



Keep your money safe

Sussex Police fraud newsletter – February 2016

Each month, we see many incidents of scammers targeting Sussex residents in an attempt to defraud them. Operation Signature is our answer to preventing and supporting vulnerable victims of fraud or scams.

This newsletter covers information on the latest incidents across Sussex to help prevent others becoming a victim. It is also where we will share success stories, such as the conviction of a group of prolific scammers last month.

By their very nature, scams are constantly evolving and taking on new forms. But be assured that, by following our tips at the bottom of this newsletter and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you will reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

Detective Chief Inspector Tracy Edwards, Operation Signature, Sussex Police

Residents targeted by fake police officers claiming to be investigating a fraud

In the last year we have had hundreds of reports of fraudsters phoning or visiting elderly residents claiming to be police officers or bank officials. The fraudsters claim the resident is a victim of fraud and that their bank cards and PIN are needed for the investigation. A courier is sent to collect the supposedly compromised/old card(s) and these are used to withdraw cash and buy high value goods. In some cases the victims are told not to trust the bank employees and to go to their bank and withdraw all of their money.

Microsoft support scam: victims being conned from 'Tech support' scammer

Residents of Sussex have been targeted by phone scammers who claim to be from Microsoft. The scammer tells victims that they need to pay money otherwise their computer will crash. The scam works by the fraudster gaining remote access to a computer, and asking for an initial fee to fix the computer. They then have access to your bank account and can withdraw money from the victim's account.

Good News: Sussex scam gang convicted!



Members of an organised criminal gang who committed fraud offences of over £310,000, were unravelled by the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROCU), and have been sentenced to over 18 years in jail. The scam from 2013 to 2014 involved a total of 34 victims in areas across South East England. Victims were told that their neighbours' property had been flooded with raw sewage from under their properties and that they needed to hire equipment to resolve the issue and to pay a deposit, which would later be refunded. Be aware of anyone knocking on your door with this story and don't be drawn in. If in doubt call 101.

Fake 'Police porn warning message' scam on mobile phones and computers

Sussex residents have been targeted by a scam where a message appears on their phone or computer saying that the police have detected that they have been watching child pornography and that their phone/computer has been locked as a result. The scammer demands a payment of £100 (or more) to unlock the phone, to be paid via a 'Paysafe' card. The victims have not been accessing pornography and the scam is as a result of Ransomware. Experts say this scam can be caused by clicking on social media links, and downloading music, installing a game or program, opening a picture, playing a video file or shopping online.

Focus on: Romance and dating scams

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, we're focusing on romance and dating scams, which we see taking place within Sussex throughout the year. These are scams which are particularly distressing because the scammers build an online relationship with the victim, sometimes using a false profile and photos on a legitimate site to lower your defences. Be cautious of giving away personal information and consider your personal safety if you decide to meet in person with someone you meet online. **Never** send money to someone you have never met or who you don't actually know and trust.

Remember: banks and police will NEVER call and ask you to transfer funds to a new account, NEVER collect your cards from your home, NEVER ask you to buy high value goods and NEVER ask you to hand over cards or money.

Keep your money safe with these tips:

- Check people are who they say they are. Not sure? Don't open the door!
- Never send or give money to people 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 or enter your PIN into a telephone
- If in doubt, phone a relative, friend or someone you know personally.

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/pactuzq>.



If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud or scams call Sussex Police on 101 or visit www.sussex.police.uk

If you need to report a scam or fraud, you can do so by contacting Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk/report_fraud