

Advice for supporting victims of scam and nuisance phone calls.

Scam and nuisance phone calls can be extremely upsetting and frustrating for people, they can result in huge amounts of financial detriment and lead to people being wary of using their phone to connect with friends & family. Calls can be received on landlines and mobiles, and scam messages can also be sent by text. Recent fraudulent texts include false bank fraud warnings supposedly from the police or a bank official, and messages that claim to be from a family member in trouble, asking the recipient to use a 'new' number for them. These unwanted calls and messages will always result in requests to move money or to send money so if we can reduce the number of these calls & messages, we will save people money and the associated stress of losing money to criminals.

The technology for a criminal to set up a rogue call centre and make thousands of unwanted nuisance calls to get money out of people, is very cheap to buy and easy to set up. Marketing lists can be purchased legitimately and can be honed down to, for example, a list of people over a certain age in a certain area. What we know is that criminals also share lists that are not legitimate, that we believe are lists of previous victims of fraud and scams. This can result in even more calls being received by a person that has lost money previously. So, our work in this field needs to be focused on reducing the unwanted calls to give our clients back their confidence in answering their phone.

- If you are carrying out a visit to your client, does the landline ring a lot? Does the client hesitate to answer the calls in front of you, or do they dismiss any enquiries as to the nature of the calls. The same with mobiles, is their mobile phone ringing or receiving several messages during your visit.
- Perhaps you are carrying out financial research into your client's bank accounts and household bills. Can you see large call volumes, higher than expected phone bills or bank transactions that can't easily be explained. It may be the case that your client is phoning premium lines to try to win competitions & prize draws, or the transactions that they have carried out could have been at the instruction of criminal callers.
- Does your client seem to be frightened of answering their phone. If you ring them, do you have to call several times before they pick up the phone. Or is their voice very hesitant when the call does connect. The criminals behind these calls can call relentlessly until they get what they want from people, and these unwanted calls can cause extreme distress. Some call centres make 'silent' calls which happen when they dial out to may hundreds of people at the same time, but when calls connect, they don't have enough staff to speak to all the people that have picked up. Their automated dialling systems leave a period of silence, until a staff member is available. But to the recipient this silent time, can feel extremely menacing. They don't understand how these contact centres work and believe that it is a real person that is remaining quiet without speaking to them. These calls cause the most harmful effects on people according to the regulator, Ofcom (The Office of Communications).
- Make sure the client's landline and mobile telephone numbers are registered with the telephone preference service. [Telephone Preference Service](#) While registration won't prevent rogue companies from contacting your client, it will reduce the number of sales and marketing phone calls that your client receives. Crucially the Information Commissioner's Office takes action including fines against companies that cold call people who are registered with the TPS. Cold calls received after registration can be reported to the ICO [Nuisance calls and messages | ICO](#)
- At the time of writing this guidance (Jan '25) the Trading Standards team has access to free call blocking units which can easily be installed in your client's home. The units will block all unwanted calls and depending on the settings, callers can either announce themselves before their call goes through, or they can hear a message asking them to redial a family member's phone for example. The units deliver complete peace of mind and can be installed very easily.

The Trading Standards Duty Officer can be contacted by email, trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk