**Instructions for using this template press release:**

**Delete box bracket and replace text with local information.**

**Include the relevant quotes for local Citizens Advice.**

**Include the relevant contact details at the bottom of the press release**

**Delete these instructions**

**Please note the embargo date**

Embargoed until 00.01 Friday 1 June 2018

**Watch out for legal and financial scams, warns Citizens Advice [insert name]**

People need to be on their guard against financial and legal scams following a rise in cases reported to the Citizens Advice consumer service. Citizens Advice **[insert name]** is now showing people how to spot scams as it launches Scams Awareness Month.

A total of 1200 financial and legal scams were reported to the consumer service in the year ending April 2018 - a 6% increase on the year before.

The median loss for these scams was £330.

A range of investments scams were reported to the consumer service, including:

**Cryptocurrency** - Fake websites claim to offer cryptocurrency investments, like Bitcoin. Often, scammers will pretend that household names have endorsed the company to give it some legitimacy.

**Binary options** - Scammers pose as stockbrokers and get you to place bets on whether phoney shares will rise or fall within a certain date. They’ll promise big returns. You should check if they are on the [FCA Register and not on the warning list of firms to avoid](https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart/binary-options-scams)

**Holiday timeshares** - Scammers promise to buy your membership off you for an advanced fee.

**Bogus solicitors** - A scammer will intercept emails from a legitimate solicitor and pose as them. Scammers often strike when a property is being exchanged on and get the funds diverted to their bank account instead. Check if they are on the [Solicitors Regulation Authority](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/fraud-dishonesty/bogus-fake-solicitors.page&sa=D&ust=1527067618823000&usg=AFQjCNECXKfYOZbQVmdJ8qGavS_iy3-2VA) to see if they are genuine.

**[Insert name], Chief Executive of Citizens Advice [insert name] said:**

“Scammers can make for convincing white collar professionals, especially online, and are skilled at persuading people they are legitimate.

“The stakes are high with financial and legal scams as you can end up losing your savings or pension fund, which can put your long-term financial stability at risk.

“When you get approached about any investment, don’t rush into anything without making sure it’s legitimate first, particularly when you’re contacted out of the blue.”

To help stop more people being fleeced by these types of scams, Citizens Advice **[insert name]** is sharing tips on how to spot them:

* Be suspicious if you’re contacted out of the blue, even if it’s from a name you recognise
* Don’t be rushed – you never need to make a decision straight away
* If it sounds too good to be true it probably is
* Never send money to someone you have never met
* Never give out your bank details unless you are certain you can trust the person contacting you
* Walk away from job ads that ask for money in advance
* Genuine computer firms do not make unsolicited phone calls to help you fix your computer
* Suspect a scam? Hang up, wait five minutes to clear the line or use another phone to call
* Persuasive sales patter? Just say: “No Thank You”
* Don’t suffer in silence – speak out about scams

[Citizens Advice **[insert name]** is] OR [Citizens Advice **[insert name]** andTrading Standards are] holding an event to help people know when they’ve been targeted with a scam. The event is part of Scams Awareness Month in June, a national campaign encouraging people to report and talk about scams.

The event will take place on **[insert date]** at **[insert address and time]**.

**-ends-**

**[Insert contact details]**