

Protect Yourself from Bogus Telephone Callers and Telephone Scams

Incidents of bogus callers contacting individuals in Northern Ireland by telephone is increasing and within the Health Service we have seen an increase in the number of patients who tell our staff they have been victims of this crime.

The majority of people who receive a bogus call identify this type of scam quite quickly and refuse to engage with the caller or provide them with their personal health information and their bank details. However, unfortunately some people have fallen victim to this scam and subsequently had significant sums of money stolen from their account.

Of the examples of this type of crime which has been brought to our attention, there does appear to be a common theme emerging, with the majority of people targeted being aged over 60.

The bogus caller will often indicate that they have been asked to call you by your local GP or Health Professional to discuss your health.

If you are contacted by a caller who tries to reassure you that they have been asked to call you by your local GP, please be reassured that your local GP will **NEVER** provide your name and contact telephone number to a company to contact you to discuss your health, or to sell you products over the phone. **This is a scam call.**

The most effective way of dealing with this type of cold calling is by making yourself and your friends and family aware of this type of crime, how it works, and by taking simple steps to protect you and your loved ones from becoming victims, like not providing your bank or card details to anyone who calls you unexpectedly.

It is vital that everyone, particularly the group these bogus callers are targeting, are aware of this type of crime, so please share this information with your neighbours and relatives or anyone you think could benefit from this advice.

HOW DOES THE SCAM WORK?

Scam callers will often try and use techniques to reassure you that they are a genuine caller by indicating that they have been asked to call you by someone who you trust, or who you know, such as your local GP Surgery.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET A CALL?

If you receive a call you're not expecting, you should be cautious. The vital things to remember are that your GP would:

- NEVER give your contact telephone number and health information to a private company selling products, so do not disclose information to anyone who calls and asks about your health status, and do not give them your card or bank details, no matter who they claim to be.

If you are not happy with a phone call and are suspicious of the conversation you have with the caller then please end the call and contact police via the non-emergency number, 101. You may also wish to alert your GP to the call so that he can take steps to alert others

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Remember to follow the above advice. In addition to this, some phone companies offer call screening services that can be effective in blocking marketing cold calls and bogus callers. Contact your phone company and ask about call screening and caller display services.

Useful contacts:

Police Service of Northern Ireland: If you think you have been a victim of this type of crime, call the non-emergency number – 101

Telephone Preference Service (TPS): This free service will help you block some unwanted and nuisance calls – 0845 0700 707

Age N.I. Advice Service: Have advice and leaflets tailored for older individuals – 0808 808 7575

Trading Standards: Can assist you if you think you have been the victim of a scam – 0300 123 6262

