

It's a scam - please talk to vulnerable relatives and friends about this

Police would like to warn the public in the South West about a phone scam that is conning vulnerable and elderly people out of thousands of pounds.

The scammers prey on victims by cold calling them and impersonating an HMRC member of staff. They tell them that they owe large amounts of tax which they can only pay off through digital vouchers and gift cards, including those used for Apple's iTunes Store. Recent calls to residents in the Torbay and Teignmouth areas apparently originate from a Manchester area code (01618).

Victims are told to go to a local shop, buy these vouchers and then read out the redemption code to the scammer who has kept them on the phone the whole time. The scammer then sell on the codes or purchase high-value products, all at the victim's expense.

The scammers frequently use intimidation to get what they want, threatening to seize the victim's property or involve the police. One caller stated that if the victim hung up then the amount payable would go up to £90,000.

HMRC would never request the settling of debt through such a method.

What can you do:

1. Share this information and TALK to potential victims who are not on social media.
2. If you suspect that you or a vulnerable or elderly relative has been the victim of this scam or a similar one, report it immediately to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or use [their online fraud reporting tool](#).
3. Check GOV.UK for information [here](#) on how to avoid and report scams and how to recognise genuine HMRC contact [here](#).
4. If you think you have received an HMRC related phishing/bogus email or text message, you can check it against [the examples shown in this guide](#).
5. Apple provides a support page reminding customers that iTunes Gift Cards can be used ONLY to purchase goods and services on the iTunes Store, App Store, iBooks Store, or for an Apple Music membership, and providing tips to avoid becoming the victim of a scam. More information is available [here](#).

Action Fraud has previously issued advice about this fraud [here](#).