

The Fraud & Scam Bulletin

OCTOBER 2026

Your monthly update direct from West Mercia Police on the latest
scams and frauds

ROMANCE FRAUD

“WORLD ROMANCE FRAUD DAY” is marked every year on the **3rd October** so it is only appropriate during the current month that we keep on raising awareness of the pitfalls of Romance Fraud and the emotional, mental and financial damage caused to those who have been inveigled into false relationships online by fraudsters.

Whilst many may think that Romance Scams only occur on Dating Sites, criminals may also make use of social media and messaging sites to meet up with and defraud their victims as well.

Did you know?

- Reports of Online Romance Fraud/Scams continue to rise year on year.
- Yet Online Romance Scams are one of the most under-reported cybercrimes in the world.
- Figures for losses through Romance Fraud and investment frauds tied to romance scams, also known as “Pig Butchering”, had reported increasing total losses to over £106 million annually in the UK.
- Only an estimated 7% (possibly lower) of victims report the fraud to the proper authorities.
- Romance Scams are emotional, psychological, and financial ABUSE.
- Everyone is a target. No matter what age, demographic, or gender

How to help people you know are online dating

- Help your friends and family to ensure they have adequate privacy settings on their social media accounts to ensure strangers do not have access to their personal information.
- Beware of how much personal information you include in personal profiles
- Never share inappropriate images with contacts made online that you would not share with friends and family
- Stay in regular contact with your friends and family who are online dating to help spot any changes in their behaviour or things that do not seem right.
- Fraudsters set up fake profiles with convincing job titles such as Engineers, Medics, Military Personnel, Airline Pilots and similar, also using relevant images taken from social media profiles.

- They have even been known to use the profiles of celebrities to entice those they have contacted into a so-called relationship
- Make friends and family aware of the signs of Romance Fraud so that they are conscious of the tactics criminals use to carry out these frauds and reiterate that you should never transfer money to someone that you have never met in person. Also never make payments to strangers with Gift Cards or Bitcoin accounts.
- Try not to use blaming language but rather a “no blame, no shame approach”. They have been targeted and exploited by professionals who know exactly how to manipulate their targets.
- Encourage people to report to Report Fraud and the police if they have become a victim of Romance Fraud and not to be embarrassed about doing so. This may also prevent others from being defrauded by the criminals.
- Help and advice is available through genuine websites such as <https://lovesaid.org> founded by two previous victims of Romance Fraud

Please feel free to share these messages with any vulnerable friends, relatives or neighbours.

If you have fallen for a fraud,

Report it to **Report Fraud** (***formerly known as ACTION FRAUD***) on **0300 123 2040** or via www.reportfraud.police.uk

Scam Text messages can be forwarded to 7726 to help phone providers take prompt action and block numbers that generate spam on their networks. You can also report Scam mobile calls by texting 7726 with the word “Call” followed by the fraudulent caller’s phone number.

Forward Fake Emails received to report@phishing.gov.uk

If you think your bank account or personal banking details have been used fraudulently, then use the short phone number - **159** - to contact the Fraud Prevention Department of most major UK banks.