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“Home Office” – Immigration Cold-Call Fraud

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“Home Office” Cold Calling Fraudsters

The information contained within this alert is based on the results of research carried out by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) concerning incidents of fraud. One of the key objectives of sharing fraud data between the NFIB and partners is to prevent fraud.

Fraudsters purporting to be from the Home Office:

Fraudsters are purporting to be from the Home Office and cold-calling victims to claim that there is a problem with their immigration status. Victims are informed that in order to rectify this issue, they must pay an up-front fee and are often asked to confirm personal details such as their passport number and date of arrival in the United Kingdom.

In a number of instances when the victim receives this phone call from the suspect, a genuine Home Office telephone number will be displayed as the Caller ID on their phone. The suspect will point this out to the victim in order to add legitimacy to the request. The fraudster has used a method called ‘spoofing’ to display a Home Office telephone number - **02070354848**. This does not mean that the call has actually originated from the Home Office.

Many victims who have been targeted by this fraud have had an association to India. The fraudsters often state that the victim has outstanding criminal charges against them in India, or that their official documentation was not completed satisfactorily upon their arrival into the United Kingdom. Victims are left with three options - either face deportation; face arrest and imprisonment; or pay the up-front fee.

Victims are asked to pay the fees through a variety of methods, including money transfers via a Money Service Bureau and by purchasing iTunes vouchers before relaying the voucher code to the suspect. The fraudster usually attempts to keep the victim on the phone until the payment is received, which can be hours at a time.

Protect yourself:

- The Home Office, Police or any UK Law Enforcement Agency will never ask for money over the telephone.
- Government agencies do not use non-secure payment methods such as a transfer via a Money service Bureau, iTunes voucher(s) or cryptocurrency e.g. Bitcoin.
- When receiving unsolicited calls, be wary of providing personal information, or confirming that personal information the caller already claims to hold is correct. Always ensure you know who you talking to. Ask for the details of the organisation the caller represents and call them back yourself on the officially published numbers rather than the numbers the caller may try to provide you with.
- If you have any concerns regarding your immigration status, please visit the following government website to speak with someone regarding your specific immigration issue: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>
- If you have been affected by this, or any other type of fraud, report it to Action Fraud by visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk, or by calling 0300 123 2040.



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