**For release – 1 July 2016**

**Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswolds set to expose tactics used by scammers**

Cold calls, high-pressure sales tactics and automated voicemails asking for people’s details are just some of the tricks scammers are using to rob people of their hard earned money, **says Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswold Districts.**

The organisation, alongside Trading Standards, is launching Scams Awareness Month on 1st July to help stop people falling prey to scams by following a three-step rule: get advice; report it; and tell others about it.

Fraud victims pay a heavy price, losing billions of pounds every year. Scams targeting people by phone or post alone cost people in the UK an estimated UK £5 billion each year.

Informing the authorities and warning others is the only sure fire way of stopping scams, but people can be hesitant to even tell their friends and family.

Throughout this month Citizens Advice will be highlighting how speaking up about scams is key to getting them closed down, and how to go about reporting suspected fraud to the authorities.

Sally Pickering, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice in the Stroud and Cotswold Districts said: “Scams come in a variety of guises and we see new ones emerging all the time. However, there are common hallmarks to every scam and we’re keen to show people what to look out for so they don’t fall prey to a fraudster.

“Scams are more common than most people realise and every day we hear from people who have lost money to a con-artist. Some scams are one-offs that persuade you to part with a lump sum, while others go after your personal details so they can access your money or copy your identity.”

This is precisely what happened to Peter who came for advice recently about dealing with investments after the death of his daughter. Peter said “I was looking to make the most of my money to ensure a secure future for my grandchildren. A company with very persistent online advertising seemed to be offering a better return than standard investments at stock market rates. But, having invested a few hundred pounds to test it out, I felt very pressured to increase this to £3,000 which I couldn’t really afford.”

More sinister was a second incident which Peter believes is related. Peter explained “Soon after this, I received a phone call, supposedly from Microsoft Technical Department, saying I had a fraudulent license. I gave them permission to access my pc to check, where they were able to gain access to all my banking details which were still on the pc from my previous dealings with the investment company. I later discovered multiple payments for a new Microsoft Licenses had been taken from my bank account. I believe there was some connection between these two scams so that my bank details could be acquired.”

With the help of his bank, Peter was able to put a stop to the scam and, having reported the incident to the **Scam Fraud Service,** it is now being investigated.

Peter added “I am mathematically competent and have a science background so I understand risk, but I feel their advertising was designed to deceive and their sales approach was very hard to resist. If I can be caught like this, it can happen to anyone and so it’s vital that such scams are reported and investigated as this is the only way they will be closed down.”

Ms Pickering said“We’re asking people to help us tackle scams in our communities by getting to know the common signs, warning others, and reporting incidents to us so we can investigate. If you think you’ve been contacted by a con artist or have been the victim of scam, such as Peter was, you should seek advice and report it to the authorities.”

* Ends -

**What to do if you have been scammed**

Get advice and report it to Trading Standards through your local Citizens Advice or through the Citizens Advice consumer service on **03454 04 05 06.**

**For more information contact:**

Before July 4th and after July 17th

Sally Pickering (Chief Executive)

Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswold Districts

01453 758252 Ext 201 Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm

Sally.pickering@stroudcab.org.uk

**Notes to editors:**

1. National Trading Standards Scams Team, 2015/16 estimate
2. For more details of how to access advice from Citizens Advice in the Stroud and Cotswold Districts, go to [www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk)
3. Peter (not his real name) is happy to talk to the press to tell his story in more detail. Please contact Sally Pickering, as above, to arrange this. Alternatively whilst I am on leave (July 4th – 17th) contact Denise Stride on 01453 758252 Ext 311 or denise.stride@stroudcab.org.uk