

# More common scams

## Career opportunities

You're tempted with an opportunity to launch an exciting new career – for instance, as an author, a model or an inventor, or perhaps as a mystery shopper. All you have to do to guarantee success is to pay an upfront fee for training, study aids or materials. You might be asked to sign a credit agreement, which can't be cancelled. Unfortunately, you get little or nothing in return.

## Chain letters

You receive a letter with a list of names and addresses. It invites you to send a small sum, perhaps £10, to the person at the top of the list and then add your own name to the list, photocopy it and send it out to, say, 200 people. The letter says you're guaranteed a return of thousands of pounds. In fact, it's almost certain you'll never see a penny. This scam operates like pyramid selling.

## Cheque overpayment

Someone responds to your ad or eBay posting with an offer to pay by cheque. The buyer sends a cheque for more than the purchase price and asks you to return the difference. Usually, the cheque is a fake, but good enough to fool bank tellers. You transfer some money back to the buyer, but soon your bank contacts you to say the buyer's cheque has bounced. There's no way to recover the money you've lost.

## Pay-in-advance credit

A company claims you've 'pre-qualified' for a guaranteed loan or credit card – even if you have a bad credit history. You just have to pay a processing fee. This fee is non-refundable and may be several hundred pounds. In reality, a pre-qualified offer only means you've been selected to apply. You can still be turned down. If so, you lose your processing fee and end up with no loan or credit card. Legitimate lenders never 'guarantee' a card or loan before you apply.

## Premium-rate prize draws

You're offered an exciting prize or reward. To claim it, you have to phone a premium-rate number (starting 090). The message you hear when you call tricks you into staying on the line. The longer the call, the more the scammers make from you. And your prize or reward is unlikely to turn up or will be worth much less than the cost of the call. Legitimate companies tell you up front how much their premium rate lines cost per minute.

## Property rentals

You want to rent a property. Before checking your references, the landlord asks for a deposit – usually a month's rent – and gets you to sign a short contract. The contract states that, if the references are unsatisfactory, your deposit will be paid back – minus a fee for checking the references. The landlord contacts you to say your references are unsatisfactory, no matter how good they really are. You're told you can only have a small portion of your deposit back because of the expense incurred checking references. You may end up losing hundreds of pounds.

## Racing tipsters

You're offered horse racing tips guaranteed to make you a fortune. All you have to do is pay a fee, follow the tips and watch your winnings roll in. Usually, the offer will come from a 'racing insider' who, owing to his gambling success, has been banned from placing bets. After handing over your cash, you find the tips are poor or non-existent.

## **Ticketing**

A website promises tickets to a sports or music event when it's already sold out or when tickets haven't yet gone on sale. You pay, but never see the tickets. Of course, there are legitimate ticketing websites. A telltale sign of a scam is if the company doesn't give a full UK street address and landline phone number.