



# Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter – July 2017

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.

This month, Operation Signature's PC Lawrie's talks to the *Argus* about how the police are fighting back against fraud. Detective Inspector Rob Walker tells us about the successful outcome from a recent bogus Microsoft investigation.

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

## Finance Abuse Officer, PC Bernadette Lawrie interviewed by the Argus on the fight against fraud

PC Lawrie became the country's first Financial Abuse Safeguarding Officer when she set



up Operation Signature; which focuses on informing potential victims and their families how to recognise fraud. PC Lawrie told the *Argus* that despite the scheme's success, more needs to be done to stop a crime she calls despicable.

"It's not just the money," she says, "it's the hundreds of letters and maybe 20 phone calls a day; people being woken up in the middle of the night – it causes terrible anxiety and really has an effect on people's health."

All calls to the police which may indicate a vulnerable person has fallen victim to phone or internet fraud is flagged as a priority. Calls are dealt with according to guidelines created by the Signature team and police visit the person at home.

Operation Signature is about educating potential victims to identify fraud. We recommend the following checklist for anyone who believes family, friends or themselves are at risk:

- Check people are who they say they are. If you are not sure, don't answer the door or discuss financial matters by phone
- Never send or give money to anyone you don't know or trust
- Remember to protect your identity – don't share your personal information with unexpected callers
- Beware of email and computer scams. Treat all emails from unknown senders with suspicion and never click on links within them
- Never share your PIN number with anyone and do not enter your PIN into a telephone
- If in doubt, phone a relative friend or someone you know personally.



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## Police take on bogus Microsoft fraudsters



In collaboration with the City of London Police and the National Crime Agency (NCA); Sussex and Surrey Police's Cyber Crime Unit investigated a customer service fraud involving bogus contacts from Microsoft.

Vulnerable individuals were contacted about a fault on their system that preys on obtaining as much financial information as possible from those victims.

The police obtained information about a company in Woking that was targeting victims across Sussex and Surrey. A warrant was executed at the company's premises, two people were arrested and the NCA subsequently closed websites that were involved.

Detective Inspector Rob Walker said: 'The key message is that everyone should be aware that companies like Microsoft will never randomly contact individual customers and there is guidance out there to ensure you don't become a victim.'

## Stay informed and be aware

Cyber-criminals often use publicly available phone directories, so they might know your name and other personal information when they call you. They might even guess what operating system you're using.

Once they've gained your trust, the caller might ask for your user name and password or ask you to go to a legitimate website (such as [www.ammyy.com](http://www.ammyy.com)) to install software that will let them access your computer to fix it. Once you do this, your computer and your personal information are vulnerable.

**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.

