

Police issue warning to Hampshire residents to remain vigilant after spate of fraudulent activity targeting elderly community

Hampshire Constabulary is warning local residents across the whole of Hampshire to remain vigilant after an increase in incidents of courier fraud since the end of October and throughout November.

The crimes commonly involve an unexpected call from someone who purports to be a police officer or a staff member from their local bank, or an employee from an internet / phone provider.

They then tell the victim that their account has been subject to fraudulent activity, or is in danger of being closed and then request the victim assist them with the ongoing investigation, with this involving:

- a. being asked for detail about their financial accounts and bank cards,
- b. being sent to their bank to withdraw money, or being asked to buy high value goods, or
- c. grant the caller access to their computer or phone, by downloading an application.

In recent cases we have seen a ‘courier’ being sent to victims home address in order to collect the goods, cash or bank cards; but in some previous offences, victims have also been directed to send the items or money to a nominated address.

Hampshire Constabulary received six reports of suspected courier fraud between Tuesday 2 November and Tuesday 16 November from communities in Alton, Liphook, Petersfield and the surrounding areas, with those residents losing a combined £17,600 to fraudsters. The offences, which have been targeted at residents between the ages of 75 and 88 have resulted in the victims losing an average £3,000 each.

While there were a further seven reports at the end of October this year in which residents of Gosport, Hayling Island, Fareham, Portsmouth and Southampton lost a combined £17,500 to courier fraud scams.

A Hampshire Constabulary spokesperson, said: “The public are our first line of defence in offences of this nature. It is really important for them to understand that the police, government agencies such as HMRC and banks will never make unsolicited calls to them, in order to try to obtain financial information, ask them to withdraw money from their bank, or to surrender money, goods or their bank cards.

“These incidents can often have a significant impact on victims – both emotionally and financially – as they come to terms with the fact that they have fallen for a scam,

and the financial losses that come with it. However, we want to ensure that those individuals do not become repeat victims, educate them and their loved ones and ensure that fraudsters can no longer take advantage of Hampshire residents.

“If anyone receives a call of this nature, they should not engage with the caller and hang up.

“Hampshire Constabulary are committed to bringing an end to offences of this nature and will take steps to identify and prosecute the individuals responsible.”

Please remember that;

- Police officers, banks and other organisations such as HMRC will never call people in this way and ask you to withdraw money or disclose personal or financial information. If someone does do this, please hang up – it will be a scam.
- If someone calls claiming to be a police officer, ask for their ID number and police force. Wait at least five minutes before calling back. A genuine police officer will not mind waiting while you check.
- Never hand money or your bank card/pin to someone at the door to be sent off elsewhere.
- Fraudsters often try to make victims buy iTunes vouchers or high end jewellery, which they will then sell to make profit. Genuine organisations will never contact you in this way to pay bills or debts.
- If you are a friend, relative or carer of someone you think might be vulnerable to this type of scam, please speak to them about this advice. You might be the only person who can stop them from being scammed.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of fraud, report it to us by calling 101. If a crime is in progress, dial 999.

You can make yourself aware of this type of scam and how to protect yourself by visiting the Action Fraud website (<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>) or by calling them on 0300 123 2040.



Message Sent By

Wes Hutchins

(Police, Corporate Communications Officer, Hampshire and Isle of Wight)