

Ferring Neighbourhood Watch



*Over 40 years of building community spirit,
safety in numbers
and working together
to reduce crime and the
disproportionate fear of crime*

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Romance fraud



Sadly, it's still a booming business - Sussex and Surrey Police received nearly 500 reports of romance fraud last year with over 300 unfortunate victims suffering a total loss of almost £7.5 million – an average of £15,000 per person. These are *reported* numbers and amounts so unfortunately the true figures are even worse. These crimes often leave victims struggling with significant emotional trauma, for not only do they have to deal with the financial impact, they also have to come to terms with the realisation that the relationship – which may have been cultivated over months or even years – is not genuine. Those aged between 65 and 74 are the most likely to be robbed in this way and, although not exclusively an online crime, scammers will often target victims on social media platforms, particularly Facebook, or dating apps such as Tinder. Sometimes they try to move the conversation on to another private platform, such as WhatsApp, and ruthlessly and callously target multiple victims at the same time.

- ♥ Typically these unscrupulous criminals will initially come across as very caring and attentive, messaging back and forth – sometimes over a period of months – to build trust and give the impression that the relationship is genuine.
- ♥ They may have scoured social profiles to help persuade their victims that they are the perfect match, based on shared interests or personal circumstances. Often they will claim to be living or working abroad to explain why they can't meet in person. They might also invent reasons why they can't turn their camera on during calls.
- ♥ Eventually they start to tell stories about family or legal issues, business problems or medical bills. At first, they might appear reluctant to accept any help, but this is all part of their wicked plan.
- ♥ Amounts could be small to begin with, but over time they convince their victims to send more and more money. The sad truth is there is never any genuine connection. If you've started a relationship and the discussion turns to money – regardless of the reason or the amounts involved – alarm bells should be ringing loudly.

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Don't rush into a relationship – get to know the person, not the profile, ensuring you ask plenty of questions. Not all, but majority of, romance fraud is initiated online.

Analyse their profile – protect yourself by confirming their identity. Check the person is genuine by putting the following into your search engine: their name, profile pictures and any repeatedly used phrases, along with the term 'dating scam'. Be mindful that a fraudster could be hiding behind an alias and have changed details connecting them to previous fraudulent activity.

Talk to your friends and family – be wary of anyone who tells you not to tell others about them. Romance fraud can involve grooming over a long period of time.

Evade scams – *never* send money or share your bank details with someone you've only met online. It doesn't matter how long you've been speaking to them or what story they give behind needing the sum.

If you think you have been a victim of a romance scam, do not feel ashamed or embarrassed



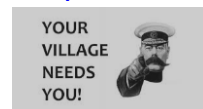
- you are not alone. Contact your bank immediately, ring the Police on 101, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or via <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> You can also report suspicions of Romance Fraud anonymously here: [Scamalytics](#) You can enter images, names and details of potential Romance fraudsters. Keep yourself and your loved ones safe and prevent others from falling victim too.

Membership

Are you a member of Neighbourhood Watch? Well, whether you realise it or not, if you've had this newsletter delivered to you, as **hard copy**** or by email, you certainly are, and you're one of 2.3 million members. Neighbourhood Watch is a charity which began in the UK over 40 years ago, with neighbours coming together to watch out for each other, help prevent crime and improve their communities. Dispersed widely across England and Wales, each group is run by a volunteer Coordinator whose goal is to make his/her community a better and safer place to live. These local groups are supported by regional associations and nationally by Neighbourhood Watch Network.

There is core strength in being local, volunteer-led and embedded within communities. But times change, and like many modern membership organisations on-line potency is increasingly important so Neighbourhood Watch Network invites volunteers and existing members to register on its robust, free, database by following this link: [NW Register](#) Registered members will receive a Welcome Pack and regular crime prevention advice. You can opt-in to receive further information from relevant local organisations such as the police. It's easy to register and, of course, your data is properly protected. See: [Privacy](#) Registering helps keep Neighbourhood Watch strong and relevant.

****If you're reading this as a printed paper copy, why not find out if the person who kindly delivered it needs any help with future delivery?**



Two Ways to Stay Safe While Out and About

1. Have you heard about **Ask for Angela**? It's a phrase you can say to venue staff to discreetly ask for help when on a night out. So if you're receiving unwanted attention or feel unsafe, Ask for Angela at the bar to get help from the staff.



2. Safe Space Sussex is an App aimed at helping people feeling unsafe or vulnerable whilst out, at whatever time of day or night. Free to download from the Apple App and Google Play stores, users see a map showing their location and a number of red pins indicating all Safe Spaces near them, including local shops, pharmacies, supermarkets, pubs or clubs. Tapping on a red pin shows opening times and directions from their current location to all venues in the scheme. Once at the Safe Space users can identify themselves to staff who can offer a safe place to wait until the Police or a trusted contact can reach them. If the user wishes to share their location using the app, they can do so using the alert button which allows them to send a text containing their location (both the address and the what3words) to their named contact. The staff of businesses across the county who are in the scheme have been offered basic training on what to do if someone comes in asking for help. See <https://www.safespacesussex.org.uk/>