

## Annex A

### **Prevention work undertaken by Trading Standards**

Prevention is a key focus of the work Trading Standards does to protect individuals, communities and businesses from harm and financial loss. We aim to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities through targeted support, education, intervention and consumer empowerment. There are a number of different strategies employed to achieve this focus including partnership work, safeguarding, call blockers, media and communications and implementation of national initiatives.

### **Immediate Response to Covid-19:**

Due to Covid-19 face to face interventions to victims of fraud and scams were no longer possible. The Prevention Team immediately adapted and created a letter and information pack which was sent to all residents identified as being vulnerable to scams.

Working with members of the Surrey Local Resilience Forum and Buckinghamshire Covid 19 Food Cell, the Prevention Team arranged for scam and doorstep crime sticker packs to be widely distributed, including accompanying food parcels sent to shielded residents.



District and Borough Councils also used local food banks and meals on wheels services to share this information.

The Team also worked closely with many other partners to share scam prevention messages. These included organisations such as The Council of Christian and Muslim Relations, Crimestoppers, Thames Valley Police and local Neighbourhood Watch.

We are now part of the Neighbourhood Alert system. This is a secure, web-based messaging system which enables Trading Standards to deliver targeted, relevant messages to specific groups of users in local communities, or broad messages nationwide. The system is used by 23 Police Forces in England, as well as several Fire & Rescue services, Police Commissioners, local Authorities and the Neighbourhood Watch Network. The system typically delivers over 8 million secure messages a month to over 700,000 registered members.

Over 55,000 scam packs and 55,000 doorstep crime packs distributed

### **Safeguarding Phone Calls:**





The information packs sent to vulnerable residents were supplemented with weekly telephone calls. The aim was to prevent fraud, but they also provided much needed wellbeing support – especially for those socially isolated or shielding. It enabled dynamic interventions in incidents, including intercepting and returning money to victims, and provided an opportunity to install call blocking technology.

## Case Study Mr B

In 2019, Mr B had been defrauded out of £70,000 due to investment fraud. Officers from Trading Standards persevered in challenging circumstances to support him and increase his resilience to fraud.

In April 2020 Mr B was one of the 300 residents trading standards began calling on a weekly basis. Recently bereaved and grieving and socially isolated with no support network it quickly became apparent that Mr B was struggling with his mental health, made worse by repeated and threatening phone calls from scammers. The only food he had was bread and milk and he was living off a box of cereal. More urgently he was contemplating suicide.

The Trading Standards Officer assigned to the case contacted key partners to raise urgent concerns. Unfortunately, Mr B was not on the shielded patients list and had fallen between the cracks. Thanks to our intervention Mr B was contacted by Adult Social Care and local charity CHEER (Concern & Help for East Elmbridge Retired). Thanks to the amazing work of CHEER Mr B immediately received an emergency care package and funding was organised for him to receive meals on wheels 3 times a day. To help with his social isolation and grieving, Mr B not only received a weekly call from Trading Standards but also received phone calls twice a week from CHEER and their volunteers. Mr B also accepted the installation of a free call blocking device to prevent malicious cold calls reaching him.

Mr B continues to receive meals on wheels as well as weekly calls from Trading Standards and charity volunteers. A call blocking device has been installed (which he loves) and following ongoing support from Trading Standards, Mr B has had £25,000 worth of debt written off by his banks and has switched his utility company to get a cheaper tariff.

He continues to take one day at a time but says Trading Standards have turned his life around. He says he is now more confident to handle financial issues and is enjoying time in his garden and returning to his painting.



I have contacted my banks and they are returning £25,000 I thought I had lost forever, I couldn't have done it without you.

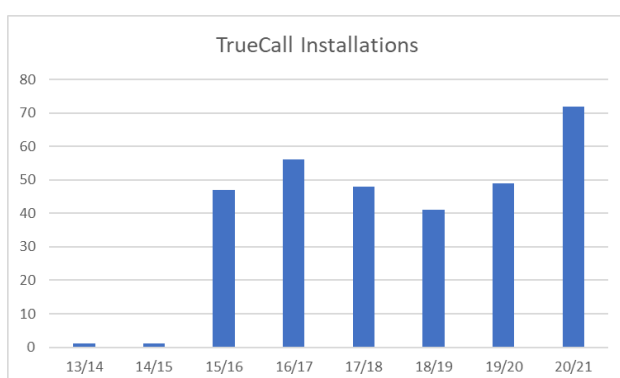


## Call Blockers

Call blockers are a key tool in stopping criminals accessing vulnerable residents in their own homes. To combat cold call fraud and to give residents peace of mind Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards provides and installs call blocking technology free of charge to vulnerable people who are being plagued by nuisance and scam calls. The retail cost of these units is £119.00 plus £9.99 delivery.



A trueCall call blocker is a piece of technology which connects between the phone and wall socket. It acts like a home receptionist, letting calls from trusted friends and family straight through, blocking unwelcome callers, and challenging unrecognised calls while providing a route for legitimate unknown callers access.



Total of 331 units installed  
Of which 205 are active  
224,232 nuisance calls blocked  
42,971 scam calls blocked  
99.7% of scam and nuisance calls blocked

Financial savings due to trueCall interventions can be divided into three categories:

Financial Savings

**£512,746**

Healthcare & Health Related Quality of Life savings

**£276,889**

Residential care cost savings

**£13,034,515**

The cost benefit analysis on the project overall is 45:1

**Buckinghamshire and Surrey residents saved £45 for every £1 spent by the Service**



## Case Study Mrs E

Mrs E was a recently bereaved widow who was receiving cold calls from individuals posing as investment specialists. She was initially persuaded into 'investing' £5,000. The cold calls continued, and she handed over another £10,000. The cold calls continued incessantly, and Mrs E's daughter contacted Surrey Police in a very distressed state.

The case was referred to Trading Standards via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The Trading Standards Prevention Team, working in partnership with Surrey Police immediately took steps to safeguard this vulnerable lady. A key part of this activity was to stop the cold calls.

Mrs E was an independent lady who was initially reluctant to the idea of installing a call blocker. She had been convinced that these 'investment traders' were genuine and was diligently keeping notes of her conversations. Trading Standards continued to support Mrs E and tirelessly to get her money returned to her.

A month later Mrs E contacted her Trading Standards case worker, she had received two very aggressive cold calls from the scammers demanding an additional £20,000 which had left her upset and very shaken. She asked for us to stop these calls and agreed to install a call blocker. The effect was immediate.

Mrs E was no longer plagued by cold calls and she was no longer afraid to answer the phone. With continued support from Trading Standards she even had £15,000 returned to her.

Extremely grateful and was not expecting that level of service

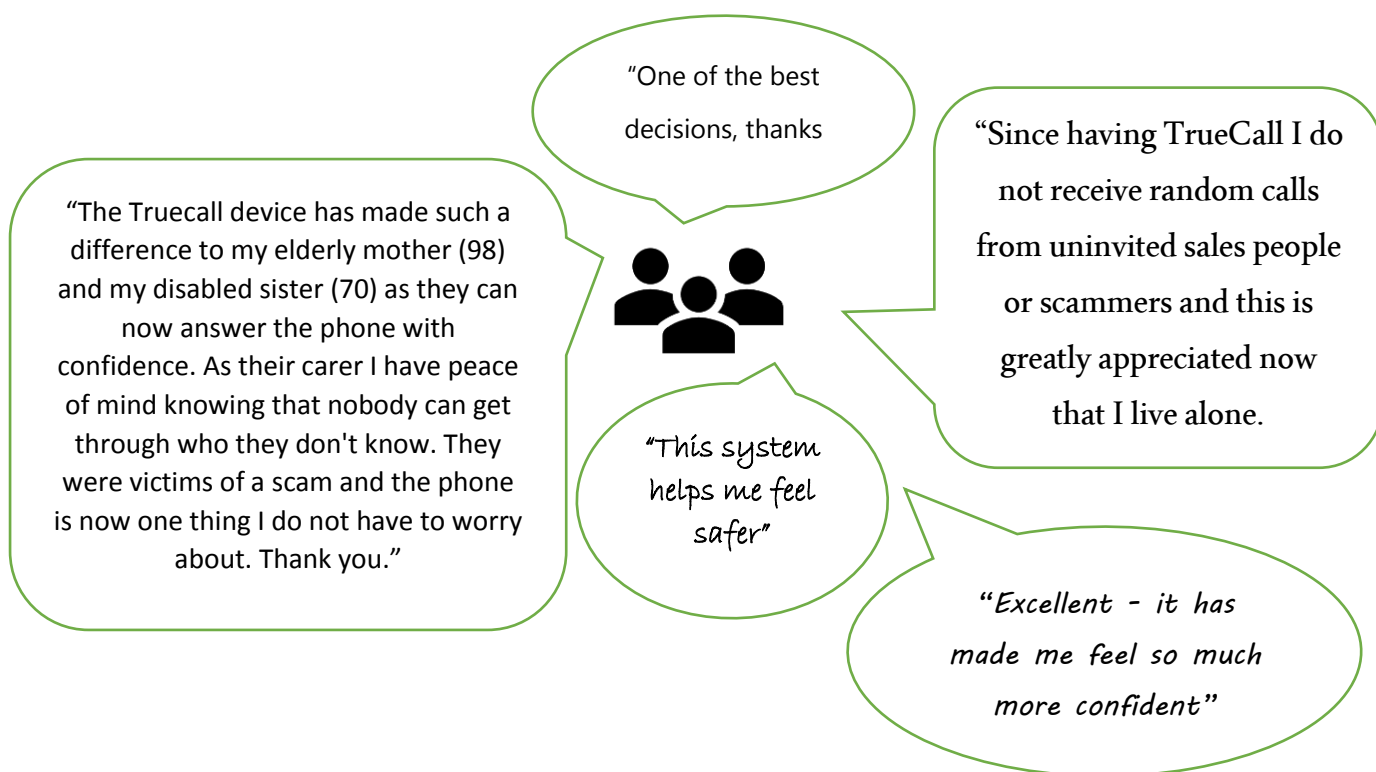


## Impact of Call Blockers

95%	of the applicants who previously felt threatened or scared by scam or nuisance calls no longer felt this way.
100%	of applicants surveyed at three months (who originally felt unsafe in their own home) felt safer due to having a call blocker installed.
99%	of applicants felt happier they no longer receive scam or nuisance calls.
80%	of applicants who were previously worried about losing money to scam and nuisance calls in the future no longer felt this way.
92%	of applicants now say they no longer receive any scam or nuisance calls.
84%	of applicants felt more confident in answering the phone knowing it wouldn't be a scam or nuisance call.



## Resident Feedback



## Call Blocker Development

**Buckinghamshire & Surrey**  
trading standards

**Are you worried about nuisance phone calls?**

Many of these calls are scams that aim to con people out of money. Unfortunately they're on the increase but a trueCall device will block nuisance and unwanted calls to give you peace and quiet at home, but still let your personalised trusted caller list through.

trueCall  
STOPS NUISANCE CALLS

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Increase awareness of this initiative through proactive and targeted promotional activities

Develop and seek new opportunities to work with partners to extend the reach of the project to support more socially isolated people and include those with a diverse range of vulnerable characteristics.

Develop and implement the use of trueCall technology for mobile phones on a pilot basis.



## **Media and Communications**

The media is an important tool for our prevention work. We regularly use mediums including Facebook, twitter, press releases and our fortnightly TS Alerts.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen an increase in Covid related scams ranging from home testing kits, HMRC payments and vaccination scams.

Here are a few of the most popular press releases:

[Scams on the rise in the wake of Coronavirus | Surrey News \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

[Scammers prey on the vulnerable charging for vaccines they don't have and stealing financial data | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

[Covid-19 vaccine scams are targeting Surrey residents | Surrey News \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

From April 2020 to December 2020 our Facebook total reach has been 755,214. This is compared to 531,731 for the whole of the previous year. A Facebook total reach is the number of people who had your page's post enter their screen. On the 15th September 2020 a post about an HMRC phishing email was shared 233 times and reached 25,178 people. On the 17th November 2020 a post about a doorstep scam against a young male was shared 143 times and reached 18,089 people.

Here is a link to our TS Alert newsletters:



<https://scc.newsweaver.co.uk/tradingstandards>

Social Media is integral to the work of the Prevention Team. Using all social media platforms and via our TS alert newsletter, sent to over 1,000 subscribers fortnightly, we provide information, guidance and alerts. Each of our TS Alert subscribers, such as Neighbourhood Watch, District and Borough Councils and charities, distributes the information throughout their own organisations and in turn their followers share it further.



<https://www.facebook.com/BucksSurreyTS>



[https://twitter.com/Bucks\\_Surreyts/](https://twitter.com/Bucks_Surreyts/)

During lockdown, one single message reached:

113,314 people via Facebook

88,600 people via Twitter



The work undertaken by the Team has generated a lot of media interest, affording us the opportunity to also provide advice and guidance via local and national television and radio.



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0007sxx>



## **Implementation of National Initiatives**

Friends Against Scams (FAS) is a National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to take a stand against scams. By attending a Friends Against Scams awareness session anyone can learn about the different types of scams and how to spot and support a victim. With increased knowledge and awareness, people can make scams part of everyday conversation with their family, friends and neighbours, which will enable them to protect themselves and others.



Scam Champions are the next level of intervention. Based on the Friends Against Scams training, Scam Champions are able to develop their own confidence to adopt and deliver Friends Against Scams Training directly to their communities or in their place of work. We have implemented this enhanced training to Surrey Police and Thames Valley Police and adult services in both counties.

Before Covid-19 training for these 2 initiatives was delivered face to face. Because of the restrictions this training is now delivered virtually on a monthly basis and has significantly increased the number of people we have been able to reach.

A Scam Marshal is any resident in the UK who has been targeted by a scam and now wants to fight back and take a stand against scams. Scam Marshals do this by sharing their own experiences, helping others to report and recognise scams and sending any scam mail that they receive to the National Trading Scams Team so that it can be utilised as evidence in future investigative and enforcement work. This scheme won the prestigious 'Outstanding Prevention Initiative' at the Tackling Economic Crime Awards (TECAs) in December.



We have recently set up a private Facebook group to enable our Friends Against Scams and Scam Champions to talk to each other in a safe space. Over 200 members are supporting each other by sharing ideas and tips and discussing the emerging scam trends.

Businesses Against Scams. In light of recent events concerning COVID-19, people are working from home more than ever. Increased stress, less opportunities to talk to colleagues and a different working environment are all things that criminals are using to their advantage to commit fraud. Employees are having to make decisions on their own without verification from their colleagues, making businesses more susceptible to scams and fraud. This initiative provides a number of resources that companies can share with their employees which



can educate them on a variety of common business related frauds, including grant and rebate scams, CEO fraud, invoice fraud and technical support scams.

Direct financial Savings for April - December 2020  
£481,006

Moving away from class room based training we now deliver these initiatives monthly on line which has significantly increased our reach.

20,075 Friends Against Scams  
132 Scam Champions  
102 Scam Marshalls  
50 Business Against Scams

SCAMBassadors are MPs, senior officials or someone who will use their influence to raise the profile of scams at a national level. They can raise the issue of scams as a key topic of concern in parliament and encourage their local authority to sign up to Friends Against Scams.)

If a business, organisation or charity would like to be involved, they can become a Friends Against Scams organisation by pledging to actively promote the initiative. The easiest way to do this is to make all employees Friends. Organisations may also wish to encourage their customers to become Friends as well.



In June 2020 Mr Steve Owen-Hughes, Director of Community Protection & Emergencies and SFRS Chief Fire Officer become a Scambassador, raising and promoting the work being done to educate and safeguard residents from fraud and scams. Soon after, SFRS was also recognised as an official Friends Against Scams Organisation.

4 SCAMBassadors  
9 Friends Against Scams Organisations



## Impact of our Interventions

As well as qualitative feedback from residents, some examples of which have been given throughout this report, we also consider the quantitative impact of our interventions. Using a tool developed by National Trading Standards, designed by economists and based on central Government Department approaches, we are able to calculate the economic and societal value of a variety of local authority trading standards interventions on scams. This tool looks at three different things:

- The Direct savings - for example on average one call blocker will block x number of scam attempts of which y number would be 'successful' causing a person to lose x pounds.
- The Health & Social Care savings – this begins to look at the impact on the person of being a victim of a scam and considers the known data about wider impacts on vulnerable victims. In particular, it considers the average increased needs for health and social care that have been shown to be required for such vulnerable victims.
- The Avoided Residential Care impact – this considers further impacts, and data showing an increased need (on average) for vulnerable victims of scam crimes.

This shows that between April and December the impact of our Scams interventions was:

**Direct & future financial savings for residents:**  
**£922,367**

**Health & Social Care financial Impact:**  
**£397,042**

**Avoided Residential Care Financial Impact:**  
**£13,034,924**

For consistency with previous reporting, we show the combination of the first two of these figures as the headline financial impact of our scams prevention work i.e. **£1,319,409**



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