

Romance Fraud Fact Sheet

What is a Romance Fraud

Romance fraud is the engineering of a supposed friendship or relationship for fraudulent, financial gain;

- **Suspects invest their time – knowing that as they gain trust, their chances of obtaining money increases.**
- **Fraudsters do not initially ask for money; instead they spend time communicating online and building trust.**
- **By the time they ask for large sums of money, the reasons for requiring financial assistance appear to have greater plausibility.**
- **This is known as the 'grooming period'.**

This fraud has devastating consequences and can leave people mentally, emotionally and financially vulnerable. This guide is designed to help you protect yourself.

How to check for the source of a photo - using Google reverse image search

Why is this useful?

It can help to identify other online sources, accounts and websites, where a photo you've received might have been originally copied from.

What photos might be worth searching for?

Dating profile pictures and photos of property, workplaces, holiday photos, etc. that you may have received from a person you've not met.

How to use Google reverse image search on a computer:

1. Go to **Google** (google.co.uk)
2. Click **Images** (top right)
3. Click on the **camera** icon
4. Click **Upload an image**
5. Click **Choose file** or **browse**

Select the required photo or image from your computer

Click **Open** or **Choose**

Search results

If your photo/image appears in the results on several other sites and accounts, it is likely that this is a stock photo or has been copied from one of these online sources.

Do you suspect you may be a victim of Romance Fraud?

- 1. Have you been asked to leave the dating site platform and talk elsewhere such as WhatsApp, Kik, Skype, Google Hangouts etc?**
- 2. Have you been asked for money for any reason even though you have never met?**
- 3. Have you been told not to tell anyone about your contact/relationship?**
- 4. Does their job demand long periods without contact?**
- 5. Despite numerous attempts to meet the person, is there always a reason given not to meet?**

Whilst these are not evidence of Romance Fraud, they are designed to raise awareness and provide red flags for you to consider. If you have answered yes to all of these questions it is highly probable you may be a victim of Romance Fraud. If you answered yes to some then be aware you may become a victim of Romance Fraud.

Information sheet

Signs to look out for

- **Be wary of giving out personal information on a website or chatroom. Fraudsters will quickly contact you, often showing you glamorous photos of themselves and gaining your trust.**
- **A fraudster will make conversation more personal to get information out of you, but won't tell you much about themselves that you can check or verify.**
- **Romance fraudsters often claim to have high ranking roles that keep them away from home for a long time. This could be a ploy to deter your suspicions around not meeting in person.**
- **Fraudsters will usually attempt to steer you away from chatting on a legitimate dating site that can be monitored. Stay on the platform that you started using initially, rather than switching to email, text or phone.**
- **A fraudster may tell stories to target your emotions and get you to give them money. They may claim they have an ill relative or are stranded in a country they don't want to be in. They may not ask you directly for money, hoping instead that you'll offer it out of the goodness of your heart. **Do not do this.****
- **Sometimes the fraudsters will send the victim valuable items such as laptops, computers and mobile phones, asking them to resend them elsewhere. They will invent a reason as to why they need the goods sent, but this may just be a way for them to cover up their criminal activity. Alternatively they may ask a victim to buy the goods themselves and send them elsewhere.**
- **A fraudster may ask you not to divulge the relationship to friends of family. This is an attempt to isolate and control you, making you deliberately vulnerable – Ask yourself why would you not want to tell your friends about a new relationship. Speak to friends and relatives **especially** if you are being asked to send money.**
- **Often, they will ask victims to accept money into their bank account and then transfer it to someone else using bank accounts, MoneyGram, Western Union, iTunes vouchers or other gift cards. These scenarios are very likely to be forms of money laundering and you could be committing a criminal offence.**

Checklist & Resources

Guard your privacy;

- **Stay on the dating site**
- **Do not reveal your name & location**
- **Do not reveal your contact details**
- **Do not engage over Social Media**
- **Do not engage in Video calls**
- **Do not send images**

What to do if you suspect Romance fraud is taking place.

Romance fraud is a serious crime. If you suspect it, you must report it.

If you, or someone you know is vulnerable to Romance fraud please report it online or call us on 101.

You can report suspicions of Romance fraud anonymously to Scamalytics. Using an online form you can enter images, names and details of potential Romance fraudsters, and IP addresses. This not only keeps yourself and your loved ones safe from Romance fraud, but could prevent others from falling victim too.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of Romance fraud you can find further advice from Victim Support or Action Fraud.

Other useful resources

Action Fraud - www.actionfraud.police.uk › [contact-us](#) or telephone 0300 123 2040

Think Jessica - <https://www.thinkjessica.com/educational-material/>

Silverline - <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/>

Neighbourhood Watch - <https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/crime-prevention/crime-prevention-toolkits/scams/common-scams/romance-scams>

Citizen Advice Bureau - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/central-east-northants/contact-us/?serialnumber=100039>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/central-east-northants/contact-us/?serialnumber=565867>

Scamalytics - <https://scamalytics.com/>

Remember you yourself would never need to borrow money from a stranger on a dating site, and neither would a genuine person. This applies to 'emergency' scenarios. Any genuine person who has an emergency will contact their friends or family, not someone they have never met in real life.

Be smart, Be a detective and apply caution.

Don't let your heart rule your head.