

THINK JESSICA

# SCAM MAIL IS BLACKMAIL

Information and advice about scam mail and the Think Jessica campaign



Supported by



**Criminals worldwide are sending scam letters, which trick, seem to befriend and even threaten millions of silent victims every year.**

**Think Jessica raises awareness of this growing problem and supports chronic scam mail victims and their families.**

Scam mail (criminal mail) is mail sent out by criminals. These criminals are called scammers.

Modern technology means scam letters can be mass produced and made to look like personal letters or important documents, hoping to trick the recipient into disclosing information such as bank details, sending cash or making money transfers.

## **TYPES OF MAIL SCAMS**

### **Lottery and prize draw scams**

Two of the most common scams are lottery and prize draw scams.

Victims are told they have won a large cash prize, but are asked to send some sort of fee to release it.

**THINK!** No genuine lottery or competition would ask you to send money to claim a prize.



### **Clairvoyant scams**

Clairvoyant scammers have no idea who will be reading their letters, but show false concern and pretend they are going to a lot of trouble to give the reader good health, wealth and happiness.

Clairvoyant scammers weave some very imaginative and tall stories, including performing rituals and sensing danger.

They often blackmail victims by telling them, "bad luck will befall you, if you don't pay up."

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### **Religious scams**

Religious themed scam letters often claim the sender is going to Lourdes to pray for the victim, but ask for a "fee".

### **Banks and Building Society scams**

Scammers sometimes send out authentic-looking scam mail, pretending to be from Banks and Building Societies, asking for information and/or cash. It's more prolific via email but is also being sent by post.

### **Debt recovery scams**

Scammers contact you by mail or phone call and claim they have bought a debt with your name on it, from a reputable company or utility supplier. They threaten court action if the fictitious bill isn't paid.

**THINK! If the scammers have your phone number, they could also try and trick you over the phone.**

**It would be impossible to cover all the scams out there. Criminals are forever coming up with new and more convincing ways of parting people from their cash, or getting them to disclose personal information.**

### **Catalogue and Brochure scams**

Scammers send out catalogues and brochures selling drastically overpriced jewellery, chocolates, biscuits, novelty items, clothes and various other products.

They also use some very dramatic before and after photos to sell pills, potions and miracle cures. They guarantee prizes to those who order but they never send the prize. Instead, they just send out more dazzling promises to get more orders.

# JESSICA'S STORY



**Jessica was a chronic scam mail victim. She was tricked into sending cash and making money transfers to criminals over the space of five years. She was 'brainwashed' into believing that bogus lottery officials and clairvoyants were her friends.**

Her family tried without success to make her understand she was being scammed, but Jessica refused to believe it. She lived in a delusional world created by worthless pieces of paper that made false promises.

Jessica died in 2007. She was still waiting for her promised prizes. Approximately 30,000 scam letters were removed from her home.

## FAQs

### ■ Why have I been targeted?

Either because scammers have 'bought' a mailing list with your details on it or you have responded to a tempting scam letter, phone call or advertisement.

Scammers make lists of all the people they have tricked. These lists are called 'suckers lists'.

### ■ What do scammers do with their suckers lists?

**They sell them to other scammers, all over the world.**

### ■ What happens if my name gets put on a suckers list?

Your seemingly exciting mail will start to increase as more scammers try their luck at getting their hands on your cash.

### ■ Where does scam mail come from?

**Scam mail can come from anywhere in the world.**

### ■ What other tricks do scammers use?

Scammers are very crafty indeed - they know how to dazzle minds and shut down the normal thought process. Someone whose mind has been dazzled will become excited and start to focus on the prize, rather than the fact that

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they are being asked to send cash or personal details to claim it.

Here are just a few of the dazzling words and statements scammers use:

**Won the lottery**  
**Highly Confidential**  
**Guaranteed Winner**  
**Unclaimed Prize/Award**  
**Time Sensitive**

Once the scammers have dazzled and hooked their victims, they trap them in a never-ending cycle of letters and payments by asking for taxes, release fees, administration charges and anything else they can think of to keep the victims sending cash.

To make the scams more convincing, scammers often ask the victim how they would like the non-existent payout to be made e.g. Cash, Cheque or Money Transfer?

**Scammers** send out false testimonials and photographs of fictitious winners. They claim to be lottery officials, clairvoyants, presidents of banks and use other important sounding titles and names.

**Scammers** sometimes disguise their mailbox addresses by calling them things like suites, units or apartments to create the illusion they are operating from a traceable office or a grand building.

**Scammers** try to trick people into sending them passports, photographs and birth certificates, and pretend they are arranging celebration parties or sending out photographs.

**Scammers** hide behind letters from fictitious charities; they often use distressing photographs in an attempt to pull at the heart strings of caring people.

### ■ **What is a chronic scam mail victim?**

**A chronic scam mail victim is someone who repeatedly falls for scams.**

**This could be because they are over trusting, socially isolated or suffering from a mental incapacity such as confusion, memory loss or dementia.**

**Chronic victims refuse to believe they are being scammed and spend most of their time reading, sorting and replying to scam letters.**

**Quite often chronic victims will shun their family's advice and keep responding to scams. Sometimes, clairvoyant scammers try and turn chronic victims against their families.**

## **FACT!**

**Registering with the Mail preference Service (MPS) will NOT reduce or stop scam mail.**

# BE VIGILANT!

Scammers from abroad can have mail printed with a Royal Mail stamp; this gives the false impression it has originated from the UK.



## ■ Is this problem serious?

Yes it is. Some elderly and vulnerable people are receiving over 100 scam letters a day. Victims are emptying bank accounts and even losing their homes as they try to keep up with the demands of scam mail and phone calls.

In 2008, 22,000 vulnerable people replied with cash to one scam mail shot in one day, sending a total of £500,000.

Twenty pensioners in Devon were tricked into sending £350,000 to claim a non-existent prize draw windfall.

Scams cost UK consumers around £3.5 billion a year.

Behind these figures lie huge numbers of heartbreaking tales about people being robbed of their entire life savings.

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# STAY SCAM SAFE

If you receive a dazzling letter...

Do not respond: put it in the recycling bin where it belongs.

If you are unsure, follow our advice and contact the agencies we have listed below. Never send cash, disclose personal details or buy goods to claim a prize.

If you receive a suspicious phone call...

Remember, you do not have to get into any discussions over the phone with anyone, and never give out any personal information, such as bank or credit card details. These could be used fraudulently. Keep your business, your business.

Just say "No Thank You, I am not interested" then hang up straight away.

If you would like to report a scam, call the Action Fraud hotline on **0300 123 2040**

If you wish to report a scam anonymously please contact Crimestoppers Scotland on **0800 555 111**.

## MORE INFORMATION

There are lots of people who can help you if you feel you are being targeted.

- Contact your nearest Trading Standards department
- Ring Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06
- Take this booklet to your local Citizens Advice and tell them your concerns
- Think Jessica DVD information packs are available for £5.00 (to cover production and postage) Cheques and postal orders made payable to **Think Jessica** and sent to **P.O. Box 44 42, Chesterfield, S44 9AS**

**Don't let scammers razzle dazzle YOU!**

**VISIT [www.thinkjessica.com](http://www.thinkjessica.com)**

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**REPORT AND SUPPORT CALL ACTION FRAUD 0300 123 2040**

**[www.thinkjessica.com](http://www.thinkjessica.com)**

**THINK JESSICA P.O BOX 44 42, CHESTERFIELD, S44 9AS**

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