



Keep your money safe

Sussex Police fraud newsletter – February 2017

Scams are fraud and fraud is crime, report it – this is our message for Sussex residents.

As we know, many people spend much of their lives online, communicating and meeting new people via social networks. Valentine's Day may have been and gone, but it is prudent to highlight how easy it is to get swept up in the romance of it all and let your heart rule your head.

In January so far, Sussex Police has received **8 reports of dating and romance fraud, with each losing considerable sums of money**; the highest individual loss was £100,000. Requests for payment are often made via MoneyGram and Western Union by fraudsters operating from abroad.

For victims of dating fraud, it can shatter lives both financially and emotionally. We continue to see fraudsters targeting vulnerable people, but there is always advice available if you think that the fraudsters may have targeted you.

If you need support, the contact details for Sussex Police and Action Fraud are at the bottom of this newsletter.

Detective Chief Inspector Tracy Edwards, Operation Signature, Sussex Police



Spot the signs of dating fraud

Every day, seven reports of dating fraud are received by Action Fraud.

It takes less than a month of contact for the average victim of dating fraud to make their first transfer of money to the fraudster, demonstrating how quickly and easily these situations can escalate. As already stated, 8 reports of dating and romance fraud were reported last month alone.

Websites [Get Safe](#) and [Online Dating Association](#) provide more information on how fraudsters operate and how to

avoid being a victim of fraud.

Here are five simple date safe tips

- ♥ Get to know the person, not the **profile** and ask plenty of questions.
- ♥ Check the person is **genuine** by putting their name, profile pictures or any repeatedly used phrases and the term 'dating scam' into your search engine.
- ♥ **Talk** to your friends and family about your dating choices. Be **wary** of anyone who tells you not to tell others about them.
- ♥ **Never** send money to someone you've met online, no matter what reason they give or how long you've been speaking to them.
- ♥ Don't move the conversation off the dating site messenger until you're **confident** the person is who they say they are.

Search the Financial Services Register

If you've received offers of investment opportunities, the first place to establish business credibility is the [Financial Services Register](#); a public record with details of firms, individuals and other bodies that checks businesses are authorised or registered or exempt.



iTunes

Apple gift card fraud alert

Fraudsters have been contacting people to request they use their Apple iTunes gift cards as a means of payment to Her Majesty Revenues and Customs (HMRC). iTunes gift cards can be easily redeemed and sold on – so they get people to read out the serial code on the back over the phone.

These are some of the contact methods used to defraud people in Sussex:

- 📞 **Voicemails:** saying you owe HMRC unpaid tax.
- 📱 **Text messages:** Fraudsters send you a text message requesting you to urgently call back on the number provided.

Protect yourself

- 📱 HMRC will never use a text message to inform you about a tax rebate or penalty.
- 📱 HMRC will never ask for any payment in the form of iTunes Vouchers.

Tackling financial abuse of older people



Katy Bourne, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex, has joined Action on Elder Abuse to urge older people and their families to learn how to spot signs of financial abuse.

Katy Bourne told the Hastings and St Leonards Observer: "In Sussex, fraud against our older and more vulnerable residents has robbed some older people of their entire life savings and left others destitute."

The charity's data suggests that as many as 2,162 older people in Sussex may be at risk of financial abuse this year, including 813 in East Sussex alone.

Check bank statements regularly, restricting how much money can be withdrawn, limiting the use of 'chip and pin', and being careful about who has access to them and their belongings. Families should lookout for signs including: changes in banking habits, inclusion of new names on the bank account, abrupt changes to wills and/or Power of Attorney, suspect signatures, and/or the unexpected disappearance of funds or possessions.

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud call Sussex Police on 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk



If you need to a report fraud or attempted fraud, you can do so by contacting Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud or by calling 0300 123 2040. You can also read the latest Action Fraud alerts at www.actionfraud.police.uk/news or by following @actionfrauduk on Twitter.