

The Fraud & Scam Bulletin

February 2022

Your monthly update from West Mercia Police on the latest Scams and Frauds

ROMANCE FRAUDS

Nearly 9,000 victims of dating scams were reported to Police in 2021 and the estimated loss to victims was nearly £100m.

More concerning is the fact that this is only the tip of the iceberg, as many victims do not report the scams through embarrassment or shame, or even do not realise that they are victims at all.

How does it work?

Romance frauds involve a criminal engaging in a romantic relationship with the sole aim of manipulating their target in order to devastate them financially.

Fraudsters will use any tactics they can to identify and exploit a victim's vulnerabilities, hopes and romantic aspirations; engaging in emotional and psychological manipulation long before any financial exploitation takes place.

By the time the fraudster asks for money, the grooming process means that the victim is unlikely to recognise their intentions as criminal, and believe that they are in a genuine romantic relationship, despite often not having met their "partner".

Many scammer approaches are happening outside of Dating Sites and Apps as well, including social media, poetry forums and even phoning wrong numbers to engage in conversation.

Criminals go to great lengths to use fake profiles in an attempt to build seemingly genuine relationships, before appealing to your compassionate side to ask for money.

Warning Signs

- Criminals use fake identities to trick you into sending them money
- Is their profile inconsistent with what they tell you?
- Have they asked you for money before you've met in person?
- They may claim to be stuck overseas or pretend to need money for a personal or family emergency
- Take Five before making loans or giving gifts to someone you've never met

So beware of romance scams when looking for love online. Check if someone is really who they say they are by reverse image searching their profile picture (possible on the search bar of some image search engines).

Sources:

NFIB

TakeFive

Take Five To Stop Fraud

- **Stop:** Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.
- **Challenge:** Could it be fake? It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
- **Protect:** If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

For further information visit:

- <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>
- <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

FREE FRAUD SAFETY WEBINARS

A new source of advice is now available online and is open to any persons interested in enhancing their knowledge, and understanding of the dangers of Fraud in the UK.

Please use the links below to sign up to any of these quarterly sessions.

MAR
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Fraud-Buster: Fraud Safety Webinar suitable for everyone.

Online event

Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 10:00 GMT

Follow link to book place on webinar: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/215692711707>

APR
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Fraud-Buster: Fraud Safety Webinar suitable for everyone.

Online event

Tuesday, 26 April 2022 at 14:00 BST

Follow link to book place on webinar: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/215697405747>