



Keep your money safe

Surrey and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter March 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.**

'GT Models' – a scam, not a real model agency



An East Sussex man found a modelling agency (GT Models) via Facebook and, after sending some photographs of himself to them, received a call from them inviting him to come for a trial photo shoot. He paid £50 deposit to the 'agency' for the photo shoot, but after having no further contact from them, realised it was a scam and the company didn't exist.

Action Fraud says that in cases like this fraudsters pressurise victims into sending an upfront fee to book a slot for the test shoot. In some cases, this test shoot doesn't ever happen; in others it does, and the fake agency convinces the victim that it was successful and encourages them send more money to 'secure a modelling contract'.

Fraudsters are also creating fake adverts for supposed modelling opportunities for children which do not exist. Fraudsters will inform parents or guardians that a potential career in modelling awaits their child. This tactic convinces the parent or guardian to sign up their child and send an advance fee.

Remember: Carry out your own research before you pay any kind of upfront fee, and definitely don't give any bank details to any kind of organisation until you are satisfied they are legitimate. Be wary if an agency asks you to pay for a portfolio; most real modelling agencies will cover that cost. If you think you have been a victim of this sort of fraud, please report it to [Action Fraud online](#) or call 0300 123 2040

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Fraudsters could be posing as your friends in Facebook Messenger scam

In Surrey, a female victim received a message that she thought was from a friend via Messenger on Facebook. In the message the friend said she was very happy and excited because she had won £150,000, and she told the victim that she may have won some money too.

The victim was then contacted by a different friend telling her that she had indeed also won £150,000 but that she needed to pay £700 to release the funds. The victim communicated continually with her friends via Facebook and was assured that it was not a scam and that they had received the money. The victim was totally convinced because she thought she was talking to friends. She paid the money and was told she would receive her £150,000 prize money in 24 hours.

She then received a subsequent message to say that there were problems and that she had to pay £15,000 to release the money from the Tax Clearance Office. At this point she smelled a rat and realised she had been a victim of fraud. Sadly, her bank could not refund the money, and her mobile phone provider could not help trace the messages as they had been sent via Facebook.

Please remember our advice that if **something seems too good to be true, it usually is**. Please do not send money or give any personal details to organisations or people before verifying who they are and always question unexpected calls, texts, emails or messages.

Is your dream home for rent online?

Finally this month, if you or people you know (especially students or young people) are renting accommodation, please make sure they know that fraudsters are claiming to be landlords of properties offered for rent online. Before a viewing the suspect requests that the individuals pay a deposit and sometimes a month's rent upfront for the Government's Tenancy Deposit Scheme. The money does not go to the scheme but direct to criminals' accounts leaving the victim out of pocket and without the home they had thought they were putting a deposit on.

To avoid this:

- Don't be rushed or pressured into making a decision. Only transfer funds when you're satisfied a genuine property, safety certificates and valid contract are in place.
- Only pay for goods or service by bank transfer if you know and trust the person. Payments via bank transfer offer you no protection if you become a victim of fraud.
- Once you've paid your deposit, you can check whether it's protected by entering your tenancy deposit certificate code on the [TDS website](http://www.tenancydepositscheme.com): www.tenancydepositscheme.com

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How you can help us

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](#)'

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