

# ***Information Network Bulletin***

## ***June 2026 Edition***

Welcome to the latest edition of the Information Network Bulletin brought to you by Croydon Council's Trading Standards team.

In addition to general news from the team, it includes details of some of the latest scams and fraud alerts which we have become aware of in recent months.

We hope that you find it useful.

## **Scam TV Licence Renewal**

A scam email impersonating TV Licensing tells you that your TV Licence could not be renewed and provides a link to start the renewal process.

The email also says that your direct debit payment has been declined and is sent from a '.jp' domain, which is a Japanese-registered email address.

The link included in it will lead to a phishing website intent on stealing your personal and payment information.

Scam emails like this can be reported by forwarding them to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)



Dear Customer,

### **Your TV Licence could not be renewed.**

We were unable to take a payment for your TV Licence, as your insurer has declined the Direct Debit payment demand.

This may have happened because your details have changed. To make sure you stay licensed, provide updated details promptly. Once you have done this, you can also update any other details if required.

#### **Your TV Licence details:**

Licence number:

Licence expiry date:

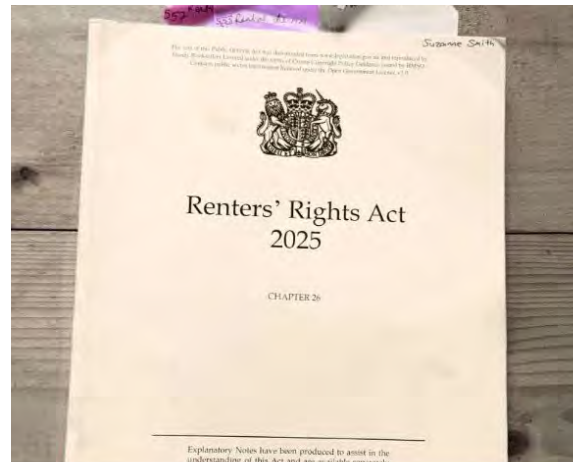
**15 April 2026**

**Update your licence**

TV Licence scam email

# Changes to tenancies following the Renters Rights Act 2025

The Renters Rights Act 2025 has made significant changes to the private rented sector and created more security for tenants. The legislation came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026 and here are some of the main points that tenants and landlord need to be aware of:



1. There are no more Section 21 'no-fault' evictions – private landlords can no longer evict tenants without a valid reason. If a landlord issues a section 21 after the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026, then this is prohibited and they may be subject to a financial penalty.
2. Landlords can still get their properties back, but there must be clear reasons such as the fact they are selling the property, or they are moving in/a member of their family is moving in, or other reasons such as rent arrears or unsociable behaviour.
3. There are no more fixed term tenancies. All tenancies in the private rented sector will roll from month to month or week to week (depending on your arrangement), but there will be no end date which gives renters more flexibility and more security. It means that if your circumstances change for whatever reason and you need to move, you are no penalised for breaching your contract early.
4. Landlords can only increase the rent once per year and if the tenant does not agree with the increase, this can be challenged through the Property Tribunal, which is a straightforward process. In addition to this, if the tribunal agree that the rent should be increased, then the increase takes effect from the date of the decision, it is NOT backdated to when the increase is proposed.
5. Rental bidding will be illegal. Landlords and agents must publish a property with the rental amount, and they are not allowed to increase it, or encourage potential tenants to offer more. It is also illegal for them to accept a higher rent than the advertised amount.
6. Landlords and agents can only ask for a maximum of one months rent in advance; they can no longer require potential tenants to pay several months in advance in order to secure a property.
7. It is now illegal to discriminate against a tenant or refuse someone a tenancy on the basis that they are claiming benefits or they are a family as examples.
8. Landlords must reasonably consider pets in their properties, in practicality this means that renters can ask to have a pet and the landlord needs to consider if, but this can be refused if there is a good reason, for example, an HMO where it is not practical to have pets or a superior lease prohibits pets or simply that the accommodation is not practical for the type of pet requested.
9. Private Rented Sector Database will be coming in at some point in the next 1-2 years. This is an online database that will be rolled out across the country and all tenants will be able to check their landlord and see if they are properly registered.
10. Once the database is fully functional there will also be a new landlord Ombudsman which will help renters to solve complaints against landlords quickly and fairly without the requirement to go to court.

## Changes to tenancies following the Renters Rights Act 2025 (cont.)

The local authority has substantially greater powers to deal with the new legislation if a landlord or agent breaches the new legislation and the can now issue fines of up to £7,000 for some breaches and £40,000 for others.

To find out more on the requirements in the new legislation, there is government guidance which can be found here:

### **Tenants:**

<https://housinghub.campaign.gov.uk/private-renting-is-changing/>

### **Landlords:**

<https://housinghub.campaign.gov.uk/renting-is-changing/>



## Phone scams take sinister twist as victims' voices cloned

Chilling new wave of AI-assisted fraud targets older people and clones their voices.

Criminals are using AI technology to clone people's voices and set up unauthorised direct debits over the phone, according to new evidence from National Trading Standards (NTS). The advanced voice cloning is part of an organised criminal operation that harvests people's personal data to target victims with a wave of scam and nuisance calls.

The process begins with a so-called 'lifestyle survey' phone call – seemingly harmless, but in fact designed to gather detailed personal, health and financial information. The criminals use this data to develop AI-generated voice clones used to simulate consent for direct debits, deceiving even legitimate businesses and financial providers. These details appear then to be passed or sold to other criminal operations who, with the details, can easily circumvent the banks and set up payments without the victim's knowledge. Victims often do not realise payments are being taken.

### **John Herriman, Chief Executive at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), said:**

"Trading Standards teams across the UK are working tirelessly to disrupt these operations, but we need the public to stay alert, talk to loved ones about the risks, and report anything suspicious. Protecting consumers, especially those most vulnerable, requires all of us to stay informed and work together to tackle these modern day and emerging examples of fraud."

Please be very wary of cold calls and surveys. Do not engage with unknown persons on the phone asking personal questions or questions about your lifestyle.

For the full article, please go to:

<https://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/news/phone-scams-take-sinister-twist-as-victims-voices-cloned/>

For advice on how to protect yourself and report scams calls and please visit: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/phishing-scams/report-scam-call>

# Energy Grants: What You Need to Know – and How to Stay Safe

Government grants are available to help improve your home's energy efficiency, including insulation, solar panels and renewable heating. They can help reduce your energy bills and improve the thermal comfort of your home.

In Croydon, government grants for home owners and private renters are available through the Warm Homes: Local Grant programme, delivered by Croydon Council's partner AgilityEco. If you apply, AgilityEco will conduct a survey of your home to come up with a proposal of what can be fitted, and if you want to proceed, appoint contractors to fit the measures.

Applications are through the Croydon Council's Healthy Homes team who can:

- Check if you qualify for the funding
- Help you apply and support you throughout the process

Funding is limited. Eligibility depends on:

- A household income below £36,000 or receipt of certain benefits (such as Universal Credit or Pension Credit)
- In some parts of the borough you could be eligible based solely on your postcode, irrespective of your income.

## Protect Yourself from Scams

Residents are urged to stay alert to potential scams:

- Croydon Council and AgilityEco do NOT cold call or knock on doors
- You should be cautious of anyone contacting you unexpectedly about grants
- Do not share personal or financial details with unsolicited callers

If someone claims to be working with the Council and you are unsure, always verify first by contacting Croydon Council directly

## More Free Advice Available

The Healthy Homes team can also help with:

- Reducing energy use and using heating controls effectively
- Tackling condensation and damp
- Managing energy bills or accessing further support

## How to Contact the Healthy Homes team

To find out more or apply:

- Visit <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthyhomes>
- Call Freephone **0800 292 2529** (voicemail service)
- Attend a local drop-in session – see <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/energyevents>



**Croydon  
Healthy  
Homes**

# Romance Fraud – Spot the Signs



**Romance Fraud is on the increase. Report Fraud received 12,093 reports of dating scams in the past 13 months, with losses totalling £119.6m.**

A dating scam, or romance fraud, typically occurs when you enter into an online relationship with a fraudster posing as an imaginary person. After grooming you over a period of days, weeks or months, the fraudster will begin to ask for money for completely fictional reasons.

The National Crime Agency estimates that only 14% of fraud cases are reported. But given the emotional impact of romance fraud, it's unlikely that the Report Fraud database gives a true picture of the volume of cases and total losses that occurred last year.

## **Typical signs of a romance scammer**

### **1. An entirely online relationship**

Meeting someone online is normal. What's not, however, is the relationship existing entirely online and you never meeting up with them in person, not even via a video call.

### **2. Using stolen images**

Fraudsters carry out romance scams by creating fake personas, and part of that persona involves images of real or fake people.

With AI scams on the rise, scammers are also generating entirely fake images of people to use in their schemes.

You can use Google image search to trace images of people to other places on the internet, or a tool like TinEye – just upload the screenshot and see if the image belongs to someone else.

### **3. Overly dramatic stories**

Anyone that you're speaking to online who always has something devastating happen to them – from losing access to their bank account to experiencing several bereavements to having their home burgled – should raise alarm bells.

### **4. Offering investment opportunities**

Once they've earned your trust, the scammer may change the conversation using claims that they can help you make easy money through exclusive trading offers or investment opportunities.

### **5. Asking for money or gifts**

This is typically the end result of the scam. Eventually, when the scammer has you convinced that you're in a real romantic relationship, they'll use one of their stories to persuade you to part with your money.

For the full article by **Which?** consumer magazine please visit <https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/signs-of-a-romance-scam-anwtT9T4qCEd>

If you lose any money to a scam, call your bank immediately using the number on the back of your bank card. You should also report it to **Report Fraud** (formerly known as Action Fraud) online at <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk> or call on 0300 123 2040.

Report Fraud also has a page dedicated to understanding Romance Fraud with some informative videos including true victims cases and practical support please visit: <https://www.reportfraud.police.uk/romance-fraud/>

# A Year in Scams



Whether we are scrolling on our phones, shopping online or playing computer games its likely we are seeing more adverts than ever before. The Advertising Standards (ASA) has shared advice to keep yourself safe while you are online this year and reported on the trends, in adverts, they saw during 2025.

## Four scam ad trends during 2025

1. Celebrity and public figure adverts containing famous people such as Keir Starmer, Naga Munchetty, Elon Musk, Nigel Farage, and Dr Hilary Jones. Most adverts related to cryptocurrencies and investments, but the ASA also saw celebrities being used to promote products such as weight-loss supplements.
2. Scam ads for products such as clothing and jewellery were on the ASA's radar throughout 2025. They published five rulings against these types of ads last April and issued a consumer warning in September 2025. These ads often featured dramatic stories about closing-down sales or big discounts and claimed to be small UK-based businesses. The ads and linked websites used AI-generated images, and the products people received were mass-produced, poor-quality goods drop shipped from overseas.
3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) -generated videos and images are increasingly difficult to distinguish from the real thing, and the ASA expects this trend to continue in 2026. In 2025 they saw scam ads and websites that appeared to use AI in some form - from fake news footage to AI-generated images of non-existent company owners
4. Scams in mobile gaming apps increased in 2025 and many of the ads promoted weight-loss pills and used a reputable pharmacy's logo, as well as fake references to the TV programme Dragon's Den. The opening pages often mentioned the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory products Agency (MHRA), the TV GP, Doctor Hilary Jones and claimed the product was made in the UK.

The following advice is taken from the ASA website:

- If you see an online ad featuring a celebrity endorsement, carry out some checks before handing over your details or hitting 'buy now,' particularly if the offer seems too good to be true or uses pressure tactics.
- Check whether the content comes from an official account and consider whether the ad seems out of character. While some celebrities do endorse products, they don't usually promote complex investments or wonder cures.
- If in doubt, pause before buying from an online company you haven't used before, particularly if you found them via an advert.
- Check reviews on third-party websites such as Trustpilot and see whether you can find a legitimate company address.
- Consider whether any images on the website or ad appear to be AI-generated. That doesn't necessarily mean it's a scam, but it is worth doing some extra checks before you purchase.
- Deepfake videos can be very convincing, although you may be able to spot unnatural facial movements, jerkiness, or unusual-sounding speech.
- As with celebrity scams more generally, pausing to consider whether the message seems out of character might help you spot a scam.
- Be aware of the potential for scam ads when using games on your phone or tablet and be cautious of ads claiming to have a celebrity endorsement.
- Avoid weight-loss products promising "quick fixes" or "miracle results" and only buy medicines from registered UK pharmacies or legitimate retailers.

If you find an advert that you wish to report, visit the ASA's website [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk) or phone 020 7492 2222. <sup>6</sup>

# More than 66,000 illegal cigarettes seized in zero-tolerance crackdown



Croydon Council's trading standards team has seized more than 66,000 illegal cigarettes during a borough-wide crackdown on illicit tobacco sales.

The haul, which would have had an estimated retail value of more than £70,000 had it been sold legally, included 18kg of hand-rolling tobacco and 11kg of shisha. Investigations arising from the operation are ongoing.

Alongside raids on six shops, officers identified vehicles being used to store contraband. One of the vehicles linked to the investigation was seized and removed by the Council. It will be destroyed within 28 days if not claimed.

Illegal tobacco sales are often linked to organised criminal activity, undermine legitimate local businesses and deprive public services of tax revenue.

The action forms part of Executive Mayor Jason Perry's zero-tolerance crackdown on antisocial behaviours that ruin the borough and put residents' lives at risk.

The day of action by trading standards was led by intelligence that indicated the shops were selling illegal tobacco.

In the investigations, the team were helped by detection dogs Skye and Fred who were able to find hidden concealments where illicit goods are stored.

***"Illicit tobacco sales are not a victimless crime. They are often linked to organised crime and are a blight on Croydon's residents and genuine businesses."***

***"This operation demonstrates our zero-tolerance approach to those who profit from criminal activity at the expense of our communities. If you are selling illegal tobacco in Croydon, we will take action."***

***"I would also encourage residents to report concerns about illicit tobacco sales so that we can continue to protect local businesses and keep our neighbourhoods safe."***  
**Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon**

Reports of illegal tobacco sales can be made to The Citizens Advice Consumer Service or direct to trading standards on [trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk).

## Illicit Tobacco in Croydon

If you are aware of any shops or traders selling illegal tobacco, which includes counterfeit and non-duty paid cigarettes or hand-rolling tobacco, foreign brands of cigarettes with no legal market in the UK and banned oral tobacco, or any traders selling singles, please report them to us.

The sale of illegal tobacco products undermines legitimate traders, puts peoples health at risk and puts traders at risk of prosecution and having their alcohol licence reviewed if they are found to be supplying illegal products.

The main way to report any issue to Trading Standards in the first instance is via the Citizens Advice Consumer Advice line on **0808 223 1133** or via their '**Chat Service**' or an **online reporting form** – all found at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/>

Alternatively, you can email us at [trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk)

## **Doorstep Crime Advice Leaflet**

Croydon Council Trading Standards is supporting The National Trading Standards Scams Team, by supplying the latest Doorstep Crime Awareness leaflet in the languages most spoken across Croydon. We want to help even more members of our community take a stand against scams and be aware of this crime.

We have some printed copies of the awareness leaflets, in English, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Tamil and Urdu, available from our office, or if you are able to download this resource yourself here is the link: [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/resources-and-materials](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/resources-and-materials).

You can also learn more from a free online interactive session which helps further raise your awareness of scams and help protect you & your loved ones from these crimes. This training is available in British Sign Language as well as an accessible version for people with a learning disability.

Once completed, you will not only receive a certificate, but you will be armed with the knowledge to confidently speak with your friends and family about scams, and the devastating effects these frauds can have on people in our communities. Take the training here:

<http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/become-a-friend/Croydon>

### **Is this bulletin helpful?**

● **Contact Trading Standards to request a free door sticker advising cold callers that they are not welcome. If you are a victim of scam mail, contact us to receive a free copy of our toolkit on how to avoid falling victim and how to stop the letters.**

● **Additionally, please let us know what you think of this bulletin and what Trading Standards topics you would like to see covered in future editions.**

● **Contact Trading Standards:** Tel: **020 8407 1311**  
Email: **[trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk)**

● **Citizens Advice Consumer Service:** Tel: **0808 223 1133**  
Web: **[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)**