

‘Police will never ask you to withdraw money and hand it over for an investigation’



“No police officer will ever ask you to hand over money, sensitive banking information or valuables to help with any criminal investigation.”

That is the message we want people to share with friends and family following several reports recently of fraudsters pretending to be police officers phoning potential victims.

In one recent case, the victim was defrauded of thousands of pounds in a telephone and courier scam.

What happened?

On Monday 22 January, one woman took a phone call from a man pretending to be a Detective Constable from ‘Taunton Police Station’ who falsely claimed her debit card was being used by someone else. He said she would hear a bleep and then should dial 999 – in reality the fraudster would hold open the phone line and the woman would not be connected to police but instead still be talking again with the fraudster or one of their accomplices.

Fortunately, the woman realised it was a scam and told the fraudster she would hang up and go to her local police station to report it – which we are really grateful she did.

However, we are aware of other incidents recently in which people have received similar calls including from fraudsters claiming to work for the ‘Taunton fraud department’.

A woman who lives in the Comeytrowe area of Taunton was encouraged to check the officer was legitimately who he said he was by calling 999 – but the phone line was held open so she remained on the call with fraudster and did not come through to our control room like she thought.

She was encouraged to withdraw thousands of pounds in cash from her bank and in foreign currency to supposedly assist with a criminal investigation and was later asked to hand it over to a courier who would take the bank notes away for analysis, after giving her the pre-agreed password.

The courier was described as male, of Black heritage, about 5ft 10ins, with short black afro-style hair and wore all black. He attended the woman's address in an estate car at about 6.30pm on Wednesday 17 January.

The courier promised she would get the money back within a few days, but when that date passed she realised it had been a scam and reported what happened.

Enquiries into the incident are ongoing and anyone with information is asked to call 101 and quote reference number **5224017297**.

We are ensuring the woman is being supported and receive fraud prevention advice to help her in future.

Advice

Fraud protect officer Amy Horrobin said: "No police officer will ever ask you to hand over money, sensitive banking information or valuables to help with any criminal investigation.

"If you are asked to do that by someone claiming to be a police officer, it is 100 per cent a scam. No ifs, no buts.

"These fraudsters are predatory and seek to pressurise potential victims, who want to do their best to help the police. They play on victims' good nature.

"They will put time and effort into trying to convince you it is legitimate – for example, getting you to check the officer's name you are given is part of your local police service or a password to give to the courier – but the reality is it is just a part of the scam.

"If you get such a call, telling you 'police want you to withdraw money' or hand over valuable items, it is without doubt a fraud attempt and you should not do it.

"We'd advise you hang up the phone. Then report it to [Action Fraud either online or by phone](#) – if calling we'd advise to use a different phone or leave it a few minutes and check the fraudster has not left the line open before trying to dial.

"It is really important that such cases are reported because it helps us build up a picture of what is happening so we can try to prevent such fraud attempts being successful in the first place and also follow any lines of enquiry that may be available to identify the perpetrators."

If you can help, please complete our [online appeals form](#).