

Monthly Threat Update - MTU

Public– April 2022

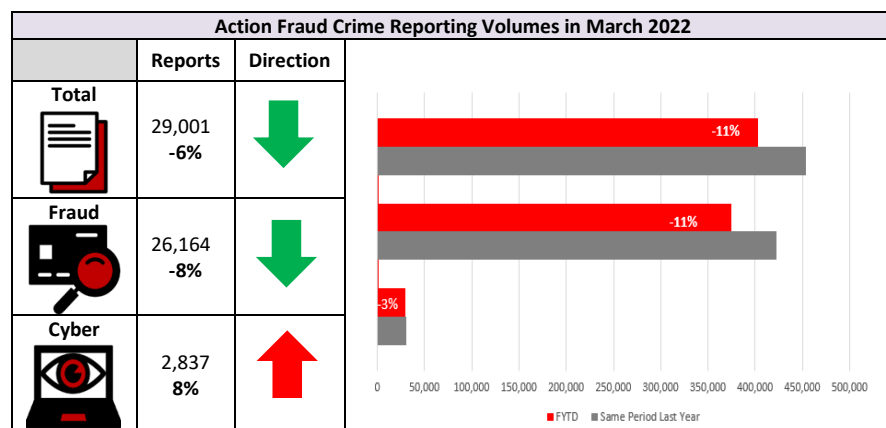
Welcome to the new Monthly Threat Update (MTU) for the City of London Police. This document provides an overview of Fraud and Cyber dependant crime trends using Action Fraud data for the period 1st March – 31st March 2022.



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Crime Trends Summary



- **Both Crime and information reports for fraud** have slightly decreased in February by 2% to 43,793. This is lower than the same time last year where 51,786 reports were received. For both crime and information reports, 27 out of 54 fraud types showed an increase in reporting compared to the previous month, whilst 19 out of 54 fraud types showed an increase in reporting compared to the same time last year.
- **Cyber-crime and information reporting** has risen again in March by 9% and are now 20% higher than 2021 average. **Computer Viruses, Hacking – Personal** and **Hacking – social media** all show increases in March.
- **Door to Door Sales** has increased once more after a gradual drop in reporting since a peak in July 2021. We would expect reporting to continue to increase as the weather gets warmer.
- **Application Fraud** continues to show a gradual pattern of increased reporting since a drop in reporting in April 2020. The reporting levels are approaching but not quite at pre-pandemic levels.

- After a drop in February, **Telecoms Industry Fraud** has increased once more. Figures appeared to have grown to reflect pre pandemic figures once more.
- **Cheque, Plastic and Online Bank Accounts Fraud:** Reporting has increased by 3% compared to the previous month. It is now just 1% below the previous year average.

Current Reporting Trends

January MO's

- Individuals have reported seeing advertisements on social media for tax rebates, clicking on the link and supplying personal and financial information. Some reports claim that the company then obtain tax refunds from HMRC but keep the money for themselves.
- Text messages are still being sent stating that a delivery has been attempted but the recipient was not home. To reschedule a new delivery date the recipient is asked to click on a link which takes them to a website requesting personal and financial information. There have been previous variants of this type of message, including requests for payments of customs fees.
- Action Fraud and Which? have issued warnings to the public about scammers trying to take advantage of the £150 council tax rebate being issued to households now. Scammers have been contacting people purporting to be calling about the refund and requesting

banking details. There have been other variations of the scam through text and email¹.

- Action Fraud have issued an alert regarding fake Norton emails, after receiving 110 reports in a week. The emails state that the recipient's anti-virus software has expired or is set to renew and are urged to contact the 'support' team to cancel. The email contains a scam telephone number or links to a website designed to steal personal and financial information.
- Scams using the crisis in Ukraine as a hook continue to circulate. Charity scams are still relatively common, including ones in relation to pets, as well as scams relating to fake 'crypto investment' opportunities. In addition, Action Fraud has issued a warning relating to fake emails targeting Instagram accounts with the emails claiming that someone is trying to recover a password from Russia. Action Fraud have received 272 reports about this MO in one week. There have also been reports of phone calls purporting to be from BT requesting remote access to the recipient's laptop claiming their device had been hacked by Russians.
- An alert has been issued in relation to emails currently in circulation promoting Bitcoin investment schemes claiming to be endorsed by Martin Lewis. Action Fraud received over 1,000 reports at the time of reporting.
- In the run up to the summer, Action Fraud have released several alerts warning the public about ticketing scams. Many festivals and popular

¹ [Warning: Beware scam calls about the Government's £150 council tax rebate \(moneysavingexpert.com\)](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2022/06/01/warning-beware-scam-calls-about-the-governments-150-council-tax-rebate/)

concerts have sold out and members of the public may be looking on social media sites to obtain last minute tickets to these events, putting themselves at risk of being scammed. This has been highlighted in previous Monthly Threat Update's and we would expect to see an increase in reporting over the coming months.

- Fraudsters are posing as WhatsApp support and contacting members of the public via the app to obtain personal and financial information. The scammers either request a verification code to gain access to the recipients account details or request credit card information.

So What? New MO's devised by fraudsters in order to trick victims into handing over personal and financial details.

Provenance: SAIP data

Horizon Scanning – Emerging Issues & Threats

Driving Licence Application Delays

There have been reports of significant delays in the processing of driving licence applications, renewals, and medical applications. This is believed to be caused by the covid pandemic which impacted on staffing levels. The government have criticised the DVLA for the delays and are examining a variety of options for speeding up the processing of applications and how to prevent delays occurring in the future.

These delays may lead to an increase in DVLA related scams as a result and we are currently seeing DVLA related scams in circulation. Although not a new MO, the volume of these scams could increase, particularly with the DVLA encouraging people to complete their DVLA applications online rather than sending off paper applications, saying that the online process is much quicker. DVLA related scams include scammers impersonating the DVLA to obtain financial and personal information from them and fake websites set up charging high fees for processing applications. DVLA scams currently circulating include scams offering vehicle tax refunds, failed vehicle tax payments, and recipients being sent an email stating their details are not up-to-date and to click on the link to update details otherwise their driving licence will be cancelled. If there are a backlog in processing and increased call volumes to DVLA this may prevent recipients from checking with DVLA as to whether these emails are genuine.

So What? Scammers will look to use the DVLA delays as a hook to scam money and obtain personal and financial details from members of the public.

Provenance:

[DVLA backlog as medical delays to drag on until autumn | News | The Sunday Times \(thetimes.co.uk\)](#)

[Grant Shapps pledges to do 'whatever it takes' to improve DVLA | The Independent](#)

[When the DVLA says you can expect your new driving licence and other applications to be dealt with - Wales Online](#)

[Dyfed-Powys Police issues warning about DVLA details scam | Western Telegraph](#)

[DVLA releases latest scam images to help keep motorists safe online - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[DVLA issue warning of 5 scams drivers need to be aware of | Stroud News and Journal](#)

Holiday Fraud

With covid restrictions easing worldwide, the tourism industry has seen a massive boost with holiday and flight bookings increasing, particularly for travel during the Easter holidays. However, along with this increase in holiday and travel demand a combination of factors have led to confusion, delays and cancellations threatening to disrupt holiday plans. For example, like driving licence delays there has been an increased demand for passport renewals which has led to processing backlogs by the passport office. As well as delays in passport processing, due to Brexit there has been uncertainty over passport expiry dates as well, with some travellers reportedly been turned away due to not having the correct documentation. There have been additional complications around different rules and requirements for vaccination and covid documentation needed for different destinations. In addition, there have been flight cancellations and reported chaos at airports due to alleged airport staff shortages.

All these factors are likely to cause uncertainty and confusion for travellers which may be exploited by fraudsters. For example, scammers may exploit the issues around passport delays and send phishing emails purporting to be from the passport office. In addition, phishing emails could be sent over covid rules and lateral flow tests. As mentioned in the last monthly threat update, now lateral flow tests are no longer free, scammers may offer non-existent tests at low prices. Any cancellations of flights or holidays due to

passport issues could lead to holidaymakers searching for last-minute low-cost holidays and this demand could again be exploited by criminals.

In the longer-term there have reports of the cost-of-living crisis leading to an increase in the cost of holidays. Any price increases could lead to holiday makers looking for cheaper deals online which again offers opportunities to criminals to take advantage of.

So What? Scammers will look to take advantage of any confusion and demand over travel. As free covid testing ends, scammers will look to exploit consumers looking to buy low-cost lateral flow tests.

Provenance:

[Allow up to ten weeks to apply for a British passport - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Summer holidays under threat as British Airways cancels popular routes \(telegraph.co.uk\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk)

[How to urgently renew UK passport as Home Office issues warning about applications - Daily Record](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk)

[‘Huge’ passport delays branded ‘shambles’ | Travel Weekly](https://www.travelweekly.com)

[EasyJet and Ryanair passport warnings leave travellers confused over travel rules - Wales Online](https://www.walesonline.co.uk)

[EasyJet says govt delays in crew security checks are 'adding to flight cancellations' | Business News | Sky News](https://www.businessnews.com)

[Travel chaos and flight cancellations will rule this summer | CNN Travel](https://www.cnn.com)

[Premier Inn and Park Plaza hotels concerned by inflation and staff shortages despite return to profit | Evening Standard](https://www.eveningstandard.com)

[Price rise threat fuels early sales | Travel Weekly](https://www.travelweekly.com)

[Confusion for Greece holidays as tourist board says entry rules ‘won’t change’ this weekend | The Independent](https://www.the-independent.com)

Protective Marking	PUBLIC
FOIA Exemption	No
Suitable for Publication Scheme	No
Version	Final
	CoLP Strategic R&A
Purpose	Provide an overview of key themes affecting individuals and enterprise. The information contained within this report has been based upon content within Action Fraud reports and open source which have not been verified as true and accurate accounts.
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