

Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter

October 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 look at the high volume of calls claiming to be from HMRC and the Financial Conduct Authority. We would like to remind everyone to be suspicious of all telephone calls claiming to be from banks, companies or individuals trying to find out about their finances or bank details.

Detective Chief Inspector Steven Boniface, Operation Signature, Sussex Police

Telephone fraud

A vast majority of cases we deal with are initiated by telephone calls making claims that victims need to withdraw large amounts of cash. Those victims are then persuaded, often with very convincing accounts that the cash should be passed over to the fraudsters. Here are some examples of reported cases that highlight the range of tactics that can be used.



People in Sussex are receiving a high number of calls claiming to be from **HMRC** officials. They tell the victim that they owe a significant amount of tax arrears and need to make a payment to prevent a warrant from being issued; which would result in them being taken to court. These calls are convincing, leading victims to go to extraordinary lengths to meet the fraudster's demands. HMRC will **never** make demands or requests for payment over the phone.

Fraudsters are posing as officials from the **Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)** and are cold calling people stating that they are eligible for a Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) claim. There may be an increase in these types of frauds following the FCA announcement; which generates a new campaign urging people to make a decision about making a PPI complaint before the deadline on 29 August 2019. PPI was usually sold with products that you need to make repayments on, like a loan, credit card or mortgage.

As well as cold calls, text messages are being used to convince victims that their PPI claim is legitimate. The fraudsters tell you how much PPI you can claim back but emphasise that an advance fee payment is required in order to make the claim successful. You should **never take up offers of PPI claims on the spot** from cold calls and text messages. If you use a third party organisation to assist with your claim, you can check to see if they are legitimate by carrying out independent research on the company, as well as checking the FCA's website for the company's details or by calling them on 0800 101 88 00 (Monday to Sunday, 8am to 10pm).

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The caller will often say that they are investigating staff at the local bank who might be stealing money from customer accounts, asking the victim to transfer money into a 'dummy account' in order to keep the money safe.

Nuisance call solution

We have now installed over 100 'true-Call' telephone call blocker devices into the homes of vulnerable victims, people who would be at high risk of being re-victimised without such preventative measures being implemented. These have blocked in excess of 43,000 nuisance calls over the past 18 months, equating to an average of 45 calls per household per month. They can block up to 99% of calls from numbers that are recognised as not being from friends and family.

We would urge those who are aware of any potentially vulnerable relation or friend who may fall victim to these fraudulent calls to consider purchasing this kind of device. Further information can be obtained via the following link: <https://www.truecall.co.uk>

Attempted fraud following building works



With the very odd exception, any situation that requires a large sum of cash to be handed over is highly likely to be an attempt to fraudulently deprive a victim of funds

We are investigating an incident in Crawley where an elderly couple had maintenance work carried out at their home several years ago.

A fraudster posing as a police officer called at the address and showed them an item purporting it to be a genuine warrant card. He told them that the building company were subject of court proceedings and if they gave him a sum of money, in this case just over £3000 in cash, they would receive a refund of the total price of the building work, around £7000.

The elderly householder attempted to withdraw the cash from his bank but was prevented from doing so by the alert bank staff. Further enquiries revealed the full circumstances.

Contact police online or by calling us on 101 quoting Operation Signature. For further information see 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.uk

If you need to a report fraud or attempted fraud, you can do so by visiting the Action Fraud website or by calling 0300 123 2040.

