

Chelmsford & Maldon Group of Neighbourhood Watches

Safer & Stronger Communities Together



NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2022

Emergency? ALWAYS use 999

Contact us at: newsletter@chelmsfordandmaldonnhw.org.uk

UPDATE ON FRAUD

Romance Fraud, Identity Theft

IN our previous editions of this Newsletter we have advised and warned on the scourge of scams and fraud—on-line, by telephone or post, or even by cold-calling at your doorstep. These are an ever-present threat and we must be vigilant for ourselves, our loved-ones, and our neighbours. In this edition we need to alert our members and readers to **Romance Fraud** and **Identity Theft**. More information can be found on our website:

www.chelmsfordandmaldonnhw.org.uk

Romance Fraud

Essex Police report that **romance fraudsters** have **scammed £5.3 millions** from victims in Essex since 2020—and they want to alert us to this nasty crime. In 2021, there were 234 victims coming forward, with £2.3m of losses. This was a significant jump in cases reported to Essex Police in 2020 with 145 cases and more than £3m lost—an average of more than £20,000 per victim: but it is widely believed that romance fraud is significantly under-reported.

These frauds are often the work of organised criminal gangs, many of which are based overseas. The fraudsters may groom victims for as long as a year, gaining their trust over hours of conversation online or on the phone, sharing supposedly intimate secrets and often having a backstory likely to make the victim empathise with them—making requests for money appear legitimate and justifiable.

The criminals use information the victim shares about their life and family to manipulate or even threaten them, asking them for cash and gifts, or to launder money through their bank accounts.

Here's one victim comments shared on the Essex Police website:—

A lot of frauds work by pressuring someone into having to do something immediately. The ► p.2

Shorter days

FROM the end of October the clocks go back one hour until the last weekend of March: particularly in the Winter months, this means it starts to get dark from around half past four (or earlier) in the afternoons.

The potential for opportunist burglaries increases, when houses appear to be unoccupied in dark late afternoons: curtains open, lights out, no activity; a sneak round the back and in through a window. It can be so easy. So the key message:

Let them think someone is in.



Also in this Newsletter ...

- Modern slavery Page 2
- Have you a Grab Bag at the ready? Page 3
- Sources of help and advice Page 4

Romance Fraud

p.2 ◀ *fraudster may create a scenario where they are stuck somewhere or need funds urgently for a business deal or maybe to get out of a difficult situation.*

Tell your friends and family if you've met someone online. Fraudsters will often ask you to keep the relationship a secret. This is to isolate you from your loved ones and minimise the risks of the fraud being exposed.

Never send, transfer, or invest money if asked by someone you meet online, and don't share your personal documents or allow access to your bank accounts.

To read more, go to

www.essex.police.uk/news

and search on 'romance'.

Since October 2020, Essex Police has run a peer support group for romance fraud victims in partnership with **Essex Victim Support**:

www.victimsupport.org.uk.

If you believe you've been a victim of romance fraud, call the Police on **101** or **report on-line** at **www.essex.police.uk**.

Identity Theft

Your identity is one of your most valuable assets. If your identity is stolen, you can lose money and may find it difficult to get loans, credit cards, or a mortgage.

Your name, address, and date of birth provide enough information to create another 'you'. An identity thief can use a number of methods to find out your personal information and will then use it to open bank accounts, take out credit cards, and apply for state benefits in your name.

There have been reports of someone's identity used to set up fake companies and conduct fraudulent business transactions, and there have been extreme cases where people have even been defrauded of their house in fraudulent 'sales'.

So take care of your identity: you can find more at the website of the **Information Commissioner's Office**:

www.ico.org.uk

You can also find advice on property fraud at the Law Society:

www.lawsociety.org.uk

See also:

www.actionfraud.police.uk

SHEDDING LIGHT ON MODERN SLAVERY



Entrapped, exploited, abused

MODERN SLAVERY is the grim reality of the exploitation of vulnerable people for personal or financial gain—often by criminal gangs.

Victims may be British citizens or legal residents who are vulnerable and easily enslaved and exploited—perhaps they're homeless, victims of abuse, or with mental health problems; they may also be illegal immigrants, victims of people traffickers.

Victims may become entrapped in illicit labour or in domestic work, such as cleaners or child-carers—or worse, for sexual or other criminal exploitation.

- **In 2021, 12,727 victims of modern slavery were identified in the UK.***
- **Common forms of modern slavery in Essex are enforced criminality (including county lines), labour exploitation, and sexual exploitation.***

You can help ... report concerns

On the surface, many of the 'jobs' done by victims may look like any 'normal' job—but people are being controlled: they can face violence or threats or be forced into inescapable debt; they feel they can't escape. **Report any suspicions or concerns to Essex Police** using **101** or **in an emergency using 999**. You can also report on-line at:—

www.essex.police.uk

following the links to *Report* and then *Crime*.

Also contact the **UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline** on **08000 121 700**, or on-line at

www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

You can report **anonymously** on: **CrimeStoppers** **0800 555 111** or online at: **crimestoppers-uk.org**

See also **www.togetherfree.org.uk**

*Data supplied by togetherfree.org.uk

IN AN EMERGENCY, HAVE YOU A **GRAB BAG** AT THE READY?

EMERGENCIES can happen at any time and affect anyone. Whilst local authorities can provide safety and shelter for people evacuated from their homes due to an emergency, it is wise to have a small bag with personal effects for such an emergency.

These emergencies may include:—

- **flooding or severe weather**
- **fire**
- **an act of terrorism**
- **or anything that makes it unsafe for you to be in your home—like a gas leak with the danger of an explosion**

A **grab bag** is a handy back-pack or carrying bag containing emergency items in case you need to flee your home quickly without time to pack. Some of the items that are suggested for the bag include:-

- **copies of important documents, e.g. insurance policies**
- **a small first aid kit**
- **important phone numbers**
- **a list of prescription medication**
- **toiletries and sanitary supplies**
- **mobile phone charger (you would have your mobile phone anyway!)**
- **a battery torch with spare batteries**
- **bottled water, emergency snacks**
- **spare house and car keys**
- **a book!**

And you may have these readily with you in any event—but note them just in case:-

- **cash and/or credit cards**
- **ID (e.g., driving licence)**
- **spectacles**

Prepare a check-list—and don't put things off: what we don't want to happen just might. It's a matter of being prepared.

You can find more information at:—

www.chelmsford.gov.uk

www.maldon.gov.uk

www.essexprepared.co.uk

www.gov.uk

Search for 'emergency planning'.

Also, contact

community.safety@chelmsford.gov.uk



First Aid in an Emergency

WE KNOW that the **NHS** is under great pressure at present—and matters won't get better any time soon. We can help ourselves and at the same time help the NHS by not calling upon them except in real emergencies. **So how are your first aid skills?**

Organisations like the St. John's Ambulance
www.sja.org.uk

and the Red Cross

www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid
provide loads of helpful advice—and you can do courses with them.

So get prepared to help yourself and your loved-ones—and the NHS.

Read Back Copies of our Newsletters

BACK COPIES of all of our Newsletters can be found on our website,

chelmsfordandmaldonnhw.org.uk/newsletters.html

and we have provided also an index by subject.

There's advice on home and personal safety and security—including protecting ourselves

against car theft, shed attacks,

bike thefts, home

burglaries, drug-

dealing in our

neighbourhoods,

fraud and cyber-

security, and

more.

Check us

out ...



VS VICTIM SUPPORT

Get support

08 08 16 89 111

www.victimsupport.org.uk

**IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF A CRIME,
OR WITNESS A CRIME:**

ALWAYS REPORT IT

www.essex.police.uk

or call 101

Always use 999

in an emergency

Call anonymously to report crime



www.crimestoppers-uk.org

DOMESTIC ABUSE

DON'T SUFFER IT

People are there to help.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

0808 2000 247

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Essex Domestic Abuse Helpline:

0330 333 7 444

www.essexcompass.org.uk

women's aid

until women & children are safe

www.womensaid.org.uk

Refuge

For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

www.refuge.org.uk

**END
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN**

**Ending violence
against
women and
girls—we all
have a
responsibility**

www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

STOP HATE CRIME...

www.report-it.org.uk

REPORT IT!

www.chelmsfordandmaldonnhw.org.uk

Contact us at: newsletter@chelmsfordneighbourhoodwatch.org.uk