



## Sussex Police fraud newsletter – June 2017

# Keep your money safe

Each month, we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting Sussex residents in an attempt to defraud them. Operation Signature is our answer to preventing and supporting vulnerable victims of fraud or scams.

By its very nature, fraud is constantly evolving and taking on new forms. By following our tips and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you can reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

Elder Abuse Awareness Day took place on 15 June, highlighting the increasing number of incidents impacting on the elderly in our communities and how we can all play our part to combat these types of fraud affecting those most at risk.

**Detective Chief Inspector Steven Boniface, Operation Signature,  
Sussex Police**

### Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Sussex Police's Operation Signature follows up on reports by local residents, particularly the elderly, of unwelcome or suspicious phone, email or personal approaches asking them to invest or seeking money in other ways. Police, PCSOs or Victim Support workers visit and offer advice, including ways of resisting further approaches. Police also work closely with local charities including Age Concern and Brighton-based Time to Talk Befriending to offer support.



Criminal gangs are deliberately targeting our older residents because they may have substantial savings and can be more trusting. That's why the work by Sussex Police officers, Specials and PCSOs who visit hundreds of vulnerable people to prevent these crimes is so important.

Almost two-thirds of victims were aged 75 or older and the same amount lived alone. Just over one in five incidents were doorstep crime and rogue traders while other types of fraud included computer scams (17%), telephone fraud, including false PPI claims (16%) and dating and romance fraud (14%). In the 12 months to the end of March 2017, Sussex Police dealt with 423 incidents of fraud, victims lost money totalling £10m with the average loss being £23,370 per victim. But in 595 cases, the fraudsters were unsuccessful thanks to alert residents, relatives, banks and shop staff.

### Apple iTunes gift card fraud on the rise

There has been an increase over the past month of fraudsters contacting people to request they use their Apple iTunes gift cards as a means of payment to Her Majesty Revenues and Customs (HMRC).

**What fraudsters say:** In order to obtain this money you are informed that you must make an initial payment in iTunes vouchers. Last month, Sussex dealt with six cases and an average loss of £1,000.



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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. As well as iTunes vouchers, HMRC would not ask for payment in the form of any other vouchers or any other payment methods. HMRC will never use texts to tell you about a tax rebate or penalty or ever ask for payment in this way.

### Alert shops, banks and friends can avert fraud

An 86-year old woman from Billingshurst received a call she thought was from her bank, asking if her new debit card had arrived. She said that she wasn't expecting one.

The caller then said the new card could be sent by courier and ten minutes later a well-spoken and smartly dressed male 'courier' arrived with what appeared to be a replacement card. They cut up her old card but the caller - still on the line - said they needed her PIN number in order to set up a new one. She supplied it but thankfully as the 'courier' left a friend of the woman came round. Together they became suspicious and promptly called her bank to freeze the account.

A 69-year old Brighton woman received a call from someone who said he was a police officer and that money had been taken out of her account. At the fraudster's insistence she went to a specialist watch shop in Brighton and asked to buy two valuable watches which the caller said would prevent more money being stolen.

However the shop manager became suspicious and the attempt failed, the caller told to go to her bank nearby to withdraw £5000 cash. But staff at the bank became suspicious too and the attempt failed.

### **The police do not contact people and ask them to withdraw or hand over cash or valuables to officers, and neither do bank staff.**

Please do look out for your friends, family and anyone you feel may be at risk by passing out this message, to help prevent further people falling victim to this type of fraud. If ever you doubt a telephone caller is genuine, simply hang up the phone. If speaking to callers at the door, always ask for ID and satisfy yourself that it is genuine before dealing with that person.

**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](http://www.sussex.police.uk)**



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