



**SCAM!**  
**HMRC**  
**BOGUS**  
**CALLS**



We want to warn all of our clients and readers about a sharp rise in the number of phone scammers pretending to be from HMRC.

The latest trend is for fraudsters to leave voicemails threatening taxpayers with warrants for their arrest or legal action. The number the call is made from is often similar to the official HMRC phone number, and so recipients are reassured that it is genuine.

## **Spotting an HMRC scam voicemail or call to your mobile**

There are reports of one scam voicemail in which a female automated voice purports to be an officer from HMRC, and gives her name. She provides a telephone number and urges you or your “solicitor of record” to call her back.

The message threatens that if you or your solicitor does not call back *“then get ready to face the legal consequences”*.

This is the scammer’s tactic to pressure you into acting quickly for fear of severe consequences.

We have also been made aware of a case where a caller (again identifying themselves by name and as an officer of HMRC), threatened court proceedings, blacklisting of accounts and confiscation of property. This caller became aggressive and angry when pressed by the suspicious recipient.

## Scam calls to landlines

With HMRC cracking down on mobile and email scams, fraudsters are increasingly turning to the traditional method of cold calling landline numbers to try and defraud taxpayers.

During the last 12 months, HMRC has worked with the phone networks and Ofcom to close nearly 450 lines being used by fraudsters.

Unfortunately, even if a number displayed on your phone appears to be genuine, it may not be as it is possible for a scam caller to mask the number they are calling from.

## What to do if you are targeted

If you get a call or voicemail which worries you, try and verify the identity of the caller and don't give out any personal information. Inform them that you will call back using numbers obtained from the HMRC website, so you can check they are genuine. If the caller is genuinely from HMRC they will be more than happy for you to call them back and they will not get angry for you saying this.

Check the number against any official correspondence and try calling the number back from a different phone and ask about the message to see if it was genuine.

As well as calls and voicemails, scammers may send email, text messages or letters in a bid to con innocent taxpayers out of their money or personal details.

HMRC do legitimately call people about outstanding tax bills and do use automated messages, but they will always include your unique tax reference number.

***If you are in ANY doubt about the veracity of any communication you get from HMRC, please don't hesitate to bring it to the attention of your accounting team.***

## Paying HMRC – official bank details

As we have seen in the examples above, scammers will use pressure tactics and threats to part you with your money.

HMRC will always send you a debt letter if they think you owe them money, so if you have not received official correspondence confirming the debt, or you are

otherwise unsure, you should not pay until you have verified that the demand is genuine.

Even if you are confident that it really is HMRC that you are dealing with, you should only ever make payments to the below official HMRC bank accounts:

## VAT

**Account no:** 11963155 **Sort code:** 08-32-10 **Account name:** HMRC VAT

## Corporation Tax, Self-assessment and PAYE

**Account no:** 12001039 **Sort code:** 08-32-10 **Account name:** HMRC  
Cumbernauld

## “Do your own due diligence”

Mr Chas Roy-Chowdury, head of taxation at accounting body ACCA, told the BBC that it was understandable for people to be tricked. He said:

*“It is difficult to be critical of the taxpayer or HMRC because many of the scammers are using the opaqueness of tax and our interactions or lack of with HMRC to steal the taxpayers money. .”*

*“It is a new world we live in when it comes to tax scams, don’t be a victim and do your own due diligence. Just do a few simple checks to avoid being taken for a ride”.*

## Reporting a scam

In the first instance, you can reverse check unknown numbers using [www.who-called.co.uk](http://www.who-called.co.uk), a website set up to identify and discredit spam callers of all types, not just HMRC.

You should always report fraudulent HMRC communications so that they are investigated and to prevent others from being targeted.

**Phone calls and voicemails** – call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 **Emails** – forward to [phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:phishing@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk) **Texts** – forward texts to 60599

