

The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



Looking out for Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Number 44 in a series of notes on important issues.

So now we are all in lockdown! Unless we work in the health or other vital services, we are self-isolating in our homes, nobody else may enter and, if we do go out for a permitted purpose, we are keeping our distance, avoiding panic buying and doing our best to obey the rules.

What a wonderful opportunity this presents to criminals! You need only to look at it from a criminal's perspective. Everyone is receptive to news and messages about coronavirus – the symptoms, the spread, the treatment, expert guidance, what the government, local authorities, firms and businesses are doing about the emergency – the list is endless.

The first question the criminal asks – What's in it for me?. Then other thoughts come –

- Let's ramp up all the old, well-trying scams because everyone is online.
- How can I use Covid-19 to get people to part with money –
 - for a testing kit, vaccine or 'guaranteed' cure;
 - for help to claim government compensation;
 - to buy fake protective equipment or other items in short supply;
 - for shopping, medication collection or deep cleaning services;
 - to protect savings from stock market swings;
 - for training for a 'safe' job, starting when the crisis is over;
 - to buy gold to beat the financial threats;
 - and so on
- Perhaps a volunteering scheme can provide criminal opportunities. Perhaps the checks will not be stringent and the procedures lax.

Again, the possibilities are endless and, in the months to come, we can expect criminal minds to come up with all sorts of inventive ideas. For them, fraud is low risk and a growing field of opportunity. The rewards are enormous. They can do it while self-isolating.

So, what can we do to protect ourselves, those that we love and the vulnerable members of our community?

There is no magic answer, but be aware of fraud, indeed expect to come across signs that criminals are attempting to turn the emergency to their advantage. Encourage others to do likewise. Be very suspicious and check everything you can. Do not allow yourself to be fooled. Do not be rushed into anything.

Self-isolation provides time for second thoughts – use that time wisely.

Jeremy Simmonds – Former Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall