



Keep your money safe

Surrey and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter July 2020

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 Rob Walker, Surrey & Sussex Police Economic Crime Unit

Great result in charge against payment requesting fraudster!

In June Sussex saw a man successfully prosecuted for fraud by false representation.

Jimmy Stonestreet, 28, from Hailsham, was sentenced to 14 months in prison after attempting to steal cash from a 74-year-old man.

The victim returned home to find Stonestreet had entered his flat unannounced. He then claimed the victim owed him £120 cash for guttering work he allegedly carried out an earlier date, but the resident refused to hand over any cash and Stonestreet left.



Detective Inspector Mark Rosser said: "This was a great result by investigators based at Hastings who spent many hours meticulously seeking out evidence to support a charge against a despicable criminal, someone preying on the most vulnerable people in our community."

Nearly a third of all fraud is committed over the telephone.

Criminals can impersonate your bank, tax office, investment or software companies and even the police. They can call from what looks like a genuine number and will keep your landline open by not hanging up.

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Some recent scams we have seen increasing include:

HMRC request tax payment

Victims receive a bogus call or text from someone claiming to be from HMRC. They are told they owe tax payments or have committed tax fraud and are threatened with being arrested if they put the phone down or don't pay up. Often the scammers ask to be paid in Amazon vouchers, claiming that Amazon is a Government company so they accept these as payment. In one recent incident, a victim was conned out of £3,100.



Calls about loft insulation

The caller says they are a trader or from the council, and tell the victim that their loft insulation may not meet "new" Government regulations or that their current insulation causes condensation/damp. The fraudster goes on to offer a free survey of the loft and attempts to make an appointment. This information is false and is an attempt to gain access to your property and pressure you for money in person.

Software service scam

Someone calls and says they are a computer manufacturer or are from a phone or internet service provider. They will ask the victim to check their network speed and to run or download diagnostic software. This gives the criminal remote access to your computer and means they can retrieve your bank details, data and password.

Our top tips to protect yourself from these types of fraud are:

- Act with care if you get an unsolicited phone call and if you have suspicions, hang up
- Always check your phone line has properly disconnected before making another call – try calling a good friend first, wait five minutes or use a different phone
- Do not give or confirm any personal details or agree to someone visiting your home if approached in this manner
- Never transfer funds into an account on the instruction of an unexpected caller, even if they tell you the account is in your name
- Do not download software on the request of a caller and never allow a caller to remotely access your computer. A genuine service provider won't call you out of the blue regarding issues with your computer. If you have problems with your internet connection or computer, contact your service provider or the retailer.

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The not-so-lucky Facebook winner

A local resident recently received a message on Facebook stating that she was the randomly selected lucky winner of £150,000. To confirm her identity, the victim was asked to send her full name, address, DOB and, later, her Facebook password to confirm her account was legit.

The victim was then instructed to send £300 in Amazon vouchers to “unlock” her winnings and, after paying £25 in vouchers, she was pressured to send more money – for a total of 16 times!



She confronted the fraudsters and spoke to a few friends about it, where she learnt that others had received the original message too.

The victim was contacted by the fraudster again, stating that the Fedex driver who was going to deliver her winnings was in hospital following an accident. When the victim didn't reply to these messages, she was harassed for a response and subsequently paid an additional £125 in Amazon vouchers.

Never confirm any personal details or transfer funds to someone you don't know or trust. If you're unsure of who you're speaking to, talk to a family member or friend. When in doubt, don't reply.

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