

National Trading Standards Scams Team

# Call Blocking

2019 - 2020



## Foreword

Scam and nuisance calls continue to be a blight for many people in society. It is estimated that between £5-10 billion is lost by UK consumers every year to fraud and scams<sup>1</sup>. People who are susceptible to scams due to their circumstances (for example, social isolation or declining health), are often targeted by criminals. Further to this, feelings of isolation and loneliness have been exacerbated due to the recent pandemic.

Scam and nuisance calls can affect people in many ways. These crimes often cause financial loss, emotional distress, social isolation, a loss of confidence, a feeling of embarrassment at having been scammed and sometimes, physical harm, due to poverty and stress.

This report highlights how important a call blocker is for individuals to defend themselves from these crimes. It demonstrates that installing a call blocker significantly increased applicants' wellbeing, blocks 99% of scam and nuisance calls and saves applicants and society £20,227,167.42.

This area of work continues to prove invaluable in protecting people from financial abuse.

**Louise Baxter, Head of the National Trading Standards Scams Team.**



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## Executive summary

The call blocker project was funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Since the start of the project until April 2020:

- **1,084** call blockers have been installed
- Over **99%** of scam and nuisance calls were blocked
- On average, applicants were receiving **23** scam and nuisance calls per month
- **99%** of applicants felt happier they no longer receive scam or nuisance calls

### Call blocker cost benefit analysis

- Total estimated saving = **£20,227,167.42**
- The cost of the Call Blocker Project 2019-2020 was **£640,000**.
- Therefore, for every **£1** spent, the project has saved consumers and society **£32**.
- The cost benefit ratio **32:1**

### Wellbeing study

Some applicants took part in an academic, ethically approved wellbeing study overseen by Bournemouth University. After installing a unit for three months:

- **96%** of all applicants reported a positive impact on their wellbeing
- All applicants reported a significant increase in their overall wellbeing
- The data suggests that a call blocker may be of particular benefit to socially isolated or vulnerable people

### Wellbeing cost benefit analysis

- Applying the wellbeing calculation method.
- **£2,318.48** wellbeing saving per person
- **£1,873,232.32** net financial value to all applicant's wellbeing

### Investigations

The data from the units identified criminals selling fake face masks during the pandemic. The closure of this telephone number resulted in an estimated saving of **£6,805,098.00**.

### Recommendations

- 1** There should be greater recognition of the impact that scam and nuisance calls have on wellbeing, regardless of whether there is actual engagement or any financial loss.
- 2** All regular landline users are likely to benefit from call blocker technology.
- 3** Call blockers should be made available to vulnerable individuals to support them to live independently - call blockers can be a vital part of a toolkit to support independent living and to safeguard vulnerable individuals from financial abuse.
- 4** Older people, those who self-identify as vulnerable, and individuals who live alone are most likely to benefit from the installation of a call blocker.
- 5** Further signposting would help provide clear guidance regarding the application for, and the potential benefits of, installing a call blocker.

## Scam and nuisance calls - what is the problem?

Telephone scams are a form of fraud where criminals contact people out of the blue by telephone or text message, often from a misleading or spoofed<sup>2</sup> telephone number.

Criminals use a combination of psychological tactics such as bullying, harassment, befriending or impersonation of officials to defraud people or offer 'too good to be true deals' to obtain personal and financial information.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) provided funding in 2016 to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team for call blocking technology to help tackle this problem. Building on this previous work, the Government continued its commitment to combat scam and nuisance calls by providing further funding to supply and install additional call blockers for those in need.

To help combat the problem of misleading or spoofed telephone numbers, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is working with telecom companies to create a central database of verified phone numbers. This will assist with identifying the "real" number behind each phone call much more easily and isolate numbers that are not recognised as genuine.

To further protect consumers, updates have been made to existing legislation. The Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR) have been amended in 2018 to include the banning of cold calling by claims management services<sup>3</sup> and to introduce director liability for serious breaches of the marketing rules. In 2019, PECR incorporated the banning of cold calling by pension schemes in certain circumstances. Such amendments are a welcome addition in fighting scams and nuisance calls yet there is always more that can be done. Call blockers are a powerful preventative tool with which we can help empower people to take a stand against scams.

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## Call blocking technology

The call blocking units used in this project were the trueCall Secure Plus units<sup>4</sup>. The units filter unwanted scam and nuisance calls and stop them from getting through to the consumers landline. The unit allows the user to set a "trusted caller list" for friends, family members, doctors and any other trusted contacts. The unit plugs into an existing phone and phone line and can work alongside broadband or lifeline/pendant devices that are already installed.



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<sup>2</sup> A spoofed telephone number is when a caller deliberately changes the telephone number and/or name relayed as the Caller ID information. They do this to either hide their identity or copy the phone number of a legitimate person or company.

<sup>3</sup> Claims management services consist of advice or services in respect of claims for compensation, restitution, repayment or any other remedy for loss or damage, or in respect of some other obligation.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.truecall.co.uk/>



## The project



### Referrals

- Applications went live on the Friends Against Scams website<sup>6</sup>.
- Applications could be made by; individuals, on behalf of someone else, by a local authority or by a partner agency such as the police.

### Assessment

- Applicants were successful if they received scam or nuisance calls and/or their circumstances made them vulnerable to these types of calls.



### Installation

- The units could be self-installed or professionally installed by an engineer.
- An installation survey was completed by the applicant.

### Monitoring

- To assess the impact of the unit at three months, a member of the NTS Scams Team contacted the applicant to conduct a follow up survey relating to the unit.

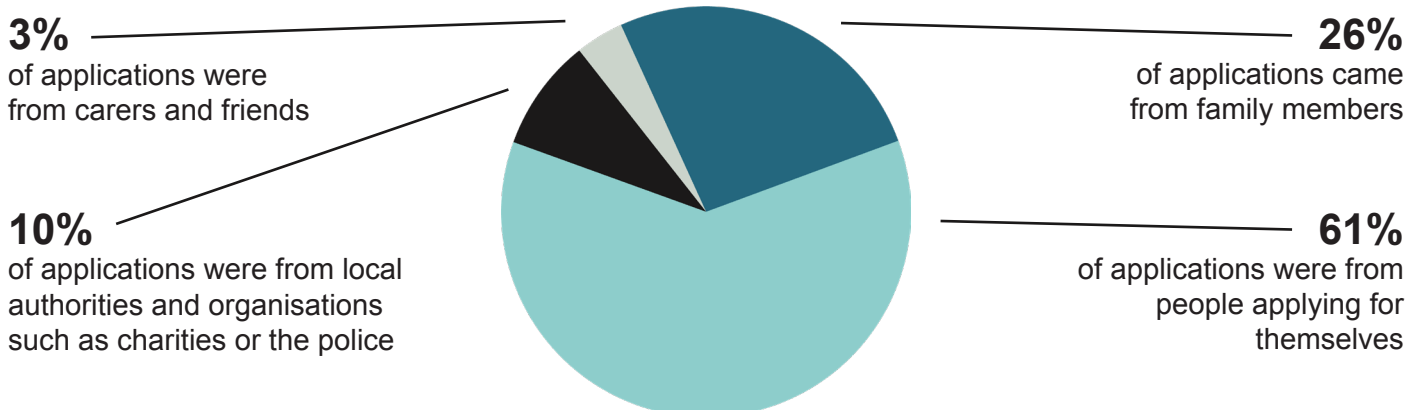


### Analysis

- The data from the units was analysed and shared with the investigations team to identify and disrupt the criminals.

## Where did the applications come from?

All 2,014<sup>5</sup> units were applied for within eight days of the project starting; an unprecedented level of requests - the demand for these units was exceptionally high. Applications were made from a variety of sources.



The average applicant was 75, female and applied for a unit for herself.

Despite not losing money to these crimes yet, some were concerned about losing money in the future.

<sup>5</sup> Since then 350 units have been returned and redeployed  
<sup>6</sup> <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

## Analysis

To assess the effectiveness of the unit, information was gathered from applicants before and after the installation of a unit. The below comparisons were made on:

- The number of scam or nuisance calls received before and after installing a unit;
- The number of scams or nuisance calls blocked;
- The financial detriment before the installation of a unit;
- The financial detriment after the installation of a unit;
- The impact on a person's emotions due to receiving scam and nuisance calls before the installation and at three months of having the unit.

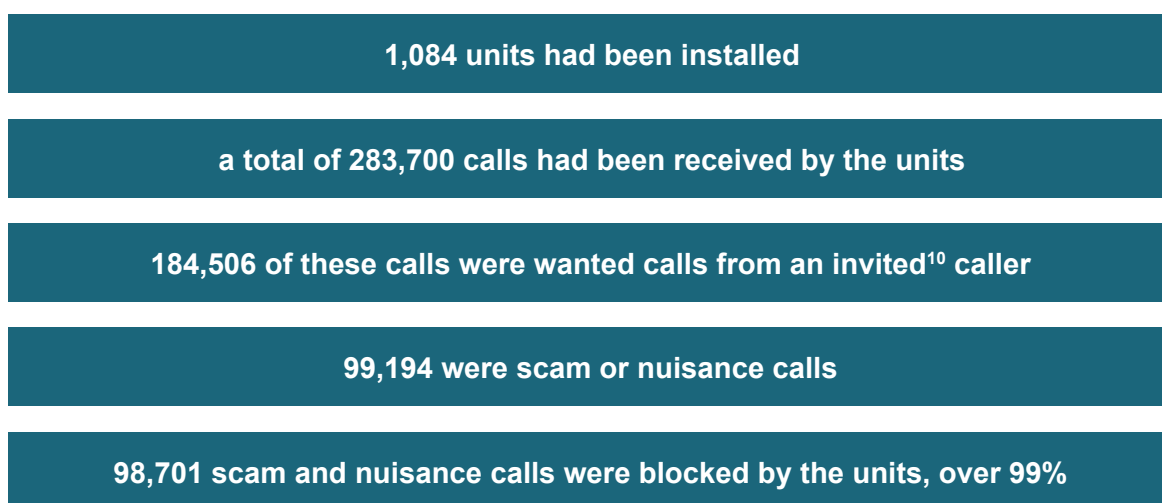
## Call analysis

A report<sup>7</sup> by Ofcom suggests that the average number of nuisance calls received by the general population per month is 7.4. The applicants in this project were receiving an average of 23 scam and nuisance calls per month, 16 more than the average general population. This higher figure shows that the units from this project were installed into the homes of those most in need of blocking these types of calls.



## How many calls did the units receive after the installation of a call blocker?

After six months<sup>9</sup>:



**Over 99% of scam and nuisance calls were blocked by the units**

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0033/159288/landline-nuisance-calls.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0033/159288/landline-nuisance-calls.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Received 6-10 calls per week, multiplied over a one-month period = 26-43 scam or nuisance calls per month.

<sup>9</sup> Applicants were surveyed at three months, but data calculated in this section is after six months of having the unit installed.

<sup>10</sup> An invited caller is someone the applicant knows or is expecting a call from or is on their trusted caller list.

## Financial savings

Applicants were asked questions about their experience of scam and nuisance calls before and after the unit was installed. This included financial loss at application and installation.

### Before the installation of a call blocker:

228 applicants stated they had lost money to scam and nuisance calls

76 applicants declared a financial figure lost to scam and nuisance calls which totalled £547,011.80

The average reported loss of these victims to scam and nuisance calls was £7,197.52<sup>11</sup>

One applicant had lost £100,000 to scam and nuisance calls

### After three months of using a call blocker:

The NTS Scams Team successfully telephone surveyed 529 applicants to find out their experience of using the unit.

All respondents reported no losses to scam or nuisance calls since the installation of the unit.

Of those surveyed at three months after installation, no applicants had lost money to scam or nuisance calls.

“Amazing! I was getting so many calls it was so bad. Before I was beginning to doubt myself and was uncomfortable and now, I feel myself again it’s really made a difference.”

- Jim



“My autistic son is able to answer the phone. He feels like his whole life is ‘lifted’ since the installation, not depressed anymore, more confident, safer in his home. Really happy.”

- Gill

<sup>11</sup> 76 respondents declared a financial figure which totalled £547,011.80.  $\frac{£547,011.80}{76} = £7,197.52$

## Emotional impact

The NTS Scams Team asked additional questions in relation to the applicants' feelings towards scam and nuisance calls before and after a unit was installed. There was a noticeable improvement in applicants' emotions as a result of installing a unit for three months. By blocking these calls, applicants were not interacting with criminals, which reduced their anxiety and their worries about losing money to these calls in the future.

529 applicants completed the three-month survey, of those surveyed:

**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.

"Feel a lot safer and I don't have to worry about answering the phone whilst I'm cooking in the kitchen." - **Gladys**





## Wellbeing study

As well as the above findings, the NTS Scams Team also wanted to find out if there was a direct link between installing a call blocker and the improvement in the applicants' wellbeing. Anecdotally, the NTS Scams Team had seen improvements of applicants' wellbeing from previous projects, however a formal study had not been completed.

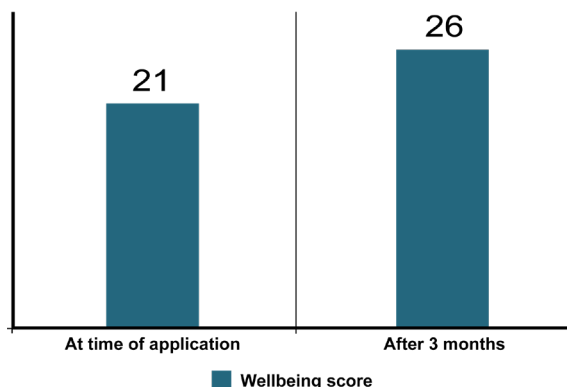
Call blocker applicants were asked if they wanted to take part in an academic and ethically approved wellbeing study overseen by the National Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work at Bournemouth University (NCPQSW). 181 applicants volunteered in the study and the seven-item Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS<sup>12</sup>) was used to survey applicants at two points, once upon application for the unit and then again three months after installation.

At the beginning of the study the applicants had an average wellbeing score of 21.1, considerably lower than the UK population average score of 25.2. After installing a unit for three months applicants reported a significant increase in their overall wellbeing, reporting an average score of 26, in line with the national average.

The lowest levels of wellbeing at all points were observed in applicants under 65 years old, who lived alone or were vulnerable<sup>13</sup>. However, after the installation of a unit, these applicants demonstrated higher increases in their average wellbeing scores when compared to applicants who were not indicated to be vulnerable. This suggests that the call blocker may be of particular benefit to socially isolated or vulnerable people.

Applicants from the study were asked a series of questions on how the unit made them feel. 96%<sup>14</sup> of all applicants reported a positive impact on their wellbeing, the remaining 4% reported little or no impact and no respondents reported a negative impact.

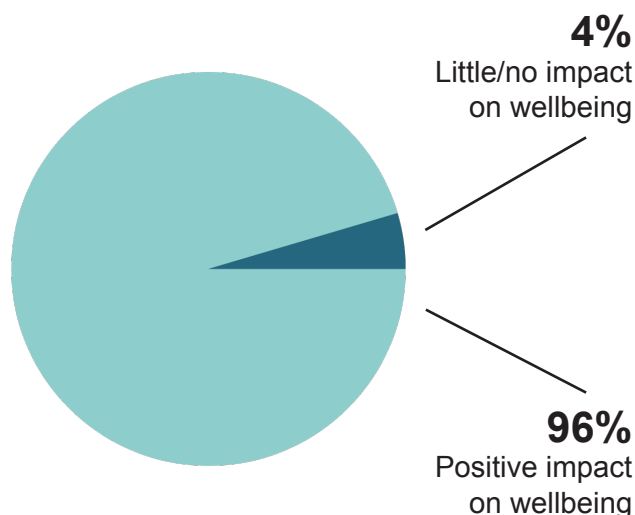
**The average overall wellbeing score**



**At the time of application**  
The average vulnerable groups wellbeing score was **20**

**After three months**  
The average vulnerable groups wellbeing score was **25**

### Did the unit provide any impact to the applicants?



The research supports the case for the installation of a unit where an individual is in receipt of scam or nuisance calls. The findings suggest that there is strong correlation between individual wellbeing and receiving scam and nuisance calls, regardless of whether there is actual engagement or any financial loss. The experience negatively impacts on an individual's sense of usefulness, ability to deal with problems and to feel close to other people. A detailed report of the wellbeing study is available upon request.

<sup>12</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs>

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/about/wemwbsvsswemwbs>

<sup>13</sup> Respondents who indicated on the survey that they felt their circumstances made them potentially vulnerable.

<sup>14</sup> 166 out of the 181 applicants answered this question.

## Intelligence

One of the key areas of work for the NTS Scams Team is investigations. The NTS Scams Team works with trueCall to provide real-time data to identify new intelligence from the calls being blocked by the units. The NTS Scams Team uses this data to find criminal entities that can be investigated and disrupted. The most prevalent calls blocked as part of this project were from the fraudulent ‘home cover industry’<sup>15</sup>. These criminals use a variety of techniques to obtain bank details and were regularly charging for non-existent or poor services, such as domestic home repairs and white goods insurance. Many of the criminals identified from the dataset were not known to the NTS Scams Team or previously reported to Action Fraud.

The top three scam call types were:

- White goods insurance – Cover for appliances such as: fridges, freezers and washing machines
- Impersonation callers and spoofed numbers – NHS, BT, Amazon, water companies, fake goods such as CBD (Cannabidiol) oil
- Domestic home repairs – boiler service and drainage work

To date, the NTS Scams Team has identified 147 individual entities who have been making calls to target consumers with these specific types of scams. The telephone numbers associated with breaches of the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) have been shared with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), the TPS is overseen by the ICO. Sharing the intelligence maximises enforcement opportunities against individuals and organisations who attempt to defraud the public. The intelligence gathered has also been disseminated to national partners, including the NTS Intelligence Team and the Regional Intelligence Analysts. This information would not have been forthcoming without the trueCall data.



“I feel a lot happier as I know I won’t get any more scam calls - I am disabled so getting up to answer each call was a nuisance.” - **Adam**



The onset of COVID-19 in the UK from March 2020 has provided new opportunities for criminals to take advantage of members of the public. The data provided by trueCall made the NTS Scams Team aware of several new scams that hadn't previously been detected, including criminals impersonating health workers to sell fake face masks for £29.95-49.95. The criminals were estimated to be making 170,000 calls a week. Following this investigation, the telephone number has been terminated. The number was identified to originate from the Philippines and intelligence was passed to The Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice. The total savings from this one investigation are an estimated £6,805,098<sup>16</sup>.

This clearly shows the benefits of using the call blocking data as an investigative tool and highlights the value of the units for prevention, detection and disruption of these scam and nuisance calls.



## Case study

Miss T a 34-year-old female living in sheltered supported accommodation, lives with Cerebral Palsy and is wheelchair bound. In summer of 2019 Miss T began to receive calls from companies claiming to offer discounted appliance and electrical goods insurance. Often the conversation stated that the amount debited was a single payment, but this was not the case. Analysis of Miss T's bank account by the NTS Scams Team identified sixteen scam companies of which five were on the trueCall top number list. Miss T had very little paperwork and no evidence of ever receiving any insurance from the companies. One criminal took £195 on three occasions in one day for heating cover which wasn't needed. A trueCall unit was placed in the property and not only did the calls stop but the data provided allowed the NTS Scams Team to identify the companies targeting Miss T. The NTS Scams Team worked in partnership with her local trading standards team and contacted the companies identified from the call data supplied by the unit and have recovered £3,800 for Miss T.



"I don't worry so much about the phone ringing early in the morning or late at night." - **Jennifer**

<sup>16</sup> 170,000 calls per week for three months with 5% of consumers making a purchase over £39.99 (170,000 x 13 weeks = 2,210,000 calls). 5% equals 110,500 calls at £39.99 each loss. The NTS Scams Team estimate that this would have led to consumers paying money to criminals, with savings in consumer detriment of £4,418,895 based on the average prices charged for on the calls. Plus, an estimated healthcare and health related quality of life savings of £366,203.

## Cost benefit analysis

The NTS Scams Team worked with Optimity<sup>17</sup> to devise a cost benefit analysis (CBA). The CBA is based on how long the unit is likely to be kept installed and in use by the applicant, this is estimated at 4.4<sup>18</sup> years. A full breakdown of the CBA can be found in the Appendix. The below CBA uses conservative figures based on 1,084 units that were installed up until April 2020.

### Financial savings equation

Number of call blockers installed 1,084
x
Number of years a call blocker is in use on average 4.4
x
Average annual loss before installation of call blocker £3,027.74 <sup>19</sup>
x
Percentage of scam calls blocked by the unit 91%

### Healthcare and health related Quality of Life saving equation<sup>20</sup>:

Financial savings
x
Physical and emotional harm
x
Health service costs

**Total estimated saving = £20,227,167.42**

**The cost of the Call Blocker Project 2019-2020 was £640,000.  
Therefore, for every £1 spent, the project has saved consumers and society  
£32.**

**The cost benefit ratio 32:1**

<sup>17</sup> <https://optimityadvisors.com/homepage>

<sup>18</sup> This calculation is from trueCall.

<sup>19</sup> Calculation based on completed installation surveys.

<sup>20</sup> This calculation is based on figures from the Home Office Costs of Crime Survey and it calculates the physical and emotional harm and the cost to health services per £1 of financial loss.

## Wellbeing cost benefit analysis

A financial figure for improving a person's wellbeing due to installing a call blocker can also be applied to the wellbeing study.

- At application, a person's wellbeing was 21.1
- After three months of using a unit, the person's wellbeing increased to 26
- Recording a 4.9 increase in average wellbeing

Applying the wellbeing valuation method<sup>21</sup>

**A** 21.1 equates to £21,049

**B** 26 equates to £24,225

The calculation is:

(B) £24,225
-
(A) £21,049
=
£3,176
-
27% (£857.52 for deadweight <sup>22</sup> )
=
£2,318.48 wellbeing saving per person
x
1,084 units
=
£2,513,232.32
-
cost of delivery £640,000
=
£1,873,232.32 Net financial value to all applicant's wellbeing

<sup>21</sup> Page 5. Trotter, L., Rallings Adams, M-K. 2017. Valuing improvements in mental health: Applying the wellbeing valuation method to WEMWBS. HACT. London, UK.

<sup>22</sup> Deadweight is calculated in the equation to account for changes that would have happened anyway regardless of any specific intervention.



## Case studies

The below case studies and anecdotal quotes have been obtained as part of the call blocker project.

"I can't believe it, we've had no scam calls since it was installed." - **Carol**



"Unfortunately, I have been ill for considerable time with cancer and after effects of radiotherapy. Today I am back at home and my son-in-law has connected the blocker for me it will be a great relief. Three demands for cash last week and frightening threats over the phone. I can rest now to know that only friends and people I know will get in touch. Very many thanks."

- **A letter received from a member of the public.**

"We were amazed to find that since installation on the 25th November, 65 calls had been blocked, quite a few recently from Hull, where we have no contacts. There were also a number of blocked international calls, so that was good.

I suppose at some unconscious level it has had a positive effect on our wellbeing, because we've just not been aware of any of those 65 calls! So yes, it has been very good for us, as over four months on we now recognize just how valuable it's been. We send you our good wishes for all the work you do, and may you continue to keep well and safe."

- **A call blocker user from the Isle of Wight.**

Mr A was a known scam victim, who the trading standards officer had dealt with previously and on this occasion they had applied for a call blocker.

Mr A is 92 years old, lives on his own and has issues with his legs, he receives lots of unwanted mail as well as calls — mostly around lotions and potions to help his legs, and white goods insurance. Since receiving the unit, the manager of the sheltered housing where he lives said that he seems much brighter in himself.

The manager said "He now gets far fewer calls and worries less about whether he's being scammed or not. Since it's been in place, he feels much better, more confident and positive."

Mr A said "People who call are friendly and befriend me and all of a sudden I'm getting my card out on the phone. I'm not worrying about that anymore, as I'm not getting those calls now."

- **A case study from an application made by a Trading Standards Officer from Kingston and Sutton.**

## Comments collected from the three-month surveys



"It's absolutely great, I wish I had got the unit earlier.  
I feel much better and safer now." - **Jane**



"My husband has dementia so the unit gives me  
the sense of security." - **Ethel**



"I am really pleased with the unit as was getting lots  
of scam calls before - it has definitely improved my  
wellbeing now." - **Peter**



"Fantastic impact. Taken away the stress. I'm on my own  
for most of the time. When you're on own it's a nightmare,  
so it's made a big difference to me. I'm a happier person. It  
gives me a feeling of being in control of each day - I used  
to frequently think it's hardly worth doing something  
because the phone might ring." - **Amir**



"I have already recommended the unit to others as I think  
it's the best thing we've ever had!" - **Reena**

## Conclusion

The evidence from this project has shown call blockers are an effective way to prevent scam and nuisance calls and help protect members of the public who receive scam calls. Most importantly, it is evident that installing a unit is an effective way to improve wellbeing and build consumer confidence.

It's clear that using a call blocker can provide an extra layer of protection for consumers and prevent criminals from taking advantage of people who are vulnerable due to their circumstances. The data provided by the project has also proved invaluable as an investigative and intelligence tool, which has led to the closure of a prolific telephone number with many more numbers being investigated. This type of crime is highly lucrative for criminals and they are continually diversifying. However, installing a unit blocks 99% of these unwanted calls and reduces this type of crime.

The wellbeing study has proven that scam and nuisance calls have a significant impact on people's wellbeing. This also includes people who don't even engage with the scam itself, but merely receive the incessant calls. The evidence shows that the applicants from this study had a lower than average wellbeing score compared with the general population. However, after just three months of using a call blocker, applicants' wellbeing increased significantly and is equivalent to a saving of £1,873,232.32. The NTS Scams Team support the below recommendations that have been identified by the wellbeing report <sup>23</sup>.

1

**There should be greater recognition of the impact that scam and nuisance calls have on wellbeing, regardless of whether there is actual engagement or any financial loss.** The findings of this research revealed the significant negative impact that simply receiving these types of calls has on individual wellbeing. This suggests that the scale of people experiencing a negative impact due to scam and nuisance calls is likely to be far larger than the occurrences reported to Action Fraud.

2

**All regular landline users are likely to benefit from call blocker technology.** Significant increases in wellbeing were observed across all ages, genders, and levels of vulnerability. Although a lot of work is being done to intercept calls at the source, the adaptive behaviour of these criminals leads the best point of intervention to be at the point of contact.

3

**Call blockers should be made available to vulnerable individuals to support them to live independently.** Supporting the aims of the Care Act 2014, this research demonstrated how a call blocker can be a vital part of a toolkit to support independent living and to safeguard vulnerable individuals from financial abuse.

4

**Older people, those who self-identify as vulnerable, and individuals who live alone are most likely to benefit from the installation of a call blocker.** These research findings suggest that increased focus should be placed on these groups, as they are most negatively impacted by experiencing scam and nuisance calls and benefitted the most from the installation of a call blocker.

5

**Building on the previous work of the NTS Scams Team, further signposting would help provide clear guidance regarding the application for, and the potential benefits of, installing a call blocker.** The call blocker utilised within this research led to the substantial and sustained reduction in unwanted calls; however, more research would be required to explore the impacts of different levels of call reduction and the efficacy of alternative call blockers.

# Appendix

## Cost benefit analysis

### Financial savings equation:

The average annual loss is worked out using data from the application and installation surveys as follows:

During the application process, 228 individuals reported a financial loss to scams. During install, 76 reported exact losses over a six-month period. An average loss per person was calculated (£7,197.52) and this was multiplied by 228 to arrive at the total loss across all individuals who reported a loss in the preceding six-month period (£1,641,035.40). This total loss was divided by the total number of individuals who received a call blocker (1,084) to get an average loss (£1,513.87) and multiplied by two to calculate the average annual loss per person with a call blocker installed (£3,027.74).

The average number of years for which the call blockers are active is reported by trueCall based on data received from all installed units.

The percentage of scam calls blocked by the units is based on data from trueCall. This is based on national analysis which shows that trueCall units block 91%<sup>24</sup> of scam calls.

### Healthcare and health related Quality of Life savings equation:

This calculation is based on figures from the Home Office Costs of Crime Survey 2018<sup>25</sup>. It calculates the physical and emotional harm and the cost to health services per £1 of financial loss.

For every £500 of stolen property/financial losses, the survey shows £200 loss linked to physical and emotional harm caused.

For every £500 financial loss, the survey shows £70 of cost to health services.

Therefore, for every £1 financial loss, the physical and emotional harm and health service costs are 54p.

“Huge relief to me as I used to get a lot of calls. Great unit as I’m on my own and 77, but this has made me feel safe.” - **Mary**



“It’s brilliant as my husband doesn’t answer scam calls anymore and he used to reply to scammers and we lost money to scams. It has all stopped now.” - **Sam**

<sup>24</sup> trueCall call blockers have been shown to block 95%+ of nuisance calls. However, we know that scam calls are more difficult to block. A variety of independent external sets of scam numbers were checked against the trueCall database to determine trueCall’s effectiveness against scam calls. trueCall uses the lowest figure of 91% as the estimate in working out a cost benefit.

<sup>25</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf)

# NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS

## Scams Team

The National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team is funded by National Trading Standards and is hosted by Surrey County Council. The NTS Scams Team was founded in 2012 to tackle the problem of postal, telephone and doorstep scams. The NTS Scams Team works across England and Wales with trading standards and partner agencies to investigate scams and identify and support those who fall victim to them.

Postal, telephone and doorstep scams are often targeted specifically at disadvantaged consumers or those in periods of vulnerability. The NTS Scams Team estimates that the detriment to UK consumers as a result of these scams is between £5-10 billion a year.



**Friends Against Scams** is a NTS Scams Team initiative, which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to “Take a Stand Against Scams”.

**Friends Against Scams** has been created to tackle the lack of scams awareness by providing information about scams and those who fall victim to them. This information enables communities and organisations to understand scams, talk about scams and cascade messages throughout communities about scams prevention and protection.

**Friends Against Scams** encourages communities and organisations to take the knowledge learnt and turn it into action.

Anybody can join **Friends Against Scams** and make a difference in their own way.  
To find out more about how you can be involved with **Friends Against Scams** please visit

**[www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk)**