



From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 124

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

Nothing to report.

Scams etc.

Letter scam

One resident in the Buchan area recently reported that she had received a letter from FIFA, the global governing body for association football, sent from their offices in Zurich, Switzerland. In this letter from 'FIFA', the sender advises that the resident has won £900,000 in a recent World Cup lottery, despite a mix-up of names and ticket numbers.

The letter goes on to advise the resident that the lottery is designed to promote the 2028 Olympic Games and the 2026 World Cup. It continues with how she can claim her winnings and that the lottery will help change the lives of millions of people. Also, it contains a warning that she must keep news of the lottery 'away from public to avoid unwarranted abuse of the program or fraudulent acts from criminal minded and unauthorized persons'...

The letter goes on to provide contact details of a Foreign Services Manager in London who the resident should contact to claim their winnings. There is also a time limit placed on the resident's claim, after which the winnings will be returned to their 'International Board of Internal Revenue'.

Thankfully, the resident saw the letter for what it really was and rather than contacting anyone named in the letter, she instead reported the matter to Trading Standards.



From mountain to sea

I have reproduced below a very similar letter from a few years ago as an illustration of the current letter, although it should be noted that some of the details are different to this resident's letter.

Some points to note:

- Of course, FIFA had nothing to do with this letter. Its name was simply used by scammers to try to cheat people out of sums of money,
- There is no prize sum of £900,000. It is entirely fictitious,
- These letters appear to pop up every few years when a major sporting event is being planned for the next year or two,
- Letters like this one have been reported all across the UK recently and as far away as Italy,
- The warning in the letter to keep the news away from the public is actually no more than a scammer's tactic to ensure secrecy and avoid the recipient getting a second opinion from someone who might tell them what is really going on,
- Likewise, the time limit on claiming the winnings or lose them is simply another scammer's tactic to get people to act immediately and not to stop and think too much about the situation,
- Our researches suggest that these letters are being sent out by organised criminals in large numbers and that the aim is to obtain initial fees from recipients who reply, then string them along with promises of a large payout while actually extracting further fees and payments from these victims for as long as possible,
- Remember too, if you haven't entered a lottery, you cannot have won it,
- From the stilted use of language in the letter, the poor structure of the paragraphs (sentences ending where a reader would not expect them to), poor punctuation and Americanised spelling (as in 'unauthorized' instead of the UK's 'unauthorised'), despite the letters being stamped 'London' it is more likely that they came from outwith the UK, from people whose mother tongue is not English,
- It may also be worth noting that the said grammar and spelling in our resident's letter was actually a little worse than that in the sample below and would be far below the acceptable standards set by an international body like FIFA, particularly with the changes of text colour and font throughout the letter,
- Please don't be fooled into contacting anyone via the information in the letter. You may simply be opening yourself up to being scammed,
- Instead, please report these letters to your local Trading Standards office for them to investigate.

From mountain to sea

POWER BALL
INTERNATIONAL FIFA WORLD CUP ONLINE LOTTERY
P O BOX 2937 MELBOURNE VIC 3001 AUSTRALIA

FROM THE DESK OF THE WORLD CUP ONLINE LOTTERY COMMISSION.
REF NO: Rainey468/PB 15/4th BATCH NO: Lot/5297

09-06-2017

AWARD NOTIFICATION

We are delighted to inform you of the International FIFA World cup Online Lottery Program held on 02/06/2017. Due to mix up of names and numbers the results were released on 09/06/2017. Your name attached to ticket number: 038/76 with serial number: 084 drew lucky numbers: 13-21-27-36-45 with bonus ball 4 which consequently won in the 4th category, you have therefore been approved the winner for a lump sum pay out of Nine Hundred Thousand Pounds (£900,000.00) congratulations! Note: This is a tax-free draw and all participants were selected through a computer ballot system drawn from Over 3,000,000, individuals worldwide.

The program was designed and promoted by European lottery, Loteria, El Gordo and Commonwealth Bank of Australia to promote the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games which is to be Hosted by Russia and Japan respectively. This has been the biggest ever played in the world which aimed at changing the lives of millions of people. Please to help us proceed with your claims, this information must be kept away from public to avoid unwarranted abuse of the program or fraudulent acts from criminal minded and unauthorized person(s).

To begin your claims, contact Mr David Price, the Foreign Service Manager of WESTPAC EQUITY HOLDINGS LTD ON Tel: 020-7060-9915. Direct Line: 07470805670. Address; 22 Hanover Square, London W1S 1HD for the processing and remittance of your Winnings. Remember to quote your reference number in all correspondence.

Finally all winnings must be claimed not later than 31/08/2017. After this date, the entire Fund will be returned to the INT'L BOARD OF INTERNAL REVENUE as unclaimed. Furthermore should there be any change of your personal details or address, do inform your claims agent as soon as Possible.

CONGRATULATIONS ONCE AGAIN!!!

YOURS SINCERELY
ROSE MURRAY
VICE PRESIDENT

WORLD CUP ONLINE LOTTO
Date: 09/06/2017
LONDON-ENGLAND.

Misc.

Ask Silver

In Bulletin no.123 we reported on Bitdefender Scamio, an AI driven webpage which can help people decide if certain types of messages sent to them are a scam or not.

In addition to Scamio, there is now Ask Silver.

Ask Silver is another AI driven scam check service, this time provided by the Get Safe Online team and has recently been made available to the public. When someone receives an e-mail, text message or letter or if they visit a website they



From mountain to sea

become suspicious of, they simply take a picture or screenshot of the offending item and upload it to Ask Silver via its webpage for it to analyse. Very quickly Ask Silver will advise the user if it believes the item is safe or not and, if not, will suggest steps to take to stay safe. Ask Silver uses a red, amber and yellow flag system to convey the perceived level of risk.

Ask Silver does not get access to the user's data nor does it store any of the user's data. All message data submitted is handled confidentially. There are a few simple rules to follow to ensure that data is handled appropriately but these are explained on the web page. The service is free and there is no need to create a user's account. To access Ask Silver, please click on the link [here](#).

There is also a WhatsApp version of Ask Silver. This can be added to WhatsApp by visiting the website <https://www.ask-silver.com/> where a user is asked to submit their name, e-mail address and mobile number. The user then receives an e-mail with a QR code to scan, which then opens the WhatsApp chat. The user then simply submits a screenshot of the item via the chat for analysis and if it comes back as suspicious, the user can use the service to report the item to various relevant authorities including the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

The service can also be stored as another Contact on the user's WhatsApp app, for future use.

Further information about Ask Silver can be found by clicking [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Conclusion

Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

From mountain to sea

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via tradingstandards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).