

Romance Scams

The average victim of online dating fraud is conned out of
£10,000

What is a Romance Scam?

A romance scam or romance fraud involves a person being tricked into thinking they have met a potential partner on social media or via a dating website, to later find out that they have been used for their money. The impact of this on the victim can be financially devastating, however the emotional damage can often be far more difficult to come to terms with.

The scammer will usually always make a fake profile to target people and attempt to build relationships, slowly gaining the persons trust over weeks, often months, in order to eventually ask for money or obtain enough personal details to steal the individuals identity. If they receive any sum of money from the individual, they will eventually ask for larger amounts of money using false stories to appear as if they have a genuine need.

These scammers are often very manipulative and play on the need for love and companionship, showering victims with compliments and claiming to be in love after a short time.

Anyone can fall victim to a romance scam, however vulnerable adults are particularly at risk of fraud and scams which are often linked to financial abuse and exploitation.

Spot the signs

- They are reluctant to video call or meet in person.
- They ask you a lot of questions about yourself and share little about themselves that can be checked or verified.
- The discussion is friendly at first, however quickly turns romantic.
- Scammers often use attractive profile pictures. You can check whether someone's profile picture is associated with anyone else by accessing the website in Google Chrome, right-clicking on the picture and then clicking 'Search Google for image'. Google will then display any other websites that the image is on. If the person seems to have a different name on other websites, chances are they are tricking you.
- Some scammers claim to live in the UK when in fact they reside in another country, some of the tell tales signs could be poor grammar, spelling or grasp of the English language.
- They ask for money, often using a false story such as needing to pay for urgent medical care for themselves or an ill relative, help to travel to the UK to meet you, money to pay their phone bill to continue communicating with you, rent due to risk of eviction or any other story with a sense of urgency.

Tips to help you stay safe

- Never ever send or receive money or give out your personal banking details to someone you have met online, even if they promise to repay it or send you gifts in advance.
- Only use trusted dating sites and be extra careful if someone asks you to move communication away from the original site or app you first met.
- Never share or exchange private or sexual photographs or videos, this can be used to blackmail you and if they share these it is a criminal offence, report it to Police.
- Trust your instincts, if something feels wrong it probably is, speak to a family member or friend to seek a second opinion.
- Choose a username that does not reveal any personal information about yourself.
- Only accept friend requests from people you know on social media and ensure your accounts are set to private.
- Don't let your own bank account be used by someone else to receive or transfer money. This could be money laundering, which is a criminal offence.

If you have been scammed report it to your local Police force on 101 and Action Fraud at www.ActionFraud.org.uk or on 0300 123 2040. Many people fall victim to romance scams each year and this is nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about, the scammers are manipulative and can be very convincing. The Police will take you seriously and deal with the matter in confidence.

If someone asks you to send them money or personal banking details via an online website or app, report this to the site.

Additional information

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/romance-scams>

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/safedating/>

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

<https://www.tsab.org.uk/key-information/find-support-in-your-area/>