

# Keep Your Money Safe



Surrey Police and Sussex Police Fraud Newsletter

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## FAKE AIR-CONDITIONING UNITS

With temperatures rising, fraudsters are targeting people searching for affordable air conditioners and cooling devices online. Criminals are advertising heavily discounted products through social media and fake websites, only for victims to receive poor-quality items, products that don't work as advertised, or nothing at all.

Surrey Police and Sussex Police have seen a recent spate of fraud reports regarding the purchase of fans and portable air-conditioning units. Products are being advertised and priced much cheaper than those sold by established and trusted retailers, however, when received are cheap imitations of those shown in the ads.

One victim was browsing Facebook when he came across a video advertising a cooling fan developed by NASA scientists and claiming to be able to cool a room in 10 minutes. In the midst of a heatwave, the victim purchased the fan for £69. When he received the fan, he found that the claims made in the advert were false and the product he had purchased was a cheaply made replica. Despite complaining to the company, he did not receive any response or refund.

Other examples, saw two victims losing nearly £250 each to similar scams, where air-con units never arrived. In these cases, the products were advertised on TikTok, with a website on Google. Upfront payments were made via PayPal and bank card, and once they had not received the air-con units multiple attempts to contact the company were unsuccessful.

*Each month we see many incidents of fraudsters targeting our residents in an attempt to defraud them. We're working hard to prevent this and support vulnerable victims of fraud or scams. By following our tips and encouraging family, friends and colleagues to do so too, you can reduce the risk of becoming a victim.*

Detective Chief Inspector  
Antony Leadbeatter  
Surrey Police &  
Sussex Police  
Economic Crime Unit

## **How to protect yourself**

- ♦ Research the site selling the product on sites such as Trust Advisor or Which?
- ♦ Be cautious of websites you have not heard of and offers that seem too good to be true.
- ♦ Where possible, pay using a credit card or another payment method that offers consumer protection.

## **Driving Lessons**

As the cost of learning to drive continues to rise, fraudsters are increasingly targeting learner drivers with attractive offers, discounted lesson packages and professional-looking websites designed to appear legitimate.

Surrey Police and Sussex Police have seen a number of recent fraud reports regarding fake driving lessons. One of these reports was from a 21-year-old who reported finding a website advertising a bulk package, offering a 25-hour course with two one-hour lessons per week. After contacting the company to arrange the booking, she was sent a payment link and transferred £792 for the lessons. It was later discovered that the driving lesson package was not genuine, resulting in a significant financial loss.

## **How to spot the warning signs**

When booking driving lessons online, look out for the following red flags:

- ♦ Prices that seem significantly cheaper than those offered by established local instructors.
- ♦ Requests for full payment upfront before any lessons have taken place.
- ♦ Poorly reviewed or recently created websites.
- ♦ Limited contact information or no registered business address.
- ♦ Pressure to make payment quickly to secure a deal.
- ♦ Payment links sent through emails, text messages or messaging apps rather than secure booking systems.

## **How to protect yourself**

Before booking driving lessons:

- ♦ Research the driving school or instructor thoroughly and check independent reviews.
- ♦ Verify that the instructor is approved and registered with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).
- ♦ Be cautious of websites you have not heard of and offers that seem too good to be true.
- ♦ Where possible, pay using a credit card or another payment method that offers consumer protection.
- ♦ Speak to family or friends and seek recommendations before committing to large upfront payments.

Trust your instincts – if something doesn't feel right, stop and carry out further checks.

## **Keeping communities safe from fraud**

Brush up on your knowledge and stay safe online with FREE webinars and in person sessions delivered by subject experts from WSCC. Sessions include talks at local libraries on scams, navigating the digital world for parents or you can even learn more about artificial intelligence. If you are interested in booking on any of their free webinars, you can book tickets [here](#):

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/digital-safety-fraud-prevention-4037633?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=creatorshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=odclsxcollection&utm-source=cp&aff=escb>

Please check out the website for talks targeted at Parents and Carers in keeping young people safe online:

<https://southeastcyber.police.uk/webinars/list/>

Surrey Police and Partners will be in attendance at the below locations to talk around fraud prevention and reporting methods.

- ♦ Monday, 17 August Surrey Heath location TBC (update via 'in the know')
- ♦ Tuesday, 18 August at The Friary Centre Guildford
- ♦ Wednesday, 19 August St Martins Walk Dorking