

# Keep Your Money Safe



## Surrey Police and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter

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### LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Fraud is a hidden crime, often happening behind closed doors, in person, over the phone or via the internet. This makes it increasingly difficult for fraud to be identified at the time, when it is happening, which is why we are asking for your support.



Please look out for each other. Be that your friends, family, neighbours, or anyone you come into contact through work or your everyday life.

Reports to police from worried relatives, concerned neighbours or supportive citizens provide us with the opportunity to intervene earlier in situations when a victim may not recognise, they are involved with a fraudster and are unlikely to self-report their concerns.

Sussex Police recently received a report from a family member who had identified changes in the behaviour of an elderly relative leading them to believe that they were involved in a romance fraud and being financially exploited by someone who had befriended them following a bereavement.

Early intervention by police in cases such as these, mean there is an opportunity to safeguard from further financial loss and in some situations, work with the banks to recover any funds already taken.

In Surrey a concerned neighbour called police when they noticed suspicious workmen at an address of a very vulnerable male. Police identified that the resident had been cold called by rogue traders who had already convinced him to part with a significant sum of money for damp proofing and were in the address at the time of police attendance attempting to gain further funds.

It is unlikely the vulnerable man would have reported this himself, which demonstrates the value in the neighbour making the report to Police themselves.

Over half of the reports received by Sussex and Surrey Police last year relating to vulnerable victims, specified that they lived alone.

If you believe a vulnerable person is being defrauded, targeted or financially exploited please report it to Police on 101.

### Are you worried about someone who might be vulnerable to fraud?

- Make fraud part of everyday conversation with family, friends and neighbours
- Offer to help with technical solutions such as checking and updating software and security settings – some people are less digitally savvy than others and may feel embarrassed asking for help
- Let them know that they can talk to you if they're suspicious of any emails, cold callers, websites, or adverts, or if they think they've become a victim of fraud
- Take time to sit down with friends and family to discuss how they can protect themselves against fraud

*“Each month we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting our residents in an attempt to defraud them. We're working hard to prevent this and support 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.”*

T/Detective Chief Inspector  
Antony Leadbeatter, Surrey  
Police & Sussex Police  
Economic Crime Unit

## SEXTORTION

Sextortion is a form of online blackmail, which is increasing at an alarming rate. This is when someone you have met online encourages you to carry out a sexual act in front of your webcam, send a video or pictures of an explicit nature and then threatens to post them online or send a copy to friends or family unless you pay them money.

Victims can be any age. In Sussex and Surrey we have received reports from victims as young as 12 and 13, with our oldest recorded victim being 90 years old. The victim profile shows us that 96% of victims are male, with females only rarely targeted.

The most common way that fraudsters are contacting victims is via Instagram and dating sites, usually then moving away from this monitored platform to an encrypted messaging service such as Telegram or WhatsApp.

The payment method requested by the fraudster is predominantly bank transfer or PayPal, but we are also seeing an increase in gift cards being requested as payment for this crime type, with over £190,000 lost to this crime type alone in Sussex and Surrey last year.

We have seen a recent example in Sussex a middle-aged male sent £300 to someone he had sent nude photos to and was immediately blackmailed into making a payment.

In Surrey a teenager sent STEAM vouchers to someone he had been added by on Snapchat and encouraged to send images to.

This crime is usually carried out by organised criminal gangs, often based overseas, who are typically motivated by financial gain.

## HOW TO SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS:



**They're moving fast** - They try to develop a relationship with you very quickly. They might be flirty, tell you they like you at an early stage of contact, or ask for nude images. Some may even send nude images to you first.



**It seems too good to be true** - They might say they have an interesting job, like a modelling scout or agent. They might offer you a job or lots of money in exchange for images. These might not be nude images to begin with, but they could start asking for them. If something feels too good to be true, it's safest to say no, block and report them.



**They tell you they've hacked your device** - Some blackmailers might tell you they've got embarrassing images or information about you from your device. They might threaten to share this information unless money is given to them. Most of the time, none of this is true.



**They pressure you to do things you're not comfortable with** - They may repeatedly ask you to do sexual things you don't feel comfortable with. They might even say nasty things like telling you you're boring if you don't do what they ask. It's never ok for someone to ask you to do things you don't want to and there are places you can get help.

## HOW TO AVOID SEXTORTION



Be wary of new online connections.



Do not engage with strangers online when in a vulnerable or highly emotional state.



Set all your social media profiles to private.



Don't share sensitive information or images with strangers online.



Exercise caution with online relationships, especially if they begin requesting intimate photos or videos.



Use strong passwords and security measures.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF SEXTORTION.

- Don't panic and don't pay.
- Tell someone you trust if you are a victim of sextortion.
- Block the abuser online.
- Where it is safe to do so, save any communications.

## IN THE COMMUNITY

**Police and partners will be providing fraud and scam prevention advice in your communities on the following dates:**

- Monday, 27 January 2025 Worthing Police Pod 10am -12pm
- Wednesday, 29 January 2025 Barclays Bank Guildford – 09.30am - 12.30pm
- Friday, 14 February 2025 Barclays Bank Worthing 11am – 1pm
- Monday, 17 February 2025 Worthing Police Pod 1pm - 5pm



**The next Trading Standards webinar is nearly here!**

It is on Thursday, 6 February from 10am - 11.30am, and this time we have 3 speakers.

- Trading Standards - overview of the different type of scams.
- Get Safe Online - how to stay safe in the online world in support of [Safer Internet Day](#)
- National Trading Standards Scams team - highlighting how scams can affect our mental health - there is [No Blame and No Shame](#). This is in support of [Time to Talk Day](#).

The sign up link to the webinar is <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/time-to-talk-about-scams-staying-safe-on-the-internet-bsl-available-tickets-1100854678979>