

From Marc Evans of Wiltshire Police in Salisbury to Richard Clewer, head of Wiltshire Council. It is requested this email is circulated as widely as possible.

Local live crime.

We have a concerning number of frauds local to Salisbury and the surrounding villages. The last reported contact that we know of was 14th May 2024, where multiple people have been contacted and 1 victim handed over £3000 to the fraudsters

The scam is as follows:

Scammers posing as police officers and bank officials will cold call residents and trick them into handing over thousands of pounds – after spending hours duping them over the phone.

The scammers will ask the victims to call them back via 999. The scammers however will still be on the line, so the victims believe they are talking to police. This is the main hook the fraudsters use throughout the scam

People are encouraged to speak to vulnerable relatives and neighbours about courier fraud following a spate of incidents in recent weeks, including one case where an elderly male was told to withdraw a large amount of Euros from various cash machines, equating to nearly £20,000.

Courier fraud comes in many forms and usually involves fraudsters telephoning a potential victim, claiming to be from their bank, the police, or another law enforcement authority.

The most common forms of courier fraud are:

Bank card expiry: Fraudsters claim to be from the victim's bank and say their card is no longer valid. They ask for the pin number and then send a "courier" to collect the card before using it for fraudulent purposes. Purchasing high end items:

The suspects pretend to be police officers and ask the victim to help with an undercover operation by purchasing expensive items like watches, jewellery, and gold, or Euros. Once the item is bought, the victim will hand over the item to the criminal.

Counterfeit cash/bank investigation: A person claiming to be a police or banking official informs the victim that they need to help with a banking corruption investigation. The victim is told to withdraw a large amount of money and the cash is picked up later by a courier to "check for fingerprints or to identify counterfeit bank notes". Alternatively, the victim may be asked to package the cash up and send it by post to an address provided by the fraudster.

Computer takeover: The fraudster telephones the victim, pretending to be from their internet service provider, saying that they have had an issue with their internet connectivity, and they are due compensation. The victim is persuaded to download a remote access application, giving the suspects access to their home computers. The fraudster persuades the victims into thinking that they have been paid too much compensation and the victims then withdraw cash to pay the money back, which is later collected by a courier.

Please remember that:

- Police officers, Police staff, 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 verifying details with the appropriate Force by calling 101 – do not use any number they provide unless you can confirm it as genuine. Ensure the call has disconnected as scammers will often leave the line open or use another phone altogether. A genuine police officer will not mind waiting while you check their identity (it's a sign that it is a scam if the person becomes pushy or stresses urgency).
- Take a step back from everything and take a few moments to think. Speak to a trusted friend or relative for their opinion before agreeing to anything. The fraudster's tactic is often to keep the victim busy talking and isolated. They stress that they should not tell anyone else about the call.
- Your bank or the police will never send a courier to your home to collect cash, bank cards, PINs or other valuable goods.
- 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.

