



Keep your money safe

Surrey and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter January 2019

Each month, we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting our residents in an attempt to defraud them. Operation Signature is our answer to preventing and supporting vulnerable victims of fraud or scams. By following our tips and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you can reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

**Detective Chief Inspector Andy Richardson, Surrey & Sussex Police
Economic Crime Unit.**

Criminals pretending to be police officers in scam

We have seen a number of cases recently of elderly and vulnerable people, often living alone, being conned out of cash by fraudsters pretending to be police officers.

The criminals make contact by phone, say they are a police officer and ask the victim to go to their bank and withdraw large sums of money because the police are investigating the possibility that the money could be counterfeit.



If their status as a police officer is questioned by the victim, the fraudsters will be prepared, and have a way of 'verifying' their job. They will also provide cover stories for the victim to give to the bank, should the withdrawal be questioned.

Once the victims have the money and return home, they are told to place the money and sometimes their cards into an envelope and seal it. The victims are advised that a courier will arrive to collect the envelope using a safe word to confirm they are a part of the operation. The courier, who is often a white male, arrives at the address, takes the envelope and leaves. Typically, once the victim has confirmed to the suspect over the phone that the money has been collected, the call is ended and no further correspondence is received.

Remember: The police or your bank will never ask you for money, your bank card or your PIN. Be extremely wary of unexpected phone calls from your bank or the police. End the call, and call the bank (using the phone number on your bank card) or the police on 101 to

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check that you have received a genuine call. Speak to friends or family before doing anything, and never hand over your money following an unexpected call.

Please share this information with your friends and family to help us to beat these criminals.

Seven investment fraudsters sentenced

A vigilant bank manager who contacted the police when he was worried about one of his clients is being hailed as a hero after he triggered an investigation into an organised crime group who were jailed for fraud today.

The group (six men and one woman) ran a “boiler room” that groomed their elderly victims and took over £800,000 from at least 24 victims from across the country. The group claimed they were selling rare earth elements – raw materials used in industrial processes as catalysts, and in the creation of high quality glass and magnets. Victims were sold an investment “basket” containing one or two kilograms, which were effectively worthless, as the supposed market – large industrial firms – would only be interested in buying the materials by the tonne direct from the mining companies.

Surrey Police started investigating the company in 2013, after one of the victims, a woman in her 80s from Woking, asked her bank manager help her transfer £100,000 to the fraudsters. The bank manager became suspicious and contacted police.

Detective Inspector Matt Durkin says “My message to anyone receiving a cold call about an investment opportunity is to hang up. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! If you are tempted to make investments, then seek professional advice and help. It is all too easy to set up websites and glossy marketing materials that make an investment appear legitimate.”

What is Operation Signature?

Operation Signature is a Surrey Police and Sussex Police campaign to identify and support vulnerable victims of fraud across both counties.

If you suspect someone you know may be vulnerable to fraud, please share this newsletter with them and encourage them to look at the ‘Little Book of Scams’, available on the following link:

<http://tinyurl.com/z8khtgh>

If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud call:

Surrey Police on 101 or visit www.surrey.police.uk

Sussex Police on 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk

Report fraud or attempted fraud, by contacting Action Fraud at

http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud or call 0300 123 2040

