

Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter

August 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, we focus on a growing and persistent crime - courier fraud. Fraudsters pretending to be from trusted organisations like the police - convince vulnerable and elderly people into withdrawing and giving them significant amounts of cash.

Detective Chief Inspector Steven Boniface, Operation Signature, Sussex Police

'Banking Protocol' introduced in Sussex

This is an initiative between police forces, the banks, building societies and The Post Office. Bank staff have been trained to identify customers who are making unusual withdrawals or money transfers. They will ask questions to establish if the customer is potentially the victim of fraud and will make a 999 call to police quoting "Banking Protocol".

Despite only being introduced in June of this year, the process is proving to be very successful; with 37 calls received from banks in July identifying 32 separate crimes resulting in the arrest of 4 suspects. The average age of each person targeted by these fraudsters was 75, with potential losses to those victims of around £196,000 was saved.

Victims will often be intending to withdraw funds to return to their home address to either pay rogue tradespersons who have cold-called at their addresses and completed sub-standard building works. Alternatively, there will have been some arrangement initiated by the offender for the money to be collected at a later time to settle some form of debt or to assist in a false police investigation.



Please remember, you should **NEVER:**

Share your PIN with any other person or input it onto a telephone

Withdraw funds on another's instructions

Hand your bank card or cash to any unknown person calling at your address

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Increase in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) frauds

Elderly people are receiving a high volume of phone calls purporting to be from HMRC. It is vital that people are aware of the signs and act on them. A message is often left on an answerphone asking the recipient to phone 0161 8508494 and press "1" to speak to the officer dealing with the case.

If the recipient answers the phone, the caller will often say that the victim owes unpaid taxes and that they will be taken to court or threatened with arrest if they do not settle the alleged debt. The conversation will then often lead to a request for the victim to visit a location in another part of the country to hand over the money, a request that will be very difficult for the victim to comply with. As an alternative, the victim is then told to go to a supermarket to purchase iTunes vouchers that are then to be passed onto the offenders.

In two separate incidents in early August, two men of 81 and a 68 both from Worthing, received a telephone call purporting to be from HMRC advising them that they owed money for tax arrears. They were instructed to purchase iTunes vouchers to the value of £2500 and £1000 respectively in order to pay the outstanding amount.

They subsequently bought the vouchers from the local Wilkinson's Store, one of them being refunded the money after the store manager became suspicious. The other provided the fraudsters with the codes and lost £2500. They were both extremely shaken by the experience and have lost confidence on answering the telephone or door.

Voicemails and text messages are some of the contact methods used to defraud people in Sussex, they will request that you urgently call them back on the number provided.

- 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 or any other vouchers.

There have been 85 of these incidents reported to Action Fraud and Sussex Police over the month of July, thankfully very few of these have resulted in any victims losing money.

You can contact police online or by calling us on 101 quoting Operation Signature. For further information go to Sussex Police website [Operation Signature](#).

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.



If you need to 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 on Twitter @actionfrauduk