



January 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about online scams and fraud.

Fraud conducted online is a devastating and pernicious crime, causing financial and emotional harm to victims. I understand from my constituency correspondence just how much this impacts individuals, leaving them feeling insecure and sometimes even ashamed. However, it is important to remember that cyber fraudsters have become extremely sophisticated in their methods and, moreover, are indiscriminate. We are all vulnerable to fraud at different points in our lives; sadly, all it takes is a momentary lapse in vigilance.

The Government is undertaking ground-breaking work to tackle this depressing trend in a variety of ways. The Online Safety Bill will require regulated companies to confront user-generated fraud on their platforms. This will impact some of the most harmful types of online fraud such as investment and romance scams. Notably, fraud is included as priority offence on the face of the Bill. This means that companies will have to take robust, proactive action to ensure that user-generated fraud is not readily published or exposed to users on their platforms.

To be absolutely clear, the legislation has not been withdrawn and I know my colleagues in Government are working hard to ensure it completes its passage through Parliament as quickly as possible.

Furthermore, the Online Safety Bill includes a legal duty requiring the largest and most popular social media platforms and search engines to prevent paid-for fraudulent adverts appearing on their services. The change will improve protections for internet users from the potentially devastating impact of fake ads, including where criminals impersonate celebrities or companies to steal people's personal data, peddle dodgy financial investments or break into bank accounts.

In addition, the Online Advertising Programme will look at the entire online advertising ecosystem in relation to fraud, as well as other harms caused by online advertising. It will consider the role of all actors not currently covered by regulation. The Online Advertising Programme consultation closed on 8 June, and the Government will set out its response in due course.

The Government continues to work with the National Cyber Security Centre on the Suspicious Email Reporting Service. This has already led to over 11 million reports received and the removal of over 78,000 scams and 144,000 harmful websites to date.

Members of the public can forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk and suspicious texts to 7726, free of charge.

However, the Government and public sector cannot tackle online fraud alone, and I welcome that in October 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce (JFT) was relaunched under the Security Minister's



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chairmanship. The JFT encourages collaboration between government, private sector organisations, regulators, law enforcement and victim groups to keep the public safe from these crimes.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**