

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE.

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud, please call Essex Police on 101.

Report fraud or attempted fraud by contacting Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk or call 0300 123 2040.

ONLINE SHOPPING – HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST THEM?

With the majority of shops being shut due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our shopping habits have moved online. However, this has given rise to a new wave of people falling victim to online shopping fraud – reports to Action Fraud have increased by 51% since the start of lockdown. Always consider how much you trust the person you are buying from or selling to before parting with your hard earned money.

As a buyer you should:

- Try to avoid paying by money transfers - they aren't secure.
- Be careful when using direct banking transactions to pay for goods. Make sure transactions are secure and to someone you trust.
- Don't send confidential personal or financial information by email.
- Use a credit card or an online payment option such as PayPal – it might cost a little more, but it will help to protect you.

As a seller you should:

- Ensure you have received payment of the item before posting it.
- Take photos of the item's condition prior to sending it in order to prevent fraudulent damage claims.
- Be wary of accepting payment by cheque. Even though it may clear, you are still liable if the cheque is forged or stolen.

There have also been a variety of online shopping frauds that relate to COVID-19, including the fraudulent sale of masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In addition, criminals continue to be arrested for selling fake COVID-19 testing kits. These kits often contain harmful chemicals and the government have stated that **no home testing kits are available to buy in the UK.**

Finally, as always with online shopping – **if it looks too good to be true, it usually is!**

'Tell2, protect many' is a communication initiative that empowers you to spread crime prevention messages to others in your life, who otherwise may never know. Start with 'tell2' and ask them to do the same. It starts with YOU!