

From mountain to sea

Trading Standards Scams Bulletin No. 131

The articles in these bulletins are based on real life complaints made to Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards department, unless otherwise stated, to make them as relevant as possible to readers. Names, exact addresses etc. have been withheld to avoid identifying complainants and to comply with GDPR so please feel free to share the contents with friends, family, neighbours or any community groups you are a part of. For details of scams reported in other parts of Scotland please click on the [Trading Standards Scotland Bulletin page](#).

Bogus Callers and Rogue Traders

One elderly resident in the Buchan area was at home recently when two men who claimed to be roofers and who worked for a company called Aberdeenshire Roofing knocked at the door and advised the resident that they had a problem with a length of guttering above the front door which needed to be replaced immediately. It was noted that the men were driving a blue Ford Transit van (which was later found to be registered to an address in the Lanarkshire area).

Alarmed by this news, the elderly resident readily agreed that the men could repair that stretch of the gutter for the agreed price of £150. The men set to work immediately and three hours later, the 'work' completed, they again spoke to the resident and advised him that while working they had noted that there were other sections of the guttering which needed to be replaced and that this would cost £8000.

As luck would have it, a concerned neighbour of the resident who had become suspicious came across and queried what was happening. Becoming even more suspicious when he learned more, the neighbour advised the men that the resident would not need this 'work' done. The men then called their boss on a mobile phone and advised afterwards that the work could be done for £4000, instead of the original £8000. The neighbour stood his ground and saw the men off the property. To date the men have not returned or tried to obtain the payment of £150.

This is a classic rogue trader situation and here is why:

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- This is one of a number of 'Good Samaritan' situations where a rogue trader, pretending to be a genuine tradesman, claims to have spotted an urgent problem with a roof and just had to stop to forewarn the resident,
- The truth is that there is nothing wrong with the roof and there have been numerous reports in the past that where 'roofers' get access to the roof, they may then cause the problem they claimed to have seen from their drive-by,
- There is no company called Aberdeenshire Roofing on the [Companies House website](#) and while this is far from conclusive on its own, it does not inspire confidence. Even if there was such a company the doorstep callers may have lied about working for it,
- The claim that the work was urgent was nonsense and aimed entirely at alarming the resident so that he would be keen to have the work started immediately, to avoid a (fictitious) catastrophe. This has the additional effect of the resident waiving his right to a 14 day cooling off period and the rogue traders obtaining money from the resident all the sooner,
- The claim, once the job had been started, that the work required was actually much greater than first anticipated is a classic tactic of rogue traders. This can be presented as the so-called problem was bigger than anticipated or more complicated. The truth is that the rogue trader knows that the resident is now committed beyond the point of no return and just wants the work finished, so they ratchet up the pressure on the resident with lies about bigger problems and costlier solutions,
- Had it not been for the intervention of the neighbour, there was a fair chance that the resident would have paid the £8000 to avoid a catastrophic problem (which was entirely made up),
- The call to the 'boss' was just another tactic, based on the premise of 'today only' that the low price being offered on that day was a one day only offer - take it now or lose out, as tomorrow it will cost you more,
- The 50% reduction on the cost from £8000 to £4000 is also a red flag. No legitimate trader will offer such a large discount at the first sign of resistance to the original price. Far better surely to offer a lower price to begin with, to encourage people to take up that offer. This deep discount suggests that the high first offer was based purely on opportunism and greed,
- As with any other cold caller at the door, you simply have their word that they are genuine and honest and this is just another example of many who are not. Far safer to remain polite but firm (to avoid a confrontation), thank the caller for their concern and advise them that you have someone

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(son, brother, nephew...) who can deal with the issue in mind already (even if you don't have someone), then close and lock the door without any further discussion,

- Do not get drawn into discussing money with these callers. If they mention money, immediately change the subject,
- Further tactics on how to deal with cold callers of various types can be found in previous Scams Bulletins at <http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/trading-standards-crime-and-scams-bulletin>
- Please then remember to report the matter to your local Trading Standards office, so that we can investigate, offer advice and alert other people.

Scams etc.

Facebook Scam

One resident of the Formartine area recently saw an advert on Facebook offering fresh fruit, veg and eggs for sale on a Buchan 'buy and sell' page. The seller's page was called Weekday Foodstuffs.

Wishing to support what she thought was a local company and to eat fresh, local produce, she contacted the seller via Facebook Messenger to make enquiries. The seller responded quite quickly and provided a mobile phone number for discussions to continue via WhatsApp. The seller also advised the resident her name, which was that of a Scottish woman.

Shortly afterwards the resident placed an order with the seller for a considerable amount of produce, and its delivery. She then paid the seller by direct bank transfer and waited for the goods to be delivered the next day. She did note that the seller's bank account was in the name of Abdul Saliki. When the delivery didn't arrive, the resident messaged the seller a number of times and was met with one excuse after another.

She soon realised that the delivery wasn't coming and that she'd been scammed. She then reported the matter to her bank and later to Trading Standards. Our enquiries are still ongoing but the resident did get refunded by her bank. The account used by the seller has since disappeared from Facebook.

This scam resembles previous Facebook scams reported to Trading Standards about eggs and firewood where sellers' take orders and payment for goods which never appear.

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Some points to note:

- Facebook and WhatsApp did not take any active part in this scam; their services were simply misused by the scammer to cheat buyers,
- It may well be that the seller's Facebook page was set up purely for the purpose of the scam and that they used it to gain access to the 'buy and sell' page for the same reason,
- Please remember to treat any selling advert on Facebook with great care. There are many scammers who use social media, not just Facebook, to cheat people. Look for anomalies such as the names given on the social media page with that on the bank account receiving payment. If there are discrepancies, treat this as a red flag and consider calling off the purchase,
- In this case, the account receiving the payment was a personal account in a man's name as opposed to a business account bearing the name Weekday Foodstuffs or the woman's name passed on WhatsApp. This can also cause the bank to decline to make payment. If this happens, this development should be heeded,
- If you believe that you may have been the victim of a scam similar to this one, as in this case, please report the matter to your bank in case they may refund the cash lost,
- Please also remember to preserve any evidence and report the matter to your local Trading Standards office along with a hyperlink to the seller's page on the social medium.

Misc.

Romance frauds are a much underreported phenomenon and can have a huge impact on its victims. The Consumers Association, via the Which? magazine, recently published an excellent article on the matter. Please see below for details.

Romance fraudsters stole £119.6m in 2025

Know the five signs you're dating a romance scammer
By Tali Ramsey, Senior Writer at Which?

Report Fraud (formerly Action Fraud) received 12,093 reports of dating scams in the past 13 months, with losses totalling £119.6m.

A dating scam, or romance fraud, typically occurs when you enter into an online relationship with a fraudster posing as an imaginary person. After grooming you

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over a period of days, weeks or months, the fraudster will begin to ask for money for completely fictional reasons and ask for more and more over time.

The National Crime Agency estimates that only 14% of fraud cases are reported. But given the emotional impact of romance fraud, it's unlikely that the Report Fraud database gives a true picture of the volume of cases and total losses that occurred last year.

Read on to discover the typical signs of a romance scammer and what to do if you think you've been dating a scammer.

1. An entirely online relationship

Meeting someone online is normal. What's not, however, is the relationship existing entirely online and you never meeting up with them in person, not even via a video call.

This should raise a red flag, especially if a significant amount of time has passed. Romance fraudsters typically use stolen images of real people, or increasingly, AI-generated images to pretend to be someone they're not, so this should be treated with suspicion.

2. Using stolen images

Fraudsters carry out romance scams by creating fake personas, and part of that persona involves images of real or fake people.

Which? has conducted previous research which found victims whose pictures had been used countless times in romance scams to lure in other unsuspecting victims.

With AI scams on the rise, scammers are also generating entirely fake images of people to use in their schemes.

You can use Google image search to trace images of people to other places on the internet, or a tool like [TinEye](#) – just upload the screenshot and see if the image belongs to someone else.

3. Overly dramatic stories

Anyone that you're speaking to online who always has something devastating happen to them – from losing access to their bank account to experiencing several bereavements to having their home burgled – should raise alarm bells.

During the grooming process, fraudsters will attempt to elicit empathy from you by telling you sob stories in an effort to extract money from you at a later date.



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This is also done to build an emotional connection with you, making you more likely to provide financial help when they ask.

4. Offering investment opportunities

Once they've earned your trust, the scammer may change the conversation using claims that they can help you make easy money through exclusive trading offers or investment opportunities.

5. Asking for money or gifts

This is typically the end result of the scam. Eventually, when the scammer has you convinced that you're in a real romantic relationship, they'll use one of their stories to persuade you to part with your money.

Sometimes, fraudsters will ask you for several amounts of money over time under the guise of various fake scenarios.

Alternatively, the scammer may ask you to move money for them by using your bank account to transfer money into and then out of again. This is a form of money laundering where a scammer uses '[money mules](#)' to move illicit cash.

What to do if you've been targeted by a romance scammer

If you think you could be speaking to a romance scammer on a dating app or a social media website, you should report the profile to the platform using its in-app reporting tools.

You may find you need impartial support too, both [Mind](#) and [Victim Support](#) offer support services for those affected by these crimes.

If you lose any money to a scam, call your bank immediately using the number on the back of your bank card. You should also report it to [Report Fraud](#) (formerly known as Action Fraud) or call the police on 101 if you're in Scotland.

There full article, in its original form, can be found [here](#).

Stop Press

Conclusion

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Please note that the advice given in these bulletins has been deliberately kept simple, so that if you are faced with such a scenario where fear, alarm and panic are tools often used deliberately by scammers, you will know what to do at that time.

If you have been the victim of a Bogus Caller or other form of scam, please report the matter to Consumer Advice Scotland so that Trading Standards can maintain a detailed picture about scammers operating in the Shire. This would be a great help to us to tackle this sort of crime.

If you have any information to share about the unlawful sale of tobacco or disposable vapes, please use the Contact Info below to pass that information to Trading Standards. If you would prefer, you can report the information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Contact Info

For non-urgent Trading Standards enquiries in Aberdeenshire, please contact Consumer Advice Scotland at <https://consumeradvice.scot/contact/> or call them on 0808 164 6000.

For urgent Trading Standards matters or doorstep crime matters, contact Aberdeenshire Council's Trading Standards at 01467 537222 or via trading_standards@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Aberdeen City Council's Trading Standards department can be contacted by calling 0300 0200 292 or e-mailing tradingstandards@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Contact Police Scotland on 999 if you need urgent Police assistance or 101 for non-urgent matters.

For more information about scams please visit the [Friends Against Scams website](#) or [Take Five](#) at their website.

Please direct any media queries to news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 01467 538222 during office hours.

All previous Trading Standards bulletins can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website on the [Trading Standards Scams Bulletin page](#).