

National campaign launched to prevent romance fraud



**SWIPE LEFT ON
ROMANCE
FRAUD**

Over £66m was lost to
romance fraud between
Aug 2019 and Aug 2020.

#LoveNotLies

Action Fraud
TO STOP FRAUD

Police forces across the country are working together with partners to tackle romance fraud, with a combination of awareness raising and enforcement activity, co-ordinated by the City of London Police and Action Fraud.

The multi-agency campaign, running throughout October, aims to raise awareness of romance fraud and provide clear and unambiguous protection advice to the public, following a 26 per cent rise in reports to Action Fraud in the past year.

Temporary Detective Chief Superintendent Alex Rothwell, from the City of London Police, said: "Romance fraud is a devastating crime that impacts victims both financially and emotionally. It is a crime that we in policing across the UK and are committed to tackling with help from key partners. Through this campaign we want to empower people to understand what to look out for and feel confident that if they have fallen victim to a fraud, to report it to us.

"Criminals are experts at impersonating people. They spend hours researching you for their scams, especially when committing romance fraud. We're reminding everyone to stop and think: fall for the person, not the profile, it could protect you and your money."

Romance fraud, or dating fraud, occurs when you think you've met the perfect partner online but they are using a fake profile to form a relationship with you. They gain your trust over a number of weeks or months and have you believe you are in a loving and caring relationship. However, the criminal's end goal is only ever to get your money or personal information.

Between August 2019 and August 2020, Action Fraud received more than 400 reports a month from victims of romance fraud in the UK. Losses reported by victims during this time totalled £66,335,239, equating to an average loss per victim of just over £10,000.

During June, July and August 2020, Action Fraud received more than 600 reports per month of romance fraud, indicating people may have met, and begun talking to, romance fraudsters during the national lockdown caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Across Avon and Somerset, almost 200 reported incidents were recorded between August 2019 and August 2020, with reported financial losses totalling approximately £2.4million.

DON'T LET YOUR HEART RULE YOUR HEAD.
#LoveNotLies

Online dating? If you haven't met them in person do not:

- Send them any money.
- Purchase and send the codes on gift cards.
- Transfer money on their behalf.
- Take a loan out for them.
- Provide copies of your personal documents such as passports or driving licenses.
- Allow them access to your bank account.
- Invest your own money on their behalf or on their advice.

ActionFraud
National Fraud & Cyber Crime Reporting Centre
www.actionfraud.police.uk

TO STOP FRAUD

Diana Fawcett, Chief Executive of the independent charity Victim Support, said: “Victims of romance fraud often blame themselves, but it is important to understand that this is an incredibly sophisticated crime, and that almost anyone can be targeted. Victims may feel they have not only lost money, but also a loving partner or relationship they thought they had.

“Lockdown restrictions meant people could not meet in person for a number of months, which led to many seeking to form new connections online. While using the internet can be a great way to meet people and form relationships, there’s also a great risk of being lured into a romance scam as fraudsters know how to take advantage of people’s desire for human contact.

“Unfortunately, we’ve seen that circumstances caused by coronavirus were in fact used by fraudsters as a ‘hook’ to extort money. For example, some have invented lies about needing medical treatment, or urgent travel expenses to leave a country, or funds to keep afloat after a bogus job loss caused by the pandemic.

“It’s important to be aware that not everyone is who they say they are.”

During October, the City of London Police, the national lead force for fraud, will be co-ordinating enforcement activity across the UK and overseas, to target, and ultimately arrest, criminals suspected of committing romance fraud.

Fraud cases can be [reported to Action Fraud online](#). Anyone who finds themselves in immediate danger should call 999 as per any emergency.

[Victims of fraud looking for help](#) can find more information on Victim Support’s website.