



Keep your money safe

Surrey and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter December 2018

Each month, we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting our residents in an attempt to defraud them. Operation Signature is our answer to preventing and supporting 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.**

Selling your car privately? Watch out for this scam



We have had a recent case in West Sussex where a man selling his car for £4,000 through Gumtree was visited by two men interested in buying it. The men spent a lot of time looking under the bonnet of the car before taking it for a test drive, during which the exhaust started smoking.

The men insisted that, because of this 'fault', they would only pay £1,500, and this price was accepted by the seller.

The seller then spotted the car advertised online for £3,850 with no faults.

Our research has found that this is a common scam. Fraudsters temporarily tamper with vehicles to get a reduced price and then sell the vehicle on for a big profit. We know this is happening elsewhere in the country too.

If you're selling a vehicle yourself, take time to consider your options. If you feel pressured or unsure, have the confidence to be firm and say no. Request the potential buyer's contact details, such as their mobile number (especially if they call from a withheld number), landline number and full home address. A legitimate buyer will be happy to provide this information.

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Fraudster takes almost £8,000 from local business

In early November, the owners of a local retail business received a call from a man claiming his name was Richard King. The man said that the business was going to be taken to court that morning for an unpaid bill for advertising their shop in hospitals. This sounded genuine as the business do advertise in hospitals. The caller asked for a fee of £3,998.45, and the business owner made a direct payment transfer to the account details given. She was then informed this payment hadn't gone through and made a second payment.

Feeling uncomfortable about the phone call, the business owner contacted the court but was told it was a scam. She checked her account only to see the first payment had gone through and she had lost £7996.80 to a fraudster.

Remember, a genuine organisation will never contact you out of the blue to ask you to move money to another account.

Online shopping in the post-Christmas sales – is it too good to be true?

This time of year is sadly a time of real opportunity for fraudsters and we've been issuing lots of advice in the run up to Christmas about how to shop safely online. As the retail madness continues into the New Year, here's a reminder of our top tips for combatting online shopping fraud:

- If something seems too much of a bargain, it's probably poor quality, fake or doesn't exist.
- Don't pay for goods or services by bank transfer unless you know and trust the person.
- Make sure you've installed the latest software and app updates.
- Don't click on a link in an unexpected email or text. The volume of online shopping related phishing emails increases at this time of year.

If you have been a victim of fraud, [report it online](#) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

What is Operation Signature?

Operation Signature is a Surrey Police and Sussex Police campaign to identify and support vulnerable victims of fraud across both counties.

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/z8khtgh>

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

