

Question:

I recently joined a dating website. I was contacted by a lovely man and we started to exchange messages. We now email every day, although we haven't met in person yet. We had arranged to go for a meal, but then he cancelled because he needs to concentrate on fundraising for his daughter - the medicines she needs aren't available on the NHS.

He's asked me to contribute, his daughter needs treatment urgently. He's given me details of a bank account to pay into. I want to help, but I'm unsure because I've only known him a short time.

Answer:

You're right to be cautious. Unfortunately dating sites are increasingly being targeted by unscrupulous people. It can be difficult to accept that someone you've developed feelings for is trying to swindle you, but scammers can be highly skilled at using emotional triggers to persuade people to part with money, or with personal information that might make victims vulnerable to identity theft.

Your friend may be completely genuine, but try to find out if he's really who he says he is. A reluctance to call you or Skype, or profile information such as educational achievements not matching the content of his messages, could be a strong indication that this is a scam.

Other things to look out for include expressing strong emotions in a short period of time, moving the conversation away from the dating site and onto a private channel such as email or instant messaging and asking lots of personal questions - but giving away very little in return.

Trust your instincts and if in any doubt, don't part with your money. For further help on identifying possible scams contact your local Citizens Advice, or call the Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 04 05 06. Scams can also be reported to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040, www.actionfraud.police.uk

For further information and advice, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or see www.adviceguide.org.uk.

Upton-upon-Severn CAB, The Library, School Lane. Mondays 10.00 am to 12.00 pm.

Malvern Bureau open:

Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 10 am - 4 pm

Telephone: (01684) 563611

CAB also has a team of three Community Liaison Volunteers (CLVs) covering rural parishes in the south of the district.. They are acting as a first point of contact and link to CAB advice services and can be contacted as follows:-

Castlemorton, Birtsmorton & Welland – Liz & Neville Mills – 07592 055998
neville_liz.mills@btinternet.com

Liz and Neville Mills are also available at St. James Church Hall, Welland, on Tuesdays 10.00-12.00