

SCAMS AWARENESS UPDATE

Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project

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Don't be an Ass...

Say no to being a money mule.

Once again, we start with an animal picture. This time it's a mule. We may associate mules with heavy loads and hard work and, sometimes, being mistreated.

Money mules are a bit different. Criminals contact people and offer them cash to receive money into their bank account and transfer it to another account. This person is known as a 'money mule'.

This may sound something you would never do, but fraudsters use their tricks to persuade people to become involved, sometimes unknowingly.

Read on to find out how to avoid becoming a money mule.

LAST CHANCE TO BOOK! Remember to book on to one of our free **"We Need to Talk About Scams"** sessions:

Monday 2nd October - online sessions

Tuesday 3rd October - Congleton Town Hall

Friday 6th October - Crewe Alexandra Football Club

It's a unique opportunity to hear from Cheshire Police, Trading Standards, TrueCall and Cooperative Bank about keeping your money and information safe from fraud.

Go to [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) or contact us on 01625 612958 or at enquiries@ageukce.org to book your place for keeping safe.

Money mules...



What is a money mule? This is a person who receives stolen money and then passes it on to another person. They may receive cash and post it on, or receive money into their bank account and transfer it to an account in another person's name.

How does it start? Fraudsters contact people and offer them cash to receive money and then transfer it on. The criminals use information from social media profiles, cold calls or emails to identify people who are vulnerable because they are in need of money. They may dress it up as a job offer or that you're helping out in some way.



Who could be targeted? Anyone can be targeted to be a money mule, of any age or background.



People who are in need of money are vulnerable. With the current higher cost of living and with pensions, investments and savings not performing as well as we'd hoped, we are all vulnerable to wanting more money in our pocket.

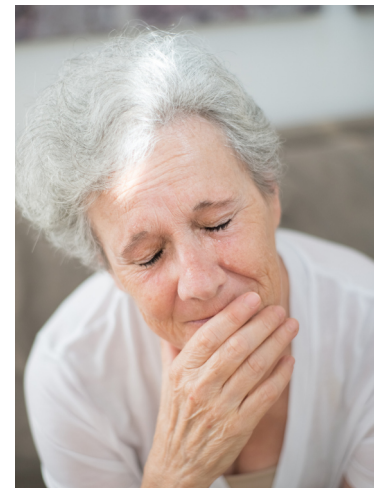
Those who are lonely are vulnerable. The fraudsters will persuade victims that they are being useful and are helping them out. Sometimes, the criminals pose as friends and ask you to receive money on their behalf due to an issue with their bank.

People with a cognitive impairment, such as a brain injury or dementia are vulnerable, as they are unable to understand what they are getting into.

How could it end? The money being transferred usually comes from and goes to organised criminal activity. This could be drug dealing, people trafficking, sexual exploitation, fraud, scams and terrorism.

If you agree to money being put into your account, you are part of this criminal activity, because without money mules, criminals can't move and use their money.

Your bank account could be closed, you could be denied banking services and you could go to prison for up to 14 years.



A case study

It would never happen here, would it? Sadly, our Scams Awareness and Aftercare Project has supported at least two older people who have unwittingly become money mules.








One person was a victim of befriending fraud and allowed their bank account to be used to transfer money for a person they believed was their friend. Another was approached on the phone and asked to receive money and pass it on (whilst keeping a little for themselves), thinking it was a part-time job.

Unfortunately, the first either knew about it was when the police came knocking on their door. Our Scams Aftercare Team were able to talk to them about what had happened, how it had affected them and work on a recovery plan.

...and how to avoid becoming one.

It's really important that we don't unwittingly become a money mule.

Here are our top tips for keeping ourselves and loved ones safe:

-  **Never agree** to receive money into your account, however plausible the reason.
-  **Tell someone.** If you have been approached to be a money mule, tell a trusted relative or friend.
-  **Look out for people** who may be vulnerable to becoming a money mule. Let them know about help and support that's available for managing finances. Being friendly with people can prevent them from becoming lonely.
-  **Be cautious** when responding to "quick cash" job adverts. Only apply for jobs from reputable companies and never share your bank details without seeing a contract first.
-  **Say "No"** to cold callers on the phone and delete emails you haven't asked for.
-  **Report it.** You can report money muling to local Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency. If you prefer not to give your details to the police, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers 100% anonymously online or by calling 0800 555 111.
-  **Get support.** If you live in Cheshire East, contact our Age UK Cheshire East Scams Aftercare Team on 01625 612958 to talk about how you are feeling.

Here are some recent frauds to look out for. Please share with family, friends and community.

Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) impersonation scam



The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has received more than 7,700 reports this year of fraudsters pretending to be from the FCA. The impersonators aim to get people to hand over money or sensitive information, such as bank account PINs and passwords through cold calls and phishing emails.

A common tactic used by criminals is to tell people they are owed compensation, and then ask for bank details or a processing fee to arrange "payment".

Courier Fraud in local area

We've had reports of a fraudster posing as a police officer on the phone. They have struck up a conversation with people over a period of time. They have then tried to persuade people to withdraw money from their bank via the post office, saying it's part of a police investigation. They then arrange for a courier to collect the money.

Remember, no police force will ever ask you to transfer or withdraw money as part of a covert operation.

If you receive such a request, put the phone down and report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.



Air fryer scam emails



Watch out for emails claiming you've won a free air fryer. The websites that the emails link to are designed to steal your contact information and payment details.

Action Fraud received over 460 reports of these in just two weeks.

This is an example of fraudsters using the same method of phishing emails but changing the content to current trends.

Remember, if an offer is too good to be true, it usually is. Suspicious emails can be reported to report@phishing.gov.uk.

Fraudsters cashing in on companies going bust



When big name brands such as Cath Kidson and Wilko get into financial difficulties, fraudsters spy an opportunity to prey on our human nature to bag a bargain.

Be wary of sales of liquidation stock online, on social media or offers by email. It's easy to take a picture of items off the internet and pass it off as goods being sold.

Always check the legitimacy of the seller and never pay by bank transfer for goods.

Coming Next Time

• Current fraud alerts

• Local round-up

Though we don't like to see you leave, you can unsubscribe from these bulletins by emailing sally.wilson@ageukce.org

The Older Persons Scams Awareness & Aftercare Project is brought to you by