

Essex Police Fraud Alert System

33

23rd April 2021

FLEECEWARE ON THE RISE

Fleeceware is a recently coined term that refers to mobile applications that come with excessive subscription fees, and in March over 200 such apps were discovered being advertised on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.



The applications attract users with the promise of a free 3-day trial, but once the trial is over, they are charged a recurring subscription fee - even if they have deleted the app - until they cancel the subscription in their device's app subscription settings. One app offers a short free trial followed by a \$66 (£47.73) per week subscription, potentially costing the victim \$3,432 (£2,482.19) per year unless cancelled. These fleeceware applications are actively advertised on major social networks.

How to avoid Fleeceware apps:

- **Be wary of free trials of less than a week** - make sure you understand how much you will be charged and that the app is worth the recurring fee.
- **Be sceptical of viral adverts for apps** - the adverts for fleeceware are likely to have enticing messaging and images to attract users' attention. They likely do not reflect the actual functionality of the application.
- **Read the small print** - a closer look will likely reveal the true price of the app. Pay close attention to the 'In-app purchases' section and be aware that even if it is a free trial, as there may be automatic charges thereafter.
- **Secure your payments** - ensure that your payment methods are secured behind a password or biometric check. This can also prevent accidental subscriptions by children.



If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud, please call **Essex Police** on 101
Report fraud or attempted fraud by contacting **Action Fraud** at actionfraud.police.uk or call 0300 123 2040

Keep up to date with fraud and
do **even more** Online **at** essex.police.uk

