

The Fraud & Scam Bulletin

MARCH 2026

Your monthly update direct from West Mercia Police on the latest
scams and frauds

WHATSAPP SCAMS

As with so many Features and Apps on the Internet, WhatsApp was set up so users could freely contact friends and family at home and abroad, with the added benefit of the use of video, audio and images in your messages.

However, Criminals have also seized on an opportunity and made use of WhatsApp as a vehicle to defraud unsuspecting victims for several years now. The commonest fraud recently has probably been the “Hi, Mum/Dad” message. Fraudsters have also made use of WhatsApp as a Dating App by contacting victims out of the blue with messages of friendship and longer term relationships.

Other messages used by opportunist criminals have included:

- **FAKE GIVEAWAYS** – these may appear to be tempting offers of vouchers and free products and apparently from well-known high street brands simply by completing a “survey” – never click on these links in messages from unknown sources
- **EXCLUSIVE GROUPS** – usually used to set up fake profiles in a Group then sending over a Passcode which let’s them take over the victim’s account, impersonate them and scam other Group members
- **VERIFICATION CODES** – once a criminal has sourced your phone number, they can use the log- in page to send a text message from WhatsApp with a verification code. By persuading the victim to pass on the code they will be able to take over their account
- **WHATSAPP JOB OFFERS** – Fraudsters contact users offering non-existent jobs with tempting salaries and appearing to come from genuine companies. They sometimes ask for up-front payments or may ask for personal details to steal your identity. So only use recognised recruiters and check back on their genuine websites first

Another current WhatsApp scam to be wary of is the WHATSAPP GOLD UPGRADE message.

This is a non-existent upgrade supposedly offering enhanced features and security and may even claim a celebrity endorsement. If you follow the “sign up “message there is then a danger that you will download malware onto your phone, and then the criminals can steal your personal data.

Always treat unexpected messages on WhatsApp with caution and beware of:

- Too good to be true offers
- Messages from unknown contacts
- Pressure to act too quickly
- Requests for money or personal details

And finally, never click on any links in these suspect messages. You can report a message by selecting it in your conversation and tapping “Report”.

Suspect Senders can be reported by opening the chat, click on the sender details and select “Block and Report”

Please feel free to share these messages with any vulnerable friends, relatives or neighbours



If you have fallen for a fraud,

Report it to **Report Fraud** (***formerly known as ACTION FRAUD***) on **0300 123 2040** or via reportfraud.police.uk

Scam Text messages can be forwarded to 7726 to help phone providers take prompt action and block numbers that generate spam on their networks. You can also report Scam mobile calls by texting 7726 with the word “Call” followed by the fraudulent caller’s phone number.

Forward Fake Emails received to report@phishing.gov.uk

If you think your bank account or personal banking details have been used fraudulently, then use the short phone number - **159** - to contact the Fraud Prevention Department of most major UK banks.



UK Government



STOP!
THINK FRAUD
ONLINE CAMPAIGN AGAINST FRAUD



Double Your Defences

With 2-Step Verification



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