Watch out for this Royal Mail chatbot scam

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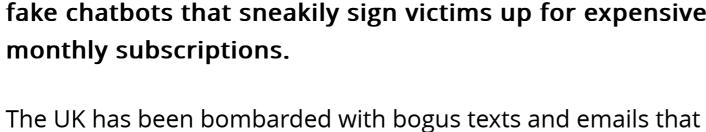
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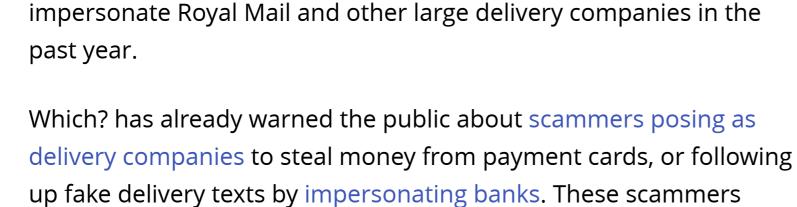
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have stepped up a gear, by sending phishing emails inviting you to 'start a chat' to trace a delivery. Find out more about this scam and how to protect yourself.

Royal Mail chatbot scam

Royal Mail chatbot scam - Which?

Multiple phishing emails, including the one below, shared with Which? by members of the public, linked to the same fake Royal Mail chatbot. This video shows you how the fake Royal Mail chatbot scam works:

this automated flow, the price will be less than \$5. nder also Watch on **YouTube**

The fake Royal Mail chatbot is plausible – it lists a delivery tracking

number and shares an image of a parcel explaining that the 'label

Clicking the link takes you to a different website, asking for your

The small print at the very top of this page – which is only visible

when you scroll up on a mobile phone – reveals that adding these

details enters you into a 'Skill Game' and purchases a three-day trial

A few days later, we noticed that this form switched to promoting a

was damaged' to convince you to reschedule the delivery.

to bilingua.net costing £2 then £59 every 30 days.

name, address, and payment details.

As the details of the sender also are not readable on the label, we

anknown sender Since you used

different website – called proplanner.io – costing £62 every 30 days. Who is behind the scam? Bilingua.net – which offers subscriptions to language courses – told

Which? that the Royal Mail scam is an unscrupulous activity

program and gets paid per sale generated for bilingua.net.

conducted by an 'affiliate' i.e. a company that joined its marketing

It told us: 'Based on your enquiry, we have reviewed our previous

conditions and marketing code of conduct. We have marketing

occur, but once in a while abusive affiliates do slip through.'

abuse cases, and we have identified three that mention "Royal Mail"

between December 15 2021 and December 17, 2021.' 'We do not condone or approve the abusive behaviour by the affiliate in question. It is a gross violation of our affiliate terms and

compliance procedures in place to ensure that such violations do not

Bilngua.net has now refunded three UK customers. It told us it has

identified the affiliate as a company called Ziiway ApS, based in

Proplanner.io has also confirmed to Which? that it detected fraudulent traffic: 'They were apparently made by Ziiway, a company that we do not know and have not done any business with, at least not directly. Upon detection we immediately notified the lead generator, from whom we buy our traffic. They confirmed that they would cease all relationships with this affiliate, and we haven't detected irregularities since.'

'We have furthermore blocked their IP address in our fraud detection

successor doesn't try to send us fake traffic in the future. As you can

imagine, we are very unhappy with the situation, and reiterate that

We attempted to contact Ziiway using the contact details listed on its

system and taken other steps to make sure this affiliate or any

While bilingua.net and proplanner.io say they have nothing to do with the fake Royal Mail chatbots, they did authorise the marketing 'campaigns' hosted on their websites. These promotions - hosted at begin.bilingua.net and

begin.proplanner.io - are highly misleading because the terms and

details risks signing up for an expensive subscription without their

Bilingua.net told us it does allow affiliates 'certain liberties' but

imposes strict requirements for the campaigns, which it tests

'In this case the campaign was authorised by us. The affiliate

conditions aren't clear or prominent, meaning anyone entering their

we do not always share the same interests. They might want maximum traffic, where we want quality traffic. Therefore, our monitoring will become stricter and now we are implementing new procedures and measures.'

Proplanner.io also said that it authorised the promotion hosted on

its website and will be aiming to improve standards going forward:

or publishing campaigns. We indeed have the power to decline

more pro-active approach in checking campaigns.'

campaigns, which did not happen. We have responded to earlier

'The affiliate network is in the lead when it comes to creating content

complaints and decided to no longer work with sub-affiliates that are

responsible for these complaints. We will furthermore implement a

Bilingua.net told Which? that while it might share the same affiliate

with Proplanner.io, it's an independent operator and upholds its own

network is organising these campaigns, doing the designs, and their

sub-affiliates are usually running these campaigns. After inspecting

all the campaigns from our affiliate network, we have concluded that

compliance standards. Proplanner.io declined to comment on any connection to Bilingua.net. How to spot a genuine Royal Mail email or text Royal Mail explains how to distinguish a genuine message from a fake: Royal Mail will only send email and SMS notifications to

customers in cases where the sender has requested this when

using our trackable products that offer this service.

doesn't for payment by email or text.

underpaid item.

In cases where customers need to pay a surcharge for an

underpaid item, Royal Mail leaves a grey 'Fee To Pay' card. It

The only time Royal Mail asks customers to make a payment by

email or by SMS is in instances where a customs fee is due. In

there's a 'Fee to Pay' before releasing the item. This would apply

either to an international customs fee or to a surcharge for an

If you do have a fee to pay, you don't need to click any links in texts

such cases, it also leaves a grey card telling customers that

or emails. The website is www.royalmail.com/receiving-mail/pay-afee, so type this into the address bar to make sure you don't inadvertently click on a link for a fake site. A Royal Mail spokesperson said: 'The security of our customers is a

high priority for Royal Mail. On our website we offer advice and

suspicious email, text message, or telephone call that claims to be

from Royal Mail, or if they or discover a Royal Mail branded website

'This advice includes reminding customers to never click on a link in

information on what customers should do if they receive a

an email if they are unsure about it, especially if it asks for personal financial information like your bank details. We also advise customers never to send sensitive, personal information, security details or credit card numbers by email or text.' How to report scams You can report scam texts by forwarding the message to 7726 (this

spells SPAM on a phone keypad), which is a free reporting service

You can report dodgy websites to the National Cyber Security Centre

(NCSC) using its suspicious website tool, or forward phishing emails

to its report@phishing.gov.uk inbox. If you spot a suspicious advert online (social media, newspaper

Tagged as: scam alert

provided by phone operators.

which they think is fraudulent.'

Standards Authority (ASA). Categories: Consumer Rights

Did you find this useful?

No

Scams

websites, search engines) can be reported to the Advertising

Yes





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we have nothing to do with this party.'

website but received no response.

Misleading promotions

true consent.

regularly:

Denmark.