....



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