



Head of Fraud promotes BBC podcast head of Romance Scam Prevention Day

Thames Valley Police is continuing its campaign to raise awareness of romance fraud, a crime that cost victims across the UK over £106 million last year. As part of this effort, the force was proud to support the launch of Series 2 of the BBC Sounds podcast 'Love Bombed: Who is Alex?' explores the devastating emotional and financial impact of romance fraud.

Hosted by Vicky Pattison, the story of Sarah, a romance fraud survivor who was manipulated into a relationship with a man she knew as "Alex" from an online dating website – a digital persona created by a scammer operating from overseas. The podcast reveals how Sarah was emotionally groomed, isolated from her support network, and defrauded out of thousands of pounds.

Detective Inspector Duncan Wynn, Head of Central Fraud Unit said:

"I am delighted to be supporting World Romance Scam Prevention Day on 3rd of October to highlight the importance of supporting and not shaming those targeted.

Shame is the 'master emotion' which can prevent victims from feeling able to report and confide in their support networks.

Romance fraudsters employ manipulative tactics and contrary to widely held belief, asking for money is not the first request made of the victim.

Mentioning money early in the communication normalises talking about it to make later requests seem legitimate and reasonable.

Fraudsters will also use emotionally fuelled responses such as being in distress, to prompt the victim to act quickly without having time think it through or seek advice.

Isolation is also a key tactic as fraudsters will cut victims off from sources of emotional support which get framed as 'romantic' and later serves as a platform to gain control over the victim."

Thames Valley Police features in Episode 6 of the series, highlighting how officers investigate romance fraud and support victims. The force worked closely with experts such as Dr Elisabeth Carter, a forensic linguist and criminologist from Kingston University, to develop resources that help the public spot the signs of fraud and understand the psychological tactics used by offenders.

Key Advice to stay safe online:

- ✗ Never send money to someone you have not met in person.
- Be cautious of being asked to move contact off the initial meeting platform as they want access to you 24/7
- Be cautious of intense declarations of love early in a relationship.
- Be cautious of late night/early hour's communication which is intended to harm your decision-making processes by making you sleep deprived.
- 🔍 Use reverse image searches to check if profile photos appear elsewhere online.
- 🗣️ Talk to friends or family if something feels off – isolation is a key tactic used by fraudsters.

Detective Inspector Duncan Wynn, continues

"Romance fraud is not just a financial crime; it is a deeply personal betrayal. Offenders use manipulative tactics to isolate victims and gain their trust. We urge everyone to stay vigilant and look out for signs of coercive behaviour, especially when meeting people online.

"These frauds are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with criminals using stolen identities, fake profiles, and psychological manipulation to target people of all ages. The emotional impact can be devastating, leaving victims feeling ashamed, isolated, and unsure of where to turn.

That is why we are urging everyone to stay vigilant online, talk to someone if something does not feel right, and never send money to someone you have not met in person. If you think you or someone you know may be a victim, please report it — help is available, and you are not alone.”

Thames Valley Police’s [*it’s Not Your Fault*](#) campaign and [*Romance Fraud eBook*](#) offers practical advice and supports victims of romance fraud.

For more information on how to spot romance fraud and access support, visit:

- ☎ Report fraud via Action Fraud: 00300 123 0240 or actionfraud.police.uk
- ☎ Call 101 or report online to us

🔗 [Thames Valley Police Romance Fraud](#)

The full series of *Love Bombed: Who is Alex?* Is available now on [Love Bombed - Series 2: Who is Alex? - 1. My dream man - BBC Sounds](#)