

# Essex Police Fraud Alert System

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6th August 2021

## CRIMINALS TARGET THOSE LOOKING FOR LOVE WITH BOGUS INVESTMENTS

Action Fraud is warning romance seekers to be cautious when using dating platforms, as new data reveals criminals have already conned over £15 million out of unsuspecting lovers with bogus investment opportunities.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of victims were aged 30 to 39 years old, and around two thirds of victims (60 per cent) were aged 30 to 59 years old.

While the vast majority of investments offered are in cryptocurrency, money has also been handed over by individuals believing they're investing in other commodities, including stocks and shares and gold.

### How to protect yourself:

- **Don't send money** - No matter how long you've been speaking to someone online, if you haven't met them in person, do not send them any money.
- **Don't be rushed** into making an investment. Be wary if you're being pressured to invest quickly, or promised returns that sound too good to be true.
- **Research the person you're talking to** - Performing a reverse image search can find photos that have been taken from somewhere, or someone, else.
- **Be suspicious if you are contacted out the blue** about an investment opportunity. Always seek advice from friends or family and consider getting independent professional advice before making a significant financial decision.
- **Stay on the site's messaging service** until you meet in person. Criminals want to quickly switch to other platforms that are less well regulated and have stronger encryption, so there's no evidence of your conversation.
- **Check if it's a scam** by visiting the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) ScamSmart website.
- **Report it!** Most online platforms have a reporting tool which you can use if you suspect someone online is using pictures that don't belong to them, you are suspicious of their behaviour, or they have asked you for money. Reporting their profile means it can be blocked, which helps protect others.



POLICE - ALERT

Victims lost over **£15 million** to criminals offering bogus investment opportunities



ActionFraud  
www.actionfraud.police.uk

CLASSIFICATION - SUITABLE FOR PUBLICATION

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If you or someone you know is vulnerable and has been a victim of fraud, please call **Essex Police** on 101  
Report fraud or attempted fraud by contacting **Action Fraud** at [actionfraud.police.uk](http://actionfraud.police.uk) or call 0300 123 2040

Keep up to date with fraud and  
do **even more** Online at [essex.police.uk](http://essex.police.uk)

