

The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



Looking Out for Love

Number 37 in a series of notes on important issues.

These days, you can find almost anything you want on the Internet. Shopping on the Internet allows you to compare products, check prices, view photos and find out the essential details of what you are looking for without having to move from home or scour the shops. Fraudsters use the Internet too – with rather different aims in mind! On Valentine’s Day (or indeed any other day of the year) they will even offer to supply romance.

All social media, particularly dating websites, provide opportunities to communicate with total strangers. This enables you to look around for and to communicate with other people, all over the world or in the next street or town, who share your interests and are perhaps looking for you. This is good news if you are looking for romance but bad news if the new-found love of your life is actually a fraudster.

The fraudster is looking for something other than love. The fraudster is seeking as much information about you as possible – full name, address, date of birth, photographs, family, friends, lifestyle and personal preferences. Sufficient information of this type will enable the fraudster to steal your identity and to impersonate you for criminal purposes. These details can be sold on to other criminals too.

Alternatively, if you seem to have fallen for the fraudster’s ploys and to have bought the rosy, romantic dream or sparkling new friendship that is being offered to you, the fraudster may decide to cultivate your greater trust (this is often called ‘grooming’) with a view to gaining access to your bank account or persuading you to ‘lend’ them money. They may even plan to ‘launder’ criminal money through your bank account.

The essential guidance is based on the advice that it is wise not to take anything at face value. The new friend sending a photo should be asked for a second one, this time with perhaps thumbs up, arms in the air or today’s newspaper – you choose. The fraudster using the photo of a fashion model will find this difficult.

The sharing of personal information always demands special care and any request to move away from the built-in messaging service of a dating website, to send money or have money transferred to your account must always be treated as an alarm bell. Action Fraud publishes helpful advice.



Jeremy Simmonds – Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall