

ROMANCE FRAUD



FIRST PRINCIPLE

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Top Tips

- Avoid giving away personal details
- Never send or receive money or give anyone your bank details
- Choose a reputable dating site

PREVENT CRIME

PROTECT COMMUNITIES



NORFOLK
CONSTABULARY
Our Priority is You



SUFFOLK
CONSTABULARY



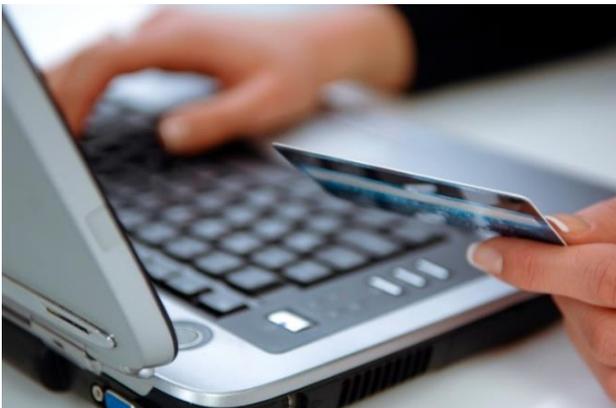
Scammers take advantage of people looking for romantic partners, often via dating websites, apps or social media by pretending to be prospective companions. They play on emotional triggers to get you to provide money, gifts or personal details.

What is it?

The majority of accounts on dating websites are genuine people looking for romance, but fraudsters may try to contact you by making fake profiles, getting in touch and building what feels like a loving relationship.

Dating and romance scams often take place through online dating websites, but scammers may also use social media or email to make contact. They have even been known to telephone their victims as a first introduction.

They may use a fictional name, or falsely take on the identities of real, trusted people such as military personnel, aid workers or professionals working abroad.



You may think you've met the perfect partner but the other person is using a fake profile to form a relationship with you.

They're using the site to gain your trust and ask you for money or enough personal information to steal your identity.

Spot the signs

Their pictures are too perfect – they may have been stolen from an actor or model. A reverse image search can find photos that have been taken from somewhere else.

Dating and romance scammers will express strong emotions for you in a relatively short period of time, and may suggest you move the relationship away from the website to a more private channel, such as phone, email or instant messaging. They may claim to be from Australia or another western country, but travelling or working overseas.

Scammers will go to great lengths to gain your interest and trust, such as showering you with loving words, sharing 'personal information' and even sending you gifts. They may take months to build what may feel like the romance of a lifetime and may even pretend to book flights to visit you, but never actually come.

Once they have gained your trust and your defences are down, they will ask you (either subtly or directly) for money, gifts or your banking/credit card details.

Often the scammer will pretend to need the money for some sort of personal emergency. For example, they may claim to have a severely ill family member who requires immediate medical attention such as an expensive operation, or they may claim financial hardship due to an unfortunate run of bad luck such as a failed business or

mugging in the street. The scammer may also claim they want to travel to visit you, but cannot afford it unless you are able to lend them money to cover flights or other travel expenses.

They may also ask you to send pictures or videos of yourself, possibly of an intimate nature.

Sometimes the scammer will send you valuable items such as laptop computers and mobile phones, and ask you to resend them somewhere. They will invent some reason why they need you to send the goods but this is just a way for them to cover up their criminal activity.

Alternatively, they may ask you to buy the goods yourself and send them somewhere. You might even be asked to accept money into your bank account and then transfer it to someone else.

Anyone can be tricked by these manipulative criminals who prey on people who just want to have a relationship. Victims are not foolish or overidealistic, but instead are victims of grooming and exploitation in this financially and psychologically devastating crime.

Protect yourself

Avoid giving away too many personal details when dating online. Revealing your full name, date of birth and home address may lead to your identity being stolen.

Beware of what may seem like an innocent reason for requesting details, like wanting to send you flowers or a gift.

Never send or receive money or give away your bank details to someone you've only met online, no matter how much you trust them or believe their story.

Pick a reputable dating website and use the site's messaging service. Fraudsters want to quickly switch to social media or texting so there's no evidence of them asking you for money.

How to report it

It can be embarrassing to feel tricked into thinking you've formed a relationship online, but Action Fraud can take a report in confidence. Report it online www.actionfraud.police.uk or call 0300 123 2040. Most online platforms have reporting tools which can be used to report suspicious behaviour and ensure their profile is blocked to help protect others.

First Principle: Related links

Check out all of our Crime Prevention information using the following links or by using the QR code to take you to the First Principle Pages

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