



Keep your money safe

Surrey and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter December 2019

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.

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

Police phone number re-created by scammers

Last week a woman contacted us to say she'd been called by someone saying they were from HMRC, who told the woman she owed money and would be arrested. Luckily the woman saw the call for what it was – a scam – but when she attempted to call the number back, it came through the Surrey Police! The scammer had managed to spoof the force's number.

Fraudsters will stop at nothing to trick us. Even if a caller claims to be from somewhere official, never take them at their word and always check their identity, using a different phone line if you can.

Parking your car? Don't be tricked by criminals

We've heard of a couple of instances of elderly people being approached by a man as they go to pay for a parking ticket. The man claims the machine will only take cards and then, when they insert their card, he distracts the victim and pockets the card, saying the machine has swallowed it. Before the victim can cancel their card, a significant amount of money is withdrawn. When we put this on our social media feed, a few people replied to say they'd heard of this happening elsewhere, including in Hampshire and Buckinghamshire, so please be aware and alert when buying parking tickets, wherever you are.

Similarly, a 75-year-old man parked his vehicle on a street in Sussex. An unknown man approached and told the victim he had been caught by a smart parking ticket camera which reads number plates and calculates how long a car has stayed. The man told the victim he owed £100 for the fine, led the victim to a nearby bank cash machine and made him withdraw cash. Thankfully a concerned member of the public approached the victim was able to confirm there were no such parking cameras in the area.

The fake names fraudsters are using this month

We have had a look through our recent telephone fraud reports and wanted to share with you the names we're hearing fraudulent callers using and the organisations they are

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claiming to be from. We're hearing the names Martin Rose, Martin Anderson, DC (detective constable) Gillingham and DC Plough used as fake names. Suspects have often said they are calling from Aldershot or Hounslow Police Station or Hammersmith Police in recent reports.

We hope alarm bells ring if you hear any of these... although as you already know, loud alarm bells should ring immediately if you or a loved one is contacted by phone **out of the blue** by someone claiming to be from a bank or the police, especially if they go on to ask for your money or details.

We've also repeatedly heard the name Gary Turner used by a rogue trader fraudster who knocks on doors and claims to be unblocking drains in the area, even 'kindly' offering to take his elderly victims to the bank so they can pay him.

Let's end on some good news

Thanks to tenacious work by our officers and alert HSBC staff, prolific fraudster Nicolae Sora, who had made nine fraudulent attempts to open bank accounts and credit cards using false documents between May and September 2019, is behind bars.

PC James Wheatland, who was in charge of the case praised the bank's staff, saying: "Local bank staff are some of our best allies in identifying when fraud is taking place, whether that's serious identity fraud like this or a vulnerable or elderly person being scammed and coming into their branch to withdraw funds. Thanks to HSBC UK's branch staff for their vigilance and quick response." Well done all.

Stopping fraud is a team effort, so a huge thank you for your support this year. We wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.



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How you can help us

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